

COUNCIL REPORT

CHANGES TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FUNCTION

KEY ISSUE/DECISION:

The changes to the arrangements for the operation of overview and scrutiny at the County Council were agreed by Council in May 2019.

BACKGROUND:

- 1 While there have been regular changes to the structure and operation of the scrutiny function at the council, there is a need to make further amendments to support the changes taking place in the organisation as a whole, in particular the transformation programme.
- 2 Article 7 of Part 2 of the Constitution sets out the terms of reference and specific remits for each of the select committees, 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, the Chief Executive, and others, and this report sets out proposed changes for the Council's approval.

PROPOSED CHANGES

- 3 The proposed changes seek to achieve a scrutiny model that aligns with the senior officer and Cabinet structure. In addition, the proposals link the select committees to the outcomes in the Council's Vision for 2030.

- 4 The key changes to the current arrangements are as follows:

(a) Reduction in the number of select committees

Under this proposal, the number of select committees would reduce from six to four. This brings the county council in line with other county councils in the South East, where an average of four select committees exists, and complies with the independent review of Northamptonshire County Council's scrutiny arrangements, which advocated fewer committees and a simpler structure. To offset the impact of an overall reduction in seats as a result of fewer committees, the proposals assume that membership of each select committee will increase from 10 to 12, with additional outside representation where appropriate.

(b) Enhanced role for the Select Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen's Group

The informal Select Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen's Group will comprise the chairmen and vice-chairmen of all the select committees and will set the direction for strategic scrutiny and general oversight of the scrutiny forward work

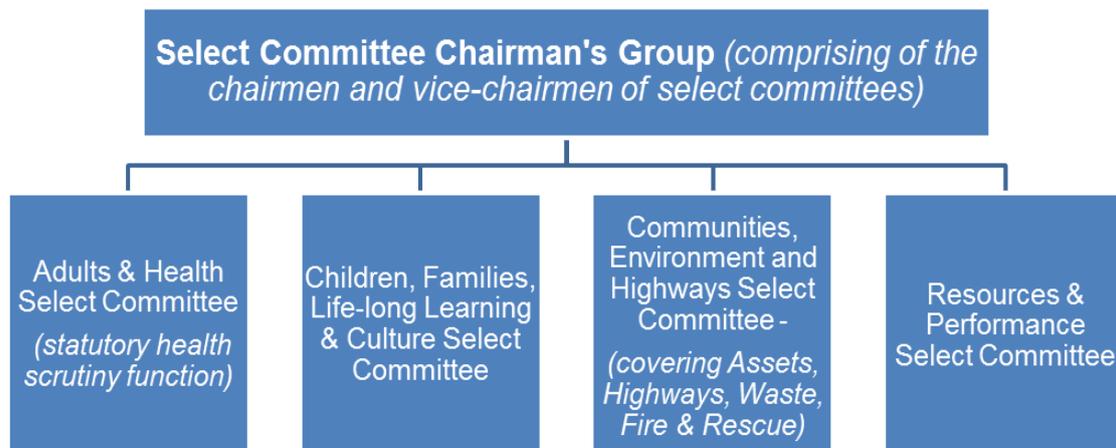
programmes and task and finish groups. The draft terms of reference for the group are attached for information at Annex A.

(c) An increase in the number of select committee vice-chairmen

It is proposed that each select committee will appoint informal task and finish groups to undertake specific, focused and time-limited reviews linking to areas within their remit. The effectiveness of these groups will be key to improving the overall impact and effectiveness of the scrutiny function.

It is anticipated that each select committee will have a maximum of two task and finish groups in operation at any one time. The expectation is that such groups will operate in noticeably different ways to committees and may meet informally and frequently, involving residents and external partners in their work. In order to sustain this intensive work, it is proposed that each select committee appoints two vice-chairmen, so that each can lead on one of the committee's task and finish groups.

- 5 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 titles have been chosen which more clearly reflect the areas of work for which they are responsible, as well as the council's transformation agenda. Details of the services within the remit of each Select Committee are set out in the annex to the Articles, published elsewhere on this agenda.



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

Select Committee	Number of Members
Resources & Performance Select Committee	12
Adults & Health Select Committee	12 plus 3 co-optees
Children, Families, Lifelong Learning & Culture Select Committee	12 plus 4 co-optees
Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee	12

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

The allocation of seats on the select committees will be considered under an item elsewhere on this agenda.

REASONS FOR CHANGE

- 7 The current scrutiny model does not support the way the organisation is changing and in particular is not sufficiently aligned to the transformation programme to allow for meaningful scrutiny. The structure proposed reflects current thinking on best practice in scrutiny, which has moved away from a service-specific focus towards a thematic approach based on required outcomes.
- 8 A Members' working group led by Councillor John O'Reilly also discussed the current select committee model and developed suggestions for a new scrutiny model along very similar lines to those proposed.
- 9 The effectiveness of scrutiny at Surrey has been criticised by three external public bodies, with the scrutiny annual review from 2017/18 identifying that select committees made recommendations on only 19 of the 55 items it considered during that time.

TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY

- 10 The Transformation Programme has been mapped against the proposed scrutiny structure to show which select committee would scrutinise which project, as follows.

Select Committee	Business cases
Adults and Health	Accommodation with Care and Support Practice Improvement ASC Market Management Health & Social Care integration
Children, Families, All Age Learning and Culture	Libraries and Cultural Services All Age LD (Transitions) Family Resilience SEND transformation

Communities, Environment and Highways	Waste Fire Improvement Place Strategy Highways, Transport and Environment Transformation
Resources and Performance	Customer Experience Finance Transformation Fees & Charges Digital Agile Workforce Performance Management/MI Insights Spans of Control Orbis VFM Commissioning

NEXT STEPS:

- 11 Subject to approval by the Council, the new arrangements will be implemented with immediate effect. A structured programme of induction and training, including chairing skills training and an all-Member briefing on effective scrutiny, has been 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.
- 12 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. In addition, Members will be encouraged to bring forward items from select committees and/or their task and finish groups for consideration at Cabinet or Council meetings.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the revised structure for overview and scrutiny in the County Council set out in paragraph four of the report, was agreed by Council in May 2019.

Contact: Geoff Wild, Director of Law & Governance
Tel: 020 8541 7981, email: geoff.wild@surreycc.gov.uk

Sources/background papers: None