

Overview and Scrutiny

Scoping Paper

Review - Raising the Profile and Awareness of Scrutiny and Increasing its Influence and Impact

For Discussion

Introduction

Following a discussion (led by the Vice Chair who has recently attended training on effective scrutiny) at the May Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it was felt that a good, short and appropriate review would be to consider ways in which the committee could raise its own profile. This would include both its internal and external presence, and those steps needed to increase the influence and impact of its workplan.

This paper sets out the proposed scope for the review, on which the Committee's views are sought.

1. Exerting influence and building positive relationships

Why?

In order to work effectively, it is crucial that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has positive working relationships with not only the other elements of the Council's governance arrangements (such as the Cabinet and senior management) but also with other parties who may become involved in the committee's work. This ranges from third parties, contractors and service providers subject to a review, to witnesses and the public who may provide advice to inform the work of scrutiny.

How?

Central to building trust and exerting influence are measures which ensure that committee is seen to work in a business-like manner - able to evidence and document the way in which it approaches its work and makes recommendations.

The committee may wish to explore the ways in which internal relationships can work to strengthen the role and influence of the committee, and measures to ensure transparency and openness in the way the committee conducts its business.

2. Making a difference...Demonstrating Impact

Why?

The demonstration of impact flows from the exerting of influence noted above. Effective scrutiny, whilst not a decision-making body itself, can still produce useful outcomes through positive relationships and engagement, effective reviews and SMART recommendations.

How?

The committee may wish to consider what measures it would be useful to have in order to demonstrate impact, and how to raise the profile of these outcomes through the committee's annual report and other means of communication.

3. Raising the Profile

Why?

Scrutiny is at the heart of modern, local accountability. Apart from elections, scrutiny is the principal democratic means of accountability. It ensures that all councillors can take part in the development of council policy, debate and evaluate that policy and other ideas for improvement in an independent and objective manner.

How?

The committee may wish to explore the different channels available for updating internal and external stakeholders on the work of the committee. This could include the local paper, council publications, social media, the council's website and the committee's own annual report.

4. Engaging the public

Why?

Scrutiny is the key means of engaging the public and partners in both the council's priorities, and on matters of local concern. It is crucial that the committee harnesses the concerns and thoughts of residents when setting its priorities and workplan.

How?

The committee may wish to consider ways in which the public can be encouraged to submit suggestions for future scrutiny reviews and be kept up-to-date with the work of the committee.

Next Steps

These are all areas which can form the basis for further discussion by a task group of committee members, or further research / information-gathering from officers in order to further future consideration.

O+S is asked to discuss and endorse or amend the scope of this review, and decide how members would like to approach the review.

The means by which the committee wishes to conduct the review will impact upon the timescale for draft recommendations to be put back to the committee, but we would hope that any review can be conducted within **2 months**, or longer if the committee considers it necessary.

Nicholas Clayton, Policy & Performance Officer