

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Meeting held 4 July 2019

PRESENT: Councillors Mick Rooney (Chair), Ben Curran, Denise Fox, Tim Huggan, Douglas Johnson, Mike Levery, Cate McDonald and Sioned-Mair Richards

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1. FORMER CHAIR AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

1.1 The Chair referred to the excellent work undertaken by the Chair of the Committee during the Municipal Year 2018/19 (Councillor Denise Fox), and those former Members of the Committee, who were either no longer Members of the Council, or Members of this Committee.

1.2 RESOLVED: That the Committee places on record its thanks and appreciation for the excellent work undertaken by Councillor Denise Fox and the former Members of the Committee during the Municipal Year 2018/19.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ian Auckland, Steve Ayris (with Councillor Colin Ross attending as his substitute), and Julie Grocutt.

3. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

3.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

5.1 18th April 2019

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18th April 2019, were approved as a correct record and, arising therefrom, further to a query raised by the Chair, the Policy and Improvement Officer (Deborah Glen) stated that she would contact the relevant officer, requesting that they forward information as to whether the Council, as part of its telephone service, provided members of the public with the option of ringing them back if they so requested, as had been requested by Members at that meeting.

5.2 15th May 2019

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15th May 2019, were approved as a correct record.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

6.1 There were no questions raised, or petitions submitted, by members of the public.

7. DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20

7.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer containing the draft Work Programme for 2019/20.

7.2 Also in attendance for this item were Eugene Walker (Executive Director, Resources) and James Henderson (Director of Policy, Performance and Communications).

7.3 James Henderson reported on the role of this Committee, referring to the topics it had discussed at previous meetings, and inviting Members to raise any other suggested topics which the Committee may wish to consider. Mr Henderson referred specifically to the possibility of the Committee scrutinising the budget in more depth.

7.4 Members made a number of suggestions with regard to additional topics they would like the Committee to consider.

7.5 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:-

(a) notes and approves the draft Work Programme for 2019/20, as set out in the report now submitted, subject to:

(i) the addition of four additional topics - Communication and Consultation, Information Technology, Citizens' Assembly and Governance Arrangements and, in connection with the four additional topics, requests that:-

(A) particular effort be made to allocate time to fully scrutinise any new proposed Governance arrangements, in accordance with the resolutions passed at the Council meeting held on 3rd July 2019;

(B) the Chair talks to Councillor Olivia Blake (Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Governance) to get an idea of the scale of the proposals regarding any new Governance arrangements, with a view to bringing an initial scoping paper to the September 2019 meeting;

(C) the Committee be afforded the opportunity to look at the proposals with regard to the establishment of a Citizens' Assembly, prior to any further proposals being made, or any proposed membership arrangements agreed;

(D) discussions on Information Technology be deferred to the

Municipal year 2020/21 to allow for it to be tested after being brought back in-house; and

- (E) Task and Finish Group be established to look into communications and consultation on the budget process, comprising cross-party membership of the Committee, to be Chaired by Councillor Sioned-Mair Richards, and with the opposition parties referring their nominations to the Policy and Improvement Officer;
 - (ii) the Access to Mental Health Services – Call for Evidence, be considered by both the Children, Young People and Family Support and Healthier Communities and Adult Social Care Scrutiny and Policy Development Committees, and not this Committee; and
 - (iii) the proposed item on Sheffield City Region be considered by the Economic and Environmental Wellbeing Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee, and not this Committee;
- (b) agrees that two sessions, as opposed to the three currently proposed, be allocated to discuss the budget; and
 - (c) requests the Policy and Improvement Officer to amend the draft Work Programme for 2019/20, based on the amendments and suggestions now made, for submission to the next meeting.

8. STATUTORY GUIDANCE ON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN LOCAL AND COMBINED AUTHORITIES

- 8.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer attaching the statutory guidance, published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in May 2019, on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities, which had been revised as a result of a review by the House of Commons Select Committee.
- 8.2 Also in attendance for this item was James Henderson (Director of Policy, Performance and Communications).
- 8.3 The aim of the guidance sought to ensure that local and combined authorities were aware of the purpose of overview and scrutiny, what effective scrutiny looked like, how to conduct scrutiny effectively and the benefits it could bring.
- 8.4 The Policy and Improvement Officer reported that, based on the contents of the guidance, and further to a recent review of the Council's scrutiny function, it had been determined that, whilst certain elements could be improved, the Council was currently operating broadly in line with the guidance.
- 8.5 In response to questions raised by Members of the Committee, James Henderson stated that, as part of the development of a new Workforce Strategy, his Service would look into the possibility of seconding officers from other Council Services, to

work alongside the Policy and Improvement Officers, in order for them to gain experience of the Council's governance and decision-making process. With regard to the future resourcing of the Council's scrutiny function, Mr Henderson stated that whilst he did not envisage any additional resources being invested in this area, he accepted that the Council needed to be more effective in terms of how it used its current resources. In the light of concerns raised by Members with regard to how seriously some Senior officers took the role of scrutiny, particularly with regard to reporting back to the Committee when Members had requested information, he indicated that he would raise this issue with colleagues.

- 8.6 RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the revised statutory guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities, together with the comments now made and the responses to the questions raised.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 9.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday, 19th September 2019, at 1.30 pm, in the Town Hall.