

TITLE	Changes to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Structure
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Council on 23 July 2015
WARD	None Specific
DIRECTOR	Andrew Moulton, Head of Governance and Improvement Services

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

An efficient Overview and Scrutiny structure.

RECOMMENDATION:

Council is asked to:

- 1) agree that the Corporate Services and Community Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Committees be amalgamated to become the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- 2) agree the terms of reference of the amalgamated committee as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
- 3) agree that the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee consist of 7 Conservative Group Members and 1 Liberal Democrat Member, plus 2 substitute Members per group, as advised by the Group Leaders;
- 4) note that the Chairman and Vice Chairman will be appointed at the first meeting of the amalgamated Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report invites the Council to consider the recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee that the Community Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee be disbanded and its functions and responsibilities, as set out in the Council's Constitution, be amalgamated with the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to create a Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Background

The present Overview and Scrutiny Committee structure of an overarching Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and four Overview and Scrutiny Committees, (Children's Services, Community Partnerships, Corporate Services and Health) was agreed by the Council in May 2013 following a review by the Scrutiny Structures Working Group.

The Management Committee is able under its Terms of Reference to propose amendments to the composition and Terms of Reference of Overview and Scrutiny Committees to the Council on the basis of political proportionality, (Para 6.1.4(a) of the Council's Constitution).

Chapter 1.1.4 of the Council's Constitution also states that the Monitoring Officer will monitor and review the operation of the Constitution to ensure that its aims and principles are given full effect.

Analysis of Issues

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee structure agreed in May 2013 reflected the anticipated need at that time for a Management Committee and four sub-committees based upon expected workload and the objective of creating scrutiny committees which had different areas of focus. Whilst the terms of reference of all the Committees were drafted flexibly, the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee was intended to have an internal Council focus whereas the Community Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee was intended to have a more external focus and include within its remit the exercise of the Council's crime and disorder responsibilities and flood risk management responsibilities, (Para 6.2.3.1 of the Council's Constitution).

Given that the current structure had been in place for two years it was felt timely in June to reconsider whether it was necessary to continue with the current number of Overview and Scrutiny Committees based upon the past workload of the Committees and the need to use Officer and Member resources in the most effective and efficient way possible. Given the relatively light workload of the Corporate Services and Community Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committees in the last municipal year, and anticipated future workload in 2015/2016, it was recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee that the number of committees be reduced by the deletion of the Community Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the functions and responsibilities to be transferred to the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee which would be renamed the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. These proposals had the support of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at its meeting held on 1 June 2015. It is not felt that these proposals would detract from the operation of Overview and Scrutiny overall.

The suggested name of the new Committee reflects feedback and suggestions from Overview and Scrutiny Members.

The proposed Terms of Reference of the new Committee and other consequential amendments to the Council's Constitution are set out in the Appendix 1 to this report.

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)	£1,600 (Save)	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£2,500 (Save)	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£2,500 (Save)	Yes	Revenue

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

The Chairman of the Community Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee receives a Special Responsibility Allowance therefore the saving above relates to a reduction in Members' Allowance. There will also be a small administrative saving e.g. agenda printing costs which has not yet been quantified.

List of Background Papers

Council's Constitution Section 6

Contact Kevin Jacob	Service Governance and Improvement Services
Telephone No 0118 974 6058	Email kevin.jacob@wokingham.gov.uk
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