

TERMS OF REFERENCE

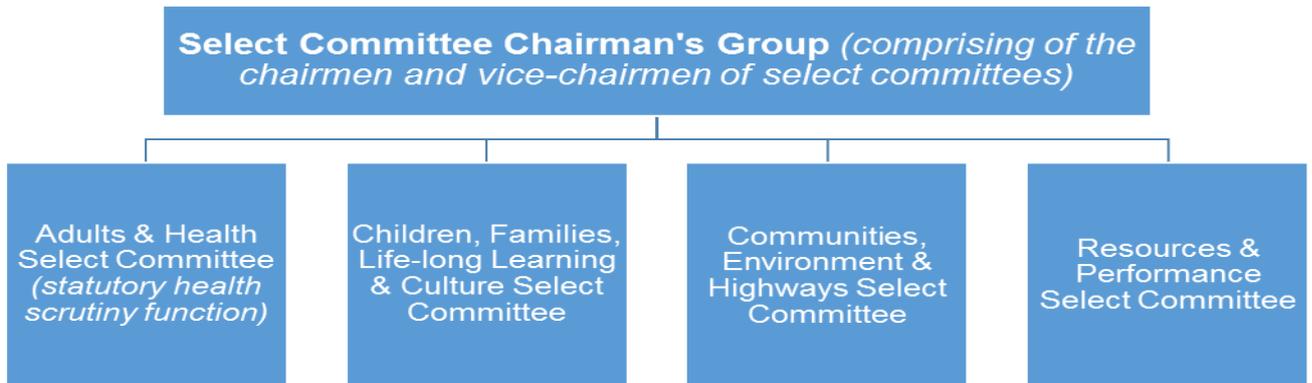
AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

2019/20 Review of the Effectiveness of the Council’s Scrutiny Function

Membership of the Effectiveness of Scrutiny Task and Finish Group – whole Committee membership.

Purpose of the task and finish group:

- 1 In May 2019 the County Council approved a new scrutiny structure as set out below.



- 1 In addition, the Housing, Communities & Local Government Select Committee ran an inquiry into the effectiveness of local government overview and scrutiny during 2017-18 and made recommendations to the Government¹ and although the majority were not accepted it did lead to the publication of the Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities in May.
- 2 It was agreed that the Audit and Governance Committee, as the Committee charged with responsibility for governance, is best placed to undertake a review of the effectiveness of the Council’s scrutiny function on behalf of the County Council and establish a Task and Finish Group at the September committee meeting to carry out the 2019/20 review.

Scope of the review:

- 3 The review will examine the effectiveness of the Council’s select committees and compliance with the new Statutory Guidance as well as undertake an assessment of the effectiveness of the scrutiny function against the Centre for Public Scrutiny’s ‘Scrutiny Evaluation Framework’. The review will not seek to make proposals to make changes to the structure of the scrutiny function.

The review:

- 4 A number of supporting documents will be provided to the task and finish group to enable members to fully understand the role of scrutiny and best practice requirements prior to starting the review.

¹ Housing, Communities & Local Government Select Committee, *1st Report – Effectiveness of Local Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committees* available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcomloc/369/36902.htm> (As accessed 13 May 2019).

5 Key areas of the review include:

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) - Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities

6 A self-assessment will be completed using the criteria set out within the new Statutory Guidance to assess compliance (Annex 1). Documents will also be collected from the Democratic Services team to evidence compliance with the various aspects of the Guidance.

Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) – The Scrutiny Evaluation Framework

7 The CfPS has produced a framework to assist with reviewing, evaluating and improving local government scrutiny and governance arrangements (Annex 2). This sets out various characteristics of good scrutiny that the Audit and Governance Committee can use to undertake a self-assessment of the scrutiny function against the best practice standards set out in the document.

Stakeholder questionnaires

8 Questionnaires could be sent out to a number of stakeholder groups to get their feedback and thoughts on the effectiveness of the scrutiny function and the Council's four select committees.

Stakeholder interviews

9 It is proposed that a cross section of members and officers will be consulted in order to give a practical balance to the review. It is suggested that the following stakeholders be consulted:

- Chief Executive
- Leader of the Council
- A Cabinet Member
- Select Committee Chairmen and Vice-chairmen
- The Chairman of the Select Committee Chairman's Group
- Officers that have recently attended select committee meetings as witnesses

Observation of Select Committee meetings and task and finish group meetings

10 Although limitations on time might prevent attendance at all select committees meetings, it is proposed that members of the task and finish group attend a range of select committee meetings to observe how these run.

Timeline:

11 The final report on the 2019/20 review will be presented to the Audit and Governance Committee when the review has concluded.

Support to the task and finish group:

12 The task and finish group will be fully supported by Vicky Hibbert, Governance Lead Manager (Statutory Scrutiny Officer), Ross Pike, Committees Business Manager and Joss Butler, Committee Manager from the Democratic Services team.