

## **REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

### **Item OS 23/41 referred from Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 14 September 2023**

Members reviewed the governance changes introduced in May 2022 and considered whether the existing arrangements could be amended and/or improved. The scope of the review had been agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April 2023 and these areas of discussion were detailed in 1.3 of the report.

The increase in the number of scrutiny committees was generally regarded as positive, although it was recognised that the system required further time to become familiar before it was possible to identify if any further, or significant, changes were required.

However, there were some concerns raised about the lack of collaboration and engagement from Members on issues, the difficulty in getting business onto agendas and insufficient matters being identified for the work programmes. There was also concern expressed that the move away from Advisory Boards meant that all Councillors were not fully appraised on all aspects of business.

Whilst the scrutiny committees were able to set their own agendas and work programmes there was still confusion around the process for agreeing topics for future meetings. The Committee supported the formalisation of the process of submitting requests for agenda items to the Chair for liaison with key officers to ensure that the work programme remained balanced throughout the year.

Attention was drawn to the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the 3 Scrutiny Select and the Overview and Scrutiny Committees (attached at Annex 2) and Members supported the introduction of regular agenda setting meetings between the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Chairs of the 3 Scrutiny Select Committees in order to minimise issues of overlapping of business. The Chair committed to meeting regularly with Cabinet Members, as set out in the Cabinet-Scrutiny Protocol.

There was heated debate on the call-in process and Cllr Hoskins proposed, seconded by Cllr Cope that the number of members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee required to call-in a decision should be reduced to 3 (down from 5). Following a formal vote this proposal was supported by the Committee.

Consideration was given to the guidance issued by the Local Government Association on the setting of scrutiny work programmes. The Committee supported the inclusion

of this guidance into the Cabinet-Scrutiny Protocol for easy reference. It was also suggested that the Protocol be published as an Annex to the Constitution so that it was easily available on the website.

Members agreed that regular agenda setting meetings between the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Chairs of the 3 Scrutiny Select Committees be introduced to minimise issues of overlapping of business.

**RECOMMENDED\*:** That

- (1) the number of members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee required to call-in a decision be reduced to 3;
- (2) the formalisation of the process of submitting requests for agenda items to the Chair for liaison with key officers to ensure that the work programme remained balanced throughout the year be approved;
- (3) the Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet Protocol be amended as follows:
  - (i) inclusion of the Local Government Association guidance on the setting of scrutiny work programmes (as set out in 1.3.10);
- (4) the amended Cabinet-Overview & Scrutiny Protocol be published to the website as an Annex to the Constitution.

**\*Recommended to Executive**