

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 26 JANUARY 2010

REPORT BY CHAIRMAN OF COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

WARD(S) AFFECTED: none

---

**Purpose/Summary of Report**

- This report is intended to support the Community Scrutiny Committee in reviewing and planning its work programme for 2009/10.

<b><u>RECOMMENDATION FOR : Community Scrutiny Committee</u></b>	
<b>(A)</b>	that the work programme shown in this report be reviewed and agreed, and
<b>(B)</b>	that the scrutiny officer be asked to make any changes, additions or arrangements as might be discussed in the meeting.

1.0 Background

1.1 Items previously required, identified or suggested for the work programme are set out in Essential Reference Paper B (Pages 11.7 -11.9).

2.0 Report

2.1 During autumn 2009 the council's external auditors (Grant Thornton) undertook a "Scrutiny and Audit Committee effectiveness review". The report, recommendations and associated action plan coming out of this review are due to be presented to Audit Committee on 20 January 2010. The outcome

of this discussion is not available at the time of submitting this report.

- 2.2 Members are reminded that a second scrutiny workshop is due to take place prior to the start of Scrutiny Committee on 16 February 2010. This session (5:30 – 7:00 pm in Council Chamber) will offer members an opportunity to:
- feedback on the scrutiny aspects of the budget-setting process
  - review training – evaluation and planning
  - identify potential topics and set the direction of scrutiny in East Herts for the 2010/11 civic year.
- 2.3 All scrutiny members are encouraged to come and contribute to the debate, although written evaluation/planning forms will be available for those who are unable to attend on the evening.
- 2.4 The meeting that follows the February workshop will be a Joint Scrutiny Committee for all members to debate the two agenda items:
- 2010/11 Service Plans
  - 2009/10 Estimates and Future Targets
- The meeting will then revert to a CBS-only meeting for the remaining agenda item.
- 2.5 In order to manage the scrutiny agendas and prevent them becoming over-crowded, a few routine reports have been changed from being scrutinised as annual, single topic reports and will now be incorporated into the twice yearly 'Service Plan monitoring' reports. Any 'exception' reporting will be brought to the attention of the committee at the earliest opportunity.
- 2.6 This change follows an agreement by the Scrutiny Chairmen and, in the case of Community Scrutiny, applies initially to the reporting of
- East Herts Play Strategy – review and progress against action plan (originally scheduled for this meeting)
  - East Herts Cultural Strategy – progress against action plan (originally scheduled for 27 April 2010).
- At this time it does not apply to the East Herts Homelessness, Homeless Prevention or Housing strategies as members felt these issues should continue to be watched closely in the current economic climate. Neither does it apply to the over-arching 'Sustainable Community Strategy' which will continue to be reported separately.

- 2.7 Members are reminded that all scrutiny members are invited to attend Corporate Business Scrutiny on 13 April 2010 when the “Business case for investment in Castle Hall” report will be on the agenda.
- 2.8 In East Herts, the Community Scrutiny Committee is charged with scrutiny of crime and disorder issues (under Sections 19 - 21 of the Police and Justice Act 2006). The Act requires the designated committee to discuss Crime and Disorder at least once in every twelve month period, so the Community Scrutiny Committee needs to have regard to this issue when considering its work programme.
- 2.9 In July 2009 the committee considered a report ‘Community Safety Consultation – member involvement’ but it has not looked at a specific topic in any detail. Space has been reserved on the agenda of 27 April 2010 for a ‘crime and disorder’ item. Officers would like to propose that members prioritise from the list below and, subject to availability of external agencies, members will have the opportunity to learn about the issues and ask questions.
- **Community Payback**  
**Community Payback** is a punishment handed out by the courts. It’s demanding work, carried out by offenders in the community. They have to wear orange high-visibility jackets, marked **Community Payback**, so you can see that they’re paying back your community for their crimes. Led by the Probation Service, it is a national scheme delivered locally. Projects can range from litter removal or clearing dense undergrowth, through repairing and redecorating community centres, to removing graffiti.
  - **LiFE (Local Intervention Fire Education)**  
 Started in 2006, the course aims are to address fire setting and anti social behaviour by engaging young people on a five day work experience course that is tightly structured, well focused and conducted in a disciplined team environment.
  - **Designated Public Place Orders**  
 The Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 (CJPA) gave local authorities the power to designate public areas through the introduction of a **DPPO** where it is an offence to drink alcohol after being required by a police officer not to do so. The police have the power to require individuals to surrender the alcohol and any opened or sealed containers, and if they fail to comply with the request they can be arrested. The powers – which replaced the old drinking byelaws - were introduced to help the police deal with the problems of anti-social drinking in the public space. DPPOs make it easier for local authorities to designate places where restrictions on public drinking will apply and can be used in areas that have experienced alcohol-related disorder or nuisance.
  - **Suggestions from members**
- 2.10 There are two agenda items scheduled for Corporate Business scrutiny meeting on 1 June 2010 which offer another suitable opportunity for all scrutiny members to work together on cross-cutting issues. The reports concerned are:
- 2009/10 Out-turns and Targets report
  - Service Plans October 2009 – March 2010 monitoring report.

- 2.11 It has been proposed that the first part of the Corporate Business Scrutiny committee meeting on 1 June 2010 should be formally held as a Joint Scrutiny meeting for the two agenda items listed above. A decision on this is not available at the time of submitting this report. A verbal update will be given at the Community Scrutiny meeting.
- 2.12 Following the successful piloting of a 'select committee-style' approach to scrutiny by the Health Engagement Panel, it has been suggested that the traditional 'annual reports' from the Housing Associations (RSLs) and the East Herts Citizen Advice Service (CAB) scheduled for 27 July 2010 could prove to be more useful if organised along these lines. All visitors representing these agencies would appear together before the scrutiny committee and be asked to respond to a prepared bank of questions. These questions would ask them to focus on specific issues of key interest to members and address the priorities identified by the council with respect to service to our residents.
- 2.13 Members are asked to agree to this 'select committee-style' approach and indicate the key areas they would like to explore with these agencies. The Scrutiny Officer will then draft a set of questions and circulate them for approval nearer the meeting date (but in good time to brief the speakers).
- 2.14 Members are reminded that the next meeting of this committee on 27 April 2010 will take place in the Council Chamber at Wallfields in Hertford.

### 3.0 Implications/Consultations

- 3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within Essential Reference Paper 'A' (Page 11.6).

#### Background Papers

Four principles of good public scrutiny published by CfPS (Centre for Public Scrutiny) [click here for link to CfPS external site](#)

East Herts Council own current guidelines for selecting issues for review. A summary of this information is printed at the back of Essential Reference Paper B (pages 11.7 -11.9).

Contact Member: Cllr Colin Woodward, Chairman: Community Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer: Ceri Pettit, Head of Strategic Direction and Performance Manager – Extn 2240

Report Author: Marian Langley, Scrutiny Officer – Extn 1612

## ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

<p>Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives</p>	<p>Effective use of the scrutiny process contributes to the Council's ability to meet two core objectives:</p> <p><b>Fit for purpose, services fit for you</b>  <i>Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.</i></p> <p><b>Leading the way, working together</b>  <i>Deliver responsible community leadership that engages with our partners and the public.</i></p> <p>In monitoring the performance of the council's services and action plans, the Committee is monitoring the Council's achievement of all of its corporate objectives.</p> <p>Any additional issues identified for scrutiny will relate to at least one of the Council's corporate objectives.</p>
<p>Consultation:</p>	<p>Potential topics for scrutiny are always invited from members of the public, the Executive and all Members.</p>
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>According to the Council's constitution, the scrutiny committees are responsible for the setting of their own work programme in consultation with the Executive and in doing so they shall take into account wishes of members on that committee who are not members of the largest political group on the Council.</p>
<p>Financial:</p>	<p>Any additional meetings and every task and finish group has resource needs linked to officer support activity and time for officers from the services to make the required input.</p>
<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>none</p>
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p>Matters which may benefit from scrutiny may be overlooked. The selection of inappropriate topics for review would risk inefficient use of resources. Where this involved partners, it could risk damaging the reputation of the council and relations with partners.</p>