

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 JANUARY 2014

BATCH 5 INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUPS

REPORT OF HEAD OF POLICY

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RECENT REFERENCES:

[OS62](#) – Batch 4 Informal Scrutiny Groups, 18 February 2013

[OS65](#) – Batch 4 Informal Scrutiny Groups Appointments – 18 March 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report sets out options for Batch 5 Informal Scrutiny Groups (ISGs). Potential topics have been submitted by both Members and officers. The Report also sets out a brief update on progress on outstanding ISGs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the following Informal Scrutiny Groups (ISGs) are taken forward into Batch 5, with chairman and membership to be decided for approval at the next meeting of the committee:
 - a) How we respond as a City Council to homelessness.
 - b) How we respond as a City Council to domestic violence
 - c) Review of the Business Support Team – 1 year on
 - d) Public Health and the City Council's role.

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1. Introduction

1.1 This report sets out options for Batch 5 ISGs as nominated by Members and officers, as well as a brief update on progress on outstanding ISGs.

2. Update on Batch 3 and 4 ISGs

2.1 The following table indicates the latest status of ISG topics that have yet to report back to The Overview and Scrutiny Committee from Batches 3 and 4.

ISG	Chair Cllr	Conservative	Liberal Democrat	Labour	Progress	No of meetings held
Making Member involvement & decision making more effective	Wright	Mather, Phillips	Witt, Cutler		ISG progressing	2 to date
How we resolve exclusion	Evans	Byrnes, Verney	Mason, Power	Pines	ISG completed – Final Report to O&S in January	5 formal meetings plus 1 pre-meeting held between July and December 2013.
Museums	Gemmell	Read, Pearson	Prowse, Collin, Laming		Inaugural meeting held 2 December	1 to date
Consultation	Power	Huxstep, E Berry,	Laming, Witt, Izard		ISG completed – Final Report to O&S in January	4 meetings held between September – December 2013

2.2 The following six appointments to lead Informal Scrutiny Groups (ISGs) were made for the 2013/14 Municipal Year:

- a. Councillor Sanders
- b. Councillor Scott
- c. Councillor Wright
- d. Councillor Evans
- e. Councillor Gemmell
- f. Councillor Power

3. Options for Batch 5 ISGs

- 3.1 The recommendations of the ISG 'The Council's Ability to Implement ISG Recommendations' (OS082 refers), included reference to a number of matters to be considered prior to the agreement of an ISG topic. This is appended to this report and provides a useful starting point for members to be aware of in selecting the following topics for consideration. Of particular note is the need for a topic to be concluded by holding not more than 4 or 5 meetings. OS082 also acknowledged that at the time of introduction of ISGs it was envisaged that there would be 12-18 meetings a year, although in practice during 2012/13 financial year 24 meetings were held and during 2013/14 20 meetings have been held to date.
- 3.2 OS082 recognised that in determining the number of ISG topics each year members should give consideration to the likely number of meetings and the officer time that will be required.
- 3.3 Elected Members were canvassed via their groups for potential ISG topics, as were senior managers. The following table sets out suggestions received and considered at a meeting between ISG chairs and officers. At that meeting it was determined that on or in the near future four ISG chairs would be available to commence a new topic.

	Topic	Officer Comment
1.	Troubled Families – progress of this initiative so far, along with the work of voluntary organisations and the Council to support the families.	Whilst this programme has commenced it is too early to determine its impact. It is therefore suggested this is considered as an ISG topic after the project has completed its second year, during late 2014. Not supported at this time
2	Public Health and the City Council's role.	Officers feel that this would be a useful topic for an ISG as funding streams have been clarified. It could therefore be a timely opportunity for this matter to be explored to understand the City Council's role in this new area. Support for Batch 5

3	<p>Impact of Welfare Reform and support from the City Council for those affected.</p> <p><i>This ISG could potentially include the following previously suggested topic as inextricably linked:</i></p> <p>3(i) The operation of a good Council Tax and Housing Benefits System</p>	<p>The City Council has been very proactive with its support to those Tenants affected by the changes introduced through Welfare Reform which are regularly monitored by the Councils Performance Management Team. Members are also updated regularly. Therefore, given these systems already in place it is not considered necessary for this topic to be an ISG at this stage.</p> <p>The Council is awaiting the introduction of Universal Credits which will have further implications for both the Council and its tenants. Reconsider this as a topic when the timeframe for the introduction of Universal Credits is known.</p> <p>Not supported at this time</p>
4	<p>Opportunities presented by Abbey House</p>	<p>This was a Recommendation of the Guildhall Informal Scrutiny Committee (Report OS84 refers).</p> <p>An ISG focussing on such a specific issue could be considered contrary to the advice set out in OS082, which emphasizes the need for topics to be more strategic. It was also noted that Abbey House is about to commence a programme of refurbishment. Consequently it was concluded that it would not be appropriate for this topic to be included at this stage.</p> <p>Not supported at this time</p>
5	<p>Supporting Older People</p>	<p>There is much support in place for older people through implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Action Plan/Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013/2018. The established Older People's Partnership also feeds into the Health and Wellbeing Board</p> <p>Given recent approval of these plans it may be too early to assess their impact, therefore consider this for batch 6/7.</p> <p>Not supported at this time</p>

6	Review of the Business Support Team – 1 year on	<p>The Business Support Team was introduced during Quarter 1 2013/14 to support Building Control, Environmental Protection, Health Protection, Land Charges, Landscape and Planning Administration. Its purpose is to allow the Council to meet its changing needs and priorities effectively, whilst officers are given opportunities to further develop.</p> <p>As the Business Support Team has now been in place for sometime, it may now be appropriate to examine how effective this initiative have been and any lessons learnt – a year on from its establishment.</p> <p>Support for Batch 5</p>
7	Impact of New Homes Programme	<p>The Council has an active schedule to implement its New Homes Programme which is reported regularly to Members.</p> <p>An external report has been commissioned in relation to this topic which is to be considered a future meeting of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This therefore may be considered suitable as an ISG topic in the future.</p> <p>Not supported at this time.</p>
8	<p>i) How we respond as a City Council to homelessness.</p> <p>ii) How we respond as a City Council to domestic violence.</p>	<p>The presentation to the meeting of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 December 2013 by representatives of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) covered a range of matters under the auspices of the CSP. However, at that event there was insufficient time for more detailed debate and discussion.</p> <p>Members of the Committee were clearly interested in specific areas relating to homelessness and domestic violence, given the range of intervention and successful multi- agency approach, it is considered that these would be suitable ISG topics.</p> <p>But in line with the guide appended to this Report, it is suggested that this is broadened to include the whole of the</p>

		<p>Winchester District, rather than focussing purely on Winchester Town as it was evident from the presentation that this is where CSP attention is focussed most.</p> <p>Support for both of these items to be considered in Batch 5</p>
9	Pensions	<p>Personnel Committee have previously considered Pensions and it had been concluded that, as the scheme is a national scheme (that the Council was unable to opt out of), there was little that the Council could influence as potential change. Therefore, it had been considered that there was little value in this being put forward as a specific ISG topic.</p> <p>However, it may be worth considering inviting representatives of the Hampshire Pension Fund to come and discuss with the Committee and/or Personnel Committee on what they are doing to deal with the actuarial forecasts and to improve management efficiency.</p> <p>Not supported.</p>

4. Scrutiny Chairs Recommendations

4.1 Having undertaken an initial review of the topics put forward for selection, the Chair of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the scrutiny chairs recommend to the Committee that the following four ISGs are taken forward into Batch 5.

- a) How we respond as a City Council to homelessness.
- b) How we respond as a City Council to domestic violence.
- c) Review of the Business Support Team – 1 year on
- d) Public Health and the City Council's role.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

5.1 COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CHANGE PLANS (RELEVANCE TO:)

Informal Scrutiny Groups (ISGs) form a key part of the City Council's system of overview and scrutiny, ensuring that the City Council remains an Effective and Efficient Organisation.

5.2 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

This report does not have any specific additional resource implications, other than staff costs in supporting the ISGs.

5.3 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

None

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Recommendations of OS82 - The Council's ability to implement ISG Recommendations Informal Scrutiny Group.

Appendix 1 - Recommendations of OS82 - The Council's ability to implement ISG Recommendations Informal Scrutiny Group.

Selection of topics

1. 'Overview' and 'scrutiny' should be complementary. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee should take a more strategic approach to its work and selection of topics for consideration by an ISG should reflect this more strategic approach.
2. That before suggesting topics, Members should be encouraged carefully to consider Change Plans, Portfolio Holder Plans and up-to-date key data about the Council's Performance, which need to be available and accessible on the Council's website. All suggested topics for an ISG should have a relatively narrow focus.
3. That when selecting the number of ISG topics for each year, The Overview and Scrutiny Committee gives consideration to the resource implications in light of continued resource constraints and likely number of meetings.
4. To assist The Overview and Scrutiny Committee in setting up an ISG, a supporting document should be prepared by the relevant member or officer that sets out the purpose and likely resource needs of the proposed ISG. This will contribute to making best possible use of Members' and Officers' time.

Size of an ISG, number of meetings and involvement of Portfolio Holders

5. The usual number of Members serving on an ISG should be five or six.
6. Unless exceptional circumstances prevail, an ISG which is correctly defined at the outset and remains focussed, should be able to conclude its business by holding not more than 4 or 5 meetings.
7. That discussion with the relevant Portfolio Holder about the financial and other relevant implications of an ISGs work should take place early in the deliberations of any new ISG, as well as at the time when recommendations are being finalised.

Recommendations and follow up

8. The ISG recommendations should be relatively few in number (usually the fewer the better) and the likely timescale of implementation and any resource implications (including officer time) should be detailed against each recommendation.

9. Scrutiny Chairs should be expected to champion an ISGs recommendations to try to ensure full implementation.
10. In addition to the current review of progress on implementing ISG recommendations after a one-year period, a further short report on the extent to which recommendations of an ISG report have been implemented should be brought to O&S two to two-and-a-half years after the first consideration of the report which should then, if necessary, raise any outstanding concerns with Cabinet.

Other ways that members can raise major issues

11. The Chief Operating Officer should remind all elected Members of their right to put items on Council agendas under the Council Procedure Rule 36