

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

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