
To: Audit, Scrutiny & Petitions Board

On: 6 June 2015

Report by: Director of Finance and Resources

Heading: Audit, Scrutiny & Petitions Board – Annual Programme 2016/17

1. Summary

- 1.1 In terms of the guidelines for its operation, the Audit, Scrutiny & Petitions Board is required to prepare an annual programme of activities which may include consideration of routine reports as well as areas of specific investigation.
- 1.2 Generally, each review takes at least five meetings to conclude, but this is dependent upon the availability of witnesses and whether the Board wishes to hear further evidence. It was agreed at an earlier meeting that, given the level of business before the Board, no more than two reviews be considered at each meeting to allow members to give sufficient consideration to each one and in order that meetings were not extended too late into the afternoon.
- 1.3 The Board historically undertook 3-4 reviews each year based on there being two meetings per cycle. However there is now only one meeting per cycle and only five cycles each year, although there is the facility to hold additional meetings if required; this has an impact on the number of reviews which can be undertaken and the length of time taken to conclude each review.

- 1.4 At the meeting of the Board held on 1 June 2015 it was agreed that the 2015/16 annual programme comprise the following reviews and their order of priority: (i) Ward 15 (Children's Ward), Royal Alexandra Hospital; (ii) bus de-regulation and its effect on transport services in Renfrewshire; (iii) the newly-introduced speed limit in Brookfield (A761); (iv) restricting access to the Council's cycle to work scheme; (v) fly tipping in the countryside and at known fly-tipping spots; (vi) housing repairs by Council and outside contractors; (vii) Japanese knotweed in our landscapes and gardens; (viii) maintenance of multi-occupancy accommodation; and (ix) the effectiveness of Fair Trade.
- 1.5 The Board's review of Ward 15 (Children's Ward) Royal Alexandra Hospital is ongoing. The scope and terms of reference of the review of bus de-regulation and its effect on transport services in Renfrewshire was agreed by the Board at its meeting held on 30 November, 2015. However the Lead Officer for that review is no longer employed by the Council and the appointment of a new Lead Officer is awaited. The other seven reviews have yet to commence. Lead officers have been appointed for reviews (v) and (vi) as in paragraph 1.4 above.
- 1.6 Accordingly, unless members have any other areas they wish to propose for the Board's consideration, it is suggested that the 2016/17 programme comprise the reviews agreed for the 2015/16 programme, namely: (i) bus de-regulation and its effect on transport services in Renfrewshire; (ii) the newly-introduced speed limit in Brookfield (A761); (iii) restricting access to the Council's cycle to work scheme; (iv) fly tipping in the countryside and at known fly-tipping spots; (v) housing repairs by Council and outside contractors; (vi) Japanese knotweed in our landscapes and gardens; (vii) maintenance of multi-occupancy accommodation; and (viii) the effectiveness of Fair Trade. However, it should be noted that these reviews will not be concluded prior to the Local Government elections in May, 2017 as only four scheduled meetings of the Board remain. Although, as detailed in paragraph 1.3 above, there is the facility to hold special additional meetings if required.
- 1.7 Members were advised that this report would suggest that the 2016/17 programme comprise the eight reviews which have yet to commence as detailed at paragraph 1.6 above, unless they had any other areas they wished to propose for the Board's consideration and were asked, when proposing issues for consideration, to provide details of why the review should be undertaken and the expected outcome of the proposed review.

- 1.8 Councillor J MacLaren has indicated that, currently, the Council does not list all council tax exemptions and reductions available to residents when issuing council tax notices and suggests that a review be undertaken as follows:

Why the review should be undertaken: because a number of exemptions are not known or readily available. For example, Many carers are not aware of possible exemptions and can end up paying many years of tax which is not refundable by back dated application, before they are told about any possible exemption.

Expected outcome of the review: People should be left in no doubt about what discounts and exemptions are available.

2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1 That members consider which issues they would wish the Board to consider for inclusion in its next annual programme of reviews, including the order of priority in which they are to be undertaken; and
- 2.2 That Lead Officers be appointed to consider all of the topics and prepare reports outlining the possible scope and terms of reference of specific investigations and suggest individuals, agencies and organisations who might be invited to contribute to the investigations.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – *none*
2. **HR & Organisational Development** - *none*
3. **Community Planning** – the Board’s annual programme reflects the Council’s commitment to open and transparent government.
4. **Legal** - *none*

- 5. **Property/Assets** - *none*
- 6. **Information Technology** – *none*
- 7. **Equality & Human Rights**

(a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

- 8. **Health & Safety** - *none*
- 9. **Procurement** – *none*
- 10. **Risk** - *none*
- 11. **Privacy Impact** - *none*

Author: Lilian Belshaw x7112
Lilian.belshaw@renfrewshire.gcsx.gov.uk