

		<b>AGENDA ITEM 6</b>
		<b>PAF/13/17</b>
<b>Committee:</b>	<b>People and Families Scrutiny Committee</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	<b>12 October 2017</b>	
<b>Enquiries to:</b>	<b>Name: Graham Hughes</b>  <b>Designation: Senior Democratic Services Officer</b>  <b>Contact details:</b> 033301 34574 <a href="mailto:Graham.hughes@essex.gov.uk">Graham.hughes@essex.gov.uk</a>	

## **WORK PROGRAMME**

It has been requested by the PAF Chairman that a report on the draft work programme be submitted to this meeting (consolidating previous informal discussions) for formal consideration by the Committee.

### Reflecting on what the committee has done so far

The first induction session after county council elections looked at the legal and organisational context for scrutiny and encouraged discussion on aspects of good practice and future ways of working. A discussion with the Chief Executive on the morning of the second induction day complemented this.

The majority of the second induction day centred around identifying some of the key issues and challenges relevant to the committee's remit during private discussions with the Cabinet Members responsible for Education, Health and Adult Social Care, and Children and Families respectively.

Private briefings were then held in September on falls prevention, school places planning, and school crossing patrols. As a result of those briefings in September, the Committee, together with members of the Health Overview Policy and Scrutiny Committee who were also present, resolved to establish a Joint Task and Finish Group to look at falls prevention (see separate report on this in the agenda pack).

Further briefings and discussion days will continue to be scheduled on an ongoing basis as required (see Appendix A).

## Planning a work programme

Work programmes should be devised that reflect a committee's capacity to deliver that programme as well as officers' capacity to support it in that task. With scrutiny resource very limited there is a need for Scrutiny Committees at Essex County Council to plan and manage their activities effectively in order to identify the best opportunities for the scrutiny committee to add value and maximise its influence.

A key part of this is using selection criteria to help the committee objectively prioritise potential scrutiny issues and identify those issues on which it is worth dedicating scrutiny resource. Ultimately Scrutiny Members want to be in the position of exerting a proactive and positive influence upon the Council, commissioners and providers.

The role of topic selection and work programmes has featured in Members' Scrutiny training, and good practice is reflected in the Council's Overview and Scrutiny handbook that is published on its website - [Scrutiny Handbook](#)

## Managing resources

The Scrutiny Board (comprising the Chairmen of the four scrutiny committees at Essex County Council) oversees the work and planning of scrutiny resource for all the four scrutiny committees at Essex County Council. The Board has recognised that there is limited scrutiny resource available (officer and member) to support Task and Finish Group activity. The Board has indicated that it considers that only a limited number of in-depth reviews can be undertaken simultaneously across the four committees (i.e. a maximum of 4-5 in total across all committees). In addition, the Board views that all Task and Finish Group reviews should aim to finish within three months of their commencement and that the Scrutiny Board would be responsible for granting extensions to this. In practical terms this means that the Committee is unlikely to be able to conduct more than a maximum of 3-4 detailed reviews a year.

Notwithstanding all of the above there is still scope for briefings, fact finding visits, and limited round table discussions to ensure that Members are well informed about what is happening across the services covered by the Committee's remit.

### **Action required by Members at this meeting:**

- (i) To note this report and Appendix A which reflects the current work programming undertaken and underway.**
- (ii) To discuss suggestions for briefings and other preparatory work as part of further developing the work programme.**
- (iii) To consider timings for initial scoping meetings and reviews.**