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| REPORT TO THE: | |
| PERFORMANCE, REVIEW & AUDIT COMMITTEE | |
| DATE: 16 th February 2009 | REFERENCE: |

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| SUBJECT: Scrutiny Forward Work Plan 2009-2010 |
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| <p>SUMMARY:</p> <p>At the Performance, Review & Audit Committee (PRAC) meeting on the 28th July 2008 a forward work plan for scrutiny topic areas 2008/2009 was agreed by the Committee.</p> <p>On the 23rd January 2009 a letter was issued to all PRAC members requesting suggestions for future scrutiny topic areas; and Policy board have been requested to put forward suggestions for Members consideration.</p> <p>Members are requested to agree what scrutiny topic areas are most suitable for scrutiny during 2009-2011.</p> |
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| OBJECTIVES | | IMPLICATIONS | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------|-----|
| More than an Emergency Service | YES | Operational Risk Management | YES |
| Trusted & Respected by our customers | YES | Community Risk Reduction | YES |
| Saving Lives, Protecting Communities | YES | Service Control | YES |
| Managing within Budget | YES | Civil Contingencies & Resilience | YES |
| Allocate Resources to Priorities | YES | Finance & Procurement | YES |
| Efficiency savings | YES | People and Organisational Development | YES |
| Alternative funding & resources | YES | ICT | YES |
| Managing People | YES | CCMS | YES |
| Risk Reduction Planning | YES | Transport | YES |
| Partnership Working | YES | Corporate Risk | YES |
| Effective & Empowered People | YES | Estates | YES |
| | | Sustainability & Environment | YES |
| | | Welsh Language | YES |
| | | Legal | YES |
| | | Governance | YES |
| | | Equality & Diversity | YES |
| | | Representative Body Consultation | YES |

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| <p>COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS ON THE ABOVE OBJECTIVES/IMPLICATIONS:</p> <p>Scrutiny is an essential component to assist the Authority in its policy development, to review performance across all of the Authority's functions and to identify areas of performance requiring improvement. The Authority has powers to scrutinise all areas of the Service and therefore impacts on all of the above.</p> |
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RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Members are asked to agree topic areas for a scrutiny exercises to be undertaken between July 2009 and April 2011.
2. Members are requested to nominate PRAC members to participate in particular scrutiny exercises on allocated dates

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT:

PRAC Reports – Nov 2007-Nov 2008

WAO A Review of the Scrutiny Arrangements within the Fire & Rescue Authorities of Wales, June 2008
John Weston

MWWFRA Constitution - Article 7, Terms of Reference for the PRAC Committee,

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Scrutiny Forward Work Plan 2009-2010

Background

At the Performance, Review & Audit Committee (PRAC) meeting on the 28th July 2008 a forward work plan for scrutiny topic areas 2008/2009 was agreed by the Committee – see appendix 1.

Since, February 2008 the following areas have been scrutinised:

- the ICT & Communications department as a whole;
- the following departmental business plans:
 - Strategic Planning & Performance Department
 - Human Resources Department
 - Community safety department
 - Pembrokeshire County Command
 - Learning & development department
 - Carmarthenshire County Command
 - Neath & Port Talbot Command
 - Ceredigion County Command
 - Corporate Risk Department
 - Estates Department
 - Technical Services Water Department
 - Civil Contingencies & Resilience department

Unfortunately, the Equality & Diversity scrutiny exercise planned for November 2008 has been delayed due to difficulties in setting up the business plan exercises due to diary clashes. However, the Equality & Diversity scrutiny exercise is now scheduled to take place on the 27th April 2009, after the PRAC meeting and following the Equality & Diversity training planned for Members on the 23rd February 2009.

To ensure that topics being scrutinised are appropriate and relevant to key current business priorities the topic of “Workforce Planning/IPDS” is included in the proposed list of topics for scrutiny in 2009-2010 contained within this report

In readiness for the PRAC meeting on the 16th February 2009, a letter was issued to all Members of PRAC asking them for suggestions for topics areas to be subjected to scrutiny in future and for discussion at the next meeting.

The Clerk has also requested that a paper be submitted to Policy Board Members prior to the PRAC meeting to gauge opinion on possible scrutiny topics areas that can be suggested to Members.

Scrutiny Improvement Strategy

To improve the way in which scrutiny is dealt with in future, the following has been undertaken:

- Firm diary dates - Initial scrutiny exercises are to take place following every PRAC meeting from April 27th 2009 onwards. Additional meetings will be scheduled as necessary.
- WLGA consultation – the WLGA have been approached to provide us with advice and guidance on how to drive forward scrutiny and will be delivering bespoke scrutiny training to PRAC Members and Officers on the 16th February 2009.
- Documentation – following attendance at an LGG Overview and Scrutiny course the Head of Corporate Communication & Member Support has devised draft scrutiny guidance for Members and Officers on undertaking scrutiny together with a scoping template for topics. Additionally an evaluation questionnaire has been devised to review the process on completion of a topic area. These are attached at Appendix 2 for perusal and comment.

The above is in accord with WAO recommendations concerning scrutiny and member engagement contained with the WAO's annual letter.

Feedback from Policy Board

One of the recommendations outlined by the WLGA was to refer to risk registers and the like to identify possible areas for scrutiny in future. Therefore, Policy Board were requested to consider possible topic areas for Members to consider based on:

- Risk Assessment Template (RAT) 2007-2008
- Peer Assessment Report 2008-2009 –
- Business Risk Management Group's Risk Register – awaiting approval of final version, the outcomes of which will be made known to full meeting of PRAC in due course. The organisation undertook a review of strategic risks facing the Service to take account of 3 key areas which are Strategic, Operational and Financial. The outcome report has now been presented to the Business Risk Management Group who are in the process of reviewing and finalising a defined corporate risk register for the Service.

Policy Board Recommendations for possible areas for Members to scrutinise in 2009/2010 include:

- **Business Continuity Management** - Business Continuity Management is an established part of the UK's preparations for the possible threats posed to organisations, whether from internal systems failures or external emergencies such as extreme weather, terrorism, or infectious disease. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 recognised its importance by requiring frontline responders to maintain internal BCM arrangements and, since May 2006, local authorities have been required to promote BCM to business and voluntary organisations in their communities.
- **RRP planning process and associated efficiencies**
- **Effectiveness of Partnerships**

- **The Outstanding items arising from the original forward work plan 2008/09, namely:**
 - **Equalities & diversity (planned for 27th April 2009)**
 - **Workforce planning, IPDS etc**
 - **Remaining Business plans:**
 - **Powys County Command**
 - **Swansea County Command**
 - **Fire Control**
 - **Corporate Communication & Member Support (Corporate Services)**
 - **Finance**
 - **Transport**

Feedback from Members

A letter was issued to all PRAC members on the 23rd January 2009 requesting suggestions for scrutiny topic areas to be put before PRAC committee on the 16th February 2009. At the time of writing this report no suggestions had been received, however Members will have the opportunity to put forward any suggested topic areas during the meeting.

Recommendations

1. Members are asked to agree topic areas for a scrutiny exercises to be undertaken between July 2009 and April 2011.
2. Members are requested to nominate PRAC members to participate in particular scrutiny exercises on allocated dates

Proposed Scrutiny Forward Work Plan July 2010 – April 2011

2009-2010

| | July 2009 | Oct 2009 | Nov 2009 | Jan 2010 | Apr 2010 |
|--|---|--|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Scrutiny Exercise | 27 th p.m. | 12 th p.m. | 30 th p.m. | 25 th p.m. | 19 th p.m. |
| Topic Area | Workforce Planning, IPDS & Powys County Command | Transport & Business Continuity Management | Fire Control & Swansea County Command | RRP planning and associated efficiencies | Effectiveness of Partnerships |
| Members 1 or 2 groups 3 members per group | | | | | |

2010-2011

| | July 2010 | Oct 2010 | Nov 2010 | Jan 2011 | Apr 2011 |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Scrutiny Exercise | 26 th p.m. | 11 th p.m. | 29 th p.m. | 24 th p.m. | 18 th p.m. |
| Topic Area | Corporate Communication & Member Support (Corporate Services) | Finance | tbc | tbc | tbc |
| Members | | | | | |

N.B - all scrutiny exercises take place on the afternoon following a full PRAC meeting



Scrutiny Handbook for Members and Officers



1. Why Scrutiny?

Scrutiny is an integral part of the Authority's decision making arrangements and Members have powers of review and scrutiny and the ability to make reports and recommendations on any matters relevant to the area and its inhabitants. They:

- Provide a “critical friend” to challenge decisions
- Reflect the voice and concerns of the public and its communities
- Take the lead and own the scrutiny process on behalf of the public
- Make an impact on the delivery of Public services

“...assist the Authority in its policy development....and review performance across all the Authority's functions”

“...look at areas of performance in need of improvement”

PRAC Terms of Reference

2.7 “Key Success Factors” – Wales Audit Office (WAO)

1. Officer / member Commitment, involvement & participation

- Ownership & commitment to make it work
 - Reviews must be member led
 - Work in a consensual & constructive way
 - Members working together
2. Focusing on the right things
 - Focus on topics that have the most impact
 - Consult when choosing topics
 - Take evidence first on strategy, then management and finally service delivery
 3. Organising what you do
 - Set a clear remit & measurable outcomes
 - Prepare & plan ahead
 4. Right level of support
 - Sufficient level of support
 - Develop good working relationships
 - Properly briefed & informed
 5. Independent & Objective Perspective
 - Never compromise independence
 - Choose right questions
 - Obtain a balanced view
 - Introduce new ideas, generate debate
 6. Learning & Development
 - Ongoing development programme
 - Learn from good practice elsewhere
 - Obtain feedback
 7. Right Outcomes & Impact
 - Reviews are evidenced based
 - Recommendations are practical
 - Identify ownership of recommendation

3. Undertaking Scrutiny

Introduction to the Topic

Members will be given a short introduction or overview of the scrutiny topics at the start of every scrutiny session to familiarise themselves with the subject matter.

Questioning

Members should consider potential questions for Officers in advance of meetings and a five minute briefing will be held at the start of each meeting, before Officers are admitted to discuss the questions that Members may wish to ask.

Effective Questioning

- **Open questions** – open questions have the greatest potential. Information is requested in a neutral way and the witness is encouraged to do most of the talking and to expand on the points at issue

For example “What do you consider is best about....?”

The key prefixes are **What? How? Why? Who? When?**

Responses should be followed up with probing questions to yield additional clarity. This technique can also be used to help you get beyond superficial or rehearsed answers to questions. It may even be necessary to help you form a balanced picture by seeking contrary evidence. Probing questions use the answer received for one question as the basis for taking the discussion further with your next question.

For example: **I was interested to hear you say.can you tell me more about that?**

- Hypothetical questions – hypothetical questions can be useful in obtaining good evidence, as well as testing possibilities to formulate new ideas and solutions

For example: **How would you set about changing your departments/the Service’s strategy for doing..?**

- **Behavioural questions** – behavioural questions can provide guidance as to how a department or the Service may undertake a task in the future. This type of question obtains an accurate example of past behaviour.

For example: **What did your department/the Service do on this issue before, to ensure outcomes x, y and z?**

Ineffective Questioning

- **Closed questions** –questions which can be answered in a single word, can actually be very useful in clearing up points of fact. However, if over-used, they will close down the witness and restrict the amount of information which an Officer may be able to give

For example: **did you know/are you aware that x priority identified in this Service was achieved/will be achieved?**

- **Leading questions** – these questions are phrased in such a way as to make it clear to the respondee what answer is expected. The technique is poor because it may force people into a false position because they are aware of how to respond.
- **Double-headed questions** – asking more than one question at a time should be avoided as it is confusing. Also, it offers those being questioned an easy strategy to defend themselves by simply selecting the bit of the question they are comfortable answering whilst ignoring the rest. It is more productive to present one question at once.
- **Multiple choice questions** – presenting a question and multiple possible answers is ineffective as none of them may provide a real explanation
- **Discriminatory questions** – questions that are run to counter equal opportunity considerations are totally unacceptable

Guidelines for Questioning

- Decide what question will get the information you want
- Think about the specific questions you need to ask
- Ask specific, clear, open or closed questions – probably using the former more often
- Avoid leading, multiple and judgemental questions
- Give the other person time to hear and understand the question, and think of the response
- Live with the silence, a silence is often an indication that a thoughtful question has been asked
- Concentrate on listening to answers rather than thinking of your next question. It is often very effective to summarise the response as a way of checking understanding

Active Listening

- **Look attentive** – messages are conveyed not only with words but also through non-verbal means such as body language
- **Give encouragement** – give appropriate verbal and non-verbal responses

4. Structure & Support

The Structure of Scrutiny

The Performance Review and Audit Committee (PRAC) undertake the scrutiny function within Mid & West Wales Fire & Rescue Authority. They have responsibility for overseeing all scrutiny work, including:

- Scrutiny of the performance and improvement plan
- Scrutiny the Operational assurance self assessment
- Receiving and considering periodic reports from the Member Risk Reduction Planning group
- Scrutinising and recommending approval to the Authority of the joint risk assessment / improvement plan

Staffing and Support

Support Officers are provided by the Strategic Planning and Performance group within the Operational Risk Management (ORM) Department and the Member Support Team in the Corporate Communication and Member Support (CCMS) department.

The role of the Strategic Planning and Performance group is to:

- Provide independent support through facilitating all scrutiny exercises
- Support the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Members of PRAC in developing the scrutiny process
- Identify members of PRAC to sit on specific scrutiny exercises
- Liaise with the relevant Heads of Department in arranging attendance and preparation for scrutiny exercises
- Provide advice, assistance and research provision in relation to Service improvement and performance management
- In conjunction with the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Member Support department, to draw up and monitor, scrutiny committee work programmes and produce an annual report on scrutiny
- Keep a record of debate and decisions

The role of the Member Support group is to:

- Provide independent support for PRAC meetings and facilitate any scrutiny exercises that deem it inappropriate for SP&P to be involved, e.g. scrutiny of an element of the ORM department
- Agree convenient dates for scrutiny exercises to be undertaken and book rooms as required
- Support the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Members of PRAC in developing the scrutiny process
- Provide advice, assistance and research provision in relation to matters other than those relating to Service improvement and performance management
- Provide advice on Constitutional matters, scrutiny procedures and protocols

The Monitoring Officer advises on matters of probity in relation to scrutiny and responsible for ongoing review and revision of the Constitution.

5. Templates

Evaluation of the Scrutiny Review Process 2009

| | | | |
|-------------------|--|-----------|--|
| Scrutiny Meeting: | | Date: | |
| Scrutiny Officer | | Your Name | |

| | |
|----|--|
| 1 | Was the preparation and information provided for the scrutiny exercise adequate? |
| 2 | Were the outcomes of the scrutiny exercise clear and understood by all? |
| 3 | Were the outcomes achieved? |
| 4 | What went well? |
| 5 | What did not go so well? |
| 6 | Did we have the right skills/information to conduct the review? |
| 7 | Was it clear what recommendations would be considered? |
| 8 | How will we know if the scrutiny review has made a difference? |
| 9 | Follow up – what follow up should there be and by whom? |
| 10 | Lessons learned – what would make our next scrutiny review more effective? |

Please return to Jacqui Maunder

MWWFRS Scrutiny Review Scoping Template 2009

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Review Topic (name of review) | | | |
| Projected Start Date | | Draft Report Deadline | |
| Scrutiny Sessions | | Number of Hours of Work Involved | |
| Councillor Involvement (Names of Cllrs involved) | | | |
| Scrutiny Officer (name of the impartial officer facilitating) | | | |
| Officer Support (names of Officers required) | | | |
| Rationale (key issues and/or reason for doing the review) | | | |
| Purpose of Review/Objective (specify exactly what the Review should achieve) | | | |
| Indicators of Success (what factors would indicate that a Review had been successful) | | | |
| Methodology/Approach (what types of enquiry will be used to gather evidence and why) | | | |
| Specify Witnesses/Experts (who to see and when) | | | |
| Specify Evidence Sources for Documents (which to look at) | | | |
| Specify site visits (where and when) | | | |
| Specify Evidence Sources for Views of Stakeholders (consultation/workshop/focus groups/public meetings) | | | |
| Publicity Requirements (what is needed – press release fliers, leaflets etc) | | | |
| Resource Requirements (people, expenditure) | | | |
| Barriers/dangers/risks/etc (identify any weaknesses and potential pitfalls) | | | |
| <u>Terms of Reference/Notes</u> | | | |
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