

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 9 JANUARY 2018 FROM THE REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL MEETING ON 12 DECEMBER 2017

RD62: Scrutiny Arrangements Task Group Cabinet Report

The Chief Executive presented the Cabinet report which detailed the conclusions from the Scrutiny Structures Task Group over a year on from the Scrutiny restructure which had taken place in 2016. The report considered the responses from a questionnaire on Scrutiny structures which had been issued to all Councillors. 50% of Members had responded to the questionnaire.

The Chief Executive provided detail of the recommendations which the Task Group would be presenting to Cabinet and the Panel were invited to consider the proposals and make any appropriate recommendations to Cabinet. It was noted that the Report had also been considered by the Environment and Community Panel and would be considered by the Corporate Performance Panel both of which would have the opportunity to make recommendations to Cabinet. The recommendations put forward by the Environment and Community Panel were outlined to the Panel

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive for his report and invited questions and comments from the Panel, as summarised below.

Councillor Manning referred to recommendation two: the training of Audit Committee Members. He commented that a lot of training was made available to Members, often prior to Audit Committee meetings. He felt that the training was invaluable and it should continue.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Chief Executive explained that recommendation seven proposed a change from the existing arrangements on how Chairman and Vice Chairman of Panels were appointed. Currently they were elected by their own Panel and the recommendation was for the Leader to appoint the Chairman and for the Panel to elect their own Vice Chairman. The Chief Executive informed the Panel that the Environment and Community Panel had not supported this recommendation and instead recommended that the existing arrangements be retained.

Councillor Crofts, who was a member of the Task Group, commented that he felt that when Panels appointed their own Chairman and Vice Chairman, Members could sometimes be lobbied by other members on who to vote for. He felt that the Leader would know the strengths of Members and therefore be in the best position to nominate them. Councillor Crofts commented that he supported recommendation seven and explained that if the Chairman was nominated by the Leader it would be easier for the Chairman to be removed from position if they were not performing to the standards set out in the terms of reference document.

Councillor Middleton agreed with the comments made by Councillor Crofts. He commented that it was important that the right candidate was selected to ensure efficient scrutiny and hold the Cabinet to account and he felt that the Leader was best placed to do this as he had overall knowledge of the strengths of Members.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Chief Executive explained that there was a section on the questionnaire for 'any other comments' and comments received had been wide ranging. He felt that it was difficult to distil any common themes from the general comments therefore the Task Group had concentrated on the comments made on specific questions.

The Chairman referred to the workload of the Regeneration and Development Panel and if meeting on a four weekly basis would be more beneficial. The Leader of the Council explained that as part of the original Scrutiny review a six weekly cycle of meetings had been agreed. Subsequently less meetings and resources had been factored into the budget resulting in efficiency savings. The Chairman explained that if there was urgent business which needed to be considered the Panel could call a special meeting.

Councillor Mrs Watson explained that sometimes Regeneration and Development meetings were too long. She felt that if a meeting lasted over two hours, Members could start to lose focus. She commented that she would prefer more regular meetings so that items could be discussed in depth.

Councillor Middleton commented that the Panel needed to prioritise their workload and focus on scrutinising policy efficiently. He felt that the six weekly cycle did work and reminded the Panel that it was within their remit to be able to set up Task Groups or Informal Working Groups. He explained that if there was an area of work which needed to be explored in depth, a small group of Councillors could be tasked to investigate and report their findings back to the Panel.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Councillor Devereux explained that he had participated in the Task Group and was disappointed that only 50% of Members had completed the questionnaire. He hoped that the recommendations from the Task Group would encourage all Members to engage in scrutiny, work to influence policy and hold Cabinet members to account.

RESOLVED: That the Regeneration and Development Panel support the recommendations to Cabinet as follows:

- 1) That all the current arrangements continue with the exception of those items listed below.
- 2) That the attendance of Audit Members for Audit training should be obligatory as it is for Planning and Licensing initial training.
- 3) That Panels be encouraged to use the powers available to them and therefore make clear recommendations on items coming before them so they can be incorporated into reports in the process of being prepared, or taken into account at the Cabinet meeting.
- 4) That Panels should consider their own performance indicators and they be encouraged to monitor the progress in line with the Corporate Objectives through that route.
- 5) That the number of post implementation reviews undertaken be monitored by the Joint Chairs meetings.
- 6) That in working on policy development and reviews and project programme work, Panels be encouraged to have discussions with portfolio holders:
 - For example – Cabinet Members could attend a Panel meeting at the beginning of the year to discuss their plans for the year in order to incorporate potential items into work plans in accordance with the Business Plan.
- 7) That the Leader nominate the Panel/Committee Chairs for agreement at Council with the Vice-Chairs to be appointed by the Panels/Committee.
- 8) That terms of reference be approved for Chairs of Scrutiny bodies (set out as an appendix). (NB they include the points raised in question 15 set out in the report).
- 9) That the appraisal of Chairs be investigated.
- 10) That the amended arrangements be reviewed after a further 12 months of operation.