

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Panel Review Task and Finish Panel

Date of meeting: 29 September 2014



Subject: Overview and Scrutiny Panel Review – Scoping and Terms of Reference

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Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) To consider the proposed scope and terms of reference for the review of the existing overview and scrutiny panel framework, and to recommend these to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for adoption;**
- (2) To agree timescales for the review as set out in this report; and**
- (3) To discuss options for undertaking the review, specifically;**
 - **times/frequency of meetings of the Panel;**
 - **evidence required by officers/members;**
 - **issues to be covered by the review, including the interrelation with the Standards Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee; and**
 - **proposals for consultation.**

Report:

Introduction

1. 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 overview and scrutiny standing panels, and to make recommendations for how any new structure could best complement the new management structure of the Council.
2. This decision was made following the deferral by the Committee of consideration of a proposal for the creation of a new four-panel structure aligned around the service directorates introduced in April 2014. This report sets out the proposed scope and terms of reference for the review of the current framework.

Background Information:

3. A review of the Council's overview and scrutiny arrangements was undertaken in 2013/14 and the Council's management structure has recently been reviewed, resulting in a reduction from seven service directorates to four. A proposal for a suggested new overview and scrutiny panel structure aligned to each of the directorates, which had not been considered as part of the overview and scrutiny review, was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 February 2014 in the light of the directorate restructuring and the outcome of the review

4. This Task and Finish has therefore been established to undertake the review of the existing overview and scrutiny panel framework. It is intended that the review will only address the future structure of the scrutiny panel framework. Wider constitutional aspects (unless the Panel identify any matters that affect the constitution) and the operation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, are excluded from the scope of this review exercise.
5. The changes to the directorate structure do however give the Panel an opportunity to consider the workload balance and the terms of reference of the existing scrutiny panels. The review should also consider appropriate scrutiny arrangements for elements of the functions of the Governance Directorate and how these interrelate with the terms of reference of the Audit and Governance Committee and the Standards Committee, as this was an area of concern expressed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when the directorate-aligned proposal was considered earlier in the year.

Aims and Objectives:

6. The proposed terms of reference for the Task and Finish Panel are set out at Appendix 1 to this report. It is proposed that the review be managed as follows:
 - (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;
 - (e) To meet the following timescales:
 - Overview and Scrutiny Committee (14 October 2014) - Report and agree scoping/Terms Of Reference);
 - provide options report to Task and Finish Panel (November 2014);
 - provide update report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee (10 November 2014);
 - undertake appropriate stakeholder consultation (by January 2015);
 - provide update report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee (12 January 2015);
 - bring forward final proposals to the Panel by February 2015;
 - report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee (10 February 2015); and
 - report to Council (19 February 2015).
7. The review is due for completion by 23 March 2015 to allow time for the final report to be agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a view to implementation in the new municipal year.

Recommendations:

8. The panel is asked to:
 - (a) agree the scope and terms of reference for the review;
 - (b) agree the timescales for the review; and
 - (c) discuss options for undertaking the review.