

Selection of topics and issues for scrutiny by councillors or officers

The selection of useful and viable topics and issues is vital to the successful and effective operation of scrutiny.

It is proposed that from June 2011 scrutiny topics be selected from a rolling programme open throughout the year. This will require scrutiny to promote and advertise its willingness to accept new projects and for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to more actively manage the programme on an ongoing basis.

1. Sources

The following are sources of ideas for the work programme:

- Performance indicators, both national and internal.
- Views of Cabinet and Leadership Team especially in relation to policy subjects.
- The Council's surveys, such as the annual residents' survey.
- The Complaints Report which is compiled annually by the Customer Service Centre.
- Service complaints more widely; although individual cases will not be taken up if a large volume of complaints is received about a single issue then it may be appropriate to pursue the topic.
- Reports of external inspections of services.
- The views of the Council's partners.
- Issues picked up by ward councillors in their locality.
- The Council's Forward Plan

2. Criteria

To qualify for consideration the topic must meet the following criteria:

- Affect a group or community of people. Scrutiny will not normally look at individual service complaints.
- Relate to a service, event or issue in which Watford Borough Council has a significant stake.
- Not be an issue that Scrutiny has covered during the last year.

- Not be a planning or licensing issue, or any other matter dealt with by another council committee.
- To match one or more of the Council's current priorities.
- To be feasible and able to be completed within the timescale projected for the work.
- There must be availability within the relevant department/service to support the review.
- Be a topic that members wish to scrutinise.

Suggestions for topics to be scrutinised – evaluation table

A Member/Officer suggesting a topic for scrutiny must complete this table as fully as possible. Completed tables will be presented to Overview & Scrutiny for consideration.

Proposer: Councillor/Officer Kelly McLeod, Helen Lynch	
<p>Topic recommended for scrutiny:</p> <p><i>Please include as much detail as is available about the specific issues and areas which should be included/excluded from the review. Should the focus be on past performance, future policy or both?</i></p>	<p>Probation service and support of ex-offenders. What support do ex-offenders receive when leaving prison? Do they get help with re-locating, applying for benefits. What are the handover procedures when probation/ prison terms are complete? Is the local council informed for housing/benefits? What policies the council has with regards to ex-offenders rehousing/benefit claims? Does a family situation have a bearing on how much support they receive? Is a young offender expected to return to a family home and will the family receive support? Do they get extra help in looking for work at the job centre? Is the local health authority informed of drug offenders and the support system/care that they may need? Who is responsible for monitoring and providing counselling? With the closure of Stoneham how will we measure the missing functions from this facility?</p>
<p>Why have you recommended this topic for scrutiny?</p>	<p>Evidence from casework shows that there seems to be little support for young offenders in accessing services that they need.</p>
<p>What are the specific outcomes you wish to see from the review?</p>	<p>A flow chart of what processes are in place for supporting ex-offenders and their families.. Named links between the services for members to access for casework</p>

Does the proposed item meet the following criteria?	
It must affect a group or community of people	Ex-offenders are cross community and cross age
It must relate to a service, event or issue in which the council has a significant stake	Re-housing of ex-offenders, reducing re-offending through drug re-habilitation/job placement
It must not have been a topic of scrutiny within the last 12 months <i>There will be exceptions to this arising from notified changing circumstances. Scrutiny will also maintain an interest in the progress of recommendations and issues arising from past reports.</i>	Not sure.
It must not be an issue, such as planning or licensing, which is dealt with by another council committee	<i>Yes, it is just covered by the Community Safety partnership</i>

<p>Does the topic meet the council's priorities?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhance the town's economic prosperity and potential 2. Supporting individuals and the community 3. Securing an efficient, effective, value for money council 4. Influence and partnership delivery <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Please confirm which ones</i></p>
<p>Are you aware of any limitations of time or other constraints which need to be taken into account?</p> <p><i>Factors to consider are forthcoming milestones, demands on the relevant service area and member availability</i></p>	<p>no</p>
<p>Does the topic involve a Council partner or other outside body?</p>	<p>Yes, police, probation, housing trust, NHS, County council</p>
<p>Please complete the 'sign off' section at the end of this document</p>	

The following section to be completed by Democratic Services

Consultation with relevant Heads of Service

(this section to be completed by Democratic Services)

It is important to ensure that the relevant service can support a review by providing the necessary documents and attending meetings as necessary. The Head of Service's comments should be obtained before the request to hold a review is put to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Has the relevant Head of Service been consulted?

Yes/no (if no, please give reason)

Is this a topic which the service department(s) is able to support.

Include HoS comments here

When was the last time this service was the subject of a scrutiny review?

Include date if known

Sign off**Councillor/Officer
Kelly McLeod****Date
14.05.12****Head of Service****date**