



Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Board **Date:** 19 June 2013

Wards Affected: All wards

Report Title: Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme

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1. Purpose and Introduction

- 1.1 Each year, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is required to agree a Work Programme. The Programme needs to be robust and realistic but also flexible enough to enable emerging issues of concern to be addressed. This will help to ensure that overview and scrutiny is driving service improvement and playing a key role in the policy development process. A successful scrutiny function would have a positive impact on our customers as the community would be involved in the work being undertaken and the outcomes of that work would be focused on the community's needs.

2. Proposed Decision

- 2.1 That the Work Programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Board be constructed around issues of major community interest with a view to preparing "packages of evidence" which can be used to inform the budget setting process.
- 2.2 That the Priorities and Resources Review Panel be appointed (comprising the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board) and meet throughout the year to (a) review and monitor the revenue and capital budgets for the current year; and (b) to review and challenge the emerging proposals for delivering the Council's priorities for the 2013/2014 financial year.
- 2.3 That, in relation to the collapse of the sea wall at Livermead, a "call for evidence" be issued in accordance with the scope of the review at Appendix 1.
- 2.4 That the Board determine whether to undertake a review of Fixed Odds Betting Terminals following the preparation of a briefing note for all members of the Board.
- 2.5 That, taking account of the briefing note at Appendix 2, the Board determine whether or not to undertake a review of the process for assessing claims for Housing Benefit.

2.2 Reason for Decision

To ensure that the Overview and Scrutiny Board sets a robust Work Programme for the coming year.

Supporting Information

4. Position

- 4.1 The Constitution requires that, early in the Municipal Year, the Overview and Scrutiny Board will co-ordinate the production of a Work Programme for the function as a whole.
- 4.2 As the Board is aware, the major challenge facing Torbay Council in the coming year is identifying the savings required to meet the continuing reducing amount of public sector finance. As part of the processes around fair decision making, robust proposals must be developed which include appropriate consultation and assessment of the impacts.
- 4.3 Last year, the Overview and Scrutiny Board focussed on the budget proposals which had a major community impact. It is proposed that this approach is taken again this year, but that the Board undertake work as policies and proposals are being developed. This would supplement the work already being carried out across the Council rather than being a parallel or duplicate stream of work.
- 4.4 The work would include:
- Review of existing policies
 - Challenge of needs assessments and impact assessments
 - Consultation and engagement with service users and the general public
- 4.5 Each review would result in a package of evidence which would be used by the Mayor in determining his budget proposals in November 2013.
- 4.6 Possible areas of review that have previously been identified by members of the Board include:
- Home to School Transport (statutory element)
 - Youth Service/Parkfield
 - Riviera International Conference Centre
- 4.7 Other elements of the Work Programme would include budget monitoring (at specially convened meetings programmed at the end of each quarter) and a review of the Council's forward financial plan.
- 4.8 At its last meeting, the Board agreed that it would ask for further information about the collapse of the sea wall at Livermead in April 2013 and whether lessons could be learnt. The draft scope for that review is attached as Appendix 1.

4.9 At that meeting, the Board also agreed that it would consider adding the following two items when agreeing its Work Programme:

- Fixed Odds Betting Terminals
- Arrangements for Assessing Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Claims

A briefing note is currently being drafted in relation to Fixed Odds Betting Terminals and will be circulated shortly. A note on the arrangements for assessing Housing Benefit claims is attached at Appendix 2.

4.10 The Board is scheduled to meet in the week prior to each meeting of the Council which will enable it to review any issues due to be considered by Council if members so wish.

4.11 The Work Programme for the Health Scrutiny Board will be agreed at the first meeting of the Health Scrutiny Board to be held on 26 June 2013.

5. Possibilities and Options

5.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Board are free to determine its own Work Programme. However, regard should be given to the resources available within service departments of the Council to provide information to the Board which is not in line with broad themes work already being undertaken.

6. Fair Decision Making

6.1 The proposals in this report do not have a major community impact. However, if the proposals are accepted the reviews of the Overview and Scrutiny Board would form part of the fair decision process for the emerging proposals.

7. Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

7.1 The proposals in this report not require any procurement and so the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 does not need to be applied.

8. Consultation

8.1 No public consultation has been carried out in formulating this report.

9. Risks

9.1 The exact nature and timing of the reviews identified will need to be agreed by members through the scoping process. In order to deliver successful reviews, members will need to ensure that they are clear about what they wish to review (and

indeed what they will be excluding from the review). The timings of each review will also be critical to ensure that as little ‘bunching’ as possible occurs. The timeline for each individual review should be adhered to – this will help ensure that all the reviews can be delivered within the resources available.

- 9.2 A critical success factor will be members’ commitment to these reviews –members need to be sure that these issues are matters which can make a difference to the community of Torbay and that they are willing to commit time and energy into identifying consultees and key questions, meeting and discussing issues with other members, officers and consultees, reading and challenging the information presented to them and, finally, drawing conclusions, considering options appraisals and risk assessments, and formulating evidence based recommendations.
- 9.3 Members also need to receive support from officers within service departments and within relevant partners. Whilst the Scrutiny Support Team can provide day-to- day support (including research, consultation and analysis), detailed information will need to be provided through Executive Heads especially at the scoping, options appraisal, and risk assessment stages.
- 9.4 If members are not committed to the topics within the proposed Work Programme and to making overview and scrutiny a worthwhile mechanism to improve the lives of the community of Torbay (and if they do not receive adequate support from service departments), then there is a risk that no or few positive outcomes can be shown to have been achieved by Overview and Scrutiny.
- 9.5 Co-ordination with the various work programmes of the Council’s Policy Development Groups is necessary to ensure there is not duplication of Overview and Scrutiny’s role and workstreams and vice versa.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Proposed Scope for Livermead Sea Wall Review

Appendix 2 Briefing Note on Assessment of Housing Benefits Claims

Additional Information

None