

REVIEW OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY – CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report relates to the proposals made by the Finance and Procedures Overview and Scrutiny Committee for changes to the Committee structure following that Committee's review of Overview and Scrutiny.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 At the Meeting of the Policy and Finance Committee on 19 October 2005, Members received a presentation from the Chairman of the Finance and Procedures Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor K H Hudson, on his Committee's findings with regard to its review of the Overview and Scrutiny process in Rochford. The Meeting had been a chance to give initial consideration to proposals relating to changes in the Committee structure that could then be given further detailed consideration.

3 DISCUSSION

- 3.1 At the meeting on 19 October it was noted that:-
- A key driver of proposals had been the objective of achieving an overview and scrutiny function that is sufficiently flexible, able to respond to all possible situations and capable of developing methodologies for Policy Committees.
 - The review had identified that Policy Committees sometimes passed items of work to Overview and Scrutiny Committees as if they are Sub-Committees of a Policy Committee. Currently, the movement of items of business through the Committee system is somewhat circuitous and there is a possibility for policy decisions to be delayed. This may be exacerbated for a balanced Council with similar arrangements.
 - An underlying theme of proposals is that Policy Committees should be able to both create and monitor policy. A Committee system needed to align well with the officer structure.
 - The term 'development control' would reflect the actual activity of the current Planning Services Committee. Feedback associated with the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process pointed to there being value in Committee titles being as descriptive as possible, particularly as an aid to assisting public understanding. The use of acronyms should be minimised.

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- Development of the proposals had included an analysis of current Committee appointments and whether it would be possible for Members to retain an interest in areas to which they are presently appointed. Account had been taken of the need for the pro-rata rules to be applied.
 - The proposed Review Committee would be able to determine its own agenda, primarily from looking outwards. Some initial work would no doubt need to be undertaken around matters that were outstanding from the previous structural arrangement. Members not appointed to a Review Committee would be able to ask that Committee to look into any matter, as would members of the public.
 - The proposed splitting of the work of current Policy Committees should help address current workload issues.
 - Background work, such as re-drafting of the Council's Constitution to reflect any changes to the Committee structure, could be undertaken once any changes are agreed by Full Council.
 - Costs associated with adjustments to the Committee structure are likely to be minimal.
 - The inclusion of grounds maintenance under the terms of reference of the proposed Leisure, Tourism and Heritage committee was a reflection of the need to look at aspects such as parks and open spaces. Whilst woodlands and countryside was included within the proposed terms of reference for the Environmental Services Committee, this could be revisited in the context of the workload of that Committee.
- 3.2 During discussion on 19 October, reference was made to the particular value of changing the ethos whereby the overview and scrutiny function is seen as something that Policy Committees can refer difficult items to. It was observed that the suggestion that Policy Committees should not be restricted to only appointing their own Members to Sub-Committees was a useful feature of the proposals.
- 3.3 Should the Policy and Finance Committee now decide to endorse the proposals of the Finance and Procedures Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it would need to recommend to Full Council:-
- (1) That the Council's Committee structure, including the names, size and terms of reference of Committees, be on the basis set out at the Appendix to this report with effect from the new Municipal Year.
 - (2) That the Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration) be authorised to adjust the Council's Constitution to take account of these changes.

4 RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Committee considers the way forward with regard to the proposals of the Finance and Procedures Overview and Scrutiny Committee and **RECOMMENDS** to Council accordingly. (CD(LP&A)).

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Background Papers:-

None

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