

Report of the Director, Customer & Corporate Services

Proposals for the Future Ways of Working in Scrutiny

Introduction

1. This report presents terms of reference for the new scrutiny committees agreed by Council in March 2017, including the two Economy & Place committees which Council agreed to trial for one municipal year.

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 its consideration.
7. In early March 2017 this committee received the draft terms of reference and was asked to consider what would be the most appropriate split of the Economy & Place Directorate bearing in mind its size. The committee was presented with two options; option one, a straightforward split of the Directorate service plan areas across two standing policy & scrutiny committees, and option two a split based on function i.e. a policy development committee and a scrutiny committee as follows:
 - Economy and Place Policy Development 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. This Committee agreed to propose option one, but in late March 2017 Council agreed to trial option 2 above for one year from the start of the new municipal year 2017-18 – see revised Terms of Reference for all the scrutiny committee attached at Annex A.

Implications

9. There are no **Finance** or **HR** implications associated with the decision taken at Full Council in March 2017 – There are no financial implications associated with option (iii) as it maintains the same number of scrutiny committees as currently in place.
10. **Legal** – The decision taken at Full Council in March 2017 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

11. 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

12. The Corporate & Scrutiny Management Policy & Scrutiny Committee are asked to:
 - Note the revised Terms of Reference for the new scrutiny committees at Annex A, and;
 - Recommend to Council the proposed terms of reference for the two Economy & Place Committees being trialled throughout the coming municipal year.

Reason: To inform the scrutiny management role of this Committee.

Contact Details

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Report Approved

Date

20 April 2017

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: N/A

Annexes:

Annex A – Revised Terms of Reference for Scrutiny Committees as from
May 2017

Abbreviations:

CMT – Corporate Management Team