

TITLE	Scrutiny Improvement Review – Action Plan
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 11 September 2023
WARD	None Specific
DIRECTOR	Graham Ebers, Deputy Chief Executive

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Effective Overview and Scrutiny helps to improve services, holds decision makers to account and engages with local communities. In so doing it helps to demonstrate that the Council and other public service providers are open and transparent and are delivering high quality, value for money services.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is requested to:

- 1) consider the Scrutiny Improvement Review (SIR) Action Plan, appended to the report;
- 2) consider any further actions to develop and strengthen the Action Plan;
- 3) note that a SIR feedback session with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny will be held later in 2023/24.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Members will recall that the Council undertook a Scrutiny Improvement Review (SIR) in 2023. The review was carried out by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) and involved interviews with Members and officers.

The CfGS review letter concluded that conditions for successful scrutiny were clearly present at Wokingham; there was a shared understanding from Members and officers that good governance involves scrutiny and, when used effectively, scrutiny can add value to decision-making. All of those interviewed believed that improvements could be made to make scrutiny more effective and to add greater value. Members recognised the benefits of change and improvement, and this presented a good opportunity for the Council to further develop the way in which scrutiny operated from its current position. Strengthening its role could also aim to elevate the status of scrutiny, so that it was recognised as a strategic function and is fully utilised as a resource to support continuous Council improvement.

Following the review a SIR Action Plan was developed in order to ensure that key recommendations were implemented and reported back to Members. The Action Plan is appended to the report for Member discussion and amendment.

The CfGS representatives will be arranging a feedback session later in the year in order to explore Member views about progress following the SIR and opportunities for further development of Overview and Scrutiny at WBC.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is, therefore, imperative that Council resources are focussed on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	0	NA	NA
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	0	NA	NA
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	0	NA	NA

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
None

Cross-Council Implications
Effective Overview and Scrutiny helps to drive service improvement, policy development and the achievement of value for money for the Borough’s residents.

Public Sector Equality Duty
Due regard has been given to Council’s Public Sector Equality Duty. The issues scrutinised during 2023/24 will raise the profile of Overview and Scrutiny for residents across the Borough, including residents with protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act 2010. The aim is to achieve better/fairer outcomes and increased value for money for residents.

Climate Emergency – The Council has declared a Climate Emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030
The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee has acted as a “critical friend” to the Council’s Climate Emergency activities through the work of the Climate Emergency Task & Finish Group. In 2022 the Committee established a new Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a specific focus on scrutinising the delivery of the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

List of Background Papers
None

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