
Meeting	Audit & Governance Committee
Date	2 October 2014
Present	Councillors Potter (Chair), Brooks (Vice-Chair), Barnes, Fraser, Gunnell, Cuthbertson (Substitute for Councillor Ayre) and Watson (Substitute for Councillor Wiseman)
Apologies	Councillors Ayre and Wiseman and Mr Whiteley
In attendance	Councillor Galvin as Chair of Corporate and Scrutiny Management Committee

36. Declarations of Interest

Members were asked to declare any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interests or any disclosable pecuniary interests which they may have in respect of business on the agenda. None were declared.

37. Public Participation

It was reported that there had been one registration to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme but that the registered speaker was not in attendance. It was also reported that a Member of the Council had registered to speak.

Councillor Healey gave details of his experiences of scrutiny, in particular as a member of the Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He stated that the scrutiny work carried out by task groups had value but that the overview function of the committee tended to be less useful. A number of reports were presented to the scrutiny committees for information, including the monitoring reports, and consideration could be given as to whether this arrangement needed to be revised.

38. Enhancing Scrutiny in York

Members considered a report which sought their views as to whether any changes were required in the governance arrangements for scrutiny.

Councillor Galvin, Chair of the Corporate and Scrutiny Management Committee, had been invited to attend the meeting and his views were sought on issues raised in the report.

Members were asked to comment on the areas highlighted in the report where changes could be considered to the existing governance arrangements for scrutiny. The following recommendations were put forward:

(i) Size of Committees

Whilst it was acknowledged that reducing the size of scrutiny committees may ensure that those Members who did serve on the committees were fully engaged with scrutiny, it was agreed that in view of the important function of scrutiny, it would not be appropriate to reduce the size of scrutiny committees.

(ii) Use of Substitutes, particularly on Task Groups

Members agreed that arrangements should be in place to enable substitutes to serve on Task Groups. They suggested that the substitute should not necessarily have to be from the same political group as the Member for whom they were substituting but should be a Member of the relevant scrutiny committee. Members requested that further consideration be given to the arrangements that were in place in respect of the recording of Member attendance at scrutiny task group meetings.

(iii) Training

Members agreed that training on scrutiny should be given a high priority within the induction training offered to newly appointed Members. It was important that the training included pre-decision scrutiny. Substitute Members should also be encouraged to participate in the training. Members suggested that a toolkit would also be helpful.

(iv) Work Planning and Officer Support

Members suggested that there was a need to review the format of the annual work programme planning session to improve its effectiveness in ensuring that the right topics

were being scrutinised and work programmes properly managed.

Members reiterated the need for there to be strong support from senior officers for scrutiny reviews and work.

(v) Cabinet

Members agreed that it was important for scrutiny committees to be aware of Cabinet priorities when determining topics for scrutiny in order to focus resources and avoid duplication of work. Nevertheless it was also important to recognise the role scrutiny played in holding the Cabinet to account, including pre-decision scrutiny.

When presenting scrutiny reports to Cabinet, Members recommended that Chairs of Scrutiny Committees not be limited to speaking for three minutes and that they also be permitted to take part in the debate (although not the vote) on the report they were presenting.

(vi) Call In Committee

Members recommended that a separate Call In Committee be established. The membership of the committee should be drawn from a pool of scrutiny Members on a proportionality basis. Further consideration would need to be given to the chairing arrangements for the Call In Committee.

(vii) Remit of Scrutiny Committees

Members suggested that there was currently an uneven distribution in the workload of the scrutiny committees and suggested that this issue should be reviewed.

(viii) Chairs and Vice-Chairs

Consideration was given to the arrangements for appointing Chairs and Vice-Chairs to scrutiny committees. Members recommended that no change be made to the current arrangements and that these appointments be made on a proportionality basis.

It was agreed that the views of the Corporate and Scrutiny Management Committee should also be sought on the issues raised in the report and that the Audit and Governance Committee would give further consideration to the scrutiny arrangements in due course.

- Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That the comments put forward by Members, as detailed above, be taken into account when changes to the present governance arrangements in respect of scrutiny are considered.

Reason: To ensure that overview and scrutiny operates effectively.

Councillor Potter, Chair
[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.45 pm].