

Annual Report And Work Programme – Overview And Scrutiny Committees

1. The County Council's constitution requires that Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) produce an annual work programme and that the programme should be agreed by a meeting of the Council.
2. While not required by the constitution, it is now accepted practice that the OSCs provide an annual report setting out what they have done in the past year and identifying some of the anticipated challenges of the following year.
3. Copies of the two documents have been circulated with the Blue Book.
4. Once again the Annual Report, in addition to reporting on the work of each of the five OSCs, identifies the main benefits that have resulted from the work that the OSCs have undertaken. This is particularly important because the OSCs must be seen to add value to the work of the County Council.
5. Anybody reading the report will see the importance of the work that the OSCs have done and the quality of the work can be demonstrated by the fact that the Cabinet has accepted virtually every one of the proposals that the OSCs' have put forward.
6. The report gives details of the way that the OSCs have engaged local people in their work. It is particularly important that scrutiny should involve local people more. This continues to be a major challenge. Some of the means that have been used to spread the word are detailed in the report. These include, not only local media coverage, but also the very successful conference that was held in early March. With delegates from 40 different local authorities the event proved to be a huge success.
7. Members of the OSCs have, as in previous years, put the work programme together based on their knowledge of areas of the Council's business that they feel would benefit from some review and investigation. The programme covers some of the most important challenges facing the Council in the next few years. There will be major changes in the provision of children's services and this will be reflected in the work programme as will the increasing development of partnership working and the crosscutting agenda. More and more, Overview and Scrutiny Committees will be required to look outwards and not just examine the Council's own services.
8. The programme does not contain as many projects as in previous years. This is because the new Committees that will be formed after the elections will need the flexibility to develop their own work programmes. Furthermore, experience has shown that it is important for there to be flexibility in the work programme to enable other projects to be taken on as required throughout the year. The draft work programme has been circulated to all Portfolio Holders and Strategic Managers prior to publication to ensure that they are aware in advance of what the OSCs plan to do and also to identify any possible areas of duplication of work between OSCs and PAGs.
9. The Council is requested to accept the annual report and to agree the work programme.

Bruce Allen
On Behalf Of The Overview And Scrutiny Committees

Overview and Scrutiny Committees – Work Programme for 2005/06

These items should be the main areas of work on the initial work programme for 2005/06. In addition there will be a number of ongoing overview items and other projects will arise as the year goes on and will be added accordingly.

OSC	Topic	Background
Lifelong Learning	Adding value to education through partnership working	For example, working with colleges, health, Connexions and other partners. Following the Children's Act 2004, local authorities have the lead role in bringing together partners to implement the Change for Children programme and deliver the five "Every Child Matters" outcomes (to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being) through children's trust arrangements. Scrutinising proposals for change and development would be very important.
	Youth Service provision	To maintain an overview of what is happening in the Youth Service, how the Service links to external partners and to scrutinise proposals for change. Also, to maintain an overview on the implementation of the improvement plan following inspection and identifying best practice in the provision of youth services and to identify how best to disseminate that practice across the County.
	Vocational training in secondary education	To consider the level and nature of vocational training being provided in schools and colleges and to review how successfully it matches local business needs.
	Fostering creativity across the curriculum	The revised national curriculum offers teachers more flexibility in delivery with opportunities for pupils to explore their creative potential to bring out their innate abilities. This work will test how the Council and the Learning and Skills Council is responding to this challenge.
	The future shape of community learning	Identifying the key issues for library and information services arising from the lifelong learning agenda, scrutinising how well libraries serve that agenda and defining the role that the library service should play in community learning.
Personal Care	Preparing for a Children's Trust	The integration of children's services promoted by the Children's Act offers challenges and opportunities. What is Buckinghamshire's approach to preparing for a Children's Trust? What are the risks, and is there a clear strategy for change? This work will track development in order to provide a 'critical friend' challenge to the process.
	Supporting People	The Supporting People programme underwent an inspection in February 2005. How is it working in Buckinghamshire? How strong are the partnership arrangements with district councils, health and the probation service? Are there any lessons to be learned from the outcomes of the inspection, and what are the plans for future development?
	Person-centred planning	How is person-centred planning for adults with learning disabilities developing in Buckinghamshire? Can it show a move away from buildings-based services to a greater integration into the local community, and links with employment, education and leisure agencies? What do those you have experienced person-centred planning think of it? Is it possible to demonstrate where it has made a difference?
Environment	Rural Strategy	The Rural Strategy is one of 15 major cross cutting projects that the Cabinet has approved to improve service delivery. A progress report to the Chief Officer's Management Team identified a number of projects being undertaken across the Council that, if brought together, would equate to a strategy. The OSC wishes to test how this approach is working and whether it is possible to ensure that the rural dimension is addressed through a variety of projects such as Customer First and by developing work with partners.
	Gypsy Services strategy	District Council's will be required by legislation to identify the need for gypsy sites in their area. The role of the County Council's Gypsy Services may therefore need to change in relation to the Council's own sites and action taken at illegal encampments. This work would seek to explore whether the Council's strategy is appropriate to respond to the changed circumstances.
	Climate change	Climate change is inevitable and changes that we make now will only begin to reverse this change in several decades time. The Committee will seek answers to how climate change could affect Buckinghamshire and what plans the County Council and the Environment Agency are considering and/or putting in place to deal with the effects.
	Country Parks	County Parks are now operating on a self-financing basis. Some parks are less viable than others and options for commercial income generation will need to be investigated to ensure they have a sustainable future. The OSC would wish to scrutinise plans for achieving such sustainability and also consider how the parks fit within the Council's core business.

Corporate Performance	Medium Term Planning (MTP)	The OSC's role in this is to challenge and to test whether the Council's aims and priorities are being delivered.
	Reviewing budget outcomes in relation to the MTP	The MTP requires an adequate budget in order for services to be delivered effectively. The OSC would consider how well this budget is being managed to bring about the outcomes set out in the MTP and also how well external grant funding is deployed and how it fits into the rest of the budget.
	Change Management	A new "Change Support" team to provide advice and assistance with change issues across the Council. The OSC will seek to understand the role of the team, what the benefits are that it is anticipated the team will bring and how their success will be measured.
Health	Management of Chronic Disease – Action Learning	Scrutinising the management of care provided for adults suffering from asthma. Looking at the prevalence of the disease, the triggers, any environmental issues and the patient pathway in the NHS. The project will run from January 2005 to September 2005 in conjunction with other OSCs across the Thames Valley region.
	Monitoring the Implementation of Shaping Health Services	The agreement of the OSC to proposed changes in Buckinghamshire health services contained a number of caveats. A sub-group of OSC members has been established to work with Buckinghamshire Hospitals Trust to monitor implementation.
	Health Inequalities – "A Child's Journey". Young People between the ages of 11 – 16 years.	Continuation of the work undertaken on parenting skills and access to mental health services by children of primary school age. Scoping exercise to take place to identify relevant area to be reviewed.
	Mental Health Services	Responding to statutory consultation for changes to mental health services in Buckinghamshire.
	Future growth agenda for Buckinghamshire and ensuring that the inequalities gap does not widen.	Stakeholders at the Health OSC Seminar in January 05, voted for this topic as a priority for the OSC. It is important for the OSC to ensure that the NHS and other organizations, including public utilities, are planning for the future population. To maintain an overview by calling Chief Executives from the TVHA and Buckinghamshire's PCTs to explain how they are planning for the future, taking into account capacity and the recruitment and retention of staff. Work needs also to take account of the Local Delivery Vehicle and AVDC's Vision 2031.
	Assessing the effectiveness of patient and public involvement in Buckinghamshire	New systems for patient and public involvement came on stream as from 2002 onwards. They include Patient Forums, PALS and ICAS. Health organizations also have a statutory responsibility to involve the public in the planning and operation of its work. Stakeholders at the OSC seminar considered that PPIF should be reviewed. A scoping exercise has taken place and highlighted the fragmentation of PPIF.
	Choosing Health – White Paper on Public Health	Choosing Health is about the transformation of the NHS to improving health in the widest terms. It requires partnership working to take place with LAs and other partners. The OSC will scrutinise the way in which health organizations in Buckinghamshire plan to implement the proposals working in partnership with other agencies.