



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH COMMISSION 14 June 2005

Report of the Director of Corporate Services

Overview and Scrutiny Objectives and Work Planning for 2005/06

RECOMMENDATION

- 1 That the Social Care and Health Commission should:
 - a) Agree the actions it will take in order to meet the objectives set out in the 2005/06 Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Commissions
 - b) Consider whether it wishes to proceed with Review of Children Looked After Services
 - c) Develop a work plan for its topic and scrutiny review activities in the coming year.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 The 2004/05 Annual Report of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Commissions set out the following objectives for 2005/06:
 1. To improve the engagement between Cabinet and the Scrutiny Commissions.
 2. For the Commissions to increase their involvement in scrutiny.
 3. For the Commissions to review their work processes with a view to improving outcomes and the linkages to Council priorities.
 4. For the Commissions to identify the skills needed by Chairs and members to deliver effective scrutiny, and prepare training programmes designed to address any skill shortages they identify.
- 2.2 It is suggested that the Commission agrees the actions it will take in order to meet the Annual Report objectives. Appendix 3 of this report contains an extract from the Annual Report which suggests some ways in which the objectives might be achieved.
- 2.3 The actions that the Commission can take will to some extent be constrained by the level of support that the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Team can provide to the Commission.

- 2.4 The Commission is advised that for the coming administrative year the Co-ordination Team is able to offer each of the six Overview and Scrutiny Commissions up to 26 meetings of around two hours duration. Eight of these meetings will be taken up by the Commission's scheduled meetings, which are as set out in Appendix 5 in the 2005/2006 Schedule of Meetings.
- 2.5 The remaining 18 meetings are therefore available to the Commission for extended scrutiny or policy development topic reviews, or for any other activities that the Commission considers would enable it to achieve its objectives for the coming year.
- 2.6 In order to make best use of the 18 meetings, it is suggested that the Commission should develop a work plan for the coming administrative year. The work plan should take into account any known demands on Commission time such as budget scrutiny, and should then allocate the remaining meetings to either topic or scrutiny review work according to Commission members' perception of needs and priorities. The actions that the Commission will take in order to meet the Annual Report objectives can where appropriate be incorporated in the work plan.
- 2.7 Members are also asked to confirm whether they wish to continue with the Review of Children Looked After Services started earlier this year. The review will examine why the number of looked after children in Derby are high compared with the average of comparator authorities and how they could be reduced safely to bring them in line. The Terms of Reference and a draft work programme for the review is given in Appendix 4.
- 2.8 To facilitate development of the Commission's work plan it is suggested that prior to the meeting on July 2005, members should inform the Co-ordination Officer of any issues or topics that they consider it would be of benefit for the Commission to scrutinise or review. The Co-ordination Officer will collate this information for circulation at the meeting.
- 2.9 As in previous years, the Co-ordination Team is arranging to provide a training session for Overview and Scrutiny members. The training will take place on 20 July and as well as the principles of Overview and Scrutiny it is also planned to include sessions on performance management and the use of Performance Eye, on work and meeting planning, and on engaging the public in scrutiny. If members would like any other issues included in the training they should contact the Co-ordination Team.
- 2.10 It is also suggested that the June-July period of the coming Municipal year could be used to familiarise the Commissions with their new portfolios. This could be done in a variety of ways. For example, with the previous Education Commission it was arranged for members to visit selected schools in order to see some of the condition issues that affect school buildings. Members may wish to visit a selection of care homes and family centres to familiarise themselves with social care issues. If there are issues

or areas within the Commission's portfolio on which members would like more information, they should contact the Co-ordination Team.

For more information contact:	Mahroof Hussain 01332 255597 e-mail Mahroof.hussain@derby.gov.uk
Background papers:	None
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Social Care and Health Commission Portfolio Appendix 3 – Extract from the 2005/06 Report of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Commissions Appendix 4 – Terms of Reference of the Review of Children Looked After Services Appendix 5 – 2005/06 Schedule of Meetings

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1. The costs of implementing the Commission's work plan must be met from the Commission's research budget.

Legal

2. None arising from this report.

Personnel

3. None arising from this report.

Equalities impact

4. Effective scrutiny is of benefit to all Derby people.

Corporate Objectives, Values and Priorities

5. This report link to:
 - **Council's Corporate Objectives** of healthy, safe and independent communities
 - **Priorities** of modernising social care

Social Care and Health Commission Portfolio

The Social Care and Health Commission has a broad portfolio covering services provided by social services and health, which include:

- Children and Family Services
- Corporate Parenting
- Adult Services
- Assessment and Care Planning
- Social Services Support Services
- Health Improvement Planning
- Health Services

Extract from the 2005/06 Annual Report of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Commissions (the comments in italics are extracted from the relevant section of the Scrutiny Management Commission's report on its Review of the Council's Scrutiny function)

2005/06 Objectives

1. To improve the engagement between Cabinet and the Scrutiny Commissions.

It was considered that this could be achieved by:

- Regular informal meetings between Scrutiny Chairs, Vice Chairs and Commission members and the relevant Cabinet members
- Cabinet members explaining to the Commissions why recommendations had not been adopted or had been amended
- Cabinet members spending more time with the Commissions, answering questions and explaining Cabinet policy
- Relevant Cabinet members attending the first Commission meeting of the Municipal Year to inform members of Cabinet priorities, provide performance summaries and details of inspections, etc
- Reinforcing the need for mutual respect between the Cabinet and Commissions and mutual recognition of the value of their roles in ensuring effective decision making

It was felt that that better engagement between the Cabinet and the Commissions would:

- *Reduce conflict*
- *Improve the focus of the Commissions*
- *Assist Commissions in prioritising their work*
- *Add value to the Council's decision making processes*

2. For the Commissions to increase their involvement in scrutiny.

It was considered that this might be done by reducing the emphasis currently placed on topic reviews and giving more attention to scrutiny. Methods of achieving this include using performance management information more effectively and conducting scrutiny reviews on the outcomes of previous decisions.

It was considered that increasing the level of scrutiny would:

- *Improve the Commissions' effectiveness in holding the Cabinet to account*
- *Improve the response of the Commissions to issues affecting Derby people*
- *Enable Commission members to develop new skills*

- *Raise the profile of scrutiny by enabling the Commissions to engage in issues that were seen by the public as locally topical and important*
- *Improve the quality of service delivery*

3. For the Commissions to review their work processes with a view to improving outcomes and the linkages to Council priorities.

This might be done by:

- Selecting agenda items and topics for review on the basis of their overall importance and the value that the Commissions will gain or add by considering them
- Giving higher priority to the consideration of matters that relate to the Council's priorities
- Holding informal all-Commission pre-meetings before business meetings in order to exchange information and explore options relating to agenda items
- Routinely requesting update and feedback reports from Cabinet and Chief Officers on the items considered by the Commissions

The time that Commission members can devote to the Overview and Scrutiny process is a scarce resource. In order to use that time effectively the Commissions must concentrate on those issues that are important to Derby people and the Council as a whole. Commissions must avoid being sidetracked into spending time on 'rubber stamping' exercises or on issues where they cannot add or gain significant value, even though such activities might be suggested by Cabinet or Chief Officers.

4. For the Commissions to identify the skills needed by Chairs and members to deliver effective scrutiny, and prepare training programmes designed to address any skill shortages they identify.

Effective scrutiny requires a particular range of member skills. By providing training in those skills it should be possible to improve the standard of scrutiny delivered by the Commissions.

Review of Children Looked After Services

Terms of Reference agreed by Social Care and Health Commission at its 18 April meeting

- To examine why there are high numbers of looked after children in the city compared with other similar sized authorities
- To examine the process of looking after children and consider whether the placements are effective, deliver good quality of service and outcomes for looked after children
- To consider ways of safely reducing the gap between Derby and similar sized authorities of the number of looked after children
- To understand the triggers for child protection register
- To evaluate the evidence and make recommendation to the Council Cabinet

Session	Witness	Issues	When	Comments
Briefing session	Social Services Keith Woodthorpe Hazel Lymbery	Introduction to Looked After Children services		
Session 1	Service User's Children Looked After	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To determine children's views about the service and what opportunities they have for personal development. • To consider the views of CLA children about being looked after by the Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 April - Young Achievers Awards • 17 May KICK Group 	<p>Responses on post card</p> <p>Meeting with young people to exchange information -</p>
Session 2	Social Services Senior managers and front line staff	<p>To examine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Care Needs Assessment Process • The threshold and processes for children entering the service • Child protection strategy • Strategy for reducing number of CLA • How best interest decisions are made and the length of time it takes to make suitable placements • Placement process - where children are placed and why and respective outcomes for children • How do Social Services support CLA and equip them on life skills • Consider impact of the Gatsby project on CLA 		<p>In-house and comparator (number)</p> <p>In-house and comparator (number)</p> <p>In-house</p> <p>In-house and comparator (number)</p> <p>In-house (outcomes)</p> <p>Outcomes</p> <p>Outcomes</p> <p>Outcomes</p>

Session 3	Foster Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To examine the process of recruiting and retaining foster carers and how this may be improved • To consider the views of foster carers about the service 		Meeting with Foster Carers Fostering network- penny King 02076201884 or 6400
Session 4	Adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To examine the process of adoption and how it supports looked after children 		Meeting with adoption panel
Session 5	Comparable authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the processes and budgets of similar sized authorities and the respective outcomes for looked after children. This could include 15 Comparator authorities identified by the Audit Commission as well as authorities with good children services 		Bolton MBC Relations manager- 01204 337288 Information co-ordinator 01204 337260

