

Governance Working Group

Proposed changes to Overview and Scrutiny

27 February 2020

Drivers for change

- Current arrangements not satisfactory.
- Pre-Scrutiny of Cabinet reports the night before a Cabinet decision not effective.
- Scrutiny should be advisory, with involvement in shaping council policy, to influence decision-making on major issues facing the council.
- Scrutiny is best undertaken without political interference.

A clear role for Scrutiny

- An opportunity for Members to have an impact and influence the work of the council.
- Focus more on pre-scrutiny at an early stage, i.e. assist in the development of major, strategic policies, programmes of works, projects, etc.
- Not just act as a rubber stamp
- Work plan items to be properly scoped, allowing for clear outcomes.
- Less busy agendas, allowing members to give more time and focus to consider individual issues on matters of significance to the work of the council.

“Scrutiny should be a strategic function
of the authority.

It should be central to the organisation’s
corporate governance, a crucial cog in the
decision-making machine”.

*Centre for Public Scrutiny –
Taking Scrutiny Seriously - January 2020*

Proposed changes

- Reduction in number of meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from 11 to 5 or 6 per year.
- Creation of a finance and performance sub-group to meet quarterly.
- Committee work plan to include about 12 clearly scoped topics, allowing for a deep dive into two topics per meeting.
- Work plan topics to have clear lines of enquiry, questions, and to draw on external expertise as necessary.
- Members to lead the items at Scrutiny meetings.
- Call-in function remains available.

Proposed next steps:

- If supported by the Governance working group:
 - Meeting schedule to be considered.
 - Work plan topics to be considered (see next slide).
 - Members encouraged to develop lines of enquiry and questions for the work plan.
 - Training to be provided to Members and staff.
 - Clear expectations established – cultural change and continuous improvement.
- Formal proposal for agreement at Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April, then Annual meeting of Council in May.
- Ongoing support from CFPS through change in 20/21.

Potential topics:

- CIL - Strategic Investment Framework and governance for decision-making.
 - Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS)
 - Fireworks
 - Modern slavery
 - Licensing policy; Taxi policy; Discretionary Business Rates Policy
 - ED Strategy.
 - HRA: new build & acquisition programme; estate renewal programme.
 - Homelessness
 - Update from Climate and Ecological Working Group, including pesticide motion.
 - Update from Town Centre Working Group – progress, impact,
 - PREVENT & Safeguarding (statutory item)
 - Oportunitas
 - Waste
 - Car parking
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- Potential for OSC Chairman to assign a named OSC Member to scope each topic being considered.

Questions?