

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Overview and Scrutiny Panel Structure
Meeting/Date:	Overview and Scrutiny (Social Well-being) Panel, 3 November 2015 Overview and Scrutiny (Economic Well-being) Panel, 5 November 2015 Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-being) Panel, 10 November 2015
Executive Portfolio:	Councillor Jason Ablewhite, Executive Leader
Report by:	Daniel Buckridge, Policy, Performance & Transformation Manager (Scrutiny)
Ward(s) affected:	All

Executive Summary:

As proposed at the Scrutiny Away Day in February 2015, the structure of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny panels has been reviewed and alternative arrangements have been explored. The Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the current Overview and Scrutiny panels have considered a number of options, including the status quo, and have agreed on a preferred structure.

This option would create three new panels - 'Finance and Performance', 'Economy and Growth' and 'Communities and Customers' to replace the existing panels. This structure is seen as a better fit to the organisation's strategic priorities than the current structure as it is aligned to and consistent with the Corporate Plan and should help balance the workload of Members involved. Amendments to the Constitution to create the new structure would also introduce greater flexibility and encourage more joint working between panels.

While the Cabinet workplan would continue to be followed in general, the Chairmen/Vice-Chairmen propose that Cabinet items should be reviewed to determine whether there is benefit in having them on a panel's agenda. They intend to create sufficient capacity for each panel to support two Task and Finish Groups each year.

Recommendation(s):

Members are invited to:

- endorse Option 2 as a new structure for Overview and Scrutiny panels, and
- request that amendments to the Constitution to allow the new structure to be adopted be referred to Corporate Governance Panel and full Council meetings in December.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At the Scrutiny Away Day in February 2015, the current structure of Overview and Scrutiny panels was questioned. With recent changes to portfolio responsibilities of Cabinet Members, the remit and alignment of panels may not support the best possible opportunity for effective overview and scrutiny.
- 1.2 Members of Cabinet and the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny panels have considered a range of options for a new structure. With general consensus in support of a single option, the Chairmen and Vice-Chairman have met with senior officers to explore how this could work in practice and are in agreement that a proposal to implement their preferred new structure should be considered by all three panels. If supported, changes to the Constitution will be required and can be submitted to Corporate Governance Panel and Council in December for approval. The changes can then be incorporated into the Constitution Review which is currently being progressed and are set out at Appendix A of this report.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Three different options were considered. Each of these proposed a total of three panels to include a 'Finance and Performance' panel. Option 1 proposed that this panel should be accompanied by 'Delivery' and 'Services' panels to reflect the Corporate Director responsibilities. Option 2 proposed 'Economy and Growth' and 'Communities and Customers' panels to align with the strategic priorities in the Corporate Plan and Option 3 proposed 'Internal' and 'External' panels.

3. VIEWS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY CHAIRMEN AND VICE-CHAIRMEN

- 3.1 The Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen are in unanimous agreement that Option 2 is their preferred option, as shown below:

Economy and Growth	Communities and Customers	Finance and Performance
Links to Corporate Plan Strategic Priorities: 'A strong local economy' 'Enabling sustainable growth'	Links to Corporate Plan Strategic Priorities: 'Working with our communities' 'Ensuring we are a customer focussed and service led Council' (the 'To ensure customer engagement drives service priorities and improvement' objective)	Links to Corporate Plan Strategic Priorities: 'Ensuring we are a customer focussed and service led Council' (the 'To become more business-like and efficient in the way we deliver services' objective)

- 3.2 This option is considered to have the clearest links to the Corporate Plan's strategic priorities and objectives, as indicated above.
- 3.3 The balance of items to panels and the impact of this on workload and the frequency of meetings have been carefully considered when reviewing options for a new structure. It is expected that the preferred option would result in a more balanced workload for the panels and their Members than the current structure. It is expected that most of the reports to the Finance and Performance Panel would be submitted on a quarterly cycle in line with business reporting processes but the quarterly reports are likely to generate additional items as needs are identified for more in-depth reviews and there would be other items to be considered by this panel throughout the year.

- 3.4 In order to assess the expected workload of each panel, the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen have analysed the work programmes of the current panels and a list of proposed new items drawn up at the Scrutiny Away Day. Key items have been allocated to the panels in Option 2 as shown in the table at 4.1.
- 3.5 It should be noted that the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions only lists items scheduled up to January so there will be other items for Cabinet which will need to be considered by Scrutiny panels that aren't listed here.
- 3.6 Different items will require different levels of input from the panels (e.g. some may require working groups to be set up or a Select Committee approach) so the number of items does not necessarily indicate the scale of the workload for each panel.
- 3.7 To help manage the workload, it is proposed that the Chairmen/Vice-Chairmen consider each item on the Notice of Key Executive Decisions individually and then determine whether reports to Cabinet need to be agenda items for their panels. For example, where panels have already been involved in developing a policy they may not need to discuss it again prior to Cabinet provided that they are confident that their views have been taken into account. The Chairmen/Vice-Chairmen would also like the capacity to allow them to aim to undertake two Task and Finish Groups per panel each year.
- 3.8 In amending the Constitution to introduce the new Scrutiny panel structure, it will be recommended that this should be less prescriptive than it currently is. This will help ensure that capacity, links to existing work programmes and the need for cross-panel working are taken into account when allocating new items to panels. Appendix 1 sets out proposed changes to the Constitution.

4. POSSIBLE ALLOCATION OF ITEMS TO NEW PANEL STRUCTURE

- 4.1 Agenda items will continue to go to the existing panels until the new structure is approved. As an example of how items would be distributed if the new structure is agreed, items due to go to the existing panels in November are listed against the most relevant new panel below:

Communities and Customers	Finance and Performance	Economy and Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable Housing Working Group report • Hinchingsbrooke Health Campus Presentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Performance Report (Quarter 2) – includes financial, project and Corporate Plan performance • Treasury Management 2015/16 Six Monthly Review • One Leisure Negotiations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Business Plan • Local Plan to 2036 update • Neighbourhood Plans & St Neots Neighbourhood Plan
<p style="text-align: center;">Joint items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport and Active Lifestyles Annual Report 2014-15 – this could be considered jointly as the report indicates the benefits of the service to its users as well as performance • Customer Service Strategy – this may impact on services provided but should also deliver improved value for money 		

- 4.2 Some of the key items expected to still be in progress in the new year, 'business as usual' subjects and new items proposed at the Scrutiny Away Day in February 2015 are likely to be allocated to the new panels as follows:

Communities and Customers	Finance and Performance	Economy and Growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Safety Partnership • Health agenda, including mental health, GP and hospital services (e.g. CCG and Hinchingsbrooke Financial and Operational Performance Reports) • Voluntary and community sector • Community empowerment • Welfare Reform • Fraud Prosecution Policy • Customer Services Monitoring Report • Service standards • Policing and crime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial Investment Strategy Business Plan • Project Management Select Committee 12month review • Draft Budget/MTFS • Final Budget/MTFS • Outturn financial reports • Shared services overview • Procurement Policy • Disposals and Acquisitions Policy • Energy Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Control shared service • Growth-related shared service (if proposed) • Flooding and flood risk • Planning Enforcement Review • Marketing Strategy and Branding for Huntingdonshire • Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership Growth and Infrastructure Thematic Group annual update • Community Infrastructure Levy • Infrastructure issues, including major roads • Supplementary Planning Documents (e.g. Design Guide) • Local Enterprise Partnership
<p>Joint items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review into car parking charges (a potential cross-panel item for all 3 panels) • Commercialisation agenda (a potential cross-panel item for all 3 panels) • Home Improvement Agency – Annual Report (Communities .../ Finance ...) • One Leisure Six Month update (Communities.../ Finance...) • Impacts of service restructures (Communities.../ Finance...) • Waste collection policies, litter policies and practices (Communities.../ Economy...) • Impact of growth on services (Communities.../ Economy) 		

- 4.3 It is likely that there will be a number of items where a cross-cutting approach involving two or more Overview and Scrutiny panels may be beneficial and the Chairmen/Vice-Chairmen are keen for them to work together where there are opportunities to do so.

- 4.4 It is expected that Cabinet's workplan will continue to be followed in general, with panels reviewing and commenting on recommendations prior to decisions being taken, although this won't necessarily happen in every case as explained in 3.7. Changes to the Constitution will allow items to be allocated to panels as appropriate, rather than having to follow the portfolio/service-based approach which is currently required.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The changes to the Overview and Scrutiny panel structure proposed will require relatively minor amendments to the Constitution as set out in Appendix 1. Setting up new panels will require some changes to our committee minutes system and website and work with the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen to establish agenda plans for the new panels.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The proposed change to the Constitution will need to be considered by the Corporate Governance Panel and then approved by full Council. Less prescriptive definitions of the panels and their remits would allow greater flexibility without further changes to the Constitution being required so the changes could be implemented in time for the new year.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Amendments to the Overview and Scrutiny panel structure would need to be accompanied by clear communication with Members, officers, partners and residents in announcing the changes. This would present a good opportunity to raise awareness of the role of overview and scrutiny at the District Council.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Members are invited to:
- endorse Option 2 as a new structure for Overview and Scrutiny panels, and
 - request that amendments to the Constitution to allow the new structure to be adopted be tabled for Corporate Governance Panel and full Council meetings in December.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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