

## **Scrutiny Management Committee**

17 September 2007

### **Report of the Head of Civic Democratic & Legal Services**

## **Looking Ahead at Scrutiny in York and the Role of Scrutiny Management Committee**

### **Summary**

1. During the last year, Scrutiny Management Committee (SMC) has introduced procedural changes to the way scrutiny topics are registered, evaluated, managed and monitored in City of York Council.
2. Looking ahead to the White Paper on Stronger, Prosperous Communities, becoming legislation and in an effort to encourage and support effective scrutiny reviews, this report proposes a more proactive role for SMC in the future in the determination of scrutiny reviews, as well as continuing to effectively manage and monitor their progress.

### **Background**

3. It is anticipated that the White Paper will become legislation in Spring 2008. The White Paper will extend the powers of scrutiny in York, enabling the services of many of our partners to be scrutinised and introducing a 'community call for action'. A previous report to SMC in January 2007 explained the new provisions and suggested how scrutiny in the Council might be shaped to meet these new legislative requirements. Discussions continue within the Council as to how those arrangements might be embedded within a wider organisational response to the 'demands' of the White Paper. More information will be brought to SMC on any necessary changes to the scrutiny function over the coming months.
4. In the meantime, the new scrutiny operational arrangements for registering topics, assessing their feasibility, scoping them, reporting their findings and monitoring progress on agreed actions have now bedded in the organisation (resulting in revised scrutiny procedural rules in the Constitution). As such, it is now suggested that some enhancement to the role of SMC in promoting and leading on scrutiny for the Council, would be timely.

### **Revised Role for Scrutiny Management Committee**

5. In order to enhance the role of SMC to enable it lead on key scrutiny issues as well manage and monitor its processes and budget, the following constitutional changes to its delegated authorities are suggested:

- To agree 3 key objectives for its coming Municipal Year on an annual basis (these will form the basis of any scrutiny reviews SMC wants to commission for the coming year);
- To propose topics for scrutiny review as appropriate (in line with its key objectives for the year), subject to the agreed feasibility and procedural processes; and
- To set its own annual work plan setting out its arrangements for commissioning, managing and monitoring reviews.

### **Proposed Key Objectives**

6. If Members were minded to support an enhancement to the role of SMC as proposed, it is further suggested that the key objectives referred to above for the remainder of this Municipal Year might be:
- To make a visible improvement to services provided or run by the Council, either solely or in partnership with others;
  - To contribute to successful introduction of new scrutiny ways of working brought about by the White Paper; and
  - To help establish an open/transparent internal scrutiny culture, in which lessons can be learnt from mistakes and successes celebrated.

### **Proposed Possible Future Scrutiny Topics**

7. The Chair of SMC has already suggested a number of possible future topics which SMC might want to consider putting forward in keeping with the above proposed objectives for the year. These are as follows:-
- The effect of geese in York, in terms of general cleanliness & hygiene and tourism and most particularly in the riverside, Rowntree Park & 'the eye of York' areas;
  - The impact of 24-hour drinking on the city, both in terms of the economy and in community cohesion;
  - Working in partnership, in terms of informing and preparing the Council for its enhanced scrutiny role under the White Paper; and
  - Use of Post Offices for payment of City of York accounts.

The above topics are merely put forward as debating suggestions and the Chair will invite all members of SMC to consider and put forward alternatives. The appropriate time to consider actual specific topics, however, would be after the Council has formally agreed a change to the Committee's delegations to allow it to propose its own reviews.

Any topics suggested in the future by SMC, subject to any constitutional change, would still be subject to the usual feasibility processes and arrangements for conducting a review, including establishment of a Sub-Committee to conduct it.

## **Consultation**

8. The Chair of SMC, Councillor Galvin, has been initially consulted on the proposals contained in this report for enhancing the role of SMC. All other Members of the Committee are invited to comment on the proposals with a view to making a suitable recommendation to Audit & Governance Committee, in the first instance, to ask Council to revised SMC's delegation arrangements, should that be considered appropriate.

## **Options**

9. Members may decide to either support the proposed enhanced role for SMC or not or even to put forward other alternatives for changing the role of SMC.

## **Analysis**

10. Enhancing the role of SMC as outlined, would have the potential benefit of promoting and leading scrutiny in both public and Council perception terms. Currently, SMC manages and monitors scrutiny processes and determines the allocation of topics registered by Members. It does not presently have the constitutional authority to propose its own reviews, in keeping with some key and current themes which would help to shape the overall direction of the scrutiny function.

## **Corporate Priorities**

11. Giving a direction on and shaping key scrutiny themes annually will help contribute to improving our organisational effectiveness.

## **Implications**

12. There are no known financial, human resources, equalities, legal, crime and disorder, ITT, property or other implications connected to this report at this stage.

## **Risk Management**

13. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy, there are no known risks associated with this report. Scrutiny must continue to be alert to potential new challenges such as the White Paper and needs the constitutional structure and flexibility to be able to respond and adapt appropriately.

## Recommendations

14. Members are asked to consider the proposals contained in the report and specifically whether they wish to recommend to Audit & Governance Committee and subsequently Full Council, the changes outlined to the delegations for SMC in order to enhance its role.

**Reason:** To enable SMC to operate pro-actively and responsively in relation to the needs of the scrutiny function in York.

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**Report Approved**



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**Specialist Implications Officers:** None

**Wards Affected:**

**All**



**For further information please contact the author of the report**

**Background Papers:** None

### Annexes

None