

SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES	Agenda Item No. 5
7 JULY 2014	Public Report

Report of the Assistant Director for Communities and Targeted Services

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WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report is to enable the Scrutiny Commission to debate and agree a work programme for the year.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1
1. Members are asked to note and debate the suggested themes for scrutiny, and to then finalise a work programme for the year.
 2. Members are also asked to note that there may be a need to vary the work programme as the year progresses if more urgent scrutiny matters emerge.
 3. Members are asked to advise officers of the approach required for the first set of scrutiny reports to be presented to the Commission at its next meeting.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy aims to deliver a bigger and better Peterborough through improving the quality of life for all. All policies, procedures and strategies that form part of the overall Community Strategy will be of relevance to the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Before the start of each Municipal Year, each Scrutiny Committee or Commission is asked to meet to provisionally set a work programme for the year ahead. In the case of the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities, this was not possible and so this report is presented to the first full meeting of the Commission in order that the programme can be agreed.
- 4.2 The work programme serves as a guide to the main themes and issues that the Commission wishes to scrutinise throughout the course of the year, based on what is known at the date of the meeting. There will inevitably be emerging themes and issues that the Commission may feel worthy of scrutiny which may result in the programme changing throughout the year. Any such changes will be agreed with the Chair and Group Representatives before being finalised.
- 4.3 The suggestions included in this report at section 5 have been included after first referencing the functions of the Commission as set out in the Overview and Scrutiny Functions section of the Council's Constitution, but are not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive.

5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 Set out below are suggestions for the work programme for 2014/15, along with a brief explanation of the issue or theme for scrutiny.

5.2 *Scrutiny in a Day*

5.2.1 In the previous Municipal Year all five Scrutiny Committees and Commissions came together as a Joint Scrutiny Committee to examine the impacts of welfare reform on communities in Peterborough. Several lines of enquiry were agreed during this event to be scrutinised over coming months. The following are of relevance to the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities and were discussed at the Commission's meeting in April 2014, but not finalised pending agreement by the new Commission:

- (i) To scrutinise the effectiveness of the Council's Housing Strategy, social housing allocations policy and relevant planning policies with a view to enabling young families to remain living in the rural community
- (ii) To scrutinise the availability of digital resources in rural areas to ensure that communities are not digitally excluded
- (iii) To scrutinise the effects that rural isolation and loneliness have in relation to the impacts of welfare reform, including the ability to access advice and information
- (iv) To scrutinise the impact of welfare reform on young people in rural locations, including their more limited access to services

5.3 *Other Suggestions*

5.3.1 In addition to the suggestions at 5.2.1 the following ideas are put forward for debate and discussion:

- (i) To scrutinise the sustainability of Parish Councils – suggested in order that the Council and our partners are cognisant of the pressures faced by Parish Councils and that we are doing all we can to ensure their long term viability and sustainability
- (ii) To scrutinise the role of Parish Councils and rural community organisations and their contribution to the social capital of Peterborough, with a view to ensuring we maximise the opportunities available to them where appropriate
- (iii) To scrutinise the impact of crime and disorder in rural areas, and the measures, policies and actions in place to minimise crime and fear of crime
- (iv) To scrutinise the effectiveness of Council services, external agencies, mechanisms and processes involved in delivering services to rural communities, including:
 - Amey
 - Vivacity
 - Cambridgeshire Constabulary
 - British Transport Police
 - Primary, secondary and adult education providers
 - Voluntary sector agencies
 - Social housing providers
 - Council Planning services
 - Council Highways services
 - Public transport providers

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 A full work programme for the year will be developed enabling the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities to fulfil its responsibilities as described in the Council's Constitution.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 Not applicable.

8. NEXT STEPS

8.1 Officers will create a full work programme based on the outcomes of the discussions at the Commission meeting, and this will be shared with the Members. Prior to each subsequent Commission meeting, the Group Representatives will review the forthcoming agenda to ensure its proposed contents are still relevant and to identify any other matters that require scrutiny that have emerged since the work programme was finalised.

8. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

8.1 None

9. APPENDICES

9.1 Appendix 1 - Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities Terms of Reference
Appendix 2 - Draft Work Programme 2014-2015

Appendix 1
Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities

1.	The Commission shall comprise 7 members and not more than 4 non-voting co-opted members.
2.	A member of the Cabinet shall not be appointed to the Commission.
3.	The quorum shall be 4 voting members.
4.	To discharge overview and scrutiny functions, excluding call-in, in relation to any area within the remit of the Scrutiny Committees which has potential for significant impact on the rural communities of Peterborough.
5.	To scrutinise the agencies, mechanisms and processes involved in delivering services to rural communities.
6.	To contribute to the development of policies, strategies and plans in relation to the delivery of services to rural areas.
7.	To advise on and monitor crime and disorder issues in rural areas.
8.	To establish time limited working groups to undertake specific enquiries.
9.	To consider any appeals from petition organisers who are not satisfied with the outcome of the Council's consideration of their petition.