

# **Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Panel**

**Date of meeting: 20 October 2014**



**Subject:** Overview and Scrutiny Panel Review – Stakeholder Feedback and Consultation

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## **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

### **That the Panel**

- (a) discuss the operation of the current scrutiny panel framework with the chairmen and vice-chairmen of the present overview and scrutiny panels;**
- (b) consider feedback on the operation of the present framework arising from interviews held with service directors and lead officers of the current panels; and**
- (c) consider options for a facilitated scrutiny workshop as part of the review of the scrutiny panel framework.**

## **Introduction**

1. At its meeting on 29 September 2014, the Task and Finish Panel asked officers to provide the following information for this Panel meeting:
  - Information on options for a facilitated scrutiny workshop;
  - Information gathered as a result of consultations held with service directors and lead officers; and
  - Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels and Audit & Governance Committee to engage in consultations relevant to the review

## **Background Information**

2. A review of the Council's overview and scrutiny arrangements was undertaken in 2013/14. The Council's service directorates have recently been restructured, resulting in a change of seven directorates to four. A proposal for a suggested new overview and scrutiny panel structure was considered on 25 February 2014 at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. Details of this proposal and the current panel structure are attached to this report.
3. This review being undertaken by the Panel only concerns the future structure of the scrutiny panel framework. Wider constitutional aspects and a review of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee itself are excluded from the review. The changes to the directorate structure give the opportunity to look at the balance of the terms of reference of the existing panels.

## **Report:**

4. At the request of the Panel, invitations have been issued to each of the chairmen and

vice-chairmen of the present overview and scrutiny panels to attend this meeting, to take part in discussions regarding the operation of the existing panel framework and options for any future structure. At the time of the finalisation of this agenda, confirmed attendance had been received from Councillor S. Murray (Chairman of the Housing Scrutiny Panel) and Councillor Y. Knight (Vice-Chairman of the Planning Services Scrutiny Panel). The Chairman of the Constitution and Members Services Scrutiny Panel, Councillor M. Sartin, is an existing member of this Task and Finish Panel and it is hoped that other relevant chairmen and vice-chairmen will be able to attend the meeting.

5. The review is also to consider appropriate scrutiny arrangements for some elements of the functions of the Governance Directorate and how these interrelate with the terms of reference of the Audit and Governance 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. Unfortunately, the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee has advised that he will not be able to attend either this or the next meeting. In the circumstances, it will be necessary to make other arrangements to secure the views of the Chairman of that Committee.
6. As agreed at the previous meeting, discussion on the review has also taken place, or is scheduled to take place, with service directors and relevant lead officers of the present scrutiny panels, including discussions with:
  - Colleen O'Boyle (Director of Governance)
  - Alan Hall (Director of Communities)
  - Derek Macnab (Director of Resources)
  - Bob Palmer (Director of Resources)
  - Simon Hill (Assistant Director - Governance & Performance Management)
  - Peter Maddock (Assistant Director - Accountancy)
  - Nigel Richardson (Assistant Director - Development Management)
7. At the finalisation of this agenda, four discussions had taken place and the feedback arising from these sessions is attached. The results of the remaining interviews will be reported at the meeting.
8. The Panel has also previously agreed that there might be merit in holding a facilitated workshop for all Members to attend, as part of the review of the scrutiny panel framework. This could be facilitated by Tim Young, an independent Scrutiny and Policy Consultant who has previously worked with the Council on overview and scrutiny matters. Mr. Young has prepared the attached outline of the possible aims, objectives and outcomes for a workshop session, for consideration by the Panel.

### **Recommendations:**

9. The Panel is asked at this meeting:
  - (a) To hold discussions with the chairmen and vice-chairmen of the overview and scrutiny panels;
  - (b) To consider information gathered as a result of discussions held with service directors and relevant lead officers; and
  - (c) To consider the proposal of a facilitated workshop with consultant Tim Young.