

Information/Discussion Paper

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

2 September 2013

The relationship between Overview and Scrutiny and the Cabinet

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1 At the Council meeting on the 22 July, following the publishing of the Annual Scrutiny report, a debate was had about the differences between Scrutiny Task Groups and Cabinet Member Working Groups. From the debate it was clear that there needs to be some clarity on the differences between these two groups and some arrangement needs to be sought to make sure they compliment and are compatible with one another. The role of the Cabinet Member on scrutiny task groups also needs to be more clearly defined. This has been covered in a report to this meeting on member working groups.
- 1.2 The results from the scrutiny questionnaire also highlighted that there was a general view from both Cabinet and non Cabinet members that Scrutiny was not being very effective at holding the Cabinet to account and this needed to be improved.
- 1.3 In order for the new scrutiny arrangements to be effective, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee needs to put in place an action plan to address the areas identified in the questionnaire and debated at the Council meeting. This report is designed to initiate that process.

2. Holding the Cabinet to account

- 2.1 Under the previous scrutiny arrangements, Cabinet Members frequently attended the O&S meetings to give an update on their portfolio. This was thought to be not relevant for the new single O&S meeting which has a managing and co-ordinating role. However this has resulted in members feeling less well informed than previously. The Leader of the Council has said that he has tried to address the issue of provision of information to members through a range of member seminars on important issues and these have been generally well attended.
- 2.2 The Chair of O&S is reluctant to schedule regular slots for Cabinet Members as if every Cabinet Member was to attend it could make for a long meeting and if it was done on a rota basis it could take a year to run through all the Cabinet Members. The vice-chair of O&S by contrast is very keen for these slots to be reintroduced in some form.

- 2.3 As an alternative, O&S could choose a Cabinet Member to attend their next meeting where there is a particular issue that they wish to question the Cabinet member on.
- 2.4 O&S could also hold the Cabinet to account more effectively if there were to choose more topics for their workplan that reflect the priorities on the Cabinet Forward Plan.
- 2.5 This area could be the subject of further discussion with Cabinet Members.

3. Summary of evidence/information

- 3.1 As set out in the report.

4. Next Steps -

- 4.1 Members of O&S are requested to decide what actions they wish to take to address the issues set out in this report.
- 4.2 The chair of O&S will be meeting with the Leader and the Cabinet Member Corporate Services to discuss this paper so can give feedback at the meeting.

Appendices	None
Background Papers	None
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Accountability	Chair of O&S committee, Councillor Duncan Smith
Cabinet Member	Corporate Services, Councillor Jon Walklett