



Notice of meeting of

Scrutiny Management Committee

To: Councillors Galvin (Chair), Alexander (Vice-Chair), Orrell, Firth, Waudby, Simpson-Laing, Taylor, Gunnell, Healey (Substitute), Looker, Fraser and Boyce

Date: Monday, 4 April 2011

Time: 5.30 pm or immediately following the SMC Calling-In meeting

Venue: The Guildhall

AGENDA

1. **Declarations of Interest**

At this point in the meeting, Members will be invited to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they may have in the business on the agenda.

2. **Minutes** (Pages 3 - 8)

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Management Committee held on 28 February 2011 and the minutes of the Edible York Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 22 March 2011, as the Ad Hoc Committee has now held its final meeting.

3. **Public Participation**

At this point in the meeting members of the public who have registered their wish to speak regarding an item on the agenda or an issue within the Committee's remit can do so. The deadline for registering is **5:00 pm on Friday 1 April 2011**.

4. Reports from Chairs of Scrutiny Committees

Councillor Fraser – Chair of Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Boyce – Chair of Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Looker – Chair of Learning and Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee will be in attendance to provide an overview of their committee's work and to highlight the key achievements in 2010/11.

5. Edible York Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee - Final Report (Pages 9 - 26)

This report presents Members with the final report arising from the Edible York Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee. Councillor D'Agorne, the Chair of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee, will be in attendance to present the report.

6. Proposed Amalgamation of Effective Organisation and Scrutiny Management Committees. (Pages 27 - 32)

As a result of the recent consultation on the current overview and scrutiny function in York, this report proposes some minor changes to the Overview & Scrutiny structure. Members are asked to consider amalgamating the terms of reference for the Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee with those of this Committee, in order to create a more purposeful Scrutiny Management Committee dealing with corporate and management issues.

7. Any other business which the Chair decides is urgent under the Local Government Act 1972

Democracy Officer:

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For more information about any of the following please contact the
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Democracy Officer responsible for servicing this meeting:

- Registering to speak
- Business of the meeting
- Any special arrangements
- Copies of reports

Contact details are set out above.

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Scrutiny Committees

The purpose of all scrutiny and ad-hoc scrutiny committees appointed by the Council is to:

- Monitor the performance and effectiveness of services;
- Review existing policies and assist in the development of new ones, as necessary; and
- Monitor best value continuous service improvement plans

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City of York Council

Committee Minutes

MEETING	SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
DATE	28 FEBRUARY 2011
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS GALVIN (CHAIR), ALEXANDER (VICE-CHAIR), ORRELL, FIRTH, SIMPSON-LAING, TAYLOR AND GUNNELL
APOLOGIES	COUNCILLOR WAUDBY
IN ATTENDANCE	COUNCILLOR KIRK (ITEMS 1-4) COUNCILLOR D'AGORNE (ITEMS 1-4) COUNCILLOR SCOTT (ITEMS 4-5) COUNCILLOR HEALEY (ITEMS 1-5)

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda. None were declared.

17. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the SMC meeting held on 6 December 2010 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

18. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there were no registrations to speak under the council's Public Participation Scheme.

19. BROADWAY SHOPS COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

Councillor Kirk, who had facilitated scrutiny's involvement in the Broadway Shops Councillor Call for Action, presented the outcomes from the series of facilitated meetings that had been held. A booklet detailing the action that had been taken had been circulated.

Councillor Kirk explained that, although not everyone was pleased with the outcome, the process had resulted in improved safety around pedestrian and vehicle access to the shops and that the shops would continue to be an asset for the community. Members were informed that the process had been time-consuming and hence there were resource implications. Nevertheless, the process had enabled an outcome to be achieved that had not previously been possible.

Councillor D'Agorne, speaking as one of the Fishergate Ward Councillors who had registered the Councillor Call for Action, stated that the process

had encouraged shopkeepers to engage and that the officer time allocated had been very helpful. Although there were still some issues remaining regarding maintenance, it was pleasing to note that the primary concerns had been addressed.

RESOLVED: (i) That scrutiny's involvement in the Broadway Shops Councillor Call for Action be noted.

(ii) That thanks be recorded to Councillor Kirk and those who had contributed to the Councillor Call for Action for the work that they had undertaken.

REASON: To ensure that SMC are updated on the outcomes of the Councillor Call for Action.

20. REPORTS FROM CHAIRS OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

In accordance with the council's Constitution, Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees were required to report to SMC on a bi-annual basis. The Chairs of the following scrutiny committees were in attendance to provide an overview of their committee's work and to highlight the key achievements in 2010/11:

(i) Economic and City Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Scott tabled a paper outlining the work that the Economic and City Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee had carried out. He went through the key issues including:

- The performance reports that the committee had considered, including the monitoring of the implementation of recommendations from previous scrutiny reviews.
- The committee's involvement in Councillor Call for Actions for Water End and Broadway Shops.
- Reports on issues within the committee's remit.
- The scrutiny review of Newgate Market.
- Attendance at meetings by the Executive Member for City Strategy, the Leader and the Chair of SMC.
- Consideration of proposed scrutiny topics on Highways Adoption and Food Security.

Councillor Scott stated that, because of the timescales involved, insufficient pre-decision scrutiny was taking place. He also stressed the importance of ensuring that scrutiny processes enabled Members to respond to issues promptly. Citing as an example a Councillor Call for Action, Councillor Scott drew Members' attention to the length of time from registration to completion.

Councillor Scott stated that committee members had been involved in the workplan at an early stage. He stated that more consideration should also be given as to how scrutiny committees could plan for

the long-term. Committees should be planning their work over a four-year period rather than annually and it was hoped that the new leader arrangements would better enable this to take place.

(ii) Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Healey explained that the remit of the Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee meant that it was not as clearly aligned to a specific directorate as other scrutiny committees. Officers had brought to the committee's attention issues requiring input from Members. Councillor Healey drew Members' attention to the following reviews that had been carried out:

- Apprenticeships – this had resulted in very good report but there were concerns as to the progress that had been made in implementing the recommendations.
- Customer Complaints – this review had been concluded within three months and the recommendations were likely to be implemented in full.

Councillor Healey stated that it was important that scrutiny topics were not limited to those put forward by officers. He suggested that more needed to be done to ensure that the recommendations arising from scrutiny reviews were implemented. As some of the recommendations had financial implications, officers should incorporate the costs into the budget options that were presented to Members on an annual basis.

RESOLVED: That the reports from the Chairs of the Economic and City Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee be noted.

REASON: To ensure that SMC is updated on the work of scrutiny committees in accordance with the council's Constitution.

21. DEVELOPING SCRUTINY IN CITY OF YORK COUNCIL

Members received a report outlining ongoing developments and improvements to scrutiny in City of York Council. Officers gave details of the key issues that had arisen during the Chair of SMC's discussions with Scrutiny Members, as outlined in paragraph 14 of the report.

Members welcomed the arrangements that had been put in place to enable task groups to meet on an informal basis if necessary but suggested that it was important that a notice was published so that members of the public could attend if they so wished. Members' attendance at such meetings should also be recorded and support packages put in place as applicable.

Discussion took place as to the role of scrutiny committees in monitoring. Whilst some Members found the monitoring reports to be useful, others felt that they overcrowded the agenda and that Members' time could be better spent on other aspects of scrutiny. It was agreed that more consideration should be given to this issue.

Whilst recognising that not all recommendations arising from scrutiny reviews had financial implications, concerns were expressed that a number of recommendations had not been implemented because funding had not been available. Support was expressed for the suggestion put forward earlier in the meeting that when the budget option proposals were drafted they included the costs of implementing scrutiny recommendations that had been agreed during the previous year.

- RESOLVED: (i) That the initiatives outlined in the next steps section of the report be endorsed.
- (ii) That the Chair and Vice-Chair give further consideration as to how scrutiny committees could better manage their role in monitoring the performance management cycle.
- (ii) That it be recommended that, in preparing the draft budget options, officers include the costs of implementing the recommendations arising from the scrutiny reviews that had taken place in the previous year.

REASON: To further develop the effective provision of scrutiny in City of York Council.

Councillor J Galvin, Chair

[The meeting started at 6.35 pm and finished at 7.45 pm].

MEETING	EDIBLE YORK AD HOC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	22 MARCH 2011
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS D'AGORNE (CHAIR), FUNNELL, GALVIN AND WAUDBY

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda. The following interests were declared:

- Councillor D'Agorne declared a personal interest as an active volunteer of Edible York.
- Councillor Funnell declared a personal interest as Chair of St Nicholas Fields Environment Centre.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2011 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there were no registrations to speak under the council's Public Participation Scheme.

4. EDIBLE YORK - DRAFT FINAL REPORT

Consideration was given to the Edible York Draft Final Report. A copy of the revised draft of the report was tabled and Members gave consideration to the proposed changes that were highlighted on the document.

Copies of a draft Garden Licence were tabled. It was agreed that this should form Annex C of the Final Report.

Members made a number of comments in respect of the Draft Final Report including:

- There was a need to clarify that the proposal for a community bed at Tang Hall referred to an area beside the Sustrans track.
- An addition to recommendation 3 arising from the review in relation to the Council's website containing a link to any local "Green Portal" that might be established.
- A suggestion had been put forward that a bond should be required from individuals and organisations to cover any costs incurred in

clearing land if a project was not sustained. Members agreed that this would not be appropriate and may deter food-growing initiatives.

- Proposed changes were put forward to the wording of recommendation 6 (and the associated implications) to reflect the following:
 - Omit the reference to highway verges in paragraph 67
 - Add information pertaining to projects on the highway to the implications section of the report
 - It was noted that voluntary organisations such as Edible York and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) had public liability insurance for their projects. The licence at Annex C to the draft final report required that all parties had public liability insurance and the Council would need to see proof of this before they approved any scheme.

Members noted that the report would be considered by the Scrutiny Management Committee at their meeting on 4 April 2011 and would then be forwarded to the Executive for consideration at their meeting on 12 April 2011.

The Committee wished to place on record their thanks for the support received from the Scrutiny Officer in the preparation of the report. They also expressed their appreciation of the contribution that had been made by other officers and by voluntary organisations.

RESOLVED: That, subject to the agreed amendments, the Edible York Final Report be approved.

REASON: In order to progress this review.

Councillor D'Agorne, Chair

[The meeting started at 4.00 pm and finished at 4.55 pm].



Scrutiny Management Committee

4th April 2011

Report of the Assistant Director Governance & ICT

Final Report arising from the Edible York Ad Hoc Scrutiny Review

Summary

1. This report presents Members with the final report arising from the Edible York Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee (Appendix 1 refers). Councillor D'Agorne, the Chair of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee will be in attendance at the meeting to present the report.

Background

2. At a meeting of the Scrutiny Management Committee (SMC) in December 2010 Members agreed to undertake a scrutiny review on the theme of local food growing. Councillor D'Agorne had registered the topic and the original topic registration form is available on-line as part of this report.
3. An Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee was set up to undertake the review and the following remit was set:

Aim

4. To improve how City of York Council supports community food growing

Key Objectives

- i. To develop an information page on City of York Council's website which provides information and links to organisations involved in food growing initiatives
- ii. To identify the barriers to communication between City of York Council and voluntary organisations
- iii. To identify potential areas of land in the city suitable for food growing
- iv. To consider how best to enable and encourage individuals and groups to grow food
- v. To encourage schools to participate in local food growing initiatives.

Consultation

5. Consultation has taken as per paragraph 5 of Appendix 1.

Options

6. Members have the following options:

Option 1 To approve the final report arising from this review in order that it may be forwarded to the Executive for consideration

Option 2 Amend the final report arising from this review prior to it being forwarded to the Executive for consideration.

Analysis

7. As the parent Committee for the Edible York Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee Members are requested to consider the final report arising from the review. They are asked to provide comment and make any amendments they feel necessary prior to it being considered by the Executive on 12th April 2011. Due to a cross over in agenda publication dates the Executive agenda will be published before SMC meets. Any comments and amendments received from Members of SMC will be circulated at the Executive meeting on 12th April as well as being e-mailed to Executive Members in advance of their meeting.

Corporate Priorities

8. This topic is linked to the 'Sustainable City' aspect of the Corporate Strategy 2009/2012:

'We aim to be clean and green, reducing our impact on the environment whilst maintaining York's special qualities and enabling the city and its communities to grow and thrive.'

Implications

9. There are no implications associated with the recommendations within this report. Implications associated with the recommendations arising from the review are included within the final report at Appendix 1 to this report.

Risk Management

10. There are no risks associated with the recommendations in this report. Risks associated with the recommendations arising from the review are included within the final report at Appendix 1.

Recommendations

11. Members are asked to approve the final report arising from the review.

Reason: In order that the final report arising from the review can be sent to the Executive for consideration.

Contact Details

Author:

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Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Andrew Docherty
Assistant Director Governance & ICT
Tel: 01904 551004

Report Approved

Date 24.03.2011

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

None

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

Appendix 1 Final report

The annexes associated with Appendix 1 are available for viewing on-line

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Edible York Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee

24.03.2011

Edible York – Draft Final Report

Background

1. At a meeting of the Scrutiny Management Committee in December 2010 Members agreed to undertake a scrutiny review on the theme of food growing in the City. Councillor D'Agorne had registered the topic and the original Topic Assessment Form is attached at Annex A to this report.
2. An Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee¹ was set up to undertake the review and they agreed the following remit:

Aim

3. To improve how City of York Council supports community food growing

Key Objectives

- i. To develop an information page on City of York Council's website which provides information and links to organisations involved in food growing initiatives
- ii. To identify the barriers to communication between City of York Council and voluntary organisations
- iii. To identify potential areas of land in the city suitable for food growing
- iv. To consider how best to enable and encourage individuals and groups to grow food
- v. To encourage schools to participate in local food growing initiatives

Timetable & Scope

4. The timetable and scope for the review are attached at Annex B to this report. For clarity the project excluded the function of allotments in community food growing although it is recognised that there are crossovers between the two areas of food production.

Consultation

5. The following were consulted as part of this scrutiny review:
 - Relevant City of York Council officers
 - Representatives of Edible York

¹ Committee Membership = Councillors D'Agorne (Chair), Funnell, Galvin & Waudby

- Representative from British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV)
- Representative from St Nicholas Fields
- Representative from Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
- Archbishop's Advisor for the Environment (York Diocese)
- Advanced Skills Teacher for Sustainable Schools

Options

6. Members are asked to consider the information below, which forms the basis of the draft final report. They are asked to inform the Scrutiny Officer of any amendments they may wish to make.

Introduction

7. 'Gardeners who grow their own fruit and vegetables could be the healthiest people. That's the conclusion of Dr Laurence J Trueman, a molecular biologist and biochemist currently working as a consultant to the horticulture industry specialising in the effects of eating fruit and vegetables on human health.'²
8. Various initiatives including the 'Five a Day' scheme have been prominent in the media in recent years in an effort to promote a diet richer in fruit and vegetables than many people eat. One small but effective way of encouraging people to eat more fruit and vegetables would be for the Council to have a more positive support programme in place that allowed people to access clear and concise information on food growing and the opportunities and support available within the City to do this.
9. The Committee were keen to promote the benefits of home grown food, as they believed it to have significant health benefits. Some argue that not only will the food you grow taste better it is generally believed to be healthier, especially if picked and eaten fresh from the allotment or garden. Dr Trueman who is quoted on the Royal Horticultural Society website states that 'freshness is a major factor in the effectiveness of fruit and vegetables to fight disease, and the best way of getting the freshest produce is to grow and harvest your own'
10. There were also other benefits from growing your own food;
 - Increased exercise could lead to improved health
 - Financial benefits – it can be cheaper to grow your own fruit and vegetables than buy them
 - Improvements to community cohesion and intergenerational working
 - Reduces the global carbon footprint associated with food transportation
 - Reduces York's ecological footprint – the more residents that grow their own food the smaller the ecological footprint for York

² [The Royal Horticultural Society Website](#)

Information Gathered

11. In order to understand what was already happening across the City the Committee met with representatives of organisations involved with food growing programmes. The Committee learned what each organisation was currently doing. An overview of what each organisation is doing is summarised below:

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT)

12. The YWT did not currently have any food growing projects within the City. They had been delivering the Running Wild project, which provided safe, constructive and fun outdoor activities for young people aged 8-18 living in York. The clubs currently met on evenings, weekends and school holidays at different green sites across York. Young people could come along and get involved with practical projects to improve their site, play environmental games, produce outdoor artwork, take part in practical conservation tasks and much more. However funding for this project was due to finish in March 2011 and YWT were currently looking at ways to extend this.
13. YWT had recently submitted a grant application to deliver the 'Dig In' project in York. This is a Big Lottery funded project that will support community groups to grow food with an emphasis on supporting young people and families. Ten initial sites within play areas across the City had been agreed with the Parks & Open Spaces Department at City of York Council. YWT will shortly know if their bid has been successful and if so, they plan to start the project in September 2011.

St Nicholas Fields & York Rotters

14. St Nicholas Fields is York's leading organisation promoting sustainable living. From their base at York Environment Centre they provide inspiration, advice, practical examples and services to enable people in York and beyond to move towards a sustainable future. They also run various courses on growing your own food.
15. St Nicholas Fields is also involved with a project called 'Bearing Fruit'. The project is funded by Ecominds and volunteers can become involved with planning, designing, planting and developing a community orchard at the St Nicholas Fields Nature Reserve. In the future they will be looking at the possibility of developing a master gardener scheme (there are currently pilot schemes in London and there is potential to bring this to York as well).
16. York Rotters is a partnership project between St Nicholas Fields & City of York Council, which promotes home composting. Amongst many other things, they run occasional courses on how to grow your own vegetables using your own homemade compost.

Diocese of York

17. The Archbishop's Advisor for the Environment explained that throughout 2011 the Diocese would be focusing on ways they could help the environment.

Whilst they were not going to be focussing on home food growing as one of their objectives they were keen to encourage churches within the Diocese to recognise the importance of the environment as a whole. Several events were planned with a 'Big Environment Celebration' being held on 28th May in York Minster.

18. Members also learned that the Oxford Diocese had been in contact with an initiative called [Grow Zones](#) and that this may be something that could be emulated in York. Grow Zones is a community project where a community team could club together to share skills, tools and produce to eliminate food miles and turn gardens over to permaculture. The project helps people to begin growing their own food.

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV)

19. The main, current initiative of BTCV is the 'Carbon Army'. This initiative encourages people to grow their own food. BTCV have produced a guide packed with tips and advice on food growing and this is available on their [website](#). The Carbon Army initiative concentrates on several different themes and at the moment the focus is on tree planting (including fruit and nut trees).
20. BTCV have food growing projects running all over the country, have built raised beds for food growing in schools and generally work with schools and other organisations in relation to food growing in all ways. They have realised that schools sometimes find it difficult to sustain their food growing projects through long holiday periods and curriculum demands. They are looking at ways in which their volunteers could help to support York schools and sustain their projects through these times.
21. They have recently put in a local bid for lottery funding to run a 'York Get growing' project. They should know whether their bid has been successful by May 2011. If so then the project is scheduled to run for three years and as part of this there are plans to develop a mentor's scheme to support community food growers in the City.
22. They also have plans to run courses in food growing that are open to the public and have a target to grow food within 20 different Community sites within York. In addition to this they are involved in running several allotments in the City and plan to offer support to individual allotment plot holders.

Edible York

23. Edible York was officially launched in November 2010. Its focus is on growing food, not only at home and on allotments but on public land as well. They currently support a network of food growing projects across York with an aim to make it possible for everyone in York to grow, cook and eat their own food.
24. Edible York has been awarded lottery funding to create five community beds for food growing across the city and they are committed to creating these over the course of the next year (proposals are for beds at Peasholme Green, St Clement's Church, Sovereign Park Estate, the Sustrans Route at Tang Hall

and Haxby Road School). To date they have created one public bed at the junction of Fawcett Street and Paragon Street near The Barbican. Their next and possibly biggest challenge is to effectively engage communities and get them involved in growing their own food.

25. In addition to this Edible York also runs an initiative called Abundance, which is concerned with harvesting and distribution of fruit from trees across the city.

Other

26. The Committee were aware of other initiatives within the city such as the 'FiveThousand' project, which provided resources to unemployed people to grow their own produce. However, due to the relatively tight timescales of this review the Committee were unable to hear directly from every organisation that was involved with food growing within the City.
27. Garden share initiatives enabled people with gardens to be matched with people who wanted to grow food. There were local schemes running throughout the country, usually in those places associated with the [Transition Town](#) movement.
28. [Landshare](#) is an initiative that brings together people who wish to grow their own food by connecting them with those who have land to share. It is a Channel 4 initiative, which now has approximately 55,000 growers, sharers and helpers. There are various plots of land offered for food growing in and around York.

Key Points that emerged during the Review

29. During discussions with the above organisations and with Council Officers the Committee became aware of the large number of food growing initiatives going on within the city. They then considered the following points in relation to each key objective of this review:

First Key Objective

To develop an information page on City of York Council's website which provides information and links to organisations involved in food growing initiatives

30. The overall aim of this review was to improve how City of York Council supported community food growing. The Committee looked at the current relevant pages of the Council's website. These can be accessed via the link below:

http://www.york.gov.uk/environment/Parks_and_open_spaces/

31. After consideration of the current information provided on the Council's website and discussions with Council Officers and representatives of the various food growing organisations within the City; it became clear that as there were so many different projects going on within the City, all being run by different organisations, it would be useful if there could be a single place from which to access information about them all.

32. Currently the relevant web pages were updated by the Head of Parks and Open Spaces and his team and there did not seem any reason to change this. However the Committee supported the view of the Head of Parks & Open Spaces that the website could provide a lot more information. They felt that clearer signposting could help residents find information more easily without taking up officer time. At the moment on accessing the Parks and Open Spaces web pages there was an 'Allotments' section. The Committee suggested that this be changed to 'Food Growing & Allotments' and within this section to build in a further menu offering the following options:
- Allotments
 - Food Growing
 - School Food Growing Projects
33. Each of the above themes could then have its own information page. Within these pages there would be scope to add in links to relevant partner organisations within the city; for example, within the 'Food Growing' section there could be links to the Edible York website and the BTCV website. The section could also include links to the websites of national organisations such as the Royal Horticultural Society and National Vegetable Society amongst others with a very brief explanation of what each link is about.
34. The overarching aim of the suggested changes to the website being that the City of York Council's website would become the first place that people would go to access information about all aspects of food growing, including links to websites (both local and national) offering advice on food growing, preparation of home grown food and cooking of home grown food. However, Members of the Committee realised that the website should not become over complicated or too wordy in itself and suggested that there was only a short paragraph connected with each external link. The bulk of the information provided would be within the links on each individual organisation's own website. The content of the information behind the links being the responsibility of each individual organisation and not the Council.

Second Key Objective

To identify the barriers to communication between City of York Council and Voluntary Organisations

35. During the course of the review Members discussed the barriers to communication with various voluntary organisations and Council officers. The Committee identified some key points, which are detailed in the paragraphs below.
36. There was a need for a 'one stop' information point that could provide access to everything related to food growing within the city. There is a large number of 'food growing' initiatives and projects happening across York and it was important that information about all of these was shared. It was learned that the idea of a 'green portal' had been gathering momentum for some time. This was envisaged to be a 'one stop' website for all things green (not just home food growing information). Currently there was no known person or organisation that had the time or resources to spend on such a project, especially if it were run

on a voluntary basis. The Committee felt that any such portal would need to be run independently and wouldn't sit within Council responsibilities.

37. However the Committee were positive about the benefits of such a portal and felt that there would be potential in asking students at one of the city's universities to volunteer to take this on as a project. Alternatively they suggested the possibility of several voluntary organisations jointly putting together a bid for funding to get this project off the ground. Any initiative would clearly need to be co-ordinated by an organisation that could provide the drive, resource and commitment to see the project through.
38. Further discussions were had around the possibilities of setting up a more general database to store information about all of the initiatives and organisations involved with food growing. However, it again became apparent that maintaining such a database and keeping it up to date would require an enormous amount of time and resource that neither the Council nor the voluntary organisations had. However improvements to the relevant pages on the Council's website was seen to be fundamental (and achievable within existing resources) to successfully sharing information about all food growing initiatives and projects happening across the city [see information under First Key Objective (paragraphs 30 to 34 refer)]
39. The Committee believed that there was a need to improve communication around the opportunities for food growing within the city. One easy way of doing this would be to use Council publications such as Your City, Your Ward, the Housing Tenants Newsletter and the Allotments Newsletter to provide encouragement to residents to grow their own food as well as promoting food growing opportunities within the city.
40. Discussions were also had around using Council land for food growing. There was a body of opinion amongst the voluntary sector and the Committee that there were difficulties involved with using Council land for growing food. However, the Head of Parks & Open Spaces was able to clarify that a draft licence for using Council land for food growing had recently been approved by both Property Services and Legal Services and this was now ready for use. A copy of the draft licence is at Annex C to this report. To date the licence has not been used. In light of this the Committee agreed that officers within the Council and members of the public needed to be made aware that this was the case and this needed to be better communicated.
41. The Committee also believed that communications between City of York Council departments needed to be improved and to look more toward positive outcomes. There had been an incident where a food-growing scheme was prevented from going ahead because of what was seen as over zealous risk management. Improved communication between departments could enable a better understanding of potential risks by all parties and allow more discussions to take place in order that any risk was managed in a more positive way.

Third Key Objective

To identify potential areas of land in the city suitable for food growing

42. The Committee was informed that Parks & Open Spaces were responsible for over 200 sites within the city; many would be suitable for food growing. There were also numerous other sites owned by Parish and Town Councils, schools and highway verges, which offer potential. The Parks & Open Spaces Team were responsible for identifying sites and would consider any specific sites that Members may wish to suggest were suitable for food growing.
43. Community Groups could contact the Local Authority about these sites via the Contact Centre or by contacting the Parks & Open Spaces Team. This is something that, at no further cost, could be emphasised by using the newly improved web pages.

Fourth Key Objective

To consider how best to enable and encourage individuals and groups to grow food

44. As mentioned previously one way of enabling and encouraging both groups and individuals to grow their own food would be through the use of existing Council publications. These could be used to promote the basic idea of food growing at a local level and to raise awareness about food growing opportunities within the city.
45. There was scope to explore initiatives around garden share but Members realised that there could be potential legal problems if the gardens being used were attached to Council Housing. However, initially Council publications could be used to encourage communities/streets to undertake growing projects together especially in terms of clearing overgrown gardens and communally growing food in them.
46. Discussions established that encouraging and supporting residents to work at a pace they could cope with was very important. It was important that residents and groups did not feel overwhelmed and that support was available to help them. Initially overgrown gardens and allotments could appear daunting. Recruiting volunteer mentors from amongst existing allotment tenants and associations to help clear overgrown plots would be beneficial, as would the continued support mentors could provide. The Head of Parks & Open Spaces has confirmed that this could be achieved at nil cost and the regular Allotments Newsletter could be used to advertise for volunteers to become mentors. In addition to this the Brunswick Organic Nursery have indicated that they would be happy to help clear overgrown plots, however it was thought there would be a small charge for this.
47. Members of the Committee were keen to give all residents the opportunity to grow their own food, whether individually or as part of a group. They believed that a lack of tools may be a barrier to some people or groups becoming involved with food growing initiatives and therefore suggested that the Household Waste Depot at Hazel Court look at the possibility of setting up a collection point for garden tools that were being disposed of. It was envisaged that these tools could be collected from Hazel Court on a regular basis by an organisation such as the Community Furniture Store and sold on at a low cost.

Initial discussions between the Waste Management Officer and the Scrutiny Officer indicated that this is possible, however they would not be able to store tools for very long and it would be unlikely that the scheme could be rolled out across all three household waste sites as resources would probably not be available. Any scheme that was successfully implemented could also be promoted and advertised within existing Council publications and on the Council's website.

48. In addition to this the Committee learned that CYC buildings such as those in Hull Road Park could be made available for use for community tool storage. Community groups could be charged a peppercorn rent and this would also include insurance. The Head of Parks and Open Spaces has confirmed that there would be no additional costs or resource requirements if this were implemented.
49. Further discussion led to the Committee wishing to promote partnership working between City of York Council and the voluntary sector to enable them to achieve their ambitions. It was also suggested that the voluntary sector might wish to work together more, especially in terms of seeking external funding. Some Members of the Committee believed that funding bids might be more successful if the voluntary sector worked in a more strategic way (i.e. one large strategic bid may be more favourable than lots of small & seemingly uncoordinated smaller bids)

Fifth Key Objective

To encourage schools to participate in local food growing initiatives

50. The Scrutiny Committee met with the Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) for Sustainable Schools. The role of the AST is to advise schools on how to be sustainable. There are eight different themes (or doorways) running through the Sustainable Schools Strategy of which food growing is one. Currently approximately 40% of York's schools are involved in food growing projects. It is hoped that this will gradually increase. Schools also have the potential to undertake larger food growing projects that could involve the community as a whole, such as the project being undertaken at Burnholme School. They have set up small community plots on school land for rent at £20 per year. The plots are available to all local residents and not just parents who have children at the school.
51. The AST acts as a co-ordinator between the schools and aims to bring cohesion to some of the food growing programmes that are already in place. The role looks at elements such as bringing plant and vegetable growing into science lessons so that children not only begin to understand the practical side of planting and growing but the scientific side as well. More work needed to be done to get schools to commit to food growing projects and the AST played an important part in supporting them to do this. Teachers needed to be motivated to undertake these projects with the children. In the long term the role was about ensuring that the Sustainable Schools Strategy remained as part of the school curriculum.

52. The AST also convenes a group called York Edible Schools (YES) which brings together members of various groups already involved in school growing projects, including St Nicholas Fields, York Rotters, Five Thousand, Low Moor Community Kids Allotment and the Council's Allotments Officer. YES and Edible York have been working together to look at ways of supporting schools to grow fruit and vegetables in their school grounds. The different members of the group bring different experiences and expertise. Since the advent of this group it has been easier for the AST to involve and co-ordinate all the different parties involved.
53. One of the barriers to food growing in schools was the long holiday periods, especially over the summer months when plants needed regular watering. BTCV were currently looking at ways that they could help schools with this and were looking at asking volunteers to look after the projects outside of school term time. There were also ways in which families could get involved in looking after the food growing projects during holiday periods by volunteering to get involved.
54. The Committee discussed ways in which the Council could support the AST and food growing projects within schools. Again one way would be to make use of existing CYC publications, in particular the Allotments Newsletter. It would be possible to place an advert in the Allotments Newsletter asking for existing tenants to become mentors to support school food growing projects and provide and share their expertise with the teachers and children.
55. The AST post was a one-day a week post and was currently financed for the next financial year. The Committee were aware of the good work and progress that was achieved through this role and wanted to see guaranteed funding for the post to continue. This would allow for the co-ordinated expansion of the food growing agenda within schools.
56. The Committee were aware that food growing was only one strand of eight within the sustainable schools agenda. However they believed very strongly in the benefits to children of learning how to grow their own food, learning where food comes from and learning gardening skills. To this end they would like to see a commitment from CYC to strengthen the local food-growing element of the Sustainable Schools Strategy.

Conclusion/Key Findings

57. The Scrutiny Committee was very supportive of the various food growing initiatives happening within the city. Alongside these they would also wish to see an increase in people growing food within their own garden, in allotments and on suitable Council owned plots of land. They realised it was important for the Council to promote food growing in any way possible and the recommendations arising from the review suggest various ways in which this should happen.
58. The Committee cannot stress enough the importance of encouraging children and their families to become involved in food growing and the need to enable this by removing as many barriers as possible. They felt it was important to use

all methods available to encourage children to become involved in growing their own food. They believed in the importance of actively involving schools in food growing and would like to see every school in the city have some form of food growing programme, activity or allotment.

59. The AST played a vital role in supporting the sustainable schools agenda, particularly in relation to supporting food-growing projects within the city's schools. Members of the Committee felt that funding for this role should continue so that the good work already undertaken could be built upon. Ways of strengthening the local food-growing element of the Sustainable Schools Strategy should also be considered.
60. The Committee noted that some of the barriers to growing food on Council land appeared to have been removed. The introduction of a licence enabling individuals and community groups to apply to grow food on Council Land was a step in the right direction. However, this was not widely known and as such should be promoted both inside the Council and out.
61. After taking all the information received into consideration the scrutiny committee have made the following recommendations:
62. **Recommendation 1** – That a collection point be established at the Hazel Court Household Waste Site for garden tools and Council officers investigate and implement a suitable system for collection, storage and distribution of the tools (including exploring the possibility of working with the Community Furniture Store to distribute these). This should be for a trial period of 6 months and if successful then permanently implemented. (*Fourth key objective*)
63. **Recommendation 2** – That the Council website be updated to include more and clearer information about food growing opportunities, food growing information and links to voluntary sector organisations. (*First key objective*)
64. **Recommendation 3** – That the Council actively promotes local food growing by providing information and encouragement by using:
 - The Council's website
 - Existing publications (Your Ward, Your City, Allotments Newsletter, Housing Tenants Newsletter)
 - Providing a link on the Council website to an appropriate York based 'Green Portal' should this be establishedIn order to provide information to residents on food growing opportunities as well as to generally promote the food growing agenda within the city. (*Overall aim and fourth key objective*)
65. **Recommendation 4** – That the Head of Parks & Open Spaces clarifies and co-ordinates the provision of information (internally & externally) in relation to food growing on City of York Council land. (*Second key objective*)
66. **Recommendation 5** – That a register of mentors be set up through advertising in the Allotments News for mentors for schools, community groups and individuals. (*Fourth & fifth key objectives*)

67. **Recommendation 6** – That City of York Council policies relating to green space management including amenity and communal housing areas should reflect a broad presumption in favour of it being suitable for food growing unless demonstrated otherwise e.g. potential harm to nature conservation or biodiversity, presence of utilities and services, sports use. (*Overall aim and second key objective*)
68. **Recommendation 7** – That the Schools Forum be asked to continue funding the Advanced Skills Teacher post that supports the Sustainable Schools Strategy and that possible ways of strengthening the local food-growing element of the Sustainable Schools Strategy be looked at. (*Fifth key objective*)

Corporate Strategy 2009/2012

69. This topic is linked to the 'Sustainable City' aspect of the Corporate Strategy 2009/2012:

'We aim to be clean and green, reducing our impact on the environment whilst maintaining York's special qualities and enabling the city and its communities to grow and thrive.'

70. In addition to this the Council's Sustainability Officer has said that the work of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee supports the wider sustainability agenda and the [Sustainable Community Strategy](#). Specifically it supports the Sustainable City chapter which aims to reduce York's ecological and carbon footprint and support local food initiatives. It also supports the city's climate change framework and action plan and can be seen as a great tool in starting people to take more sustainable action and raise awareness of wider sustainability issues.

Implications

71. **Recommendation 1** (*establishing a tool collection point*) – The Waste Management Officer has spoken with the Yorwaste site manager at Hazel Court who has indicated that there will be no financial implications associated with the recommendation. However it is unlikely that staff resources and space would be available to expand this to other Council household waste recycling sites within the city.
72. **Recommendation 2** (*website improvements*) - The Head of Parks and Open Spaces has indicated that this could be implemented within existing resources.
73. **Recommendation 3** (*promoting food growing*) - The Head of Parks and Open Spaces has indicated that this could be implemented within existing resources.
74. **Recommendation 4** (*provision of information*) - The Head of Parks and Open Spaces has indicated that this could be implemented within existing resources.
75. **Recommendation 5** (*Register of mentors*) - The Head of Parks and Open Spaces has indicated that this could be implemented within existing resources.

76. Recommendation 6 (policies relating to green space management) - The Head of Highway Infrastructure had indicated that he was broadly in favour of cultivating public open spaces, however he did have some concerns surrounding potential planting on highway verges. Highway verges often contained 'hidden utilities and services' and may, as such, be unsuitable for cultivation. Liability for the public highway is non delegable and the Council must accept liability should a third party claim be made against them. In addition to this he suggested that a returnable bond be requested for any scheme to encourage both individuals and groups to return the land back to the Council in the condition they found it.
77. On consideration of these concerns the Committee did not feel a bond would be appropriate and would discourage both groups and individuals from using Council land for growing food. It could also be cost prohibitive to some.
78. In relation to the concerns regarding the public highway Members of the Committee were of the opinion that very few groups or individuals would chose to cultivate a plot of land directly adjacent to a busy road. However they may wish to use land at adjacent to the highway in quieter areas set back from the highway; e.g. Edible York's public bed on Peasholme Green. The Head of Highway Infrastructure had been consulted about this and was happy for the scheme to go ahead. This consultative approach will be followed in future.
79. The Head of Parks and Open Spaces would ensure that any licences issued for plots of land on the highway addressed the necessary highway safety requirements. This would include the legal requirement to wear fluorescent vests/jackets when working on projects on the highway.
80. Recommendation 7 (AST teacher)

Financial - The funding for Advanced Skills Teachers (AST) forms part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The Schools Forum reviews the allocation of this funding annually and the Forum has decided to allocate funding to continue the AST programme during 2011/12.

The deployment of ASTs is reviewed annually and aligned to school improvement priorities outlined in the School Improvement service plan. An AST role has been aligned to support our Sustainable Schools Strategy and action plan and this work will continue during 2011/12.

The AST for sustainable schools is currently funded to do outreach work as an AST for one day a week and this funding includes a payment to the school to cover the differential between the substantive role as a teacher at a local primary school and the additional allowance as an AST. The AST role is primarily to support schools with developing their work on Education for Sustainable Development, particularly with regards to supporting the development of learning, teaching and the curriculum. The school also receives funding to cover the costs of supply cover for the outreach day. The total annual cost of the AST is estimated at £9,240 for 2011/12.

The overall level of the DSG is not yet known for 2012/13 and the Schools Forum will need to review the funding of AST roles, along with all other DSG

priorities as part of the 2011/12 budget setting and local decision making process.

81. There are no known other (property, legal, equalities) implications associated with the recommendations arising from this review.

Risk Management

82. There are no direct risks associated with the recommendations arising from this review however there may be longer-term sustainability risks if the Council chooses not to support local food growing in a more positive way.

Recommendations

The recommendations arising from the review are at paragraphs 62 to 68 of this report.

Reason: To complete this scrutiny review

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**Final Report
Approved**

✓

Date 24.03.2011

Specialist Implication Officers

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Wards Affected:

All ✓

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes (online only)

Annex A Topic Assessment Form
Annex B Timetable & Scope for the Review
Annex C Draft Garden Licence



Scrutiny Management Committee

4 April 2011

Report of the Assistant Director of ITT & Governance

Proposed Amalgamation of Effective Organisation and Scrutiny Management Committees**Summary**

1. As a result of the recent consultation on the current overview and scrutiny function in York, this report proposes some minor changes to the Overview & Scrutiny structure. Members are asked to consider amalgamating the terms of reference for the Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee with those of this Committee, in order to create a more purposeful Scrutiny Management Committee dealing with corporate and management issues.

Background

2. In 2009 the council's scrutiny function was restructured and the current cross-cutting Overview & Scrutiny Committees were introduced. As part of that process, it was recognised that any new scrutiny function introduced, would need to evolve with time to ensure it was robust and fit for purpose.
3. Since then, the role of Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee has been questioned by Members and Senior Officers, with particular regard to:
 - the similarity of its role to that of Scrutiny Management Committee
 - its responsibility for receiving the Corporate Performance & Financial Monitoring Reports (incorporating all of the performance and financial information which is later divided up and presented to the other Overview & Scrutiny Committees based on their individual terms of reference).
 - its struggle to identify suitable topics for review, as evidenced by the committee's annual workplans for 2009-10 & 2010-11.

Consultation

4. Recently, the Chair of Scrutiny Management Committee, attended a meeting of each of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees to receive soundings from them about how overview & scrutiny currently works within this Council. The issues highlighted above, were raised at the meeting of the Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee itself.

Options

5. Having considered this report, Members may choose:

- to approve the removal of the Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee from the Council's Committee structure, and the transfer of its current remit to Scrutiny Management Committee
- not to reduce the number of Overview & Scrutiny Committee's on the council committee structure, and retain the existing Effective Organisation Committee.

Analysis

6. For some time, there has been concern that the role of Scrutiny Management Committee has diminished as a result, in part, of the introduction of the Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The reduced number of meetings that have been held annually by SMC, since the restructure of the scrutiny function in 2009 attests to this. Meanwhile, the Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee has struggled to understand its remit in comparison to that of the other cross-cutting Overview & Scrutiny Committees.
7. Since its introduction, and in an effort to identify suitable topics for scrutiny review, the Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee has received many 'information only' reports on those services which fall within its remit. However, this has not generated many suitable topics. The committee as a whole has only carried out one review in that time, relating to the use of the Executive Forward Plan. They have also carried out two Task Group reviews – one on Apprenticeships and one on Customer Complaints. Each of the reviews took 3 months and an average of 4 meetings to complete.
8. Attached at Annex A to this report are the proposed terms of reference for a 'revamped' Scrutiny Management Committee, taking in the existing responsibilities of Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee. If a decision were taken to amalgamate the role of both Committees, the ability to carry out reviews would not be lost. Future reviews on topics falling within the new SMC's remit could still be carried out, either by SMC as a whole, or by a small Task Group of its Members, or by an Ad-hoc Scrutiny Committee created solely for that purpose.
9. The corporate nature of the remit of Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee would fit comfortably within the management role of SMC. And, the reduction in the number of Overview & Scrutiny Committees would have a positive effective on scrutiny resources and Members' time commitment, without losing a route to effectively scrutinise corporate issues.
10. SMC currently meets 4 times a year (not including Call-in meetings), and Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee are diarised to meet 5 times a year. However, there is evidence of a lack of business for both committees. For example in the last two municipal years, SMC has cancelled 3 of its 11 meetings and Effective Organisation cancelled its last meeting in February 2011. The meetings of Effective Organisation are currently scheduled around the timeframe for receiving Financial & Performance Monitoring Reports. If these reports are to continue to come to Overview & Scrutiny Committees then the suggestion would be to remove the Effective Organisation from the corporate calendar and insert

SMC in its place, thereby losing the 4 meetings dates that are currently included in the corporate diary for SMC.

11. Members of this Committee considered a report on developing the scrutiny function at their last meeting, which covered the issues raised by scrutiny Members generally during the consultation round undertaken by the Chair of this Committee. One such issue raised during that process was indeed the effectiveness of Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee. However, another frequently made observation was the issue of whether performance and financial monitoring in its current guise was best performed by the overview & scrutiny committees. Some scrutiny Members do however, still find receiving the regular monitoring reports at scrutiny to be a valuable tool. There is a debate to be had about the future of performance and financial monitoring within the scrutiny function. It is suggested that some analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the current arrangements be undertaken and submitted to SMC in the new Municipal Year, following the establishment of the overview & scrutiny committees with their new membership, after the Annual Meeting at the end of May 2011. For that reason, in the meantime it is proposed that the existing Effective Organisation performance and financial monitoring responsibilities simply be transferred to SMC, as set out in Annex A and explained in paragraph 10 above.

Corporate Strategy

12. It is the Council's aim to improve organisational effectiveness. The amalgamation of the Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee with SMC would be beneficial in clarifying the overall corporate role of scrutiny and would better rationalise resources.

Implications

13. **HR & Financial** - There will be a slight saving made by reducing the number of meetings, in terms of fewer meetings for Democratic Services to prepare reports for and fewer meetings to attend. Equally, there would be fewer meetings for Directorate officers to attend and support.
14. **Legal** - If members were to approve the amalgamation of Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee with SMC, it will be necessary to seek the approval of Full Council to make the required constitutional changes.
14. There are no other known implications associated with the recommendation in this report

Risk Management

15. There are no known risks associated with the recommendation in this report. If the Committee decides not to make the proposed changes, there is a risk that Scrutiny Members and Officers will continue to be confused about the roles of the existing Committees.

Recommendations

16. Having considered the information within this report, Members are asked to:

- i. approve the amalgamation of Effective Organisation Overview & Scrutiny Committee with SMC, in accordance with the terms of reference drafted at Annex A to this report;
- ii. request Full Council agrees the necessary changes to the council's Constitution
- iii. receive a further report in the new Municipal Year on the effectiveness of existing arrangements for performance and financial monitoring.

Reason: To ensure the scrutiny function remains robust and fit for purpose.

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Report Approved



Date 25 March 2011

Specialist Implications Officer(s) - None

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annex A: Proposed terms of reference for SMC

The Constitution – Pt 3C

Council Committees and Other Bodies

12 The Scrutiny Management Committee

12.1 The functions of the Scrutiny Management Committee are:

No.	Delegated authority	Conditions
	Work planning	
1	To oversee and co-ordinate the scrutiny function, including allocating responsibility for issues which fall between more than one Scrutiny Committee	Subject to budget and resource availability
2	To receive bi-annual reports from the Scrutiny Committees on progress against their workplans	
3	To consider any decision “called in” for scrutiny in accordance with the Scrutiny Procedure Rules as set out in Part 4 of this Constitution.	
4	To consider and comment on any final reports arising from completed reviews produced by the Scrutiny Committees, prior to their submission to the Executive	
	Performance monitoring:	
5	To advise the Executive on the development of the Sustainable Corporate Strategy and monitoring its overall delivery	
6	To exercise the powers of an overview and scrutiny Committee under section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000.	
7	To receive feedback (through reports or otherwise) as appropriate, on progress against the Work Plans of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees.	
8	To receive periodical progress reports, as appropriate, on particular scrutiny reviews.	
9	To provide an annual report to Full Council on the work of the Overview & Scrutiny function	
10	In relation to the Executive Member portfolios this Committee is responsible for monitoring the performance of the following service plan areas through regular performance monitoring reports: (a) Corporate Services: Audit & Risk Management, Strategic Finance, Business Management, IT&T, Public Services, Property Services	

No.	Delegated authority	Conditions
	(b) Executive Leader: Policy & Development, Civic Democratic & Legal Services, Marketing & Communications, Human Resources and Performance & Improvements (c) City Strategy: Resources & Business Management, Business Support Service (d) Neighbourhood Services: Business Support Services (e) Housing & Adult Social Services: Corporate Services (f) Leisure, Culture & Social Inclusion: ICT Client, Directorate Financial Services, Directorate HR Services (g) Children & Young People's Services: Management Information Services, ICT Client, Directorate Financial Services, Directorate HR Services	
	Budget	
11	To consider and recommend to the Executive a budget for scrutiny and thereafter to exercise overall responsibility for the finance made available to scrutiny.	
	General	
12	To periodically review the overview and scrutiny procedures to ensure that the function is operating effectively and recommending any constitutional changes, to Council	
13	Responsible for promoting a culture of continuous improvement in all services, and monitoring efficiency across organisational / service boundaries to promote a seamless approach to service delivery, with the user as a central focus.	