FOR PUBLICATION

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW – STAGE 2 COMPLETION
REPORT**

MEETING: OVERVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY
                       FORUM

DATE: 10 NOVEMBER 2015

REPORT BY: POLICY MANAGER - PROJECT MANAGER

FOR PUBLICATION

BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR PUBLIC
REPORTS:
- Scrutiny Review Stage 1 competition report
- Scrutiny Review baseline data

1.0   **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1   To report to the Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum the
      findings of Stage 2 of the Overview and Scrutiny Review.

1.2   To recommend actions to continue to improve the Overview and
      Scrutiny function.

2.0   **BACKGROUND**

2.1   During 2011 an external review by the Institute of Local
      Government Studies (INLOGOV) was completed on the Overview
      and Scrutiny function at Chesterfield Borough Council. Since the
      2011 review there have also been significant changes in the
      officer resource and direction due to major restructures in the
      Governance and Policy Services.

2.2   Members and Officers felt that the time was right to revisit the
      findings of the review and subsequent recommendations taken

forward to assess whether or not these arrangements are working as envisaged and if they are still appropriate, given the large number of changes impacting on the Scrutiny function.

2.3   The review of the Overview and Scrutiny function was commissioned on the 17th October 2014. Stage 1 of the review concentrated on the baseline position of Scrutiny and the significant changes that have occurred since the last review in 2011. Stage 1 findings were reported to the board in February 2015.

2.4   The second stage of the review – research and challenge focused on the areas for improvement identified during stage 1. This stage was completed in September 2015 and discussed at the review board on 17th September 2015.

3.0   **LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

3.1   Stage 1 identified a clear need for enhancing learning and development for both members and officers. The new development programme will need to address the following issues identified during stage 1:
   - Officer and member confusion regarding Scrutiny processes and requirements
   - Clarification required on roles, responsibilities and expectations
   - Cultural change required – Scrutiny to be viewed as a partner in improving services and decision making
   - Preparation for Scrutiny's role in the emerging devolution agenda

3.2   As national plans develop for the greater devolvement of powers and responsibilities to local councils, we need to ensure that our overview and scrutiny function remains fit for purpose. Maintaining a supportive and ongoing learning culture for members and officers underpinned by a corporate development programme will help achieve this

3.3   The draft Member Development Programme for Overview and Scrutiny is attached for consideration (Appendix 1) and is divided into 3 sections :

   1. Scheduled Development for Civic Year 2015/16

2. Ongoing Development
3. Optional Further Development

3.4   The final agreed programme for overview and scrutiny learning will form part of the Corporate Member Development Programme for all elected members. This will help facilitate the most efficient use of resource whilst providing comprehensive learning opportunities for all members.

3.5   To further strengthen member development the Council recently relaunched the Corporate Member Development Group to develop and monitor member development opportunities. Overview and Scrutiny have an important role on this group – Cllr Tricia Gilby, Cllr Lisa-Marie Derbyshire and the Policy and Scrutiny Officer are members of the Corporate Member Development Group.

3.6   Alongside and interacting with the member development programme there are also opportunities for learning, development and awareness raising for Council Officers. This is attached at Appendix 2.

3.7   The learning and development activity has been costed and falls within the annual budget allocated to Scrutiny development. Where possible opportunities for joint member and officer development will be utilised and encouraged.

4.0   **INTRANET AND WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT**

4.1   Currently many elected members are unable to use the intranet as it is unavailable on their IPAD devices. The new Intranet is expected to launch in October 2015 which will improve both accessibility and functionality.

4.2   The Intranet offers a range of opportunities to help raise the profile of Scrutiny activity but to also address some of the issues raised at 3.1. The development of an Intranet presence for Overview and Scrutiny will be a key focus during the end of 2015/16 and start of 2016/17. The areas for development we are currently exploring with the Communications are Marketing Service are:
- A central point for up to date policies and procedures

- Advice and support for officer and members including frequently asked questions, key contacts, timetabling assistance, key dates etc.
- Awareness raising activity including case studies, videos, a day in the life of…..etc.
- Utilising new features such as the team work section which will be positive for Scrutiny project groups

4.3   A number of updates and improvements have been to the Overview and Scrutiny pages on the CBC website including ensuring that annual reports are published and the updated information about the three Scrutiny Committees, their membership and political balance are also available. Further improvements are planned during 2015/16.

4.4   Increased website and Intranet presence will also promotion Scrutiny added value, activity and outcomes to a larger audience. Opportunities for promotional activity via Community Assemblies, Your Chesterfield and the Borough Bulletin will also be utilised.

5.0   PRE-AGENDA MEETINGS AND SUPPORT

5.1   Officers are being activity encouraged to attend the pre-agenda meetings a few weeks before the Committee meetings to informally discuss with the Scrutiny Chairs and Officers their agenda items.

5.2   Officer attendance at these meetings is increasing and feedback has been extremely positive in particular officers like the opportunity clarify what will be expected of them at the meeting, the focus, timings etc. These meetings also offer the Chairs the opportunity to request a particular focus or to request that more time is devoted to member discussion than officer presentation.

5.3   Pre-agenda meetings are viewed as very beneficial to both members and officers and in particular for Chairs and Scrutiny staff as issues can be discussed and clarified before moving into the Committee environment.

5.4   The Committee and Scrutiny Co-ordinators have been developing new guidance and templates for reports and clarifying the key milestones of activity. This work will also benefit Scrutiny committees and reinforce expectations and responsibilities.

5.5   Stage 1 of the review highlighted that the new staffing arrangements for Scrutiny have been working well and this has been further enhanced by the Policy and Scrutiny Officer and Committee and Scrutiny Co-ordinators meeting every three weeks for team meetings. These team meetings are effectively used to consider emerging issues with committees, Scrutiny project progress, discuss ideas and suggestions for improvement, lessons learned and celebrating success etc.

5.6   There are however ongoing concerns about the resilience of Scrutiny support as is the case with many of CBC's smaller teams. The potential changes highlighted in this report and the emerging issues around devolution may require a change in emphasis for Scrutiny officer roles and new or enhanced skill sets. Subject to the outcomes of the forthcoming Corporate Management Team restructure the Policy Manager and Democratic Services Manager propose to work together to consider these roles with a view to strengthening resilience and clarifying roles, responsibilities and skills required to respond to these emerging areas.

6.0   **WORK PROGRAMMING**

6.1   **Background**

6.1.1 The Centre for Public Scrutiny (Cfps) emphasise the importance of work programming "Effective work programming is the bedrock of an effective scrutiny function. Done well, it can help to lay the foundations for targeted, incisive and timely work on issues of local importance, where scrutiny can add value. Done badly, scrutiny can end up wasting time and resources on issues where the impact of any work done is likely to be minimal".

6.1.2 Currently Scrutiny work programmes are live documents which are updated after each Scrutiny Committee meeting. The programme sets out the key items for forthcoming agendas and updates on the status including reporting frequency.

6.1.3 The following concerns relating to the current work programming approach were raised at Stage 1 of the Scrutiny review:
- More focus required on policy development role and identifying policy areas where Scrutiny could lead

- Desire for focus on quality rather than quantity on Scrutiny activity
- Timetabling issues linked to Forward Plan usage
- Capacity of members and officers to effectively undertake a number of simultaneous Scrutiny Review Projects at the same time.

6.1.4 Cfps also have concerns that in some authorities work programming can be officer led rather than member led, sometimes members may be involved right at the beginning and sign the end document off but officers lead on longlisting and shortlisting. Members should lead the longlisting and shortlisting with support from officers but such work should, however, recognise the possible constraints for both members and officers in carrying out concurrent, and/or technically complex, pieces of work.

6.2 Developing a work programme

6.2.1 The LGIU suggest the following ways to maximise the benefit of scrutiny work programming:
- It must not be packed with so many separate scrutiny activities that none of them can be done properly.
- One major scrutiny and perhaps two shorter reviews in the course of a year is realistic per committee
- A certain amount of flex should also be built into the scrutiny programme to allow for unexpected developments
- Timeliness in scrutiny is key. Activities need to be timetabled in such a way as to gel with executive decision-making schedules. This allows scrutiny to intervene at appropriate junctures for maximum impact. For example, pre-decision scrutiny must conclude well prior to the time when a relevant executive decision is to be made, allowing the executive time to factor the scrutiny's findings into their subsequent decision
- Horizon-scanning scrutiny is most productive when sufficient information is available about developments on the horizon to ask informed questions about them
- In selecting topics, a scrutiny committee should ordinarily avoid re-examining topics which have been scrutinised in the recent past, drawing on the council's institutional memory

6.2.2 Cfps consider that it is important to set aside time at a given time of the year – usually in February to decide on some key issues for

Scrutiny to investigate in the following year. Many authorities hold away days for Scrutiny members to review performance data, emerging issues, public consultation data and Council priorities (Council Plan) and then collaboratively develop a draft work programme. Events like these can help define the tone and purpose of Scrutiny work for the forthcoming year and improve engagement levels. A example timetable for this activity and how it could work at CBC is attached at Appendix 3.

6.2.3   Some flexibility should however be retained as it is important to ensure that scrutiny is not tied in to carrying out projects that might become less relevant because of an unexpected policy change – or equally, doesn't miss out on the opportunity to look at something which crops up over the course of the year.

6.2.4   Many authorities retain separate work programmes for their various Scrutiny committees but others are moving towards a single unified work programme for all committees. With a unified Scrutiny work programme each committee still has its own areas of responsibility but it is easier to see, at a glance, where resources and time are being allocated. The programme is a results-focused and living document, with updates on its progress being submitted appropriate Scrutiny Committee. These are however available to all Scrutiny members via the Intranet or other sharing mechanism.

6.3   **Criteria for inclusion in the work programme**

6.3.1   With the increasingly challenging financial and resourcing position it is now more important than ever that Scrutiny can demonstrate added value. Many authorities have introduced feasibility criteria for selecting Scrutiny topics. This approach aims to show clear justification for expending resources. There are however pros and cons to this approach:

Pros:
- It is more transparent and it is clear to all stakeholders how the work programme is developed
- It is more objective and less emotive – easier to avoid "hobby horse" activity
- It can help to improve the scoping process for Scrutiny reviews

- Being more certain that you are choosing the right topics means that scrutiny is surer of adding value, using its resources more effectively.

Cons:
- This system is not as flexible
- Some members may feel it takes their judgement out of the decision
- More time is considering which items should go on the work programme and may involve a fair amount of research being carried out into various projects that don't lead anywhere

6.3.2 CBC's current feasibility criteria for establishing a Scrutiny Review is attached at Appendix 4. This appears to be one of the more comprehensive/complicated systems in use by authorities. This criteria is not used when deciding whether or not to add items to the rolling work programme. Some common alternative approaches to feasibility criteria are also included in Appendix 4.

6.4 **Public involvement in work programming**

6.4.1 At CBC there is a large community engagement programme providing key data on customer experience, resident satisfaction and aspirations for the future. Evidence from ward work, where available, also gives an excellent indication of areas of public concern. It is important that this information is considered during the development of Scrutiny work programmes. Many authorities use an annual away day style event as detailed in section 3 to consider this wealth of information and develop their programme.

6.4.2 Councils are starting to use a variety of means to engage the community in Scrutiny work programming including social media activity via Facebook and Twitter, asking specific Scrutiny questions on the biennial resident's satisfaction surveys. Sometimes this activity is prior to the work programme being developed (particularly with the surveys) but social media could be effectively used to test a draft work programme and encourage debate.

6.5 **Discussion Points for Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum to consider**

1. Should we continue with the rolling Scrutiny Work Programme approach or move to an annual planning cycle from 2016/17 with some flexibility for in-year change? *This would include the development of an annual or biannual annual away day to consider key data and priorities (performance management framework data, community engagement data, ward work concerns, the Council Plan) and collaboratively develop a work programme.*

2. Should we set a limit on the number of Scrutiny Review Projects which can be established per annum?

3. Should we consider moving towards a single united work programme with activities assigned to the appropriate committee but updates available to all via the Intranet?

4. Should we continue with the current feasibility criteria approach, adopt an alternative criteria approach for both work programming for meetings and reviews or stop the usage of criteria altogether?

5. Would Scrutiny work programming at CBC benefit from increasing the public profile and involvement with social media activity and/or specific consultation activities via the large biennial "Are you being served" survey?

7.0   <u>RECOMMENDATIONS</u>

7.1   That the member development programme for Overview and Scrutiny is approved.

7.2   That the Officer development programme for Overview and Scrutiny is approved.

7.3   That the opportunities to increase Scrutiny presence on the Intranet, Internet, public meetings and publications are pursued during 2015/16 and early 2016/17 and that Intranet new features are utilised where possible to aide Scrutiny project working.

7.4   That the Policy Manager and Democratic Services Manager review Scrutiny staff roles and responsibilities to strengthen resilience and to respond to emerging issues.

7.5   That the working programming actions agreed at section 6 are implemented for 2016/17.

8.0   <u>REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS</u>

8.1   To continue to improve the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function and to prepare for emerging areas of work.

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D. M. REDDISH
POLICY MANAGER

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Further information on this matter can be obtained from Donna Reddish (Extension 5307).