

Procedure for the Establishment of a Working Group

This procedure complements the existing procedures for the establishment of Advisory Groups (Constitution Part 4, Executive Procedure Rules) and of Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups (Constitution Part 4, Scrutiny and Overview Committee Procedure Rules).

Introduction

Working groups may be established to assist a Council body, including full Council and individual Portfolio Holders, through detailed analysis of issues to inform the final decision. Working groups should not normally exceed nine elected members of this Authority.

Proposal to Establish a Working Group

There are several routes from which a request to establish a working group may originate:

- Suggestion by a Councillor, by several Councillors or by a political group;
- Recommendation from a Committee, from a Portfolio Holder or from another working group;
- Suggestion by an Officer or group of Officers.

1. Suggestion by a Councillor, by several Councillors or by a political group

The Councillor(s) requesting the establishment of a working group should submit a proposal to Senior Management Team, copied to the Democratic Services Team Leader. Senior Management Team will meet with the Councillors or with a representative of the group of Councillors to discuss the proposal and the implications for the authority to establish a working group. Following these consultations, the proposal, possibly incorporating recommendations from Senior Management Team, will be put to the next meeting of the body to which the working group will be reporting.

2. Recommendation from a Committee, from a Portfolio Holder or from another Working Group

Where another Committee, a Portfolio Holder or another working group recommends the establishment of a working group, it should make a formal recommendation to the Committee to which the working group will report. The recommendation should include a completed proposal and Senior Management Team and the Democratic Services Team Leader must be consulted. The recommendation, including the consultation responses from Senior Management Team and the Democratic Services Team Leader, will be put to the next meeting of the body to which the working group will be reporting.

3. Suggestion by an Officer or group of Officers

Suggestions by Officers will be handled in the same manner as those by Councillors, and will require the completion and submission to Senior Management Team, copied to the Democratic Services Team Leader, of proposal form.

Co-option

Members of partner authorities and non-members may be co-opted by the body which establishes the working group. Co-option shall be according to relevant experience, knowledge and interest. Rules of political balance *may* apply if members of partner authorities are co-opted, depending upon the agreed terms of reference of the working group.

The working group may invite members of partner authorities and non-members to attend and speak at meetings without formal co-option. Such guests will not have voting rights.

Political Balance

Rules of political balance will apply to all working groups which meet formally in public unless:

- no individual councillor on the body establishing the working group votes against an alternative arrangement when one is proposed (known as a “no dissent” alternative); or
- Council has determined that this body shall not be treated as one for which political balance must apply; or
- it has been agreed by the body to which the working group is reporting that the working group is one where membership shall be determined on the basis of electoral ward represented (e.g. similar to an Area Committee).

Rules of political balance need not apply to working groups which meet informally.

Appointments Procedure

If the proposal to establish a working group has been agreed by the body to which it reports, appointments will be made by that body. If the body is politically balanced, the Democratic Services Team Leader will ask the political group leaders for nominees, otherwise all councillors will be canvassed by e-mail for expressions of interest. If the working group’s membership is to be made only from the members of the body to which it reports, the Democratic Services Team Leader will contact either political group leaders or all members of that body, depending upon whether or not the group is politically balanced, for expressions of interest.

The terms of reference for the working group must state whether or not substitutes may be appointed and whether or not substitutes will have voting rights.

The final decision on appointments, including substitute member appointments, rests with the body which has established the group.

SCDC Constitution

Unless delegated authority is to be granted to the working group to make decisions rather than recommendations, its terms of reference need not be included in the Constitution.

Working Group Proposal Form

Name of proposed Working Group	
Body to which Working Group will report	
Working Group's remit	
Key outcomes expected	
Details	
Is there strong evidence linking the remit of the Group to the Corporate Plan and to the Council's Aims, Approaches and Actions?	
Does the service provide substantial benefits for all or a significant proportion of the District's residents?	
Is the Working Group likely to identify better value for money for the Council?	
Are there budget implications?	
Are there staffing implications, e.g., investigation of issues, preparation of reports, administration of the Working Group?	
Is there a high level of risk involved?	
Is there public interest in this, e.g., petitions, press coverage?	
Is new legislation or guidance relating to this topic expected within the next year?	
Draft Terms of Reference	
Proposed size of Working Group	
Public meetings?	
Politically-balanced?	
Substitution procedures?	
Co-opted members?	
Administrative support?	
Provisional date of first meeting	
Provisional completion date (i.e., date by which project is expected to have concluded and Working Group disbanded)	