

To: **The Overview & Scrutiny Commission**
6 July 2023

STATUTORY SCRUTINY OFFICER REPORT
Executive Director: Delivery

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 Following the result of the election in May 2023 the new administration appointed members to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission. The Chair and Vice Chair have requested that the first task for the Commission would be to discuss ways of working, including the number of Commission meetings per year, and how to carry out scrutiny reviews by reviewing the following documents:
- Appendix A - Overview and Scrutiny 2019-2023 – report on the four-year term of the previous administration
 - Appendix B - Scrutiny Panel Review Flowchart

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 **That the Commission agrees to reduce the number of O&S Commission meetings from 10 to 5 per year.**
- 2.2 **That the Commission takes account of the work undertaken by the previous Overview & Scrutiny Commission and uses it to discuss how they may focus their work programme in the future.**

3 Reasons for Recommendation(S)

- 3.1 Reducing the number of meetings per year would allow members to review the implementation of recommendations from previous reviews, gain a better understanding of the work the Commission carries out and to carry out some deep dive reviews.
- 3.2 An understanding of scrutiny work undertaken by the previous administration and how scrutiny reviews are conducted will enhance planning for new ways of working and approaches to undertaking scrutiny reviews in the future.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Retaining ten meetings per year is another option but this would not allow a period of time to upskill Commission members about the work of scrutiny or much time to review if recommendations from previous scrutiny reviews have been implemented.
- 4.2 All planned scrutiny reviews were conducted prior to the end of the previous administration, with the exception of the Adult Social Care review, which had a scope agreed by the O&S Commission in January 2023. Commission members could opt to carry out this scrutiny review but it may not reflect the priorities of the new administration.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The significant change in administration of Bracknell Forest Council has presented officers with an unprecedented situation. Members, officers, and the whole Council

are working together to ensure a smooth transition. However, it is recognised that 28 new Councillors out of 41 will require significant training to feel able to carry out their duties. There has also been a change in officer support to the Commission so it is vital everyone feels able to support each other.

- 5.2 One of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission's key roles is to undertake focussed work programming to ensure that scrutiny activity contributes effectively to the Council Plan objectives.
- 5.3 In preparation for Overview and Scrutiny activities to commence Commission members are asked to review the previous four-year work programme report - *Appendix A*. They are also asked to review the flowchart about how topic reviews are chosen and carried out – *Appendix B*. The aim of this agenda item is to discuss:
- Departmental capacity to support review activity preparations from July 2023;
 - New Councillors taking on significant roles and feeling that they have the required training and skillset;
 - A reduction in the number of Overview and Scrutiny Commission meetings per year whilst still enabling Councillors to carry out their statutory responsibilities;
 - How to choose and carry out topics for scrutiny reviews.
- 5.4 It has been suggested that the Commission should reduce the number of meetings which take place a year from 10 to 5. This will allow the new administration time to attend training and ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge to complete scrutiny in a meaningful way.
- 5.7 Discussions will be held over the coming months to discuss ways of suggesting and selecting topics for review, endeavouring to make sure they align to the Council Plan.
- 5.8 A Member, officer or member of the public can suggest a topic for inclusion in the work programme. They will be required to complete and submit a proforma to the overview & scrutiny team.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3 These are included in this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 Not required for this report.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 Effective scrutiny is important to the successful functioning of local democracy by securing the efficient delivery of Council services and driving improvements. A robust work programme is essential in order to ensure that overview and scrutiny activity contributes successfully to the work of the Council. Poor scrutiny can be indicative of wider governance, leadership and/or service failure.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.6 The recommendations in Section 2 above are expected to:

Reduce emissions of CO₂

The reasons the O&S Commission believes that this will reduce emissions is because scrutiny reviews will hold the Executive to account on its commitments in its Council Plan, which are likely to include manifesto commitments.

Health & Wellbeing Considerations

- 6.7 The recommendations in Section 2 above are expected to consider health and wellbeing issues for residents, with the aim of improving outcomes for residents, by holding the Executive to account on its commitments in its Council Plan, which are likely to include manifesto commitments.

Background Papers

None

Contact for further information

Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery - 01344 355621

Kevin. gibbbs@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Ann Moore, Assistant Director: Delivery – 01344 352260