

By: Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager
To: Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee – 10 September 2008
Subject: **Select Committee Topic Review Work Programme - Update**
Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: To receive an update on the current Topic Review Programme and the resources available to deliver it.

Current Phase of the Work Programme – Autumn 2008 to Spring 2009

Accessing Democracy

1. The Select Committee under the Chairmanship of Mrs Angell finished its evidence gathering in June and in August received the first draft of their report. The Select Committee's final report will be submitted to Cabinet on 15 September 2008 and the County Council on 16 October 2008.

Autistic Spectrum Disorder Select Committee

2. (1) This Committee under the Chairmanship of Mr Simmonds started its work in June 2008 and held its first phase of hearing sessions in July. Further hearing sessions and visits have been programmed for September/early October 2008.

(2) The Select Committee have requested an extension of the timescale to allow them to submit their report to Cabinet in January 2009 rather than December 2008.

Provision of /Positive Activities for Young People – Select Committee

3. (1) The research for this review was started in July 2008 and the inaugural meeting for this Select Committee took place on 29 August 2008. It is anticipated that the Select Committee will hold their hearings in October/November 2008 and submit their report to Cabinet on 30 March 2009.

(2) Prior to the commencement of the Review the Labour Group indicated that they were unable to find two Members to serve on the Select Committee. However, the Group were happy for the Review to go ahead. Members of my team supporting the Select Committee will keep Mr T J Birkett, Shadow Cabinet Member for Communities fully apprised of the activity of the Select Committee.

Access to Healthcare – Select Committee

4. I will update the Committee at the meeting on the progress being made to support this Review.

CTLR Passenger Services – Select Committee

5. Members will recall that at the last meeting it was reported that at the request of the Leader of the Council resources would be sought from the Environment and Regeneration Directorate to support this review. I am pleased to report that resources have been made available from within the Environment and Regeneration Directorate. The Review has started and the intention is that the report will be available for reporting to the Cabinet on 1 December 2008.

Operational Issues for Managing the Topic Review Programme

Programming for Topic Reviews

6. I have already drawn the Committee's attention to the difficulty that the Labour Group had in providing two Members to serve on the Select Committee: Provision of Activities for Young People. However, there is a matter of principle here which the Committee may wish to consider - which is how many Select Committees can be supported at a given time so that the political groups can identify their Members to serve on these committees, accordingly.

Resources to Deliver the Work Programme

7. (1) I now have two and a half FTE Research Officers supporting the Select Committee Topic Review Programme and I have one research officer whose time is dedicated entirely to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

(2) At the May meeting of the Committee, I was asked to bid for a Graduate from the Graduate Development Programme. However, on approaching the Manager of the programme I received a note from the Chief Executive what made it clear that he does not consider that the new Kent Graduate Programme is appropriate to be used in this way. The Chief Executive has, however, suggested that the Talent Management Scheme could be a possible source of additional resource for Select Committee Topic Reviews. This is being explored. I will make an oral report to the Committee of progress made.

(3) In addition to the Research Officer resources to support topic reviews, there are three Democratic Service Officers to support the Policy Overview Committee and Select Committee activities.

Cabinet Scrutiny Committee

8. I have appointed a Research Officer to the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee. Mrs Anna Taylor takes up her appointment on 15 September 2008.

Building Capacity for Policy Overview Committees

9. (1) At the last two meetings of this Committee there have been discussions on the way forward for building capacity for POC's to overcome the increasing challenge for them as they fully exercise their Terms of Reference of trying to carry out their business effectively in 5x1 day meetings per year.

(2) The Children's Families and Education Policy Overview Committee will be asked at their meeting on 19 September 2008 to consider establishing a Sub-Committee to oversee and report back to the POC on the Local Children's Strategic Partnership.

(3) Members will also see from the Minutes of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee IMG held on 25 June 2008 that it is suggested that where POC's find it necessary or would like to, they should set up IMG's to look at the budget for their Committee at key times of the year.

(4) Taking into account the challenges identified by the Labour Group in identifying Members to serve on additional Committees etc Members may wish to consider how it wishes to accommodate them ad-hoc Member Committees if they are not identified as part of the formal work programme.

Recommendations

10. The Committee are requested to note:-

- (a) the progress of the Select Committee Topic Reviews Accessing Democracy, Provision of Activities for Young People be noted ;
- (b) consideration be given to extending the timescale for the Select Committee on Autistic Spectrum Disorder to enable it to present its report to Cabinet in January 2009
- (c) the resources suggested for undertaking the Accessing Health Care Select Committee Topic Review be endorsed
- (d) Members be invited to submit their views on how ad-hoc Member Committees are to be accommodated in the Work Programme.

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Background Documents: None