

CAB 13: REVIEW OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Councillor Daubney presented a report which explained that in 2014 a Corporate Peer Challenge was undertaken at the Borough Council. One of the issues which emerged quite strongly from the review was a fairly widespread concern amongst the Members who participated that the current Overview on Scrutiny arrangements were not particularly effective. An in depth review of the Council's overview and scrutiny function was subsequently commissioned from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS). The report summarised the main findings and recommendations arising from the review and recommends a way forward to seek to enhance the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny arrangements.

The Chief Executive summed up the recommendations of the CfPS and explained that he proposed to hold a workshop of Members to ascertain their views on future structures. He suggested that a Task Group be set up to consider the findings of the workshop, and make recommendations to Cabinet and Council on future structures.

Councillor Daubney drew attention to the full debate on the matter at the Resources and Performance Panel.

Under Standing Order 34 Councillor Moriarty addressed the Cabinet in that he was pleased Councillors would be able to contribute to the process when the opportunity arose.

Councillor Daubney drew attention to the comment from the Resources and Performance Panel that they disliked the term Task and Finish Group, and had requested that it be called a Working Group. Councillor Beales asked for clarification on the difference between the two types of bodies, and expressed the wish that as many members as possible would participate in the workshop to make their views known.

The Democratic Services Manager explained that constitutionally, a Task Group was a proportional body which could be set up by any of the main Council bodies, and an Informal Working Group was a body which could be set up by Scrutiny to carry out a piece of work for them, and did not have to be proportional.

Under Standing Order 34 Councillor Mrs Mellish informed Cabinet that she had attended the Resources and Performance Panel and she felt that the term Task and Finish was the issue, whereas a Task Group would be acceptable. She also commented on other elements of the recommendations such as the sifting meetings involving the whole Committee or Panel or the reduction of number of meetings.

Councillor Lord Howard sought clarification on how the matter would progress. It was explained that once the recommendations were approved by Council a workshop would be set up, from which the findings would be reported to the new Task Group which would then consider them and report through the process to Council for a final decision.

Councillor Beales drew attention to what he felt was the major thread in that the Panels were dominated by Cabinet reports. He commented that he hoped the

structures would ensure Cabinet would still be scrutinised in some way, and that he hoped public speaking would be introduced to Cabinet and Scrutiny meetings. He expressed the hope that it would be dealt with in an open and accountable manner.

RECOMMENDED: 1) That the findings of the CfPS review be noted.

2) That officers be instructed to arrange a workshop for Members with the CfPS to consider in more depth their report and examples of good practice from similar authorities.

3) That a 9 Member, Council Proportional Task Group be set up to consider the CfPS report and the outcome of the Member workshop and make recommendations to Cabinet.

4) That a further report be brought to Cabinet to finalise revised arrangements for the performance of the overview and scrutiny process within the Borough Council.