

Items agreed at the previous meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Review Task and Finish Panel

Nomination of O&S Chairmen –

AGREED: that the following wording be added to the constitution, that:
“The Chairman should have experience and understanding of our Scrutiny System.”

AGREED: that the constitution should not be altered but, with an emphasis on any training given to members on Overview and Scrutiny that it was not and should not be whipped.

Leader & Cabinet to O&S –

AGREED:

- 1) That the Leader should be called to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, twice a year at the most; firstly at the start of the year to present their Forward Plan and secondly after 6 months to update the Committee. That all members should be encouraged to attend.
- 2) That at the start of the year the Leader shall indicate, if appropriate, that O&S look at any work that the Cabinet thinks needed to be investigated.
- 3) That individual Portfolio Holders to attend an appropriate Standing Panel meeting formally convened to consider their Portfolio and to question them. This meeting be open to all members; and that the Portfolio Holder be encouraged to attend all appropriate Standing Panel meetings that considers their portfolio.

AGREED:

- i) That the Forward Plan include other decisions other than just Key decisions;
- ii) That the Cabinet Review agenda item be placed earlier on O&S Agenda;
- iii) That members raise any items of business for future Cabinet meetings as raised in the Forward Plan; and
- iv) Members have the opportunity to ask Portfolio Holders questions on matters of concern.

Use of PICK Forms for Scrutiny

AGREED:

- 1) That a rigorous use of the PICK work request form should be enforced, preferably through better training and/or by returning the form to members asking for more details;
- 2) That a further report be submitted on Scrutiny follow up processes.

Scrutiny Panel Chairmen

AGREED:

The Panel agreed that the Constitution should be strengthened to say that Panel Chairmen are expected to attend the main O&S Committee to give progress reports on their Panel's work.

Call-ins

That once a call-in had been made:

1. That either side could request a pre-meeting to discuss the call-in before it was considered formally by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
2. That they should not attempt to define what a major or minor matter was for a call-in and that the wording should remain "Call-ins should be for the bigger and more important issues and not for small insignificant detail."
3. They agreed that the present set time for calling-in a report should be kept at 5 days, as nowadays with electronic communication it was relatively easy to get five members to sign a call-in, especially as they could send in their signatures separately by email;
4. Members also had the time before a Cabinet meeting to study the reports on the agenda as well as the five working days after the decision had been taken to call-in a decision;
5. That some sort of electronic call-in be introduced to speed up the process;
6. That a system be devised for the members of a call-in to be able to withdraw their objections if once having met with the Portfolio Holder and chairman of the O&S Committee their concerns were met;
7. That the protocol be clarified to make for a more formalised debate with only the lead call-in member and the Portfolio Holder allowed to start the debate and then opening it out to wider discussion, with members of the committee speaking first, then non members and with the Portfolio Holder concluding the debate;
8. That guidance be sought for the amendment of a report after a call-in had been made and a compromise had been had been reached.

Scrutiny of External Organisations

The Panel wanted to:

- i) Have a repeat of the training sessions first had last year on scrutiny;
- ii) Change the layout of the chamber to alter where the outside bodies sit and where the committee sit when receiving a presentation;
- iii) This new layout could also be used for call-ins;
- iv) The non-attendance of the public at our meeting needed to be addressed and their ability to ask questions of the outside bodies;
- v) Members should be flexible about putting presentations to either the O&S Committee or if preferable to a suitable Standing Panel.

Training

That the following courses be offered to members:

- Charing Scrutiny for positive Outcomes; and
- Improving Questioning Skills - *to be run together as one course*;

Also:

- Effective Financial and Budget Scrutiny;
- The Fundamentals of Scrutiny;
- Assessing Evidence and Drafting Effective Recommendations.

It was agreed that if possible the courses be held on a Saturday and if possible share the costs of training with another authority (such as Harlow and/or Broxbourne etc.)

That if possible the financial scrutiny training be held in the autumn just before the start of the budget setting process.

Each member should receive basic finance training as everything was connected to finance.

Finance Scrutiny

- 1) That a timetable be produced at the start of the budget setting process to enable the scrutiny members to plan ahead. They should start at the very beginning of the process reviewing the mid year financial plan. This mid term finance strategy should be published and made available to all members.
- 2) A timetable of the budget process should be publicised in the Council Bulletin.
- 3) The Finance Scrutiny Panel's Terms of Reference should be altered to avoid duplication with the work of the Finance Cabinet Committee. There should not be any more joint meetings with the Cabinet Finance Committee.
- 4) They not only need to look at the up coming budget but also at what had gone before and how it had worked.
- 5) Scrutiny should be looking at trends, problems and themes that were emerging. Scrutiny should flag up the larger points on the budget and not go through the detailed figures.
- 6) That the Chairman of the Finance Scrutiny Panel was to be invited to the next meeting to outline the F&PM Panel's deliberation on the KPIs and for his views on what his views were on the F&PM Panel should scrutinise generally.
- 7) Members should clarify what kind of budget scrutiny they wanted the F&PM Panel to carry out in the future, in its broadest sense
- 8) The Scrutiny panel should target the exception and ignore what was going well.
- 9) The Scrutiny Panel to receive a further report on KPIs (see 6 above).

Items still to be considered:

Scrutiny of KPIs;
The Public profile of OSC;
Determining the Work Programme each year;
Questions from the public.