

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

2nd June 2016

### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY – BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY WORKING GROUPS**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor John Fisher, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management
Portfolio Holder Consulted	No
Relevant Head of Service	Jayne Pickering, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources and Deb Poole, Head of Business Transformation and Organisational Development.
Ward(s) Affected	All wards.
Non-Key Decision	

#### **1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

This report provides Members with an opportunity to consider proposals from the Chair of the Committee to launch a Budget Scrutiny Working Group and a Performance Scrutiny Working Group in 2016/17.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Committee is asked to RESOLVE on the following options:**

- 1) to establish a Budget Scrutiny Working Group and to identify a Chair from amongst the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to lead this group; and**
- 2) to establish a Performance Scrutiny Working Group and to identify a Chair from amongst the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to lead this group; OR**
- 3) that no further action be taken by Overview and Scrutiny Members in respect of this matter; OR**
- 4) alternative action, to be identified and clearly specified during the meeting, should be taken in relation to this matter.**

#### **3. KEY ISSUES**

##### **Background**

- 3.1 Overview and Scrutiny has an important role in the local democratic process. In line with standard national practice the Redditch Overview and Scrutiny Committee scrutinises the Council's budget and holds the Executive Committee, senior Officers and external agencies to account for the performance of local public services.

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

**2nd June 2016**

---

- 3.2 There is always the potential for improvements to be made to the Council's scrutiny process in order to ensure that it makes a constructive contribution to local decision making. Mindful of this the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, following consultation with senior Officers, is proposing that a Budget Scrutiny Working Group and a Performance Scrutiny Working Group be introduced at the Council.

Budget Scrutiny Working Group

- 3.3 Budget scrutiny has become an increasingly important part of the Overview and Scrutiny process in Redditch in recent years. In the past two years progress has been achieved in improving the content and presentation of the reports provided for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Officers are commended for their hard work to achieve this.

- 3.4 However, like many local authorities, the Council is facing challenging economic circumstances. In this context the role of budget scrutiny will become even more important in the future. A Budget Scrutiny Working Group could help to enhance the budget scrutiny process. When considering whether to launch a Budget Scrutiny Working Group the Committee is asked to note the following:

- A working group could meet in private and dedicate their time to considering budget information in detail.
- Members of the working group would develop expertise in considering financial matters.
- The working group would need to be chaired by a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and s/he would be expected to provide regular updates to the Committee on the work of the group.
- Meetings could be scheduled so as to provide sufficient time for the working group to consider figures and propose constructive recommendations for the consideration of the Executive Committee.
- Recommendations from the group would be evidence based.
- A Budget Scrutiny Working Group would help to address recommendations from the Council's external auditors that there should be greater involvement of Members in the Council's budget setting process.

Performance Scrutiny Working Group

- 3.5 Scrutiny of the performance of local public services is a key responsibility of Overview and Scrutiny. The Council maintains performance data on a Corporate Measures Dashboard. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a demonstration on the content of the dashboard in April 2016. This revealed that not only was the dashboard a useful tool for Council services but it could also be a key resource for Overview and Scrutiny.

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**2nd June 2016**

---

- 3.6 However, the dashboard contains a vast amount of data which can be difficult to assess during one off presentations. A Performance Scrutiny Working Group could help Members to develop greater familiarity with the content of the dashboard and to identify ways in which this resource could be used in the scrutiny process. When considering whether to establish a Performance Scrutiny Working Group Members are asked to take the following into account.
- The working group could meet in private and Members could dedicate their time to familiarising themselves with the content of the dashboard.
  - Members of the working group would develop expertise on this subject.
  - Any findings and recommendations from the working group could be reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee by the Chair who will need to be a member of the Committee.
  - Recommendations arising from the working group's work would be evidence based.
  - The content of the dashboard could help Members of the working group to identify topics that would be suitable for a Task Group or Short, Sharp Review exercise.
  - The content of the dashboard could also help Members to identify areas of service performance requiring more detailed investigation by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
  - The establishment of a Performance Scrutiny Working Group would help to address recommendations from the Council's external auditors that there should be greater involvement of Members in managing service performance.

### **Financial Implications**

- 3.7 The establishment of a Budget Scrutiny Working Group could help to enhance the Council's budget setting process.

### **Legal Implications**

- 3.8 There are no specific legal implications.

### **Service / Operational Implications**

- 3.9 Many local authorities have Scrutiny Committees and Panels that focus purely on their Council's budget and service performance. By introducing the Budget Scrutiny Working Group and Performance Scrutiny Working Group the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be following established practice in other parts of the country.
- 3.10 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee previously agreed that there should only be two Task Groups or Short, Sharp Reviews at any one time. The introduction of these working groups could impact on the capacity of both Members and Officers to get involved in more than one Task Group or Short, Sharp Review exercise at a time. However, the Committee is asked to note that in 2015/16 Members only

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

**2nd June 2016**

---

undertook one Task Group or Short, Sharp Review exercise at any one time so the impact of this may not be significant.

- 3.11 In line with standard practice Members would have an opportunity to review the effectiveness of the working groups at the end of the municipal year as part of the preparation of the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2016/17. If Members conclude that the working groups have not added value they could be disbanded.

**Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 3.12 There are no specific customer or equalities and diversity implications.

**4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

No specific risks have been identified.

**AUTHOR OF REPORT**

Name: Jess Bayley, Democratic Services Officer  
Email: [jess.bayley@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:jess.bayley@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)  
Tel.: (01527) 64252