

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 June 2012

APPOINTMENT OF INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUPS FOR 2012/13

REPORT OF HEAD OF POLICY

Contact Officer: Antonia Perkins Tel No: 01962 848 314
aperkins@winchester.gov.uk

RECENT REFERENCES:

OS43 - Update on 2011/12 Informal Scrutiny Groups, appointment of batch 3 Informal Scrutiny Groups and review of the new overview and scrutiny procedures – 28 May 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report sets out potential topics for review via Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG). The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to select four topics for in-depth review via an ISG. These are in addition to the Access to Services in the Market Towns and Rural Areas, and The Impact of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) on City Estates ISGs which were appointed at the Committee's May meeting.

This report also sets out dates where progress against the implementation of Informal Scrutiny Groups' recommendations will be reviewed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That four scrutiny topics are selected for in-depth reviews by Informal Scrutiny Groups.
- 2 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee appoint Chairs to the agreed Informal Scrutiny Groups.
- 3 That Group Managers be asked to nominate the membership of the four Informal Scrutiny Groups agreed as part of Recommendation 1 and that these be appointed at the next meeting of this Committee, to be held 9 July 2012.
- 4 That the review dates set out in paragraph 3.1 to monitor progress with the implementation of ISG recommendations are added to the Scrutiny Work Programme.

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 July 2012

APPOINTMENT OF INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUPS FOR 2012/13

REPORT OF HEAD OF POLICY

1 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting of 28 May 2012, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that in order to take account of further suggestions of Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG) topics from Members, a further report should be taken to its next meeting.

2 Informal Scrutiny Groups – Batch 3

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee can appoint up to 6 ISGs at a time. At its May meeting, the Committee reappointed the Public Access to Data and Information via the City Council's Website ISG. It also agreed that ISGs looking at Access to Services in the Market Towns and Rural Areas and The Impact of Houses of Multiple Occupation on City Estates should be appointed. This leaves up to another three more ISGs to be appointed to batch 3 for 2012/13, with the suggestion that an additional ISG is appointed to commence once the Public Access to Data ISG presents its final report in September.
- 2.2 The Committee identified several other topics that it wished to further consider for batch 3 at the same time as a further list of topics which were not available at the time of the May Committee meeting. These topics are listed in the table below, along with Member and officer comments where these have been available.

	Proposed ISG topic	Member comment on evidence supporting the need for an ISG	Officer comment
	The following topics are proposed as Informal Scrutiny Groups in batch 3		
1	<p>Cost effectiveness of the Winchester District Strategic Partnership (WDSP), and the feasibility of a 'Total Place' approach to public expenditure in Winchester district</p> <p>(This topic was referred from the May meeting of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee)</p>	<p>This topic was suggested to look at the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How effective has the WDSP proved to be in the Winchester District in the last four years? 2. What is its current role? 3. What is the future of partnership working in Winchester district? 4. How much time, effort and money should the City Council be investing in the work of the WDSP? 	<p>Officers suggest that this ISG topic is broadened to review the Council's approach to partnership working more generally and how it is evolving from the WDSP.</p>
2	<p>The City Council's shared IT service with Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC), and the City Council's IT Strategy.</p> <p>(This topic was referred from the May meeting of The</p>	<p>The City Council has had a shared IT helpdesk with TVBC since December 2010 and a shared Head of IMT since January 2011. It has been suggested that this topic include a review of the Council's IT Strategy to ensure that the partnership with TVBC provides financial benefits and supports the Council's corporate ambitions.</p>	

	Proposed ISG topic	Member comment on evidence supporting the need for an ISG	Officer comment
	Overview and Scrutiny Committee)		
3	<p>Section 106 (S106) agreements: lessons to date and future application</p> <p>Or</p> <p>The development of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)</p> <p>(This topic was referred from the May meeting of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee)</p>	<p>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 January 2012 agreed that this could be considered as a potential topic for a future ISG to examine whether the public were getting value for money and to focus on issues of consistency, transparency, co-ordination between the City and County Councils.</p> <p>At the May meeting of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it was suggested that in light of the ongoing work for CIL, it would be more worthwhile to look at the development of the CIL than a retrospective review of the Section 106 Agreement scheme.</p>	<p>The Council envisages adopting its Community Infrastructure Levy by September 2013. Once in operation CIL will largely replace the need for planning obligations which are currently used as the means to secure financial contributions from development towards the provision of community and other facilities such open space. There will still be a role for planning obligations which will be needed for matters like affordable housing. However, in light of CIL, an ISG looking at S106s may be considered not to be the best use of member and officer time although the use of contributions secured by planning obligations under the current system could be covered by Member training.</p>
4	The Localism Act	An ISG is proposed to look at the implications for the City Council of the Localism Act, with a particular emphasis on the following:	

	Proposed ISG topic	Member comment on evidence supporting the need for an ISG	Officer comment
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood Plans and how parishes and communities can be actively engaged early on during the development of the next stage of the Local Plan • General power of competence: what could this mean for the City Council • The involvement of communities and parish councils in a rural environment in the implications of the Localism Act 	
5	Provision of public transport to support the evening economy.	<p>Although the Town Forum is looking at this topic, it is suggested that a review include transport to and from the outlying areas to the town.</p> <p>A particular focus on public transport in the evening for students is proposed.</p>	
6	Design of new houses in the new Council House building scheme	Scrutiny of the standard to which new Council houses are built is proposed, looking at creating houses which are visually attractive, affordable and sustainable.	The Head of New Homes Delivery will be developing a design protocol which will be considered by Cabinet (Housing) Committee. Scrutiny of this area could be helpful if it was undertaken quickly.

	Proposed ISG topic	Member comment on evidence supporting the need for an ISG	Officer comment
7	The Osborne Housing Maintenance Contract		
8	Review of the statutory requirements of the City Council and which services that are provided are discretionary.		Local Government has generally reached the point where the City Council will seek to respond to community priorities, not statute alone, so an ISG looking at this issue could potentially be a retrograde step. Much of what the City Council does, however, has some basis on statute, including responsibilities towards children or on community safety. It may be more useful to review the level of service provided by the City Council and the mechanism by which the service is delivered.
Topics which officers advise take place later in the scrutiny work programme			
9	The letting of the Guildhall		New operational arrangements have been put in place for the Guildhall and it is suggested that these need to be given time to bed down before a review in this area is undertaken.
10	Opportunities to maximise		New operational arrangements

	Proposed ISG topic	Member comment on evidence supporting the need for an ISG	Officer comment
	income generation opportunities (including the Guildhall, 1871, and advertising income)		<p>have been put in place for the Guildhall and it is suggested that these need to be given time to bed down before a review in this area is undertaken.</p> <p>An ISG looking at sponsorship opportunities for the Council was rejected at the May meeting of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p>
11	Raising income from the City Council's assets.	An ISG is proposed to review other means of raising income from assets, including offering wedding receptions in City Council owned venues and using the Council's assets as film venues.	Assets are already listed as being available for film use. New operational arrangements have been put in place for the Guildhall and it is suggested that these need to be given time to bed down before a review in this area is undertaken.
12	HRA Loan Arrangements and the House Building Programme		Officers suggest that this topic should be scrutinised later in the work programme, as it would be premature to review this topic before the house building programme has commenced.
13	The size of Social Housing and gardens		This will be considered by Cabinet (Housing) Committee as part of the New Homes Delivery development

	Proposed ISG topic	Member comment on evidence supporting the need for an ISG	Officer comment
			strategy.
14	Progress against the development of the Winchester Town Access Plan	<p>As consultation on the Access Plan began in 2007, it is felt that an ISG should take place to review what has been achieved since then and the cost of producing the Access Plan to date.</p> <p>A similar ISG topic has also been suggested to look at access in the town area, including parking provision and charges, public transport and any other potential means by which people might gain access to the Winchester town centre.</p>	Hampshire County Council will shortly be considering options from the Traffic Management Study part of the Access Plan in the next month or so, and it is advised that the need for an ISG is reviewed following this. It is suggested that a progress report on work completed on the Winchester Town Access Plan to date is discussed at The Overview and Scrutiny Committee if Members require an update sooner than this.
15	Reducing the number of Councillors		A shared commitment to act on the results and recommendations of this ISG would be necessary to make this a worthwhile topic.
Topics not felt suitable for review via an ISG			
16	Attending a Planning Appeal Committee -improving the experience for the lay public		Planning Appeal Committees are run by the external Planning Inspector; therefore the City Council will have limited influence on changing the process.

	Proposed ISG topic	Member comment on evidence supporting the need for an ISG	Officer comment
17	The handling of planning applications and pre-application consultations	This topic has been put forward due to concern that planning applicants are misled during pre-application consultations that their application will be successful only for them to be later refused.	Officers do not feel that there is an issue with advice given at pre-application stage which subsequently turns out to be inaccurate when the corresponding application is submitted. Complaints received from applicants do not reflect this and feedback to this effect has not been received from planning agents.
18	The revenue, management and licensing of lay by catering		It is suggested that this topic is too limited in scope to be dealt with via an ISG.
Other			
19	To look at and compare the perceived and actual level of service that WCC delivers to the City compared with the other major market towns in the district.		The Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their last meeting agreed to establish an ISG to look at Access to Services in Market Towns and Rural Areas. It is suggested that this ISG's scope could include a review of service levels throughout the district.
20	Efficiency and Effectiveness of flexible and home working	An ISG is proposed to look at whether In the experience of officers, Members and the public, does officers' ability to work flexible hours and	At the last meeting of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee this topic was rejected as a potential ISG and

	Proposed ISG topic	Member comment on evidence supporting the need for an ISG	Officer comment
		from home improve both the value for money and efficiency of the Council's services?	it was agreed that Personnel Committee should look at the issue.

3 Review of batch 1 and 2 ISG recommendations

- 3.1 After each ISG makes its final report to The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a date is set in the Scrutiny Work Programme for the Committee to review progress against the implementation of its recommendations to Cabinet. The table below sets out the suggested review dates for the batch 1 and 2 ISGs which have submitted their final reports, for agreement by this Committee:

Informal Scrutiny Group	Review date for recommendations
Allocation of gypsy and traveller sites	19 November 2012
Asset Management	Asset Management Plan – Annual Report – As agreed as part of ISG Report (Report OS24 refers) recommendations – 19 November 2012
City Council's efforts to reduce its carbon footprint	20 May 2013
Housing Allocation	18 February 2013
Air Quality and Transport	TBC once the Portfolio Holder Decision Notice for the ISG's recommendations is approved.
Young People and Employment	18 February 2013
Commissioning and the voluntary sector	20 May 2013
Leader funding	20 May 2013

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

4 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CHANGE PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 4.1 Overview and scrutiny plays in a key role in ensuring the City Council remains an Efficient and Effective organisations.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 This report does not have any direct resource implications, other than staff time in supporting the ISGs and recommendations from the review of the overview and scrutiny system. This may be a significant commitment and the impact should be considered when deciding which ISGs to establish.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

6.1 None

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

APPENDICES:

None