

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REMITS AND STUDIES
(Report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to acquaint Members with their remit following the introduction of changes to the structure of overview and scrutiny, review the programme of studies, provide an opportunity for Members to plan their work programme for the forthcoming year and set out additional responsibilities that the Panels now have in terms of scrutinising strategic partnership working.

2. WORK PROGRAMME

(a) Internal Scrutiny

- 2.1 The Council's services are divided into portfolios, which are the responsibility of Executive Members. In the past the portfolios have been simply divided between the Scrutiny Panels. Following the democratic structure review a new structure for overview and scrutiny has been introduced. This structure is based on the broad themes of Social, Environmental and Economic Well-Being. The allocation of Council services under these themes is represented in Appendix A.

(b) External Studies

- 2.2 The Council has a duty to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of the District and, in order to demonstrate that the Council closely complies with the duty, this has been reflected in the new structure for overview and scrutiny. It gives the Panel a wide remit to examine any issues that affect the District by conducting in-depth studies. A number of such studies have been completed in the past, such as the investigation into flooding in the District.

(c) Study Programme

- 2.3 At the first meeting in the Municipal calendar, it is usual for the Overview and Scrutiny Panels to give detailed consideration to a programme of studies that they intend to undertake in the course of the year. Members are requested to consider whether any studies or investigations of single issues within their remit might usefully be undertaken. These might be topical or contentious matters, for example, it could be an issue that has arisen in the course of a Member's contact with constituents.
- 2.4 Performance data, which is regularly submitted to the Panel, and the Decision Digest, also can be used to identify study areas. The latest performance report appears elsewhere on the Agenda.
- 2.5 At each meeting the Panel's discuss a progress report their programme of studies. This report is reproduced at Appendix B.

(d) Study Methodology

- 2.6 Following a recent audit a report template to guide studies has been adopted. The template appears at Appendix C. It will be seen that there is considerable flexibility in the way studies may be conducted. It is also important to note that the Panels have a budget with which to pursue their study aims, for example, by obtaining expert opinion on a particular issue.
- 2.7 A number of working groups already exist to undertake some of these studies. It has been the practice for the membership of working groups to continue to the completion of studies and it is suggested that this principle should continue.

(e) Completed Studies

- 2.8 Since the establishment of Overview and Scrutiny Panels in June 2000, a number of studies have been completed. These are listed below:

- Anti-Social Behaviour Orders
- Vandalism
- Cemetery Administration
- Arts Provision in Huntingdonshire and Major Events Promoted by the Council
- Registered Social Landlord Rent Levels
- Bus Stations/Bus Services
- Bus Shelters
- Bus Information/Publicity
- Flooding
- Post Office Network and Services
- Fly Posting
- Fly Tipping
- Trees and Hedgerows
- Emergency Planning
- Sun Beds in Leisure Centres
- The Council's Charging Policy
- Tourism
- Market Services
- Best Value Review on Access to Services
- Council's Budget and Expenditure
- Member Development
- Street Naming and Numbering
- Levels of Affordable Housing on Land Sold By The Council
- Procedural Arrangements for Development Control
- Local Procurement
- Town Centre Initiatives
- St Ives (Environmental Improvements Schemes)
- County Council Highway Standards
- Consumption of Alcohol in Public Places
- Safer Routes to Schools
- Rent Levels at Paines Mill Foyer, St Neots
- West Huntingdon Rural Transport Study
- Benefit Fraud
- Service Provision for the Elderly
- Health and Safety Management
- Member Involvement and Consultation Procedures in the Local Plan Process
- Substance Misuse in Huntingdonshire
- Play Equipment
- Abandoned Vehicles
- Services for Young People
- The Big Gig
- Biodiversity
- Council's Complaints Procedure
- The Budget and Medium Term Plan
- Rural Economy and Services
- District Council's Twinning Links
- Hear By Right
- Dentistry Services
- Promoting Better Health in Older People Through Physical Activity

- Cycling in Huntingdonshire
- District Council's Travel Plan
- Electronic Communication
- Youth Forum
- Social consequences of alcohol abuse
- Section 106 process
- Small Scale Environmental Improvements
- State of the District Engagement Events
- Grant Aid
- Leisure facilities for older people

3. SCRUTINISING STRATEGIC / PARTNERSHIP WORK

- 3.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 Act introduced changes from April 2009 to secure effective scrutiny of strategic partnership working and of local area agreements. The thematic groups under the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership have been aligned to the terms of reference of scrutiny panels. The Economic Well-Being Panel will be responsible for the Economic Prosperity and Equality and Inclusion thematic groups of the Strategic Partnership. The Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership itself is to be held to account through the full Council.
- 3.2 The Panel's remit also contains reference to the Council's corporate priorities and goals as they appear in the Corporate Plan. Specifically, this means that the Panel will be responsible for scrutinising the Strong Local Economy, Improving Systems and Practices, Learning and Developing and Maintaining Sound Finances aims of the Council's corporate plan 'Growing Success'. As has been said, a report monitoring progress against each of these aims appears elsewhere on the Agenda.
- 3.3 Details of how it is suggested that these strategic / partnership areas of work might be undertaken will be the subject of a report at a future meeting.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel is

RECOMMENDED

- a. to note the contents of the report;
- b. to review the existing programme of studies for the forthcoming year; and
- c. to consider the addition of new subject areas to the programme of studies.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Previous reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

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