

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	10 January 2017
Subject:	Review of Effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Report of:	Graeme Simpson, Head of Corporate Services
Corporate Lead:	Mike Dawson, Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Councillor Mrs E J Elaine MacTiernan, Lead Member for Organisational Development
Number of Appendices:	One

Executive Summary:

The Corporate Peer Challenge completed in November 2014, facilitated by the Local Government Association, recognised how the Overview and Scrutiny Committee makes an impact and contributes well to policy development. The final Peer Challenge report encouraged that the Committee's contribution be maximised to provide even greater value. In February 2015, the views and experiences of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were obtained to identify any areas where the Committee could add more value and an action plan was developed to aid this effectiveness.

There were changes to the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee following the Borough Council elections in May 2015 and a similar workshop was held on 9 February 2016 to obtain the views of the new Committee which led to the development of a new action plan. As part of the training and development action, Members agreed to be 'critiqued' by an independent assessor. This assessment was carried out by Ann Reeder from Frontline Consulting who attended and observed the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 14 June 2016. Initial observations were fed back to the Committee directly following the meeting with a formal report to be issued in due course; this report can be found at Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDATION

To CONSIDER the report on the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and APPROVE the recommendations identified by Officers in Paragraph 2.5.

Reasons for Recommendation:

It makes good business practice to ensure the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is adding as much value as possible. The good work of the Committee was recognised by the Corporate Peer Challenge which encouraged that the Committee's contribution is maximised.

Resource Implications:

There will be a cost for additional training. This is a minimal cost as equates to only one day training which can be met from existing budget.

Legal Implications:

None directly arising from this report.

Risk Management Implications:

If the Committee does not add value to the operations of the Council then there is a risk it will not wholly fulfil its Terms of Reference

Performance Management Follow-up:

The effectiveness of the Committee is reviewed annually and actions arising can be monitored through this review.

Environmental Implications:

None.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 1.1** The Corporate Peer Challenge completed in November 2014, facilitated by the Local Government Association, recognised how the Overview and Scrutiny Committee makes an impact and contributes to policy development. The final Peer Challenge report encouraged that the Committee's contribution be maximised to provide even greater value.
- 1.2** At a workshop held on 9 February 2016, Overview and Scrutiny Members agreed to be 'critiqued' by an independent assessor. This assessment was carried out by Ann Reeder from Frontline Consulting who attended and observed the Committee meeting held on 14 June 2016. Initial observations were fed back to the Committee directly following the meeting with a formal report to be issued in due course; this report can be found at Appendix 1.

2.0 OBSERVATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON 14 JUNE 2016

- 2.1** The attached report highlights the positive area of activity and makes suggestions as to where further development might be possible.
- 2.2** Pages 1-2 of the report highlights numerous examples of positive practice including:
- publication of an annual Overview and Scrutiny report;
 - commitment of the Committee and robust Chairmanship;
 - strong Officer support;
 - relevant and significant issues being included within the Work Programme; and
 - the Committee's understanding of 'what matters' e.g. policy development and issues relating to the Borough.
- 2.3** The suggested areas for improvement focus on those which were identified by Members at the review of effectiveness workshop on 9 February 2016. The recommendations are quite detailed and several are statements of fact about what is already taking place

rather than actually being a new recommendation. For example:

- Page No. 5 - the Committee might usefully focus on RAG ratings and direction of travel indicators first;
- Page No. 6 - Members could be reminded that they can make suggestions for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agenda and Work Programme;
- Page No. 7 - the pre-meeting could usefully help the Committee as a whole identify the overall areas for focus;
- Page No. 12 - it would be useful to sustain the regular updates from County wide scrutiny activity.

As the areas for improvement are interlinked, some of the observations and recommendations are repeated.

2.4 Following discussion between relevant Officers, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Lead Member, it was felt that there would be no added value arising from certain recommendation. Furthermore, in some cases the benefits would be disproportionate to the resources available to effectively implement the recommendation, for example:

- Pages No. 4 & 5 - Members sharing out responsibility for specific areas of performance.
- Pages No. 7 & 8 – Conducting preparation for Pre-Briefings of the Committee Preparation via email in advance.
- Page No. 9 - Introduction of a ‘Select Committee’ style seating arrangement.

2.5 Three key recommendations have been identified which it is believed will add value to the effectiveness of the Committee:

1. Page No. 3 - The identification of key partners which contribute to the delivery of the Council’s priorities and programming in their attendance at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
2. Page No. 4 - Consistency of approach across all monitoring reports e.g. the use of RAG or direction of travel indicators.
3. Pages No. 5, 6, 7, 8 & 11 - Ongoing training and development, particularly in respect of effective questioning and the relationship between the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

2.6 When the report was written, the Committee was still receiving financial information as part of the quarterly performance management report which is now no longer the case as this is reported directly to the Executive Committee only. Members may wish to consider whether this is an appropriate arrangement or whether they should continue to have an input in monitoring the Council’s financial position.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.1 None.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 Chair and Vice-Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Lead and Support Members for Organisational Development.

5.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

5.1 None.

6.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

6.1 None.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

7.1 Training and development costs.

8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

8.1 None.

9.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

9.1 None.

10.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

10.1 None.

Background Papers: None

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Appendices: Appendix 1 – Frontline Consulting Report