

To: The Scrutiny Committee

Date: 6th. May 2014

Report of: Head of Law and Governance.

Title of Report: Scrutiny Work Programme 2013 – 2014 outcomes.

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present the outcomes from the scrutiny work programme for 2013 – 2014.

**Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Mark Mills (Committee Chair)
Councillor Gill Sanders (Committee
Vice-Chair)**

Recommendations:

- 1. Note the progress in the current programme and recommend which items should continue and be carried forward to the 13/14 programme. Programme attached at Appendix 1.**
- 2. Note and make any comments on the outcomes for this year's programme attached at Appendix 2.**
- 3. Note and comment on the comparative data presented in tables 1 – 3.**
- 4. Raise any operational issues for consideration. Agreed operational arrangements are attached at Appendix 3.**
- 5. Suggest any new items to the committee for 14/15 which item (members will have a further opportunity to do this at a later date).**

Introduction

1. This year saw the introduction of changes to the scrutiny function agreed by Council following recommendations from a review led by Scrutiny Councillors. The improvement aims of the new scrutiny arrangements were to:
 - Improve and broaden member engagement
 - Focus member time in areas that interest them or their constituents
 - Improve community engagement
2. For particular note the programme set under these new arrangements in June 2013 included:
 - Named lead members, from the committee, for all themes and issues allowing influence and engagement to be spread.
 - Opportunities and encouragement for **all** non-executive councillors to support and engage in issues and themes that interest them.
 - New protocols for working providing for improved governance.
 - Improved scheduling and use of the Forward Plan to engage members more directly in decision making and the work of the City Executive Board.
 - Reporting of progress within the work programme and the recommendations made by members to Council and also more visibly on the Councils web site.
 - The appointment and selection of co-optees to support and inform the work of members when considering issues and themes.

Setting the Programme

3. As usual the committee set its work programme from “long lists” of items posed for scrutiny from various sources. These items included a number of reviews from the previous year that were incomplete with a strong recommendation that they were brought to a conclusion. This, with one exception, was agreed by the committee.
4. In placing items in the programme officers and members left room to accommodate topical issues and allow for the pre-scrutiny of decisions on their way to the City Executive Board and Council. There is a view amongst some members that the reduction of scrutiny committees to 1 has hampered this work because it provides less time. It should be noted that the reduction of committees has not reduced the number of meetings so the opportunities to pre-scrutinise are at least as great now as previously. Scrutiny Committees have always had to focus attention in an effort to produce good quality results. The advice of the Scrutiny Officer has always been to give time and focus within committee meetings for debate and questioning in order to add value. This advice should never and has never precluded members from pre-scrutinising any decision that they wish to.

5. Appendix 3 outlines the current operating arrangements agreed in June 2013. Members are asked to outline any changes they wish to propose to the next committee.
6. As already mentioned the programme is rolling which allows items under consideration in one year to be recommended for inclusion in the programme for the next. A number of issues from this year have not been completed or started. These are highlighted in the programme attached at Appendix 1. There is, however, a reasonable expectation that items agreed for inclusion and scheduling will be largely completed within the year and the expectations of members have been achieved this year.
7. To remind members the resources available to committees to deliver their programme are a mixture of:
 - Scrutiny Officer time
 - Committee and Member Services Officer time.
 - Councillor time through committee meetings and contributions to review groups, panels and inquiries.
 - Time from the Chair and Vice-Chair of the committee to guide the management of the programme, agendas and generally highlight and promulgate the work of their committees.
 - Service officer time in attending meetings and providing information.
 - Board Member time in attending meetings, providing information and answering questions.

Outcomes for the year 2013/14

8. This has been another busy year for the committee with issues being taken forward through formal committee meetings and various panels and reviews. The committee has produced about thirty reports to the City Executive Board outlining recommendations for change or improvement, a number of these have been as a result of significant pieces of work. At each meeting members have seen and reviewed the outcome of these recommendations. Appendix 2 shows the complete table of all outcomes and the table below shows counts. Comparisons to previous years are usually made but this historic data is split across 2 committees rather than for the function as a whole so is not useful here. Instead the table below shows the outcome for this year and comparisons to the combined averages from the previous committees.

Table 1 – Recommendations for 2013/2014

Accepted	Accepted & Amended	Noted	Refused	Pending	Total
58 68%	12 14%	3 4%	10 12%	2 2%	85

Table 2 - Percentage Comparisons to previous years
Accepted and implemented recommendations

	04/05 All	05/06 All	06/07 All	07/08 All	08/09 VAP & CAP	9/10 VAP & CAP	10/11 VAP & CAP	11/12 VAP & CAP	12/13 VAP & CAP	13/14 All
*% accepted	77%	76%	64%	45%	60%	89%	82%	70%	84%	86%
**% implemented	n/a	n/a	n/a	51%	40%	25%	43%	67%	41%	54%
**% in the process of implementation	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	60%	52%	54%	29%	47%	46%
Total recs. made					162	202	134	113	75	85

* Count of all accepted/accepted with amendment and noted recommendations.

**Comparison done at the same time of year.

Figure is a percentage of all accepted, accepted with amendment and noted recommendations.

- As mentioned earlier a number of substantial reviews have been undertaken by members but the committee should also highlight the considerable efforts and value provided by the 2 standing panels set at the beginning of the year, Housing and Finance. The Finance Panel has met 5 times and also produced a review of the budget proposals. The Housing Panel has met 7 times and is about to undertake a review in partnership with the newly formed Tenant Scrutiny Panel aimed at suggesting an “Oxford Standard” for the fabric of Council homes. This is an innovative piece of work for the Council and hopes to provide real experience and influence for Council Tenants.

Member Input

10. As ever members have shown support and enthusiasm for the scrutiny process and have worked at committee and on reviews groups and panels. This level of activity and engagement is excellent and all members engaged should be thanked and congratulated. Executive Board Members have also shown themselves ready and open to engage and the City Executive Board willing to positively consider scrutiny recommendations. All of this is a demonstration of healthy democratic structures which contribute to the success of the Council.
11. Overall more than 60% of non-executive councillors have been actively engaged in the scrutiny process this year which is an increase on all previous years. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the new structure which focuses member involvement around interest and priority rather than committee membership.
12. The table below shows data kept on attendance at committee and details of the number of substantive items appearing on committee agendas. It shows the highest ever substitution rate overall. The current Chair has expressed the view at Council items appearing on committee agendas should not only be limited in number but also in time for debate. The “general rule” is that no more than 3 or 4 substantive items will appear on any agenda thus allowing for a good quality and focused 2 hour meeting. This has largely been achieved. The Chair of the committee “manages business” at meetings and so the ability of the Chair to control debate within time limits already exists. Future Chairs may wish to be more directive at meetings should committee agree that this is an issue that needs addressing.

Table 3 – Committee attendance and management

Meeting Date	No. Seats	No. Substitutes	No. of vacant seats	No. of substantive items on agenda	% of seats vacant	% of seats substituted
4th. June 2013	12	1	2	3	17	8
2nd. July 213	12	2	2	3	17	17
5th. September 2013	12	2	1	3	8	17
1st. October 2013	12	6	1	4	8	50
5th.	12	0	0	5	0	0

November 2013						
3rd. December 2013	12	1	0	5	0	8
14th. January 2014 – cancelled	12					
4th. February 2014	12	1	1	4	8	8
4th. March 2014	12	4	0	2	0	33
1st. April 2014	12	0	0	3	0	0
Averages so far				3.6	6	16

Looking forward to 2013/2014

13. Officers will begin talking to all members of Council about items for inclusion in the work programme after elections in May. The movement of the election to the end of May will mean that this information will not be available for the scrutiny committee to consider when they meet for the first time on the 23rd. June and may delay the start of the new programme.

14. The selection principles advised by officers will remain as in previous years:

- Is the issue contained and focused
- Does it link to an objective of the organisation
- Will it have an impact within communities
- Is it clear what might be a measure of success
- Does broad member support exist
- Can it reasonably be delivered within the resources available

In addition it is important to understand the views of the current committee. The current work programme is attached at Appendix 1 with shaded areas highlighting areas for consideration in the coming programme. Members are asked to decide which items they wish to recommend for carry forward or additional items they wish to add.

Name and contact details of author:

Pat Jones

Committee and Member Services Manager

Tel: 01865 252191 e-mail:phjones@oxford.gov.uk

List of background papers: None

Version number: 1

This page is intentionally left blank