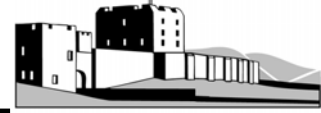


OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT

CARLISLE
CITY COUNCIL



COMMITTEE www.carlisle.gov.uk

Committee Report

Public

Date of Meeting:

13th March 2003

Title: **WORKSHOP OUTCOMES - REVIEW OF OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

Report of: **Overview and Scrutiny Manager**

Report reference: **OS 03/03**

Summary:

The report summarises how various actions agreed at the Overview and Scrutiny Workshop are being taken forward. It suggests how others can best be progressed and proposes alternative mechanisms for taking forward the review of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Structure.

Recommendations:

1. Members note the actions already in hand.
2. Agree the suggestions in relation to the other Workshop Outcomes.
3. Agree how the Review of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Structure is taken forward.

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2. **Introduction**

The annual Overview and Scrutiny Workshop to review the operation of Overview and Scrutiny in the authority, in accordance with the constitution, took place on 28th January 2003.

The outcomes of the event are included within the Annual Report elsewhere on the agenda and are also, for ease of reference, included as the Appendix to this report.

3. Taking Forward Outcomes

There are 16 action points recorded in the outcomes of the workshop. Items 7 to 16 relate to 'Processes and Procedures' and officers have started to address these (in conjunction with Chairmen where appropriate). For example in response to item 7 (Executive's Forward Plan) two items appear on the next agenda of Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee where officers have been invited to discuss Forward Plan items with the committee before the Executive report is written.

In relation to action points 1 (Committee Working), 4 (Involvement of Communities), 5 (External Scrutiny) and 6 (Assessing Success of Overview and Scrutiny) then these will need to be taken forward by the committees themselves as they develop their work programmes for the new municipal year. Officers will raise them as appropriate at that time and provide further reports if required.

Action point 2 (Focus on Outcomes) is important and it is suggested that Members consider this in more detail when the current prioritisation of Corporate Plan objectives is completed as that will enable a focussed programme and process to be defined for taking this work forward.

The final action point is 3 (Review of O&S Committee Structure) and the main purpose of this report is to seek Members views on how this work is taken forward. The next sections of the report consider this further.

4. Review of O&S Committee Structure

There are a number of options to consider including the following: -

Increasing the size of committees to 10 or 12 Members

Having an additional committee(s)

Having Management Committee undertake corporate work

Re-defining committee responsibilities to relate them to City Vision/Corporate Plan Objectives

Changing frequency and /or timing of meetings

There are significant implications associated with these options for example: -

Increasing committee size may jeopardise teamworking

More committees may require more resources (e.g. committee administration)

Giving Management Committee corporate work would take this away from Corporate Resources Committee

Re-defining responsibilities may result in less clarity

Increasing frequency of meetings may again require more resources.

There are more general concerns also, for example, ensuring that in any changed arrangement all committees have a meaningful and sustainable workload. Some changes would, under the current political make-up of the Council require controlling group Members to increase the number of committees on which they were members. Whilst conversely some options would not result in many additional back-bench Members becoming involved.

All these and more need to be brought out and considered in developing any alternative O&S committee structure.

5. Taking the Review Forward

A mechanism is required in order to explore the options and make recommendations for change. The committee is asked to consider the following mechanisms for taking the review forward and agree upon which they prefer (or identify another):

Discussions by Group Leaders

Resurrect (for a limited period) the Local Government Reform Working Group

Hold a further O&S Awayday (similar to the workshop)

It is suggested that it may be best (whichever mechanism is chosen) that it starts work immediately after the May elections.

5. Recommendations:

1. Members note the actions already in hand.
2. Agree the suggestions in relation to the other Workshop Outcomes.
3. Agree how the Review of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Structure is taken forward.

John Mallinson

Overview and Scrutiny Manager

APPENDIX

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

a. Working within the System

(1) **Committee Working** – less formal approaches such as workshops, talking to people informally, face to face meetings with members, officers and external interested parties should be used more.

(2) **Focus on Outcomes** – It was agreed that the role of O&S should not be about "nit-picking" over individual Executive Decisions. There should be a move towards examining outcomes (e.g. achievement of City Vision and Corporate Plan priorities) rather than inputs (individual Executive decisions). This was seen as a way of making a greater difference/adding value.

b. Development of Overview and Scrutiny

(3) **Review of O&S Committee Structure** – a review of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee structure and composition should be undertaken. The number, responsibilities and size of O&S Committees should be reviewed (including options of more Committees, setting up Sub-Committees, one Committee having a corporate role, engaging more Members by increasing number of Members on Committee or co-opting backbench Members). The Management Committee should undertake the Review and consider options. It was recognised that this could lead to changes to the City Council's Constitution

(4) **Involvement of Communities** – Community engagement should be fostered through individual studies and reviews. Points to recognise:

- how do we ensure we are talking to a cross-section of people
- co-option of interested parties
- protocol to engage with relevant community stakeholders

(5) **External Scrutiny** – external scrutiny is important for the Council to fulfil its Community Leadership role. Overview and Scrutiny Committees should consider the priority to be given to external scrutiny when the Work Programme is being considered. (Examples of possible external scrutiny - Post-16 education, University of Cumbria, Health, Flooding, Fire safety, Post F&M Health and Environmental matters)

(6) **Assessing Success of Overview and Scrutiny** – The success of O&S can be measured by looking back and assessing if O&S has made a difference or added value. Mechanisms to enable this to happen were needed, a move to looking at outcomes would help.

c. Processes and Procedures

(7) **Executive's Forward Plan** – Committees should look at Forward Plan items before the report going to the Executive is written. Officers should be invited to meetings in advance of Executive reports being written, allowing the Committee to provide input to and influence policy development.

(8) **Holding Reports** - there should not be any "holding reports" – rather just a note on the Executive agenda as to why there is no report. The O&S Management Committee receive a report on changes to the Forward Plan.

(9) **Executive Reports** – Overview and Scrutiny should not just be seeing reports which have been written for the Executive. By being involved at an earlier stage of the process, O&S should have input to issues under discussion before they are in the form of a report to Executive.

(10) **Decisions and Communications** - The onus is on the Chairman to sum up, with a clear resolution of what has been agreed by the Committee. The Committee's position is therefore comprehensive and understandable. The Executive should then be able to understand what they are being asked to do and give a clear and comprehensive response.

If a consensus is not reached the Clerk will record this in the minutes.

Overview and Scrutiny and Executive both need to work on improving the two-way communication process.

(11) **Minutes** – minutes should reflect the general nature of debate leading to the resolution, summarising how the Committee reached the resolution and clearly stating if there was disagreement. Minutes should not be a record of what each Member said.

(12) **Decisions and Communications – Best Value Review Final Reports-** BV Review final reports should have three separate sets of recommendations addressed to each of the following (to ensure that each audience is clear about what they are being asked to do):

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Executive
- City Council

(13) **Balance of Work/Work Programme** – when Work Programmes are agreed, the Committees should be clear about prioritisation and what they want to focus on. An option was to concentrate on one major Review with a comprehensive report.

(14) **Work Programme – Performance Indicators** – The Executive would be undertaking a prioritisation exercise – which would also involve Overview and Scrutiny. O&S could be involved in the development of indicators around the Council's priorities for moving the whole organisation forward.

O&S performance monitoring role could include:

- continuation of the focus on low performers; and
- input to development of indicators for measuring performance against the Council's priorities.

(15) **Frequency and timetabling of meetings** – the proposed timetable of O&S meetings for 2003/04, as submitted to the City Council was endorsed. It was recognised that this could change after the review of O&S to be undertaken by the Management Committee.

(16) **Budget Scrutiny** – The Executive make their budget policy statement in autumn, this would be the appropriate time for policy items to be programmed to go to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committees. A more structured timetable for the budgetary process would help O&S to consider and respond to Budget issues.