

**Public**  
**Key Decision - No**

## **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Title:** Overview and Scrutiny – Remit, Role and Studies

**Meeting/Date:** Overview & Scrutiny Performance & Growth –  
8th June 2022  
Overview & Scrutiny Customers & Partnerships –  
TBC

**Report by:** Democratic Services Officer

**Ward(s) affected:** All

---

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report is to inform Members of the Panel of the remit, role and operation of Overview and Scrutiny.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is

#### **RECOMMENDED**

- a) to note the Overview and Scrutiny remits, roles and processes outlined;
- b) to consider the existing programme of studies for the forthcoming year;
- c) to consider the addition of subject areas to the programme of studies;
- d) to consider the composition of Working Groups to undertake additional studies.
- e) to delegate formation of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme, as well as the formation and commencement of work streams to the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) after consultation with the Overview and Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs; and
- f) that the draft Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs as well as the Managing Director and Corporate Directors for input and comment.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the Panel of the remit, role and operation of Overview and Scrutiny.
- 1.2 In addition, there is an opportunity for Members to review the programme of studies or investigations and plan the Panel's work programme for the forthcoming year.

## **2. REMIT**

- 2.1 The remits for the Overview and Scrutiny Panels have been revised following the appointment of new administration at the start of the municipal year 2022/23. The proposed remits are attached at Appendix A.
- 2.2 Any future amends to the remits of the Panels will be agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs.

## **3. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCESS**

### **(a) Holding the Executive to Account**

- 3.1 A fundamental element of the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels is the holding of the Executive to account for its decisions and, for this purpose, the Panels are able to scrutinise the activities of the Executive at various points in the decision making process. Information on subjects to be considered and decisions taken by the Executive are available to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels and to the Members in a variety of ways –
- Forward Plan of key decisions to be taken by the Executive in the ensuing four months;
  - Agenda for meetings of Cabinet available five days prior to meeting;
  - Notice of all decisions to be made by individual Executive Councillors and key decisions to be taken by officers five days prior to decision;
  - Consent of relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chair required for consideration of any decision by Cabinet or Executive Councillor or key decision by officer if five days' notice cannot be given;
  - Record of all decisions made by Cabinet and an Executive Councillor and key decisions by an officer sent to Overview and Scrutiny Panel Members; and
  - Minutes of meetings of Cabinet.

### **(b) Pre-Decision Scrutiny**

- 3.2 The most significant document in this respect is the Forward Plan which must be produced monthly containing key decisions to be considered by the Executive in the ensuing four months. A copy is attached to the Agenda for each meeting of the Panel. If a Member is interested in an Overview and Scrutiny Panel discussing any particular decision that appears on the Forward Plan, he or she can, following its receipt –
- seek further information from the relevant Executive Councillor or officer named in the Plan;
  - ask for copies of background documents where relevant;

- ask for an item to be included on the Agenda for the next Panel meeting to enable a subject to be discussed prior to the Cabinet meeting.

3.3 The Panels also have adopted formal arrangements to deal with the Plan –

#### **Month 1**

The Panel identifies any key decision of interest to them in months three and four of the Plan and allocates a lead Member to enquire about the availability of draft reports etc

#### **Month 2**

The nominated lead Member follows up those enquiries and reports the outcome to the ensuing Panel meeting. The Panel considers whether this is a matter which they wish to pursue further and decide whether to seek further information, ask others for comment, commission independent advice etc. This may or may not be undertaken by the Lead Member. The Panel also decides whether to request the Executive Councillor and/or relevant senior officer to attend their next meeting and to review the report to be considered by the Executive if this is available.

#### **Month 3**

Where appropriate the Executive Councillor and/or relevant senior officer attend the Panel meeting and in the light of the information presented, the Panel decides whether to submit recommendations/observations to the Executive for consideration when the decision is to be made. The Panel may also consider whether it wishes to call-in the decision if the Executive does not concur with its recommendations. If so, the Panel may identify the requisite three members for that purpose.

### **(c) Post-Decision Scrutiny**

3.4 After any decision has been taken by the Cabinet or an Executive Councillor and any key decision has been taken by an officer, a record of the decision will be circulated by the Democratic Services Section to all Overview and Scrutiny Panel Members within three working days. The decision may not be implemented for a further five working days during which it may be called in by any three Members of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The process is undertaken electronically for all Members. When a decision has been called in, a meeting of the relevant Panel should be held within a further ten working days to decide whether to refer the matter back to the decision taker or onwards to full Council.

### **(d) Other Members**

3.5 Scrutiny is not restricted solely to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels. Other non-Panel Members have access to the information referred to above (other than the records of decisions) and may –

- ask for an item to be included on an Overview and Scrutiny Panel Agenda;
- speak at that meeting with the Chair's consent; or
- be appointed to sub-panels established by an Overview and Scrutiny Panel to assist them in their work.

## **4. STUDIES**

- 4.1 It has been established as best practice to devise a limited programme of studies at the start of each year. Appendix B to this report contains details of the Panel's ongoing studies. Members are reminded that they can add to the list of studies and make their own suggestions throughout the year. Members are invited to review the programme.
- 4.2 Working groups are set up to undertake the studies. It is usual for the Membership of Working Groups to continue to the completion of studies and it is suggested that this principle continue. The exception to this would be if a Member no longer holds office as a District Councillor for Huntingdonshire.

### **a) Internal Studies**

- 4.3 The areas of Council services that fall within the Panel's remit are included at Appendix A.

Members are requested to identify studies or investigations of single issues, which are topical or contentious, for example, that may have arisen in the course of their contact with constituents.

- 4.4 Performance data, which is regularly submitted to the Panel, can also be used to identify study areas. The current performance report appears on the June agenda of Overview and Scrutiny Performance and Growth Panel.

### **b) External Studies**

- 4.5 The Council has a duty to improve the social, environmental and economic well-being of the District. This gives the Panel a wide remit to examine any issues that affect the District by conducting in-depth studies. A list of the previous year's work programme appears at Appendix C and Members should find this a useful basis for issues that have previously been undertaken.

## **5. APPENDICES**

Appendix A – Overview and Scrutiny Remits

Appendix B – Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2022/23

Appendix C – Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2021/22

### **Contact Officer:**

B Buddle

Democratic Services