HarrowCOUNCIL
LONDON

Meeting:	Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny sub committee
Date:	5 July 2006
Subject:	Scrutiny Work Programme
Responsible Officer:	Paul Najsarek, Director, People Performance and Policy
Contact Officer:	Heather Smith, Scrutiny Officer
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor David Ashton, Business Development
Key Decision:	No
Status:	Part I

Section 1: Summary

Decision Required

That the sub committee:
- Considers and comments upon the items included in the work programme long list for this sub committee
- Notes and comments upon the items in the work programmes of the other committees sub committees
- Calls for a further report to the next meeting of the sub committee incorporating more detail with regard to scope, prioritisation and methodology for topics

Reason for report

This report outlines how the sub committee's work programme has been devised for the period 2006 – 2010 and introduces the key topics that have been included in an initial 'long list'. The report also considers new ways in which the work programme might be undertaken.

When agreed the sub committee's work programme will be provided to the Overview and Scrutiny committee for information.

Benefits

The sub committee has the opportunity to contribute to the improvement of services for local people and the work of the council in a number of ways. By carefully structuring the work programme, the sub committee has the opportunity to:
- Gain maximum benefit out of the value they can add.
- Be strategic in the areas it targets.
- Consider its work levels and any resource implications that may be present.

Cost of Proposals

The work programme will be managed within the scrutiny budget. No additional funding will be sought.

Risks

Failing to consider the work programme in detail may mean opportunities for scrutiny to contribute to the improvement of services for local people and the work of the council may be diminished.

Implications if recommendations rejected

The Overview and Scrutiny committee is required to agree a work programme each year. Each sub committee contributes to this process by determining its own work programme and feeding this into the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Failure to provide this to Overview and Scrutiny would mean this Committee would not be able to meet its constitutional responsibilities.

Section 2: Report

2.1 <u>Brief History</u>

Developing the work programme
2.1.1 In September 2005, the Overview and Scrutiny committee agreed the 'Principles and Protocols of Scrutiny'. This document outlines the process by which the work programme will be developed. In particular, the document states that items included in the committees' work programme should:

- Be identified as a particular concern to residents (residents surveys/consultation exercises) and not necessarily solely within the remit of the council
- Focus on an area of poor performance (for example as highlighted by Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs))
- Focus on areas of apparent high cost and poor performance
- Focus on the delivery of improved outcomes for local people not simply the internal structures or functions of local organisations
- Assist the council to achieve its corporate priorities
- Be requested by either senior officers or cabinet as a problematic area where the resources of overview and scrutiny would help identify service solutions
- Focus on the source of a high level of complaints
- Focus on an area in which the council wishes to develop policy
- Focus on an area in which government legislation is being developed and which would benefit from early consideration by overview and scrutiny committee/sub committees
- Be informed by the programme of inspection work to be undertaken by external inspectors in order to support rather than duplicate investigation (if appropriately programmed scrutiny could assist in identifying problematic areas, identifying solutions and thus contributing towards improved inspection score)
- Be informed by services own service improvement programme, adding value to this process by offering support to service investigations rather than duplicating.

2.1.2   The long list of issues attached as Appendix D was identified through:
- Executive directorate service plans
- Meetings with the relevant directors/managers to discuss key issues in their areas
- Issues arising from performance monitoring – services requiring attention (poor performance) (council and partner)
- Joint priorities for the council and partners arising from the Local Area Agreement (LAA)
- Central government policy direction and areas identified by inspectorates.

2.1.3   It also includes:
- Resolutions made by the sub committee in 2005/06 that are outstanding (excluding established standing items)
- Suggestions made by members, officers and colleagues within the council and partner organisations

2.1.4   With the anticipated implementation of legislation over the coming months, there will be an increasing emphasis on the role of scrutiny not only to consider the council's own performance but also that of our partners and how we work with them to deliver improved quality of life for local people. The attached work programme reflects this growing responsibility.

Delivering the work programme

2.2.1 During the conduct of last year's work programme, councillors felt that other methods could also be employed to improve how scrutiny is delivered. In particular this reflected experience that suggested that the amount of items being considered at committee meant that the actual time devoted to each was insufficient to allow effective challenge. During the year, both the Strengthening Communities and Environment and Economy sub committees held special meetings to consider particular items from their work programmes that would otherwise been included as agenda items at committee

2.2.2 The 'Scrutiny Principles and Protocols' paper, adopted by the Overview and Scrutiny committee in September 2005 noted:

> *'The majority of the work of scrutiny is currently carried out either via in depth review groups or as items on the quarterly committee meeting. As only a maximum of 2 reviews are practical each year this means that the agendas of committee become overcrowded and thus that a number of issues not meriting detailed consideration via in depth review, are not being given the attention that they nevertheless warrant. It is becoming apparent that alternative methods for scrutinising the council's performance should be investigated. The scrutiny committees and the scrutiny unit would like to experiment with different approaches to the scrutiny function in order to enhance the challenge process and the subsequent benefit to services.'*

2.2.3 Whilst both committee and in-depth review still clearly have a key role to play, there are a number of additional methodologies that might be usefully deployed to deliver the scrutiny work programme and these are outlined below. When considering the work programme, members might also like to consider these different approaches to its completion.

- Light-touch reviews – of time-sensitive issues, or matters where a particular element of policy or performance might need to be considered. They could be commissioned by the (sub) committee at one meeting, to report back to the next one with either some key findings, or if appropriate key findings and recommendations, which could be discussed and approved as appropriate.

- Working parties – where issues are of continued importance (for example, the delivery of a statutory function or a long-term council project). It would eliminate the necessity for officers to continually attend committee to present updates on issues which may not have changed substantially since the last meeting. For example, members might find it useful to have a working party following through the progress of the Decent Homes Programme or the Business Transformation Project, which could report back to the committee on an annual / six monthly basis. A working party would be free, if it wished, to do its own research on a particular issue and discuss policy

development in this context with officers from the particular service involved, lending flexibility to the discussion on ongoing items.

- Challenge sessions – on many occasions – particularly when a policy is being developed – officers appreciate feedback on proposals from members. The committee environment is not suited to this, mainly because of time constraints. Challenge sessions, where a small group of officers and members are able to discuss a particular policy or strategy more informally and in more detail, provide an opportunity for members to provide an alternative, 'real time' perspective to council business, and lend additional accountability to the policy development process. This level of detailed challenge would not be possible as a single item on a packed committee agenda. The key findings of the session could then be fed back to the sub-committee for endorsement. Challenge sessions could provide an additional forum for involving Portfolio Holders.

- Evidentiary hearings – an opportunity for internal officers and external partners to meet members to consider national, regional and local policy and performance – although it would be geared towards collecting evidence from external partners. The purpose would be to identify key examples of "best practice", and to benchmark with neighbouring authorities and other organisations carrying out similar roles. Findings and recommendations, where appropriate, could then be fed through the sub-committee to the officers involved. There could always be the option of expanding a single evidentiary hearing into a light-touch review, with the addition of a desktop review of evidence, site visits and other events if thought necessarily. An evidentiary hearing also formed a key part of the Tourism review undertaken by the last administration.

- Conferences – conferences allow members, officers and partners to engage with local people to identify ways of improving council services. Workshops, exercises and activities will enable members to reflect suggestions and proposals which partners and the public might want the council to adopt on a particular issue. These can be fed back to the sub-committee as a set of key findings (identifying areas where members of the public have expressed concern, or have praised council activities) or incorporated into a larger, ongoing review process. In the case of the former, members could ask officers for a verbal or oral response at the next meeting as to how they propose to respond to the points raised at the conference.

- Public events – this would tend to be more along the lines of a public consultation, survey or focus group, more usually used as part on a larger-scale review. It would enable members to get a "snapshot" of public opinion on a given issue, which would be useful (if carried out at the right time) for officers developing policies. It might also enable members to identify whether certain issues raised sufficient public concern to justify further study in the form of a light-touch or in-depth

review, and provide signposts to officers in the case of potentially shifting priorities.

It is hoped that these suggested methods of delivering the work programme and a more focussed approach to committee agenda setting can make the best use of both members' and officers' time and at the same time deliver the most effective challenge to the council's (and increasingly our partners') policy and performance. It is anticipated that were these or any other alternative ways of undertaking the scrutiny work programme prove to be effective as 'pilots' they will be applied more generally.

Considering the long-list

2.3.1 Attached to this report are appendices incorporating the long-lists of items for inclusion in the work programmes for each committee, derived as per the process outlined above. This is the first time this list has been considered by members and as this is the first meeting of a new administration, it is suggested that members do not make any formal decisions on the content of the work programme but spend time during the ongoing induction period to consider the suggested topics and call for a further report to the next cycle of meetings to determine their programme of work. This report would be more specific regarding:

- prioritisation of topics for consideration
- their programming and
- appropriate methodologies

2.3.2 As a further development of previous practice, it is suggested that members consider developing a 4-year programme. This again reflects a more flexible approach to delivery of the work programme and allows for programmes of work comprising different approaches to be developed during the lifetime of the committees. However, it is suggested that members bear in mind that:

- realistic project planning needs to be undertaken to ensure that each committee has a realistic and appropriately targeted workload – for example, previously, each committee was not expected to undertake more than 2 in-depth reviews each year. An assessment of the likely resource commitment for the proposed different methodologies will need to be undertaken to inform work programme decisions.
- a degree of flexibility will need to remain in the work programmes of each committee to allow for the inclusion of 'urgent' items for example items referred from cabinet or local regional or national policy developments.

Specific issues for the Safer and Stronger Scrutiny sub committee

2.4.1 The proposed work programme for the Safer and Stronger Scrutiny sub committee is attached as Appendix D.

2.4.2 This section outlines very briefly the rationale for the topics included:

- **Voluntary Sector programme** – there is potential for an ongoing programme of work to look at how Harrow works with the voluntary

sector. Projects could include the future role and purpose of grant funding, building capacity within the voluntary sector as well as examining how the council works with the voluntary sector.

- **Safer communities programme** – there are a range of community safety related topics that Members may wish to consider as part of a programme of activity:
  - ➢ Safer communities (for example social cohesion, respect and antisocial behaviour)
  - ➢ Safety and the physical environment (for example licensing, enforcement and envirocrime)
  - ➢ Decision making processes (relating to mainstreaming of community safety within decision making processes under s17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998)
  - ➢ Fear of crime (initially monitoring the implementation of recommendations from last year's review and later reassessing how fear of crime is incorporated into wider service delivery)

- **Financial inclusion** – the council has developed links with the Department for Work and Pensions relating to encouraging benefit take up, but there is scope for developing further advice services such as debt counselling. There is potential for exploring means of building capacity within the voluntary sector in order to provide services that meet the needs of Harrow's diverse communities. This project could be linked into the voluntary sector review.

- **Public Realm infrastructure** – Members may want to look at how lessons can be learned from the rollout of the existing scheme in terms of value for money and resident satisfaction, and how changes might be effected to expand the scope of the scheme. Members may also wish to look at outsourcing, and how contracting-out might affect the viability, accountability and effectiveness of service delivery in this high-profile area.

- **Strategic objectives for community cohesion** – a new team has been established within the Learning and Community Development Directorate of People First. Members may wish to support and contribute to the development of objectives for community cohesion in Harrow.

- **Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) 6 monthly assessments** – the Police and Justice bill is set to require local CDRPs to review their performance on a six monthly basis, which would provide an opportunity for the sub committee to hold the CDRP and relevant portfolio holder to account on a regular basis.

- **Faith in Harrow** – based on the seven religions listed in the 2001 census, Harrow has the highest level of religious diversity of any local authority in England and Wales. Members may wish to consider the long-term impact of such diversity on service delivery.

- **Phone booth provision** – Members may wish to consider commissioning a short light touch review into how the council should consult its residents on the subject of removal of public call boxes, as it is empowered to do under the Office of Communications' Universal Service Obligation (the USO defines BT's obligations to the general public).

- **Area working programme** – Members may wish to review of the impact of area-based working and explore governance issues relating to neighbourhood working. Such a project could include a review of the extended schools programme.

- **Community strategy** – the strategy sets the long-term direction for Harrow, in which priorities for Safer and Stronger will need to be reflected.

2.2 Consultation
As noted consultation has taken place with:
- Relevant Executive Directors and Directors;
- The community via Harrow's website;
- All Members of council.

2.3 Financial Implications
The scrutiny budget for 2006/07 is £340,400 which is made up of £266,050 for salaries and £74,350 for projects and other expenditure. This programme of work will be delivered within this provision.

2.5 Legal Implications
There are no legal implications in this report.

2.6 Equalities Impact
Scrutiny reviews make a significant contribution to the improvement of services for Harrow's multicultural community. When considering any item on the work programme across the year, the sub committee specifically takes into consideration how to engage with and meet the diverse needs of residents.

2.7 Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Considerations
Individual scrutiny reviews may impact on crime and disorder and details are given in the Appendices.

Section 3: Supporting Information/Background Documents

Appendix A: Suggested topics for the Overview and Scrutiny committee work programme 2006 – 2010
Appendix B: Suggested topics for the Adult Health and Social Care scrutiny sub committee work programme 2006 – 2010
Appendix C: Suggested topics for the Children and Young People scrutiny sub committee work programme 2006 – 2010
Appendix D: Suggested topics for the Safer and Stronger Communities scrutiny sub committee work programme 2006 – 2010

Appendix E: Suggested topics for the Sustainable Development and Enterprise scrutiny sub committee work programme 2006 – 2010

IDR = In depth review
LTR = Light touch review

Appendix A: Suggested topics for the Overview and Scrutiny committee work programme 2006 – 2010

Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four
Budget ½ day challenge panel	Budget ½ day challenge panel	Budget ½ day challenge panel	Budget ½ day challenge panel
Impact of NHS financial situation Working party	Impact of NHS financial situation Working party		
Procurement programme • Management/ monitoring IDR • Delivering savings IDR • Procurement partnerships IDR	Procurement programme • Management/ monitoring IDR • Delivering savings IDR • Procurement partnerships IDR	Procurement programme • Management/ monitoring IDR • Delivering savings IDR • Procurement partnerships IDR	Procurement • Management/ monitoring IDR • Delivering savings IDR • Procurement partnerships IDR
Community Engagement strategy Report			
Community strategy Report			
Corporate assessment ½ day challenge panel			
Power enquiry Report			
HR Programme • Motivating and rewarding staff - IDR • Harrow council as an employer IDR • Internal communications LTR • Recruiting BME staff IDR • Revised strategy for			

people – ½ day challenge • Management development post MMR – LTR			
Olympics programme	Olympics programme	Olympics programme	Olympics programme
Audit/Risk ½ day challenge panel	Audit/Risk ½ day challenge panel	Audit/Risk ½ day challenge panel	Audit/Risk ½ day challenge panel
MORI outcomes Report	MORI outcomes Report		
	Equalities programme	Equalities programme	Equalities programme
Community calls to action – implications of the white paper(s) Report			
Ombudsman's annual report Report	Ombudsman's annual report Report	Ombudsman's annual report Report	Ombudsman's annual report Report
	Service and corporate planning LTR		
	Embedding performance management LTR		
Culture programme • Cultural strategy ½ day challenge panel • Arts culture Harrow LTR			

Appendix B: Suggested topics for the Adult Health and Social Care scrutiny sub committee work programme 2006 – 2010

Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four
Review of catering services Report			
ACL provision for people with learning disability IDR			
Obesity /Diabetic Care IDR x with Children			
Integrating mental health services Report plus further work			
Eye care for older people Report plus further work			
Northwick Park reconfiguration Joint committee	Northwick Park reconfiguration Joint committee		
Integration of council/PCT provision Programme – link to finance working party	Integration of council/PCT provision Programme	Integration of council/PCT provision Programme	Integration of council/PCT provision Programme
	Adults social care VFM IDR		
	Impact of rationalisation of services on well – being IDR Older peoples chiropody services – case study		
	Implementation of leisure card IDR		

	MORI outcomes Report and possible programme		
	Community strategy - report		

Appendix C: Suggested topics for the Children and Young People scrutiny sub committee work programme 2006 – 2010

Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four
Review of catering services Report			
Young people's sexual health IDR			
Obesity /Diabetic Care IDR x with Adults			
JAR self assessment ½ day challenge panel			
Children and Young People's plan ½ day challenge panel or report Children's health specific - ½ day challenge panel			
School nursing LTR			
14 – 19 strategy ½ day challenge panel			
Future of schools – demography IDR			
	Schools' organisation IDR – linked to demography review		
Achievement and attainment Report	Achievement and attainment Report	Achievement and attainment Report	Achievement and attainment Report
	Annual Performance Assessment	Annual Performance Assessment	Annual Performance Assessment

	½ day challenge panel	½ day challenge panel	½ day challenge panel
	School exclusions LTR		
	Youth engagement IDR Policing and youth – case study		
	Early years and childcare IDR		
	Post Jar programme		
	Community strategy Report		

Appendix D: Suggested topics for the Safer and Stronger Communities scrutiny sub committee work programme 2006 – 2010

Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four
Voluntary Sector Programme • Developing a strategic relationship with the sector • Future role/purpose of grant funding • Increasing the voluntary sector's capacity	Voluntary Sector Programme • Developing a strategic relationship with the sector • Future role/purpose of grant funding • Arts culture Harrow • Increasing the voluntary sector's capacity	Voluntary Sector Programme • Developing a strategic relationship with the sector • Future role/purpose of grant funding • Arts culture Harrow • Increasing the voluntary sector's capacity	
Financial inclusion IDR	•		
	Safer communities programme • RFOC – report • People (ASB, social cohesion) – IDR • Physical (Licensing, enforcement, envirocrime – IDR • Decision making processes (S17 mainstreaming) - LTR	Safer communities programme • fear of crime reassessment – report • ASB – IDR • Enforcement/ Envirocrime - IDR	Safer communities programme • fear of crime reassessment – report • ASB – IDR • Enforcement/ Envirocrime – IDR
Public Realm infrastructure IDR	Public Realm infrastructure IDR		
Strategic Objectives for community cohesion Report			

CDRP 6 – monthly assessments Report/ challenge	CDRP 6 – monthly assessments Report/ challenge	CDRP 6 – monthly assessments Report/ challenge	CDRP 6 – monthly assessments Report/ challenge
Faith in Harrow IDR			
Phone booth provision LTR			
	Area working programme • Extended schools – LTR • Neighbourhood working	Area working programme • Extended schools – LTR • Neighbourhood working	Area working programme • Extended schools – LTR • Neighbourhood working
		Fuel poverty IDR	
	Community strategy Report		

Appendix E: Suggested topics for the Sustainable Development and Enterprise scrutiny sub committee work programme 2006 – 2010

Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four
Welcome to Harrow LTR			
Local Development Framework ½ day challenge panel			
Impact of changes in Harrow's demography IDR and regular reports			
Drought preparations ½ day challenge panel			
Borough-wide economic development ½ day challenge panel	Town centre redevelopment IDR/working party		
Tourism Review ½ day challenge panel	Town centres redevelopment Programme of work	Town centres redevelopment Programme of work	Town centres redevelopment Programme of work
	Energy consumption IDR		
	ACL: Value for money LTR	ACL: Learning disabilities IDR	
	Traffic congestion IDR		
		Housing post decent homes standard Report Challenge later	
	Community strategy Report		