

POLICY & COORDINATION REVIEW 23 April 2009 COMMITTEE

REVIEW OF OPERATION OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND OF THE CITY SOLICITOR

**STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: ALL
CORPORATE PRIORITIES: ALL**

1. Why has this report come to the Committee?

- 1.1. To inform Members of the response of Cabinet to this Committee's review of Overview and Scrutiny arrangements.
- 1.2 To provide Members with an opportunity to consider and comment on revisions to the Scrutiny handbook.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Committee considered a report of the working group on review of Scrutiny, making recommendations for modernisation of those arrangements, at its meeting on 22 January 2009. The Committee, with two abstentions, resolved that Cabinet be recommended to support the recommendations detailed in the report and give consideration to the unresolved options arising from discussions in the Working Group. Cabinet has subsequently given consideration to the Committee's recommendations in this context.

3. Current position

- 3.1 At its meeting on 8 April 2009, Cabinet considered its response to the Committee's proposals. Cabinet accepted the majority of the proposals in full, and made further proposals for strengthening the Council's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements by establishing an additional Overview and Scrutiny Committee with responsibility for oversight of the Sunderland Partnership's Sustainability and further cross-cutting priorities, and of major city projects. Cabinet's response is attached in full at Appendix A to this report.
- 3.2 Alongside the work of the Policy and Coordination Committee's working group on the modernisation of Overview and Scrutiny arrangements, support officers have documented proposals for working arrangements to reflect and embed the recommendations of the group, proposals to be put forward to full Council following Cabinet consideration of those recommendations, and themes identified by IDeA colleagues, and through self-evaluation undertaken by Council Members and officers based on the Centre for Public Scrutiny's four main principles of good scrutiny.

- 3.3 These proposals are now documented in a set of draft guidance to be incorporated in a revised Scrutiny handbook. A copy of the drafts developed to date is attached at Appendix B for members' information and comment. An exercise is under way to cross-reference the arrangements set out in the draft documents against the improvement actions identified through the work set out at paragraph 3.2 above, and to ensure a consistent style of presentation. Members should note that the draft will require further refinement to reflect Member comment and to ensure the detailed arrangements link to and complement arrangements being developed in relation to Area Committees and other developments within the Community Leadership Programme.
- 3.4 As Members are aware, operation of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements transfers to the Office of the Chief Executive on the newly appointed Head of Overview and Scrutiny taking up post on 27th April. It is appropriate at that point for the final detail of operational arrangements to be finalised by the Overview and Scrutiny team in readiness for the coming Council year.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 This report provides members with an overview of progress in implementing the review and modernisation of Overview and Scrutiny arrangements in preparation for the 2009-2010 Council year, and an opportunity to consider and comment on proposals for future operation of Overview and Scrutiny arrangements.

5 Recommendation

- 5.1 That Members note Cabinet's response to the working group's recommendations
- 5.2 That Members consider the arrangements set out in draft at Appendix B and provide comment to the Review Coordination team on the draft handbook.

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