

## SCRUTINY HANDBOOK

### TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

- 1.1 As part of their work programmes, Review Committee may wish to establish a Task and Finish Group to undertake a focused investigation into a particular topic. Task and Finish Groups should be used for policy review and development and their work should support the priorities of the Council.
- 1.2 Task and Finish Groups should allow a small group of members to address issues quickly and flexibly on a relatively informal basis. Papers do not need to be circulated in advance and the meetings are not automatically open to the public.
- 1.3 Task and Finish Groups will be appointed and managed by the parent Review Committee. The parent Committee will identify a Chairman and set the broad remit for the work of the Group. The parent Committee should also take an overview of the work being done and ensure that workloads are properly managed.
- 1.4 As a rule, Task and Finish Groups should be time limited and have a duration of no more than one municipal year. The parent Committee should ensure that the number of Task and Finish groups running at one time should be manageable and take full account of the member and officer resources available to carry out the work.
- 1.5 The Groups should have a minimum of three and a maximum of six members with additional support and expert advice as and when appropriate. An endeavour should be made to ensure that any Task and Finish Group is broadly representative.
- 1.6 Task and Finish Groups should take a structured approach to the examination of a particular issue with the aim of identifying key issues and outcomes. At its first meeting, a scoping exercise should be undertaken to identify a detailed remit and terms of reference, resource implications, the need for expertise, existing research/supporting documentation.
- 1.7 The remit of the Task and Finish group should be adhered to. Any expansion of the remit should not be undertaken without the agreement of the parent Committee.
- 1.8 Meetings will take place as often as needed until the task is complete. Following the initial scoping (planning) meeting the Group should aim to hold the necessary meetings in as short a time frame as possible.
- 1.9 The process followed by the Group will be in accordance with the Council protocol for Policy Review. However, the Group will be able to operate in a more informal and flexible manner. Visits and focus groups

should be very useful in helping task and finish groups to get to grips with issues and should be arranged as and when required.

- 1.10 The Task and Finish Group will operate within the overall budget of the Review Committee. Any significant expenditure will require the approval of the parent Review Committee.
- 1.11 Members of the parent Review Committee should be kept informed regarding the progress of the task and finish group through regular progress reports.
- 1.12 It is recognised that the Groups may be working with sensitive information or looking at difficult or controversial subjects. In these circumstances it can be important that working papers and discussions remain confidential until the group has agreed a final report or drawn together its recommendations.
- 1.13 On completion of its work, the Task and Finish Group will submit a report on its findings to the parent Review Committee. In reaching their conclusions and making recommendations it is hoped that the Group will be able to reach consensus. If following discussion on a particular issue agreement cannot be reached, a minority view on a particular issue will be included in any report to the parent Committee.