

Select Committee Task and Finish Group Scoping Document

The process for establishing a task and finish group is:

1. The Select Committee identifies a potential topic for a task and finish group
2. The Select Committee Chairman and the Scrutiny Officer complete the scoping template.
3. The Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews the scoping document
4. The Select Committee agrees membership of the task and finish group.

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| Review Topic: Future Governance of the Basingstoke Canal |
| Select Committee(s) Environment and Transport Select Committee |
| <p>Relevant background</p> <p>The Basingstoke Canal is located in the south of England, to the southwest of London. The navigable section runs from West Byfleet in Surrey to the east, following a course of 32 miles through Woking, Brookwood, Mytchett, Ash, Fleet and Crookham, then Odiham, finally ending up at Greywell in Hampshire to the west. Surrey and Hampshire took joint ownership of the Canal in the mid 1970s and currently have joint management of the Canal, with the day to day maintenance and operation of the Canal undertaken by the Basingstoke Canal Authority (BCA).</p> <p>29 miles of the 32 mile Canal is designated as 'Site of Specific Scientific Interest'. This places significant legal duties on both County Councils as owners under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 to preserve and enhance the features of the Site of Special Scientific Interest and take general account of biodiversity in all operations. The Occupiers Liability Act 1954 and National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949 also place a general duty of care upon the county council to maintain Surrey land in a safe condition and make the land available for public recreation.</p> <p>In recent times discussions have taken place around possible income generating opportunities for the Canal which has included the redevelopment of the Basingstoke Canal centre. As part of these discussions both local authorities have agreed to discuss the future management of the Canal.</p> |

Why this is a scrutiny item

75% of the BCA's funding is from annual revenue grants given by each of the partner authorities. In the current economic climate this is unsustainable for Surrey and therefore the county council must look at the future sustainability of the Canal and their management position in relation to this. It is recognised that there are many positive benefits to be gained from the Basingstoke Canal and a range of redevelopment options to generate income from the Canal have been identified to increase long term sustainability of the Canal.

JBA consultancy has been commissioned to investigate the value of the Canal; the conclusion so far is that there is a huge amount of benefit to be gained from the Canal. As part of the scrutiny process both Surrey and Hampshire county council have agreed to discuss and consider the most effective option for the future management of the Canal.

The task group's key objective is to ensure the county council makes an informative decision around the future management of the Basingstoke Canal.

What question is the task group aiming to answer?

What position should Surrey county council take in terms of the future management of the Basingstoke Canal?

There is currently a joint partnership arrangement in place between Surrey and Hampshire. The task group could recommend that the current arrangements remain or recommend another model of governance.

Aim

To review the draft business plan from JBA Consultancy on the Basingstoke Canal and recommend the most effective governance option for the future management of the Canal which brings benefits to both the county council and Surrey residents.

Objectives

The task group will develop a range of governance options for the future management of the Basingstoke Canal and will recommend the most effective management option for Surrey county council.

Scope (within / out of)

The task group will consider the most effective governance option for Surrey county council. In order to recommend a governance option the task group will need to consider and analyse the draft business plan on the value of the Canal. Along with a range of witness sessions, both will provide a source for evaluating different models of ownership in the medium term future.

Although the Canal is jointly owned by Hampshire and Surrey, recommendations around the governance position Hampshire should take will be out of scope.

Outcomes for Surrey / Benefits

The recommendations of this Task Group will enable the county council to decide whether they continue their involvement with the Basingstoke Canal or make changes to the current joint ownership model.

The following corporate objectives will benefit in particular from the work of the Task Group:

Economic Prosperity- 'Surrey's economy remains strong and sustainable'. In the uncertain economic climate the county council must make savings but also create a sustainable future with income generation opportunities. The work of the task group will take account of future sustainability and value for money for both the county council and residents.

Resident Experience- 'Residents in Surrey experience public services that are easy to use, responsive and value for money'. The task group will ensure that any recommendations made improve resident's experiences and provide value for money for residents.

Proposed work plan

It is important to clearly allocate who is responsible for the work, to ensure that Members and officers can plan the resources needed to support the task group.

| Timescale | Task | Responsible |
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| May 2015 | Brief task group on outcomes from consultancy report and update on the future management of the Canal. | Officers |
| Round 1- June 2015 | Initial witness sessions/evidence gathering from internal officers/cabinet member. | Task Group |
| Round 2- June/ July/ Early August 2015 | Witness sessions/evidence gathering from external partners. | Task Group |
| Late August/ September 2015 | Report writing and submission of recommendations to Select Committee/Cabinet. | Task Group |

Draft list of Witnesses

- Countryside Group Manager
- Strategic Manager for the Basingstoke Canal
- Basingstoke Canal Manager
- Assistant Director for Environment
- Cabinet Member for Environment and Planning
- SCC Procurement Department
- Head of Countryside, Hampshire CC
- Hampshire Finance Service
- Basingstoke Canal Society
- JBA Consultancy
- Inland Waterways Association
- Residential Boat Owners Association
- Canal and River Trust

Useful Documents

- Report to the Environment and Transport Select Committee: Basingstoke Canal Update Report (12.03.2015)
- Report to the Basingstoke Canal JMC: Canal Centre Redevelopment Proposals (16.10.2014)

Potential barriers to success (Risks / Dependencies)

- Progress of the Task Group is dependent on officer and witness availability.
- The final officer report with recommendations on the future management of the Basingstoke Canal will be submitted to Cabinet in September 2015. This means final recommendations from the task group will need to be submitted and circulated by late August/ early September.

Equalities implications

- No discernible impacts have been identified; however the task group will need to consider the impact on changes to governance on residents/Canal users.

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| Task Group Members | Tbc |
| Spokesman for the Group | David Harmer |
| Scrutiny Officer | Huma Younis |