

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Overview and Scrutiny Co-opted Members
Meeting/Date: Corporate Governance Panel – 27th November 2013
Executive Portfolio: Strategic Economic Development and Legal
Report by: Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

At the March 2013 meeting, the Panel noted that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services would be undertaking a review of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's Procedure Rules, specifically the need for continued involvement of external co-opted persons. The review of Co-opted Members' involvement in Scrutiny has been completed and it is recommended that the Council ceases to co-opt individuals to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels on a permanent basis.

The financial implications of this report are minimal.

Recommendations:

That the Council is recommended to delete the following words from paragraph 2 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution:

“Each Overview and Scrutiny Panel shall comprise two co-opted persons appointed for a four year period without voting rights. The co-opted persons shall not be paid an allowance.”

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1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT/PURPOSE?

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to acquaint the Panel with the outcome of the review of the external co-optees appointment to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The original co-optees' term of office expires in February 2014. It is necessary to determine whether they are to continue or introduce alternative arrangements.

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS

- 3.1 Some other authorities co-opt individuals on a temporary basis to contribute to single studies. However, this could result in particular perspectives having greater influence on a Panel than others. Instead, it is argued that if all interested parties are able make submissions or present evidence, Members will be in a position to triangulate it against other relevant sources and make an objective judgment on the study aims and recommendations.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

- 4.1 The Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen have been consulted and they support the recommendation.

5. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 The Co-opted Members currently are not involved in the Scrutiny Panel's work while the Facing the Future process is taking place. It had been intended they would resume their role in January 2014. If it is decided that they are no longer required, the Co-opted Members would be advised so that their terms of office would naturally end in February 2014. Two vacancies have not been filled because the review was taking place. A further vacancy has recently arisen. One Co-opted Member's term extends past February because he was appointed when a previous post-holder resigned. It is suggested that his term should finish at the same time as the others.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Co-opted Members are entitled to be reimbursed for travel and subsistence expenses incurred in undertaking their role. They claimed a combined total of £184.70 in 2012/13 and £140.40 in 2013/14.

7 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 7.1 The Co-opted Members' terms of office will expire at the start of 2014. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services has been asked to carry out a review of their involvement with the Overview and Scrutiny Panels. This has been done through consultation with the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Scrutiny Panels. It is intended that the Scrutiny Panels' studies will be conducted more like Select Committee investigations. Instead of making permanent appointments to the Scrutiny Panels, individuals who have specialist knowledge will be invited to provide evidence on particular study areas.

Recommendations:

That the Council is recommended to delete the following words from paragraph 2 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution:

“Each Overview and Scrutiny Panel shall comprise two co-opted persons appointed for a four year period without voting rights. The co-opted persons shall not be paid an allowance.”

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Constitution

Reports and Minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 22nd April 2009 and 17th February 2012

Reports and Minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels held in February 2010.

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