

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Agenda Item 31

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Scrutiny Panel Annual Work Programme
Date of Meeting: 7 September 2010
Report of: Acting Director of Strategy and Governance
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Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the power to establish scrutiny panels to undertake short, focused reviews on specific issues. At its March meeting the Overview and Scrutiny Commission (OSC) supported the idea of an annual trawl of ideas for scrutiny panels involving Members, partner organisations and residents. This report sets out the results of this consultation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission:
- (1) Agrees which panels to establish under its own remit as per appendix 1
 - (2) Notes and comments upon the consultation responses for panel work to be taken forward to individual scrutiny committees for agreement based upon appendix 2
 - (3) Notes the scoping report (appendix 3) for the panel on Alcohol Related Hospital Admissions and agrees to delay work on this panel
 - (4) Notes the panel update attached as appendix 4

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

OSC has previously agreed that a more strategic and coordinated approach to the selection of panel topics would be beneficial. To this end a consultation was held asking residents, Members and partner organisations for their ideas for scrutiny panel topics.

The public consultation ran during the course of July with a total 69 separate suggestions for scrutiny topics received. The consultation was promoted through a number of means:

1. All Members of the council were invited to submit ideas
 2. All LSP themed partnerships were written to and scrutiny officers attended a number of partnership meetings
 3. Citynews and the Argus both carried articles promoting the consultation
 4. A press release was issued and promoted on Facebook and Twitter
 5. Information was added to the Consultation Portal at <http://consult.brighton-hove.gov.uk/portal>
- 3.3 Consultation responses have been grouped together where similar, for example a number related to parking issues and a number to primary school admissions. Preliminary research has been undertaken to see which suggestions are suitable topics for scrutiny. This has been based on criteria agreed previously at OSC and outlined below:
- Length of review – Topics need to be achievable within 3-4 meetings, or undertaken as Select Committees in around 6 meetings.
 - Relevance to Brighton and Hove – The focus needs to be a local issue, or at least an issue that is within the decision making power of a local organisation.
 - Policy Context – What is the policy/strategy development cycle, are changes expected to legislation, or has a local strategy just been finalised?
 - Alignment to LSP and Council priorities – Reviews of issues identified as key to improving the lives of residents are by definition the best use of scrutiny resources.
 - Highlighted as an issue within performance regimes – Is the issue in question something that has been shown as requiring improvement during performance monitoring? With limited resources scrutiny should avoid reviewing issues which the council and partners are seen as doing well.
 - Avoiding duplication with existing work-streams – If a suggestion would replicate work already ongoing there is limited utility in also scrutinising it.
 - What is the outcome a scrutiny review could achieve? Will the review be able to add value to the issue?
- 3.4 Appendix 1 outlines all of the topics put forward that fall within the remit of OSC. For the topics suggested the scrutiny team has undertaken some brief preliminary scoping. Capacity within the scrutiny team will allow for OSC to establish 1 panel immediately with another to commence prior to Christmas once work on the impact of budget savings is complete.
- 3.5 There is an existing informal convention that each O&S Committee only runs 1 scrutiny panel at a time, with OSC occasionally running 2 staggered panels. Members will see in appendix 4 that there are currently 4 review panels established. There is however no reason why each Committee should have a panel if Members were to decide a specific area is a priority.
- 3.6 HOOSC, through the Commission, has established a select committee to look at alcohol related hospital admissions. Members however are being asked to place this panel on hold whilst a number of relevant pilot schemes are running, the results of which will be of direct interest to panel members. If this panel is placed on hold additional capacity will exist for other panels.

- 3.7 In establishing panels Members need to be mindful of the resources commitment required, both in terms of officer resource but also critically relating to Members time and interest.
- 3.8 Those topics that are not taken forward as panels will be addressed in alternative ways, for example reports to committee. Where possible individuals who submitted a response will be contacted to inform them of action that will be taken.
- 3.9 Urgent matters that require detailed review can still be addressed during the year; this will however require their prioritisation over existing pieces of work.
- 3.10 Reports will be taken to the other O&S Committees for them to prioritise scrutiny reviews for their areas of responsibility; any comments OSC has on suggested other topics will be included in these reports.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 This report summarises the consultation responses received from residents, Members, officers and partner organisations. Consultation was undertaken throughout July.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 There are no financial implications as all panel work will be undertaken within the existing resource envelope allocated to scrutiny.

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The recommendations at 2.1 is consistent with the statutory framework for overview and scrutiny committees under section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000. It is also consistent with the role of OSC in co-ordinating and maximising the efficiency and effectiveness of scrutiny panels.

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 In undertaking detailed scoping work on panels equality implications will be addressed. The consultation as a whole has highlighted some equality issues that can be taken forward.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 A number of sustainability issues were raised as possible scrutiny topics. Members are being asked to recommend that some of these topics are taken forward through scrutiny panels.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 Scrutiny enjoys powers under the Police and Justice Act 2006 to look at crime and disorder issues. A protocol agreed by Council has established guidelines between scrutiny and the Community Safety Forum to avoid duplication of effort. In prioritising reviews OSC will need to be mindful of this protocol.

Risk & Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The consultation exercise was undertaken to ensure that scrutiny resources are focused on the most appropriate areas. There is an opportunity for scrutiny to influence some of the key issues facing the city.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 An annual work programme for scrutiny reviews should enable the scrutiny function to respond to those issues that affect the city as a whole and take a more active role in place-shaping.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. OSC consultation responses and scoping reports
2. Full list of consultation responses
3. Alcohol related hospital admissions scoping report
4. Scrutiny panel update

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

1. The Community Engagement Framework
2. Report to March OSC