

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

### Executive Summary

Following a report received on guidance released by the former Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Committee agreed to develop a communications plan to raise awareness of the purpose, function and intentions of Overview and Scrutiny at Woking Borough Council.

To that end, it is proposed that a section of the Council website be created that provides information to residents and updates on what the Committee will be scrutinising at its meetings.

The Council will also communicate via digital channels activities and meetings of the Committee.

Facility shall be included that allows residents to submit scrutiny topic proposals.

### Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

#### RESOLVE That

- (i) the recommendations in the report, namely, to create a webpage on the Council website and utilise digital communications to inform residents of the activities of the committee, be agreed; and
- (ii) Officers be instructed to proceed with the work in time for the new Municipal Year.

The Committee has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.
---

<b>Background Papers:</b>	None.
<b>Reporting Person:</b>	Toby Nash, Scrutiny and Democratic Services Officer Email: toby.nash@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3056
<b>Contact Person:</b>	Toby Nash, Scrutiny and Democratic Services Officer Email: toby.nash@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3056
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Ann-Marie Barker Email: cllrAnn-Marie.Barker@woking.gov.uk
<b>Shadow Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Ayesha Azad Email: cllrAyesha.Azad@woking.gov.uk
<b>Date Published:</b>	10 March 2023

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (“the Committee”), at its meeting held on 13 September 2021, agreed to develop a Communications Plan to inform the public of its work.
- 1.2 At the meeting on 13 September 2021, a report was received on guidance released by the then Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government regarding Overview and Scrutiny.
- 1.3 Among the recommendations of the report was for Overview and Scrutiny to be communicated to residents.

## 2.0 Webpage

- 2.1 It is proposed that a webpage be included in the Council and Democracy section of the Woking website.
- 2.2 The webpage will detail:
  - i) the rationale for the Committee and how it acts as a critical friend to the functions and decision-making apparatus of the Council;
  - ii) the role and function of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
  - iii) the methods by which decisions are reviewed, and items are chosen for inclusion;
  - iv) the Committee’s Work Programme, which details its intended items for overview and scrutiny, will be included for residents to view. It will be updated when decisions of the Council or other matters are considered for inclusion;
  - v) links to other information held on the Council’s website, in particular the membership of the Committee, and the webcasts and details of the agendas, reports, and minutes of meetings; and
  - vi) How residents can submit scrutiny topic proposals.
- 2.3 It is beneficial for the functioning of the Council to allow access for residents to Committees. A mechanism for public involvement at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is being devised in line with revisions to the Constitution. There would be benefit for residents to provide comments on upcoming items of the Work Programme which the Committee could respond to.

## 3.0 Methods of Communication

- 3.1 As well as the webpage, the Council’s social media and e-newsletter shall be used to promote upcoming meetings of the Committee and items for overview or scrutiny.
- 3.2 Residents shall be invited to contribute their views on agenda items via communication with Councillors and Council.
- 3.3 Residents shall be invited to join meetings of the Committee online or in person.

## 4.0 Corporate Strategy

- 4.1 The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee bridges all elements of the Council’s Corporate Strategy.

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

- 4.2 By providing more information and access to residents with overt communication and promotion of the committee it particularly addresses both 'Engaged Communities' and 'A High Performing Council' strands.

### 5.0 Implications

#### Finance and Risk

- 5.1 The proposed communication channels already exist and utilised by the Council.
- 5.2 Existing Officer resource within Marketing & Communications and Democratic Services teams will be used to prepare and maintain the website and communications.
- 5.3 There are, therefore, no anticipated financial implications to the Council from the recommendations in the report.

#### Equalities and Human Resources

- 5.4 It is recognised that digital only communications may limit the ability of a minority of residents to engage with the Committee. However, at this time cost controls limit the ability for the Council to communicate using other methods.
- 5.5 The recommendations in this report will have an impact on Officer resource, requiring additional work to be performed by the Democratic Services and Marketing & Communications teams. However, it is considered that the additional work can be completed within existing resources.

#### Legal

- 5.6 Accessible means of communication are important for good governance strategies in local government creating opportunities for transparency and public involvement. The main legal implication is that the Council must adhere to Data Protection legislation and therefore any personal data collated as result of communicating via digital channel activities should ensure compliance with that legislation.

### 6.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 6.1 This report has been prepared in consultation with senior Officers of the Council and those experienced with Communications and Overview and Scrutiny.
- 6.2 The act of including facility for residents to be informed of the activities of the Committee is aimed to increase engagement for residents.

REPORT ENDS