

# Agenda Item 9.

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Overview and Scrutiny - Member Training</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 20 June 2018
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific
<b>LEAD OFFICER</b>	Andrew Moulton, Assistant Director, Governance

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Overview and Scrutiny is one of the checks and balances which ensure that the Council and its partners make and implement effective decisions. It is a key element in the decision making process which ensures transparency and accountability.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) confirm the date for the 2018 Member training session as 23 July 2018;
- 2) consider the content and format for the training session and any specific issues to be included;
- 3) consider a potential review of the grass cutting service as a case study for consideration at the training session.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

Each year the Council delivers an Overview and Scrutiny training session for Members. The training provides an introduction to Overview and Scrutiny for new Members and a refresher for more experienced Members. The session allows Members to discuss any perceived strengths and weaknesses relating to the existing Overview and Scrutiny function and to brainstorm ideas for improvement.

The report sets out a number of potential dates for the training session and asks Members to consider any specific issues for inclusion in the session.

The report also sets out the range of issues covered in previous sessions to facilitate the Member discussion at the meeting.

## **Background**

As part of the annual Member training programme a session is delivered on Overview and Scrutiny. The session provides a useful introduction for Members who are new to Overview and Scrutiny and a refresher for more experienced Members. It also allows Members to consider potential improvements to the Scrutiny function and to learn from best practice elsewhere.

In order to ensure that the training session is effective, Members are requested to consider any specific issues for inclusion in the session. As an aide memoire, a brief summary of issues considered in previous training sessions is set out below.

## **Fundamentals of Effective Scrutiny**

- “Critical friend” challenge to the Executive
- “Independent-minded” Members leading the Scrutiny process
- Driving improvement in public services – internal and external
- Identifying efficiencies and new ways of working
- Supporting the development of new policies
- Channelling the “voice” of residents and community groups.

## **Work Programming**

- Shortlisting and prioritising topics for consideration during the year
- Reflecting local needs, concerns and priorities
- Involving local stakeholders – residents, community groups, Towns/Parishes
- Focus on big issues – Council Plan, 21CC, Ofsted reports, health changes
- .....but allow flexibility to respond to new or urgent issues, e.g. flooding.

## **Effective Overview and Scrutiny Meetings**

- The role of the Chairman
- Effective preparation – developing key lines of enquiry (KLOEs)
- Active listening and effective questioning techniques
- Understanding data and performance management information
- The importance of SMART targets
- Making effective recommendations and following up.

## **Different Methods of Scrutiny**

- Reports to Overview and Scrutiny Committees
- Leader and Executive Members attend to discuss priorities
- Task and Finish Groups
- Individual Member initial research on specific issues
- Briefings to Members outside the formal Committee setting
- Joint reviews with neighbouring authorities.

## **Carrying Out a Scrutiny Review**

- Identifying the topic – can Scrutiny add value?
- Designing the review – terms of reference/desired outcomes
- Gathering the evidence – residents/service users/experts/best practice
- Discussing findings with relevant Executive Member
- Final report - making effective recommendations using “SMART” principles
- Monitoring implementation and measuring outcomes.

## **External Scrutiny**

- Crime and Disorder – Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 - Scrutiny has the power to scrutinise the Community Safety Partnership and liaise with the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel
- Health – under the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and subsequent legislation Scrutiny has the power to scrutinise local health matters to ensure equal access to services and to be consulted on “substantial variations” to services
- Flood and water management – under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, Scrutiny has the power to scrutinise the operations of the Lead Local Flood Authority (WBC)
- Local Enterprise Partnership and arm’s length service providers – as discussed in the recent Select Committee report.

## **Call-In**

- A legal power of Scrutiny to seek a review of an Executive or Individual Executive Member decision made, but not yet implemented
- A Call-In request requires support from at least five Members
- The role of Scrutiny is to consider whether the decision was taken in line with the principles of good decision making – proportionality, due consultation, human rights, openness and clarity of aims and desired outcomes
- Scrutiny can refer the matter back but cannot change the original decision.

## **Proposed Date and Format**

Feedback from members of the Committee indicates that the most suitable date for the training session is Monday 23 July. Members are requested to confirm the date, with a proposed start time of 7pm. Previous training sessions have included presentations, Q&Q, small group discussions and practical exercises. It is proposed to follow a similar pattern for the 2018 session.

## **Case Study**

As set out elsewhere on the Agenda, the Committee has been requested to carry out a review of the Council’s grass cutting service. It is suggested that part of the training session focus on the steps involved in carrying out such a review including developing the terms of reference, engagement with the public and other stakeholders, a list of key witnesses and drafting the final report with recommendations to the Executive.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

***The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	NA	NA	NA
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	NA	NA	NA
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	NA	NA	NA

### Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None

### Cross-Council Implications

Overview and Scrutiny impacts on all Council services and the work of key partners.

### List of Background Papers

None

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