

CORPORATE SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2008-09**1 Background**

1.1 The Select Committees are required to create a work programme for the next municipal year. The Scrutiny Team have contacted Parish and Town Councils, Councillors and Officers asking for suggestions for scrutiny reviews. A notice was also sent to the press, an article placed in the borough magazine *ilocal*, and two advertisements placed on the front page of the Council website to gain public involvement. All suggestions received so far are outlined in this report for consideration for the work programme.

1.2 In order to provide some background information regarding priority areas and responsibilities included in this report is the following information:

- The Remits of the Select Committees (page 9.2);
- Work undertaken by the Corporate Services Select Committee in the 2007/08 municipal year (page 9.4);
- The Centre for Public Scrutiny's four principles of effective scrutiny (page 9.5);
- Work Programme items – Suggested topics for review (as submitted before 13 June 2008) (page 9.5);
- Work Programme Table for 2008/09 (page 9.8);
- The Forward Plan of Key Decisions, as discussed at the 12 June Cabinet meeting. Please note, this version only includes key decisions that fall under terms of reference of the Corporate Services Select Committee (Page 9.9);
- The Council's Three Customer Service Commitments (page 9.21);

1.3 Members are asked to identify items for their work programme giving regard to the following criteria:

1.4 Stage 1

Reject the topic if it:

- Has been covered by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the past 12 months;
- Is an individual complaint; or
- Does not meet the Council's priorities

Stage 2

Accept the topic if it:

- Affects local people;
- Has tangible outcomes;
- Will bring improvements for local people and/or for the Council;
- Relates to a poor performing service; or
- Meets the Council's priorities.

Stage 3

Prioritise:

- If we have more than two major reviews per Committee, Members will be asked to prioritise by looking at how many of the stage 2 criteria have been met and crucially which reviews could bring tangible benefits for local people.

Recommendation

That Members suggest any additional topics that they wish to review in the next municipal year and identify preferred options, if more than two major reviews are agreed then prior to making a final decision on the work programmes for 2008-09 more information on preferred options will be presented at the 29 July Select Committee meeting so items can be prioritised.

2 Remits of the Select Committees

2.1 Corporate Services Select Committee

Membership: 10 non-executive Members.

Terms of Reference:

To perform the overview and scrutiny role in relation to the following matters and deal with Councillor Call for Actions as they arise in relation to these matters:

1. The preparation of the Council's budget and the Council's performance in relation to budgetary management.
2. The management of the Council's resources.
3. The development and monitoring of the Asset Management Plan.
4. The development and implementation of the Council's corporate plan and community plan.
5. The development and implementation of the Council's performance monitoring function.
6. The provision of corporate services including human resources, legal services, democratic services and elections.
7. Customer Services.
8. Risk Management.
9. ICT.
10. Public Relations.
11. Equality and Diversity.
12. The Local Strategic Partnership, West Kent Partnership, Community Plan Partnership, Local Area Agreement, Kent Partnership and Partnerships.

2.2 Local Economy and Housing Select Committee

Membership: 10 non-executive Members.

Terms of Reference:

To perform the overview and scrutiny role in relation to the following matters and deal with Councillor Call for Actions as they arise in relation to these matters:

1. Planning and the development of the Council's planning policies.
2. Economic Development and regeneration including the development of businesses in the Borough.
3. Tourism.

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4. Building Control.
5. Housing Services, including the identification of housing need and related outside agencies.
6. Transport, including public transport initiatives, concessionary fares and related outside agencies.
7. Revenues and Benefits.
8. South East England Regional Assembly.
9. South East Economic Development Agency.
10. Business Development.

2.3 Environment and Safer & Stronger Communities Select Committee

Membership: 10 non-executive Members.

Terms of Reference:

To perform the overview and scrutiny role in relation to the following matters and deal with Councillor Call for Actions as they arise in relation to these matters:

1. Environmental Services and Street Scene.
2. Refuse collection and recycling.
3. Licensing.
4. Leisure including the provision of parks and open spaces.
5. The provision of cultural activities in the Borough.
6. Community Safety, Community Development and the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.
7. The Environment and the work of outside agencies.
8. Health Service and Community Well-being.
9. Young people – services provided to young people internally and by outside agencies.
10. Education provision in the Borough.
11. Public conveniences.
12. Crematoriums and Cemeteries.
13. Voluntary and Community Services.
14. Adult services.
15. Older people.
16. Parishes.

ITEM 9**3 Work undertaken by the Corporate Services Select Committee during the course of the last municipal year (2007/08)**

Corporate Services Select Committee		
<i>Topic</i>	<i>Action Taken</i>	<i>Still to be done</i>
Printing	Interim report – now considering how to link this with design.	Working group visiting other councils to identify best practice –July/August Full report to committee in September.
Urban Parishing	Scrutiny asked to review possibilities Town Forum big debate held – ascertained Rusthall most interested. Tom Crookall attended Town Forum on 15 May Rusthall costings will be presented in July.	Sean to present costings to committee in July and then report from CS to Cabinet in September
Outside Bodies	New arrangements agreed by Committee	Recommendations in September
Two-tier working and gateway	ongoing monitoring of Gateway Project	Review 2008-09
Budget Scrutiny	Recommendations made for improvement this year and review of key documents. AW has arranged training on 16 July and 27 November Budget Cycle identified for next year – 2008-09	Ongoing

4 Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) – Four principles of effective scrutiny

4.1 “The Centre for Public Scrutiny has been created to promote the value of scrutiny in modern and effective government - not only to hold executives to account but also to create a constructive dialogue between the public and its elected representatives - to improve the quality of public services. The CfPS have established four principles which propose that effective scrutiny:

- (i) Provides ‘critical friend’ challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers;
- (ii) Enables the voice and concerns of the public and its communities;
- (iii) Is carried out by ‘independent minded governors’ who lead and own the scrutiny process; and
- (iv) Drives improvement in public services.”

(Taken from the CfPS website at <http://www.cfps.org.uk/about_us/index.php>)

5 Work Programme Items

Outlined below are suggestions for reviews to be considered by the Corporate Services Select Committee.

5.1 Possible Major Reviews

Major reviews to last from three to six months will be undertaken by the Select Committee. One or two of the following suggestions should be pursued. Please note the committee has several major reviews still to be completed in the Autumn and also carries out extensive work on the budget, strategic plan and performance management.

Partnerships

- 5.1.1 The Audit Commission in 2005 released a report, "Governing Partnerships bridging the accountability gap". A main recommendation from this report was that public bodies "should know the partnerships they are involved in, and how much money and other resources they invest in them. They should review each partnership to strengthen accountability, manage risks and rationalise working arrangements."
- 5.1.2 The committee could begin by identifying criteria to measure partnerships; criteria could be adapted from the audit commission's guidance. This criterion would allow the committee to examine each of the council's partnerships in detail. Owing to the large number of partnerships active within the Council, a small working group would need to be formed to review each with officer support. A database of partnerships has already been created this could be used to identify key partnerships for detailed scrutiny based on a threshold set by the committee which could be, for example a financial or time threshold.
- 5.1.3 Key witnesses would be the council's performance and improvement manager and interviews with key partnership officers as well as partnership boards or chairmen if appropriate. The majority of work could be carried out through a survey of partnerships and interrogating the partnership database.
- 5.1.4 The review would enable the council to establish the government arrangements of partnerships and allow the Committee to identify rationalisation where appropriate and improved ways of working.

Member Remuneration

- 5.1.5 Councillors have requested that the Committee review member remuneration. A more detailed review by the joint independent remuneration panel will be carried out during 2008-09 involving all Members. A report will go to full council for decision so a scrutiny review would be duplicating this work.

Voter Turnout – 4 yearly elections

- 5.1.6 A review to identify which measures are in place to promote electoral participation and turnout. Are there any local authorities that have particularly high turnouts? The committee should also consider the national push for four yearly elections, as election fatigue could be a reason for poor turnout.

Stress Audit

- 5.1.7 The Council undertook a stress audit of its staff in the summer of 2007; the survey consisted of 35 online questions. The results indicated that improvement was required in most areas, areas covered included: demands, control, support, relationships, role and change. This is an interesting area, considering that the Council has not met its targets on BV12: days lost due to sickness absence, with a quarter 4 performance of 9.83 days versus an 8.24 days target.
- 5.1.8 The survey had a response rate of 53%. It was agreed at a recent management meeting that focus groups would be set-up to look at the results and report in October 2008. The Committee could look at the results of the survey and identify appropriate action, through researching best practice and looking at successful reductions of stress by other organisations in the private and public sector. Following an initial presentation to the Committee a small member working group could carry out the work on best practice. The Committee should consider interviewing the Chief Executive and the leader initially, with the Human Resources Manager.

5.2 One-Offs

These would take one or two meetings.

5.2.1 Special Expenses

The Council's Head of Finance and Property Services is currently reviewing special expenses, looking at the implications for urban parishing and whether special expenses should continue in the future. A report will be given to the Committee in July on costs for Rusthall as a potential new parish council. The Committee should request that they receive a report on special expenses before it goes to Cabinet.

5.2.2 Member Champions and Lead Members

The Council has created Member Champions and Lead Members to be responsible for developing policy and supporting Cabinet members. A one-off

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review would consider the roles of these members and how best they can fulfil the remit for each position.

5.2.3 Value for Money

Are the Council's current audit practices adequate for gathering information on, and identifying and recording examples of value for money?

5.2.4 Safer Town Partnership

This provides an excellent service in reducing crime in the area, saving both police resources and money an approximate £1,100 saved for each criminal apprehended without involving the police.

The Committee could help to raise public awareness of what the organisation achieves and help it to achieve greater recognition. Although it does receive a small contribution from the Council, it could benefit from funding for small projects, as it is a non-profit making organisation. The Head of Community and Corporate Planning and the Community Safety Manager could be interviewed in relation to the review.

5.3 Select Committee's Watching Brief and Updates

The Select Committee could receive updates on all of these topics.

Communications Strategy

Local Strategic Partnership – performance monitoring

Kent Area Agreement

Quarterly financial and performance monitoring reports

Corporate Services Select Committee**Work Programme 2008-2009**

Date	Items for discussion
24 June 2008	Work Programme Setting
29 July 2008	Budget working group nominated and begin looking at priorities, savings and growth items
2 September 2008	Review 1 st Quarter Performance and Financial Monitoring
7 October 2008	
11 November 2008	Working group review draft budget and strategic plan Review 2nd Quarter Performance and Financial Monitoring
16 December 2008	
20 January 2009	Final budget scrutiny
24 February 2009	
7 April 2009	Review 3rd Quarter Performance and Financial Monitoring Review of achievements of Select Committee

All meetings start at 6.30 pm and are held at the Town Hall, unless otherwise stated.

Major Reviews

TBC

Joint Reviews

TBC

One-Offs

TBC