City of York Council

Scrutiny Committee   **24 July 2006**

Report of the Head of Civic, Democratic and Legal Services

WORK PLANNING AND MONITORING FOR SCRUTINY REVIEWS

Summary

1. This report sets out an initial strategy for developing a work plan for scrutiny reviews with a twofold purpose as follows:

   (i)   to enable topics to be assessed for feasibility against some agreed criteria; and

   (ii)   monitor progress in relation to new, ongoing and completed reviews.

Background

2. Scrutiny Management Committee has been receiving a forward plan of its scheduled business for coming meetings for some time. However, there is a need to expand upon this to assist the Committee in its enhanced managerial, planning and performance monitoring role.

Consultation

3. Discussions have taken place internally within the Scrutiny team, and are continuing, with regard to the advantages of a more tailored work planning approach to the scrutiny function. The team is keen to move forward and establish this as a working practice to help it achieve its goals. The Chair and Vice-Chair have initially been consulted on developing this practice as a tool to enable Members to progress and monitor scrutiny effectively.

4. A network of scrutiny contacts in other Local Authorities has been contacted with a view to learning from any relevant or interesting practices elsewhere.

Options

5. Members views are being sought on the principles involved in developing this approach as outlined in the report .

Analysis

6. It is proposed to create a database to monitor the progress and status of new, ongoing and completed scrutiny reviews from their registration to the agreement of any final recommendations by the Executive. Work is underway to create a database to capture the following information:

New	Ongoing	Completed
Topic Registration No./date registered/by whom	Topic Registration No./date registered/by whom	Topic Registration No./date registered/by whom
Status of feasibility study	Review start date	Completion date (final report to SMC)
Resources required to undertake review	Stage of review (ie. Scope/fact finding/interim/final report)	Executive date
Decision on whether to proceed to review (or not)	Revised completion timescales (subject to SMC approval where necessary)	Outcome of Executive consideration
Estimated timescale for completion of review	Revised priority rating (if any – subject to SMC approval where necessary)	Actions for implementation & by whom
Review allocated to (name of body)		Target date for implementation of actions
Priority Rating		Known implementation arrangements
		Date for system review of above target date

It is planned for this work to be done during August.

7. The above database is a potential means of tracking and capturing information about the progress of scrutiny topics/reviews. It is envisaged that progress reports would be produced off the system and reported regularly to Scrutiny

Management Committee meetings to enable Members to track the information consistently.

8. In tandem with the preparation of the above proposed database, work is also underway on the preparation of some guidelines on drawing up a work programme for scrutiny to help Members in their decision making about scrutiny reviews. More information on this will be available at the September meeting of the Committee along the lines of some agreed eligibility criteria for proceeding with reviews which might be based around some of the following:

    - Where it fits (or doesn't fit) with corporate priorities
    - National/local/regional significance
    - Legislative requirements
    - Level of associated risk
    - Links to Best Value Performance Plan/Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)
    - Availability of resources

    Having agreed a suitable set of eligibility criteria, Members could then theoretically use these to reject topics for review if a majority felt that proposed topics failed to meet a significant number of the criteria and were not otherwise a scrutiny priority, in the light of available resources.

9. In addition to setting some eligibility criteria to set consistent operational practices for proceeding with reviews, Members might then want to set a priority rating for proceeding with any agreed reviews.

Corporate Priorities

10. The aims in creating this twofold work planning approach fit with the Council's overall corporation priorities to improve its organizational efficiency.

Implications

11. There are no known implications in relation to the following at this stage of the preparatory work other than those relating to information technology. It is anticipated, at this stage, that skills already available within the Democratic Services team will be used to create the database.

    - **Finance**
    - **Human Resources (HR)**
    - **Equalities**
    - **Legal**
    - **Crime and Disorder**

- **Property**
- **Other**

Risk Management

12. There are no risk management implications associated with the preparatory work at this stage.

Recommendations

13. Members are asked to consider the proposals for creating a database and some work programme guidelines to help monitor and assess reviews for feasibility.

Reason:
To establish some agreed processes within which the scrutiny function can operate.

Contact details:

Author:	**Chief Officer Responsible for the report:**
Dawn Steel	Suzan Hemingway
Democratic Services Manager	Head of Civic, Democratic and Legal Services
01904 551030	
email:	
dawn.steel@york.gov.uk	**Report Approved** ✓ **Date** *14.07.06*

Specialist Implications Officer(s)
None

Wards Affected: **All** √

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers
None

Annexes
None