

**Bath & North East Somerset Council; Bristol City Council;
North Somerset Council; South Gloucestershire Council**

MEETING:	West of England Partnership Joint Scrutiny Committee	
MEETING DATE:	3 rd July 2009	AGENDA ITEM NUMBER 6
TITLE:	Joint Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2009 – 2010	
WARD:	ALL	

AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

List of attachments to this report:

- A – West of England Partnership Joint Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2008/09
- B - Partnership Work Programme for 2009/10 (to follow)
- C – Partnership Risk and Performance Management Framework (to follow)

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 Following its first year of operation, the West of England Joint Scrutiny Committee will receive retrospective and forward planning information in order to decide its work programme for the year ahead (2009/2010), in conjunction with the resources available.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The West of England Joint Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- 2.1 Conduct a “workshop” style informal discussion after the Chief Executive of West of England’s presentation, to discuss priorities for their work programme for the year ahead;
- 2.2 Agree the items and timescales for its work programme for 2009/10, and preferred approach for working on these.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The report identifies that additional officer support is required to more properly fulfil the scrutiny function.
- 3.2 The Chief Executives of the 4 UAs have recently reviewed the staffing structure of the West of England Partnership Office, and it is planned to appoint additional staff with the additional costs being funded in the first instance from interest earned on external government funding. It is envisaged that additional support for scrutiny will come principally from one of these posts – the Partnership Secretary.
- 3.3 The staffing structure and costs of the West of England Partnership Office will need to be kept under review in light of the changing workload and funding available.

4 THE REPORT

Background – 2008-09

- 4.1 The Committee was established in July 2008, building upon previous informal scrutiny arrangements for waste and transport, in order to reflect the more formalised executive decision-making structures being set up within the Partnership. Following legal advice, the Committee exists as a collective of four individual overview and scrutiny committees (one per Council in the Partnership) that meet together as one. Its' role is to provide an opportunity for both overview and scrutiny of the Partnership activities, reviewing proposed and implemented decisions, making recommendations to the Executive committees or other Partnership bodies, or their component Councils' Overview and Scrutiny bodies.
- 4.2 During July – March 2008/09, the Committee met 12 times, conducted an additional 3 briefings and seminars, and considered 51 items. These included the Joint Waste Strategy, the Multi-Area Agreement and the new Partnership governance arrangements. In addition, the Committee held a successful session on an Integrated Transport Authority for the area, involving the regional Government Office (GOSW), private transport companies and local campaigning groups.
- 4.3 Many of the items dealt with by the Committee were generated as part of the decision-making process and in line with funding application timescales, so in this sense, the Committee was functioning mainly as a pre-decision scrutiny body, influencing decisions. During the year, Councillors on the Committee expressed a desire for the Committee develop more "overview" work in the future.
- 4.4 The year was a challenging one for the Committee in establishing itself and its role, with a heavy workload and high level of technical knowledge to acquire. However, the Chief Executive of the Partnership did provide assurances that their work was effective and influencing the decisions they scrutinised.
- 4.5 At the end of the year, following a review of their workload, the Committee decided there was not sufficient capacity to conduct more in-depth studies, and that a greater level of support was required in order to carry out more complex or overview enquiries and the associated work planning, research and report writing activities. A report about this requirement was taken to the joint Councils Leaders

and Chief Executives groups to consider and report back, as referred to in paragraph 4.10.

Work planning – 2009/2010

4.6 Looking forward to 2009/2010, the Partnership is developing a combined executive work programme of key issues, dates and decisions in order to provide a co-ordinated approach to the various projects within its remit. This will include all the elements of work included under the Partnerships' direction (Waste Management, Transport, Planning, Housing and Communities, Employment and Skills, Culture, Leisure and Tourism and Rural Strategy).

4.7 The Partnership's work programme will be presented to the Committee by the Chief Executive of the Partnership, along with the new Risk and Performance Management Framework, to inform the Committee's work planning by highlighting which issues/items -

(1) are a good opportunity for the Committee to influence future decisions and developments in a meaningful way;

(2) require Overview and Scrutiny input as an essential part of their progress.

4.8 It is considered best practice within Overview and Scrutiny to examine fewer items in an in-depth manner and make substantive, meaningful recommendations, rather than a "light-touch" approach to a large quantity of subjects. Methods of conducting either overview or scrutiny activities also need to take into account the resources available to the committee.

4.9 With these factors in mind, the Committee are asked to examine the Partnership's work programme and, through an informal workshop approach,

(1) Prioritise/select those which they wish to place on the Committee's work programme for the year ahead;

(2) De-prioritise/deselect those items which they feel are not high priority for their time/focus at this stage;

(3) Start to identify how items will be considered (eg: one-off officer report, presentation, series of several items leading to final conclusions and recommendations, etc) and whether these are pre- or post-decision scrutiny, or an overview approach leading to policy development.

4.10 In order to conduct this work planning process, Committee are asked to bear in mind the current situation regarding available resources. The Chief Executives considered a request from the Joint Committee earlier this year, in respect of dedicated scrutiny support, and agreed that support to scrutiny should be provided through the overall package of support to the West of England Partnership. A Partnership Secretary is to be appointed and within their remit will be support to scrutiny.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 All Council Leaders, WEP Executive Councillors and Chief Executives were consulted in the compilation of the Partnership Work Programme used to inform the development of the Committee Work Programme.

6.2 This report – Chief Executive of West of England Partnership, officers from all 4UAs.

7 ADVICE SOUGHT

7.1 Bath and North East Somerset Council's Monitoring Officer (Council Solicitor) and Section 151 Officer (Strategic Director - Support Services) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

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Background papers	<i>All previous committee papers including Terms of Reference and Work Programmes – at http://www.westofengland.org/</i>
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	