

Overview and Scrutiny informal work planning meeting

notes

1 March 2023

Attendees; Stephen Andrews (Chair), Gary Selwyn (Vice Chair), Nikki Ind, David Cunningham, Patrick Coleman

Officers: Angela Claridge, Claire Locke, Andrew Brown, Ana Prelici

1. Executive Scrutiny Protocol

The purpose of the item was to consider embedding this way of working in light of the commitment to do so in the peer review action plan.

The Committee reflected on several changes and improvements, the principle ones were:

- The new room layout, the Committee wished to amend this so that the Chair and Vice-Chair would be facing the Committee, which would make it easier to chair.
- Indicative timings on the agenda should be implemented to help the Committee focus on questioning.
- Democratic Services will brief report authors that papers will be taken as read, and members will be able to pre-submit questions to the authors, with the Committee to focus on follow-up questions.

The Committee also discussed the pre-circulation of planning applications which go to committee in someone's ward, to members of all affected wards where there were impacts on neighbouring wards. This would be discussed as part of a Development Management service update.

RESOLVED: That Democratic Services implement the suggested changes.

2. Formulation of Work Plan for 23/24

The Committee considered the formulation of the work plan for 2023/24.

The Assistant Director for Property and Regeneration compiled a list of potential items for the work plan, and the Chair compiled a long list of work topics. The Committee considered the items, prioritising the routine items using a pairwise comparison technique.

	Round 1		Round 2		Round 3		Round 4		Round 5		Round 6	
	H	L	H	L	H	L	H	L	H	L	H	L
PC	13	26	12	24	10	22	14	28	15	32	30	19
GS	14	23	16	22	15	24	30	18	17	11	33	22
DC	10*	25	19	22	16	24	15	28	14	13	29	11
NI	13	23	17	25	16	24	15	26	14	20	30	28
SA	16	22	17	28	11	20	23	26	27	25	33	32

*to include items 17 and 19

As part of this discussion, the Committee discussed several service-specific topics, most notably Planning, and Local Plan related items. It was suggested by the Assistant Director for Property and Regeneration that Local Plan related items could be dealt with as part of a single session. Democratic Services Business Manager added that certain issues could be dealt with through pre-decision scrutiny, whereby the Committee could consider decision reports before they were presented to Cabinet and make any comments or recommendations.

RESOLVED: To agree the prioritisation as discussed

Report on Approach to Pre-Decision Scrutiny

The Business Manager for Democratic Services presented the report and explained that pre-decision scrutiny would involve the Overview and Scrutiny Committee seeing the report before a Cabinet meeting. The Cabinet reports would be circulated a few days after the Committee papers, to avoid delays to the decision making process.

The Committee welcomed this approach as members highlighted it may have prevented the recent call in, as the additional information that was presented to the committee would have been available ahead of the Committee.

Members also highlighted that minutes from Cabinet meetings should be circulated within the period of call-in.

RESOLVED: The Committee:

01. Agree the approach to pre-decision scrutiny described in this report, whereby selected Cabinet reports will be circulated to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Friday before a Tuesday meeting.

02. Agree that as a general rule the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will generally consider no more than two Cabinet reports for pre-decision scrutiny at a single meeting.
03. Agree that when considering the Cabinet Forward Plan the Committee will agree a priority order of reports for pre-decision scrutiny at the next meeting.
04. Agree to allow sufficient capacity on the Scrutiny work plan for the consideration of future Cabinet reports in addition to the items prioritised as part of the work planning exercise.

3. Time limit for Overview and Scrutiny

The Committee discussed agenda construction, and agreed changes that would allow meetings to be shorter. This included changes such as; shorter, more focussed agendas, pre-scrutiny of Cabinet items, and reports being taken as 'read', The Committee agreed that three hours would be a good time limit, with a comfort break around halfway through the meeting.

Members commented that a 5pm start would mean that many would have to leave after two hours on days when Town and Parish meetings were taking place.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agree the recommendation of a three hour time limit, and that their comments be passed on to the Constitution Working Group.