

**Forward Work Programme
Review & Petitions, item 7**

Committee: Review & Petitions
Date: 8 February 2006
Title: Forward Work Programme
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**Agenda Item
7**
Item for
decision

Summary

The document suggests further areas of scrutiny for the Committee to consider undertaking during the 2006-07 year.

Recommendations

The Committee consider two or three broad topics for in-depth investigation in the next civic year, and a series of individual topics for future meetings.

Background Papers

None.

Impact

Communication/Consultation	Each review will need to engage widely with communities of interest
Community Safety	None explicitly
Equalities	The impact of each review will need to be assessed individually
Finance	The impact of each review will need to be assessed individually
Human Rights	The impact of each review will need to be assessed individually
Legal implications	The impact of each review will need to be assessed individually
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	The impact of each review will need to be assessed individually

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Situation

- 1 Local Government Act 2000 Guidance sets out the role of overview and scrutiny committees in fourth option councils (ie those retaining a committee system) as:
 - Reviewing policy and assisting in policy development
 - Scrutinising decisions and decision-making for any council function except regulatory functions such as planning and licensing
 - Investigating other matters of local concern
 - Ensuring councils fulfil their duties relating to Best Value
 - Ensuring procedures are in place for councillors to feed in community views to policy development and decision making

- 2 The Centre for Public Scrutiny (www.cfps.org.uk) cites policy review and development as the most impressive aspect of overview and scrutiny. The key factors in this success are:
 - Selecting significant review topics where scrutiny can add value
 - Rigorous project planning with careful scoping of terms of reference, etc
 - Range of investigative methods adopted, ensuring that a range of experiences and views are represented including focus groups, site visits, mystery shopping, 'select committee' approach, etc
 - Well-presented final reports
 - Follow up of recommendations

- 3 It is also important that Members take the lead in scrutiny, backed by appropriate officer support. It is therefore usual for review reports to be written by the Members undertaking that review, rather than by officers.

- 4 With two broad scrutiny investigations currently underway (fees and charges, and climate change), it would be sensible to identify two or three further topics as early as possible for the 2006-07 year, and to identify areas for scrutiny at regular Review and Petition Committee meetings.

- 5 It is suggested that the Committee may want to look at more *external* scrutiny topics, and the list below therefore includes a wide range of possible subjects, which Committee members may wish to add to before selection.

- 6 In addition, Uttlesford PCT attend two or three meetings a year to discuss their plans, and answer questions from Members.

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Outline suggestions for possible scrutiny review
Social services provision
Water charges
Post Office closures
Local Strategic Partnership
MRSA
Improving bus services
Flooding Issues
Economic Development (growth issues) SME, skills etc
Representation on Outside Bodies
Affordable Housing for Key Workers
School Dinners
Child Obesity
Procurement
Equality & Diversity
Asset Management
Grants
Phone Masts
Recruitment & Retention

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Insufficient challenge	Medium	High	Members taking lead on subjects of interest to them Thorough initial scoping of review Regular review team meetings outside of formal R&P Committee meetings for large reviews