



**Rochford District
Council**

REPORT TITLE:	Review of the Council's current Outside Body and Partnership Arrangements
REPORT OF:	Outside Bodies and Partnerships Task & Finish Group

REPORT SUMMARY

An initial report was presented before this Committee on 1 February 2024. This report provides a further update on the ongoing review Rochford District Council's (the Council) current Outside Body and Partnership arrangements, in consultation with the Task & Finish Group appointed at the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 5 July 2023.

It is recommended that Members of this Committee now consider all the evidence collated to date during this review process and to provide feedback in order to permit the Task & Finish Group to determine which Outside Bodies and Partnerships the Council should continue appointing its Members to.

This Committee is also required to determine whether Outside Body and Partnership appointments are to be made by Full Council or their respective Committees as the Council enters new governance arrangements from the 2024/25 Municipal Year, moving from an Executive style of governance to Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1 -** To note the contents of the report.
- R2 -** To agree that this review continues throughout the upcoming 2024/25 Municipal Year to establish how Outside Bodies and Partnerships are affected by the newly implemented Committee style of governance.
- R3 -** To agree whether appointments to Outside Bodies and Partnerships be made by either Committees or Full Council at the subsequent meeting(s) following the Annual Council meeting.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 1.1 This Council currently requires Councillors to act as representatives of the Council on a number of external organisations known as Outside Bodies and Partnerships. Councillors are currently appointed to Outside Bodies and Partnerships at Annual Council each year based on their experience and interest. Those Outside Bodies that are considered strategic have the relevant Executive Lead Member or Leader appointed to them.
- 1.2 The Council has not reviewed its Outside Bodies and Partnerships since 2011 and it should also be noted that when a review was last conducted by the former Review Committee on 8 February 2011, it excluded from its scope any strategic Outside Bodies.
- 1.3 The Task & Finish Group reviewing the Council’s current Outside Body and Partnership arrangements was constituted at the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 5 July 2023 and comprises of:-
Cllr Mrs J E McPherson (Chairman);
Cllr R Milne, and
Cllr Mrs S J Page
- 1.4 Cllr Mrs J E McPherson met with officers and a scoping document was completed to provide a focus for the work. This was approved by the Committee on 13 September 2023.
- 1.5 The Task & Finish Group was asked to include within the scope of the current review all Outside Bodies and Partnerships that Members are permitted to attend; giving consideration of how beneficial the current Outside Bodies and Partnerships are to the Council; whether there are any Outside Bodies or Partnerships that Members should be attending but currently aren’t; to review the level of delegated authority associated with appointments to Outside Bodies and Partnerships; and, to explore how best Members can report back on any Outside Body and Partnership activity.
- 1.6 Since the implementation of this review, there has been a good level of feedback received by Members which disclosed that some Members did not receive any meeting invitations and/or were not contacted by their respective Outside Body or Partnership. It was also noted that the Council did not implement formal reporting mechanisms for Members to report back on their Outside Body and Partnership activity.

Out of 39 Members, 22 responses were received. Full detail of responses received from Members is attached at **Appendix 1**.

- 1.7 A further, separate survey was circulated to Outside Bodies and Partnerships that the Council appoints to and is attached at **Appendix 2**. Feedback received has granted officers with a better understanding of the aims and objectives of the organisations, as well as suggestions that the Council could consider implementing in the upcoming Municipal Year.
- 1.8 This Council will continue to have a strong commitment to collaborative working with its partners and provide various means of guidance and support.

2.0 NEXT STEPS

- 2.1 Taking into account feedback received from this Committee and responses to both surveys, the Task & Finish Group will be required to make recommendations to Full Council which Outside Bodies and Partnerships the Council should continue appointing its Members to. Mindful of the new Committee system and the membership of Councillors appointed to each Committees, a new Task & Finish Group will need to be formed to continue the review process.
- 2.2 Once the Task & Finish Group makes their final decisions, it would be prudent to categorise the Outside Bodies and Partnerships in accordance with their remits and Terms of Reference (ToRs) to produce a table listing the Council's Committees and assigning the appropriate, annually appointed Outside Body and Partnership against each Committee, if applicable.
- 2.3 Each individual Committee will be able to decide on the reporting mechanism from the organisations, e.g., annual report; presentation from the organisation; a report distributed through the Members' Drop, or more commonly; an update given by the Chairman of a Committee. Committees will be supported by the Democratic Services Team and/or relevant Director when deciding upon the means of reporting.
- 2.4 Currently, arrangements for those Members to report back on any Outside Body and/or Partnership activity are loose with a requirement that this be done via the Members' Drop. However, no such reports have been made over the past twelve months. The Constitution Working Group has therefore suggested that with effect from the new Municipal Year, Members should report back to the relevant Committee on any Outside Body activity. In addition, the Working Group has recommended that in future, there should be an annual review of appointments to Outside Bodies and Partnerships reported to meetings of Full Council.
- 2.5 As outlined within the 1 February 2024 report to the Committee, handover arrangements should be tightened up at the beginning of each new Municipal Year when changes are made to appointments to external organisations.

- 2.6 Arrangements should be made for either a representative of the Outside Body/Partnership or an officer to brief Members when newly appointed. Furthermore, it would be beneficial if the Member being replaced could be asked to prepare a handover to the subsequent appointee and provide any relevant documentation.
- 2.7 In light of all the above, it is recommended that a report should be brought back to the new scrutiny Committee in the upcoming Municipal Year with recommendations put forward by the Task & Finish Group undertaking the reviewing process.

3.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 3.1 All Councillors were sent a link to a Microsoft survey which sought their feedback. Furthermore, a separate survey was sent to Outside Bodies and Partnerships the Council currently appoints to. Responses of both surveys are contained within the appendices.

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APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 – Feedback from Members
Appendix 2 – Feedback from Outside Bodies

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no background papers attributed to this report.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
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Overview & Scrutiny Committee	1 February 2024
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	5 July 2023
Council	28 June 2023
Annual Council	17 May 2023
Annual Council	18 May 2023
Annual Council	9 July 2020