

## SCRUTINY REVIEW

Dear Councillor

You will recall that last year we undertook a review of the Council's Scrutiny and Policy Development process and subsequently made a number of changes to the way we worked. At the time the changes were made a commitment was given that a review of the impact would be undertaken a year after implementation and, if necessary, further changes would be made.

As part of this review, we are asking you to complete a short survey and return this to Wendy Vincent in Democratic Services.

**1. Abolition of Cabinet Scrutiny Committee and enhanced scrutiny role transferred to Corporate Performance Panel**

How has this impacted upon Members' ability to scrutinise decisions made by Council (please tick one answer)?

10	Improved Members' ability to scrutinise Cabinet decisions
15	No discernible impact
6	Reduced Members' ability to scrutinise Cabinet decisions

**2. Abolition of the Scrutiny & Overview Liaison Committee (Joint Committee of Cabinet Scrutiny and the three Review Panels)**

How has the abolition of this Committee and its replacement by 'informal' meetings for the Panel Chairs impacted upon the effective agenda management of the three scrutiny and policy development panels (please tick one answer)?

7	Not all
8	Very little
1	A small number of issues are not addressed
4	Quite a few issues are not addressed
11	Don't know

3. **If you ticked the third or fourth answer in 2. above, which of the following do you think would be most likely to lead to improvements?**

2	Reinstate the formal Scrutiny & Overview Committee
1	Regular Joint Panel Chair/Vice Chair meetings to manage forward agendas
2	Cabinet Reports to be automatically directed to the appropriate panel by officers

4. **Splitting Audit Committee from the Resources & Performance (now Corporate Performance) Panel**

Do you feel that this has impacted positively or negatively on the effectiveness of the Member Audit role (tick as many boxes as apply)?

15	Improved the focus of Audit Committee
11	Gives more time to carry out the Audit Committee role effectively
14	Enables Audit Committee members to develop a greater level of expertise and knowledge
9	Has made no discernible difference
0	Has resulted in the Audit Committee being less effective

Why do you say that?

5. **There are fewer Members (6 less) on Audit Committee than there were on the old R&P Panel.**

Has this helped or hindered its work?

9	Helped
5	Made no difference
0	Hindered
17	Don't know

6. **How can we best ensure that the Members of the Audit Committee have the appropriate skills and understanding required to effectively carry out the Audit Committee function?**

5	Careful selection of Panel membership by the respective political groups
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6	More training to be provided to Audit Committee Members
18	Attendance at Audit training to be a requirement of all Members of the Committee
1	Other – please specify

**7. Remit of Corporate Performance Panel extended to include:-**

- Power to formally ‘call in’ a Cabinet decision
- To undertake post implementation reviews of new policies and major projects
- Monitoring of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

Do you consider that CPP is best placed to monitor the MTFP or would this fit more appropriately with the Audit Committee?

18	Retain with CPP
12	Allocate to Audit Committee

**8. Do you consider that CPP is undertaking sufficient post implementation reviews of major projects?**

5	Yes
14	No
12	Don't know

**9. Do you consider that decisions of Cabinet and individual Portfolio Holders are being effectively held to account through use of the CPP call-in powers?**

9	Yes
10	To some degree
12	No

Why do you say that and how do you think things could be improved?

**10. The Scrutiny Review Task Group considers that the Panels should increase their focus on the progress towards the achievement of the Council's Corporate Objectives using the Performance Indicators as a measure of progress**

Do you agree with this suggestion?

28	Yes
3	No

If yes, would this be best achieved by each panel considering and examining the performance indicators that fall within their respective remit or by CPP considering all of the indicators?

25	Each panel to take 'ownership' of its own indicators
3	CPP to have responsibility for all performance information

**11. Increased focus of Panel work onto Policy & Project/Programme Development**

Do you feel that Panels are now effectively engaging in the development of new projects/initiatives/policies?

16	Yes
15	No real improvement

Why do you say that? Can you give an example where this has worked well?

**12. A number of Structural/Procedural changes were made**

Considering each one in turn, do you feel that they have worked effectively?

**12(a) Move from 4-weekly Cabinet/Panel/Council cycle of meetings to a 6-weekly cycle**

8	Yes, this is working well
15	Not noticed any real difference
8	No, this is not working well

Why do you say that?

**12(b) Panels elect their own Chairs/Vice Chairs instead of being appointed by the Leader of the Council**

9	Yes, has worked well
9	No real impact

11	Not worked very well
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Why do you say that? Do you have an alternative suggestion?

**12(c) Minutes of meetings shorter and more focused. Are you content with the revised minutes format?**

23	Yes
8	No

Why do you say that?

**13. Delegation to Portfolio Holders for decisions where they relate exclusively to the direct implementation of government legislation**

Are you happy with the way in which this is operating?

25	Yes
6	No

**14. Opposition groups given the ability to place items on Panel Agendas 'as of right'**

Has the arrangement whereby opposition groups now have the ability to place items on Panel agendas 'as of right' worked effectively?

20	Yes
11	No

Why do you say that?

**15. The Scrutiny Review Task Group at its first meeting has suggested that the role and duties of Panel Chairs could include an expectation that Panel Chairs will (please tick all that you would support)(rather than it being the Chair's choice as it is now)**

21	Attend Cabinet Meetings to explain and advocate proposals or recommendations arising from their Panel meetings, including any proposed changes to Cabinet Report recommendations
25	Meet regularly with the Chair/Vice Chairs of all three Panels to plan and manage workloads and cross Panel issues
19	Proactively manage the Panel agendas with the support of the Lead Officer

20	Make greater use of 'workshop formats' to enable Members to examine new policies/project concepts in greater depth
14	Panels to undertake a scrutiny role with regards to the delivery of public services which are delivered by other public bodies in the Borough

**16. Other suggestions for consideration include (please tick all of the suggestions you would support)**

10	Cabinet Members rather than officers to present reports to Panels
16	Closer working with Executive (Cabinet) Members on Policy Development
8	Panel Chairs to be chosen by a ballot of all Members (as opposed to only those Members on the Panel itself)
9	Panel Chairs to be selected by the Leader
16	Introduction of a 'performance review/appraisal' of Panel Chairs/Vice Chairs

**17. Do you have any other suggestions to help to improve the Council's Scrutiny and Policy Review functions? Please outline**