

ITEM 12



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION 29 MAY 2007

Report of the Director of Corporate and Adult Social Services

Overview and Scrutiny Commissions – Work Planning and Resources 2007/08

RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 That the Commission note and approve the report.
- 1.2 That members:
 - a) Consider and select the topic(s) that the Commission wishes to review in 2007/08 and that this is done in time for the topic to be agreed at the Commission's meeting in July 2007.
 - b) Agree a Commission workplan for 2007/8

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 At the beginning of the municipal year it is usual for each Overview and Scrutiny Commission to consider its work plan and to select any topics that they wish to review in the coming year. Reviews can cover anything that affects Derby, and Commissions can if they wish review external as well as internal services. Commissions should if possible aim to engage the public in the review process. A topic selection matrix is shown in Appendix 2 of this report.
- 2.2 The Constitution limits Commissions to one topic review report every six months which means that it is in theory possible for each Commission to conduct two reviews in each municipal year. This has been achieved in the past, but if a Commission also wants to conduct effective scrutiny it is probably more realistic for it to aim to complete one topic review each year. Some members will recall that at a previous meeting in 2007 the Scrutiny Management Commission agreed to spend more time in future on performance monitoring. Implementation of this decision will have time and resource implications for the Commission.
- 2.3 Topic reviews are not mandatory, but if the Commission wishes to conduct one during the coming municipal year it is suggested that members should aim to have agreed on the review topic by the date of the Commission's July meeting. If members wish, a special topic selection meeting can be arranged for a date in June/July to assist in this process.

- 2.4 To enable the Commission to carry out its work plan it can draw on the Overview and Scrutiny budget which, for 2007/08 amounts to £24,000. This sum will need to be shared between all the Commissions.
- 2.5 Overview and Scrutiny is a member led process but the Commissions will be supported by the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination Team which comprises the Scrutiny and Complaints Manager, three Co-ordination Officers and a Team Administrator.
- 2.6 Previously the three Co-ordination Officers and the Scrutiny and Complaints Manager have worked in pairs with each pair covering several Commissions. This arrangement has worked well and has provided the flexibility needed to cope with unexpected work load peaks and absence due to holiday or sickness. It is therefore proposed to continue the arrangement in 2007/08.
- 2.7 The Commission is advised that for the coming municipal year the Co-ordination Team is able to offer the Scrutiny Management Commission up to 30 meetings of around two hours duration. Some of these meetings will be taken up by the Commission's scheduled meetings, but the remainder will be available to the Commission for performance monitoring, 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.
- 2.8 In order to make best use of the available meetings, it is suggested that the Commission should develop a work plan for the coming municipal 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.

For more information contact:	David Romaine 01332 255598 e-mail david.romaine@derby.gov.uk
Background papers:	Appendix 1 – Implications
List of appendices:	Appendix 2 – Topic Selection Matrix

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1. Costs incurred in implementing the Commissions' workplans will have to be contained within the 2007/08 Overview and Scrutiny budget of £24,000.

Legal

2. None arising directly from this report.

Personnel

3. None arising directly from this report.

Equalities impact

4. Effective Overview and Scrutiny will be of benefit to all Derby people.

Corporate Priorities

5. This report has the potential to link with all the Council's priorities for 2007-10.

Workplanning

Topic Selection Matrix

The Commissions are solely responsible for selecting the subjects on which they will carry overview ‘topic’ reviews.

Although the Commissions are able to exert considerable control over the subjects they select for review, the amount of time that Commission members can devote to the overview and scrutiny process is usually quite limited. This means that it is important for the Commissions to select for detailed review only those subjects that are likely to justify the time and effort that will be needed to carry out the review

One way of doing this is by making sure the Commissions concentrate on reviewing ‘significant’ subjects.

Significant subjects are topics and issues that are:

- a) important and/or of interest to the Council and/or to local people, and where:
- b) the Commission will add or gain value by doing the review

The simple decision matrix shown below can be used to assess the significance of subjects for review.

	HIGH Score 4-5	MEDIUM Score 3	LOW Score 1-2	Total
IMPORTANT – is it				
a) Interesting				
b) Controversial				
ADDS VALUE				
URGENT				
Specific				
Measurable				
Attainable				
Relevant				
Trackable				
TOTAL				

By using the matrix, the significance of each potential review subject can be assessed by attributing numerical scores according to:

- **How important the subject is, either to the public or to the Council.** There is little point in spending time reviewing a subject that is not important. To some extent importance will depend on:
 - a) **How interesting the subject will be.** The public are more likely to want to participate in reviews of subjects they consider to be interesting
 - b) **How controversial the subject is considered to be.** Reviewing a controversial topic may present some difficulties but it is likely to generate a lot of interest and public involvement
- **How much value the Commission will add or gain by doing the review.** If no real value will be added or gained by the Commission, there is little point reviewing the subject.
- **Is it Urgent that the Commission carries out the review?** Urgency can in some cases override Importance and Value.
- **Whether the review will be SMART.** Does it have a specific aim, measurable outputs, achievable and realistic objectives and can it be completed in the available time.

The decision matrix can be used to choose which subjects to review. The maximum score is 40 and as a general rule, unless they are very urgent, subjects that score less than 25 are unlikely to justify the time and effort of a review.

The decision matrix was created to assist in the selection of relatively complex subjects for overview 'topic' reviews, and can be used to 'sort' a number of review topics into an order of importance.