

To: **Overview & Scrutiny Commission**  
**4 November 2021**

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## **Briefing Note**

### **Overview & Scrutiny Staffing Resource Head of Democratic & Registration Services**

#### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This briefing note has been prepared at the request of the Commission chair for inclusion in the evidence pack for agenda item 6, '[Context for budget proposal consultation for 2022](#)'.

#### **2 Officer support**

- 2.1 Officer support to the overview and scrutiny function for the provision of policy and research, organising and administering meetings and preparing review reports, is delivered by the overview and scrutiny section within Democratic & Registration Services.
- 2.2 In addition, as live streaming meetings requires an additional officer at each meeting, officers from the wider Democratic & Registration Services Team attend meetings to stream proceedings as a live event. This additional resource is provided from outside the core team to maintain the level of support for scrutiny activity. The amount of time this involves is difficult to calculate precisely as the staff have other responsibilities.
- 2.3 The function also benefits from a proportion of the Executive Director: Delivery's time, in his role as Statutory Scrutiny Officer (SSO), and the Head of Democratic & Registration Services' (HDRS) time supporting overview and scrutiny councillors and the team. This is also difficult to quantify.
- 2.4 There is also an element of unquantified departmental support for overview and scrutiny activity which can vary significantly depending on the review topic.
- 2.5 It is worth highlighting that throughout the pandemic most resources were spread more thinly, and several members of staff were seconded to support services critical to the council's response to the pandemic. The scrutiny work programme was re-profiled a number of times and review work was paused for a short period, however the number of Commission meetings increased.
- 2.6 Interim arrangements put in place to cover for the Governance & Scrutiny Officer seconded to another team have worked well. Throughout this time the number of hours devoted to support scrutiny has remained stable at a minimum of 86 hours per week. In recent months the Governance & Scrutiny Manager has had to spend more time supporting the new members of the team and on the Commission as the workload has increased significantly which has impacted on her other work. It was intended that the Governance & Scrutiny Officers would share supporting the Commission when it moved to more frequent meetings, but this has been difficult given that they are all managing a review whilst preparing for the next one. This is however still the intention.

2.7 The support arrangements have been reviewed following the resignation of one of the officers providing temporary cover. The table below shows the breakdown of core officer time pre-covid to date, with the new arrangements for October 2021 onwards. The figures also include a rough estimate of support provided by the SSO and HDRS.

	<b>2018-2019</b> (pre-covid)	<b>2019-2020</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>
<b>Governance &amp; Scrutiny Manager</b>	0.32 FTE	0.32 FTE	0.5 FTE	0.32 FTE
<b>Governance &amp; Scrutiny Officer</b>	2 FTE	2 FTE	0.60 FTE 0.65 FTE 0.75 FTE	3x0.68 FTE
<b>Statutory Scrutiny Officer</b>	0.2 FTE	0.2 FTE	0.2 FTE	0.2 FTE
<b>Head of Democratic &amp; Registration Services</b>	0.2 FTE	0.2 FTE	0.2 FTE	0.2 FTE
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.72 FTE</b>	<b>2.72 FTE</b>	<b>2.9 FTE</b>	<b>2.73 FTE</b>

2.8 The cost of this support is currently £163,452 p.a.

#### **Overview & Scrutiny activity**

2.9 The tables below set out the number of meetings for the Commission and its Panels for the past three full years and for the first six months of 2021-2022. This shows a significant increase in the number of meetings over this period.

<b>Overview &amp; Scrutiny Commission</b>			
<b>2018-2019</b>	<b>2019-2020</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022 to date</b> <b>(6 months)</b>
5 meetings No review activity	6 meetings Climate Change review commenced	10 meetings 3 reviews completed – recommendations to Executive	5 meetings held 5 scheduled No review activity
2 over 2 hrs	2 over 2 hrs	8 over 2 hours	1 over 2 hrs to date
Average 1.5 hrs per meeting	Average 1:40 hrs per meeting	Average 2:20 hrs per meeting	Average 1:10 hrs per meeting to date
<b>Total = 7:55 hrs</b>	<b>Total = 9:45 hrs</b>	<b>Total = 20:20 hrs</b>	<b>Total = 5:50 hrs to date</b>

2.10 The Commission is scheduled to hold 10 meetings in 2022-2023. Every additional meeting held puts pressure on the available support and impacts other work. There is no capacity to support more than 10 Commission meetings without reducing support to panel activity.

<b>Panels</b>			
<b>2018-2019</b>	<b>2019-2020</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>
16 meetings held across 4 panels	14 meetings held across 3 panels	25 meetings held across 3 panels	12 meetings held across 3 panels to date (6 months)
3 reviews – no recommendations generated	2 reviews – recommendations to Executive 1 review – no recommendations generated	3 reviews - recommendations to Executive	2 reviews - recommendations to Executive 1 review near completion 1 review underway and 2 reviews due to be launched

- 2.11 Panel activity also increased as work began to deliver the work programme. Activity so far this year is consistent with the level of activity last year. Careful management of the work programme by the Commission should continue to allow available support to be tailored to agreed activity.

### **3 Consultation and Other Considerations**

#### Legal Advice

- 3.1 N/A

#### Financial Advice

- 3.2 There are no financial implications arising from this briefing note.

#### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 3.3 N/A

#### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 3.4 There are no strategic risk management issues arising directly from this briefing note.

#### Climate Change Implications

- 3.5 N/A

#### Background Papers

None

#### Contact for further information

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