



Report to:	Scrutiny and Overview Committee	26 July 2022
Lead Cabinet Member:	All	
Lead Officer:	Chief Executive	

Scrutiny and Overview Committee – a new approach

Executive Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to inform Scrutiny and Overview Committee members about a proposed new approach to scrutiny at South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that the Scrutiny and Overview Committee endorses the report, and that Members comment as appropriate.

Reasons for Recommendations

3. The Chair and Vice-Chair are keen to enhance the role of the Committee and of its members in such a way as to give non-Executive Councillors and, through them, residents a more prominent voice in influencing and helping to shape future decisions affecting both the Council and District.

Details

4. Prior to May 2018, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee focused on 'post scrutiny' (through the call-in process) and providing officers with a steer in writing reports to Cabinet.
5. Following the local elections in May 2018, the new administration switched the emphasis towards pre-scrutiny of planned Cabinet decisions.
6. While there is no intention of moving away from pre-scrutiny, there is a desire to supplement this with the scrutiny of topics not on the Cabinet's Forward Plan of Key and Non-Key decisions.
7. The Chair and Vice-Chair will continue to base the Scrutiny and Overview Committee's work programme on the pre-scrutiny of selected Cabinet decisions.

However, they would like to hear members' views on their proposal to supplement this with clearly evidenced and carefully selected issues of concern to Councillors and residents.

8. Attached to this report as Appendix A is the form sent to Committee members and all other non-Executive Councillors. Upon forms being returned, the Chair and Vice-Chair will use the Scrutiny Prioritisation Tool in order to identify a reasonable number of topics which will then be considered as part of a Committee meeting. At such meeting, topics submitted by Members would be supported by short briefing notes prepared by officers. Committee members may agree to do one of the following:
 - a. Review by the full Committee
 - b. Review by a sub-Committee or working group
 - c. Community outreach
 - d. establish a Task and Finish Group
 - e. Decline to review
9. Topics would then be added to the work programme for the year as appropriate, taking into account the amount of preparatory work required to bring a full report to Scrutiny.
10. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny recommends that two substantive reports on each agenda should be the norm. This does not include consideration of the work programme and could be varied up or down depending on the complexity of the matters in question.

Options

11. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee is invited either to
 - a. endorse this proposal as outlined above; or
 - b. provide feedback that will help to further improve the proposal; or
 - c. reject the proposal

Implications

12. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:-

Staffing

13. The need for briefing notes to help Members decide which topics to add to the work programme could add considerably to officers' workloads.

Consultation responses

14. None sought – this report has been drafted following discussions with, and comments from, Chair and Vice-Chair.

Alignment with Council Priority Areas

Growing local businesses and economies

15. Topics selected might align with this priority.

Housing that is truly affordable for everyone to live in

16. Topics selected might align with this priority.

Being green to our core

17. Topics selected might align with this priority. However, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee has previously left such issues to the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee.

A modern and caring Council

18. Topics selected might align with this priority. In particular, the new approach seeks to reflect in a more transparent way the Committee's wish to represent the concerns and aspirations of Councillors and residents.

Background Papers

None

Appendices

Appendix A: Suggestion form sent to non-Executive Councillors

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