

REPORT TO: Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 18 June 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Environment

SUBJECT: Improving Overview and Scrutiny; Action Plan 2008-9

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The report brings to the attention of the Board those elements of the 'Action Plan 2008-9 for Overview and Scrutiny' relevant to the Urban Renewal PPB

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) The Board discusses the recommendations of the 'Action Plan 2008-9 for Overview and Scrutiny'; and**
- (2) agrees a way forward.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) is intended to be an independent, Member-led process. In 2007-8 a series of initiatives were undertaken to progress the way in which Halton Borough Council undertakes this activity;
- The issue was discussed at a joint meeting of the Executive Board and Management Team and at Chairs' Away Days;
 - An externally-administered questionnaire and Away Day group discussion sessions were facilitated by consultant Peter Kent;
 - Improvements were highlighted through completing the North west Scrutiny Support Officers' pilot quality benchmarking exercise;
 - Other improvements have been drawn from good practice elsewhere or prompted by the experience and comments of Members and officers operating O&S in Halton.
- 3.2 As a consequence a Draft Action Plan was drawn up and circulated informally amongst the then-Members of the Urban Renewal PPB in March 2008. (It is attached as Appendix One.) The elements relevant to this Board are set out in summary in the table below, together with comments and/or actions either implemented or required. It should be noted that the nature of the scope of the Urban Renewal PPB is such that it has always exercised flexibility in its approach to policy and scrutiny matters and it is assumed that this approach will be maintained.

AP ref	Issue Raised	Action Recommended in Action Plan	By When	Comment
1	Strengthen communication and dialogue between O&S and the Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portfolio holder or Strategic Director to attend/contribute to PPB meetings by invitation of the PPB Chair. Encourage closer dialogue between PPB and XB portfolio holders e.g. informally and through participation in PPB preparatory meetings. Develop protocol for XB participation at PPB 	June 2008 Ongoing	The Board might wish to consider: an invitation to the Strategic Director Environment to attend June and January meetings of the Board; a standing invitation to the XB portfolio holder to attend both Board meetings and Chair's briefings; and an invitation to the XB portfolio holder to be present to address Board Members' questions on at least two occasions each year.
2	Promote 'pre scrutiny' and use the Forward Plan to better effect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPB to seek earlier involvement in issues and make more productive use of an improved Forward Plan to support Council decision-making 	May 2008	The Board might wish to consider if, when and how frequently they receive a formal item on the Forward Plan, or whether the opportunity to question officers on the FP would be sufficient.
4	Improve the effectiveness of O&S's role in relation to Performance Management (PM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shift the focus of PM towards greater emphasis on more strategic and partnership aspects 	Ongoing	Over and above service plan quarterly monitoring and other reports, would the Board find it helpful to have reports on progress against strategic objectives within their remit?
7	Strengthen/streamline PPB agendas e.g. to avoid overload, improve effectiveness	<p>Agenda planning to be more selective and question the inclusion of relevant reports/items to avoid overload and any items that may, for instance, be duplicative, out of date or otherwise beyond the scope of a PPB to influence or add value e.g. query/avoid inclusion of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'tired' performance info; 'to note/receive/endorse' agenda items items that PPB debate/comments can no longer meaningfully influence <p><i>Consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> special meetings or informal sessions where necessary e.g. to consider 'fresh' performance info, essential background briefings focussing more on early involvement with issues and key decisions (pre-scrutiny) when policy options and plans are still fluid <p>All Topic team proposals to consider expected costs, benefits and resource implications</p>	From June 2008 March 2008	The Board to note. Topic Lead Officers/Members to note.
8	Develop and implement ways to engage and listen to the voice of the public and their (non-councillor) representatives more fully through O&S	<p>Explore/pursue options including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> more involvement of groups of the public and their representatives e.g. school children making fuller use of market research findings 	On-going	The Board might wish to consider how the public could be more meaningfully involved in its work. To be noted.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no policy implications

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no other implications

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Not applicable

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Not applicable

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Not applicable

6.4 A Safer Halton

Not applicable

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Not applicable

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

Not applicable

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

Not applicable

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Action Plan for 2008-9 Improving Overview and Scrutiny	Office of Overview and Scrutiny Officer	Alex Villiers

IMPROVING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (O&S) ACTION PLAN FOR 2008 - 2009

This plan combines recommendations for improving Halton B C's overview and scrutiny arrangements derived from several sources including:

- *suggestions from the joint Executive Board/Management Team and proposals from the Chairs' Awaydays;*
- *findings from an externally administered questionnaire and Awayday group/discussion sessions facilitated by consultant Peter Kent;*
- *improvements highlighted through completing the NW Scrutiny Support Officers' pilot quality benchmarking exercise;*
- *other improvements drawn from good practice elsewhere or prompted by the experience of Members and officers operating O&S in Halton.*

These actions will be complemented within the next few months by actions relating to O&S identified through the Topic work currently underway to review and develop the Council's performance management approach and processes.

#	ISSUE RAISED	ACTION	BY WHOM	BY WHEN
1	Strengthen communication and dialogue between O&S and the Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite Executive Board (XB) members to O&S Coordination Panel (OSCoP) meetings periodically – agreed twice a year • Portfolio holder or chief executive/strategic director to attend/contribute to PPB meetings by invitation of the PPB Chair. Encourage closer dialogue between PPB (Chairs) and XB portfolio holders e.g. informally + through participation in PPB preparatory meetings • Develop protocol for XB participation at 	Cllr. Blackmore + Alex Villiers PPB Chairs and Prime Officer Leads (POLs) + Cllr. Blackmore, Alex Villiers AV PPB Chairs	From July 2008 June 2008 On-going

		PPBs			
#	ISSUE RAISED	ACTION	BY WHOM	BY WHEN	
1	Strengthen communication and dialogue between O&S and the Executive (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight scope of O&S for timely monitoring of the progress of XB business using: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - XB papers on intranet - XB minutes on intranet (within 5 days of meeting) - and by sending 'all Members' email reminders when such papers are posted Share O&S Topic work programme summary with Exec Board Members early in each municipal year Highlight scope of O&S for timely monitoring of the progress of XB business using: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - XB papers on intranet - XB minutes on intranet (within 5 days of meeting) - and by sending 'all Members' email reminders when such papers are posted Share O&S Topic work programme summary with Exec Board Members early in each municipal year 	<p>OSCoP/AV</p> <p>Committee Services</p> <p>AV</p>	<p>June 2008</p> <p>March 2008</p> <p>From April 08</p>	
2	Promote 'pre-scrutiny' and use the Forward Plan to better effect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore scope for strengthening the Forward Plan and making it more informative - and implement PPBs to seek earlier involvement in issues and make more productive use of improved Forward Plan to support Council decision-making 	<p>Mark Reaney</p> <p>PPB Chairs + POLs</p>	<p>April 2008</p> <p>May 2008</p>	

#	ISSUE RAISED	ACTION	BY WHOM	BY WHEN
3	Strengthen impact of O&S activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve programming of O&S activities/meetings • Embed process for referrals/recommendations to XB so it is more fully understood/ transparent • Open invitation for non-Exec Members to attend XB meetings – remind Members • Introduce more systematic and effective tracking and follow up of O&S recommendations and their impact, including feedback to PPBs 	<p>AV/POLs</p> <p>Management Team (MT)/ POLs/AV</p> <p>AV</p> <p>AV/Mark Reaney</p>	<p>June 2008</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>March 2008</p> <p>June 2008</p>
4	Improve the effectiveness of O&S's role in relation to performance management (PM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement relevant recommendations emerging from the on-going Topic review of PM • Shift the focus of PM towards greater emphasis on more strategic and partnership aspects • Ensure performance monitoring information, especially financial information, is current • Remind Members of PM information available via intranet enabling timely monitoring independent of formal meeting timetable • Ensure continued Member engagement in scrutiny and development of PM arrangements 	<p>Cllr Dennett/ Rob Mackenzie</p> <p>AV with PPB Chairs/POLs (As per review recs – t.b.a.)</p> <p>Rob Mackenzie</p> <p>Cllr. Blackmore + AV</p>	<p>March 2008</p> <p>On-going w.e.f. Apr '08</p> <p>July 2008</p> <p>March 2008</p> <p>On-going</p>

		<p>necessary e.g. to consider 'fresh' performance info, essential background briefings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> focussing more on early involvement with issues and key decisions (pre-scrutiny) when policy options and plans are still fluid <p>All Topic team proposals to consider expected costs, benefits and resource implications</p>		
#	ISSUE RAISED	INITIAL ACTION PROPOSED	BY WHOM	BY WHEN
8	Develop and implement ways to engage and listen to the voice of the public and their (non-councillor) representatives more fully through O&S	<p>Explore/pursue options including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> more involvement of groups of the public and their representatives e.g. school children making fuller use of market research findings further exploiting the potential of Halton's devolved arrangements e.g. Area and Neighbourhood fora for localised O&S further develop and promote awareness of O&S information accessible electronically 	<p>Chairs + POLs</p> <p>Chairs + POLs</p> <p>Area Forum and N'hood Board</p> <p>Chairs/Lead offs</p> <p>AV</p>	<p>On-going</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>On-going</p>

9	Implement aspects of the Local Govt etc. Act 2007 and associated guidance relating to O&S	Assess implications of LG Act and integrate requirements into HBC documentation, processes and procedures, as required (e.g. the Constitution)	AV	w.e.f. May 2008
10	Further develop programme of training and personal development for those involved with O&S to strengthen the Council's capacity to carry out this function effectively	Review scope and relevance of existing O&S training and development activities. Enhanced programme in place	Cllr Blackmore and AV	Sept 2008
11	Check Committee/Board structure and arrangements are fully fit for purpose	As part of the review of the Constitution - Undertake a review of the present Committee/ Board structure, arrangements and membership with a view to improvement	Council Members guided by the Leader & CX	June – Dec 2008