

Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 20 October 2015



Subject: Member Training – Overview and Scrutiny

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Recommendations/Decisions Required

That the Committee note the proposed response to issues arising from a recent member training session in respect of the operation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Report

1. As part of the Member Training Programme for 2015/16, an introduction to Overview and Scrutiny was delivered to members on 22 June 2015. The session was facilitated by Tim Young, an experienced scrutiny trainer who works with councillors and officers on most aspects of local government, and focussed on essential information and useful skills that scrutiny Members need to carry out Overview and Scrutiny to best effect.
2. Mr. Young's training session was grounded in the four principles of good scrutiny (developed originally by the Centre for Public Scrutiny), which see effective scrutiny as:
 - providing 'critical friend' challenge to the Executive and partners;
 - reflecting and enabling the voice and concerns of the public and its communities;
 - being carried out by 'independently-minded governors' who lead and own the scrutiny process; and
 - driving improvement in public services and helping to find efficiencies and new ways of delivering services
3. The session also focussed on how Overview and Scrutiny was organised and carried out within the Council, using examples from other authorities to illustrate best practice and how other authorities use overview and scrutiny to tackle a range of pressing issues.
4. A number of issues were raised by members during the training session, in connection with the operation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Presentations

5. Members felt that presentations to be made to the Committee should be available in advance of the relevant meeting, so that they can have early sight of presentation material to aid the process of scrutiny and questioning. This is considered to be a reasonable approach and will be implemented going forward, provided that it is possible to obtain presentations from external organisations attending meetings of the Committee. Presentations will be published as a supplementary item on the Modern.Gov system, but not will not be printed for hard-copy distribution.

Presentations - Follow-Up

6. Members expressed the view that there should be time available to follow-up matters subject of presentation to the Committee by external organisations, either at the relevant meeting at the conclusion of the presentation (in the absence of the representatives of the external organisation) or by periodic monitoring at subsequent meetings. Again, this is considered to be a reasonable approach and will be implemented appropriately in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee.

Recommendations - Follow-Up

7. Members felt that improvements could also be made in ensuring that the recommendations of the Committee on specific matters are followed-up to ensure that action is always taken where necessary. Arrangements for regular progress reporting on such matters are also currently being considered in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee.
8. Tim Young will be running a further member training session highlighting skills for effective scrutiny, on 22 October 2015.

Resource Implications:

There are no resource requirements arising from the recommendations of this report.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The Council's constitution sets out rules for the operation of overview and scrutiny activity.

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:

There are no implications arising from the recommendations of this report in respect of the Council's commitment to the Climate Local Agreement, the corporate Safer, Cleaner, Greener initiative, or any crime and disorder issues within the district.

Consultation Undertaken:

None required.

Background Papers:

None

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

The Council's constitution sets out rules for the operation of overview and scrutiny activity.

Equality:

There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations of this report.