

Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules

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Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules

1. Number and Arrangements for Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1.1 The Council will have one Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

‘Overview and Scrutiny Committee’

It will perform all overview and scrutiny functions on behalf of the Council and will be politically balanced.

1.2 The terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be as detailed in Article 7 and Part IV of the Constitution.

2. Seats on Overview and Scrutiny Committee

2.1 All Councillors, with the exception of the Chairman, Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader of the Council, and Leader of the Opposition, may be members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. However, no member may be involved in scrutinising a decision in which he/she has been directly involved.

2.2 A member must if he/she is involved in the consideration of a matter at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Authority or a sub-committee of that Committee, regard himself/herself as having a personal and a prejudicial interest if that consideration relates to a decision made, or action taken, by another of the Council's –

- committees or sub-committees; or
- joint committees or joint sub-committees.

of which he/she may also be a member and took part in that decision making.

2.3 Sub-paragraph (2.2) above shall not apply if that member attends that meeting for the purpose of answering questions or otherwise giving evidence relating to that decision or action.

3. Co-optees

3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall be entitled to appoint a number of people as non-voting co-optees.

4. Meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4.1 Special meetings may be called from time to time as and when appropriate.

- 4.2 An Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting may be called by the Chairman of the Committee, by a simple majority of members of the Committee or by the Proper Officer if he/she considers it necessary or appropriate.

5. Quorum

- 5.1 The quorum for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall be one quarter of the whole numbers of members provided that in no case shall the quorum of the committee be less than four voting members.

6. Work Programme

- 6.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be responsible for reporting annually to the Council on both its proposed work plan and its work in the preceding year and, in doing so, shall take into account wishes of members on the Committee who are not members of the largest political group on the Council.

7. Agenda Items

- 7.1 Any member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall be entitled to give notice to the Proper Officer that he/she wishes an item relevant to the functions of the Committee to be included on the agenda for the next available meeting of the Committee. On receipt of such a request, the Proper Officer will ensure that it is included on the next available agenda.
- 7.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall also respond, as soon as its work programme permits, to requests from the Council and policy committees to review particular areas of council activity. Where it does so, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall report their findings and any recommendations back to the relevant policy committee and/or Council. The Council and/or the relevant policy committee shall consider the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the next available meeting.
- 7.3 There will be a standing item on the agenda of all ordinary meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which will allow for consideration to be given to the work programme.

8. Policy Review and Development

- 8.1 The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to the development of the Council's budget and policy framework is set out in detail in the Budgetary and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in Part V of this Constitution.
- 8.2 In relation to the development of the Council's approach to other matters not forming part of its policy and budgetary framework, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may make proposals to policy committees for developments in so far as they relate to matters within its terms of reference.

8.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may hold inquiries and investigate the available options for future direction in policy development and may appoint advisers and assessors to assist in this process. It may go on site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission research and do all other things that it reasonably considers necessary to inform its deliberations. It may ask witnesses to attend to address it on any matter under consideration and may pay to any advisers, assessors and witnesses a reasonable fee and expenses for doing so.

9. Reports from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

9.1 Once it has formed recommendations on proposals for development, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will prepare formal reports and submit them to the Proper Officer for consideration by the relevant policy committee (if the proposals are consistent with the existing budgetary and policy framework), or to the Council as appropriate (e.g. if the recommendation would require a departure from, or a change to, the agreed budgetary and policy framework).

9.2 If the Overview and Scrutiny Committee cannot agree on one single final report to the Council or the relevant policy committee as appropriate, then up to one minority report may be prepared and submitted for consideration by the Council or policy committee with the majority report.

9.3 The Council or policy committee shall consider any report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the next available meeting after being submitted to the Proper Officer.

10. Consideration of Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Reports by Policy Committees

10.1 Once an Overview and Scrutiny report on any matter which is the responsibility of a policy committee has been completed, it shall be included on the agenda of the next available meeting of the relevant policy committee.

11. Rights of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members to Documents

11.1 In addition to their rights as Councillors, members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have the additional right to documents and to notice of meetings as set out in the Access to Information Procedure Rules in Part V of this Constitution.

11.2 Nothing in this paragraph prevents more detailed liaison between the relevant policy committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as appropriate depending on the particular matter under consideration.

12. Members and Officers Giving Account

12.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may scrutinise and review decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any council functions within its remit. As well as reviewing documentation, in fulfilling the

scrutiny role, it may require any member of a policy committee, the Head of Paid Service or an Assistant Director to attend before it to explain in relation to matters within its remit –

- (a) any particular decision or series of decisions; and
- (b) the extent to which the actions taken implement Council policy

and it is the duty of those persons to attend if so required.

More junior officers may be invited to assist the Committee.

- 12.2 Where any member or officer is required to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee under this provision, the Chairman of the Committee will inform the Proper Officer. The Proper Officer shall inform the member or officer in writing giving at least five working days' notice of the meeting at which he/she is required to attend. The notice will state the nature of the item on which he/she is required to attend to give account and whether any papers are required to be produced for the Committee. Where the account to be given to the Committee will require the production of a report, then the member or officer concerned will be given sufficient notice to allow for presentation of that documentation.
- 12.3 Where, in exceptional circumstances, the member or officer is unable to attend on the required date, and then the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall, in consultation with the member or officer, arrange an alternative date for attendance.

13. Attendance by Others

- 13.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may invite people other than those people referred to in paragraph 12 above to address it, discuss issues of local concern and/or answer questions on issues within the remit of the committee. The committee may, for example, wish to hear from residents, stakeholders and members and officers in other parts of the public sector and shall invite such people to attend.

14. Call-In

- 14.1 Call-in should occur where members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have evidence which suggests that the policy committee(s) for which it is responsible did not take the decision in accordance with the principles set out in Article 12.
- 14.2 Five working days are to be allowed for the call-in of decisions. The procedure is as follows –
- (a) If four members on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee wish to call in a decision with a view to requesting that the relevant policy committee reconsiders the decision, this must be done within five

working days of publication of the decision, provided the issue in question has not been recorded as urgent.

- (b) Any request to call in a decision must be in writing, be signed by the four members and set out the resolution to be considered. The call-in notice should also set out the reason(s) why the decision should be reconsidered. The notice should be sent to the Head of Paid Service no later than 5pm on the fifth working day following publication of the decision.
 - (c) Decisions can only be called in once and must be considered at the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee unless the agenda for that meeting has already been published. If the agenda has been published, the issue will be considered at the subsequent Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting unless the matter is considered urgent by the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, taking into account any views of the Chairman of the Committee whose decision has been called in.
 - (d) The date of publication of the decision will be deemed to be the day on which the minutes were published on the Council's website.
 - (e) If having considered the decision the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may:
 - (i) refer back to the relevant policy committee for further consideration, setting out in writing its recommendations; or
 - (ii) not refer back to the relevant policy committee and the decision shall take effect on the date of the overview and scrutiny meeting.
- 14.3 Where a matter is to be referred to another committee, call-in only applies after the matter has been considered by that other committee.
- 14.4 Call-in does not apply to recommendations to Council nor to Council decisions themselves.
- 14.5 The Chairman of the committee whose decision has been called in shall be invited to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting when the item is considered. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or his/her representative) shall attend the policy committee meeting when the called-in item goes back for consideration.
- 14.6 Where a policy committee does not wish to accept the recommendation(s) of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a called-in decision, the decision shall be referred to Council.
- 14.7 The call-in procedure set out above shall not apply where the decision being taken by the policy committee is urgent. A decision will be urgent if any delay likely to be caused by the call-in process would seriously prejudice the Council's

or the public interest. The record of the decision shall state whether, in the opinion of the decision-making committee, the decision is an urgent one and, therefore, not subject to call-in. The committee taking the decision must agree both that the decision proposed is reasonable in all the circumstances and to it being treated as a matter of urgency. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall be consulted before any matter is dealt with under this urgency procedure.

14.8 Urgency in this context goes further than the urgency provisions contained in the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 relating to late reports. A report may well have been submitted to the relevant committee in good time but the implementation of the decision is nevertheless considered urgent.

14.9 The operation of the provisions relating to call-in and urgency shall be monitored annually.

15. Procedure at Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meetings

15.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall consider the following business –

- (a) minutes of the last meeting;
- (b) declarations of interest;
- (c) consideration of any matter referred to the Committee for a decision in relation to call-in of a decision;
- (d) (responses of the policy committee(s) to reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- (e) the business otherwise set out in the agenda for the meeting; and
- (f) the work programme.

15.2 Where the Overview and Scrutiny Committee conducts investigations (e.g. with a view to policy development), the Committee may also ask people to attend to give evidence at committee meetings which are to be conducted in accordance with the following principles:

- (a) that the investigation be conducted fairly and all members of the Committee given the opportunity to ask questions of attendees, to contribute and speak;
- (b) that those assisting the Committee by giving evidence be treated with respect and courtesy; and
- (c) that the investigation be conducted so as to maximise the efficiency of the investigation or analysis.

15.3 Following any investigation or review, the Committee shall prepare a report for submission to the appropriate policy committee and/or Council as appropriate and shall make its report and findings public.

16. Oversight Commissions

16.1 Part of the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to provide support to the two policy committees by holding commissions on specific areas as requested by those committees.

To commence a commission: -

- The Prosperous Communities Committee and/or the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee will agree the purpose, scope and terms of reference of a commission and make a formal request via the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny (by formal report) that a commission is established to investigate in detail a particular issue from a national, regional, sub-regional and local perspective.
- The proposed report and terms of reference for a commission should be agreed with the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to being submitted to the commissioning policy committee for agreement.'
- In undertaking such a commission, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may hold inquiries and investigate options for future direction in policy development. They may appoint advisers and assessors to assist in this process. They may go on site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission research and do all other things that they reasonably consider necessary to inform their deliberations. They may ask witnesses to attend to address it on any matter under consideration and may pay to any advisers, assessors and witnesses a reasonable fee and expenses for doing so, as specified in the Constitutional operating procedures.
- If a budget is required this will need to be agreed by the commissioning Committee.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will report back their findings to the Commissioning Policy Committee