

TITLE	Overview and Scrutiny - Member Training
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 29 May 2019
WARD	None Specific
LEAD OFFICER	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 2019 Overview and Scrutiny Member training session as 26 June 2019;
- 2) consider the content and format for the training session and any specific issues to be included;
- 3) note the additional provision of Budget Scrutiny training for Members;
- 4) consider any further aspects of Overview and Scrutiny which could usefully be supported by training for Members.

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 an initial draft format for the training session and asks Members to consider any specific issues for inclusion in the session. The draft programme for the training session is attached to the report.

The report also asks Members to consider any further aspects of Overview and Scrutiny which would be suitable for Member training.

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
- Government Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny.

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.

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.

Date and Format

The 2019 Member training session will be held on **Wednesday 26 June 2019 at 7pm**. Previous training sessions have included presentations, Q&A, small group discussions and practical exercises. It is proposed to follow a similar pattern for the 2019 session.

Case Studies

The 2018 training session included discussion of a case study relating to a Scrutiny review of the Grounds Maintenance contract (which the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee subsequently undertook). It is suggested that part of the 2019 training session focus on the steps involved in carrying out such a review including developing terms of reference, engagement with the public and other stakeholders, identifying key witnesses and drafting the final report with recommendations to the Executive.

Further Training

It is proposed to deliver further Member training sessions during 2019/20. This will include a session on Budget Scrutiny which will support the work of the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee in scrutinising the Council’s Budget setting process.

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

Contact Neil Carr	Service Democratic Services
Telephone No 0118 974 6058	Email neil.carr@wokingham.gov.uk
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