

Information/Discussion Paper

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

3 November 2014

LGA Peer Review

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed.

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1 In September 2014 the council invited a peer challenge team led by LGA to visit the council for 3 days to provide an external 'health-check' of the organisation. The peer challenge team were asked specifically to look at the effectiveness of the council's governance arrangements and scrutiny.
- 1.2 In carrying out their review they spoke to members of the Cabinet, O&S, partners, service managers, the Executive Board and other officers so they got a cross section of views. They also examined documents relating to O&S such as the annual report and workplan.
- 1.3 The peer challenge team fed back their findings in a presentation to officers and members on 19 September 2014 at the end of their visit. They will be formally writing to the council setting out their conclusions and the Chief Executive/Leader have agreed that this will be made public on the council's website.
- 1.4 The challenge team made a number of recommendations and although the council is not bound in any way to action them, they can provide a valuable external insight into how the workings of the council could be improved. The Executive Board are already working on a draft action plan to address the issues raised.
- 1.5 As a number of recommendations related to scrutiny, this paper has come to O&S so they can review the feedback and decide whether there are any actions they would like to put in place.

2. Summary evidence/information

- 2.1 Overall the peer group concluded that scrutiny was working well under the new arrangements and these were a good starting point for further improvements to the scrutiny process.
- 2.2 They were impressed by the achievements to date by scrutiny task groups which were set out in the annual report.

- 2.3 They commended the arrangements whereby scrutiny was chaired by a member of the opposition. They also commented that the Cabinet Members seemed to have respect for the work of O&S.
- 2.4 One improvement area that they identified was in the area of the scrutiny workprogramme which they felt needed to be rationalised. They would encourage members to feed into the process and challenge themselves when devising the work programme as to whether scrutiny is the best route for resolving an issue. With limited resources they suggested there may be a need for scrutiny to focus on the high value areas.
- 2.5 One of the issues they picked up from officers was that scrutiny could be very demanding on officer time so the input needed from officers for any particular review needed to be taken note of at the workplanning stage.
- 2.6 They also recommended that the council needed to make more use of the skills of the members and engage a wider group of members into the scrutiny process.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 The committee may wish to take on board some of the recommendations and/or come up with actions to address some of the issues raised.
- 3.2 The committee may also want to look at other outcomes from the LGA peer review and identify other areas where O&S may be able to bring about further improvements in other areas e.g governance and decision making, project management etc.

Background Papers

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Scrutiny Function	O&S Committee