

### Proposed Changes to the Overview and Scrutiny Function as reported to Council on 30<sup>th</sup> January.

1. On the 25<sup>th</sup> July, 2013 Council agreed to undertake a review and refresh of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function to identify improvements and take account of best practise from leading Councils. A cross party Working Group was established to assist in the review. Following a series of meetings in September, 2013 the following key principles for delivering improvement were agreed:
  - Maintaining the status quo position was not an option – changes were needed to working practices and structures particularly in light of future challenges e.g. budget cuts and changes to service delivery;
  - Revised arrangements should be accommodated within existing resources;
  - The function should identify priorities that will improve the delivery of services and support the Council's aims and objectives. More task and finish activities should be carried out. Working methods should be flexible and innovative and not be based around predetermined meeting dates;
  - To ensure there is an understanding of the value of Overview and Scrutiny recommendations should be reviewed periodically by OSMC to identify the impact they have had on services;
  - OSMC needs to provide a greater management and co-ordination role with a smaller membership that includes the Chairs of standing panels;
  - The size of Scrutiny Panels/OSMC needs to be reviewed although Members with a particular interest or expertise may wish to contribute to specific work of the Panels/OSMC;
  - Under current arrangements there is an imbalance in Panel workloads and there may need to be some realignment of responsibilities. There needs to be a reduction in the amount of information issues coming to O&S Panels/OSMC; and
  - A separate Panel should be established to consider Overview and Scrutiny of Health.

#### Proposed Structure:

2. With these key principles in mind the following changes were agreed by Group Leaders following consultation with their respective Groups.

#### OSMC - Membership

3. Membership to comprise 8 Members and include Chair and Vice, and Chairs of the four standing Panels, to ensure greater co-ordination of activity, plus two other Councillors. It was recommended that proportionality be disappplied to encourage cross party representation. Vice Chairs of the Panels will substitute for Chairs when necessary to ensure accountability back to the Panels. Members are advised that in accordance with Section 17 (1) of the

Local Government and Housing Act 1989 proportionality may be disapplied only where no Member of the Council votes against this proposal.

### **OSMC - Role & Remit**

4. OSMC will operate as a business Committee undertaking pre decision scrutiny (on important decisions), review finance and performance, consider the call in of decisions, receive recommendations from Panels and monitor their impacts. OSMC's remit will cover all aspects of Council and partnership activity (except Health Scrutiny).
5. The statutory responsibilities that Overview and Scrutiny must undertake i.e. annual review of the Community Safety Partnership, consultation on budget and policy framework issues before approval by Council will all be undertaken by OSMC (except on health related issues). OSMC may however, wish to delegate these to one of the Panels for consideration if appropriate. OSMC will meet more often possibly monthly to ensure it can consider a wider range of issues.
6. To reinforce OSMC's management and co-ordination role it will identify a small number of issues for consideration by the Panels at the start of the year but may add to these as other important issues arise e.g. a major policy review or to seek Scrutiny's views prior to consideration of a significant key decision. The intention is to ensure the Panel work plans remain focused on a small number of important issues. Panel updates and recommendations from Panel reviews would be fed back to OSMC by Panel Chairs.
7. OSMC may also establish ad hoc committees on issues it deems cross cutting to ensure appropriate consideration can be given to priority issues.

### **Standing Panels - Membership**

8. It was proposed that four standing Panels referred to below would be established with 9 Members and proportionality be disapplied. Cross party membership would be encouraged to ensure wider Member participation.
9. The Panel responsible for considering educational issues (Children and Young People's Panel) would need to include 5 statutory co-opted Members (three parent governor representatives and two faith representatives). Consideration would need to be given to these co-opted Members attending OSMC where relevant matters were being considered. In addition to these co-optees other invitees will continue to attend Scrutiny meetings where they can provide an informed input on specific issues. Currently Trade Union representatives attend Scrutiny meetings to provide a workforce perspective where this is relevant to the issue under consideration. These invitees do not have voting rights but can provide a useful input to the Overview and Scrutiny process. Invitees are able to contribute to the work of Overview and Scrutiny where they have a particular expertise.

## Standing Panels Role and Remit

10. It was proposed that the role and remit of the four Panels would be as follows:
  - **Children and Young People's Panel** – would continue to consider issues relating to Children and Young People including CYPS Directorate, the Children's Trust and other areas undertaken by partners;
  - **Regeneration & Housing** - Key areas will include regeneration, economic development, strategic transport and housing;
  - **Community & Environment**– this would include neighbourhood issues, street scene and highways, community safety as well as environmental issues; and
  - **Health and Adult Social Care** – Issues that fall within the remit of Public Health Directorate, adult social care and wider health issues. This Panel may need to meet more often to consider consultations/quality assurance or other statutory or significant health issues.
11. As the Council seeks to change the way it delivers services through commissioning and partnership arrangements Overview and Scrutiny should focus on how priorities are delivered throughout the Borough not just within Council Directorates. This will help to support Overview and Scrutiny of Doncaster the place and the delivery of Borough wide priorities rather than an internal focus on Council services. Overview and Scrutiny can use its specific powers and influence to review the activity of partners. Further work will be undertaken to ensure there is an alignment of activities and Cabinet Members to Panels to ensure clear lines of accountability exist.
12. OSMC would have the ability to establish cross panel ad hoc committees on issues it deemed cross cutting.

## Delivering Work Plans

13. Work planning sessions to identify future work programmes have been arranged for the following dates:
  - Regeneration and Environment: 7th April at 11.00am;
  - Adults and Communities 8th April at 1.30pm;
  - Schools Children and Young People 10th April at 10.00am; and
  - Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee 10th April at 2.00pm
14. Although the arrangements above do not mirror the proposed Panel structure the purpose will be to identify issues that can be identified for consideration by OSMC in the new municipal year. OSMC can then consider how any issues identified will be delegated to Panels within the new structure.
15. These work planning sessions will help OSMC identify one in depth review for each of the Panels for the 2014/15 municipal year. OSMC may also identify a small number of additional items to add to the Panels' work programmes at

this stage or during the course of the year. The Panels will seek to deliver a small number of high quality pieces of work focused on discreet areas that will contribute to the Council's priorities.

16. Panels will have flexibility to undertake their work within a timescale that is appropriate to the issue under consideration. This will avoid setting meeting dates in advance which may not align with the timescales of the review. The Council diary will include one monthly session set aside for an Overview and Scrutiny activity to be used by any of the Panels if required e.g. to gather evidence. These meetings may be cancelled if they are not required. There will be set dates for OSMC to meet monthly and the Health and Adult Social Care Panel to meet bi – monthly if required.
17. Chairs and Vice Chairs of OSMC/Panels would still be expected to liaise regularly with relevant Directors and Cabinet Members to ensure they are aware of relevant issues within their area.

### **Support for Delivering the New Structure**

18. The revised structure will be delivered within current resources. Although it is the intention for the Panels to consider fewer issues it is expected that this work will be more in depth. There will be a need to ensure there is officer support and buy in across the whole Council for the revised structure and new ways of working.
19. Members need to be adequately supported with the right skills to work effectively under these revised arrangements. Review work will be given a greater focus and will require effective questioning and listening, research and communication skills etc. Resources will be put in place to ensure elected Members have the necessary development opportunities to build on these skills if necessary.
20. Improved communication will also be necessary to ensure Members have a good awareness of forthcoming issues and Scrutiny meetings do not become a forum for receiving information items.
21. It is recommended that some piloting of these new arrangements takes place before implementation.