

Scrutiny Topics for Review in 2014-15

Summary

1. This report provides introductory information on the possible topics for scrutiny review in this municipal year, for Members' consideration.

Background

2. At a meeting in early May 2014, the Committee agreed to submit the following possible topics to the annual Scrutiny Work Planning Event held on 12 May 2014:
 - i. Council House Maintenance & Refurbishment – to look at cost effectiveness
 - ii. Commercial Waste – issues around shortfall in income and reducing customer base
 - iii. Flood Defences – in light of the increased frequency and severity of extreme weather – identify improvements to protect residents from increased risks posed by climate change.
3. At the work planning event it was agreed that the views of Cabinet Members would be sought on the proposed topics relevant to their individual portfolios. Their views on the topics listed above are included below.
4. In addition, at the work planning event it was agreed that another corporate review would be undertaken during this municipal year. A number of possible scrutiny topics were discussed and the consensus was a corporate review around supporting elderly people. The Corporate & Scrutiny Management Committee will formally agree the topic for corporate review at its next meeting on 23 June 2014.

Information Gathered

5. i. Council House Maintenance & Refurbishment – to look at cost effectiveness

The Cabinet Member for Homes & Safer Communities has confirmed that this is part of the transformational change programme and as the work is well underway, has suggested that a review of this topic would only duplicate ongoing work. She has also rightly pointed out that this topic falls within the remit of Economic & City Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

6. ii. Commercial Waste – issues around shortfall in income and reducing customer base

The Cabinet Member for Environmental Services, Planning & Sustainability agrees this is an important issue. However the Leader feels this would largely turn into a members training event about the issues around why there is a shortfall, rather than addressing the issues that are already being worked on.

7. As an alternative, the Asst Director for Transport, Highways & Waste has suggested that the Committee consider reviewing 'Discretionary Charges in Waste Management'. This could include considering what other councils are doing with discretionary charges, possibly visiting other Councils to discuss the practical and political issues associated with their chosen regimes. Such a review would help the Council understand where it is in relation to other Authorities, and Members could consider their findings in light of the Place Based Services review due to be undertaken by officers during this municipal year. It would also be of value in respect of helping develop options for the Council to consider in 2015-16.

8. The appropriate officer(s) will be in attendance at this meeting to support Members' consideration of this proposal.

9. iii. Flood Defences – in light of the increased frequency and severity of extreme weather – identify improvements to protect residents from increased risks posed by climate change.

The Cabinet Member for Environmental Services, Planning & Sustainability has confirmed that the Environment Agency has agreed to undertake a new Ouse & Foss catchment study this financial year, which will provide an informed view on the adequacy of the city's river flood defences by the year end. The Cabinet Member has therefore

suggested that a decision on whether or not to carry out a review of this topic be deferred until the results of that study are known.

10. The council has recently appointed a new Flood Risk Manager who will be the lead on any flood risk matters for this committee. He has confirmed that once the Environment Agency has finished the study detailed above, he would be in a position to support a review looking at the long term future management of the city's river defences, as it is the role of his team to ensure that this is developed appropriately and to support any funding bids etc.
11. At some point there will be some key information and outputs for the scrutiny committee to review and although it is some way off it may be useful to add this to the Committee's work plan in advance, to give a heads up on the approach. It would also be useful for the Flood Risk Manager to hear the Committee's wider views and concerns with regard to flood risk management delivery so that he can ensure his team are developing approaches in the right areas to address any issues.
12. The Flood Risk Manager will be in attendance at this meeting to support Members' consideration of this topic.
13. 'Supporting Elderly People' Corporate Review
As this is likely to be the topic agreed by Corporate & Scrutiny Management Committee later this month, this Committee may wish to discuss some ideas for their contribution to this corporate review. This will enable the scrutiny officer to carry out some initial research and produce a scoping report for when this Committee meets again in July 2014.

Council Plan

14. Both the Commercial Waste topic and the Flood Defences topic would support the Council's corporate priority to protect the environment, as set out in the Council's Plan 2011-15.

Risk Management & Implications

15. There are no known risks, and there are no known Financial, HR, Equalities, Legal, Crime & Disorder, ITT, or Property implications associated with the recommendation in this report.

Recommendation

16. Members are asked to consider the information within this report and with the support of the officers present, agree:

- Which of the proposed topics should proceed to review
- A suitable review remit for each agreed review and the timeframe for their completion (bearing in mind the limited time available for carrying out review work during this municipal year due to the forthcoming elections)
- Whether the agreed reviews are to be carried out by a Task Group or the full Committee
- Ideas around a topic in support of the proposed corporate scrutiny review for 2014-15

Reason: To enable work to commence on the reviews that the Committee will be carrying out in this municipal year.

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Report Approved



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27 May 2014

Wards Affected:

All



Background Papers: None

Annexes: None