

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE**

DATE: **WEDNESDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2014**

REPORT BY: **MEMBER ENGAGEMENT MANAGER**

SUBJECT: **SCOPING THE REVIEW OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To determine the scope of the 2014 review of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Structure.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 Flintshire has been operating with its current six committee Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) structure since the last review in 2010 (although the Co-ordinating Committee was subsumed into the Constitution Committee in 2012). The current terms of reference are contained in Article 6 of the Constitution and attached as Appendix A of this report.

2.02 At the 2013 Annual Meeting, in the light of the new operating model and senior management structure of the Council, it was recognised that there was now a need for a review of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees. It was resolved that the Chief Executive would prepare a scoping paper for the Constitution Committee

2.03 The current Overview & Scrutiny structure is of six committees, which between them cover all of the Authority's 600 plus services and also have the ability to engage with external bodies, using the general power available in section 21 (2) (e) of the Local Government Act 2000.

2.04 Section 21(1) of the Local Government Act 2000 requires a principal council to have at least one Overview & Scrutiny committee.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 A number of models for how our O&S structure might look for the future could be suggested, even at this early stage. However, it is acknowledged that a Member Opinion survey has not been carried out to elicit their views: the last one was in 2009/10.

3.02 There is a particular concern that following the changes to the operating model, that some of the Cabinet Members and Chief Officers are having to attend more than one Overview & Scrutiny committee. This is not a good use of already stretched resources, hence the inclusion of the statement ' We must have efficiency of attendance from Cabinet and Chief Officer Team members (at Overview & Scrutiny committee meetings'.

3.03 That being so, and to provide the officers with the design principles for a review, it would be beneficial for us to consider the following statements and questions:

1. Overview & Scrutiny must have the capacity to cover all of our internal services and external challenges.
2. Overview & Scrutiny must have the capacity, ability and enthusiasm to take a full and active part in our Improvement agenda.
3. We must ensure efficiency of attendance from Cabinet and Chief Officer Team (COT) members at Overview & Scrutiny committee meetings.
4. All of the committees should have broadly similar workloads.
5. Overview & Scrutiny must have a clearly defined and valued role in corporate governance and improvement.
6. Overview & Scrutiny must have the ability and capacity to provided well evidenced solutions to recognised problems.
7. Overview & Scrutiny must be member led, whilst taking into account the needs of the organisation and the views of the public, our partners and our regulators.
8. Overview & Scrutiny must be credible to all our members, our public, partners and regulators.
9. Overview & Scrutiny must be able to balance small pictures - detailed scrutiny - with big pictures -more imaginative overview.
10. Overview & Scrutiny must have flexibility, durability and appetite for change.
11. Should the O&S structure focus be the Council's Improvement priorities or the operating model?
12. Is six committees of fifteen Members the right number or should this be reduced or increased?

13. What will the officers need to support change and help them to implement it?
14. What does the public need to comment on/influence change through consultation on policy and service reviews.

3.03 Depending on how Members respond to the questions/statements above, it may be necessary to conduct further research into this issue. However, if the responses to the questions elicit answers which provide clear guidance, then a report setting out a number of different O&S structural models could be submitted to the 28th January 2014 meeting, or an earlier special meeting if so required.

As a first stage in consultation, the statements and questions which are intended to form the design principles for further work, were forwarded to the political group leaders and the chairs of the Overview & Scrutiny committees for them to comment. The responses which were received are included as appendix 2.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 That the committee consider the draft guiding principles and questions above, together with the leading Member feedback in Appendix 2 and provide guidance to the officers as to how this issue should be progressed.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 None directly at this stage.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 None directly at this stage.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 None directly at this stage.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 None directly at this stage.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None directly at this stage.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 Publication of this report constitutes consultation.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 The political group leaders, Overview & Scrutiny Chairs and appropriate senior officers have been consulted.

12.00 APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Article 6 of the Constitution – Overview & Scrutiny Committees

Appendix 2: Responses to initial consultation from leading Members.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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