

## AGENDA

### POLICY OVERVIEW CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

**Friday 23rd May 2008 at 10.00 am**  
**Darent Room, Sessions House,**  
**County Hall, Maidstone**

Ask for: **Paul Wickenden**  
Telephone: **(01622) 694486**

*Tea/Coffee will be available from 9:30 am **inside the meeting room***

#### **Membership (11)**

- Conservative (7): Mr E E C Hotson (Chairman), Lord Bruce-Lockhart, Mr C J Capon, Mr C J Law, Mr R A Pascoe, Mrs S V Hohler and Mr L B Ridings
- Labour (3): Ms A Harrison (Vice Chairman), Dr M R Eddy and Mr D Smyth
- Liberal Democrat (1): Mrs T Dean

#### **UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**

*(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)*

1. Membership - to note that Mrs S Hohler has replaced Mr P Lake and Mr Ridings has replaced Mr Fullarton as Members of this Committee
2. Substitutes
3. Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this meeting.
4. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2008 (Pages 1 - 6)
5. The Policy Overview Committee's - Timetable 2009 (Pages 7 - 10)
6. Select Committee – Topic Review Programme Work Programme – Update (Pages 11 - 22)

#### **EXEMPT ITEMS**

*(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)*

Peter Sass  
Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership  
(01622) 694002

**Thursday, 15 May 2008**

*Please note that any background documents referred to in the accompanying papers maybe inspected by arrangement with the officer responsible for preparing the relevant report.*

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Draft subject to approval

**KENT COUNTY COUNCIL**

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**POLICY OVERVIEW CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of a meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee held at Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 14 February 2008.

PRESENT: Mr E E C Hotson (Chairman), Ms A Harrison (Vice-Chairman), Mrs T Dean, Dr M R Eddy, Mr P W A Lake, Mr C J Law, Mr R A Pascoe and Mr D Smyth.

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr L Christie (Vice-Chairman of Communities POC), and Mr M Angell (Lead Member for Adult Social Services).

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Mr O Mills, Managing Director, Kent Adult Social Services, Mrs J Doherty, Policy Manager, Communities and Ms D Fitch, Assistant Democratic Services Manager (Policy Overview).

**UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**

**15. Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2007 and 3 December 2007 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

**16. Select Committee – Topic Review Work Programme Update**  
(*Item 3 – Report by the Overview Scrutiny and Localism Manager*)

(1) The Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager submitted a report updating the Committee on the current Topic Reviews and invited the Committee to set out its priorities in the work programme for the period Spring 2008 to Autumn 2008.

Topic Review Work Programme

(2) In relation to the Flood Risk Select Committee and County Council meeting on 13 March 2008, Dr Eddy requested that feedback on the recommendations of both of the Flooding Select Committees should be supplied to Members so that this could inform the debate.

(2) It was noted that the report from the Select Committee on Carers in Kent had been submitted to the Minister for Care Services as part of the review of the Prime Ministers 1999 Carers Strategy.

(3) Members were reminded that the Accessing Democracy Review had started its work. In relation to the proposed topic review on vulnerable children, the proposer of the review, had indicated that, as considerable work had been undertaken in the Children,

Families and Education Directorate, he was satisfied that a review at this time would not be appropriate and he was happy for this to be withdrawn from the programme.

(4) The Chairman informed the Committee that their bid for a permanent Graduate Development Placement for Overview and Scrutiny had been unsuccessful. It was therefore up to the Chairmen of the Policy Overview Committees and other Members to continue to lobby for more resources.

(5) There were resources available for one review to start shortly and two potential topics had been identified. These were Provision of Activities for Young People and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

(6) The topic of **Provision of Activities for Young People** had first been put into the work programme in 2006 and was strongly supported by the Communities Policy Overview Committee. Mrs Doherty and Mr Lake spoke in support of this topic review and answered questions from Members on the proposal. The comments made by Members were noted by officers and would be taken into account when the Terms and Reference and scope of the review were drawn up.

(7) The proposed review on **Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)** had been put forward by the Adult Services Directorate. Mr Mills and Mr M Angell were present and gave details of the proposed review and indicated why it was valuable to carry it out at this time. Mr Mills and Mr Angell answered questions and noted comments from Members in relation to this proposal. As part of this discussion, Mr Mills offered to meet reasonable costs for a professional adviser to this Select Committee from his budget.

(8) There was considerable discussion by the Select Committee on which of the two pieces of work should be allocated to the research officer resources that was becoming available shortly. It was acknowledged that both pieces of work were important and would add value to the work of the County Council.

(9) It was noted that whichever review was not selected at this point, would be the next review to be undertaken either by a graduate from the Graduate Development Programme, if the bid of the Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager was successful or by the next research officer resource that became available within the team.

#### Monitoring of Select Committee recommendations

(10) Circulated with the report was an appendix which set out the monitoring that had been undertaken of all Select Committees since 2001. Also included was a copy of the report which had been submitted to Cabinet on 14 January 2007 which set out some of the key outcomes of Select Committees. It was noted that although the paper submitted was in a variety of styles, a standard monitoring format would be prepared to make this easier to monitor in future. Members indicated that they particularly liked the format that had been used for monitoring feedback on the Climate Change Select Committee.

(11) Members welcomed the report as a good starting point for the monitoring of all Select Committee recommendations. It was mentioned that where the recommendations involved lobbying Government or another body, Members would expect to be given information on what had actually been done and the impact that it had had, it was not satisfactory just to mention that the lobbying had taken place.

(12) As the information on the monitoring that had been undertaken to date had not been submitted to County Council, it was suggested that all Members should be made aware of it.

(13) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the progress of the Select Committee Topic Reviews Support for Carers in Kent, Alcohol Misuse and Flood Risk be noted;
- (b) it be noted that the Select Committee Topic Review on Accessing Democracy had commenced its work;
- (c) it be noted that the dedicated Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Research Officer would shortly undertake a review into the transport aspects of Accessing Health Care;
- (d) the Committee agreed to the withdrawal of the Vulnerable Children Topic Review proposal from the work programme;
- (e) that the proposed Topic Review on Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) be undertaken by the Research Officer resource which will become available once the Alcohol Misuse Select Committee has been reported to Cabinet on 17 March 2008;
- (f) that the Topic Review on Provision of Activities for Young People be put on the work programme to be the next review to commence in the September or sooner if resources become available;
- (g) it be noted that Members had found it extremely difficult to decide which Select Committee should be the next one to start its work.
- (g) the recommendations produced by Select Committees prior to March 2006 when a formal monitoring process was introduced be systematically reviewed by the parent Policy Overview Committee;
- (h) that all Members be informed that monitoring information is available, on request for some Select Committees.

## **16. Building Capacity for Policy Overview Committee**

*(Item 5 –Report by the Overview Scrutiny and Localism Manager)*

(1) The Chairman introduced a report which sought the Committee's views on the options for Building Capacity for Policy Overview Committees. Some Policy Overview Committees finding it a challenge to effectively deal with the required amount of business in a one day meeting. Included as an appendix, was a list of agenda items for the Policy Overview Committees over the past year with the indication of what part of the terms of reference they related to.

(2) Members discussed the issue of Capacity for Overview and Scrutiny and made comments which included the following:-

- Dr Eddy mentioned that the report did not cover Health Overview and Scrutiny or Cabinet Scrutiny. It might be helpful to look at the whole

Overview and Scrutiny structure as part of the Building Capacity exercise, as looking just at the Capacity for Policy Overview Committees did not deal with all of the issues.

- It would appear that some items for example, the Equality Strategy which went to all Policy Overview Committees might be more appropriate for an IMG comprised of Members of each of the Policy Overview Committees which could then feed back to the individual Policy Overview Committees.
- Mention was made of the financial monitoring reports and the timing of these in relation to the programme meetings for the Policy Overview Committees which meant that the basic data was often a number of months out of date. It was noted that the Corporate Policy Overview Committee had already raised this issue and that consideration would be given to the programming of Policy Overview Committees for 2009 to try and address this issue.
- It was mentioned that the Annual Performance Assessments for both Adult Social Services and Children, Families and Education did not appear to be going to the Policy Overview Committee.
- Mr Smyth highlighted the shortage of research resources for Select Committees and the difficult choice that Member had to make earlier in the meeting. He also made a plea for research resources for Cabinet Scrutiny Committee. He referred to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Research Model and he would like to see this replicated across Overview and Scrutiny.
- A number of Members spoke in support of the Rapporteur System. One of the advantages of this system was that it gave more Members the opportunity to have a greater degree of involvement. However, one of the issues with this would be the amount of research support that Members may require in order to carry out this role effectively.
- It was suggested that Policy Overview Committees should consider using IMG's when appropriate in same way that Cabinet Scrutiny does.
- Although Policy Overview Committees were developing and improving, a view was expressed that they were still too heavy on overview and light on scrutiny.
- The Chairman of Communities Policy Overview Committee commended the system of having their Cabinet Member/Managing Director give an oral update for up to 45 minutes at the start of each meeting. This provided an opportunity for Members of the Committee to put any questions within the remit of the Committee to the Cabinet Member supported by the Managing Director.
- It was suggested in relation to Children, Families and Education Policy Overview Committee that greater use should be made of the Children's Champions Board to deal with appropriate matters to reduce the workload of the main committees.

- Ms Harrison explained the system at Swale Borough Council where they had Informal Member Groups which were not politically balanced or supported by Democratic Services Officers. Members carried out their own research, organised their own meetings and wrote their own report for submission to the main Committee.
- It was emphasised that there was a need to look at the structure for Overview and Scrutiny in relation to the divide between Policy Overview and Scrutiny.
- The Chairman stated that the comments made by Members would be used to inform further discussion on this issue with the Cabinet and Chief Officers Group. If Members wished to submit any further views, they could do so in writing.

(3) RESOLVED that the Committees views which will inform reports to the Cabinet and Chief Officers Group be noted.

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**Item 5**

By: Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager

To: Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee – 23 May 2008

Subject: **Select Committee Topic Review Work Programme – Update**

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: To receive an update on the current Topic Review Programme and ways in which the Committee may consider building capacity for the future.

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**Current phase of the Work Programme – Spring 2008 – Autumn 2008***Alcohol Misuse Select Committee*

1 (1) The Select Committee, under the Chairmanship of Mr Hirst, presented its report to the Cabinet on 17 March and to County Council on 3 April 2008. The Select Committee report was well received by both these fora. One of the appendices to the report before the County Council was a very early draft of what an action plan might look like to implement the Select Committee's recommendations. The Committee will be encouraged to note that the Cabinet Member for Public Health, Mr Gibbens, has already established a working group to take forward the recommendations of the Select Committee which has already had one meeting. The Working Group has noted the linkages with the Working Group taking forward the recommendations of the Personal, Social, Health, Education Select Committee.

(2) As part of the agreed monitoring process for Select Committee Topic Reviews an action plan will be prepared for submission to the Corporate Policy Overview Committee in September/November. The Select Committee will be re-convened in April 2009 to receive a report on the progress with its recommendations a year after it was considered by Cabinet.

(3) One of the most significant recommendations arising from the Select Committee report was the proposal to organise a conference on Alcohol Misuse before the summer recess. This Conference will take place on 10 July 2008 at the University of Greenwich, Kings Hill, West Malling. This will provide a further opportunity to launch the Select Committee report.

(4) Also worthy of note during the Select Committee process were a number of innovative practices which the Select Committee adopted. These included:-

- a) asking the Marlowe Academy in Ramsgate to facilitate a discussion session with young people to enable the Select Committee to

understand the experiences of this group of young people regarding the use and misuse of alcohol;

- b) in the final preparation of the report (before the report was published) the Select Committee ensured that all the partner organisations who had contributed to the report were brought together. At these facilitated discussions the draft recommendations of the Select Committee were discussed in detail and how these recommendations might be implemented.

(5) This process proved to be very useful for this Select Committee where the recommendations required partner organisations to take forward recommendations although they were not entirely within the gift of the County Council.

### **Topic Review Programme – Spring 2008 to Autumn 2008**

2. (1) The Committee will recall at its meeting on 14 February it agreed the following work programme for Autumn 2007 to Spring 2008:-

- a) Accessing Democracy;
- b) Autistic Spectrum Disorder;
- c) Access to Healthcare (a Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Topic Review).

(2) It was agreed that as soon as resources became available the next Select Committee, after those set out above, would be “Provision of Activities for Young People”.

(3) The Committee will be pleased to note that an additional Policy Overview Research Officer post has been added to the Overview and Scrutiny Team to support Select Committee topic reviews. Recruitment is currently underway and it is hoped to have an officer in post by July/August. This would mean that a review could be started after the summer recess.

#### *Accessing Democracy*

(4) This Select Committee agreed its terms of reference, and these have been endorsed by the Corporate Policy Overview Committee. This Select Committee under the Chairmanship of Mrs Angell is currently gathering evidence. The Select Committee are using a number of methods to do this in addition to the established hearing sessions. Members of the Select Committee have carried out insight gathering exercises, using the Gateways, libraries and attending forums/meetings. They have also conducted interviews and have been asked to report back – “the rapporteur”.

(5) The Committee also had a hearing session which was undertaken using the County Council video conference facilities with Bristol Council which is the first time this conference facility has been used as part of the Select Committee process.

(6) The Select Committee is aiming to complete its evidence gathering phase by the end of June 2008.

#### *Autistic Spectrum Disorder*

(7) Preparatory work for this Select Committee is almost complete and the inaugural meeting will be held in June. The Chairman Designate for this Select Committee is Mr Simmonds.

#### *Access to Healthcare*

(8) Pressure on the Health Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme is enormous. As a consequence representations have been made by the Chairman and Members of the Committee to the Leader and Chief Executive to increase the resources available to the Committee.

(9) It was been clear during recent discussions between the Chairman of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Chairmen and Chief Executives of the two Primary Care Trusts across the administrative county of Kent that they would like to see this piece of work started as soon as possible. The Primary Care Trusts have indicated that they will contribute what they can with resources to assist this process.

(10) The Committee will be aware that the Committee has a dedicated Research Officer to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. However the Committee are asked to note that the current postholder has recently secured a post with the Parliamentary Health Select Committee and there will therefore be a short gap whilst I recruit to this post.

#### **Potential two year programme**

3. (1) Members will recall that at the Committee's last meeting it was a difficult decision to make as to what should be the second Topic Review for the resources I had available. The decision was to support the review on Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) leaving the Provision of Activities for Young People as the next review in the programme.

#### *Future Rail Services in Kent*

(2) The Committee will recall that a decision was taken by the County Council in December 2007 to periodically review the outcomes recommendations of each Select Committee report to ascertain whether recommendations had been implemented or not.

(3) The Environment and Regeneration Policy Overview Committee agreed at its last meeting to look quickly at updating the work undertaken by the Select Committee (which included representatives of Medway Council) on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) Domestic Services.

(4) The Leader of the Council has indicated that he would welcome a piece of work being conducted by the County Council which looks at the opportunity to influence the rail providers, Government and others to ensure that the commuters of Kent are best served by the proposed services to be delivered by the train operators as well as exploiting in full the potential economic development and tourism opportunities for the County. Attached is a proposal form for a Select Committee to update the work previously undertaken on CTRL Domestic Services to ensure that the Rail Services in Kent meet the populations needs.

## **Operational Issues for Managing the Topic Review Programme**

### ***Programming of Topic Reviews***

4. (1) The programming and refocusing the Topics which Members wish to review continues to present my Team with the biggest challenge. We still struggle to focus clearly on what the Review should cover and the potential outcomes. It is a challenge to ensure that the focus for the Reviews is not so broad that it might result in the loss of impact and added value to the County Council and the County's residents. One suggestion, which has come from the Research Officer team supporting the topic review process, is that it would be helpful if once a topic review has been agreed by the Committee that a cross-party group (say three Members could be identified to undertake, in conjunction with the Research Officer, the preparation of the Terms of Reference, the scope for the review and potential witness lists, so that the review is narrow and focussed which often for each of the Committees to achieve). In the current system the experience is that Committees spend some considerable time during the early part of the Select Committee process focussing the piece of work, whereas if this could be achieved at the outset by a small group of Members (which is then agreed by the sponsoring Policy Overview Committee), this would be overcome. As a consequence capacity could be built for undertaking more reviews.

(2) Members will be aware that the Parliamentary Select Committee Model is to look at a topic narrow and deep, rather than broad and all embracing.

### ***Resources to deliver the Work Programme***

(3) I currently have 1½ FTE Research Officers supporting the Select Committee Topic Review Programme, which will increase by 1 FTE when a new officer is recruited. In addition, I have one Research Officer whose time is dedicated entirely to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

(4) As reported at the last meeting a bid was made for a graduate from the Graduate Development Programme to join the team on a 6 month placement from 1 April, unfortunately this bid was unsuccessful. It is intended to bid again for the placements starting 1 October 2008. However, there is no guarantee that this application will be successful. This placement within my Team has always been recognized as an excellent opportunity and a number of our Select Committee's have been supported from the Graduate Development Programme.

(5) In addition to the Research Officer resources, there are three Democratic Services Officers to support the Policy Overview Committee and Select Committee activities. I am submitting a business case for a further Democratic Services Officer to work specifically for the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### ***Launching of Select Committee Reports***

(6) It would be helpful if a process for launching the report of the Select Committee could be agreed. Members of the Select Committee put a lot of work into producing their report and this is recognised when it submitted to Cabinet and County Council. However it is also important, especially for those witnesses who have contributed to the report, that it is launched as widely as possible so that it can have the maximum impact both internally and externally.

(7) Members are invited to discuss and come up with suggestions for how and when these reports could be launched, within resources available, to ensure that they have the opportunity to influence as widely as possible and gain the maximum benefit to the people of Kent.

### **Building Capacity for Policy Overview**

5. (1) At the last meeting of the Committee there was discussion on the way forward for building capacity for POC's, to overcome the increasing challenge for POC's as they fully exercise their terms of reference of trying to carrying out their business effectively in 5 x one day meetings per year.

(2) This has become a particular challenge for Children, Families and Education Policy Overview Committee (CF&E POC) due to the size of the Directorate. The CF&E POC are due to receive a report at their next meeting which suggest setting up an IMG on Building Schools for the Future which will have an information monitoring role and report back to the POC. If this proves successful the POC may look to establish other IMG's to cover specific areas of their work

(3) The comments made by Members at this Committee are set out in the Minutes (minute 16 of today's agenda refers). As the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) report is due to be published in early June it may be more appropriate for this Committee to discuss this issue along with the recommendations on Overview and Scrutiny from the CPA at your meeting on 10 September.

(4) As an interim measure which may assist Members in focusing the work of the Policy Overview Committees is to ask officers to identify which part of the Policy Overview Committees terms of reference a report is seeking to addressing. This would avoid reports being submitted which are in effect for information or to brief Members as this could be done outside of POC's meetings or in other ways.

(5) The key areas of the terms of reference which could be set out are:-

- Policy Development
- Performance Monitoring

- Responding to consultations

## Recommendations

6. The Committee are requested to note:-

- a) that the Select Committee on Alcohol Misuse has presented its final report and commend it for its innovative processes which will be used where appropriate for future Select Committees
- b) the progress of Select Committee Topic Reviews, Accessing Democracy and Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- c) that the Select Committee on Provision of Activities for Young People will start its work when the new Policy Overview Research officer is in post
- d) that the dedicated Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Research Officer will shortly undertake a review into the transport aspects of 'Accessing Healthcare';
- e) that a bid for a graduate from the Graduate Development Programme offering a placement from 1 October 2008
- f) that the Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager be asked to prepare a paper for the next meeting setting out a process which could be recommended to the County Council for adoption in the Constitution to launch Select Committee reports
- g) a business case be prepared for a dedicated Democratic Services Officer for the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- h) the Committees views are sought on (a) building capacity for the Policy Overview Committees and (b) the suggestion of a small group working with the research officer to focus the terms of reference for Topic Review.

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## Appendix 1

### ASSESSMENT OF A SELECT COMMITTEE TOPIC REVIEW

(\* - sections to be filled in by the proposer of the topic)

**\*Subject of Proposed Review:-**

Passenger Rail Services Select Committee

**\*Reason for the Review:-**

(see note 1 below)

To identify the best rail passenger services solution for Kent

**\*Issues to be covered by the Terms of Reference:-**

The aim of the select Committee is to identify the best rail passenger services solution for Kent, both in terms of:-

- The immediate benefits of the solution in terms of journey times and improved services to London, around Kent and to mainland Europe; and
- The long term benefits of the solution in terms of the regeneration of Kent and the impacts on the wider rail network and transport in the County.

**\*Scope of the review:-**

This will involve investigating the following:-

- Current proposals of the franchise holders, Southeastern, for services from December 2009 and proposed fare levels
- Forecasted effects of these proposals and whether they are robust - including whether rising general fare levels and additional premium fares on CTRL DS will prove to be a deterrent to travel by rail
- The effects the proposed services will have on the regeneration of Growth Areas and the coastal towns
- The case for new parkway stations
- The likelihood of rail heading to stations with significantly improved services and likely effects
- Access to stations forecast to attract significant rises in passenger volumes
- Current and future service proposals of Eurostar from Ebbsfleet and Ashford Stations

**Witnesses past and proposed**

Connex - now Southeastern  
Network Rail

Rail Passengers Committee - now Passenger Focus

Union Railways - Eurostar

Other Local Authorities:-

Gravesham, Dartford, Swale, Canterbury, Dover, Thanet, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge  
and Malling, Tunbridge Wells, Maidstone, Ashford, Shepway

Pfizer

Wiggins Group PLC - Infratil

Dover Harbour Board

Eurotunnel

Kent and Medway Economic Board - Kent Economic Board

Plus:-

Locate in Kent  
Land Securities

Also:-

Medway Council as separate witness or in partnership?

**\*Purpose and objectives of the Review:-**

As above

**Proposer of the review**

Paul Carter  
.....

To be completed by the Directorate/Cabinet Member(s)

<b>Are there any reasons why this review should not be put forward for inclusion in the work programme for 2006/07?</b> (see note 2 below)	
<b>How will the review contribute to corporate objectives and priorities?</b>	
<b>Will the review support the achievement of PSA or LAA targets? If yes, please identify targets:-</b>	
<b>Does the review need to be completed within a specific timeframe? If yes, please give details:-</b>	
<b>How will this review have an impact on KCC policy development and/or help to influence national policy?</b>	
<b>How will this review add value to the County Council and residents of Kent?</b>	
<b>Any additional comments from the Portfolio Holder/Strategic Director:-</b>  <b>Portfolio Holder's Signature:-</b>  <b>Strategic Director's Signature:-</b>	
<b>Contact Officer:-</b>	<b>Date:-</b>

## Notes

### Note 1 - Possible reasons for the review

1. Key public issue, identified by
  - Focus groups/citizens panels
  - Member contact with constituents/member surgeries
  - Contact with key representative bodies/forums
  - Media coverage – Public interest issue covered in local media
2. Issue highlighted via POC activities or previous reviews
3. Issue recommended to POC by another body e.g. another POC, Cabinet Scrutiny, Directorate, Cabinet or an external body.
4. Poor performing service i.e.:-
  - High level of complaints/dissatisfaction with service
  - Performance standards poor/below target – (evidence from PI's or benchmarking)
  - Identified through external review/inspection (OFSTED/Audit/ CPA etc)
  - Budgetary overspends
5. Key reports or new evidence published
6. County Council priority
7. Central Government priority/New Government guidance or legislation published

### Note 2 - Possible reasons why a review should not be put into the next years/ next two years work

1. Issue being examined by
  - Cabinet
  - Cabinet Scrutiny
  - Officer Group
  - another internal body
  - an external body
2. It has been the subject of a topic review by other Councils from which details of best practice can be obtained.
3. New legislation or guidance expected.
4. **NB:** Before suggesting that a review should not be included in the work programme the following should be considered:-

Could consideration of this issue 'add value' without causing unnecessary duplication, for instance by:

- i) Looking at this issue in conjunction with another group,
- ii) Through appropriate timing of the topic review,
- iii) Through considering another group's findings rather than duplicating the same/or similar activity.



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By: Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager  
To: Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee – 23 May 2008  
Subject: **Policy Overview Committees – Timetable 2009**  
Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: This report puts forward issues relating to the timetabling of Policy Overview Committee (POC) meetings in 2009 for Members consideration.

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## Introduction

1. Members will be aware that increasingly as Policy Overview Committees (POCs) have expanded their monitoring role has lead to competing demands on the Committees work programme. This has recently been brought into focus by the quarterly financial monitoring reports.

## Programming of POC Meetings

### *Financial Monitoring report*

2. (1) Members of all Policy Overview Committees have expressed concern about the timetabling of the POCs in relation to the quarterly financial monitoring reports. These reports cannot be released until they are published for Cabinet.

(2) Unfortunately, the 2008 programme of meetings were diarised before it was established that there would be an expectation that POCs would be receiving these reports. The challenge is to ensure that there reports are as up to day as possible for the POC to make them useful.

(3) To meet the POCs wishes the POCs would need to be held approximately two weeks after the information has been confirmed at Cabinet. Based on the 2008 timetable of POCs it would mean that the POCs June and September meeting cycles would need to be programmed differently in 2009.

(4) The June cycle of POCs would need to be held in late June early July and the September cycle late September early October.

### *Other factors that need to be taken into account in Programming POCs*

(5) In accordance with the County Council Constitution five meetings of each POC were programmed for 2008.

(6) This programme of five meetings takes into account the following:-

Date	Item	Reason
January	Draft Budget and MTP	Meetings need to be held in the short period after the draft budget is published for Cabinet but allowing enough time for the comments from POC to be fed back to Cabinet (and the key issues to the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee).
March	There are no specific key items for this cycle	
May/June	Annual Plan	In 2008 – POC need to meet in a very short time period to enable their comments on the Annual Plan to be included report to County Council.  However, there will not be an Annual Plan in 2009. To date no guidance has been issued from government on what will replace the Annual Plan.
September	Towards 2010	Again there is a short time period for POCs to meet and make comments for inclusion in the report to County Council.
November	Medium Term Plan	Part of the Budget process to update the Committee on the Autumn Budget Statement and any later announcements by Government departments. Also an opportunity to consider suggested service pressures and savings proposals for the Directorates.

*Competing pressures when programming meetings in 2009*

(7) The paragraphs above illustrate that it is not possible for all cycles of meetings to be programmed so that the POC can consider both up to date Financial Monitoring information and meet the timescale for putting forward comments on other key documents. For the January, April and November cycles there is no conflict in priorities for the POCs work programme only June and September POCs

### *Option for considering the Financial Monitoring information*

(8) Members have suggested at some of the Policy Overview Committees that an Informal Member Group (IMG) should be set up for each POC to consider their Financial Monitoring and to report back to the parent POC via a set of minutes/notes which will draw out the key issues. This would mirror the way that the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee currently deals with financial monitoring.

(9) Consideration of the Financial Monitoring Report enables Members to prepare for the budget process and consultation of the draft Budget and Medium Term Plan. As stated in the report to the last meeting on building capacity, the main disadvantage of this would be that it would limit detailed financial knowledge for each POC to 3 Members.

### *Option for commenting on key documents*

(10) In previous years both the Annual Plan and Towards 2010 have been considered at meetings of this Committee where any of the Vice-Chairmen/Spokesmen of POCs, who are not Members of Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee (POCC) have been invited to attend. However, in June 2007, when the Annual Plan was considered Members made it clear that this was not their preferred option and they wanted meetings of the POCs to be programmed so that they could individually consider these documents.

(11) However, going back to using the POCC is an option that Members may wish to re-consider if the priority is to make sure that POCs receive up to date Financial Monitoring information.

### **Recommendations**

3. The Committee are requested to set out its priorities for programming the POCs in 2009 and whether they want to use any of the other options such as IMG or POCC meetings to assist with the work programming for POCs

Officer contact:

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