



REPORT TO COUNCIL

CHANGES TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FUNCTION

KEY ISSUE/DECISION:

To agree amendments to the arrangements for overview and scrutiny in the County Council.

BACKGROUND:

- 1 The Council's current overview and scrutiny structure was agreed in 2015, when the existing Scrutiny Boards were introduced. Article 7 of Part 2 of the Constitution sets out the terms of reference and specific remits for each of the Scrutiny Boards, and states that the number of committees will vary from time to time as agreed by the Council. Democratic Services has reviewed the existing arrangements in conjunction with Group Leaders and the Chief Executive, and this report sets out proposed changes for the Council's approval.

PROPOSED CHANGES

- 2 The proposed changes seek to build on the good practice evident under the existing scrutiny arrangements and to respond to the range of challenges facing the Council by providing a stronger, more joined-up and more flexible approach to overview and scrutiny.
- 3 The key changes to the current arrangements are as follows:

(a) Scrutiny Boards to be re-named Select Committees

The return to the previous title of 'select committee' is to strengthen the perception of their key role in policy development, rather than just scrutiny of decisions taken - the involvement of select committees in helping the Council to consider options for service delivery and advising the Cabinet before decisions are taken will be key to ensuring the best outcomes for residents.

(b) New Overview & Budget Scrutiny Committee

The remit of the existing Council Overview Board will be split, with the Overview & Budget Scrutiny Committee having an enhanced strategic role, including formally agreeing the work programmes of the Select Committees, to ensure a more cohesive approach and a strong focus on the Council's key priorities. The Committee will also have responsibility for budget scrutiny across all services.

The services previously under the remit of the Council Overview Board will now fall under the new Corporate Services Select Committee.

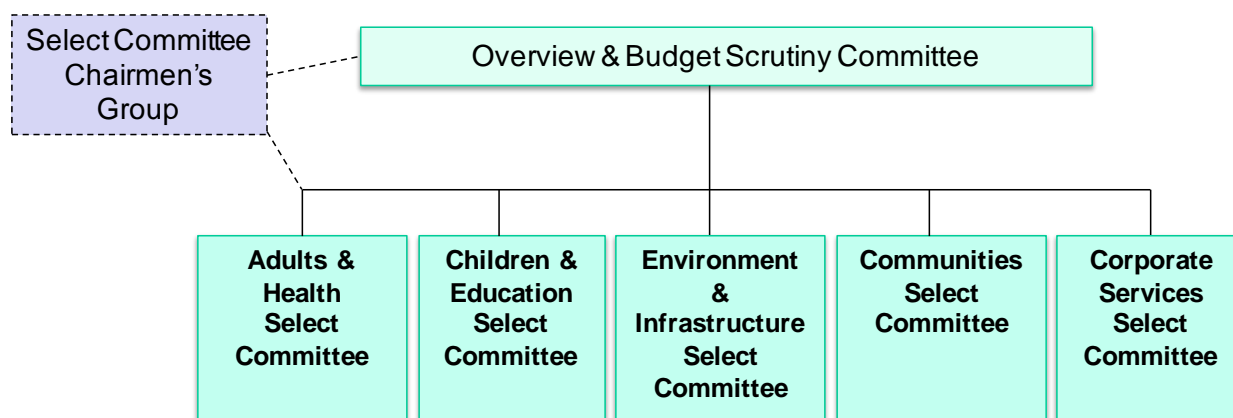
(c) New Adults & Health Select Committee

The proposals bring responsibility for health and social care issues together for the first time, in order to help ensure a strong and co-ordinated focus on these priority areas.

(d) Creation of an informal Select Committee Chairmen's Group

This Group, consisting of the Chairmen of the five Select Committees and the Audit & Governance Committee, will not be a formal part of the governance structure but will provide an opportunity to co-ordinate business, share good practice and support the training and development of Select Committee members.

- 4 The diagram below shows the proposed new structure. The remits of the new Select Committees are intended to align more closely with the Cabinet portfolios, and names have been chosen which more clearly reflect the areas of work for which they are responsible. Details of the services within the remit of each Select Committee are set out in the **Annex**.



- 5 The number of members to be appointed to each of the committees is as follows:

- Overview & Budget Scrutiny Committee – **12**
- Adults & Health Select Committee – **12**, plus 3 co-opted members
- Children & Education Select Committee – **12**, plus 2 co-opted members
- Environment & Infrastructure Select Committee – **15**
- Communities Select Committee – **12**
- Corporate Services Select Committee – **12**

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council will be ex officio members of all the committees.

WAYS OF WORKING

- 6 The intention is to have fewer formal meetings of committees than under the current arrangements, typically four for each Select Committee and six for the Overview & Budget Scrutiny Committee. The Overview & Budget Scrutiny Committee will ensure that Select Committee work programmes focus on the key priorities. It will also represent the views of the overview and scrutiny function cohesively and serve as the key link for engagement with the Cabinet and senior management.

- 7 Task groups (with membership drawn from across all Select Committees where appropriate) and other flexible approaches will be encouraged to ensure responsive and timely involvement of the overview & scrutiny function in discussions about service delivery and policy.
- 8 The Committees will continue to have responsibility for public scrutiny of Cabinet Members and officers, and the rights of Members to request items for inclusion on an agenda will be unaffected.
- 9 Subject to approval by the Council, the new arrangements will be implemented with immediate effect. A structured programme of induction and training is being developed by Democratic Services to support the introduction of the new arrangements, and officers will work with the Select Committee Chairmen's Group to review the effectiveness of the process over the coming year.

<u>RECOMMENDATION:</u>

That the revised structure for overview and scrutiny in the County Council set out in paragraph four of the report, and the specific committee remits as shown in the Annex, be approved.

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Sources/background papers: None

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