

REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting:	20 September 2016
Subject:	Draft Scope for Homelessness Scrutiny Challenge Panel
Responsible Officer:	Alex Dewsnap (Divisional Director of Strategic Commissioning)
Scrutiny Lead Member area:	Councillor Jeff Anderson, Policy Lead Member & Councillor Manji Kara, Performance Lead Member
Exempt:	No
Wards affected:	All
Enclosures:	Draft Scope for Homelessness Scrutiny Challenge Panel

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out the draft scope for the scrutiny Challenge Panel on homelessness.

Recommendations:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- Consider and agree a scope for the Challenge Panel, considering the options presented by officers at (A) and (B) below;
- Request that Groups notify lead Policy Officer (Rebecka Steven) of the membership of the Challenge Panel (a maximum of 8 members);
- Agree that the Chair of the Review will be Councillor Jeff Anderson
- Agree the timing of this Challenge Panel and associated reporting arrangements.

Section 2 – Report

The Scrutiny Leadership Group agreed that a Challenge Panel on homelessness form part of the scrutiny work programme for 2016/2017.

It was agreed that the Challenge Panels would enable short sharp scrutiny – short in that the review is completed in one meetings and sharp as it is very focused and concise.

At a Challenge Panel, a small group of scrutiny members (maximum of 8), relevant officers, and sometimes portfolio holders, meet to discuss a particular policy, strategy or issue informally and in detail. This provides an opportunity for a more detailed and more informal discussion of a particular matter than would otherwise be possible at Committee.

The benefits of Challenge Panels are that they:

- are timely – a more agile and responsive methodology than other scrutiny reviews
- allow greater input than an item at committee but less input than would be required at a review
- consider one off issues or matters of urgency
- require less time commitments of members and officers to attend meetings.

The scrutiny Councillors agreed all review work would take the form of a Challenge Panel in 2016/17 so as to be manageable within current resources.

The attached scope has been drafted with input from officers and Councillors who met on 30 August 2016.

The scope put forward by Councillors covers three areas, namely (1) to understand the drivers of homelessness in Harrow; (2) to examine whether the solutions currently being implemented effectively address these drivers; (3) to scrutinise the supply/ land/ site issues.

It will be difficult for all of this to be covered in one Challenge Panel, with each topic given enough time to be considered and debated and recommendations formed.

There are two potential solutions to this:

- (A) The briefing, which will be prepared by officers prior to the Challenge Panel, will cover points (1) and (2) in order that members are fully aware of the drivers of homelessness locally and of the solutions being implemented in advance – then the Challenge Panel meeting can focus on scrutinising the supply/ land site issues;
- (B) Two Challenge Panels could be convened, one into the drivers and solutions around homelessness locally and the second into the supply/ land site issues; this would mean that two out of the three remaining Challenge Panels for this financial year would be set aside for this, and

one of the other topics earmarked for a challenge panel on the work programme would have to be foregone. It is also worth noting that a considerable amount of additional officer time (particularly from the Housing Division) would have to be committed to supporting two separate Challenge Panels. It should also be noted that there has already been a huge amount of resource across the Council directed to looking at this area of policy to date including:

- Roundtable on 23 February 2016
- CSB Challenge Panel on 25 May 2016
- Overview and Scrutiny 8 June 2016
- Performance and Finance 13 July 2016
- Report to CSB on 27 July 2016
- Deep Dive Review on 17 August 2016.

Financial Implications

The costs of delivering this project will be met from within existing resources.

Performance Issues

There are no specific performance issues associated with this report.

Environmental Impact

There is no specific environmental impact associated with this report.

Risk Management Implications

There are no risk management implications

Equalities Implications

The Challenge Panel will consider during the course of its work, how equality implications have been taken into account in current policy and practice and consider the possible implications of any changes it recommends.

Council Priorities

Protect the Most Vulnerable and Support Families

Build a Better Harrow

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Statutory clearances not required.

Ward Councillors notified:	N/A
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Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact:

Rebecka Steven, Policy Officer, 020 8420 9695

Background Papers:

Draft scope for the Homelessness Scrutiny Challenge Panel (appended)