

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 14 October 2014



Subject: Scrutiny Panels Review Task and Finish Panel – Terms of Reference

Report of: Councillor K. Angold-Stephens (Chairman)

Democratic Services Officer: A. Hendry (01992 564246)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Committee agree the terms of reference for the Scrutiny Panels Review Task and Finish Panel.

1. At its meeting on 25 February 2014, this Committee agreed the establishment of this new Task and Finish Panel to review the structure of the existing framework of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Standing Panels, and to make recommendations for how any revised structure (if necessary) could best complement the new management structure of the Council.
2. A review of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements was undertaken in 2013/14 and the Council's new management structure was finalised in December 2013, 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 deferred by the Committee in February 2014 for further consideration.
3. The work of the Task and Finish Panel will only address the possible 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 itself, are excluded from the scope of the review exercise, having already been considered by the earlier review.
4. The membership of the Task and Finish Panel is the same as that which undertook the review of the authority's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements last year. We held our first meeting on 29 September 2014, at which time we considered draft terms of reference for the review, which are attached as an appendix to this report, for consideration by the Committee.
5. As part of the review, we intend to gather evidence and information from relevant stakeholders. We will be inviting the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the existing panels to attend our next meeting to discuss the operation of the existing framework, and will also seek the views of service directors, lead officers and all members in relation to the review. We will report progress with regard to the review to the Committee on a regular basis.
6. The recent changes to the management structure of the Council have also presented us with an opportunity to consider the workloads of the existing Scrutiny Panels. We will therefore undertake some comparison of the terms of reference of each panel as part of our review, in order to ensure that panels have balanced and achievable work

programmes. The review will also 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 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. We intend to discuss these matters with the Chairmen of the Audit and Governance and Standards Committees.

7. The review is due for completion in February 2015 to allow time for the final report to be considered by the Committee and the Council during March/April 2015, with a view to the agreement of any necessary constitutional changes and the introduction of the preferred Overview and Scrutiny Panel structure at the commencement of the next municipal year.
8. We would request the Committee to agree the proposed terms of reference for the review of the structure of the existing of Overview and Scrutiny Standing Panel framework.

Councillors K. Angold-Stephens (Chairman), Mrs. R. Gadsby, Mrs. M. Sartin, D. Stallan, Mrs. J.H. Whitehouse.