

Item

CHANGES TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEES AND REVIEW OF DECISION MAKING PROCESSES



To:

Civic Affairs Committee 28/03/2018

Report by:

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Wards affected:

None directly affected

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report details the conclusions and recommendations of a Member Working Group tasked with reviewing the council's scrutiny committees and the workload undertaken by these committees.
- 1.2 The working group consisted of the three Group Leaders (Cllrs Bick, Herbert and Hipkin) and the Chair of Civic Affairs Committee (Cllr McPherson). It met three times (11 July 2017, 16th October 2017 and 24th January 2018).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To recommend to Council the changes to Part 3 section 6 of the Constitution as set out in Appendix A (Appendix B shown with tracked changes for reference).
- 2.2 To agree that the new scrutiny committees keep to the already agreed 2018/19 programme of meetings as referred to in paragraphs 3.7 and 3.8

3. Background

3.1. Group Leaders agreed with the Chief Executive to set up a small working group to review the approach to scrutiny and whether it should be revised. This review was prompted by two issues (i) a sense that the business had become unbalanced between scrutiny committees and (ii) the changing service, delivery and partnership landscape within which the council is now working since the original scrutiny committee structure was introduced.

3.2 The working group consisted of the three Group Leaders (Cllrs Bick, Herbert and Hipkin) and the Chair of Civic Affairs Committee (Cllr McPherson). It met three times (11 July 2017, 16th October 2017 and 24th January 2018) and received officer support from the Chief Executive, Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services Manager. The Working Group reviewed the number of decisions that had been made at each committee during the period October 2014 to October 2016 and the average length of scrutiny meetings. It then asked for additional analysis in the area of Environment, Community Services and Planning Policy for October 2016-October 2017.

3.3 The working group has agreed that the following would improve upon the existing scrutiny working arrangements:

a) create an Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee which will scrutinise the decisions of three executive councillors (Communities; Environmental Services & City Centre; Streets & Open Spaces)

b) create a Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee which will scrutinise the decisions of one executive councillor (Planning Policy and Transport)

The work of Development Plan Scrutiny Sub-Committee will cease to exist. This will reduce the overall number of scheduled meetings a year by at least four.

3.4 Housing Scrutiny Committee is unaffected by these proposals. Strategy & Resources Scrutiny Committee will continue to scrutinise decisions by the Executive Councillor for Strategy and Transformation to set up new shared services. Once those services are established on-going reports on their operation will go to the relevant Executive Councillor and scrutiny committee.

3.5 The working group at its 24 January 2018 meeting discussed the scrutiny of the budget setting report, the timing of the meetings including the meeting of the Executive (which must meet to recommend a budget to Council). It agreed that officers should report back on alternatives to the current arrangements which should include:

Options on sequencing and number of meetings required on scrutiny of the budget; and

Which scrutiny committees should scrutinise financial matters.

3.6 Members also supported the principle that the Chief Executive should put in place arrangements for informal briefings to make efficient use of officer time.

Timing of scrutiny committees

3.7 Civic Affairs Committee is responsible for setting the schedule of meetings. When it sets meetings the committee has to take into account our internal processes and requirements, good governance and also the increasingly complex inter-relationship with external partners and Members' commitments on various external bodies. It is not practical therefore to permit individual committees to change the day or time that it meets without having this overview.

3.8 There are currently dates in the municipal calendar 2018/19 which the new scrutiny committees should use:

Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee meets on a Tuesday at 5.30pm (previous slot for Environment Scrutiny Committee)

Environment and Community Scrutiny meets on a Thursday at 5.00pm (previous slot for Community Services Scrutiny Committee)

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications *Page: 3*

(b) Staffing Implications

A relatively small, but nevertheless overall reduction in the number of meetings will help to reduce the resource required to support the democratic process.

(c) Equality and Poverty Implications

The schedule of meetings should take into account the issues for Members, officers enabling these meetings to function effectively and for those who wish to engage with the democratic process by attending and/or speaking.

This can be a challenge to satisfy what can be conflicting preferences.

(d) Environmental Implications

(e) Procurement Implications

(f) Community Safety Implications

There are none

5. Consultation and communication considerations

Strategic Leadership Team and the Head of Legal Practice were involved in the preparation of these proposals.

6. Background papers

Background papers used in the preparation of this report:

Member Working Group Reports and notes of meetings (11 July 2017, 19 October 2017 and 24 January 2018)

7. Appendices

Cambridge City Council Constitution Part 3, Section 6-Overview and Scrutiny Committees

8. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Gary Clift, Democratic Services, tel: 01223 - 457011, email:

gary.clift@cambridge.gov.uk.

SECTION 6: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The Council shall have the following Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Their role and functions are set out in Article 6 of Part 2 of this Constitution and their procedure is governed by the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules in Part 4 of this Constitution.

6.1 Strategy & Resources (Scrutiny) Committee

Terms of Reference
1. Overview and scrutiny of the functions for which the Leader (and Executive Councillor for Strategy and Transformation) is responsible.
2. Overview and scrutiny of the functions for which the Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources is responsible.
3. Overview and scrutiny of any functions exercised by the Executive collectively.
4. Overview and scrutiny of any Council functions which fall outside the remit of any other scrutiny committee.
5. As required by Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 to be the crime and disorder committee with the power to review or scrutinise decisions made by the Council or by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

6.2 Environment and Community (Scrutiny) Committee

Terms of Reference
Overview and scrutiny of the functions for which the Executive Councillors for (i) Communities (ii) Environmental Services and City Centre and (iii) Streets and Open Spaces are responsible

6.3 Planning and Transport (Scrutiny) Committee

Terms of Reference
Overview and scrutiny of the functions for which the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport is responsible

6.4 Housing Scrutiny Committee

Terms of Reference
A. Overview and scrutiny of the strategic and other housing functions for which the Executive Councillor for Housing is responsible, including responsibility for the development of housing strategies and policies, tackling homelessness, the Council's housing responsibilities with regard to the private rented sector, bringing vacant homes back into use, the development of new homes and partnership working with other housing providers.
B. Overview and scrutiny of functions relating to the management of the Council's housing stock.
C. To be the main discussion forum between the Council, its tenants and its leaseholders for all matters relating to the landlord function of Cambridge City Council.

Membership
City Councillors (Such number as shall be decided by the Council from time to time)
Six elected tenants and leaseholders of Cambridge City Council of whom at least five shall be tenants of Cambridge City Council.

Appointment of tenant and leaseholder members
Tenant and leaseholder members shall be co-opted by the Scrutiny Committee following the procedure for election set out in the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules in Part 4E.

Voting
Tenant and leaseholder members are voting members in respect of matters concerning the management of the Council's housing stock (Part 1 of the agenda.) Tenant and leaseholder members may contribute to discussion of other matters (Part 2 of the agenda) but shall not have a vote.

Appointment of Chair
The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee shall be appointed by the Council and be a councillor and shall chair Part 2. The Vice-chair shall be nominated by the elected tenants and leaseholders and shall chair Part 1 if present. If the Chair or Vice-chair is not present, a councillor shall be appointed as the Vice-chair for that meeting.

Other matters relating to elected tenants and leaseholders

These are set out in the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules in Part 4E. They include information about the roles, responsibilities and training of tenant and leaseholder representatives, expenses and allowances, and the circumstances in which they may cease to be members of the Committee.

6.5 Other Scrutiny Committees

6.5.1 The Council may appoint further scrutiny committees in accordance with Article 6 of Part 2 of this Constitution.