

MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
REPORT FOR INFORMATION

COMMITTEE: Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 22 May 2008

SUBJECT: Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2008/9

REPORT OF: City Solicitor

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform the Committee's discussion regarding the selection of topics for its 2008/9 work programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 1) Considers the information set out in this report;
- 2) Identifies topics for investigation as part of its 2008/9 Work Programme;
- 3) Request that the Chair of the Committee, in consultation with relevant Officers, draft outline work programme reflecting these priorities for submission to the next meeting; and
- 4) Agrees membership of the Human Resources Sub-Group and Governance Working Group for 2008/9.

CONTACT OFFICERS

Kate Brown, Scrutiny Support Officer

0161 234 3376

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a central role in contributing to the improvement of outcomes for Manchester residents.
- 1.2 By promoting democratic accountability, strong governance and sound financial management in delivering the Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement, the Committee can influence important issues affecting Manchester residents, regardless of which agency is responsible for delivering them
- 1.3 A balanced and effective work programme will enable the Committee to dedicate its time and resources to those areas where it can have the greatest impact and will help members to commission relevant information, be it from written reports or witnesses, which will assist the Committee in formulating recommendations and reports.

2. THE WORK PROGRAMME

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny process is led by elected Members and is an important part of the decision-making process. Committees should therefore contribute to the delivery of the City Council's aims and objectives, as set out in the Community Strategy.
- 2.2 The Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a number of responsibilities as part of its role in challenging and supporting decision-makers:
 - representing the interests, views and wishes of Manchester residents;
 - scrutinising how the City Council and the Manchester Partnership are using their resources in a way that provides the greatest value for money;
 - holding the City Council's Executive to account and reviewing Executive decisions
 - championing the principles of strong and effective governance across the City Council and Manchester Partnership;
 - scrutinising the work of the Manchester Partnership in delivering the Community Strategy
 - helping to develop new policies and reviewing existing ones
 - monitoring performance
- 2.3 The Committee is not obliged to consider every topic within its remit during the course of the municipal year and in order to discharge its responsibilities effectively, the Committee should select only those topics to which it can make a real difference. Guidance on prioritising topics for the work programme is set out below.

Remit of the Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The City Council reviewed the remits of all six Overview and Scrutiny Committees in May 2007.

Particular issues within the remit of the Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee are:

Corporate Finance
Human Resources
Governance
Manchester Improvement Programme
Corporate Audit and inspection Reports
Revenues and Benefits
IT
Capital Programme

The Committee also has responsibility for overseeing the work of the Manchester Board and Public Service Board.

Work Programme Sources

- 2.4 By gathering topic ideas from a broad range of sources, the Committee can make informed decisions about which topics it would like to influence and evaluate over the next twelve months.
- 2.5 Examples of information sources that may assist the Committee to identify potential work programme topics include:
- Suggestions from elected members, members of the public, the Executive and partner organisations
 - Work programme of the Manchester Board and Public Service Board
 - Forward Plan of Key Decisions
 - Local Area Agreement
 - Service and Business Plans
 - Performance Monitoring Information
 - Audit and Inspection Reports
 - National and regional policy developments and initiatives
- 2.6 **Appendix One** lists those issues raised by the Committee during 2007/8 as appropriate for further investigation in 2008/9.

Prioritising Topics

- 2.7 The Work Programme should support the Committee to make a positive contribution to the delivery of better outcomes for Manchester. By concentrating on those high-level issues that are of strategic importance to the City Council and its partners, the Committee can help to reflect the

needs and wishes of local communities before decisions are taken. This will maximise the influence of Overview and Scrutiny and ensure that the best value in the use of time and resources.

- 2.8 From April 2008, the City Council and named partners have a formal duty to respond to reports and recommendations made by Overview and Scrutiny Committees setting out action they propose to take, if any, the reasons for this and to what timescales. Priority should therefore be given to those topics where there is a potential to add value and make recommendations that can make a real difference.
- 2.9 Past experience suggests that Overview and Scrutiny is most effective when it looks at fewer issues in more depth. In 2007/8 the Committee insofar as possible sought to consider one or two major topics at each meeting. This ensured that Members had sufficient time to give full consideration to key issues and to gather and evaluate evidence from different sources, including external witnesses.
- 2.8 The Committee may also wish to take the following factors into account in selecting topics for the work programme:
- Does the topic relate to one of the Council's key priorities in the Community Strategy?
 - Will scrutiny lead to better outcomes or services to the people in Manchester?
 - Are there widespread public concerns about the service or topic?
 - Will it contribute to the formulation of future plans or strategies?
 - Is the issue likely to be of interest to members of the public?
 - Is it timely?
 - Would it be better to refer the topic to be considered elsewhere first?

Implementing the Work Programme

- 2.10 The Work Programme should be flexible enough to respond to changing needs and priorities: it is likely the Committee will still occasionally be required to respond to issues at short notice. Members will therefore need to review the work programme on a monthly basis.
- 2.11 An up to date version of the Committee's work programme will continue to be submitted to every meeting as part of the Information and Overview report. This will provide an opportunity for all Members of the Committee to shape and influence what the Committee considers and how it should be done and may include suggestions for fact-finding visits, external witnesses that may help the Committee in its work and suggestions for how the public could be involved in scrutiny work.

3. SUB GROUPS

3.1 The Resources and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee has regularly established sub-groups of its members to undertake more detailed scrutiny of important issues than is possible during the course of a Committee meeting.

3.2 The Committee has established the following Sub-Groups for 2008/9

A) Human Resources Sub-Group

This standing Sub-Group meets approximately once per quarter to consider issues relating to the City Council's Human Resources function.

Meeting dates for 2008/9 are:

Tuesday 1 July: 10am

Tuesday 21 October: 10am

Tuesday 13 January: 10am

Tuesday 10 March: 10am

B) Governance Working Group

The Committee agreed to establish a Working Group to engage with ongoing work to promote effective governance throughout the City Council and Manchester Partnership. Dates of this working group are to be determined.

Membership for 2008/9

3.3 The Committee is requested to agree membership of both of these Sub-Groups for 2008/9. Membership should reflect the overall political balance of the Council.

4. Recommendations

Recommendations appear at the front of this report.