

TASK AND FINISH PANELS

1. SCRUTINY PANEL REVIEW TASK AND FINISH PANEL

Origin:

At its meeting on 25 February 2014, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the establishment of a new Task and Finish Scrutiny Panel to review the structure of the Council's existing framework of Scrutiny Standing Panels, and to make recommendations for how any new structure could best complement the new management structure of the Council.

Aims and Objectives:

- (a) To report findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to submit a final report for consideration by the Committee and the Council by the end of March 2015;
- (b) To gather evidence and information in relation to the review through the receipt of appropriate data, presentations and by participation in fact-finding visits to other authorities if necessary;
- (c) To have due regard to relevant legislation and the Council's procedures;
- (d) To consult political groups and independent Councillors during the review process.

Term of Reference:

To review the current structure of the overview and scrutiny panel framework, taking into consideration the report of the recent overview and scrutiny review and how any future panel framework would best fit the management structure of the Council;

- (1) To specifically consider whether the Council should:
 - retain the current five-panel structure; or
 - move to a panel structure based around the new directorate responsibilities (i.e. have four panels instead of five); or
 - move towards a commissioning model based upon a work programme;
- (2) To consider options for any other panel structure deemed appropriate;
- (3) To review the workload and terms of reference of each of the existing scrutiny panels for relevance and consider how their processes could be improved;
- (4) To consider how any future scrutiny panel established to review relevant functions of the Governance Directorate would interrelate with the terms of reference of the Audit and Governance Committee and the Standards Committee; and

- (5) To report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on options for a new scrutiny panel framework to be implemented from the 2015/16 municipal year.

The Panel

The Committee appointed the following members to serve on the Panel:

Councillors K Angold-Stephens (Chairman), M Sartin (Vice Chairman), R Gadsby, A Grigg, D Stallan and J H Whitehouse

The Lead officer was S Hill, Assistant Director Governance and Performance Management.

A review of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements was undertaken in 2013/14. The Council's service directorates had recently been restructured, resulting in a change from seven directorates to four. A proposal for a suggested new Overview and Scrutiny Panel structure aligned to the directorate framework was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 February 2014.

This review only concerned the future structure of the Scrutiny Panel arrangements. Wider constitutional aspects (unless the Panel identify issues that affect the Constitution) and a review of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee itself, were excluded from the scope of the work of the Task and Finish Panel.

As part of the investigation process a Saturday workshop was held to get the view of members. Fourteen Members attended the scrutiny workshop facilitated by an independent Scrutiny Advisor, on 22 November 2014 with a mixture of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Scrutiny Panels, members of the Task and Finish Panel, members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and members of Cabinet. The workshop focused on three main sections:

- Strengths, Weaknesses & Aspirations for the current provision of Scrutiny;
- Applying insights gained from section one to the different types of Scrutiny; and
- Weighing evidence, making choices.

Attendees also discussed the following different methods of scrutiny that could be utilised in individual circumstances:

- challenge session – single issue, one session;
- single day scrutiny – a snap shot review;
- focus group meeting – focus is on consultations with users/stakeholders as opposed to scrutinising officers/members/providers;
- short-term single issue panel – typically two or three meetings to review a single issue;
- longer-term panel work – typically over four to six months, with detailed scrutiny;
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting – an item with presentation and questions, discussion and with the option to make recommendations.

The utilisation of these approaches, as appropriate to individual scrutiny activities, was agreed by the Task and Finish Panel and formed part of its recommendations for a future panel framework.

The Panel recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee a four committee

structure, replacing the Panel Structure with a new Directorate orientated Select Committee structure. The four Select Committees being:

- Environment Select Committee;
- Governance Select Committee;
- Housing Select Committee; and
- Resources Select Committee.

They also recommended that no action be taken at the present time with regard to any possible combination of the Audit and Governance Committee and the Standards Committee but that, if necessary, a further Task and Finish Panel be established in future to consider such combination in light of new legislative audit requirements.

These recommendations were accepted by the parent Overview and Scrutiny Committee and would be put into action when practicable.

2. GRANT AID SCHEME TASK AND FINISH PANEL

Origin:

At its meeting on 16 September 2014, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the establishment of a new Task and Finish Panel to review the Council's Grant Aid Scheme for Sports, Arts, Leisure and Community Groups in terms of the overall policy/guidance and procedures for Major Grants and Service Level Agreements including those for the determination of applications, and those for the pre and post determination stages.

Aims and Objectives:

- (a) To report findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to submit a final report for consideration by the Committee and the Council by April 2015;
- (b) To gather evidence and information in relation to the review through the receipt of appropriate data, presentations and by participation in fact-finding visits to other authorities if necessary;
- (c) To have due regard to relevant legislation and the Council's procedures;
- (d) To consult political groups and independent Councillors during the review process.

Term of Reference:

To review the current structure of the Grant Aid Scheme, taking into consideration the terms of the overall policy/guidance and procedures those for the determination of applications, and those for the pre and post determination stages and how this framework would best fit the structure of the Council.

- (1) To specifically consider:

- The eligibility criteria and assessment arrangements for funding taking into account the budget available and the thematic areas in the leisure and cultural strategy;
- The grant maxima;
- Appropriate arrangements for safeguarding;
- Review procedures.

(2) To consider any other matters that are deemed appropriate.

The Panel

The Committee appointed the following members to serve on the Panel:

Councillors Caroline Pond (Chairman), J Knapman, T Boyce, A Mitchell, S Murray, G Shiell and B Surtees.

The Panel would not finish its work by the end of this municipal year and would continue into the next year.

3. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT TASK AND FINISH PANEL

Origin

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 10 February 2015 set up a Task and Finish Panel to review potential options for the best use of the existing budgets for youth engagement for the future. Also, they agreed that it would be helpful to co-opt two youth councillors to sit on this panel and give their input. This Panel stemmed from a PICK form submitted by Councillor Kane the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Community Services.

Aims and Objectives

- (a) To report findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and submit a final report for consideration by the Committee and the Council by November 2015;
- (b) To include two representatives from the District Youth Council on the Task and Finish Panel;
- (c) To determine the impact of the Council's current engagement with young people, through consultation with local statutory and voluntary sector partners, and,
- (d) To determine the best use of the allocated funding for the future.

Draft Terms of Reference

1. To review the operation of the Youth Council and identify specific areas of work undertaken and the success and impact of these;
2. To review the level of engagement with peers in local schools and 'other young people' of all ages across the district, through the range of work undertaken by the Youth Council and the importance of this engagement for local community groups;
3. To consider feedback from local schools and other partners in respect of the work of the Youth Council;
4. To identify the expenditure related to various elements of the Youth Council work programme and analyse the cost/benefit of this;
5. To consider other work undertaken by Community Services and Safety to engage with young people and identify the costs associated with this;
6. To consider the status of Essex Youth Services following recent service transformation and resulting implications for the district; and,
7. To prepare a set of recommendations for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in November 2015.

The Panel

The Committee appointed the following members to serve on the Panel:

Councillors K Adams, R Butler, G Mohindra, S Murray, C Roberts and B Surtees

Two non-voting youth Councillors were also co-opted to help the Panel with their work. They were Youth Councillors J McIvor and M Tinker.

The Panel had its first meeting in April 2015 and will continue on into the new municipal year, hopefully finishing in November 2015.