
Health Scrutiny Committee prioritisation methodology

Committee considering report:	Health Scrutiny Committee
Date of Committee:	10 November 2021
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Howard Woollaston
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	19 October 2021
Report Author:	Gordon Oliver
Forward Plan Ref:	OSMC/HSC

1 Purpose of the Report

This report presents a transparent and objective methodology which is designed to help prioritise which topics the Health Scrutiny Committee should be considering.

2 Recommendation(s)

That the Health Scrutiny Committee adopt the PAPER criteria (Public interest, Area affected, Performance/Priority, Effectiveness, Resources) and associated scoring system to help prioritise its work programme.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	There are no financial implications arising from this report.
Human Resource:	There are no HR implications arising from this report.
Legal:	There are no legal implications arising from this report.
Risk Management:	There are no risks associated with this report. The PAPER methodology should ensure that the most appropriate topics are prioritised for health scrutiny.
Property:	There are no property implications arising from this report.

Policy:	There are no local policy implications arising from this report. The proposed methodology is broadly consistent with that set out in guidance from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		✓		There are no equalities impacts arising from this report.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		✓		
Environmental Impact:		✓		There are no environmental impacts arising from this report.
Health Impact:	✓			The PAPER methodology will help the Health Scrutiny Committee to prioritise its work and focus on where the greatest benefits can be delivered in terms of improving local health services.
ICT Impact:		✓		There are no ICT impacts associated with this report.
Digital Services Impact:		✓		There are no Digital Services impacts associated with this report.

Council Strategy Priorities:	✓			<p>The PAPER methodology will help the Health Scrutiny Committee to prioritise its work and focus on where the greatest benefits can be delivered in terms of improving local health services.</p> <p>This in turn will support the Council Strategy priority to 'support everyone to reach their full potential'. In particular, it will help with the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improve the health and wellbeing of our residents - improve mental health and wellbeing
Core Business:		✓		There are no core business impacts arising from this report.
Data Impact:		✓		There are no data impacts arising from this report.
Consultation and Engagement:	None			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 This report sets out a proposed methodology for the Health Scrutiny Committee to use in prioritising topics for scrutiny.
- 4.2 Criteria have been based on those advocated by the Local Government Association and include:
- Public interest
 - Area affected
 - Performance / Priority
 - Effectiveness
 - Resources
- 4.3 A scoring system is also proposed, which should help with the prioritisation of competing proposals.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

5.1 This report considers how the Health Scrutiny Committee can best prioritise its work programme and evaluate the merits of competing proposed scrutiny topics. This applies to discretionary scrutiny rather than formal consultations from health bodies.

Background

5.2 In May 2019, Government published [statutory guidance for councils and combined authorities on overview and scrutiny](#). This indicates that prioritisation is necessary to ensure the scrutiny function concentrates on delivering work that is of genuine value.

5.3 The statutory guidance suggests that scrutiny committees should plan their work programmes by drawing up a long-term agenda, while making it sufficiently flexible to accommodate any urgent, short-term issues that might arise during the year.

5.4 The statutory guidance advocates that when local authorities are considering whether an item should be included in the work programme, the kind of questions Members should ask include:

- Do we understand the benefits scrutiny would bring to this issue?
- How could we best carry out work on this subject?
- What would be the best outcome of this work?
- How would this work engage with the activity of the executive and other decision-makers, including partners?

5.5 It highlights that some authorities use scoring systems to evaluate and rank work programme proposal. It goes on to suggest that if these scoring systems are used to provoke discussion and debate, based on evidence, about what priorities should be, they can be a useful tool. It notes that other local authorities take a looser approach with no scoring system, but whichever method is adopted, a committee should be able to justify how and why a decision has been taken to include certain issues and not others.

5.6 The West Berkshire Health Scrutiny Committee has previously agreed that it would be useful to develop a prioritisation methodology to help with planning its work programme.

Proposals

5.7 The Local Government Association (LGA) published '[A Councillor's Workbook on Scrutiny](#)', which sets out a number of criteria that could be useful for selecting and prioritising topics for scrutiny.

5.8 The following PAPER criteria have been developed, based on the LGA criteria, and with a rudimentary scoring system attached.

Health Scrutiny Committee prioritisation methodology

Criteria	Aspects	Scoring
<u>P</u>ublic Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the topic of concern to local residents? • What is the level of interest amongst particular communities / groups? • Has the topic been identified by Members / officers / Healthwatch? • Has there been negative press about the topic? 	3 = high public interest 2 = medium public interest 1 = low public interest
<u>A</u>rea Affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the topic affect all parts of the district or only selected areas / communities? 	3 = entire district 2 = multiple wards 1 = single ward
<u>P</u>erformance / <u>P</u>riority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there / has there been a high level of dissatisfaction amongst service users? • Is there evidence of poor performance in this service? • Do we understand why performance is poor? • Is the service costly to run relative to other areas? • Does this relate to a priority in the Council Strategy and / or the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy? 	3 = poor performance / high priority 2 = fair performance / medium priority 1 = good performance / low priority
<u>E</u>ffectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the issue one where the committee can exert influence and add value? • Are changes to policy and / or legislation planned that will affect the service? • Is work already underway or planned to investigate the issue? • Are changes already planned for the service? 	3 = good chance to deliver change 2 = fair chance to deliver change 1 = little chance to deliver change
<u>R</u>esources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the review be delivered with existing resources and in a timely fashion? 	3 = good availability of resources 2 = some resource constraints 1 = poor resource availability

5.9 The PAPER criteria can be used as reference guide for Members in selecting topics for scrutiny, or it can be rigidly applied as a scoring system.

5.10 How strictly the criteria are applied will depend of the number of competing topics proposed and the resources available to undertake reviews. However, it is likely that there will be more topics than the Committee has the capacity to consider.

5.11 There will inevitably be a degree of subjectivity to some of the scoring criteria, and so the Committees will need to use their best judgement in agreeing any scores and which items to take forward for scrutiny.

6 Other options considered

- 6.1 The Health Scrutiny Committee could choose not to adopt a prioritisation methodology, but in doing so, this could lead to a haphazard approach to work programming, with a focus on issues that are not necessarily where the Committee could be most effective.
- 6.2 An alternative option would be to have a methodology without a scoring mechanism. However, this approach is not considered to be as effective. Although scoring can be subjective, it does at least provide a rudimentary means of comparing competing scrutiny topics.

7 Conclusion

The proposed PAPER methodology and scoring system would support the Health Scrutiny Committee in effective work programming.

8 Appendices

None

Background Papers:

MHCLG (May 2019) [Overview and scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils and combined authorities](#),

LGA (May 2017) [A Councillor's Workbook on Scrutiny](#),

Wards affected: All Wards

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