

**REPORT TO:** Scrutiny and Overview Committee 17 December 2019

**LEAD OFFICER:** Director of Corporate Services

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## Proposed Scrutiny Review

### Executive Summary

1. To inform the Scrutiny and Overview Committee of a proposal to invite the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the Council's scrutiny function.
2. Key Decision - No

### Recommendations

3. That the Scrutiny and Overview Committee notes and endorses the proposal to invite the Centre for Public Scrutiny to undertake a review of the effectiveness of the Council's scrutiny function as outlined in this report.

### Reasons for Recommendations

4. To enable an independent review to be undertaken to provide assurance that our scrutiny arrangements operate effectively and add value to the work of the Council.

### Details

5. The Council has been operating its revised overview and scrutiny arrangements since May 2018. Since that time, the committee has been operating a robust system of pre-scrutiny of Cabinet reports resulting in considered and constructive recommendations being presented to Cabinet and Council and helping to improve overall decision making in the Council. The Committee has benefitted from having engaged and committed members who are enthusiastic about the difference scrutiny can make. The committee now also has dedicated officer support.
6. Whilst our recent self-assessment against the new "Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government" indicated that most of the actions recommended in the guidance are already in place, it may now be timely to reflect on how we can further strengthen and develop the scrutiny function in the Council and ensure that it adds value, for example, by engaging scrutiny at an earlier stage in policy development.

7. Following discussions with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee and the Leader of the Council, it is felt that there would be a benefit in inviting the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) to conduct a review, acting as a “critical friend” to check and test that our scrutiny arrangements are operating effectively and add value to the work of the Council.
8. The CfPS is the leading national body promoting and supporting excellence in governance and scrutiny and is an independent national charity.
9. The Centre for Public Scrutiny’s proposal for the review is attached at Appendix A.
10. The review would involve some on-site interviews with relevant Members and officers, observation of a Scrutiny and Overview Committee meeting and a Member workshop to review any options for improvement and change. If Members are supportive of the proposal, ideally the review would be completed by March so that any outcomes could be taken into account, if necessary, for the purposes of the revised Constitution to be presented to Council in April.

## **Implications**

11. 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:-

### **Financial**

12. The cost of the review is provided in the attached proposal. This cost can be covered by existing budgets.

## **Effect on Council Priority Areas**

### **A modern and caring Council**

13. The review will help ensure that the Council’s scrutiny function is effective and in line with modern and best practice.

## **Background Papers**

Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overview-and-scrutiny-statutory-guidance-for-councils-and-combined-authorities>

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: CfPS proposal for the review

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