

Agenda item : **8**

Committee	Scrutiny Committee for Transport and Environment
Date:	11 March 2003
Title:	Scrutiny Programme 2003 - 2004
From:	Deputy Director of Legal & Community Services
Purpose:	To suggest scrutiny activities which will support the improvement of County Council's Services

Recommendation

To receive the report and decide if members wish to undertake any of the scrutiny activities suggested for their committee.

1. Introduction

1.1 The identification of scrutiny activity is a function for elected members on scrutiny committees. This paper, therefore, does not seek to determine scrutiny activities for committees, but offers suggested topics which would ensure that the scrutiny function is closely allied to the County Council's improvement agenda and that scrutiny is used as a tool to drive improved performance.

1.2 The topics outlined below would complement any external inspections of services arising from the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). Similarly, the three year programme of Best Value Reviews to be considered by Cabinet on March 25th 2003 (See appendix 1) recognises the Audit Commission's likely Best Value Review inspection emphasis in 2003 and subsequent years.

2. Proposed Scrutiny Activities

2.1 When preparing the CPA Improvement Plan, Cabinet agreed that the emphasis in the next year should be on consolidating the Authority's improvement in the County Council's identified key priority areas. With the exception of Social Services, the Council has been recognised by the Audit Commission as 'good' for the purposes of audit and inspection. This means a reduction of between 25% and 50% in the level of such activity as part of the

Government's promise of a more proportionate approach to inspection following the CPA.

2.2 The CPA Improvement Plan is an extract from the Council Plan which sets out a challenging programme for service improvement over the next three years. It is important that all the Council's resources are used effectively to drive through that programme of change and improvement. The Council Ability inspection, which formed part of the CPA, recognised the scrutiny process as a strength for the Authority. The proposed programme for scrutiny activities aims to use this strength to support the Council's priorities for improvement.

2.3 The topics for scrutiny identified in the following charts represent services delivered by the County Council which are likely to benefit from some form of scrutiny focus. They are linked to priorities in the Council Plan and they also have links to proposed Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets.

2.4 In most cases the list represents potential topics for scrutiny. Whilst some have been previously agreed by the relevant scrutiny committee the remainder need to be discussed alongside other scrutiny activities elected members may wish to suggest. However, the rationale for identifying these topics is to propose a well integrated and purposeful approach to scrutiny activities that supports the Council's improvement agenda and the Best Value Review programme.

2.5 Scrutiny activities could also be focused on a service area's performance against national and local Performance Indicators (PIs). Scrutiny committees will have a particular interest in identifying performance which is below the median. Approaches and methods of scrutiny can be more varied in the next few years to reflect more efficient and effective ways to carry out the scrutiny function.

2.6 The suggestions are:

(Where BVPI and a number are shown this indicates the particular Best Value Performance Indicator which relates to this activity. BVPIs and the County Council's performance against each of them can be found on the website: <http://www.bvpi.gov.uk/home.asp>)

N.B. Members are asked only to make a judgement on the activities which relate to their own scrutiny committee. Suggestions for all other scrutiny committees are provided for information.

Scrutiny Committee for Transport & Environment	
Suggested activities:	
• Public Transport.	(BVPIs 102, 103, 184)
• Health checks on performance in Planning (CPA ref)	(BVPIs 107, 109, 111, 200)
• Health checks on aspects of Highways subsequent to outcomes of current BV Review in this area. (CPA ref)	
• Rights of way - looking at allocation of resources/areas for investment (<i>linked to PSA target</i>)	(BVPI 178)
Scrutiny Committee for Social Services and Health	
Suggested activities:	
• Community Collaborative Rehabilitation Team	(BVPIs 52, 53, 54, 56, 58, 196, 195)
• Living At Home Programme	(BVPIs 52, 53, 54, 56, 58, 196, 195)
• 'Out of Hours' hospital social work	(BVPIs 56, 58, 195, 196)
• Rapid response	(BVPIs 58, 195, 196)
• Learning disabilities	(BVPIs 58, 161, 195, 196)
Scrutiny Committee for Education	
Suggested activities:	
• Attainment of Vulnerable Children	
• Connexions and strategies to support young people in education, training & employment. (BVPI 33)	
• School Place Planning	(BVPI 34)
• Family Learning	
• Recruitment, retention and training of school governors	

Scrutiny Committee for Legal & Community Services	
Suggested activities:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The impact of monitoring racial incidents (BVPI 2, 174, 175) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intelligence gathering processes and the impact they have on managing the risk to the public of poor standards (BVPI 166) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Peoples' Network & Electronic Learning Materials 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Book distribution. (BVPIs 117, 118, 119) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local authority Co-ordinating body on Food and Trading Standards. 	

3. Possible new health scrutiny activities

3.1 Members will also be familiar with the current consultation on how the County Council might exercise its new power to carry out overview and scrutiny of health. Although there is a suggestion in the proposal on the way in which this new function might be resourced, there is likely to be a knock-on effect in the way existing scrutiny activities are supported.

3.2 If Cabinet approve the establishment of a new committee on March 25th the members of this new committee will need to consult on, and create a programme for the coming year. It is likely that the committee will be ready to formally begin work from 1 September 2003. Thereafter, there will be further scrutiny activities to be undertaken.

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutiny activity related to an external function/provider. Activity will relate to NHS bodies and health issues in the county

4. Conclusion

4.1 If all the scrutiny activities suggested above were undertaken it would amount to an extensive programme of work. Clearly members will need to be realistic about workloads and priorities. However, the suggested Best Value reviews, as shown in appendix 1, present a much reduced programme from previous years. This, in terms of workload for members, does allow for a more extensive programme of scrutiny activities.

4.2 There will continue to be related monitoring activities. Scrutiny committees will continue to monitor previous review action plans, best value and scrutiny recommendation and the Council Plan.

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Appendix One (Proposed three year programme of Best Value Reviews)

3. The Best Value Review Programme

3.1 The three year programme has been proposed to mirror the Audit & Inspection Plan and to support the County Council's agenda for the improvement of services. This allows a more flexible approach to the use of reviews, to tackle issues and priorities as they arise, than the previous five-year programme. However, it is the intention to evaluate the programme at the end of 2004 and make any necessary revisions.

Review Area	2003-2004	2004 - 2005	2005 - 2006
Improving attendance in schools (Education) <i>Council Improvement Plan Priority – Raise education standards (also PSA target)</i> (BVPIs 45, 46, 159)	/		
Improving road travel across the County (T & E) <i>Council Improvement Plan Priority – Highways, making roads better</i> (BVPIs 96, 97, 99, 100, 165, 186,187)	/		
Planning and partnership for better services (Chief Execs) <i>Council Improvement Plan Priority – an integrated , enhancing authority</i> (BVPI 1)		/	
Increasing local provision for adults with learning disabilities (Soc. Services) <i>Council Improvement Plan – Joint SSI review</i>		/	
Better access to integrated services for older people (Soc, Services) Council Improvement Plan – Joint SSI			/
School Improvement Services – improving standards for pupils (Education) <i>Council Improvement Plan Priority – Raise educational standards</i> (BVPIs 38, 39, 40, 41, 48, 159, 181, 194)			/

