

REPORT TO: Overview and Scrutiny Commission

DATE: 21st September 2009

DEPARTMENT: Corporate Policy and Improvement

REPORTING OFFICER: Policy Support Officer (*Vicky Monkman*)

SUBJECT: **Overview and Scrutiny Performance Measures**

WARD/S AFFECTED: N/A

FORWARD PLAN REF: N/A

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on how the performance of Overview and Scrutiny is currently measured, outline proposals for future measures of performance and to seek Members' approval on this process.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

2.1 It is recommended that Members consider the options for monitoring Overview and Scrutiny's performance and accept the proposed method.

3.0 RECOMMENDED REASON/S FOR DECISION/S

3.1 To improve measurement of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's performance.

4.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTION/S CONSIDERED AND RECOMMENDED FOR REJECTION

4.1 The alternative options are:

- To continue to monitor Overview and Scrutiny's performance using the current performance indicators.

5.0 THE REPORT

5.1 Background

5.1.1 In most service areas it is relatively straightforward to measure performance and performance indicators can closely reflect the functions of the service which is under review. Performance can, in most cases be easily quantified

and compared not only with previous and future targets, but with ideal standards and other authorities as well.

5.1.2 Scrutiny is different and there are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, it is a function that is not formally audited. Secondly it is still a relatively new function whose role and remit is still changing. Thirdly (although closely linked to the previous point) different authorities have widely different scrutiny methodologies. Finally, scrutiny outcomes are notoriously difficult to quantify - often they are subjective, not only in terms of 'user satisfaction' but in terms of officer and executive member opinion, which can have a negative or positive impact upon the substantive success of the scrutiny process.

5.1.3 All of the above should be considered when reviewing how best to monitor the Commission's performance. Members should also take into account that there is no "ideal" model for Scrutiny in local authorities, different authorities benefit from different attitudes towards the process. Some may have an internal focus, some may use scrutiny as a reactive process, some may use it as a conclusion to the policy process, none of these are more or less correct but it is important that we assess what Harrogate Borough Council needs from its scrutiny commission and adopt the most appropriate measure(s) of performance meeting this need.

5.2 **Why continue to monitor the performance of Overview and Scrutiny?**

5.2.1 Done well, performance measurement can promote transparency and innovation, as well as being an incentive for productivity. Analysis of performance can also help to promote learning and could enhance the Commission's insight into what it is doing well and how good results are being achieved.

5.3 **Why review current performance measures?**

5.3.1 Currently the Commission's performance is measured against 26 performance indicators (**Appendix A**). What has become apparent is that several of these indicators have become obsolete, some difficult to monitor and on the whole this indicator set is not reflective of all of the work that the Commission undertakes.

5.3.2 Throughout this indicator set there is a range of collection intervals (quarterly, half yearly, annually), this is not ideal and has previously led to reports being presented to the Commission which, although up to date, were not an accurate reflection of current performance.

5.3.3 For example, indicators such as O&S 5-7 - the percentage of residents satisfied with participation are based on information produced triennially and so quickly become of little relevance to the actual performance of the Commission.

5.3.4 Further to this, an inherent problem with quantitative performance indicators is their lack of flexibility to expose the details of specific reviews and failure to measure scrutiny's "impact".

5.3.5 A truer measure of the Commission's performance would be through a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative analysis, with a reduction in the number of actual performance indicators and an increased emphasis on the evaluation of individual in-depth reviews.

5.4 **The New Scorecard**

5.4.1 The Centre for Public Scrutiny puts forward four main objectives for each Overview and Scrutiny function: *Critical friend challenge, Reflect the voice and concerns of the public and its communities, Take the lead and own the scrutiny process, Making an impact on service delivery.*

5.4.2 It is on these four principles that the proposed new indicator set is based. Below follows an explanation of the new measures and proposed indicators:

5.4.3 **Critical friend challenge**

Overview and Scrutiny should play a key role in providing a critical friend challenge to the Executive, both before and after implementation, the following would serve as indicators of this:

- Percentage of items on work programmes taken from the forward plan.
- Percentage of items on the cabinet agenda considered by the Commission.

5.4.4 **Reflect the voice and concerns of the public and its communities**

Overview and Scrutiny should focus it's work on that which is of most benefit to the residents of the district and wherever possible should seek the input of the community in it's work. The following would serve as indicators of this:

- The percentage of items on the work programme suggested by the public or in response to issues raised through surveys, comments or complaints.
- Number of visits to the authority's scrutiny web pages.
- Number of articles in the press.

5.4.5 **Take the lead and own the scrutiny process**

Overview and Scrutiny should be member led and inclusive of all non-executive members. Member's should be engaged and positive about the work of Overview and Scrutiny. The following would serve as indicators of this:

- The percentage of Overview and Scrutiny meetings fully attended.
- The number of non-executive Members involved in scrutiny in some way throughout the year. (Attendance at meetings, membership of task and finish groups etc)
- Achieve nominations for good scrutiny awards.

5.4.6 **Making an impact on service delivery**

Overview and Scrutiny should carry out focused, beneficial reviews, which provide achievable recommendations for both the executive and external organisations. The following would serve as indicators of this:

- Number of internal reviews carried out.
- The percentage of scrutiny recommendations approved by the executive.
- Number of external reviews carried out.

- The percentage of scrutiny recommendations implemented by external organisations.

5.5 **Targets**

Targets for the above indicators would have to be determined based upon the aspirations of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, baseline figures could be achieved through analysis of performance in 2008/09 and targets reviewed at the beginning of the 2010/11 civic year.

5.6 **Reporting Arrangements**

5.6.1 **End of Review Report** - it is suggested that each in-depth review be evaluated within context, not as a stand-alone report but as a component of the final report when reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, presented in an accessible “narrative” format based upon the above principles, ensuring that members and the public find it easier to engage with this aspect of the performance monitoring process. This would also allow the principles of overview and scrutiny to be linked with review recommendations and outcomes.

5.6.2 **Annual Performance Monitoring** - an annual analysis (at the end of the civic year) would be carried out. A summing-up of performance year-on-year could also be included in the scrutiny annual report. This would include details on all performance indicators and would allow members to identify areas for improvement and methods which had achieved particular success. Recommendations could be made by the Commission for amendments to some performance indicators, or amendments to the next years targets as appropriate.

6.0 **CONCLUSION/S**

6.1 In conclusion, for a more appropriate assessment of the Commission’s performance it is necessary for a change in the current measurement practice.

6.2 The fact that scrutiny is a member-led function means that member involvement in this monitoring process is crucial. It would be important to ensure that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission would be in a position to identify any areas of weakness, to highlight instances of good work and to pass on examples of good practice to the Overview and Scrutiny panels and working groups.

6.3 Member input is therefore of great importance and the Commission are invited to comment on the proposed performance indicators and to raise any potential additional measures of scrutiny’s performance.

6.4 The proposed revised indicator set and reporting arrangements would lead to a better overall analysis of the Commission’s performance.

7.0 **ACTIONS**

7.1 It is for the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to agree the proposed

changes to the measurement of their performance and to agree on any additional measures.

- 7.2 If progressed the Policy Support Officer will set up the proposed scorecard on Covalent.
- » Monitoring of progress will be carried out quarterly by the Policy Support Officer and reported annually by the Policy Support Officer/Scrutiny Officer.
 - » An evaluation of the revised performance measurements will be carried out by the Commission after the first annual report.

Background Papers - None

OFFICER CONTACT: Please contact **Vicky Monkman** if you require any further information on the contents of this report. The officer can be contacted at ... by telephone on **01423 551636** or by Email – **victora.monkman@harrogate.gov.uk**

SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT / POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

		Implications are		
		Positive	Neutral	Negative
A	Economy		✓	
B	Environment		✓	
C	Social Equity		✓	
i)	General			
ii)	Customer Care / People with Disabilities			
iii)	Health Implications			
D	Crime and Disorder Implications		✓	

If all comments lie within the shaded areas, the proposal is sustainable.