

Agenda Item 9

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Subject	Scrutiny Work Programme 2013/2014
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RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Committee considers its Work Programme and the Executive's Forward Plan and determine if it wishes to amend the Work Programme.

SUMMARY

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Scrutiny Committee on the reports due to be received by itself and the Executive in the near future.

BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Attached are copies of the Forward Plan and the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.
- 3.2 The Council is required to publish the Forward Plan monthly, setting out Key Decisions to be taken over the next four months.
- 3.3 The Plan is submitted to the Scrutiny Committee to enable the Committee to be aware of forthcoming issues to be considered.
- 3.4 The Committee is asked to consider if it wished to make any changes to its Work Programme

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications - None arising from this report.

Financial and Risk Implications - None arising from this report

Equalities Implications - None arising from this report

Employment Issues - None arising from this report

Sustainability Issues - None arising from this report

Consultation – Providing details of the Forward Plan to the Scrutiny and Audit Committee enables the Committee to be aware of forthcoming issues.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

The Committee's work programme was approved by Council at its meeting on 23rd July 2013.

The work programme is divided into the following four strands:-

- External Scrutiny
- Services Updates
- Scrutiny Panels
- Scrutiny of Executive Reports

Set out below is information detailing what is either being currently undertaken or planned in each of these areas.

External Scrutiny

The Committee currently has the following outside organisations scheduled for the forthcoming year – further organisations will be reported as agreement is reached on dates.

Organisation	Meeting Date
Surrey Wildlife Trust	28 th January 2014

Service Updates

The following Service update have been scheduled for forthcoming Committee meetings

Service	Meeting Date
Property	10 th December 2013
Dorking Halls	28 th January 2014
Community Support	4 th March 2014

Scrutiny Panels

The Scrutiny Committee currently has four Panels' in existence, namely the Car Parking Panel, Devolution Panel, Standing Budget Panel and the Waste Management Panel.

The next meeting of the Car Parking Panel is scheduled for 15th January 2013.

The first meeting of the Devolution Panel is being arranged for early January

The Standing Budget Panel met on 23rd October 2013 (Notes for this meeting attached) again on 5th December 2013 (notes will be available on the next Scrutiny Committee agenda).

The next meeting of the Waste Management Panel is scheduled for 18th December 2013.

Scrutiny of Executive Reports

A copy of the Executive Forward Plan is attached to this report to highlight to the members of the Committee reports scheduled for forthcoming meetings of the Executive.

Notes of a meeting of the Standing Budget Scrutiny Panel held on 23rd October 2013 at Pippbrook, Dorking from 7.00pm to 8.35pm

Present: Councillors Stella Brooks (Chairman), Lynne Brooks, Paul Elderton, Paula Hancock and David Sharland.

Also present: Councillor Simon Ling (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Assets)

1. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor David Preedy.

2. Notes of the Last Meeting

The notes of the last panel meeting held on 21st May 2013 were agreed as a correct record.

3. Terms of Reference

The Panel reviewed its new terms of reference for 2013/14 as they had been revised in light of comments made by the Panel during its review of the budget setting process for 2012/2013. It was highlighted that the Scrutiny Committee had made an amendment to the terms of reference asking for the Panel 'comments' on the Administration's Budget rather than specific budgetary 'recommendations'.

As part of its work the Standing Budget Panel had been tasked with scrutinising the allocation of Council grants to voluntary organisations. There was some uncertainty amongst the Panel as to whether they should be focusing on the allocations process or the outcomes. It was requested that this be clarified at the next Panel meeting, when the Council's grants would be considered.

It was noted that the Panel had been asked to scrutinise in detail the budget proposals of two Services. In order to determine which Services would be chosen it was agreed that information on current budgetary performance would be provided.

In advance of the meetings with Portfolio Holders in January 2014, each Portfolio Holder would be asked to complete a pro forma aimed at gathering information on the current year's budgetary performance and also a summary of their budget proposals for 2014/15.

4. Background to 2014/2015 Budget Setting

In order to provide an overview of the current budget situation the Panel were provided with a copy of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and a budget presentation delivered at a recent Members seminar.

It was advised by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Assets that at present it was difficult to predict the Council's future income as the Government would not be confirming future funding levels until later in the year. The New Homes Bonus and the percentage of Business Rates to be retained could be predicted with some degree of confidence, but the situation regarding the Revenue Support Grant was not clear after 2014/2015. The MTFS also assumed an annual increase of 2% to Council Tax which was considered by the Administration to be reasonable as it was below the current rate of inflation.

The Administration would continue to ensure the Council was achieving value for money in order to make savings where possible. Although only small amount of savings were required for 2014/15, it was forecasted that larger savings would be required in future years. As well as savings the Administration were also looking at potential areas for growth. As the new management contract for Dorking Sports Centre had generated a greater than anticipated income for the Council it was the Administration's intention to increase the contribution to the capital minor repairs budget from the revenue budget. Staff salaries had increased by 1.7% on average in the past year and provision for an increase of up to a maximum of 2% per annum had been included in the MTFS for future years. Increases to fees and charges would

also be linked to inflation at 2.5% rather than 5% increase that had been previously implemented.

During the Panel's discussion of the Medium Term Financial Strategy the following points were noted:-

- At the next meeting the Panel would have the opportunity to scrutinise the Administration's proposed fees and charges for 2014/2015. It was requested that a full breakdown of all fees and charges be provided in addition to a summary highlighting noteworthy increases.
- The value of scrutinising the fees and charges without the individual Portfolio Holders being present was questioned. It was agreed that a question asking for an explanation of any proposed increases above the standard 2.5% should be included in the pro forma to be completed by Portfolio Holders.
- It was agreed that the Administration should be advised to consider other options in the event that the Leatherhead Bypass development did not go ahead, particularly given that it contributed a significant amount to future budget forecasts.
- It was noted that the Business Plan's would be available for the next meeting of the Panel.
- Of the Panel's three recommendations from 2012/2013 two had been addressed, while the third, which requested the Panel start meeting in July, had not been met due to the revisions being made to the terms of reference.
- It was agreed that a question about any potential staffing implications as a result of savings should be included in the pro forma for Portfolio Holders.

5. Next Meeting

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held at 7.00pm on 21st November 2013.

At the next meeting the Panel would be provided with the Council's Business Plans as well as the Administration's fees and charges proposals and grant allocations. A draft copy of the pro forma for Portfolio Holder would also be prepared for discussion.