PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide guidance and inform the Committee’s discussion on the selection of topics for the work programme for 2007/8.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee

1) Identify issues that it wishes to investigate in the coming municipal year; and

2) Request the Chair of the Committee, in consultation with relevant Officers, draft an outline work programme reflecting these priorities and report back to the next meeting.

CONTACT OFFICERS

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Members will be aware that the Council on 16 May 2007 approved a revised structure for Overview and Scrutiny devised by elected Members to ensure that the structure is aligned with the Council’s current priorities, as set out in the Community Strategy.

1.2 The new structure (attached at appendix one) also reflects proposals in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill to extend the role of Overview and Scrutiny to partner organisations and give elected Members a greater influence over matters that affect local people. It is important to note that the power to scrutinise health and health services has been in place since January 2003.

1.3 The Director of the Joint Health Unit will present an overview of the work of the Manchester Partnership and in particular the Health and Well-being Thematic Partnership to assist the Committee to identify areas of the partnerships work that they might wish to incorporate into their work programme. The Manchester Public Health Annual Report will also give some pointers. Members of the Executive, in particular the Executive Member for Adult Services, have also been invited to discuss with the Committee their priorities for the coming year along with relevant Chief Officers.

2. THE WORK PROGRAMME

2.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committees have a number of responsibilities as part of their overall role in contributing to the delivery of the Community Strategy:

- holding the Executive to account and reviewing Executive decisions
- scrutinising the work of the Manchester Partnership in delivering the outcomes of the Community Strategy
- reviewing and developing new policies
- monitoring performance
- responding to consultations

2.2 As Overview and Scrutiny becomes more strategic and develops an external focus, Committees will have to manage these competing demands and become more selective about the items that they choose to scrutinise.

2.3 A balanced and effective work programme will enable Members to allocate the Committee’s time and resources appropriately, commission relevant information from written reports, visits or witnesses and identify opportunities to engage local communities in its work.

Sources

2.4 Although it is for the Committee to agree their priorities and decide what they wish to scrutinise, gathering information from a range of sources will aid Members to develop a broader overview of important
issues likely to have an impact on the Council’s work over the next twelve months.

2.5 The following are examples of information sources that can assist the Committee to identify potential work programme topics:

- Suggestions from Committee Members
- The work of the Sustainable Neighbourhoods and Culture Thematic Partnership
- The Forward Plan of Key Decisions
- Local Delivery Plan of the Manchester Primary Care Trust
- Service and Business Plans of NHS Trusts and Council Departments
- Requests from elected Members, the Public, Partners, Executive,
- Performance Monitoring Information
- Suggestions of the Patient and Public Involvement Forums (Manchester Health Watchdog)
- Audit and Inspection Reports

Topic Selection

2.6 The Work Programme should support the Committee to make a positive contribution to the delivery of better outcomes for Manchester. Concentrating on only those higher-level strategic issues to which the Committee can add value will maximise the influence of Overview and Scrutiny and ensure the best value in the use of time and resources.

2.7 Overview and Scrutiny is Member-led, however it is also a central part of the Council’s decision-making process and so as such should contribute to the delivery of the Council’s aims and objectives. Obviously this Committee will also want to influence efforts to improve health in Manchester and the delivery of local NHS services. The following criteria is designed to assist Members to identify those issues that would benefit most from scrutiny:

- Does the topic relate to one of the Council’s and NHS partners key priorities in the Community Strategy or other relevant plans?
- Will it contribute to the formulation of future plans or strategies?
- Will our work lead to better outcomes or services to the people in Manchester?
- Are there widespread public concerns about the service or topic?
- Will the work be of interest to members of the public and can we involve the community in the project?
- Is it timely?
- Would it be better to refer the topic to be considered elsewhere first?
Past experience suggests that Overview and Scrutiny is most effective when it looks at fewer issues in more depth. The Committee might therefore consider using single item agenda or themed meetings, which will enable Members to have sufficient time to give full consideration to important issues and gather and evaluate evidence. This should lead to better informed recommendations that are likely to be more influential and have real impact on improving the lives of local people.

Implementing the Work Programme

2.9.1 The Work Programme should be flexible enough to respond to changing needs and priorities: it is likely the Committee will still occasionally be required to respond to issues at short notice. Members will therefore need to review the work programme on a monthly basis.

2.9.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group has recommended that the Work Programme should form part of a regular information report submitted to the Committee at every meeting. The purpose of this report is to advise members of developments within the Committee’s remit - this includes relevant entries on the Executive Forward Plan, local and national policy developments and information requested at previous meetings.

2.9.2 It is envisaged that this will provide the Committee with necessary information to the work programme as well as providing an opportunity for Members to plan future work, for example to identify visits, external witnesses, working parties or possible ways to engage the public in the scrutiny process.