

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28th March 2017

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP – UPDATE REPORT AND ANNUAL REVIEW

Relevant lead Councillor	Councillor Tom Baker-Price, Chair of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Ward(s) Affected	No specific ward relevance.
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

This report outlines proposals from Members in respect of the future operation of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to **RESOLVE** that

- 1) the Performance Scrutiny Working Group should continue to exist in 2017/18 and in future years;
- 2) a member of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group should also sit on the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, subject to its continuing existence, to help reduce the potential for duplication in the activities of the two groups;
- 3) in 2017/18 the Performance Scrutiny Working Group should primarily focus on the Council Plan and the measures arising from that plan, when selecting items for scrutiny;
- 4) subject to the agreement of Bromsgrove District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board, in 2017/18 informal meetings should be arranged between the Performance Scrutiny Working Group and Bromsgrove District Council's Measures Dashboard (scrutiny) Working Group to share ideas and understanding of best practice in performance scrutiny; and
- 5) subject to the agreement of Bromsgrove District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board, where both the Performance Scrutiny Working Group and the Measures Dashboard Working Group identify the same item from the dashboard as being suitable for further investigation this should be reviewed at a joint scrutiny meeting.

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3. KEY ISSUES

Background

- 3.1 The Performance Scrutiny Working Group was established in June 2016. The purpose of this group was to identify items that were suitable for scrutiny from the Council's measures dashboard. Members agreed when the working group was established that the outcomes of the group's work would be reviewed at the end of the municipal year and a decision would be taken at this stage as to whether it should continue to exist.
- 3.2 During the course of the 2016/17 municipal year the Performance Scrutiny Working Group has reviewed a range of subjects. Further detail about the work of the group is provided in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report 2016/17.
- 3.3 At the final meeting of the group in this municipal year, held on Monday 20th March 2017, Members discussed the future role of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group and whether this should continue to form part of the Council's scrutiny process. Based on their discussions during this meeting Members agreed five proposals for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
- Proposal 1: The Performance Scrutiny Working Group should continue to exist in 2017/18 and in future years
- 3.4 The Performance Scrutiny Working Group was established after a period in which there had been limited performance scrutiny at the Council. Scrutiny of the Council's dashboard, and the performance measures on the dashboard, enabled Members to start to address this, thereby strengthening the performance scrutiny process at the local authority.
- 3.5 During the year Members of the group selected items for scrutiny based on issues that they had identified when viewing the contents of the dashboard. In some cases this resulted in recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that were designed to enhance the effectiveness of services in future years. Members also learned a lot about different Council services which made it easier for the group to make informed recommendations to the Executive Committee that aimed to improve working policies and practices.
- 3.6 As the group's work has led to a number of constructive outcomes Members are proposing that the Performance Scrutiny Working Group should continue to exist in 2017/18.

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Proposal 2: A member of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group should also sit on the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, subject to its continuing existence, to help reduce the potential for duplication in the activities of the two groups

- 3.7 There have been a small number of occasions when subjects identified by the Performance Scrutiny Working Group as suitable for further scrutiny have also been on the Budget Scrutiny Working Group's work programme.
- 3.8 The group found that it was helpful to have two Members, Councillors Matthew Dormer and David Thain, who had also been appointed to the Budget Scrutiny Working Group. They were both able to highlight where there might be the potential for duplication of the work of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group and could report Members' concerns about a subject for the consideration of that group where appropriate to ensure that these points were not missed. The Performance Scrutiny Working Group believes that this arrangement benefitted the work of both groups and is therefore recommending that, subject to its continuing existence, at least one Member of the group should also sit on the Budget Scrutiny Working Group in 2017/18.

Proposal 3: In 2017/18 the Performance Scrutiny Working Group should primarily focus on the Council Plan and the measures arising from that plan, when selecting items for scrutiny

- 3.9 There are a huge range of measures on the dashboard, including strategic and operational measures. Theoretically the Performance Scrutiny Working Group could review each of these measures in turn. However, this would not necessarily represent the best use of resources and Members feel that to add value the group should adopt a strategic approach to scrutiny.
- 3.10 Redditch Borough Council's Council Plan was approved in January 2017. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised the content of the plan and was advised that measures would be developed to enable Officers and Members to monitor implementation of the actions detailed in the plan. At the time of writing these measures were in the process of being developed.
- 3.11 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has requested a biannual monitoring update report to enable Members to monitor progress with the implementation of the actions detailed in the plan. Members believe that the Performance Scrutiny Working Group can help the Committee in this endeavour by pre-scrutinising the measures that are developed for the Council Plan and subsequently reviewing specific measures arising from the plan in detail.

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Proposal 4: Subject to the agreement of Bromsgrove District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board, in 2017/18 informal meetings should be arranged between the Performance Scrutiny Working Group and Bromsgrove District Council's Measures Dashboard (scrutiny) Working Group to share ideas and understanding of best practice in performance scrutiny

- 3.12 Bromsgrove District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board established the Measures Dashboard Working Group in June 2016. The purpose of the Measures Dashboard Working Group is similar to that of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group.
- 3.13 Members of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group believe there might be opportunities for Redditch Members to learn from Bromsgrove Members and vice versa in terms of scrutinising performance measures in the most effective manner. For this reason the group is suggesting that, subject to the agreement of Bromsgrove District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board, informal meetings should be arranged between members of both groups in 2017/18.

Proposal 5: Subject to the agreement of Bromsgrove District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board, where both the Performance Scrutiny Working Group and the Measures Dashboard Working Group identify the same item from the dashboard as being suitable for further investigation this should be reviewed at a joint scrutiny meeting.

- 3.14 Redditch Borough Council shares the majority of services with Bromsgrove District Council. At both Councils the measures dashboard is used to monitor the performance of Council services. In many cases both the strategic measures and the operational measures on the dashboard are the same for both Councils, though the performance may differ due to variations in demand for services between the two local authority areas.
- 3.15 In these circumstances Members are aware that there may be occasions when both the Redditch Performance Scrutiny Working Group and the Bromsgrove Measures Dashboard Working Group may choose to investigate the same measures in further detail. When this occurs Members believe the option to undertake joint scrutiny meetings should be explored further. This would help to minimise the impact on staff workloads whilst helping Members to compare experiences and combine efforts to hold the performance of services to account.

Financial Implications

- 3.16 Joint scrutiny with Bromsgrove Members, where similar measures are identified as suitable for investigation at both local authorities, would help to minimise the impact on Council resources. Officers would only need to attend one meeting to discuss the background to the measures, rather than two meetings, and would only need to follow up on actions arising from a combined meeting.

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- 3.17 It is envisaged that if joint scrutiny of performance measures does take place in future the location of meetings for this purpose would need to alternate between Redditch and Bromsgrove. This would help to minimise the impact on demand for the civic suite at both Councils, potentially creating greater opportunity for these rooms to be hired by external customers to the benefit of Council budgets.

Legal Implications

- 3.18 No specific legal implications have been identified.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.19 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note that if the Performance Scrutiny Working Group and Budget Scrutiny Working Group continue to exist in 2017/18 Democratic Services would have capacity to support one Task Group or Short, Sharp Review exercise at any one time during the year. This would replicate arrangements in place in 2016/17.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.20 No specific customer, equalities or diversity implications have been identified.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

No specific risks have been identified.

5. APPENDICES

N/A

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report 2016/17

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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