

# **FOR PUBLICATION**

## **ANNUAL EVALUATION OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS**

---

MEETING:	COUNCIL
DATE:	15 <sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2014
REPORT BY:	POLICY MANAGER AND POLICY AND SCRUTINY OFFICER
WARD:	ALL
KEY DECISION REFERENCE (IF APPLICABLE):	FORWARD PLAN ENTRY REF : NON KEY DECISION NO 28

---

### FOR PUBLICATION

BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR PUBLIC REPORTS: 1. Report to Cabinet on 29 November 2011 and to Council on 14 December 2011.  
2. Report to Cabinet on 9 July 2013 and to Council on 24 July 2013.

TITLE: 1. Independent review of scrutiny proposed new scrutiny arrangements.  
2. Review of revised overview and scrutiny arrangements 2012/13.

LOCATION: Scrutiny Office (Room 3.33).

---

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To respond to the Cabinet decision of 9 July 2013 and Council decision of 24 July 2013 to evaluate and report on the implementation of the Council's overview and scrutiny arrangements after a further 12 months of operation.

- 1.2 To make recommendations to Cabinet and Council to help ensure continuous improvement of the delivery of the Council's overview and scrutiny function.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That an extended internal review of overview and scrutiny arrangements takes place during 2014/15.
- 2.2 That the current overview and scrutiny committees and arrangements be retained until the 2014/15 review is completed.
- 2.3 That further training for Members and Officers be provided after the review.

## **3.0 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 In July 2010 Cabinet agreed that an external review of the overview and scrutiny function be undertaken and an independent review was then commissioned. The findings and recommendations of the independent review were considered by Cabinet on 29 November and Council on 14 December 2011 where new arrangements for scrutiny were agreed and put in place subject to an evaluation after 12 months.
- 3.2 The new arrangements were evaluated in 2012/13 and reported to Cabinet on 9 July 2013 and Council on 24 July 2013. A further annual evaluation was also agreed.
- 3.3 The current scrutiny arrangements have now been in operation for more than 2 years. Scrutiny committees, with all scrutiny stakeholders, continue to work pro-actively to undertake and support scrutiny work. Scrutiny's achievements for the year are detailed fully within the Scrutiny Annual Report 2013/14 received by Council on 30 July 2014.
- 3.4 Annual evaluations are recommended to ensure continuous improvement of the scrutiny function and its delivery. This report details the 2013/14 evaluation. The 2013/14 evaluation headline report is attached at Appendix 1 and the 2012/13 to 2013/14 trend analysis is attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.5 The report was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 23 September and it was resolved that the recommendations be supported. [Cabinet Minute No.85]

## **4.0 METHODOLOGY**

4.1 The evaluation took place between April and June 2014. The primary method of research comprised of a self-completion survey. The same questionnaire was used in 2013/14 as in the previous year to enable benchmarking. The questions were designed around each of the key findings of the independent review as detailed in the report of the Head of Governance to Cabinet on 29 November 2011. The questions are therefore intended to cover the following key issues raised in that independent report:

- (1) Overview and Scrutiny Structure
- (2) Scrutiny link officers
- (3) Scrutiny pre-agenda meetings
- (4) Scoping of reviews
- (5) Resources
- (6) Scrutiny protocols / procedure notes
- (7) Induction/follow-up sessions for Members and Officers
- (8) Executive inviting Scrutiny to look at certain issues
- (9) Scrutiny reviews to full Council
- (10) Importance of Forward Plan
- (11) Possible bi-monthly informal meetings between Chair, Vice-Chair and Portfolio Cabinet Member(s).

4.2 Questions were also designed to ensure a balance of quantitative and qualitative data providing both statistical measures of improvement together with contextual data to provide suggestions and ideas for further improvement actions.

## **5.0 EVALUATION RESULTS**

5.1 The survey sample included Council Members (48) Chief / Senior Officers, and Service Managers/Scrutiny Link Officers (79) a total of 127 persons surveyed. Of the 127, a total of 44 responses were received giving a response rate of 34% an improvement of 16% on last year's return.

5.2 Of those 44 respondents, 7 (16%) were Scrutiny Members, 10 (23%) were other Members, 24 (54%) were Officers and 3 (7%) not indicated. Appendix 2 also provides a breakdown of responses into the three respondent groups of (i) Scrutiny Member (ii) Other Member and (iii) Officer.

5.3 Appendices 1 and 2 attached provide all the survey response data received. It should be noted that for many of the measures almost 50% of respondents chose the "don't know" option.

5.4 The following measures improved significantly between 2012/13 and 2013/14:

- Overall experience of scrutiny under the new arrangements
- Resources and support for scrutiny
- Improved procedure rules and informal protocols

5.5 The following measures marginally improved:

- Effective overview and scrutiny committee structure
- Scrutiny link officers
- Scoping of scrutiny reviews

5.6 The following measures saw a dip in performance for 2013/14:

- Effective scrutiny committee pre-agenda meetings
- Learning sessions for members and officers
- Awareness of Forward Plan and key decisions
- Awareness of scrutiny project groups
- Scrutiny and executive effective working relationship
- Informal meetings between Scrutiny Chairs, Vice Chairs and Executive Members

## **6.0 PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES**

6.1 When benchmarking against the 2012/13 evaluation 50% of the measures showed some improvement and 50% declined in performance.

6.2 Concerns have been raised by overview and scrutiny members about the large number of respondents choosing the “don’t know” option for the questions. This could indicate a lack of awareness and engagement in overview and scrutiny activities. Engagement levels in some of meetings and processes including Scrutiny Link Officers and pre-agenda meetings would support this assertion.

6.3 Due to the issues raised at 6.1 and 6.2 the results of the 2013/14 evaluation are considered to be inconclusive.

6.4 Since the 2011 external review and subsequent annual evaluations there have been a number of key changes influencing the overview and scrutiny functions including:

- New functions for example Health and Wellbeing responsibilities and the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority
- Re-focused Corporate Planning and associated resource alignment

- Major restructures impacting on Scrutiny including the Corporate Management Team, Governance Service and Policy Service.

## **7.0 PROPOSED EXTENDED REVIEW**

- 7.1 Due to the issues raised in section 6, particularly that the 2013/14 evaluation is considered to be inconclusive, it is felt that the time is right to revisit the findings of the 2011 external review and subsequent recommendations taken forward to assess whether or not these arrangements are still appropriate and working as envisaged.
- 7.2 The proposed scope of the review is:
- Overview and scrutiny structure
  - Policies, procedures and documents
  - Overview and scrutiny work programme
  - Officer resource
  - Awareness and engagement
- 7.3 The review should be completed by February 2015 to enable any changes to be implemented early in the 2015/16 financial year.
- 7.4 A draft Project Brief is attached at Appendix 3.

## **8.0 RISK CONSIDERATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no risk implications arising from the contents of this report. Risk Assessment will form a key part of the 2014/15 review.

## **9.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 9.1 Overview and Scrutiny had previously been recognised as under-resourced. The 2013/14 Governance restructure increased the level of employee resource significantly by introducing the Scrutiny and Committee Co-ordinator roles. Due to current and future financial challenges additional financial and employee resources are unlikely to be available. Review recommendations must be achievable via existing resource allocations.

## **10.0 EQUALITIES CONSIDERATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no equalities implications arising from the contents of this report. The appropriate level of equality analysis will take place for any proposed changes emerging from the review.

## **11.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 11.1 That an extended internal review of overview and scrutiny arrangements takes place during 2014/15.
- 11.2 That the current overview and scrutiny committees and arrangements be retained until the 2014/15 review is completed.

## **12.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 12.1 To ensure continuous improvement and the effective and efficient delivery of the Council's overview and scrutiny function.

DONNA REDDISH  
POLICY MANAGER

ANITA CUNNINGHAM  
POLICY AND SCRUTINY OFFICER

Further information on this matter can be obtained from Anita Cunningham  
(Tel. 01246 345273).