

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Corporate Governance	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	25 th March 2008

REVIEW OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY STRUCTURE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To report back on the review of the Council's overview and scrutiny function which has taken place over the last 12 months.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- That any comments on the suggested new structure for overview and scrutiny be fed back to both the Executive Cabinet on 27th March and the full Council Meeting on 22nd April 2007.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

- To consider a proposed new structure for the Council's overview and scrutiny function.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

(If the recommendations are accepted)

- To address concerns that the current structure is not as effective as it could be and to increase Member engagement with the scrutiny process by promoting scrutiny reviews undertaken by small task and finish groups.
- Further to political groups considering the proposals, to allow the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to comment on the suggested new way of working.

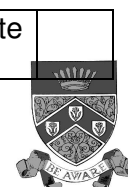
ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- The proposals are as a result of consultation with Members, which started approximately 12 months ago.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the	Develop local solutions to climate change.
--	--



Central Lancashire sub-region			
Improving equality of opportunity and life chances		Develop the Character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live	
Involving people in their communities		Ensure Chorley Borough Council is a performing organization	/

BACKGROUND

8. In early 2007 a Scrutiny Sub Committee met to consider a way forward for scrutiny in the light of a number of concerns expressed at the time around reviews taking too long; not necessarily adding value; Members reluctance to be involved in reviews and concerns that the previous CPA's view that scrutiny was an area of weakness for the Council, had not really been resolved.
9. The Sub Committee did not complete it's work as it was decided that Members would await the IDeA training which was scheduled for June 2007 and also the scrutiny implications of the Local Government White Paper at the time. This training was very well received and created enthusiasm for the process and put forward suggestions for topics for future reviews.
10. A consultation exercise was carried out during the summer of 2007 on a proposal for an overarching Overview and Scrutiny Committee and both an outward facing Panel for services provided to the public and inward facing Panel for services provided internally. There was a very low response to the consultation and there were views expressed that smaller groups worked more effectively and that both the current and suggested structures were too bureaucratic.
11. On that basis a further proposal was put forward towards the end of 2007/early 2008 to political groups for discussion with a more simplified structure of one overarching Overview and Scrutiny Committee and a series of task and finish groups. This has generally been supported by groups and therefore is being put forward for full Council approval on 22 April 2008. The details are set out below for members consideration.

THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE NEW SCRUTINY STRUCTURE

12. The current proposal is for an overarching Overview and Scrutiny Committee – with the two current scrutiny panels (Corporate & Customer and Environment & Community) being disbanded. The suggestion is a membership of 12 for the Overview and scrutiny Committee as at present.
13. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be the Committee which hears any call-ins of decisions; sets the workplan for scrutiny for the whole year and also consider corporate issues including:
 - o overall performance information;
 - o business planning for the Council
 - o overall budget scrutiny
14. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will establish and appoint task and finish groups to undertake reviews. A task and finish group should generally consist of four or five members from the membership of the main committee but could include other Council Members (other than Executive Members) who are interested in the topics under scrutiny. Practice has shown that smaller groups tend to work more effectively and this is backed up by members comments. Once the scrutiny workplan has been set for the year, all Councillors outside of scrutiny (other than Executive Members) can be asked

to volunteer for any reviews in which they are particularly interested or keen to participate in.

15. Task and finish groups undertaking reviews or inquiries will meet fairly frequently with a view to completing a review and reporting it to the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 3 or 4 months depending on the size of the subject under review. Dates have been scheduled in the meetings calendar for Task and Finish Groups and a report on the agenda for this Committee looks at suggested inquiry topics with a view to selecting a number for the next Council year.
16. Overview and Scrutiny Committee will continue to produce an annual report each year for Executive Cabinet and then onto a Council meeting.
17. The Scrutiny Toolkit will require updating and refreshing and this will take place early in the 2008/09 Council year and be brought to the Overview and scrutiny Committee for approval.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

18. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Corporate Directors' comments are included:

Finance		Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal	/	No significant implications in this area	

ANDREW DOCHERTY
DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Carol Russell	5196	12 th March 2008	***

Background Papers			
Document	Date	File	Place of Inspection
***	***	***	***