



TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on Monday, 18 June 2018 at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber - Civic Offices.

The agenda for the meeting is set out below.

RAY MORGAN
Chief Executive

NOTE: Filming Council Meetings

Please note the meeting will be filmed and will be broadcast live and subsequently as an archive on the Council's website (www.woking.gov.uk). The images and sound recording will also be used for training purposes within the Council. Generally the public seating areas are not filmed. However by entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed.

AGENDA

PART I - PRESS AND PUBLIC PRESENT

1 Minutes

To approve the minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 26 March and 21 May 2018 as published.

Part I - Press and Public Present

2 Urgent Business

To consider any business that the Chairman rules may be dealt with under Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

3 Declarations of Interest

To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary and other interests from Members in respect of any item to be considered at the meeting.

Performance Management

4 Performance and Financial Monitoring Information

To consider the current publication of the Performance & Financial Monitoring Information (Green Book).

Reporting person: Councillor I Johnson

Matters for Determination

5 Work Programme (Pages 5 - 24)

Reporting Person: Councillor I Johnson

Presentations

6 Network Rail

Representatives for Network Rail will be attending the Meeting to update the Council on their future plans for rail services in the Borough.

7 South Western Railway

Representatives for South Western Railway will be attending the meeting to discuss their future service aspirations.

Matters for Consideration

8 Parliamentary Review of Overview and Scrutiny Functions (Pages 25 - 50)

Reporting Person: Councillor Ian Johnson

9 Briefing Paper No. 1 - Submitting Scrutiny Review Requests (Pages 51 - 58)

Reporting Person: Frank Jeffrey

10 Sheets Heath Site Visit

Members are encouraged to attend the Site Visit to Sheets Heath on Saturday, 30 June 2018 at 11am. The visit will be led by Marcus Turley of the Surrey Heathland Project.

Members will be aware that, at its last meeting, the Committee was advised that a paper setting out a proposal to establish a formal programme for the maintenance of the Borough's heathlands would be submitted to the Committee later in the year. The proposal would look at the possibility of identifying funding through the annual business plan from 2019/20 onwards.

Task Group Updates

11 Economic Development Task Group Update (Pages 59 - 62)

Reporting Person: Councillor Ian Johnson

AGENDA ENDS

Date Published - 6 June 2018

For further information regarding this agenda and arrangements for the meeting, please contact Frank Jeffrey, Democratic Services Manager, Ext 3012, Email frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk



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WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL
Overview and Scrutiny
Work Programme

CIVIC OFFICES
GLOUCESTER SQUARE
WOKING GU21 6YL
01483 755855
www.woking.gov.uk

INTRODUCTION TO WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

This Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme is published with the purpose of assisting the Council in its overview and scrutiny role. The Work Programme is covers the following areas:

- Items for consideration at future meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- An extract from the latest version of the Council's Forward Plan.
- Any Scrutiny Review Topics proposed by Members of the Council for inclusion on the Work Programme.
- Any topics identified for pre-decision scrutiny.
- Details of the current Task Groups under the Committee's remit.

The Work Programme is designed to assist the Council with its overview and scrutiny role by providing Members with an indication of the current workload, subjects to be considered for review and items which the Executive expects to consider at its future meetings, so that matters can be raised beforehand and/or consultations undertaken with a Member of the Executive prior to the relevant meeting.

The Committee

Chairman: Councillor I Johnson

Vice-Chairman: Councillor D E Hughes

Councillor H J Addison

Councillor S Hussain

Councillor J Bond

Councillor R Mohammed

Councillor G G Chrystie

Councillor M I Raja

Councillor K Howard

Councillor C Rana

2018/19 Committee Dates

- 18 June 2018
- 16 July 2018
- 17 September 2018
- 26 November 2018
- 21 January 2019
- 25 February 2019
- 25 March 2019

Suggested Additions to the Work Programme

Decision to be Taken	Proposed by	Officer Comment
Review of Play Areas. To explore the provision of play areas in the Borough, including programme of refurbishment and equipment maintenance.	Chairman and Vice-Chairman	A review is scheduled for later this year to refresh the Council's Play Strategy – the outcome of which will influence future provision and investment. In light of this it is proposed that the Committee is invited to comment on the draft Strategy once completed, potentially early next year.
Review of Grounds Maintenance. To review the grounds maintenance programme, exploring the standard of sports provision such as football and cricket pitches to ensure the facilities are fit for purpose. Feedback to be sought from users of the facilities.	Chairman and Vice-Chairman	It is proposed that Officers discuss this proposal with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to clarify the extent of the review proposed before a commitment can be given for a future meeting of the Committee.
Health and Well-Being and the Role of Leisure Facilities. To explore options to build strong links between the health and well-being objectives of the Council and the Borough's leisure facilities.	Chairman and Vice-Chairman	Subject to further details of the proposal, Officers may be in a position to report on this topic later in the year.
Support Services for those Discharged from Hospital. To explore the different support services offered to those residents of Borough discharged from hospital.	Chairman and Vice-Chairman	There is significant amount of joint work being undertaken with partners within North West Surrey. It is suggested that the scope of the topic is discussed with Officers before a commitment can be given for a future meeting of the Committee.
Closure of Children's Centres. To consider the impact in the Borough of the County Council's proposals to close Children's Centres.	Chairman and Vice-Chairman	Further information on the current proposal of Surrey County Council will be needed before a commitment can be given for a future meeting of the Committee.
Update on Sheerwater Regeneration Scheme. The Committee to receive an update on the Sheerwater Regeneration Scheme.	Chairman and Vice-Chairman	Scheduled for July 2018. In the meantime, details of the Scheme can be found on the Council's website.

<p>Dementia Friendly Borough. To receive a presentation on the work done by Woking Borough Council to support and enable individuals, communities and businesses to become Dementia Friendly across the Borough.</p>	<p>Chairman and Vice-Chairman</p>	<p>Scheduled for September 2018, subject to Officer availability.</p>
<p>Update on Victoria Square Development. The Committee to receive an update on the Victoria Square Development.</p>	<p>Chairman and Vice-Chairman</p>	<p>Scheduled for November 2018.</p>

Activity Plan for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 16 July 2018			
Decision to be Taken	Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person
Performance Management			
Performance & Financial Monitoring Information – For the Committee to consider the current publication of the Performance & Financial Monitoring Information (Green Book)	None	None	Cllr Ian Johnson
Presentations			
Welfare Benefits and Universal Credit. Representatives for Surrey Welfare Rights will give a presentation on the implications of changes to welfare benefits and the introduction of Universal Credit. Officers from Woking Borough Council will outline the direct implications for the Council.	None	None	Frank Jeffrey
Matters for Scrutiny			
Overview of Complaints Received – Six Monthly Review. To consider the details of those complaints received since 1.1.18.	None	None	Joanne McIntosh
Matters for Determination			
Work Programme. For the Committee to receive the updated Work Programme.	None	None	Councillor Ian Johnson

Update on Sheerwater Regeneration Scheme. The Committee to receive an update on the Sheerwater Regeneration Scheme.	None	None	Peter Bryant
Briefing Paper No. 2 – Call-in and Call For Action. To receive a briefing paper on the powers of the Committee in respect of Call-in and Call For Action.	None	None	Frank Jeffrey
Affordable Housing Proposals.	None	None	Ray Morgan

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 17 September 2018

Decision to be Taken	Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person
Performance Management			
Performance & Financial Monitoring Information. For the Committee to consider the current publication of the Performance & Financial Monitoring Information (Green Book)	None	None	Cllr Ian Johnson
Presentations			
Dementia Friendly Borough. To receive a presentation on the work done by Woking Borough Council to support and enable individuals, communities and businesses to become Dementia Friendly across the Borough.	None	None	Jade Buckingham
Enterprise M3. Enterprise M3 is the Local Enterprise Partnership under which Woking falls and, following on from the work of the work of the Effective Scrutiny Task Group, representatives have been invite to attend the meeting of the Committee to present the Annual Report.	None	None	Frank Jeffrey
Matters for Scrutiny			
Update on Raynes Close. To receive an update on Raynes Close to ensure all the outstanding actions had been completed.	None	None	Frank Jeffrey

Matters for Determination			
Work Programme. For the Committee to receive the updated Work Programme.	None	None	Councillor Ian Johnson
Basingstoke Canal Proposals Update. To receive an update on the possibility of funding dredging work as part of the Council's ambitions for the Canal, together with options to undertake litter clearing of the Canal banks.	None	None	Ray Morgan
Scrutiny Briefing Paper No. 3 – The Scrutiny Toolkit. To receive a briefing paper setting out the Council's Scrutiny Toolkit.	None	None	Frank Jeffrey
Task Group Updates			
Housing Task Group Update. To receive an update on the work of the Housing Task Group under the remit of the Committee.	None	None	Frank Jeffrey
Finance Task Group Update. To receive an update on the work of the Finance Task Group under the remit of the Committee.	None	None	Cllr Ian Johnson

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 26 November 2018

Decision to be Taken	Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person
Performance Management			
Performance & Financial Monitoring Information. For the Committee to consider the current publication of the Performance & Financial Monitoring Information (Green Book)	None	None	Cllr I Johnson
Matters for Determination			
Work Programme. For the Committee to receive the updated Work Programme.	None	None	Frank Jeffrey
Countryside Estate. To receive a report exploring the options available to the Council to support the work undertaken to manage the Borough's countryside portfolio (arising from the Surrey Heathlands Project site meeting and subsequent discussions).	None	None	Ray Morgan
Update on Victoria Square Development. The Committee to receive an update on the Victoria Square Development.	None	None	Ray Morgan

Matters for Scrutiny

<p>Celebrate Woking 2018/19 Review and Forward Plan. For the Committee to be updated on the outcomes of the various events that have taken place within the Borough over the past year and to be informed of future plans for encouraging visitors into the area.</p>	None	None	Riette Thomas/ Chris Norrington
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Task Group Updates

<p>Economic Development Task Group Update. To receive an update on the work of the Economic Development Task Group under the remit of the Committee.</p>	None	None	Frank Jeffrey
<p>Finance Task Group Update. To receive an update on the work of the Finance Task Group under the remit of the Committee.</p>	None	None	Frank Jeffrey
<p>Housing Task Group Update. To receive an update on the work of the Housing Task Group under the remit of the Committee.</p>	None	None	Frank Jeffrey

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 21 January 2019

Decision to be Taken	Consultation	Background Documents	Contact Person
Performance Management			
Performance & Financial Monitoring Information. For the Committee to consider the current publication of the Performance & Financial Monitoring Information (Green Book)	None	None	Cllr I Johnson
Matters for Determination			
Work Programme. For the Committee to receive the updated Work Programme.	None	None	Frank Jeffrey
Matters for Scrutiny			
Overview of Complaints Received – Biannual Update. For the Committee to consider the report of Complaints received since July 2018.	None	None	Joanne McIntosh
Task Group Updates			
Economic Development Task Group Update. To receive an update on the work of the Economic Development Task Group under the remit of the Committee.	None	None	Frank Jeffrey

Latest Version of the Forward Plan

The Forward Plan gives an indication of the decision to be taken by the Executive. Published monthly, the Forward Plan has traditionally given an indication of the decisions to be taken over the following four months.

28 June 2018

Key Decision	Subject	Decision to be taken	Consultation (Undertaken prior to the meeting unless otherwise stated)	Background Documents	Contact Officer
No	Notice of Motion - Cllr A-M Barker - Tackling Plastics	To consider the Notice of Motion from Cllr A-M Barker referred to the Executive by Council on 5 April 2018.	Council.	None.	Deputy Chief Executive (Douglas J Spinks)
No	Economic Development Strategy Annual Report 2017-18	To report on the progress of the Economic Development Strategy during 2017-18.	Economic Regeneration Task Group, Portfolio Holder.	None.	Deputy Chief Executive (Douglas J Spinks)
Yes	Working Integrated Transport Package	To support a bid for further Enterprise M3 funding for sustainable transport.	Portfolio Holder.	None.	Deputy Chief Executive (Douglas J Spinks)
Yes	Treasury Management Annual Report 2017-18	To receive the Annual Treasury Management Report.	Portfolio Holder.	None.	Chief Finance Officer (Leigh Clarke)
No	Community Infrastructure Levy – Enforcement	To seek delegated authority for the Deputy Chief Executive to administer CIL enforcement in accordance with the requirements of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended).	Portfolio Holder.	None.	Deputy Chief Executive (Douglas J Spinks)

No	Risk Management and Business Continuity Annual Report	To receive the annual report on Risk Management and Business Continuity.	Portfolio Holder.	None.	Chief Executive (Ray Morgan)
No	Performance and Financial Monitoring Information	To consider the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information contained in the Green Book.	Portfolio Holder.	None.	Chief Finance Officer (Leigh Clarke)
Yes	Land Management - Byfleet	To consider the acquisition of land. (The press and public will be excluded from the meeting during consideration of this item in view of the nature of the proceedings that, if members of the press and public were present during this item, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A, to the Local Government Act 1972.)	Portfolio Holder.	None.	Chief Executive (Ray Morgan)

12 July 2018

Key Decision	Subject	Decision to be taken	Consultation (Undertaken prior to the meeting unless otherwise stated)	Background Documents	Contact Officer
No	Update of Financial Regulations	To update the Council's Financial Regulations.	Portfolio Holder.	None.	Chief Finance Officer (Leigh Clarke)
No	Update of Contract Standing Orders/Procurement Procedures	To update the Council's Contract Standing Orders.	Portfolio Holder.	None.	Head of Democratic and Legal Services (Peter Bryant)
No	Equalities Annual Report - 2018	To receive an annual report detailing progress on the equalities agenda.	Portfolio Holder, employees, a range of voluntary and community sector groups and organisations.	None.	Chief Executive (Ray Morgan)
No	Performance and Financial Monitoring Information	To consider the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information contained in the Green Book.	Portfolio Holder.	None.	Chief Finance Officer (Leigh Clarke)
No	Monitoring Reports - Projects	To provide quarterly reports on the progress of projects in the interests of financial prudence and corporate governance.	Portfolio Holder.	None.	Chief Executive (Ray Morgan)

<p>Yes</p>	<p>Land Management - Westfield Avenue</p>	<p>To consider the feasibility study. (The press and public will be excluded from the meeting during consideration of this item in view of the nature of the proceedings that, if members of the press and public were present during this item, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A, to the Local Government Act 1972.)</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder.</p>	<p>None.</p>	<p>Chief Executive (Ray Morgan)</p>
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13 September 2018

Key Decision	Subject	Decision to be taken	Consultation (Undertaken prior to the meeting unless otherwise stated)	Background Documents	Contact Officer
No	Performance and Financial Monitoring Information	To consider the Performance and Financial Monitoring Information contained in the Green Book.	Portfolio Holder.	None.	Chief Finance Officer (Leigh Clarke)
No	Contaminated Land Strategy Review Report and Future Funding	<p>To receive the Contaminated Land Strategy Review Report and the requirements for future funding of desk top studies and site investigations.</p> <p>(The press and public will be excluded from the meeting during consideration of this item in view of the nature of the proceedings that, if members of the press and public were present during this item, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A, to the Local Government Act 1972.)</p>	Portfolio Holder.	None.	Deputy Chief Executive (Douglas J Spinks)

Current Task Groups Responsible to the Committee

The table below provides a list of current Task Groups established by the Committee, including an indication of the resource requirements and the anticipated completion date. Updates on the progress of individual Task Groups are included elsewhere on the Committee's agenda.

Task Group	Topic	Membership	Resources	Date Established	Anticipated Completion Date
Economic Development Task Group	To identify and seek the implementation of measures to mitigate the impact of the economic downturn on the residents, community organisations and businesses in the Borough of Woking.	Cllrs Addison, Ali, Azad, Barker, Chrystie, Davis and Johnson.	Officer and Councillor time.	11.03.09	Ongoing
Standing Finance Task Group	To review Financial issues as and when identified by the Committee. Financial Performance of the Council Management and Administration of Accounts procurement Strategy, Pension fund, Financial Strategy.	Cllrs Ashall, Azad, Barker, Bond, Davis, Hughes, and Martin.	Officer and Councillor time.	25.05.06	Ongoing
Standing Housing Task Group	To review Housing issues as and when identified by the Committee, including Housing Strategy, Housing Business Plan, Housing Service Plans, Housing Revenue Account, Housing Conditions, Housing Needs, Private Sector Housing, Home Improvement Agency, Housing and Council Tax Benefits, and monitor/review progress of the PFI Scheme	Cllrs Addison, Aziz, Bridgeman, Hughes, Johnson, Kemp and Mohammad.	Officer and Councillor time.	25.05.06	Ongoing

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 18 JUNE 2018

PARLIAMENTARY REVIEW OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FUNCTIONS

Executive Summary

At its meeting on 26 March 2018, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a proposal to examine the outcome of a Parliamentary review of overview and scrutiny functions had been undertaken over the past year. The Members of the Committee supported the proposals and appointed a Task Group to undertake the work. This report summarises the findings of the Task Group and sets out the recommendations drawn up by the Members of the Task Group. Included in the report are Officer comments on the proposals.

The Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are now invited to consider the recommendations of the Effective Scrutiny Review Task Group and recommend accordingly to Council.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to consider the recommendations from the Effective Scrutiny Review Task Group and recommend accordingly to Council.

The item above will need to be dealt with by way of a recommendation to Council.

Background Papers: None.

Reporting Person: Frank Jeffrey, Democratic Services Manager
Email: frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3012

Contact Person: Frank Jeffrey, Democratic Services Manager
Email: frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3012

Date Published: 6 June 2018

Parliamentary Review of Overview and Scrutiny Functions

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In March 2018, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a proposal to examine the outcome of a Parliamentary review of overview and scrutiny functions had been undertaken over the past year. The extract from the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is set out below.

“The Members of the Committee were advised that a Parliamentary review of overview and scrutiny functions had been undertaken over the past year. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman had submitted a representation to the review as part of the Select Committee’s evidence gathering, a copy of which was attached to the report. The review had concluded at the end of 2017 and the Government had recently published its response to the recommendations.

The report before the Committee proposed that a cross party task group should be established to review the findings of the work and the Government’s response, with a view to determining whether any of the recommendations could be adopted for the benefit of Woking. It was anticipated that the Task Group would only need to meet once before reporting back to the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED

- That (i) a cross party task group (the ‘Effective Scrutiny Task Group’) consisting of five Councillors be established to review the findings of the Communities and Local Government Committee through its review of the effectiveness of the overview and scrutiny functions of local government;
- (ii) the membership of the Task Group to consist of Councillor I Johnson, Councillor K Davis, Councillor J Kingsbury, Councillor M I Raja and Councillor J Bond; and
- (iii) the Task Group to report its findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 18 June 2018.”

2.0 The Effective Scrutiny Task Group

- 2.1 The Members of the Effective Scrutiny Task Group met on Monday, 16 April 2018 to consider the recommendations from the Parliamentary Select Committee together with the responses by the Government.
- 2.2 The minutes of the Task Group are attached at Appendix 1. A number of recommendations were put forward by the Members of the Task Group for consideration by the Committee. These recommendations are set out below, together with an Officer comment.

3.0 Recommendations of the Effective Scrutiny Task Group

Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 3.1 The Members of the Task Group considered that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should not be appointed from the same political party and agreed to recommend accordingly.

RECOMMENDED

- That (i) the Constitution be amended to ensure that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview and**

Parliamentary Review of Overview and Scrutiny Functions

Scrutiny Committee are not appointed from the same Political Group;

3.2 Officer Comments

3.3 It is understood that this recommendation stems in part from the desire to avoid the Committee being dominated by one political party, in particular the majority party, and in part from the positive relationship between the Chairman and Vice-Chairman over the past two years.

3.4 Council should retain the freedom to appoint the appropriate persons to undertake the roles of Chairman and Vice-Chairman irrespective of their political group. It should be noted that the Council appointed Councillor Johnson and Councillor Hughes, both Members of the Liberal Democrat Group, as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the current Municipal Year. Had the Constitution been amended as proposed, it would not have been possible for Council to appoint both Councillor Johnson and Councillor Hughes as Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

3.5 In view of this, Officers would advise that the recommendation is not taken forward.

Voting Arrangements for the position of Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3.6 The Members of the Committee proposed that the election of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be undertaken by all Members of the Council with the exception of Members of the Executive. This would result in 22 Members taking part in the election, comprising nine Conservative Councillors, seven Liberal Democrat Councillors, three Labour Councillors and three Independent Councillors. The proposal would require a change to the Constitution.

RECOMMENDED

That (ii) the suggestion that the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be elected through a vote by all Members of the Council, with the exception of Executive Members, be explored further.

3.7 Officer Comments

3.8 The Chairman of the Committee should be elected by the Members of that Committee. Under the current arrangements, the Chairman is elected by the ten Members of the Committee itself, of whom non serve on the Executive. The Members of the Task Group were advised that the proposed change could result in the Council electing a Chairman for whom no Members of the Committee itself had voted.

3.9 In view of this, Officers would advise that the recommendation is not taken forward.

Enterprise M3

3.10 The Members of the Task Group noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had not to-date scrutinised the work of Enterprise M3. It was therefore suggested that a copy of the Local Enterprise Partnership's annual report should be brought to the Committee in future years, setting out the work undertaken and future aspirations of the LEP. It was also suggested that the Enterprise M3 LEP should be invited to make a presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RECOMMENDED

That (i) Enterprise M3 be requested to submit an annual report on its activities to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and

(ii) Enterprise M3 be invited to make a presentation to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3.11 Officer Comments

3.12 Enterprise M3 produce an annual report which will be brought to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Representatives from Enterprise M3 will be invited to attend the meeting to introduce the annual report.

Annual Budget for the Committee

3.13 The Members of the Task Group considered that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should have a budget of its own for the specific purpose of secure impartial advice. The budget level was not discussed though the importance of 'checks and balances' if the Committee was to be responsible for its own budget was emphasised.

RECOMMENDED

That an annual budget be established for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to secure impartial advice.

3.14 Officer Comments

3.15 In considering this recommendation it should be noted that the Council, when it first established the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2005, resolved that a budget of £20,000 should be established, by way of transfer from existing budget provision, to enable the Committee to fund public consultation, publicity and public involvement through the Task Groups. However, the budget was not called upon in subsequent years and the Council has adopted the approach that any expenditure anticipated by the Committee would be agreed by the Executive or Council. To-date, however, no such requests have been received.

3.16 The Council as a corporate identity employs officers to provide the necessary advice to the Council and its Committees, including the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The option already exists for the Council to obtain specialist advice in appropriate cases.

3.17 In view of this, Officers would advise that the recommendation is not taken forward.

4.0 Implications

Financial

4.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. However, it is noted that a proposal to establish a budget for the Committee has been made by the Effective Scrutiny Task Group. Such a proposal would need to be brought to Council once the amount proposed and the governance arrangements have been drawn up by the Committee. The financial implications will be considered at that stage.

Parliamentary Review of Overview and Scrutiny Functions

Human Resource/Training and Development

- 4.2 There are no human resource or training and development implications arising from this report.

Community Safety

- 4.3 There are no community safety implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

- 4.4 There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

Sustainability

- 4.5 There are no sustainability implications arising from this report

Equalities

- 4.6 There are no equalities implications arising from this report

Safeguarding

- 4.7 There are no safeguarding implications arising from this report

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 This report sets out the recommendations of the Effective Scrutiny Task Group. The Committee is invited to consider the recommendations and determine which are to be submitted to Council. Officer comments have been added in respect of each recommendation.

REPORT ENDS

Effective Scrutiny Task Group

Minutes of a Meeting held on Monday, 16 April 2018

Present: Councillor J Bond
Councillor K Davis
Councillor I Johnson
Councillor J Kingsbury (In the Chair)
Councillor M I Raja

1. Election of Chairman

Councillor Kingsbury moved and Councillor Raja seconded the election of Councillor Johnson as Chairman of the Task Group.

Councillor Davis moved and Councillor Johnson seconded the election of Councillor Kingsbury as Chairman of the Task Group.

The matter was put to a vote, with two Members in favour of Councillor Johnson and three Members in favour of Councillor Kingsbury. Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED

That Councillor Kingsbury be elected Chairman of the Task Group.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

Councillor Johnson moved and Councillor Raja seconded the appointment of Councillor Davis as Vice-Chairman of the Task Group.

RESOLVED

That Councillor Davis be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Task Group.

3. Apologies for Absence.

No apologies for absence had been received.

4. Remit of the Task Group

The Members of the Task Group received a report on the remit of the Task Group. The Task Group had been established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 26 March 2018. The purpose of the Task Group was to review the findings of the Communities and Local Government Committee through its review of the effectiveness of the overview and scrutiny functions of local government, published in December 2017. Furthermore, the Task Group was to take into consideration the Government's response to the recommendations from the Parliamentary Select Committee.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed that the Task Group would submit a report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 18 June 2018 on its considerations, setting out any recommendations to emerge from the work.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

5. Recommendations of the Select Committee and Response of the Government

The Members of the Task Group had before them a report which set out the key recommendations of the Select Committee published in December 2017 and the subsequent response by the Government, published in March 2018. *A copy of the report is set out in Appendix 1 to this document.*

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Chairman started the discussion by emphasising the importance of the position of Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and seeking to ensure that the Council appointed the 'best person for the job'. The past two years had seen significantly improved work programmes and scrutiny reviews by the Committee, largely as a result of the joint approach adopted by the Chairman (Councillor Davis in 2016/17 and Councillor Johnson in 2017/18) and the Vice-Chairman (Councillor Johnson in 2016/17 and Councillor Davis in 2017/18).

The Members of the Task Group considered whether a different approach could be adopted for the election of the Chairman, with the objective of ensuring that the 'best person for the job' was elected. It was noted that the appointments to Committees were considered initially by Selection Panel, based on the names proposed by each Political Group and the proportionality of the Council (the proportionality on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2017/18 was noted as 6:2:1:1). The Membership of each Committee was then determined by Council, before the Committees themselves elected their Chairman and appointed their Vice-Chairman. It was confirmed that Members of the Executive could not serve on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Task Group considered whether a secret ballot would improve the likelihood that the 'best person for the job' was elected, though it was noted that this would not prevent the Majority Party from electing the Chairman.

Recommendations of the Select Committee

The Members of the Task Group considered each of the recommendations of the Select Committee, and the responses by the Government.

<p><i>Recommendation 1: Proposed Revisions to Government Guidance on Scrutiny Committees</i></p>

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| <p>a) <i>That overview and scrutiny committees should report to an authority's Full Council meeting rather than to the executive, mirroring the relationship between Select Committees and Parliament.</i></p> |
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<p><i>Government Response:</i></p>

<p><i>The Government acknowledges that the current guidance was issued in 2006 and is happy to ensure it is updated. New guidance will be published later this year.</i></p>
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| <p>a) <i>The Government notes the evidence supplied to the Committee. Updated guidance will recommend that scrutiny committees report to the Full Council.</i></p> |
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The Members noted that the annual report prepared by the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was presented to Council in April each year, and was not considered by the Executive. The distinction between report to Council and making recommendations to the Executive was made. It was felt that the Select Committee had drawn up the recommendation in light of responses from those Authorities where the Overview and Scrutiny Committees reported direct to the Executive, not the Council.

Parliamentary Review of Overview and Scrutiny Functions

Recommendation 1: Proposed Revisions to Government Guidance on Scrutiny Committees

- b) *That scrutiny committees and the executive must be distinct and that executive councillors should not participate in scrutiny other than as witnesses, even if external partners are being scrutinised.*

Government Response:

- b) *The Government accepts the need to limit the executive's involvement in the scrutiny meetings. Updated guidance will make clear that members of the executive should not participate in scrutiny other than as witnesses.*

The Government's response to the recommendation was noted. The Members of the Task Group confirmed that Members of the Executive could not serve on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation 1: Proposed Revisions to Government Guidance on Scrutiny Committees

- c) *That councillors working on scrutiny committees should have access to financial and performance data held by an authority, and that this access should not be restricted for reasons of commercial sensitivity.*

Government Response:

- c) *Scrutiny committees already have powers to access documents and updated guidance will stress that councils should judge each request to access sensitive documents on its merits and not refuse as a matter of course. We will also have discussions with the sector to get a better understanding of the issues some scrutiny committees appear to have in accessing information and whether there are any steps the Government could take to alleviate this.*

The Members of the Task Group agreed with the response by the Government.

Recommendation 1: Proposed Revisions to Government Guidance on Scrutiny Committees

- d) *That scrutiny committees should be supported by officers that are able to operate with independence and offer impartial advice to committees. There should be a greater parity of esteem between scrutiny and the executive, and committees should have the same access to the expertise and time of senior officers and the chief executive as their cabinet counterparts.*

Government Response:

- d) *Updated guidance will make clear that support officers should be able to operate independently and provide impartial advice. It will also stress the need for councils to recognise and value the scrutiny function and the ways in which it can increase a council's effectiveness. However, the Government believes that each council should decide for itself how to resource scrutiny committees, including how much access to senior officers is appropriate to enable them to function effectively.*

The Members of the Task Group agreed with the response by the Government.

Recommendation 1: Proposed Revisions to Government Guidance on Scrutiny

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Committees

- e) *That members of the public and service users have a fundamental role in the scrutiny process and that their participation should be encouraged and facilitated by councils.*

Government Response:

- e) *The Government fully believes that local authorities should take account of the views of the public and service users in order to shape and improve their services. Scrutiny is a vital part of this, and scrutiny committees should actively encourage public participation. Updated guidance will make this clear.*

The Members felt that the Council should look to promote the involvement of Members of the Public by raising the awareness of the work of the Committee.

Recommendation 2: *That DCLG works with the Local Government Association and Centre for Public Scrutiny to identify willing councils to take part in a pilot scheme where the impact of elected chairs on scrutiny's effectiveness can be monitored and its merits considered (Paragraph 35).*

Government Response:

The Government will give further consideration to this recommendation.

The Government fully accepts that the chair of a scrutiny committee can have a great impact on its effectiveness. As the then Minister told the Select Committee at the oral evidence session on 6 November 2017, a chair needs to have the requisite skills, knowledge and acumen to take on the functions and achieve the outcomes that the scrutiny committee needs to achieve.

The Government also accepts that, in some instances, the election, rather than the appointment, of a chair might help ensure that the right individual is ultimately selected, but feels that this is a decision for every council to make for itself - we note that the Select Committee is "wary of proposing that [election] is imposed upon authorities by Government".

A local authority is already free to elect a chair if it wishes, and the updated guidance will recommend that every council bears this in mind when deciding on a method for selecting a chair.

The Government is happy to explore with the sector how best to establish the impact of elected chairs on scrutiny committees' effectiveness, but is not yet convinced that running pilot schemes is the best way to achieve this. The Government will therefore discuss this recommendation with the sector, including the Local Government Association and Centre for Public Scrutiny, and write to the Select Committee on this matter when we publish updated guidance.

The Members discussed further the process for electing the Chairman of the Committee and Councillor Raja considered that the Chairman should be selected from one of the opposition groups. However, the Members felt that a Chairman from the majority Group did not necessarily mean that the individual would not go against the views of their Group (and therefore potentially the Executive). It was also recognised how well the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had performed over the past two years, and how it was more important to consider the 'best person for the job' rather than consider which Political Group should lead the Committee.

The Members agreed that the Council should not put itself forward for the proposed pilot. However, they did feel that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee should not be appointed from the same Political Group. Furthermore, the Members felt that a proposal put forward by Councillor Bond – that the Chairman of the Committee should be appointed by a

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vote by all Members of the Council with the exception of the Executive Members – should be explored further. It was noted that the Committee currently appointed its own Chairman, and that no Members of the Executive were involved in the process. It was further noted that allowing all Members of the Council to vote on the election of the Committee's Chairman (with the exception of Executive Members) could leave the Committee with a Chairman which the Members of the Committee themselves had not supported.

RECOMMENDED

- That (i) **the Constitution be amended to ensure that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are not appointed from the same Political Group; and**
- (ii) **the suggestion that the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be elected through a vote by all Members of the Council, with the exception of Executive Members, be explored further.**

Recommendation 3: *Councils should be required to publish a summary of resources allocated to scrutiny using expenditure on executive support as a comparator (Paragraph 62)*

Government Response:

The Government does not accept this recommendation.

Many councils do not have dedicated scrutiny support staff - officers work on issues and engage with committees as part of the flow of business - so this would make quantifying the support that scrutiny committees receive very difficult. In the Government's view, the quality of the support is the more important issue.

The Government firmly believes that each individual authority is best-placed to decide for itself how to support scrutiny most effectively.

The Members of the Task Group agreed with the response by the Government.

Recommendation 4: *That the Government extend the requirement of a Statutory Scrutiny Officer to all councils and specify that the post-holder should have a seniority and profile of equivalence to the council's corporate management team. To give greater prominence to the role, Statutory Scrutiny Officers should also be required to make regular reports to Full Council on the state of scrutiny, explicitly identifying any areas of weakness that require improvement and the work carried out by the Statutory Scrutiny Officer to rectify them (Paragraph 65).*

Government Response:

The Government does not accept this recommendation.

As the then Minister outlined during the oral evidence he gave to the Select Committee, decisions about the allocation of resources for the scrutiny function are best made at a local level. Each council is best-placed to know which arrangements will suit its own individual circumstances. It is not a case of one size fits all.

The key requirement for effective scrutiny is that the culture of the council is right. Where councils recognise the benefits effective scrutiny can bring, and put in place suitable arrangements, it is working well. Local authorities with a strong culture of scrutiny may invite regular reports to full council on the state of scrutiny in the council and this idea will be reflected in the updated guidance.

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The Members of the Task Group agreed with the response by the Government. It was noted that the Democratic Services Team provided support for the Committee, with a member of the Team taking responsibility.

Recommendation 5: *The Department to put monitoring systems in place and consider whether the support to committees needs to be reviewed and refreshed. We invite the Department to write to us in a year's time detailing its assessment of the value for money of its investment in the Local Government Association and on the wider effectiveness of local authority scrutiny committees (Paragraph 76).*

Government Response:

The Government does not accept this recommendation. Local authorities are independent bodies and it is for them to ensure that their scrutiny arrangements are effective.

The Government firmly believes that every council should be able to access the training it needs to carry out its functions effectively, and recognises that Government itself has a role to play in making this happen. That is why we provide funding to the Local Government Association for sector-led improvement work. It should be noted that this funding is to support local authorities on a wide range of improvement work. It is not purely to assist with overview and scrutiny.

The funding is determined annually and for 2017/18 is £21 million. The package of work that is funded from the grant is set out in a jointly agreed Memorandum of Understanding between the Department and the Local Government Association, which is refreshed annually to ensure that it remains relevant to the sector's needs.

The Government is, of course, very keen to ensure that this funding provides value for money and that local authorities feel that the training on offer serves their needs. To this end, the Department has quarterly performance monitoring and review meetings with the Local Government Association, which are chaired by the Director-General for Local Government and Public Services.

The Government notes that not all the councillors who provided evidence to the Select Committee felt that the scrutiny training provided was as effective as they would have liked, and that the Local Government Association wrote to the Committee on 20 December 2017 to provide more information on the feedback it received on its support work.

The Government will ensure that the 2018/19 Memorandum of Understanding with the Local Government Association clearly sets out our expectation that they remain responsive to feedback they receive to ensure all training, including scrutiny training, remains relevant and effective.

The recommendation was not relevant to the Borough Council.

Recommendation 6: *Scrutiny committees must be able to monitor and scrutinise the services provided to residents. This includes services provided by public bodies and those provided by commercial organisations. Committees should be able to access information and require attendance at meetings from service providers and we call on DCLG to take steps to ensure this happens (Paragraph 90).*

Government Response:

Updated guidance will remind councils of the requirements set out in regulations that allow scrutiny members to access exempt or confidential documents in certain circumstances. As mentioned in response to the Select Committee's recommendation on guidance, the Department will also have discussions with the sector to get a better

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understanding of the issues some scrutiny committees appear to have in accessing information and whether there are any steps the Government could take to alleviate this.

In terms of service providers' attendance at meetings, when councils are tendering contracts with external bodies they should carefully consider including requirements to ensure they are as open and transparent as appropriate. Ultimately, however, it is up to each council to decide how best to hold to account those who run its services.

It was agreed that the Council could not take on the additional powers proposed by the Select Committee. The Council would continue to invite representatives on outside Organisations to attend meetings of the Committee in response to requests for reviews of their services. This could include Elected Members from neighbouring Authorities if necessary.

Recommendation 7: *The Government to make clear how LEPs are to have democratic, and publicly visible, oversight. We recommend that upper tier councils, and combined authorities where appropriate, should be able to monitor the performance and effectiveness of LEPs through their scrutiny committees. In line with other public bodies, scrutiny committees should be able to require LEPs to provide information and attend committee meetings as required (Paragraph 96).*

Government Response:

The Government agrees on the importance of clear and transparent oversight of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). The Industrial Strategy made clear the continuing important role of LEPs in delivering local economic growth.

The MHCLG Non-Executive Director Review (published in October 2017), looked at a range of governance issues for LEPs. The Review made a series of recommendations that we have accepted in full and are now implementing. As part of this we have published guidance for LEPs on a range of issues including publication of agenda and papers for LEP Board meetings. This will make the proceedings of LEPs more transparent for local people.

The National Assurance Framework for LEPs states that democratic accountability for the decisions made by the LEP is provided through local authority leader membership of LEP Boards. In places where not all local authorities are represented directly on the LEP board it is important that their representatives have been given a mandate through arrangements which enable collective engagement with all local authority leaders. Many LEPs already go much further in allowing democratic scrutiny of their decision making.

The MHCLG Non-Executive Director Review into LEP governance and transparency explored the extent to which scrutiny was embedded into LEP decision making. The review acknowledged that each LEP had their own arrangements to reflect: legal structure, the complexity and needs of the locality and local requirements to ensure value for money; engagement; and democratic accountability. The Review concluded that it was not appropriate to be prescriptive on the specific arrangements that all LEPs needed to adopt due to the variation in LEP operating models.

The Government committed in the Industrial Strategy White Paper to reviewing the roles and responsibilities of LEPs and to bringing forward reforms to leadership, governance, accountability, financial reporting and geographical boundaries. Working with LEPs, the Government committed to set out a more clearly defined set of activities and objectives in early 2018. MHCLG will write to the Select Committee following the conclusion of this Ministerial review into LEPs to provide an update.

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Whilst it was acknowledged that Woking Borough Council was neither an upper tier council nor a combined authority, it was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had not to-date scrutinised the work of Enterprise M3 and it was suggested that a copy of the LEP's annual report should be brought to the Committee in future years, setting out the work undertaken and future aspirations of the LEP. It was also suggested that the Enterprise M3 LEP should be invited to make a presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RECOMMENDED

That (i) Enterprise M3 be requested to submit an annual report on its activities to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and

(ii) Enterprise M3 be invited to make a presentation to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

***Recommendation 8:** We are concerned that effective scrutiny of the Metro Mayors will be hindered by under-resourcing, and call on the Government to commit more funding for this purpose. When agreeing further devolution deals and creating executive mayors, the Government must make clear that scrutiny is a fundamental part of any deal and that it must be adequately resourced and supported (Paragraph 104).*

Government Response:

The Government accepts this recommendation.

At the Budget it was announced that the government will make available to mayoral combined authorities with elected mayors a £12 million fund for 2018-19 and 2019-20, to boost the new mayors' capacity and resources. Combined Authorities could use some of this resource to ensure that scrutiny and accountability arrangements within the CAs are effectively resourced and supported.

Further to this, the recent Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017, developed with assistance from the Centre for Public Scrutiny and the National Audit Office, provides for the rules of operation for local overview and scrutiny and audit committees to robustly hold combined authorities and mayors to account. The order ensures that there are strong scrutiny arrangements in place consistently across every combined authority area and sets out clear requirements, strengthened appropriately to match the new powers and budgets being devolved, for the arrangement of overview and scrutiny and audit committees in all combined authorities.

Combined authorities are subject to existing relevant legislation applying to local authorities, including the strong finance and audit requirements around ensuring value for money and sustainability. Local democratic accountability, including through the scrutiny of directly-elected mayors, is a crucial and fundamental aspect of devolution.

The recommendation was not relevant to the Borough Council.

6. Any Other Business

Attendance by Portfolio Holders

The Members noted that attendance by Portfolio Holders at meetings of the Committee had significantly improved over the past two years. It was hoped that attendance levels would continue.

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Participation by Members of the Committee

Councillor Davis tabled a report which set out all the items of business undertaken by the Committee over the past five years and allocated them against the following headings:

Topics Raised 2013 to 2018	
○ Topics Raised by the Chairman or Vice-Chairman	39 topics.
○ Topics Raised by Members of the Committee other than the Chairman or Vice-Chairman	No topics*
○ Topics Raised by Members not serving on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Others	2 topics.
○ Topics Raised by Officers (including standing items)	18 topics.

**It was noted that earlier in the year Councillor Barker had identified the Rail service for review. This was to be considered at the next meeting of the Committee (2018/19 Municipal Year)..*

The report clearly demonstrated that most if not all items considered had been proposed either by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman (66%) or by Officers (30%). Councillor Davis confirmed that no items had been proposed by Members of the Committee itself.

The Members of the Task Group therefore emphasised the importance of appointing proactive Councillors to the Committee who would participate fully in the work undertaken and propose topics for review.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Budget for Impartial Advice

The Members of the Task Group felt that there could be an occasion where the Committee wished to receive impartial advice, and therefore proposed that the Council should identify a budget for the Committee.

Councillor Davis emphasised the need for ‘checks and balances’ if the Committee was to be responsible for its own budget.

RECOMMENDED

That an annual budget be established for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to secure impartial advice.

Training

The importance of training for the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was discussed and it was agreed that opportunities for training should be identified, including the possibility of arranging a training event on the evening of the first meeting of the Committee following its appointment by the Council. Part of the training would seek to address the perception Members had of the Committee with a view to raising its profile and the participation of Councillors. Councillor Bond added that the training should include instructions for Members on how to propose topics for scrutiny.

Public awareness was further considered, and it was agreed further work was needed to promote the work of the Committee to Members of Public.

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Topics for Scrutiny

Councillor Bond advised that he was keen that the work of the Thamesway Group of Companies and the Victoria Square project were scrutinised. It was noted that, whilst a scrutiny topic selection form could be submitted, Councillors Bond would need to clearly identify what aspects he wished to scrutinise. Furthermore, the Members advised that Councillors could attend the Board Meetings of the Thamesway Group of meetings subject to the completion of a Non-Disclosure Agreement and that an annual presentation was made to which all Councillors were invited. Furthermore, the accounts and business plans of the Thamesway Group were reviewed by the Council each year. In regard to Victoria Square, it was noted that a cross-party group of Councillors had been appointed to maintain oversight of the project.

The meeting started at 5.00pm
and concluded at 7.15pm

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Appendix 1 (to the minutes of the meeting of the Task Group)

EFFECTIVE SCRUTINY TASK GROUP – 16 APRIL 2018

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE AND THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE

SECTION 1 - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE

<p>The role of scrutiny</p> <p>1. <i>We therefore recommend that the guidance issued to councils by DCLG on overview and scrutiny committees is revised and reissued to take account of scrutiny's evolving role. (Paragraph 12)</i></p> <p>Proposed revisions to Government guidance on scrutiny committees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ That overview and scrutiny committees should report to an authority's Full Council meeting rather than to the executive, mirroring the relationship between Select Committees and Parliament.○ That scrutiny committees and the executive must be distinct and that executive councillors should not participate in scrutiny other than as witnesses, even if external partners are being scrutinised.○ That councillors working on scrutiny committees should have access to financial and performance data held by an authority, and that this access should not be restricted for reasons of commercial sensitivity.○ That scrutiny committees should be supported by officers that are able to operate with independence and offer impartial advice to committees. There should be a greater parity of esteem between scrutiny and the executive, and committees should have the same access to the expertise and time of senior officers and the chief executive as their cabinet counterparts.○ That members of the public and service users have a fundamental role in the scrutiny process and that their participation should be encouraged and facilitated by councils. <p>2. <i>We call on the Local Government Association to consider how it can best provide a mechanism for the sharing of innovation and best practice across the scrutiny sector to enable committees to learn from one another. We recognise that how scrutiny committees operate is a matter of local discretion, but urge local authorities to take note of the findings of this report and consider their approach. (Paragraph 13)</i></p>
<p>Party politics and organisational culture</p> <p>1. However, all responsible council leaderships should recognise the potential added value that scrutiny can bring, and heed the lessons of high profile failures of scrutiny such as those in Mid Staffordshire and Rotherham. (Paragraph 19)</p> <p>2. <i>To reflect scrutiny's independent voice and role as a voice for the community, we believe that scrutiny committees should report to Full Council rather than the executive and call on the</i></p>

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Government to make this clear in revised and reissued guidance. When scrutiny committees publish formal recommendations and conclusions, these should be considered by a meeting of the Full Council, with the executive response reported to a subsequent Full Council within two months. (Paragraph 23)

3. We believe that executive members should attend meetings of scrutiny committees only when invited to do so as witnesses and to answer questions from the committee. Any greater involvement by the executive, especially sitting at the committee table with the committee, risks unnecessary politicisation of meetings and can reduce the effectiveness of scrutiny by diminishing the role of scrutiny members. *We therefore recommend that DCLG strengthens the guidance to councils to promote political impartiality and preserve the distinction between scrutiny and the executive. (Paragraph 25)*
4. It is vital that the role of scrutiny chair is respected and viewed by all as being a key part of the decision-making process, rather than as a form of political patronage. (Paragraph 27)
5. We believe that there are many effective and impartial scrutiny chairs working across the country, but we are concerned that how chairs are appointed has the potential to contribute to lessening the independence of scrutiny committees and weakening the legitimacy of the scrutiny process. Even if impropriety does not occur, we believe that an insufficient distance between executive and scrutiny can create a perception of impropriety. (Paragraph 30)
6. We believe that there is great merit in exploring ways of enhancing the independence and legitimacy of scrutiny chairs such as a secret ballot of non-executive councillors. However, we are wary of proposing that it be imposed upon authorities by government.

We therefore recommend that DCLG works with the LGA and CfPS to identify willing councils to take part in a pilot scheme where the impact of elected chairs on scrutiny's effectiveness can be monitored and its merits considered. (Paragraph 35)

Accessing information

1. Scrutiny committees that are seeking information should never need to be 'determined' to view information held by its own authority, and there is no justification for a committee having to resort to using Freedom of Information powers to access the information that it needs, especially from its own organisation. There are too many examples of councils being uncooperative and obstructive. (Paragraph 37)
2. Councils should be reminded that there should always be an assumption of transparency wherever possible, and that councillors scrutinising services need access to all financial and performance information held by the authority. (Paragraph 41)
3. We do not believe that there should be any restrictions on scrutiny members' access to information based on commercial sensitivity issues. Limiting rights of access to items already under consideration for scrutiny limits committees' ability to identify issues that might warrant further investigation in future, and reinforces scrutiny's subservience to the executive. *Current legislation effectively requires scrutiny councillors to establish that they have a 'need to know' in order to access confidential or exempt information, with many councils interpreting this as not automatically including scrutiny committees. We believe that scrutiny committees should be seen as having an automatic need to know, and that the Government should make this clear through revised guidance. (Paragraph 42)*
4. *We note that few committees make regular use of external experts and call on councils to seek*

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to engage local academics, and encourage universities to play a greater role in local scrutiny. (Paragraph 45)

5. We commend such examples of committees engaging with service users when forming their understanding of a given subject, and encourage scrutiny committees across the country to consider how the information they receive from officers can be complemented and contrasted by the views and experiences of service users. (Paragraph 47)

Resources

1. We acknowledge that scrutiny resources have diminished in light of wider local authority reductions. However, it is imperative that scrutiny committees have access to independent and impartial policy advice that is as free from executive influence as possible. We are concerned that in too many councils, supporting the executive is the over-riding priority, with little regard for the scrutiny function. This is despite the fact that at a time of limited resources, scrutiny's role is more important than ever. (Paragraph 61)

1. *We therefore call on the Government to place a strong priority in revised and reissued guidance to local authorities that scrutiny committees must be supported by officers that can operate with independence and provide impartial advice to scrutiny councillors. There should be a greater parity of esteem between scrutiny and the executive, and committees should have the same access to the expertise and time of senior officers and the chief executive as their cabinet counterparts. Councils should be required to publish a summary of resources allocated to scrutiny, using expenditure on executive support as a comparator. We also call on councils to consider carefully their resourcing of scrutiny committees and to satisfy themselves that they are sufficiently supported by people with the right skills and experience. (Paragraph 62)*

2. *We recommend that the Government extend the requirement of a Statutory Scrutiny Officer to all councils and specify that the post-holder should have a seniority and profile of equivalence to the council's corporate management team. To give greater prominence to the role, Statutory Scrutiny Officers should also be required to make regular reports to Full Council on the state of scrutiny, explicitly identifying any areas of weakness that require improvement and the work carried out by the Statutory Scrutiny Officer to rectify them. (Paragraph 65)*

Member training and skills

1. It is incumbent upon councils to ensure that scrutiny members have enough prior subject knowledge to prevent meetings becoming information exchanges at the expense of thorough scrutiny. Listening and questioning skills are essential, as well as the capacity to constructively critique the executive rather than following party lines. *In the absence of DCLG monitoring, we are not satisfied that the training provided by the LGA and its partners always meets the needs of scrutiny councillors, and call on the Department to put monitoring systems in place and consider whether the support to committees needs to be reviewed and refreshed. We invite the Department to write to us in a year's time detailing its assessment of the value for money of its investment in the LGA and on the wider effectiveness of local authority scrutiny committees. (Paragraph 76)*

The role of the public

1. *The Government should promote the role of the public in scrutiny in revised and reissued guidance to authorities, and encourage council leaderships to allocate sufficient resources to enable it to happen. Councils should also take note of the issues discussed elsewhere in this report regarding raising the profile and prominence of the scrutiny process, and in so doing encourage more members of the public to participate in local scrutiny. Consideration also need to be given to the role of digital engagement, and we believe that local authorities should commit time and resources to effective digital engagement strategies. The LGA should also consider how it can best share examples of best practise of digital engagement to the wider sector. (Paragraph 82)*

Scrutinising public services provided by external bodies

1. *Scrutiny committees must be able to monitor and scrutinise the services provided to residents. This includes services provided by public bodies and those provided by commercial organisations. Committees should be able to access information and require attendance at meetings from service providers and we call on DCLG to take steps to ensure this happens. We support the CfPS proposal that committees must be able to 'follow the council pound' and have the power to oversee all taxpayer-funded services. (Paragraph 90)*
2. *In light of our concerns regarding public oversight of LEPs, we call on the Government to make clear how these organisations are to have democratic, and publicly visible, oversight. We recommend that upper tier councils, and combined authorities where appropriate, should be able to monitor the performance and effectiveness of LEPs through their scrutiny committees. In line with other public bodies, scrutiny committees should be able to require LEPs to provide information and attend committee meetings as required. (Paragraph 96)*

Scrutiny in combined authorities

1. *We are concerned that effective scrutiny of the Metro Mayors will be hindered by under-resourcing, and call on the Government to commit more funding for this purpose. When agreeing further devolution deals and creating executive mayors, the Government must make clear that scrutiny is a fundamental part of any deal and that it must be adequately resourced and supported. (Paragraph 104)*

SECTION 2 – GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE

Introduction

In September 2017, the Communities and Local Government Select Committee relaunched the inquiry into the effectiveness of local authority overview and scrutiny committees that had been started by its predecessor earlier that year. The Select Committee published its report on 15 December 2017:
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcomloc/369/36902.htm>.

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The Government will be looking at further ways to extend and improve transparency and is grateful both to the Committee for its consideration of the effectiveness of overview and scrutiny committees and to all those organisations and individuals who provided oral and written evidence.

Scrutiny can play a vital role in ensuring local accountability on a wide range of local issues. It is one of the key checks and balances in the system and the Government is committed to ensuring councils are aware of its importance, understand the benefits effective scrutiny can bring and have access to best practice to inform their thinking.

The Government firmly believes that every council is best-placed to decide which scrutiny arrangements suit its individual circumstances, and so is committed to ensuring that they have the flexibility they need to put those arrangements in place.

The Government is pleased the Select Committee acknowledges overview and scrutiny is functioning effectively in many local authorities and that committees are playing a key role in helping executives develop and review policy. The Government accepts, however, that in some councils scrutiny is not functioning as well as might be expected.

The Select Committee has made a number of recommendations, most, but not all, of which are for the Government to consider. The response in the following pages addresses only those recommendations aimed at the Government.

Recommendation 1: Proposed revisions to Government guidance on scrutiny committees (Page 7)

- a) That overview and scrutiny committees should report to an authority's Full Council meeting rather than to the executive, mirroring the relationship between Select Committees and Parliament.
- b) That scrutiny committees and the executive must be distinct and that executive councillors should not participate in scrutiny other than as witnesses, even if external partners are being scrutinised.
- c) That councillors working on scrutiny committees should have access to financial and performance data held by an authority, and that this access should not be restricted for reasons of commercial sensitivity.
- d) That scrutiny committees should be supported by officers that are able to operate with independence and offer impartial advice to committees. There should be a greater parity of esteem between scrutiny and the executive, and committees should have the same access to the expertise and time of senior officers and the chief executive as their cabinet counterparts.
- e) That members of the public and service users have a fundamental role in the scrutiny process and that their participation should be encouraged and facilitated by councils.

Government Response:

The Government acknowledges that the current guidance was issued in 2006 and is happy to ensure it is updated. New guidance will be published later this year.

- a) The Government notes the evidence supplied to the Committee. Updated guidance will recommend that scrutiny committees report to the Full Council.
- b) The Government accepts the need to limit the executive's involvement in the scrutiny meetings. Updated guidance will make clear that members of the executive should not participate in scrutiny other than as witnesses.

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- c) Scrutiny committees already have powers to access documents and updated guidance will stress that councils should judge each request to access sensitive documents on its merits and not refuse as a matter of course. We will also have discussions with the sector to get a better understanding of the issues some scrutiny committees appear to have in accessing information and whether there are any steps the Government could take to alleviate this.
- d) Updated guidance will make clear that support officers should be able to operate independently and provide impartial advice. It will also stress the need for councils to recognise and value the scrutiny function and the ways in which it can increase a council's effectiveness. However, the Government believes that each council should decide for itself how to resource scrutiny committees, including how much access to senior officers is appropriate to enable them to function effectively.
- e) The Government fully believes that local authorities should take account of the views of the public and service users in order to shape and improve their services. Scrutiny is a vital part of this, and scrutiny committees should actively encourage public participation. Updated guidance will make this clear.

Recommendation 2: That DCLG works with the Local Government Association and Centre for Public Scrutiny to identify willing councils to take part in a pilot scheme where the impact of elected chairs on scrutiny's effectiveness can be monitored and its merits considered (Paragraph 35).

Government Response:

The Government will give further consideration to this recommendation.

The Government fully accepts that the chair of a scrutiny committee can have a great impact on its effectiveness. As the then Minister told the Select Committee at the oral evidence session on 6 November 2017, a chair needs to have the requisite skills, knowledge and acumen to take on the functions and achieve the outcomes that the scrutiny committee needs to achieve.

The Government also accepts that, in some instances, the election, rather than the appointment, of a chair might help ensure that the right individual is ultimately selected, but feels that this is a decision for every council to make for itself - we note that the Select Committee is "wary of proposing that [election] is imposed upon authorities by Government".

A local authority is already free to elect a chair if it wishes, and the updated guidance will recommend that every council bears this in mind when deciding on a method for selecting a chair.

The Government is happy to explore with the sector how best to establish the impact of elected chairs on scrutiny committees' effectiveness, but is not yet convinced that running pilot schemes is the best way to achieve this. The Government will therefore discuss this recommendation with the sector, including the Local Government Association and Centre for Public Scrutiny, and write to the Select Committee on this matter when we publish updated guidance.

Recommendation 3: Councils should be required to publish a summary of resources allocated to scrutiny, using expenditure on executive support as a comparator (Paragraph 62)

Government Response:

The Government does not accept this recommendation.

Many councils do not have dedicated scrutiny support staff - officers work on issues and engage with committees as part of the flow of business - so this would make quantifying the support that scrutiny committees receive very difficult. In the Government's view, the quality of the support is the more important issue.

Parliamentary Review of Overview and Scrutiny Functions

The Government firmly believes that each individual authority is best-placed to decide for itself how to support scrutiny most effectively.

Recommendation 4: That the Government extend the requirement of a Statutory Scrutiny Officer to all councils and specify that the post-holder should have a seniority and profile of equivalence to the council's corporate management team. To give greater prominence to the role, Statutory Scrutiny Officers should also be required to make regular reports to Full Council on the state of scrutiny, explicitly identifying any areas of weakness that require improvement and the work carried out by the Statutory Scrutiny Officer to rectify them (Paragraph 65).

Government Response:

The Government does not accept this recommendation.

As the then Minister outlined during the oral evidence he gave to the Select Committee, decisions about the allocation of resources for the scrutiny function are best made at a local level. Each council is best-placed to know which arrangements will suit its own individual circumstances. It is not a case of one size fits all.

The key requirement for effective scrutiny is that the culture of the council is right. Where councils recognise the benefits effective scrutiny can bring, and put in place suitable arrangements, it is working well. Local authorities with a strong culture of scrutiny may invite regular reports to full council on the state of scrutiny in the council and this idea will be reflected in the updated guidance.

Recommendation 5: The Department to put monitoring systems in place and consider whether the support to committees needs to be reviewed and refreshed. We invite the Department to write to us in a year's time detailing its assessment of the value for money of its investment in the Local Government Association and on the wider effectiveness of local authority scrutiny committees (Paragraph 76).

Government Response:

The Government does not accept this recommendation. Local authorities are independent bodies and it is for them to ensure that their scrutiny arrangements are effective.

The Government firmly believes that every council should be able to access the training it needs to carry out its functions effectively, and recognises that Government itself has a role to play in making this happen. That is why we provide funding to the Local Government Association for sector-led improvement work. It should be noted that this funding is to support local authorities on a wide range of improvement work. It is not purely to assist with overview and scrutiny.

The funding is determined annually and for 2017/18 is £21 million. The package of work that is funded from the grant is set out in a jointly agreed Memorandum of Understanding between the Department and the Local Government Association, which is refreshed annually to ensure that it remains relevant to the sector's needs.

The Government is, of course, very keen to ensure that this funding provides value for money and that local authorities feel that the training on offer serves their needs. To this end, the Department has quarterly performance monitoring and review meetings with the Local Government Association, which are chaired by the Director-General for Local Government and Public Services.

The Government notes that not all the councillors who provided evidence to the Select Committee felt that the scrutiny training provided was as effective as they would have liked, and that the Local Government Association wrote to the Committee on 20 December 2017 to provide more information on the feedback it received on its support work.

Parliamentary Review of Overview and Scrutiny Functions

The Government will ensure that the 2018/19 Memorandum of Understanding with the Local Government Association clearly sets out our expectation that they remain responsive to feedback they receive to ensure all training, including scrutiny training, remains relevant and effective.

Recommendation 6: Scrutiny committees must be able to monitor and scrutinise the services provided to residents. This includes services provided by public bodies and those provided by commercial organisations. Committees should be able to access information and require attendance at meetings from service providers and we call on DCLG to take steps to ensure this happens (Paragraph 90).

Government Response:

Updated guidance will remind councils of the requirements set out in regulations that allow scrutiny members to access exempt or confidential documents in certain circumstances. As mentioned in response to the Select Committee's recommendation on guidance, the Department will also have discussions with the sector to get a better understanding of the issues some scrutiny committees appear to have in accessing information and whether there are any steps the Government could take to alleviate this.

In terms of service providers' attendance at meetings, when councils are tendering contracts with external bodies they should carefully consider including requirements to ensure they are as open and transparent as appropriate. Ultimately, however, it is up to each council to decide how best to hold to account those who run its services.

Recommendation 7: The Government to make clear how LEPs are to have democratic, and publicly visible, oversight. We recommend that upper tier councils, and combined authorities where appropriate, should be able to monitor the performance and effectiveness of LEPs through their scrutiny committees. In line with other public bodies, scrutiny committees should be able to require LEPs to provide information and attend committee meetings as required (Paragraph 96).

Government Response:

The Government agrees on the importance of clear and transparent oversight of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). The Industrial Strategy made clear the continuing important role of LEPs in delivering local economic growth.

The MHCLG Non-Executive Director Review (published in October 2017), looked at a range of governance issues for LEPs. The Review made a series of recommendations that we have accepted in full and are now implementing. As part of this we have published guidance for LEPs on a range of issues including publication of agenda and papers for LEP Board meetings. This will make the proceedings of LEPs more transparent for local people.

The National Assurance Framework for LEPs states that democratic accountability for the decisions made by the LEP is provided through local authority leader membership of LEP Boards. In places where not all local authorities are represented directly on the LEP board it is important that their representatives have been given a mandate through arrangements which enable collective engagement with all local authority leaders. Many LEPs already go much further in allowing democratic scrutiny of their decision making.

The MHCLG Non-Executive Director Review into LEP governance and transparency explored the extent to which scrutiny was embedded into LEP decision making. The review acknowledged that each LEP had their own arrangements to reflect: legal structure, the complexity and needs of the locality and local requirements to ensure value for money; engagement; and democratic accountability. The Review concluded that it was not appropriate to be prescriptive on the specific arrangements that all LEPs needed to adopt due to the variation in LEP operating models.

Parliamentary Review of Overview and Scrutiny Functions

The Government committed in the Industrial Strategy White Paper to reviewing the roles and responsibilities of LEPs and to bringing forward reforms to leadership, governance, accountability, financial reporting and geographical boundaries. Working with LEPs, the Government committed to set out a more clearly defined set of activities and objectives in early 2018. MHCLG will write to the Select Committee following the conclusion of this Ministerial review into LEPs to provide an update.

Recommendation 8: We are concerned that effective scrutiny of the Metro Mayors will be hindered by under-resourcing, and call on the Government to commit more funding for this purpose. When agreeing further devolution deals and creating executive mayors, the Government must make clear that scrutiny is a fundamental part of any deal and that it must be adequately resourced and supported. (Paragraph 104)

Government Response:

The Government accepts this recommendation.

At the Budget it was announced that the government will make available to mayoral combined authorities with elected mayors a £12 million fund for 2018-19 and 2019-20, to boost the new mayors' capacity and resources. Combined Authorities could use some of this resource to ensure that scrutiny and accountability arrangements within the CAs are effectively resourced and supported.

Further to this, the recent Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017, developed with assistance from the Centre for Public Scrutiny and the National Audit Office, provides for the rules of operation for local overview and scrutiny and audit committees to robustly hold combined authorities and mayors to account. The order ensures that there are strong scrutiny arrangements in place consistently across every combined authority area and sets out clear requirements, strengthened appropriately to match the new powers and budgets being devolved, for the arrangement of overview and scrutiny and audit committees in all combined authorities.

Combined authorities are subject to existing relevant legislation applying to local authorities, including the strong finance and audit requirements around ensuring value for money and sustainability. Local democratic accountability, including through the scrutiny of directly-elected mayors, is a crucial and fundamental aspect of devolution.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 18 JUNE 2018

BRIEFING PAPER NO. 1 – SUBMITTING A TOPIC FOR SCRUTINY REVIEW

Executive Summary

This Briefing paper set out the process for Members of the Council to submit a topic for scrutiny review and forms part of the Council's support for Member Learning and Development. It is intended to bring to future meetings of the Committee 'bite-size' briefing papers on the different roles and functions of the Members appointed to the Committee, including elements of the Council's Tool Kit, Call-in arrangements and Call For Action arrangements.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

RESOLVE That the Briefing Paper be noted.

The Committee has the authority to determine the recommendation set out above.
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Background Papers: None.

Reporting Person: Frank Jeffrey, Democratic Services Manager
Email: frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3012

Contact Person: Frank Jeffrey, Democratic Services Manager
Email: frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3012

Date Published: 6 June 2018

Briefing Paper No. 1 – Submitting a Topic for Scrutiny Review

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Briefing Paper has been drawn up to inform the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and the Members of the Council as a whole, of the Council's procedures for the submission and consideration of topics for scrutiny review.

2.0 The Arrangements

- 2.1 The setting of an Annual Work Programme is an important part of the Scrutiny process. Overview and Scrutiny is a Member led process and as such, Members should lead on developing the Work Programme for the Committee. A key element of the Work Programme is the identification of topics for scrutiny reviews.
- 2.2 A Topic Selection Form has been developed to assist the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to select topics in a structured and consistent way, which can be recorded and justified if necessary. A form must be completed for every topic suggested in order to define the objectives, determine the methodology of the review and agree timescales of the review.
- 2.3 An example of the form is attached. Those Members wishing to raise a topic should access the eform through eWokPlus under the Councillors' Pages. The completed form is referred to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee for information and is brought to next available meeting of the Committee to determine whether the topic is to be taken forward for scrutiny.

3.0 The Scrutiny Process

- 3.1 Ideally when considering a topic for scrutiny Members should consider what benefits the review will achieve, the anticipated timescale and what resources will be necessary to complete the review. Scrutiny Reviews are Member-led and as such Members will have a greater role to play than would be the case with a standard working group of the Council.
- 3.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee can appoint any Member to a Task Group, regardless of their Committee membership, with a view to ensuring that those with the most relevant background serve on the Task Groups. The responsibilities of Members will be determined at the earliest stage of a review, identifying those Members responsible for undertaking the necessary research, inviting 'witnesses' or 'experts' and managing the Scrutiny review.
- 3.3 Reviews can be undertaken by a single Councillor or a group of Councillors, to be appointed by the Committee. The Members undertaking a review will be expected to report regularly to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on its progress and to bring forward its findings at the end of the process.
- 3.4 The work programme of the Committee will be taken into consideration when considering any topic review requests..

4.0 Implications

Financial

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. Any financial implications of a scrutiny review will need to be considered before a decision is taken to proceed with a review.

Human Resource/Training and Development

- 4.2 There are no human resource implications arising from this report, which forms part of the Council's overarching approach to Member learning and development. Proposals for

Briefing Paper No. 1 – Submitting a Topic for Scrutiny Review

scrutiny review topics will need to identify the level of human resource necessary to complete the review.

Community Safety

- 4.3 There are no community safety implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

- 4.4 There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

Sustainability

- 4.5 There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

Equalities

- 4.6 There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

Safeguarding

- 4.7 There are no safeguarding implications arising from this report.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 This Briefing Paper sets out the Council's arrangements for the submission of proposals for scrutiny review topics, as part of the Council's learning and development programme. It is intended to submit further Briefing Papers to future meetings of the Committee on different aspects of the roles and responsibilities of the Members appointed to the Committee.

REPORT ENDS

Scrutiny Review Topic Selection

Set out below is a copy of the online form set up for Councillors to submit a Scrutiny Review Topic Selection for consideration at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

This form must be completed in full with as much detail as possible.

Your name:	
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Your email:	
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Selection criteria	
Criteria for Scrutiny Review:	
Scrutiny Review likely to result in improvements for local people.	
Topic falls within a Community or Corporate priority.	
Topic represents a key issue for the public.	
A service is performing poorly.	
High level of dissatisfaction with a service.	
Criteria for rejecting a Scrutiny Review Topic:	
Topic already being addressed.	
Matter is subjudice or prejudicial to the Council's interests.	
Specific case falls within the Council's complaints procedure.	
Topic involves individual disciplinary or grievance matter.	
Proposed topic is unlikely to result in improvements for local people.	

If your proposed Scrutiny Review Topic falls under any of these rejection criteria, it may not be a suitable topic to progress.

Briefing Paper No. 1 – Submitting a Topic for Scrutiny Review

Outcomes of the Review	
Why should the Scrutiny Review be undertaken?	
What benefits could result from the Scrutiny Review?	
What level of impact will the Scrutiny Review have?	
Substantial benefits community wide or for a significant proportion or section of the Community.	
Moderate benefits for two or more client groups or substantial benefits for only one client group.	
Minor benefits for two or more client groups or substantial benefits for only one client group.	
Minor benefits for only one client groups.	
No benefits likely to result.	

Topic Review Process	
Resources to be included in the Scrutiny Review:	
WBC Officer Time Committee.	
Report and/or presentation.	
Councillor time.	
Portfolio Holder Involvement.	
Expert or External Representatives participation.	
Establishment of a Task Group.	
Site visits.	
Research and Evidence.	
Consultation Exercise.	

Briefing Paper No. 1 – Submitting a Topic for Scrutiny Review

Other
Please add explanatory note for any resource selected above.
Please add any further information that you think would be useful in the consideration of this Scrutiny Review Topic.

Once submitted, if your Scrutiny Review Topic meets the selection criteria and enough information has been provided, it will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their next meeting, where they will decide whether to add the topic to their Work Programme.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 18 JUNE 2018

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TASK GROUP UPDATE

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the work of the Economic Development Task Group, one of the three Standing Task Groups that fall under the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The report highlights the key points of discussion held during the most recent meeting of the Task Group.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

RESOLVE That the report be noted.

The Committee has the authority to determine the recommendation set out above.
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Background Papers: None.

Reporting Person: Councillor Ian Johnson, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Contact Person: Frank Jeffrey, Democratic Services Manager
Email: frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3012

Date Published: 6 June 2018

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Task Group was established in March 2009 with the following objective:

“To identify and seek the implementation of measures to mitigate the impact of the economic downturn on the residents, community organisations and businesses in the Borough of Woking.”

- 1.2 The last meeting of the Economic Development Task Group of the 2017/18 Municipal Year was held on 28 March 2018. The Membership for the year was: Councillor Hilary Addison, Councillor Mohammad Ali, Councillor Ann-Marie Barker, Councillor Ian Johnson (Chairman), Councillor Ayesha Azad, Councillor Graham Chrystie and Councillor Saj Hussain.
- 1.3 This report summarises the main points of discussion, in accordance with the responsibilities of the Task Group to report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at regular intervals.

2.0 Key Points Discussed

Economic Strategy 2017-2022 Bi-annual Progress Report

- 2.1 The Task Group considered the biannual progress report on the Economic Strategy for 2017 to 2022 and noted key points throughout the report.

Workforce Skills, Education and Employment

- 2.2 A careers fair had been organised by the Business Liaison Team for 25 April 2018 at the HG Wells Conference and Events Centre. Those organisations participating represented a good cross section of the employment market in the Borough, though the Job Centre had been unable to make staff available.
- 2.3 The Task Group Members noted that employment was higher in Woking than in other areas of the County, though the figures did vary depending on the measurements applied.

Ultrafast Connectivity

- 2.4 The Task Group discussed the Council’s support for the aspiration of providing ultrafast (100Mbps) connectivity and the work being undertaken to submit a funding bid to the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to help roll out the Council’s fibre network from the Town Centre.
- 2.5 A pilot exercise had been undertaken where three ultrafast fibre connections had been installed at Morris House, capable of providing speeds of up to and over 100Mbps. The pilot had been successful and discussions were now being held with other local businesses to explore the potential of expanding the ultrafast service.

Commercial Space

- 2.6 The Members of the Task Group discussed the extent of the Council’s ownership of retail space across the Borough. It was understood that there were only four units available to let across the Borough. In view of the extent of the Council’s interests, Officers undertook to draft a schedule showing all the units and the associated floor space for consideration at the next meeting of the Task Group.

Attracting Key Retail Brands

- 2.7 The Task Group discussed the work of the Council in attracting key retail brands and was advised that the Council proactively sought to provide a mix of units and services for the

benefit of residents, rather than seeing to achieve the highest financial returns. Examples include Harpers, Aracelli's, the Santa Fe Coffee Company and Market Walk.

'Choose Woking' Leaflet

- 2.8 The Officers were congratulated on the design and development of the 'Choose Woking' leaflet, aimed at promoting commercial interests in the Borough. It was noted that an online, interactive version of the brochure would also be available.

Date of Next Meeting

- 2.9 The next meeting of the Task Group will be held on Tuesday, 30 October 2018.

3.0 Implications

Financial

- 3.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Human Resource/Training and Development

- 3.2 There are no human resource or training and development implications arising from this report. The activities of the Economic Development Task Group can be met through existing resources.

Community Safety

- 3.3 There are no community safety implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

- 3.4 There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

Sustainability

- 3.5 There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

Equalities

- 3.6 There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

Safeguarding

- 3.7 There are no safeguarding implications arising from this report.

REPORT ENDS