

TITLE OF REPORT: Review of Annual Work Programme

REPORT OF: Jane Robinson, Chief Executive
Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services
and Governance

Summary

The report updates and seeks the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's views on the current position with regard to the annual work programme.

Background

1. At its meeting on 2 April 2015, the Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed its work programme based on the Council's policy framework. This work programme was then agreed by the Council as part of the policy planning process.
2. In line with the process agreed by all OSCs this OSC selected its review topic and case studies using a process designed to help make linkages between potential topics and the Council's policy framework.

Proposals

OSC Review Topics for 2016/17

3. In advance of the OSC agreeing its review topic for 2016-17, members of the OSC have been invited to identify any issues which may potentially be appropriate for a detailed review by 18 December 2015. It is proposed that those issues put forward by members are added to the list of potential review topics for consideration by the OSC at the start of the municipal year, unless the issue is already being, or would more appropriately be, dealt with through other processes within the Council. Members will be notified if this is the case and advised as to how their issue is being dealt with.

Monitoring of OSC Reviews

4. All of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee's have received feedback on the outcomes of the specific reviews undertaken by them during 2015-16. This Committee has received a monitoring report on the outcomes generated by its Review of the Council's role in supporting Educational Outcomes for Vulnerable and Poorly Performing Pupils on 22 October 2015 and will receive a further monitoring report on 6 April 2016.

Case Studies

5. Case studies have been included within OSC work programmes to provide an additional means of examining specific issues of concern/carrying out more detailed work on a particular topic/measure the impact of a particular OSC's review recommendations over a specific period of time.
6. The case studies for 2015/16 are:-
 - Health in Schools (3 December 2015)
 - Targeted and Specialist Support from NHS for Special Schools (3 March 2016)
7. Each OSC has identified specific issues to be considered through the case study method and it was agreed that in view of the timing of case studies within the 2014-15 work programmes that feedback on their effectiveness be sought during its work programme review in 2015/16.
8. During 2014/15 the OSC considered the following case studies :-
 - Corporate Governance for Looked After Children (23 October 2014)

The OSC focused on:-

- proposals for strengthening the membership arrangements of the Corporate Parenting OSC and increasing the robustness of the scrutiny role.
- information about a number of models from other local authorities which had either been rated as outstanding by Ofsted, or which received lower ratings but were now improving as a result of new arrangements being put in place
- information that some authorities are looking to further strengthen their arrangements by increasing the non-voting co-opted members.

Having examined the issues the OSC :

- considered it would be advantageous for the Corporate Parenting Sub to have external views.
- considered that, when looking to appoint additional representatives onto the OSC their ability to be able to commit to attending the programmed meetings should be taken into account as it was considered that continuity of representation was important.
- considered that any revised arrangements should be reviewed in 12 months time.

In light of the above, the OSC agreed to the addition of non-voting members comprising of a representative of the Foster Carers Association, a care leaver, a school governor, a Gateshead Housing Company representative, a voluntary sector representative. The OSC also agreed that the revised arrangements should be reviewed in 12 months time.

- Vulnerable Young People and Housing (2 April 2015)

The OSC focused on:-

- the levels and types of housing need experienced by vulnerable young people in Gateshead
- some of the tools and resources that are available to address the issues and highlights some of the challenges this poses and the plans in place to address these.
- Examples of good accommodation partnership work in Gateshead
- information from Changing Lives who offer the supported accommodation at Eslington Park.

Having examined the issues the OSC

- was concerned at how the level of demand was being met – the OSC noted that sometimes the waiting list for the Changing Lives Project could be 2 weeks and sometimes 2 months
- was concerned to ensure that the Council / working with partners has the relevant information to ensure that we know when we are meeting need and that make sure we have sufficient resources.

In light of the above, the OSC's views would be taken into account when forming supported housing services during upcoming reviews.

Recommendations

9. The Committee is asked to

- (i) Note that any issues identified by members of the OSC as potential review topics by 18 December 2015 will be included in the list of review topics to be considered by the OSC at the start of the municipal year unless such issues are being or would more appropriately be dealt with via other Council processes.
- (ii) Give its views on the review monitoring process carried out so far.
- (iii) Give its views on the effectiveness of the case studies carried out in 2014/15.