

Report of the Director Customer & Corporate Services

Proposals for the Future Ways of Working in Scrutiny

Introduction

1. This report proposes terms of reference for the new scrutiny committees to be considered by Council in March 2017. The Committee are asked to consider the draft terms of reference and agree a recommendation to Council.

Background

2. In September 2015 this Committee agreed to undertake a review of the scrutiny function based on the following review remit:

To review all options for revising the scrutiny committee remits, including the financial implications, in order to:

- Ensure an annual scrutiny workplan that better supports the Council's priorities
 - Improve the Council's scrutiny function and working arrangements;
 - Better balance the committees' workloads;
 - Increase corporate engagement;
 - Encourage more policy development work, and;
 - Allow for reactive scrutiny
3. An initial report containing an analysis of a range of possible scrutiny structures was considered by this Committee in March 2016, together with information on national best practice. However at that time the results of an officer review of the Council's operating model and the new structure of senior management roles were unknown, so the Committee were unable to consider the option of aligning scrutiny committee remits to Directorates.

4. In July 2016 following completion of the officer review this committee met again to consider all of the possible structure variations, and as a result were able to narrow down its preferred options to the following:
 - Option (iii) - Current structure with no change other than bringing remits in line with Directorates
 - Option (iv) – New structure based on scrutiny functional roles

Consultation

5. The scrutiny team consulted with political groups and the Corporate Management Team (CMT) on the preferred options above, and this Committee considered detailed consultation feedback at its last meeting in February 2017.

Review Conclusion

6. In February 2017, having considered all of the information provided and the consultation feedback, this Committee agreed to recommend to Council Option (iii) above, i.e. 'No change to the current structure other than bringing remits in line with the new Directorates' and requested that appropriate terms of reference for the new scrutiny committees be drafted for consideration at this meeting – see Annex A.

Outstanding Issues

7. In regard to the most appropriate split of the Economy & Place Directorate, Annex A suggests a straightforward split of the Directorate service plan areas across two standing scrutiny committees (see paragraphs 12 & 13 of Annex A). However, the Director of Economy & Place has proposed an alternative split for this Committee's consideration:
 - Economy and Place Policy Scrutiny Committee – focussing on policy development, strategic objectives and horizon scanning for best and emerging practice across all Economy & Place service plan areas.
 - Economy and Place Service Scrutiny Committee – focussing on performance and customer expectations across all Economy & Place service plan areas, and major project progress.

8. In February 2017 this Committee considered a report which contained a number of proposals for how this Committee in its management role, might progress positive change in scrutiny through improvements to annual work planning. The report asked the Committee to consider whether in the future it wishes to:
- Invite the Leader and/or Deputy Leader to attend at the beginning of each municipal year (early June), to advise on key priorities for the Council for the year ahead. This would enable CSMC to feed potential areas for scrutiny involvement into scrutiny committee work planning discussions
 - Advise on and sign off each scrutiny committee's annual workplan(late July)
 - Receive regular updates from the new scrutiny committees on progress with their workplans through regular meetings with the Chairs of the new scrutiny committees (November & May)
9. If the Committee agreed to proceed along these lines, the draft terms of reference attached at Annex A would need to be revised to reflective this approach prior to their presentation to Council in late March 2017.

Implications

10. Finance – There are no financial implications associated with option (iii) as it maintains the same number of scrutiny committees as currently in place.
11. HR – The implementation of option (iii) would not change the level of officer support required.
12. Legal – Option (iii) meets the Council's legal requirements in regard to scrutiny i.e. Councils operating executive arrangements are required to create an Overview and Scrutiny Committee which is composed of Councillors who are not on the Executive Committee, or Cabinet, of that council. Overview and Scrutiny Committees are required to meet the rules on proportionality defined in the Local Government & Housing Act 1989 (i.e. the committee must reflect the respective sizes of the political groups on the council).

Risk Management

13. Not having clearly defined terms of reference may lead to ambiguity as to the role and responsibilities of the individual committees, which would therefore minimise the effectiveness of scrutiny.

Recommendations

14. The Corporate & Scrutiny Management Policy & Scrutiny Committee are asked to:
- i) Consider and agree the most appropriate split of the Economy & Place Directorate across two standing scrutiny committees, as referred to in paragraph 7 above.
 - ii) Consider and agree proposals for improved annual scrutiny work planning as detailed in paragraph 8 above.
 - iii) Agree to recommend to Council the proposed Terms of Reference for the new scrutiny committees at Annex A, subject to any necessary revisions agreed at this meeting.

Reason: To fulfil the scrutiny management role of this Committee, and enable the changes required to the scrutiny function to be presented to Full Council in March 2017 for approval.

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Report Approved



Date

21 February 2017

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: N/A

Annexes:

Annex A – Draft Terms of Reference for Revised Scrutiny Committees

Abbreviations:

CMT – Corporate Management Team