

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 11th December, 2014

Joint Report of the Director of Corporate Resources and the Lead Officer

Review of Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements – Corporate Restructuring

Purpose of Report

1. To give initial consideration to the implications of the corporate restructuring on the Council's future overview and scrutiny arrangements.

Background

2. During 2013, the Council adopted revised scrutiny arrangements. The scrutiny arrangements have been the subject of ongoing review since then. The last annual scrutiny review was presented to the Council in April, 2014.
3. The changes made to the Council's scrutiny arrangements have been broadly welcomed. In particular, positive comments have been made on the directorate aligned Committee arrangements and the adoption of an Annual Scrutiny Programme to give a clear focus on specific topics for in-depth scrutiny by Members.
4. Scrutiny Committees retain the flexibility to scrutinise any additional topics that might arise during the year. In carrying out their individual work programmes, Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs have the freedom to adapt their approaches to carry out the scrutiny reviews allocated to them. Examples have been informal meetings, task and finish groups, visits and 'virtual' meetings.
5. The Council has recognised the importance of retaining an annual review process. This should ensure that the arrangements continue to align themselves to the needs of the Council and that the scrutiny arrangements remain adaptable and flexible to changes in circumstances.
6. For the remainder of the 2014/15 municipal year, it is recommended that scrutiny arrangements remain unchanged to enable the Committees to complete the reviews allocated to them. The annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will be presented to the Council on 13th April, 2015.
7. As the Scrutiny Committees are aligned to the existing Directorates, the Board is requested to give early consideration to the arrangements for 2015/16 and beyond, taking into account the ongoing corporate restructuring.

8. The revised organisational structure establishes 3 new Strategic Directorates with 8 Chief Officer portfolios. The proposal, in principle, is to establish a Scrutiny Committee structure which is aligned to the new Strategic Directorate structure. In addition, it would seem appropriate to retain the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to co-ordinate corporate scrutiny activity. The Health Scrutiny Committee should also be retained to continue with its statutory role.
9. This proposal would mean the establishment of the following Committees with effect from May 2015:

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board
People Services Scrutiny Committee
Resources and Transformation Scrutiny Committee
Environment, Economy and Housing Scrutiny Committee
Health Scrutiny Committee
10. This proposal would be broadly in line with the existing scrutiny arrangements and the overall context of the restructuring. Subject to the approval of the Board, further work will be undertaken on the details, including the necessary amendments to the Constitution and terms of reference. A more detailed report will be submitted to the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 25th February, 2015.

Finance

11. The costs of operating the Council's scrutiny arrangements are being contained within existing budgetary allocations.
12. The ongoing budget reductions will have an impact on the levels of Directorate and Democratic Services support that is available for the scrutiny process. Moving forward into 2015/16, consideration has to be given to the availability of corporate and directorate resources to service and support working groups, meetings and various levels of scrutiny activity.
13. The proposed structure set out above will mean no increases in Special Responsibility Allowances payable under the Members Allowances Scheme.

Law

14. Scrutiny Committees are established in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 and the requirements of the Council's Constitution, which was adopted under the Local Government Act 2000, subsequent legislation and associated Regulations and Guidance.
15. Scrutiny powers relating to health are included in the Health and Social Care Acts 2001 and 2012, and associated Regulations and statutory guidance. The Police and Justice Act 2006 gives the Council powers to scrutinise the work of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enables local authorities to scrutinise other partners. Much of this legislation was consolidated in the Localism Act 2011.

16. The Council's scrutiny arrangements are set out in Article 6 of the Constitution (Scrutiny Committees) and the associated Scrutiny Procedure Rules and Protocols.

Equality Impact

17. Provision exists within the scrutiny arrangements for overview and scrutiny to be undertaken of the Council's policies on equality and diversity.

Recommendation

18. That the proposal set out in paragraph 9 this report be approved in principle and that a further detailed report be submitted to the next meeting of the Board with a view to recommendations being submitted to the annual meeting of the Council on 21st May, 2015.



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List of Background Papers

The Council's Constitution – Article 6, Scrutiny Procedure Rules and Protocols
Reports and Minutes of the Council dated 13th October, 2014 - Review of Senior Management and Organisational Structure