

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 15 MARCH 2011

REPORT BY CHAIRMAN OF ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE

8. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12

WARD(S) AFFECTED: None.

Purpose/Summary of Report

- This report is intended to support the Environment Scrutiny Committee in reviewing and planning its work programme for 2011/12.

<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:</u> that	
(A)	The work programme detailed in this report be reviewed and agreed; and
(B)	The scrutiny officer be requested 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**. This includes the Planning Enforcement Task and Finish Group reporting back to the Committee, at the September meeting, following a short review on the outcome of their recommendations after they had been in place for one year.

1.2 The full 2012/13 Integrated Service Plan and Budget timetable is not due to be set until April/May. Some changes and/or additions may have to be made to the draft work programme to meet certain deadlines or actions.

2.0 Report

2.1 Two scrutiny evaluation/planning workshops were held with members during January and February 2011. A 'long list' of

potential scrutiny topics for 2011/12 came out of these events. This list is given in **Essential Reference Paper C – to follow**).

2.2 These topics could fall into a range of categories:

- High priority and extensive/important enough to warrant a more detailed review through a task and finish group
- Important, but limited scope which could come as a report to a future scrutiny committee meeting for discussion
- Interesting, but not a priority at this time (keep on 'waiting list')
- Possible, but need to wait for changes in government policy or legislation to become clearer before reviewing
- Topic does not warrant use of scrutiny resources and/or does not meet our own criteria for selection.

2.3 As a reminder, East Herts agreed criteria for selection of a topic for scrutiny review are reproduced on the back page of **Essential Reference Paper B**.

2.3 During the recent evaluation/planning workshops members expressed the view that in the current economic climate and with limited resources, selection should also consider:

- the level of the spend/cost to the council for this topic
- the level of risk associated with this topic/issue
- the length of time since topic was last reviewed.

2.5 As part of the consultation process for preparing this report, the current scrutiny Chairmen and senior officers have given feedback on the list of potential topics. Their views have been summarised in the commentary column of **Essential Reference Paper C (to follow)**.

2.6 Members of this Committee are asked to indicate their views for topics to be included in a 'short list' to go forward to the new Environment Scrutiny Committee at their first meeting of the new civic year.

2.7 Members may wish to note that an article explaining scrutiny and asking for suggestions for review topics from residents will appear in the next edition of Link magazine. Any responses arising from this consultation will be brought to the attention of the new 2011/12 scrutiny chairmen and committees.

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'**.

Background Papers

Four principles of good public scrutiny published by CfPS (Centre for Public Scrutiny) summarised in **Essential Reference Paper B** or [click here for link to CfPS external site](#)

East Herts Council's own current guidelines for selecting issues for review.

A summary of this information is printed at the back of **Essential Reference Paper B**.

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ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives:	<p>Effective use of the scrutiny process contributes to the Council's ability to meet two core objectives:</p> <p>Fit for purpose, services fit for you <i>Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.</i></p> <p>Leading the way, working together <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>
Consultation:	Potential topics for scrutiny are always invited from members of the public, the Executive and all Members.
Legal:	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.
Financial:	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.
Human Resource:	None.
Risk Management:	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.