

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

6 JANUARY 2015

<p>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCESS - UPDATE</p>
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PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To inform the Overview and Scrutiny Board (OSB) of actions being taken to strengthen and improve Middlesbrough Council's scrutiny process.

RECOMMENDATION

2. OSB is requested to note the updated position.

BACKGROUND

3. While the authority's overview and scrutiny process has generally been regarded as having worked well since its introduction, the opportunity has been taken to review arrangements supporting the process. This is to ensure that:
 - a) Scrutiny panel Chairs, Vice-Chairs, non-Executive members and relevant officers are fully engaged in the process; and
 - b) The scrutiny process is strengthened and used to maximum effect.

PROPOSED ACTION/ACTION TO DATE

4. Following discussions involving the Chair of OSB, Corporate Management Team (CMT), Leadership Management Team (LMT) and Scrutiny Panel Chairs/Vice Chairs the following measures have been suggested/introduced:
 - a) Where Scrutiny Panel Chairs consider it would be beneficial, they are to be given the opportunity to meet relevant assistant directors prior to commencing investigation of a new scrutiny topic. This will allow both parties to discuss and identify areas for possible investigation and ensure that officers are aware of a scrutiny panel's requirements. Meetings will also be arranged between Scrutiny Chairs and Executive Members where Chairs consider that this would be of benefit. Executive Members will continue to be briefed, as appropriate, on occasions where they are required to attend scrutiny panel meetings.

- b) More-regular meetings are to be arranged between the Chair of OSB and Scrutiny Panel Chairs.
 - c) All Members now receive an electronic weekly update to briefly outline the purpose/content of forthcoming scrutiny panel and OSB meetings.
 - d) The system of submitting scrutiny reports to The Executive is under review. This is aimed at streamlining the process to ensure that final reports are submitted for consideration by The Executive as soon as possible - eg by perhaps submitting such reports to Individual Executive meetings when they relate to internal management issues, or issues that would be unlikely to generate significant public interest.
 - e) Each scrutiny panel has identified one or two Change Programme-related items for inclusion in its 2014-15 work programme.
 - f) The process of monitoring scrutiny recommendations and reporting on this to OSB is being reviewed.
 - g) In order to free-up officer time, officers attending Overview and Scrutiny Board are now given a scheduled time slot for attendance at the meeting. This will also be applied to scrutiny panel meetings when more than one topic is being discussed.
 - h) Executive summaries will be included in the case of lengthy scrutiny panel final reports.
 - i) Scrutiny panels will build on existing practice, with Council partners and stakeholders to be informed of work programmes and invited to contribute to the scrutiny process where appropriate.
5. The updated arrangements outlined above are at various stages of development/introduction. In addition, previous support for the scrutiny process, such as periodic training for Chairs, Vice-Chairs and scrutiny Members will be continued.

BACKGROUND AND REFERENCE MATERIAL

6. There were no background documents used in preparing this report.

COUNCILLOR NICKY WALKER

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