

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD

22ND MAY 2008

WORK PROGRAMME

Responsible Portfolio Holder	
Responsible Head of Service	Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report relates to the Work Programme of this Board. There are four main sections within this report for the Board to discuss and agree:
- Anti-Social Behaviour and Alcohol Free Zones Task Group;
 - Refuse and Recycling Task Group – Value for Money;
 - Car Parking Task Group – Concessionary Parking for the over 60s;
 - ‘Older People’ and ‘Senior Citizens’

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are requested to:
- (a) reconsider the membership of the Anti-Social Behaviour and Alcohol Free Zones Task Group;
 - (b) consider and agree the terms of reference of Refuse and Recycling Task Group in order that it can undertake the additional work as requested (suggestion attached as Appendix 3);
 - (c) note that the Value for Money Training for Members is scheduled to be held on 11th June 2008 at 6pm;
 - (d) agree that, in relation to concessionary car parking for the over 60s, the views of the proposer (Mr. Bateman) be taken into account and an officer report be requested as soon as 6 months worth of data is available for Members of the Board to consider; and
 - (e) agree that, as ‘Senior Citizens’ and ‘Older People’ are seen as the same subject area, no change is made to the work programme and ‘Older People’ remains a topic for future scrutiny following the outcome of the focus groups.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the last meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 29th April 2008, several items were considered which affected the Board’s Work Programme. However, clarification is sought so that all Members of the Board (as well as officers) are clear on exactly what the Board would like included on its work programme and how it would like those items progressed.

Anti-Social Behaviour and Alcohol Free Zones Task Group

- 3.2 Councillor K. Taylor, who had originally been appointed as the Chairman of the Anti-Social Behaviour Task Group, was appointed as the Chairman of the new combined Task Group at the Scrutiny Steering Board Meeting on 1st April 2008.
- 3.3 As the Task Group Chairman, Councillor K. Taylor completed a Scrutiny Exercise Scoping Checklist (attached as Appendix 1) which includes the Task Group's terms of reference and this was agreed at the last meeting.
- 3.4 By merging the two Task Groups it meant the total number of membership forms received was nine and the recommended maximum on a Task Group is seven Members, including the Task Group Chairman. The nine membership forms are attached as Appendix 2. From those nine Members, Councillors J. T. Duddy, D. McGrath and C. J. Tidmarsh also indicated that, if it helped the Scrutiny Steering Board, they were equally happy to withdraw their membership form to allow others to remain on the Task Group.
- 3.5 It should be pointed out that Task Groups can vary in size and as a general rule Task Groups should have a minimum of three and no more than seven Members. This does mean that if the Board wished, there could be more than seven Members on a Task Group but demand for such participation needs to be balanced against the need to maintain the small size of the Task Group.
- 3.6 At the last meeting of the Board when the full Membership was considered there was some confusion as to the selection procedure to be followed by Members given that there were a greater number of candidates than places. Officers are concerned that due to the confusion, Members did not have the opportunity to evaluate all the candidates fully or consider other available options such as having a slightly larger group. Accordingly, it is strongly recommended that the Board revisits this and decides the way forward for this Task Group.

Refuse and Recycling Task Group – Value for Money

- 3.7 The Cabinet's Response to the Refuse and Recycling Scrutiny Report was submitted to the Board at its meeting on 30th April 2008 and the Board was satisfied with the response to the recommendations put forward as 14 out of 15 recommendations were approved.
- 3.8 However, the Cabinet also suggested to the Board that the Refuse and Recycling Task Group could undertake additional work in relation to Value for Money.

- 3.9 Although the Board agreed to this proposal, there were some concerns by Board Members that there was a need for Value for Money training to be provided to Members to enable the Task Group to carry out the additional scrutiny investigation. It was also suggested that a detailed terms of reference was required in order to ensure everyone was clear on what was expected from the scrutiny exercise.
- 3.10 As stated at the last meeting of the Board, it has been agreed by the Modern Councillor Steering Group that Value for Money Training will be incorporated into the Member Training Programme for 2008/09. Since that time, it has been arranged that such training will be held on Wednesday 11th June 2008 at 6pm and it will be facilitated by the Head of Financial Services, Ms. Pickering.
- 3.11 In relation to the terms of reference, the Board may wish to consider the suggestions stated in Appendix 3 attached.
- 3.12 It should be pointed out that it is the Board's decision to decide what work any Task Group should undertake. As the Refuse and Recycling Task Group has not yet been disbanded, Members of the Task Group will be expected to undertake the additional work set by the Board. (However, it is possible for a Member of a Task Group to resign if they so wish.)

Car Parking Task Group – Concessionary Parking for the over 60s

- 3.13 A scrutiny request from Mr. Bateman, a representative from the Older People's Forum, was submitted and considered by the Board at its last meeting. As outlined in the minutes (minute no. 110/07), there were two alternative views expressed at the meeting by Members. Firstly, due to the lack of reliable data available to carry out an in-depth scrutiny at the present time, it was suggested that an officers report be requested when there is 6 months worth of data (March – August 2008) so that the Board can consider it properly when the necessary evidence had been gathered. The alternative view stated was that a Task Group be set up straight away and after a vote, where the Chairman used his casting vote, it was agreed that a Task Group would be established.
- 3.14 Since that meeting, Mr. Bateman sent an email to the Board Members on 1st May 2008 which stated:

“Dear Councillor,

Thank you for your understanding of our concerns. We will monitor car park revenue monthly and compare it to the revenue for the same month in the previous year. We will also monitor the number of £200 and £300 permits sold to persons over the age of 60. We believe that for this data to have any significance the data should be collected for at least 6 months. If, as we

expect, increased revenue is less than that forecast, we will request another hearing by the scrutiny board. The car park income for March 2007 was £112k and for March 2008 was £103k, over one month this is not significant. However, it may be a reflection of resistance to increased charges.

*Yours faithfully,
Charles Bateman.”*

- 3.15 As the Board will see, Mr. Bateman agrees with the view that data should be collected for at least 6 months. In light of the comments made by Mr. Bateman who put the scrutiny proposal forward, it is suggested that the Board reconsiders this item and takes account of Mr. Bateman's views on how the scrutiny request should be taken forward.

'Older People' and 'Senior Citizens'

- 3.16 At the last Board Meeting, Members considered a second scrutiny request from the Board Chairman. The scrutiny proposal had originally been a motion for the Council Meeting on 23rd April 2008 but had been referred to the Board by the Monitoring Officer in accordance with the Council's Constitution.
- 3.17 The scrutiny proposal related to establishing a Senior Citizens' Task Group to review the quality of service to older people given by Bromsgrove District Council. However, it was pointed out that the topic 'Older People' was already on the work programme which appeared to be the same subject.
- 3.18 Councillor Mrs. M. Bunker updated the Board and informed Members that the Assistant Chief Executive was ensuring one rural and one urban Focus Group would be set up in the summer to find out the views of older people to enable Members to scrutinise issues which older people themselves believed should be scrutinised rather than only taking into account what Board Members believed should be scrutinised. Once the focus groups have taken place and views have been collated, a scrutiny proposal form from Councillor Mrs. Bunker is likely to be submitted for the Board to consider.
- 3.19 At the last meeting, it was agreed that the request relating to establishing a Senior Citizens' Task Group would be deferred until the next meeting of the Board. Therefore, Members need to revisit this scrutiny request.

General

- 3.20 The existing Work Programme for this Board is attached as Appendix 4. As usual, it will be revised to reflect the decisions made by the Board at this meeting and future meetings.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications directly relating to this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications directly relating to this report.

6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

6.1 Members of the Board need to take into account the Council's priorities and objectives when setting its work programme.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 The Board needs to be clear what items they wish to be included in its work programme, the priority order of those items and the way forward with any Task Groups which have been established. If there is any ambiguity, this could lead to confusion on what is expected from officers and Task Group Members carrying out scrutiny exercises on behalf of the Board.

8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no customer implications directly relating to this report.

9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no implications directly relating to this report for the Council's Equalities and Diversity Policies.

10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no Value for Money implications directly relating to this report. However, the Refuse and Recycling Task Group, when looking at value for money of the service, will obviously be considering such implications.

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues – None.
Personnel Implications – Consideration to the limited resources of the Committee Team to support Scrutiny Task Groups needs to be taken into account. It is advised that items agreed to be included on the work programme are prioritised as usual.
Governance/Performance Management – None
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998 – None

Policy – None
Environmental – None

12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holders	N/A
Chief Executive	Yes
Executive Director (Partnerships and Projects)	No
Executive Director (Services)	Yes
Assistant Chief Executive	No
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	No
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes
Head of Organisational Development & HR	No
Corporate Procurement Team	No

13. WARDS AFFECTED

All Wards

14. APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 Scrutiny Exercise Scoping Checklist completed by Councillor K. Taylor for the Anti-Social Behaviour and Alcohol Free Zones Task Group
- Appendix 2 Membership Forms for the Anti-Social Behaviour and Alcohol Free Zones Task Group
- Appendix 3 Suggested Terms of Reference relating to the additional work for the Refuse and Recycling Task Group
- Appendix 4 Current Work Programme

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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