

Report to Overview & Scrutiny Review task & Finish Panel

Date of meeting: 14 February 2013

Report of: Assistant to the Chief Executive

Subject: Scrutiny of External Organisations

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Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry (01992 564246)



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

To formulate any proposals concerning the Council's arrangements regarding scrutiny of external organisations

Report:

1. This report sets out the legal and constitutional background concerning scrutiny of external organizations together with points which have arisen during consultation, details of previous reviews and comments made at the scoping meeting.

Legal & Constitutional Requirements

Legal

3. The Council must ensure that their Overview and Scrutiny Committees have the power:

(a) to make reports or recommendations to the Council on matter that are not the responsibility of the Executive; and

(b) to make reports or recommendations to the Council on matters which affect this district or the inhabitants of the district.

EFDC Constitution

4. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall be able to review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies active in the District.

Feedback from Consultation

5. There should be a review of how external bodies are scrutinised and called to account with particular reference as to how the public are to be involved by Overview and Scrutiny.

6. The OSC is not always scrutinising external bodies and holding them to account properly. The invitation of external bodies to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is seen to be very procedural, following a format of an annual report by the organisation concerned rather than robust scrutiny.

7. The OSC has not achieved real public engagement, neglecting their views and their

involvement in the scrutiny process.

Suggestions:

8. Better preparation is needed when scrutinising external bodies to avoid repeated questions from previous years.

9. Discussions before the meeting should provide members a platform to construct relevant questions, also drafting in the view of the public.

10. There should be greater follow-up on questions asked to external bodies.

11. The public should be involved in important issues and call-ins.

12. More specialised issues such as Child Protection should go to panels instead of the OSC which should be more general.

13. Move guest speakers to a lower part of the Council Chamber.

Previous Reviews

14. Items involving speakers at forthcoming scrutiny meetings are to be highlighted at the preceding meeting to allow sufficient preparation.

Decisions at Scoping Meeting

15. There was a need to scrutinise how outside bodies are dealt with.

Reason for decision:

16. As determined at the scoping meeting

Options considered and rejected: None

Consultation undertaken:

17. Previous consultation was carried out with members and officers. The feedback was included in the scoping report to the first meeting of this Panel. Further consultation has been agreed once provisional recommendations on the review have been compiled.

Resource implications: None

Community Plan/BVPP reference: None

Relevant statutory powers: Local government Act 2000 and 2007 and the Localism Act 2011.

Background papers: None

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: None

Key Decision reference: (if required): None