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Engagement of Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group

Tuesday, 25th September, 2018 at 5.30 pm
Wallis Room, Parkside, Chart Way, Horsham

Councillors: Brian O'Connell (Chairman)

Paul Clarke
David Coldwell
Leonard Crosbie
Jonathan Dancer

Nigel Jupp
Lynn Lambert
Michael Willett

You are summoned to the meeting to transact the following business

Glen Chipp
Chief Executive

Agenda

	Page No.
1. Apologies for absence	
2. Notes of the previous meeting	3 - 6
To receive the notes of the meeting held 28 th August 2018	
3. Declarations of Members' Interests	
4. Announcements	
5. To review the Chairman's notes (attached) and make a recommendation	7 - 8
6. To consider the next item within the Terms of Reference:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">To consider any other options in relation to major items on the Cabinet Forward plan or work of the Council.ie. the Budget or major schemes such as the Hurst Road development	
7. Date of next meeting	

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Engagement of Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group
28 AUGUST 2018

Present: Councillors: Paul Clarke, David Coldwell, Leonard Crosbie,
Jonathan Dancer, Nigel Jupp, Lynn Lambert and Brian O'Connell
(Chairman)

Apologies: Councillors: Michael Willett

1 **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Brian O'Connell was appointed as Chairman of the Task and Finish Group.

2 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

3 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

4 **DETERMINATION OF TERMS OF REFERENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF GUIDELINES PRESENTED TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN THE TRAINING SESSION**

The Chairman reminded the Group of the three factors which were agreed at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4th June 2018, which agreed to form the basis of this review: 1) How Scrutiny has worked over the past 12 months and confirm whether this formula should be continued until the end of the year, 2) Consider any other options in relation to major items on the Cabinet Forward Plan or work of the Council i.e. the Budget or major schemes such as the Hurst Road development, and 3) Recommendations for a future structure of Overview and Scrutiny for the new Council year.

These would form the terms of reference for the review.

5 **SCOPE THE REVIEW AND AGREE A TIMESCALE**

The Group discussed the scope of the review and the terms of reference, it was suggested by a Member that the review should include examining the S106 process and commercial viability. The Chairman asked that the Council's policy on viability statements, the guidelines on S106 and the revised National

Planning Framework, be circulated to the Group and this aspect would be discussed at the next meeting.

The Group addressed the terms of reference. Firstly discussing how Overview and Scrutiny had worked over the past 12 months under its new structure.

Members felt that the Committee was restricted in relation to examining some items such as crime and disorder. Currently the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receives an annual update on crime and disorder matters and the Horsham District Community Safety Partnership, whereas previously the Crime and Disorder Sub-Committee used to receive presentations from partners such as the Police and West Sussex Fire and Rescue twice a year.

The Group agreed that other areas such as business improvement and finance and performance were all areas where the Committee had lost the ability to look at these subjects in detail. The Group suggested a balance somewhere between the new system and the old.

It was agreed that under the new structure of Scrutiny, there had been an improvement in terms of the volume and length of meetings and councillor and officer time. However, it was the outcomes which were more important and these were considered not to have been so satisfactory over the past year. For example, the Group felt that now the monitoring of finance and performance was a function of the main Committee, the Members do not have the ability to drill down to the details. They also felt that the old system of working groups and sub-committees allowed a build up of expertise and knowledge of the subject. But agreed that the meetings had been too long in the past.

Any changes to the current Overview and Scrutiny structure would require a change to the Constitution and need form a recommendation to the Governance Committee.

The Chairman summarised that he would like to see the reinstatement of three sub-committees or working groups: 1. Business Improvement, 2. Finance and Performance and 3. Community – which would encompass health, leisure services, community safety partnership, crime and disorder. It was suggested that these standing groups meet quarterly. In addition, he would like to see the ability to set up task and finish groups for specific reviews, continue. The Chairman of these groups would then summarise and feedback at meetings of the Scrutiny Committee. The Group agreed with this initial proposal.

The Members suggested that the group covering finance and performance should be broadened to include the Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget setting and the Corporate Plan. Members agreed that the mechanics of how Scrutiny engages with the MTFs and the Corporate Plan was very important and if this could not be done through the group, it should perhaps form a task and finish group.

Standing working groups would be open to all Councillors, not only Members of Overview and Scrutiny.

The Chairman would work with the officer to draw up the proposals and the formation of the new structure of Overview and Scrutiny and bring this back to the Group for discussion.

At the next meeting the Group would consider in more depth how Scrutiny engages with the Cabinet Forward Plan and discussed the proposed new format.

6 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Group would be held on Tuesday 25th September 2018 at 5.30pm.

The meeting closed at 6.57 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN

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Chairman's notes to T&F Meeting 28th August 2018

The minutes of the meeting which have been published summarise our discussions at the last meeting. The T&F group has been established to review the effectiveness of the O&S committee since the changes made last year.

These notes are an addendum to the minutes and will form the basis of the first agenda item of the second meeting of the T&F group.

The main thrust of the discussions resulted in a general consensus from the group that while the changes implemented last year in respect of O&S groups/procedures has resulted in an agenda for O&S meetings being too extensive to properly discuss and analyse the information provided in any meaningful depth. To this end the O&S committee is not fulfilling its duty properly.

It was generally agreed that a meeting of this nature should last no longer than 2 hours. To this end as directed in recent Scrutiny training the Chairman of the meeting must manage the meeting to achieve this outcome and also cover the business of the meeting.

The net outcome of the discussion that a revised procedure encompassing a mix of T&F groups and the resumption of 3 standing committees that could report to the main O&S group and pick out relevant points would be more productive, better engage the main committee, offer an opportunity for greater member involvement and enable the O&S function to be carried out in greater depth and detail.

1) F&P group/committee.

The F&P traditionally carried out detail examination of the quarterly reports provided by the Finance department. The current report that is now used has evolved as a direct result of many late meetings and many questions and queries raised as to the information provided. It is now widely recognised as an excellent report which provides adequate data for the members to question any particular element which may be of concern.

However, the true function of an F&P group should be far wider than just reviewing historical data. It should be involved in reviewing progress during the year on the MTFS. An update could be given to the group at each meeting. It should also be involved in the preparation of the budget. Again this would be via giving a presentation to the group of current progress being made during the year, maybe of things being currently considered or of the current policy objectives of the cabinet. This would give the F&P group an opportunity to have an overview which would give the members an opportunity to have a greater input. A very positive outcome and a change to current practices as all the O&S seminars have advised that O&S is not just to review historical facts or data but to have a positive input to future policy decisions and planning.

The Chairman of this group would be key to its success in managing the work programme. There would probably in reality be 6 meetings a year. Each meeting at 2 hours. Each meeting should have a varied agenda to incorporate all of the above terms of reference over the year. The agenda for the first meeting might for example have the first hour reviewing the financial data, the second hour could be used for discussion in respect the ongoing budget work. The next meeting might have the first hour reviewing data and the second hour on the MTFS. It would be the duty of the Chairman to

ensure that the meetings do not last more than 2 hours but that work programme was covered over the year.

This working group could also be open to all members as the Chairman would report to the main O&S group meeting. A group with this broader remit would encourage better attendance, the meetings would be more interesting as the scope would be broader than just trying to audit data with limited powers.

2) Community

This group would be a new group evolving from Health & wellbeing which was clearly very important to the members of the group. It was suggested that this group should now incorporate crime & disorder, leisure and any other community issues which may be relevant. The structure and operation of the group should be as per previous comments made in respect of F&P group.

3) B.I.W.G. (Business Improvement Working Group)

The now redundant B.I.W.G had a very broad scope. It looked at practices and procedures employed by the council usually in line with a recent event or action and thoroughly investigated this and brought its recommendations forward to the main O&S group. Despite the introduction of the new T&F groups this kind of Scrutiny is not carried out now. The structure and operation of the group should be as per previous comments made in respect of F&P group.

It was widely recognised that there is a place for T&F groups but not solely on their own. They can be used alongside the standing working groups or as part of the working group as was the case when the BIWG reviewed S106 procedures a few years ago.

The main O&S committee meeting now has far too big an agenda and the topics are not covered in the detail that they should be or as used to be the case. If this statement is accepted then the O&S group is now not as effective as was previously the case.

Brian O'Connell.