

# Consultation feedback – OS Select Committee Structure

## 1. Do you agree the proposed new structure is appropriate?

**Alan Hall (Director of Communities):** My view is that it would be wrong to spoil the neat, clearly demarcated, 4-directorate proposal for Scrutiny Panels - by making this one minor change, which goes against the principle of the proposal.

I am aware that the current Housing Scrutiny Panel is busy, and that members and the current Chairman are concerned about increasing the workload of this Panel. However, I would make the following key points which I hope members will consider:

Historically, the workload on the scrutiny of Community Services and Community Safety has been very low. One of the reasons for this is that a lot of Community Safety work and scrutiny is undertaken by the multi-agency Community Safety Partnership, which EFDC leads and is a major player;

Accepting that there may be a small increased workload to that undertaken by the current Housing Scrutiny Panel, I would suggest that, if necessary, this could easily be dealt with by having 5 meetings per annum instead of 4 per annum.

**Peter Maddock (Assistant Director (Accountancy)):** I see the proposed structure better reflects the current Directorate Structure which should make it easier to manage from an officer point of view. Some of the Communities responsibilities fall to the Environment Select Panel which should probably work fine as Housing is a big area and any panel that included the Museum and arts as well might be difficult to manage.

Overall seems a reasonable proposal.

**Glenn Chip (Chief Executive):** Ok by me

**Councillor Janet Whitehouse:** My comments are as follows - I agree that there should be 4 scrutiny panels. Aligning them with the directorates makes it clear to members and staff which scrutiny panel will be dealing with which topics so I think this is the better arrangement.

**Simon Hill (Assistant Director (Governance & Performance Management)):** Thank you for the opportunity of commenting further. The proposals as amended do seem to be workable. It brings forward elements of the original proposals from February 2014 but takes account of the views of most members that the Housing Panel works effectively and has a heavy work programme.

The proposals will bring forward a small saving of one SRA.

**Councillor Gavin Chambers:** I agree with the majority of the new proposed structure

**Nigel Richardson (Assistant Director (Development Management)):** I do agree to the new structure, so that answers question 1. I think though you should change the Governance Select Committee part that reads "...elections reviews and consultation and engagement, building control and planning enforcement..." to read as elections reviews and

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consultation and engagement, development management including conservation, trees and landscaping and delete “control, building control and planning enforcement”

**Councillor Caroline Pond:** Thanks for the consultation; I would prefer the structure to be a select committee for each of the 4 Directorships. It can then cover all departments and responsibilities. In my view that is clearer than the existing structure and then the other option. I do welcome 4 committees instead of 5.

**Councillor David Stallan:** I support the proposed structure of the new select committee and believe it to be appropriate.

**Brian Bassington (Chief Internal Auditor):** I have no comments on the proposed structure for O&S.

**Councillor Chris Pond:** Following the comments at Full Council yesterday, here are my comments on the proposed O&S structure: I think there should be as few as possible standing panels. These should shadow the work of each Director, with finance being scrutinised by an enhanced audit and finance committee. This latter should always be chaired by a non-administration councillor.

**Councillor David Wixley:** I suggest trying the new proposals subject to a review after one year.

**Councillor Brian Surtees:** Having now seen the structure chart, I would like to respond as follows,

The proposed structure is appropriate, but depends on carefully worked out protocols and flexibility to enable proper scrutiny and accountability to be maintained while deploying less strait jacketed and costly ways of working.

**Councillor Anne Grigg:** I confirm that I support the Overview & Scrutiny Select Committee Structure p17 of the Bulletin 19th December.

This gives Housing a Select Panel dealing with housing matters only. Housing Scrutiny is currently a busy Committee, which works efficiently and very well. This would mean that community and cultural services and community safety would be included in the Environment Select Panel – this ties in with previous model Safer Cleaner Greener and provides continuity from that aspect.

Task and Finish Panels can be set up as required/appropriate from these Select Panels.

I do not support the commissioning model.

In addition I support Constitution continuing as a Task and Finish Panel.

### 2. Do you foresee any issues with this proposed new structure?

**Alan Hall (Director of Communities):** Quite rightly, the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Panel would be dominated by issues relating to the Neighbourhoods Directorate – with which the Panel would build up a relationship and knowledge base – yet would only occasionally

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consider the odd Community Services/Safety issue to scrutinise, which is covered by another Directorate.

It doesn't appear right or appropriate that, unlike the approach taken for all other Directorates, where each directorate would be sensibly aligned with one scrutiny panel (which is the whole basis of the approach), the Communities Directorate would be aligned with two scrutiny panels.

I'm not sure how definitive the Task and Finish Panel's views/decisions on this are, but I would be grateful if you could draw the above comments to the attention of the Task and Finish Panel's Chairman and other members.

**Peter Maddock (Assistant Director (Accountancy)):** I note HRA financial monitoring is under housing? Presumably the remainder under Resources? Could you clarify please?

**Glenn Chip (Chief Executive):** Ok by me

**Councillor Janet Whitehouse:** At the Scrutiny Panels Review Task and Finish Panel on 25 November concern was expressed that Housing needs to be a separate scrutiny panel as there would be too much if all the Community Directorate was included. However, in his evidence, the Director of Communities was confident he could manage this and I think that due regard should be given to his response. Also, in proposing the non-directorate based structure no proper analysis of the work areas that were moved from one scrutiny panel to another was done.

**Simon Hill (Assistant Director (Governance & Performance Management)):** I think that part of the final proposals should be to have a review of this say after 18 months of operation just to check it is fit for purpose. Minor changes to the wording of the OS Rules in the Constitution will be needed but this can be picked up subsequently.

**Councillor Gavin Chambers:** No comments

**Nigel Richardson (Assistant Director (Development Management)):** In answer to question 2, my only concern is whether we will have Councillors sitting on these Committees with sufficient knowledge or interest over what could be a wide range of issues.

**Councillor Caroline Pond:** No comments.

**Councillor David Stallan:** In regard to the new structure, I foresee no issues and if the attendance of the Directors is an issue, maybe the Asst Directors could attend more.

**Brian Bassington (Chief Internal Auditor):** I have no comments on the proposed structure for O&S.

**Councillor Chris Pond:** The idea of themed committees, as in the organisation chart in the Bulletin, seems to me to be less desirable. It gives too much prominence to housing as a council activity; should this be proceeded with, governance and resources could be merged.

It follows that I do not favour the suggested structure.

**Councillor David Wixley:** No comments

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**Councillor Brian Surtees:** Clear understanding of role and purpose needs to be communicated to Cabinet members, Councillors and the public. Issues can be avoided by careful implementation and training for all Councillors which (IMHO) should be mandatory.

**Councillor Anne Grigg:** No comments

### **3. Do you have any possible views about the combination of the Audit and Governance Committee with the Standards Committee?**

**Alan Hall (Director of Communities):** No comments

**Peter Maddock (Assistant Director (Accountancy)):** No comments

**Glenn Chip (Chief Executive):** Ok by me

**Councillor Janet Whitehouse:** With regard to combining the Audit and Standards Committees more work needs to be done so that members can make an informed decision. The Standards regime has changed a lot since the Standards Committee was established so that a separate Standards Committee may not have much to do. Therefore joining with Audit seems sensible in order to reduce the number of committees.

**Simon Hill:** I think that the idea that Audit and Governance Committee coming under the auspices of Overview and Scrutiny is not favoured by the members of that committee. In any event the Council will need to look further at its Committee structure in a critical fashion in order that all members are engaged.

**Councillor Gavin Chambers:** However the audit and governance and standards board should remain very separate. They have very different terms of references and are of course very different meetings. I think the Independent person/s should also be asked their views. We will not be sending a very good message to the public by merging these committees.

**Nigel Richardson (Assistant Director (Development Management)):** I do not have any strong views on 3 other than this seems to be a good idea.

**Councillor Caroline Pond:** No to 1 panel for A and G, and Standards. They are looking at different things. Both need special training but not the same training and do not attract the same interests of councillors and independent members.

**Councillor David Stallan:** I would like to see Audit & Governance and Standards Committee to remain in existence in their current form as I believe these committees should be and be seen to be independent of either the executive and O&S. In fact, I did not believe they should have been part of the review.

I hope this is useful

**Brian Bassington (Chief Internal Auditor):** I have no comments on the proposed structure for O&S.

**Councillor Chris Pond:** The Standards Committee, which is specialised, should not be merged with any other committee.

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**Councillor David Wixley:** No comments

**Councillor Brian Surtees:** I am strongly against amalgamating the Audit and Governance Committee with the Standards Committee. Although there is a superficial congruence between the two committees their function is widely different. To combine the two would be to risk a melding of the narrower remit of Audit and Governance with the much wider one of the Standards Committee. This could lead to role confusion or possibly (and worse) a clouding of the clear parameters needed for both audit/governance and standards functions to be effective.

**Councillor Anne Grigg:** Generally, I support the Scrutiny Task and Finish Panel recommendations at their meeting of 25th November for the reasons given in the minutes, apart from their view on Audit and Standards.

Having looked at a number of examples of a combined Audit and Standards Committee/Panel, details of which were submitted to the workshop on 22nd November and the discussion that took place at that meeting, I support a combined Audit and Standards Panel.

### **Miscellaneous Responses**

**Councillor Alan Lion:** Hi the meeting notes are not there and it's not clear on what structure is proposed so useful to include in the email so there is no doubt.

I agree audit and governance and standards could be combined

**Colleen O'Boyle (Director Of Governance):**

In the environment one – what is the development plan – is it the Local plan or something else,

The governance one – too many 'ands' – can we put commas instead

And the Resources one – is there a wider term to pick up the finance aspects which aren't fees and charges