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To: Cllr Rita Johnson (Chair)

Councillors: Glyn Banks, Marion Bateman, Chris Bithell, Clive Carver, Bob Connah, Jean Davies, Rob Davies, Ian Dunbar, David Healey, Joe Johnson, Ted Palmer, Mike Peers, Michelle Perfect, Neville Phillips, Paul Shotton, Ian Smith, David Williams, David Wisinger and Arnold Woolley

11 October 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Constitution and Democratic Services Committee which will be held at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 17th October, 2018 in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA to consider the following items

A G E N D A

1 APOLOGIES

Purpose: To receive any apologies.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Purpose: To receive any Declarations and advise Members accordingly.

3 MINUTES (Pages 3 - 8)

Purpose: To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 21st June 2018

4 WALES AUDIT OFFICE STUDY – OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY – FIT FOR THE FUTURE. (Pages 9 - 30)

Purpose: To enable the committee to consider the Wales Audit Office Study – Overview & Scrutiny – Fit for the Future final report.

5 **REQUEST FOR CO-OPTION TO THE EDUCATION & YOUTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** (Pages 31 - 34)

Purpose: For the committee to consider a request for a member of the Flintshire Youth Council to be co-opted to the Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

6 **MEMBER DEVELOPMENT AND ENGAGEMENT UPDATE** (Pages 35 - 38)

Purpose: To provide the committee with an update

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Robins', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Robert Robins
Democratic Services Manager

CONSTITUTION AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE **21 JUNE 2018**

Minutes of the meeting of the Constitution and Democratic Services Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Mold on Thursday, 21 June 2018.

PRESENT: Councillor Rita Johnson (Chair)

Councillors: Marion Bateman, Chris Bithell, Clive Carver, Bob Connah, Jean Davies, Rob Davies, Ian Dunbar, David Healey, Joe Johnson, Mike Peers, Paul Shotton, David Williams, David Wisinger and Arnold Woolley.

SUBSTITUTES: Councillor Vicky Perfect for Michelle Perfect

APOLOGIES: Councillors: Aaron Shotton, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Ted Palmer, Neville Phillips and Ian Smith

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors: Bernie Attridge, Christine Jones and Patrick Heesom (as observers)

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Officer (Governance), Democratic Services Manager, Senior Manager Human Resources & Organisational Development, and Democratic Services Officer

1. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

Councillor Joe Johnson nominated Councillor Marion Bateman as Vice-Chair of the Committee and this was duly seconded.

Councillor Bob Connah nominated Councillor Arnold Woolley and this was seconded.

On being put to the vote Councillor Marion Bateman was appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Marion Bateman be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2018 were submitted.

Accuracy

Page 3, Councillor Clive Carver asked that the minutes be amended to record that Councillor Jean Davies had been present at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the above amendment the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. EXTENDING THE CARE FIRST SCHEME TO COUNTY COUNCILLORS

The Democratic Services Manager introduced the report to inform the Committee of the employee Care First service which could be extended to provide support to Members. He provided background information and explained that whilst County Councillors were not employees, they were part of the County Council and it was reasonable from a well-being perspective to extend access of the service to them.

The Democratic Services Manager referred to the main considerations, as detailed in the report, and explained that the service was free of charge to the individual and available 24 hours a day throughout the year by phone or online. He advised that Care First was designed to provide information and support to individuals with a wide range of work, family, and personal issues.

Councillor Paul Shotton supported the initiative to extend the service to Members.

Councillor Mike Peers commented on the matter of confidentiality and asked if the Authority was provided with information regarding users of the service. The Senior Manager, Human Resources & Organisational Development, explained that the Authority was not advised who accessed the service without the individual's consent but statistical information was provided to assist the Authority to identify any developing areas of concern its workforce may have within or outside the workplace with a view to providing support if needed.

Councillor Chris Bithell said the Authority had a duty of care to all its staff and spoke in support of the service which he said included school based employees.

In response to a question from Councillor Ian Dunbar concerning the provision of on-going support, the Senior Manager, Human Resources & Organisational Development explained that Care First advisors were professionally qualified to provide continued support or passport to other appropriate services if required.

In response to a comment from Councillor Clive Carver concerning resource implications, the Democratic Services Manager advised that the Care First service could be extended to Councillors at a cost of £1.76 per head as part of the Authority's existing contract. This was an annual flat rate payment which did not alter on usage.

The Senior Manager, Human Resources & Organisational Development reported that the Care First service was welcomed and promoted by the Trades

Unions and was part of an all Wales programme offered to all local authorities. She explained that the service enhanced existing provision across the Council to support the health and well-being of its employees

RESOLVED:

That the Care First service which was available to employees also be made available to County Councillors.

5. CALL-IN DURING THE BUDGET PROCESS

The Chief Officer (Governance) introduced the report to consider whether to impose any limitations on the use of call-in during the budget setting process. He provided background information and advised that a range of options existed for placing limits on call-in such as:

- prohibited call in for budget decisions; or
- limiting call in to issues that have not already been considered by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC); or
- limiting call in to stages 1 and 2 of the new budget process so that the final 3rd stage can be delayed

In addition to the above the Chief Officer (Governance) advised that the Committee may consider that no change was required and therefore decide status quo.

The Chief Officer explained that the new budget process allowed Members to consider proposals at all Member workshops and at Overview and Scrutiny Committees at each of the 3 stages. If a Member was concerned about a budget proposal at stages 1 or 2 then it could be deferred for further detailed consideration at a later stage. He continued that this should be sufficient to enable detailed scrutiny of proposals, although at times it was not always clear what the full implications of a decision would be especially when considering the potential cumulative impact.

Councillor Chris Bithell expressed the view that the current arrangements were adequate and did not need changing. He proposed status quo for the time being.

Councillor Ian Dunbar said he saw merit in each of the three options put forward above and suggested that they all be considered with a view to providing one combined option which could be put forward for further consideration.

Councillor Mike Peers referred to the Welsh Audit Office scrutiny report and said the contents should be considered before making any change to the current arrangements and supported the status quo position. He commented that more work needed to be undertaken on the budget consultation process and said that a timeline was needed for the budget setting process in March 2019.

Councillor Arnold Woolley drew attention to the last paragraph on page 17 of the report and reiterated the statement that "ultimately it is a matter for Councillors to

decide whether to submit a call in request". He concurred that the system was to an extent "self policing" and that Overview and Scrutiny Committees were quick to reject any call-in which lacked merit.

During discussion Members expressed further views in support of retaining the current position. When put to the vote the proposal by Councillor Chris Bithell for status quo for the time being was agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee recommends status quo to County Council in relation to call in.

6. AUDIT AND OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY LIAISON GROUP

The Democratic Services Manager introduced the report to inform of the arrangements for liaison between the Audit and Overview and Scrutiny functions. He advised that following a meeting between officers for Internal Audit and Overview & Scrutiny, it was agreed that there was merit in resurrecting the liaison meeting approach, with the Chair and Vice-Chair of Audit Committee and each of the six Overview & Scrutiny Committees being invited to attend, alongside officers from both teams. Meetings would be scheduled on a quarterly basis and would ensure that issues of interest to both Audit and Overview & Scrutiny, such as the management of strategic risk, were properly dealt with. The Committee was asked to support the initiative.

Councillor Woolley suggested that the wording "if required for good reason" be included at the end of the recommendation.

When put to the vote the Committee supported the initiative and agreed that the wording "if required for good reason" be included in the recommendation.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee supports regular meetings of the Audit and Overview & Scrutiny Chairs and appropriate officers if required for good reason.

7. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Democratic Services Manager presented the Member Development update report to inform the Committee of recent and forthcoming Member development events and initiatives. He explained that following last year's elections the Induction Programme was designed to provide new and returning Members with essential knowledge to function effectively as Councillors. Regular update reports on progress on the Member Development events had been reported to the Committee and if Members had any suggestions for future events they could contact the Democratic Services Manager to discuss.

The Democratic Services Manager drew attention to the Member Development events held in May and June 2018 and to the further events to be held during July and September this year, as detailed in the report. He also referred to the training to be

made available to Members on Domestic Violence Awareness and a workshop to be held on 17 September, on Corporate Parenting which would include a presentation on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) awareness. Members were reminded that in addition to the Welsh language training offered through Coleg Cambria, they were welcome to participate in the staff lunchtime Welsh Conversation Group.

Councillor Chris Bithell commented on the low attendance at Member Development events which had been held during the day. He expressed appreciation for the Welsh Language Conversation Group sessions which Members were invited to attend.

In response to the comments on attendance the Democratic Service Manager acknowledged that the issue of low attendance at some Member Development events, for a number of reasons, was an on-going problem. He explained that morning, afternoon and evening sessions were provided where possible to accommodate Members' needs, however, the provision of evening sessions for all training events was not possible. The Democratic Services Manager explained that the Chief Executive had said that if a Member was unable to attend a training session that he/she was specifically interested in, officers could provide a condensed one-to-one session to address that need.

Councillor Paul Shotton suggested that Group Leaders could address the issue of low attendance at development events with Members.

In response to a concern raised by Councillor David Healey regarding planning matters and Town and Community Councils, the Democratic Services Manager agreed to write to all Clerks of Town and Community Councils to inform that meetings of the Authority's Planning Committee are available for the public to view on webcast on the Authority's website with the corresponding agenda and application reports.

Councillor Mike Peers suggested that all Member Development events be included on the weekly diary which was provided by the Member Services team to Members in advance of the scheduled meetings and events being held.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the progress with Member Development events be noted;
- (b) That suggestions for future Member Development events be discussed with the Democratic Services Manager; and
- (c) That the Democratic Services Manager writes to all Clerks of Town and Community Councils to inform that meetings of the Authority's Planning Committee are available for the public to view on webcast on the Authority's website.

8. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the press and no members of the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2pm and ended at 3.00pm)

.....
Chair



CONSTITUTION & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday, 17 October 2018
Report Subject	Wales Audit Office Study – Overview & Scrutiny – Fit for the Future.
Cabinet Member	Not applicable
Report Author	Democratic Services Manager
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a result of carrying out their study of Overview & Scrutiny in Flintshire during the autumn of 2017, the Wales Audit Office have made four proposals for ways in which the Council could improve the effectiveness of its Overview & Scrutiny function, to make it better placed to meet current and future challenges.

These are:

- P1 The Council should undertake regular self-assessment of its overview and scrutiny function, to consider its impact, and identify areas for improvement.
- P2 Further develop scrutiny forward work programming to:
 - ensure that the method of scrutiny is best suited to the topic area and the outcome desired, and consider more innovative methods for undertaking scrutiny activity.
- P3 Overview and scrutiny committees should further improve their arrangements for promoting the engagement of the public and other stakeholders in scrutiny activity.
- P4 The Council should review the support arrangements for overview and scrutiny in light of current and future challenges.

The Committee is invited to consider and comment on those recommendations. Which are constructive and, if the committee is supportive, intend to examine how they could inform future Overview & Scrutiny work, including the development of a self- assessment template for use by Overview & Scrutiny committees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the committee considers and responds to the four recommendations made by the Wales Audit Office in their <i>Overview & Scrutiny – Fit for the Future?</i> Study report.
2	That the officers be tasked with examining how the proposals could inform future Overview & Scrutiny work, including the development of a self-assessment template for use by Overview & Scrutiny committees.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE WALES AUDIT OFFICE STUDY – OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY – FIT FOR THE FUTURE? FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT
1.01	During the autumn of 2017, the Wales Audit Office conducted a study of Overview & Scrutiny across the 22 Welsh principal councils. The study involved interviews with individuals and groups of both Members and officers, document research and observation at a small number of committee meetings.
1.02	The study, <i>Overview & Scrutiny – Fit for the Future?</i> was a follow up to the previous study - <i>Good Scrutiny? Good Question!</i> which the Wales Audit Office carried out in 2012/13.
1.03	In Flintshire, interviews were held with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Leader, • a group of Cabinet Members, • a group of Overview & Scrutiny Committee Chairs • a group of experienced Members and co-optees who had served in the 2013-2017 Council • a group of Members first elected in 2017 • the Chief Executive • the Chief Officer, Governance • the Democratic Services Manager • the Corporate Business and Communications Executive Officer
1.04	The intended benefits of undertaking the project were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of approaches to embedding the sustainable development principle into scrutiny processes and practices to inform practice sharing and future work of the Auditor General in relation to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act; • providing assurance that scrutiny functions are well placed to respond to current and future challenges and expectations; • helping to embed effective scrutiny by elected members from the start of this new electoral cycle; and • providing insight into how well councils have responded to the findings of the previous Scrutiny Improvement Study.

1.05	<p>Wales Audit Office had provided councils with suggested discussion questions before the interviews and group work. These were;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny environment: Is the Council creating a supportive environment to enable scrutiny to operate effectively? • Scrutiny practice: Is the operation of the scrutiny function well planned, efficient, objective and based on evidence from a range of sources? • Scrutiny impact: Is overview and scrutiny activity contributing to improvements in performance and decision-making?
1.06	<p>The finding of the Wales Audit Office are :</p> <p>In this review we concluded the Council values its overview and scrutiny function and is taking steps to promote effective scrutiny, however better work planning, use of a wider range of scrutiny methods and routine evaluation of the impact of scrutiny activity will help in responding to current and future challenges. We came to this conclusion because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Council has created a positive environment for Overview and Scrutiny to operate effectively, but continuous work is needed to keep up that momentum and ensure that officers and committee members' understanding of and commitment to its purpose is maintained; • Overview and Scrutiny Committees are increasing their use of different sources to inform their work and recognise the need to ensure that work planning has more rigour and to consider alternative ways of undertaking scrutiny activity to gather evidence from a wider range of sources; and • arrangements to evaluate overview and Scrutiny are under-developed.
1.07	<p>Following on from the conclusions, the Wales Audit Office have made four proposals for ways in which the Council could improve the effectiveness of its Overview & Scrutiny function, to make it better places to meet current and future challenges. These are:</p> <p>P1 The Council should undertake regular self-assessment of its overview and scrutiny function, to consider its impact, and identify areas for improvement.</p> <p>P2 Further develop scrutiny forward work programing to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that the method of scrutiny is best suited to the topic area and the outcome desired, and consider more innovative methods for undertaking scrutiny activity. <p>P3 Overview and scrutiny committees should further improve their arrangements for promoting the engagement of the public and other stakeholders in scrutiny activity.</p> <p>P4 The Council should review the support arrangements for overview and scrutiny in light of current and future challenges.</p>

1.08	As officers, we welcome the proposals, which are constructive and, if the committee is supportive, intend to examine how they could inform future Overview & Scrutiny work, including the development of a self- assessment template for use by Overview & Scrutiny committees.
1.09	With regard to P2, we recognise the validity of employing innovative methods of scrutiny activity where they are appropriate and beneficial.
1.10	Flintshire has offered public engagement over a number of years, but this has not been effective. Subject to committee agreement, we will investigate this further.
1.11	Flintshire's support for Overview & Scrutiny is on a par or better than most principal councils: the committee's views are welcomed on P4.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	There are no implications within this report which will adversely affect the Overview & Scrutiny budget.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	None

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Wales Audit Office recommendations are taken seriously and evaluated.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Report of the Wales Audit Office <i>Overview & Scrutiny – Fit for the Future?</i> Document reference 763A2018-19

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None Contact Officer: Robert Robins, Democratic Services Manager Telephone: 01352 702320 E-mail: robert.robins@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Wales Audit Office (WAO): works to support the Auditor General as the public sector watchdog for Wales. They aim to ensure that the people of Wales know whether public money is being managed wisely and that public bodies in Wales understand how to improve outcomes.

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WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru
Auditor General for Wales

Overview and Scrutiny – Fit For the Future? – Flintshire County Council

Audit year: 2017-18

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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is also available in Welsh.

The team who delivered the work comprised Jeremy Evans, Paul Goodlad and Richard Hayward directed by Huw Rees.

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Overview and scrutiny Committees are increasing their use of different sources to inform their work and recognise the need to ensure that work planning has more rigour and to consider alternative ways of undertaking scrutiny activity to gather evidence from a wider range of sources 8

Arrangements to evaluate overview and Scrutiny are under-developed, and there are few examples where overview and scrutiny activity has had an impact 10

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Summary report

Summary

- 1 This review explored with each of the 22 councils in Wales how ‘fit for the future’ their scrutiny functions are. We considered how councils are responding to current challenges, including the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 (WFG Act) in relation to their scrutiny activity, as well as how councils are beginning to undertake scrutiny of Public Service Boards (PSBs). We also examined how well placed councils are to respond to future challenges such as continued pressure on public finances and the possible move towards more regional working between local authorities.
- 2 As part of this review we also reviewed the progress that councils have made in addressing the recommendations of our earlier National Improvement Study **Good Scrutiny? Good Question?** (May 2014) (see [Appendix 2](#)). We also followed up on the proposals for improvement relevant to scrutiny that we issued in local reports including those issued to councils as part of our 2016-17 thematic reviews of Savings Planning and Governance Arrangements for Determining Significant Service Changes.
- 3 Our review aimed to:
 - identify approaches to embedding the sustainable development principle into scrutiny processes and practices to inform practice sharing and future work of the Auditor General in relation to the WFG Act;
 - provide assurance that scrutiny functions are well placed to respond to current and future challenges and expectations;
 - help to embed effective scrutiny by elected members from the start of the new electoral cycle; and
 - provide insight into how well councils have responded to the findings of our previous Scrutiny Improvement Study.
- 4 To inform our findings we based our review methodology around the Outcomes and Characteristics for Effective Local Government Overview and Scrutiny that were developed and agreed by scrutiny stakeholders in Wales following our previous National Improvement Study **Good Scrutiny? Good Question?**.
- 5 We carried out our fieldwork during October 2017 and December 2017. We reviewed documents, interviewed officers and ran focus groups with councillors. We did this to understand their views on Flintshire County Council’s (the Council) current scrutiny arrangements. In particular how the Council is approaching and intends to respond to the challenges it faces. We observed a sample of scrutiny meetings and reviewed relevant meeting documentation provided to committee members to support them, such as reports and presentations.
- 6 In this review we concluded the Council values its overview and scrutiny function and is taking steps to promote effective scrutiny, however better work planning,

use of a wider range of scrutiny methods and routine evaluation of the impact of scrutiny activity will help in responding to current and future challenges. We came to this conclusion because:

- the Council has created a positive environment for Overview and Scrutiny to operate effectively, but continuous work is needed to keep up that momentum and ensure that officers and committee members' understanding of and commitment to its purpose is maintained;
- overview and scrutiny Committees are increasing their use of different sources to inform their work and recognise the need to ensure that work planning has more rigour and to consider alternative ways of undertaking scrutiny activity to gather evidence from a wider range of sources; and
- arrangements to evaluate overview and Scrutiny are under-developed.

Proposals for improvement

7 The table below contains our proposals for ways in which the Council could improve the effectiveness of its overview and scrutiny function to make it better placed to meet current and future challenges.

Exhibit 1: proposals for improvement

Proposals for improvement / Recommendations
P1 The Council should undertake regular self assessment of its overview and scrutiny function, to consider its impact, and identify areas for improvement.
P2 Further develop scrutiny forward work programing to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that the method of scrutiny is best suited to the topic area and the outcome desired, and consider more innovative methods for undertaking scrutiny activity.
P3 Overview and scrutiny committees should further improve their arrangements for promoting the engagement of the public and other stakeholders in scrutiny activity.
P4 The Council should review the support arrangements for overview and scrutiny in light of current and future challenges.

Detailed report

The Council values its overview and scrutiny function and is taking steps to promote effective scrutiny, however better work planning, use of a wider range of scrutiny methods and routine evaluation of the impact of scrutiny activity will help in responding to current and future challenges

The Council has created a positive environment for Overview and Scrutiny to operate effectively, but continuous work is needed to keep up that momentum and ensure that officers and committee members' understanding of and commitment to its purpose is maintained

- 8 The Council's governance documents clearly define the role of its Overview and Scrutiny function. For example, the Constitution emphasises the importance of challenge in the scrutiny process, encouraging members to '...not shy away from the need to challenge and question decisions and make constructive criticism'. The Council's Code of Governance reinforces this point, noting the contribution that scrutiny plays as a '...critical friend that provides constructive challenge to support continuous service improvement'. Our discussions with councillors and senior officers suggest that the contribution made by overview and scrutiny to the Council's governance arrangements is well understood and valued. For example, we heard how scrutiny committees can provide a refreshing viewpoint on local priorities, which can influence and add value to the Council's corporate plan.
- 9 Scrutiny committee members told us they receive an appropriate level of training to help them fulfil their role; this includes a member's induction programme and stand-alone workshops covering areas such as roll out of the corporate safeguarding policy. Despite the training, some newly elected councillors found the unfamiliar scrutiny process challenging. However, they acknowledged that their ability to contribute improved as they became more familiar with the procedures and learned from those more experienced. The training, which is generally well attended, is supplemented by additional support and training associated with new and emerging challenges, such as guidance on scrutinising the Public Services Board (PSB). The Council also provided training in chairing skills for committee chairs and vice chairs, to help their committees function effectively.
- 10 The Council has a democratic services manager, supported by two committee facilitators. They service six overview and scrutiny committees and a range of other

committees. Overview and scrutiny committee members spoke highly of the support they receive from the democratic services secretariat. However, they had mixed views about the information provided to committees. Several committee members are concerned about the excessive length of some reports they receive; equally, others believe that some reports do not provide the level of detail they require. Some committee members are also concerned about long reports occasionally being issued at short notice, leaving them with limited time to digest the information. In recent years, the Council has improved the format, structure and general quality of reports presented to councillors, both to scrutiny and to other committees. Striking an appropriate balance between report brevity, clarity, and timeliness which meets the needs of all committee members, is likely to remain a challenge. However, constructive feedback from committees, and clarity on why a topic is being included on committee agenda, will help officers to continue refining their approach to reporting in ways which promote more effective scrutiny.

- 11 The Council reviewed and refreshed its overview and scrutiny committee structure during 2015 to rebalance individual areas of responsibility and promote better alignment with the chief officer and lead member portfolio responsibilities. For example, the remit of the corporate resources overview and scrutiny committee expanded to include partnership working and crime and disorder. Despite the recent review, the Council anticipates further adjustments to committee portfolios in the near future, to reflect new and emerging challenges such as the anticipated growth in regional working.
- 12 The roles and responsibilities of cabinet and committee members and officers involved in the overview and scrutiny process are clearly defined in the Council's policy and guidance documents; these roles support clear accountability. The Council's Leader is an advocate of robust scrutiny; his introduction to the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2016-17¹ acknowledges how Cabinet benefits '...from the collective knowledge and wisdom of a wider cross-section of the Council's membership'. This view is echoed within comments in the same report by the Chief Executive, who acknowledges that '...having a robust and effective critical friend to provide challenge to the Cabinet has improved the quality of decision-making'.
- 13 Our observation of recent overview and scrutiny committees confirmed a good understanding of the appropriate role of executive members at scrutiny committees. The Council routinely complies with statutory guidance covering the presentation of reports to committee². Lead members introduce reports associated with their portfolio area and respond to questions and challenges, supported by

¹ Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2016-17, Flintshire County Council.
<http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/PDFFiles/Overview-and-Scrutiny/Overview-Scrutiny-Annual-Report-2016-17.pdf>

² '...it is for the elected executive to answer questions about its policies and decisions. When officers appear to answer questions their contribution should, as far as possible, be confined to questions of fact and explanation relating to policies and decisions.' Add DCC footnote source.

senior officers where appropriate. This enables Lead members to be held to account and provides a clear and public demonstration of accountability.

- 14 Arrangements for scrutinising the Public Services Board (PSB) are integrated into the Council's overview and scrutiny committee structure and include reviewing governance arrangements and monitoring progress against the Well-Being Plan. The Council recognises that councillors, particularly those involved in overview and scrutiny, need a good understanding of the PSB and its governance arrangements and held an all-member workshop to raise awareness.
- 15 The officers and councillors we spoke to recognised some of the future challenges facing the scrutiny function, such as resource and budget pressures, and there is a growing awareness about the anticipated growth in regional working. Whilst the Council has not yet developed a systematic approach to regional scrutiny, it expects the scrutiny function to evolve to meet emerging and future challenges. In view of these and other current and future challenges there is an opportunity for the Council to consider how it might best support scrutiny members to help the Council address these challenges. This could include a consideration of the type of training that it could provide linked to specific challenges, as well as the type of officer support that committees may need. There is also an opportunity for the council and scrutiny committees to reflect on their ways of working and to consider if more innovative approaches to planning and undertaking scrutiny activity may be more effective in light of current and future challenges, rather than the current default model of receiving officer reports at full committee meetings.

Overview and scrutiny Committees are increasing their use of different sources to inform their work and recognise the need to ensure that work planning has more rigour and to consider alternative ways of undertaking scrutiny activity to gather evidence from a wider range of sources

- 16 Like many other councils in Wales, the majority of scrutiny activity takes place at formal committee meetings where officer reports are considered. This means that the majority of evidence provided to committees is from council officers, and the ability of committees to employ more innovative ways of gathering evidence is limited. Although we recognise that overview and scrutiny committees have increased their use of external sources of evidence. For example, external regulators and representatives from other public sector organisations such as the local health board and police regularly attend and often receive a robust challenge.
- 17 However, public engagement with the scrutiny process is less well developed. The Council applied Participation Cymru's 10 Principles for Public Engagement when designing the current overview and scrutiny infrastructure. Members of the public are also encouraged to attend overview and scrutiny meetings, and committee papers are available on the Council's website. Forward work programmes are published in the Council's web site and kept up to date so the

public can see that committees will be discussing. However overview and scrutiny committees rarely seek to proactively engage the public in their work through for example seeking views on topics under consideration or seeking views on potential topics for scrutiny. This may in part be due to the default approach to scrutiny activity of receiving officer reports at full committee meetings.

- 18 Whilst committees rarely proactively seek to gather evidence from a range of sources, there are a few examples where a more proactive approach is being taken. For example, the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee maintains a rota of visits to social care establishments; this provides an opportunity for committee members to interact with, and receive feedback from, service delivery teams and service users. Committee agendas include a standing item requiring members involved in site visits to report back, verbally, to the committee.
- 19 The Council's corporate resources overview and scrutiny committee has primary responsibility for budget scrutiny. However, in recent years, councillors in general, and overview and scrutiny committee members in particular have been encouraged to become better acquainted with the Council's budget, particularly during budget development and setting process. Some members and officers we spoke to felt that this helped to promote greater transparency, stronger governance and wider ownership of the budget, and of the challenges associated with financial pressures facing the public sector. This is important, because financial pressures will continue to influence local decision-making for the foreseeable future and will benefit from a robust approach to budget scrutiny. To address this the Council holds a series of workshops on the budget and has also developed service resilience statements to illustrate to councillors the pressures that services are under.
- 20 The Council's current overview and scrutiny committee structure was established in May 2016. However, the Council intends to revisit the committee structure again during 2018-19 to ensure that committee workloads are suitably balanced. For example, the remit of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee has expanded to include partnership working and crime and disorder, as well as budget monitoring; this has created a significantly higher workload than for some other committees. Reviewing and reallocating some responsibilities would help to make overview and scrutiny committee workloads more equitable.
- 21 As part of this review we observed some overview and scrutiny committee meetings. Based on our observations we believe there is scope to improve the focus and planning of questioning, and to ensure that discussion and debate also remains focused and enables committees to arrive at clear outcomes.
- 22 The Council has established a systematic approach to developing and updating committee forward work programmes (FWP). However, in practice, the arrangements are not fully implemented. Not all committee members seem to appreciate their ability to influence the FWP's, or the merits of taking a proactive approach to their development. As a consequence, there is limited control of the FWPs by committees. Instead, by default, overview and scrutiny FWPs Council

tend to be officer-led. Committee agendas routinely include the FWP as an item for discussion, as the last item on the agenda. However, our experience of observing committees at the Council, suggests that little, if any, discussion takes place about the FWPs. There is therefore little discussion on the most appropriate method of scrutiny activity for each item, with the assumption being that items will usually be considered solely via officers support.

- 23 By taking responsibility for their FWP's, overview and scrutiny committees would have more opportunity to better prioritise and plan the scrutiny of individual topics. It is also unclear why reports are still presented to committees 'for information', and this does not suggest that officers and members have a full understanding of the role and purpose of overview and scrutiny.
- 24 The Council's overview and Scrutiny members favour pre- rather than post-decision scrutiny, believing that this approach provides more opportunity to influence decisions and to promote good governance. Although there is scope for committees to carry out more reflective work, looking at the impact of past decisions, in practice, resources constraints mean that this happens infrequently.

Arrangements to evaluate overview and Scrutiny are under-developed

- 25 Overview and Scrutiny committees routinely provide challenge to Cabinet members, service providers and external partners. Although we heard mixed views on the quality of challenge provided by overview and scrutiny committees. Some scrutiny committee members attribute this in part to the quality of information provided within the reports they receive, which they feel influences their ability to provide constructive challenge.
- 26 Officers and members were generally unable to identify many situations where overview and scrutiny committees have provided viable and well-evidenced solutions to recognised problems. A few examples were highlighted where committee members have taken a more proactive approach to the scrutiny of individual topics. The example most often cited to the development of revised options for household waste recycling sites across the County. Other examples were:
 - further development of the budget process;
 - contributing to the development of the Growth Vision for North Wales;
 - changes to Household Recycling centres;
 - the car park strategy;
 - introduction of dog DNA; and
 - the active involvement in the development of the alternative delivery models and community asset transfers.
- 27 Although the Council routinely produces an annual report on the activities of its overview and scrutiny committees, the report describes the issues discussed by committees rather than evaluate the impact of scrutiny activity. The absence of

routine and robust self-evaluation arrangements for the overview and scrutiny function limits the Council's ability to identify opportunities to strengthen arrangements and improve the effectiveness of the function.

Appendix 1

Outcomes and characteristics for effective local government overview and scrutiny

Exhibit 2: outcomes and characteristics for effective local government overview and scrutiny

Outcomes	Characteristics
<p>What does good scrutiny seek to achieve?</p>	<p>What would it look like? How could we recognise it?</p>
<p>1. Democratic accountability drives improvement in public services. 'Better Services'</p>	<p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Scrutiny has a clearly defined and valued role in the council's improvement arrangements. ii) Scrutiny has the dedicated officer support it needs from officers who are able to undertake independent research effectively, and provide Scrutiny members with high-quality analysis, advice and training. <p>Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii) Overview and Scrutiny inquiries are non-political, methodologically sound and incorporate a wide range of evidence and perspectives. <p>Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> iv) Overview and scrutiny regularly engages in evidence based challenge of decision makers and service providers. v) Scrutiny provides viable and well evidenced solutions to recognised problems.

Outcomes	Characteristics
<p>What does good scrutiny seek to achieve?</p>	<p>What would it look like? How could we recognise it?</p>
<p>2. Democratic decision making is accountable, inclusive and robust. 'Better decisions'</p>	<p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Scrutiny councillors have the training and development opportunities they need to undertake their role effectively. ii) The process receives effective support from the Council's Corporate Management Team which ensures that information provided to scrutiny is of high quality and is provided in a timely and consistent manner. <p>Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii) Scrutiny is Member led and has 'ownership' of its work programme taking into account the views of the public, partners and regulators whilst balancing between prioritising community concerns against issues of strategic risk and importance. iv) Stakeholders have the ability to contribute to the development and delivery of scrutiny forward work programmes. v) Overview and scrutiny meetings and activities are well-planned, chaired effectively and make best use of the resources available to it. <p>Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> vi) Non-executive Members provide an evidence based check and balance to Executive decision making. vii) Decision makers give public account for themselves at scrutiny committees for their portfolio responsibilities.
<p>3. The public is engaged in democratic debate about the current and future delivery of public services.</p>	<p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Scrutiny is recognised by the Executive and Corporate Management team as an important council mechanism for community engagement. <p>Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii) Scrutiny is characterised by effective communication to raise awareness of, and encourage participation in democratic accountability. iii) Scrutiny operates non-politically and deals effectively with sensitive political issues, tension and conflict. iv) Scrutiny builds trust and good relationships with a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders. <p>Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> v) Overview and scrutiny enables the 'voice' of local people and communities across the area to be heard as part of decision and policy-making processes.

Appendix 2

Recommendations from the report of the Auditor General's national improvement study 'Good Scrutiny? Good Question?' (May 2014)

Exhibit 3: recommendations from **Good Scrutiny? Good Question?** Scrutiny Improvement Study

Recommendation	Responsible Partners
R1 Clarify the role of executive members and senior officers in contributing to scrutiny.	Councils, Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association
R2 Ensure that scrutiny members, and specifically scrutiny chairs, receive training and support to fully equip them with the skills required to undertake effective scrutiny.	Councils, Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association
R3 Further develop scrutiny forward work programming to : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide a clear rationale for topic selection; • be more outcome focussed • ensure that the method of scrutiny is best suited to the topic area and the outcome desired; and • align scrutiny programmes with the council's performance management, self-evaluation and improvement arrangements. 	Councils
R4 Ensure that scrutiny draws effectively on the work of audit, inspection and regulation and that its activities are complementary with the work of external review bodies.	Councils, Staff of the Wales Audit Office, CSSIW, Estyn
R5 Ensure that external review bodies take account of scrutiny work programmes and the outputs of scrutiny activity, where appropriate, in planning and delivering their work.	Staff of the Wales Audit Office, CSSIW, Estyn

Recommendation	Responsible Partners
R6 Ensure that the impact of scrutiny is properly evaluated and acted upon to improve the function's effectiveness; including following up on proposed actions and examining outcomes.	Councils, Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association
R7 Undertake regular self-evaluation of scrutiny utilising the 'outcomes and characteristics of effective local government overview and scrutiny' developed by the Wales Overview & Scrutiny Officers' Network.	Council
R8 Implement scrutiny improvement action plans developed from the Wales Audit Office improvement study.	Councils
R9 Adopt Participation Cymru's 10 Principles for Public Engagement in improving the way scrutiny engages with the public and stakeholders.	Councils

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CONSTITUTION & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday, 17 October 2018
Report Subject	Request for Co-option to the Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member	Not applicable
Report Author	Democratic Services Manager
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is for the committee to consider a request for a member of the Flintshire Youth Council to be co-opted to the Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The creation of the Flintshire Youth Council was supported by the County Council on 20th June 2017.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the committee considers the request from the Flintshire youth council to be a co-opted member of the county Council's education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE REQUEST FOR CO-OPTION OF A MEMBER OF THE FLINTSHIRE YOUTH COUNCIL TO THE EDUCATION & YOUTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
1.01	The Flintshire Youth Council has made a formal approach for one of their members to become a co-opted member of the County Council's Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
1.02	<p>The creation of the Flintshire Youth Council was subject of a Notice of Motion to County Council on 20th June 2017 and supported. The resolution was as follows:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">That the Notice of Motion on developing a Youth Council for Flintshire be supported as follows: 'This Council supports the establishment of a Youth Council for Flintshire to discuss relevant issues, engage with decision makers and contribute to improving the lives of young people within the County'.</p>
1.03	The Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee had an update on the development of the Flintshire Youth Council at the meeting on 18 th April 2018 and were supportive of the Youth Council.
1.04	The Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee has five statutory co-opted members. Two are nominated to represent the Anglican and Roman Catholic dioceses and the other three represent parent governors, and are elected following a ballot. Those co-optees all have voting rights on all the matters within the remit of the committee.
1.05	It would be acceptable to have a nomination from the Flintshire Youth Council for one of their body to become a co-opted member of the Council's Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Any such co-optee would not have the right to vote (because they are not statutory co-optees) but could speak to all items within the committee's remit. Unlike the statutory co-optees, a non-statutory co-optee would not be eligible to receive payment. It is suggested that it would be reasonable for the Youth Council to have a nominee and a deputy.
1.06	Any member of the Youth Council would be able to attend and observe at an Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee (or indeed any Overview & Scrutiny Committee) but they would not be able to speak unless they had, as with any member of the public, given notice of their request before the meeting or the chair uses their discretion to allow them to speak.
2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	The Chair of the Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Cllr David Healey has indicated that he supports the co-option of a member of the Flintshire Youth Council.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	None

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Minute 23 of County Council, 20th June 2017. Letter from the Flintshire Youth Council dated 4th October 2018</p> <p>Contact Officer: Robert Robins, Democratic Services Manager Telephone: 01352 702320 E-mail: robert.robins@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	None

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CONSTITUTION & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 17 th October 2018
Report Subject	Member Development and Engagement Update
Report Author	Democratic Services Manager

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is the practice for this committee to receive a progress report on the Member Development and Engagement events which had been organised. This report details events which have been held since the last report on this topic, on 21st June 2018.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Committee notes the progress with Member Development and Engagement events since the last report.
2	That if Members have any suggestions for future Member Development and Engagement they are invited to contact the Democratic Services Manager to discuss them.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING OUR APPROACH TO MEMBER DEVELOPMENT AND ENGAGEMENT
1.01	Following last year's elections, we had an Induction Programme. At previous meetings of the committee, a progress report on the Member Development and Engagement events which had been organised subsequently was submitted. It is the intention to provide a similar update to each meeting of this committee.
1.02	<p>Since the last meeting on 21st June, we have held the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tuesday, 10th July 2pm- 5pm Understanding Performance Monitoring workshop (33 attendees)• Friday, 13th July 10.30 am- 1pm First Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget 2019/20 workshop (33 attendees)• Thursday, 19th July 10am - 12pm General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) briefing (22 attendees)• Monday, 23rd July 2pm -5pm Second Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget 2019/20 Workshop (42 attendees)• Wednesday, 5th September 6pm – 7.15pm Budget Briefing (combined budget workshops 1 & 2 for those who have been unable to attend the day time sessions.) (5 attendees)• Monday, 10th September 5pm – 6.30pm General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) briefing for those unable to attend the morning session. (7 attendees)• Monday, 17th September 2pm -5pm Corporate Parenting and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Awareness workshop (16 attendees)• Tuesday, 18th September 2pm -5pm Third Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget 2019/20 workshop (24 attendees)• Tuesday 2nd October, 6pm Budget Briefing (workshop 3 for those who have been unable to attend the day time session.) (7 attendees)• Friday 5th October 10am. Budget Workshop for Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee Members. (15 attendees)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monday 8th October 2pm. Budget Workshop for Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee Members.(14 attendees) Wednesday 10th October 10am. Budget Workshop for Social & Healthcare Overview & Scrutiny Committee Members. Wednesday 10th October 2pm. Budget Workshop for Organisational Change Overview & Scrutiny Committee Members. Thursday 11th October 10am. Budget Workshop for Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee Members. Friday 12th October 10am. Budget Workshop for Community & Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny committee Members. Monday 15th October 11am GwE Workshop for Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee members.
1.04	Members at a meeting of Social & Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee have asked that training on Domestic Violence Awareness be made available to Councillors. The Welsh Government had required all staff to undertake an e - learning package. This was adapted to be made available to Members who were notified on 6 th July.
1.05	Members are also reminded that in addition to the Welsh language training offered through Coleg Cambria, they are welcome to participate in the staff Lunchtime Welsh Conversation Group, which meets on Wednesdays. Welsh Language Awareness briefings were organised but had to be postponed. They will be rearranged. The intention is to offer morning, afternoon and evening sessions.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	There is a small training budget which can be accessed if necessary: most development sessions are provided using the Council's own officers.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	None

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	The provision of information through workshops and briefings contributes to effective risk management.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Reports of the Democratic Services Manager on the Induction Process and Member Development and Engagement to the Constitution & Democratic Services Committee at the quarterly meetings and associated minutes.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Robert Robins, Democratic Services Manager Telephone: 01352 702320 E-mail: robert.robins@flintshire.gov.</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	None