CRITERIA CHECKLIST FOR SELECTING TOPICS FOR REVIEW

Criteria for Selecting Items
▪ Issue identified by members as key issue for public (through member surgeries, other contact with constituents or volume of complaints)
▪ Poor performing service (evidence from performance indicators/benchmarking)
▪ Service ranked as important by the community (e.g. through market surveys/citizens panels)
▪ High level of user/general public dissatisfaction with service (e.g. through market surveys/citizens panels/complaints)
▪ Public interest issue covered in local media
▪ High level of budgetary commitment to the service/policy area (as percentage of total expenditure)
▪ Pattern of budgetary overspends
▪ Council corporate priority area
▪ Central government priority area
▪ Issues raised by External Audit Management Letter/External audit reports
▪ New government guidance or legislation
▪ Reports or new evidence provided by external organisations on key issue
▪ Others

CRITERIA FOR REJECTION

Potential Criteria for Rejecting Items
▪ Issue being examined by the Cabinet
▪ Issue being examined by an Officer Group : changes imminent
▪ Issue being examined by another internal body
▪ Issue will be addressed as part of a Service Review within the next year
▪ New legislation or guidance expected within the next year
▪ Other reasons specific to the particular issues.

**SCRUTINY CHECKLIST
DO'S AND DON'TS**

DO

♦ Remember that Scrutiny
   ♦ Is about learning and being a "critical friend"; it should be a positive process
   ♦ Is not opposition

♦ Remember that Scrutiny should result in improved value, enhanced performance or greater public satisfaction
♦ Take an overview and keep an eye on the wider picture
♦ Check performance against local standards and targets and national standards, and compare results with other authorities
♦ Benchmark performance against local and national performance indicators, using the results to ask more informed questions
♦ Use Working Groups to get underneath performance information
♦ Take account of local needs, priorities and policies
♦ Be persistent and inquisitive
♦ Ask effective questions - be constructive not judgmental
♦ Be open-minded and self aware - encourage openness and self criticism in services
♦ Listen to users and the public, seek the voices that are often not heard, seek the views of others - and balance all of these
♦ Praise good practice and best value - and seek to spread this throughout the authority
♦ Provide feedback to those who have been involved in the review and to stakeholders
♦ Anticipate difficulties in Members challenging colleagues from their own party
♦ Take time to review your own performance

♦ DON'T
♦ Witch-hunt or use performance review as punishment
♦ Be party political/partisan
♦ Blame valid risk taking or stifle initiative or creativity
♦ Treat scrutiny as an add-on
♦ Get bogged down in detail
♦ Be frightened of asking basic questions
♦ Undertake too many issues in insufficient depth
♦ Start without a clear brief and remit
♦ Underestimate the task
♦ Lose track of the main purpose of scrutiny
♦ Lack sensitivity to other stakeholders
♦ Succumb to organisational inertia
♦ Duck facing failure - learn from it and support change and development
♦ Be driven by data or be paralysed by analysis - keep strategic overview,

and expect officers to provide high level information and analysis to help.

KEY QUESTIONS

Overview and Scrutiny Committees should keep in mind some of the fundamental questions:-

Are we doing what users/non users/local residents want?
Are users' needs central to the service?
Why are we doing this?
What are we trying to achieve?
How well are we doing?
How do we compare with others?
Are we delivering value for money?
How do we know?
What can we improve?

INVESTIGATIONS:-

To what extent are service users' expectations and needs being met?
To what extent is the service achieving what the policy intended?
To what extent is the service meeting any statutory obligations or national standards and targets?
Are there any unexpected results/side effects of the policy?
Is the performance improving, steady or deteriorating?
Is the service able to be honest and open about its current performance and the reasons behind it?
Are areas of achievement and weakness fairly and accurately identified?
How has performance been assessed? What is the evidence?
How does performance compare with that of others? Are there learning points from others' experiences?
Is the service capable of meeting planned targets/standards? What change to capability is needed.
Are local performance indicators relevant, helpful, meaningful to Members, staff and service users?