

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Thursday, 27 April 2023

Venue: The Liz Cantell Room, Ealing Town Hall, New Broadway,
Ealing, W5 2BY

Attendees (in person): Councillors

Y Gordon (Chair) J Ball (Vice-Chair), L Brett, D Crawford, P Driscoll, M Rice,
C Summers, C Anderson, H Haili, P Knewstub and C Tighe

1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Crawford and Nijhar.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Matters to be considered in private

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public as proposed.

4 Minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 April were not ready for publication and were therefore deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

5 Approach to Scrutiny in 2023-24

The Chair, and Sam Bailey, Head of Democratic Services, introduced an options paper on the Council's approach to Scrutiny in 2023/24. The Committee was asked to consider the options and make a decision on the way in which the Scrutiny function would operate in the following municipal year.

The approach outlined proposed retaining the structure of a Committee and five panels. However the focus of the Committee and panels would become aligned more closely with the Council's strategic priorities. It was important that the advantages of allowing Scrutiny some flexibility in scrutinising important topics that cut across the priorities or that were important to residents. Therefore two of the proposed structures of topics selected included allowing one of the panels to scrutinise a topic as before. These topics were proposed to be either Crime, Disorder and Antisocial Behaviour or the Council's Partnership Working. The way in which the Scrutiny Panels and Committees were proposed to be further aligned to the Council's strategic priorities was to assign each panel or Committee to a Strategic Director's portfolio of responsibilities. There were 6 Scrutiny

Panels/Committees and 6 Strategic Directors, so this fitted well. To accommodate one of the Panels considering a different type of topic the Strategic Directors of Resources and Strategy and Change would be aligned to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Both of these Strategic Directors oversaw services that supported many of the other Council services; including finance, transformation and performance; which made them a good fit for working closely with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which would take some of the more high risk, cross cutting, strategic items in the next year.

In addition to the structure outlined, some proposed changes to the Constitution would be being brought forward for the new municipal year. These changes would empower Panels to make recommendations at the end of their meetings and send them on to the relevant decision makers immediately rather than waiting for them to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee first. This would empower the panels to make their recommendations in a timely manner and would remove the need for a lengthy scrutiny report at the end of each municipal year.

The Committee discussed the various options and came to view that structuring the Scrutiny function by aligning it to the Strategic Directorates would help the Scrutiny function focus on strategic issues that would be facing the Council, residents and the Borough for the next year. However it was felt that the issue of trust and confidence in the Police, and the issue of crime and antisocial behaviour in the Borough were of critical importance to residents and therefore this would benefit in having its own panel.

The Committee commented that although the approach to empowering the panels to make their own recommendations was the right direction, there needed to be some work on ways to feed back the work of the panels to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as well as all members. Sam Bailey committed to working with Scrutiny Members to work up some options on improving the feedback and communications from Scrutiny to members. It was noted that this year a Scrutiny Annual Report would be taken to Council to update it on the activities of Scrutiny throughout the year, which would help towards this aim.

RESOLVED: That

1. Thanks be noted for the Chair of the Committee for his work chairing the meetings for the municipal year 2022-23.
2. For 2023-24, the structure of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee plus 5 panels be retained. Each of the Council's Strategic Directors will be assigned to a Scrutiny Panel, with the Strategic Directors of Strategy and Change and Resources being allocated to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The final Panel will be assigned to scrutinising Crime, Disorder and Antisocial Behaviour in the Borough.

6 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 17 May 2023, but only if a valid call-in of Executive Decisions from April was received.

Meeting commenced: 7.00 pm

Meeting finished: 7.32 pm

Signed:

Y Gordon (Chair)