

## **Chairman's notes to T&F Meeting 28<sup>th</sup> 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.