

**COUNCIL, 22 OCTOBER 2014**

## **REPORT OF THE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

### **REVISIONS TO THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

Governance Committee at its meeting on 14 October will consider a report concerning Overview and Scrutiny Committee structure. The Committee will be reminded that following a Member-led review of Scrutiny in 2013 it was recognised that the majority of councils across London, and many nationally, had an “overarching” Overview and Scrutiny committee which co-ordinated the work of thematic sub-committees, overseeing requisitions of executive decisions and ensuring the avoidance of duplication in terms of topic groups and other scrutiny activities. It is proposed that similar arrangements be established in Havering.

Since coming into force in 2002, Havering has adopted an O&S structure whereby individual committees take ownership for scrutinising specific areas of responsibility, operating their own requisition powers. Currently, there are seven O&S committees: Value, Towns and Communities, Environment, Children and Learning, Individuals, Health and Crime and Disorder

The 2013 review identified that various models for O&S had been developed across the country and that a “no one size fits all” approach existed. Some local authorities had adopted a “one for one” style, where the O&S Committees matched service delivery areas; others had adopted a cross-cutting system, with O&S committees matched to activities that were common to a number of service areas. The majority of councils across London, and many nationally however, had adopted a single, over-arching O&S committee with sub-committees (known by a variety of names) covering specific areas, some permanent, others set up with a limited scope and timeframe that were dissolved upon completing their task.

As part of the review, Best Practice authorities in O&S as recognised by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) were visited. Visits to Enfield and Hackney demonstrated the advantages of an overarching scrutiny board which coordinated the work of themed committees. Hackney, in particular, used its O&S Board as the vehicle by which the effectiveness of scrutiny was monitored and through which work - undertaken by the themed committees - could be directed to avoid duplication and to ensure that areas of priority and, importantly – issues that scrutiny could influence – were being pursued.

It was consequently proposed that a single O&S Board be established in Havering to undertake all call-in functions and to act as a vehicle by which the effectiveness of scrutiny is monitored and where work undertaken by themed sub-committees could be co-ordinated to avoid duplication and to ensure that areas of priority were being pursued. This Board would subsume the role of the current Value Scrutiny Committee which oversees general management matters. It is proposed that the

other current O&S committees would become sub-committees to the new Overview and Scrutiny Board. The sub-committees would continue to form topic groups.

In order for this arrangement to function effectively, the Chairs of the O&S sub-committees would have automatic membership of the new O&S Board to ensure good co-ordination. The Board would need to be politically balanced and its size would therefore need to depend upon the political balance of the distribution of Chairs of sub-committees.

Depending upon the agreement of the Group leaders it is proposed that, as the Chairs of Scrutiny had only recently been decided by the Council, the current Chairs of scrutiny committees become Chairs of the relevant sub-committees. It is further proposed that Council appoints one of the Chairs of the sub-committees to also be the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

If these proposals are accepted by Council and given the political affiliation of current Chairs, the Overview and Scrutiny Board would need to be a Committee of 16 members in order to comply with political balance requirements. Under these circumstances, the allocations would be as follows:

- 7 Conservative
- 3 RAs (the current Chairs of Environment, Individuals and Health)
- 2 UKIP (including the Chair of Towns and Communities)
- 2 EHRG (including the current Chair of Children's)
- 2 IRG (including the current Chair of Crime & Disorder)

If the proposals are accepted by the Governance Committee, it will recommend to the Council that it makes a resolution to adopt the following changes to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee arrangements:

- 1) An overarching Overview & Scrutiny Board be established in accordance with the political balance rules
- 2) The following Overview and Scrutiny committees be converted to sub-committees of the overarching Overview & Scrutiny Board:
  - Towns & Communities
  - Health
  - Individuals
  - Environment
  - Crime and Disorder
  - Children & Learning
- 3) That Council nominate one of the chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committees to Chair the Overview & Scrutiny Board
- 4) The Overview & Scrutiny Board will comprise all of the chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny sub-committees together with such other members nominated to the Board to meet the political balance requirements.
- 5) The Council's Monitoring Officer, using her delegated powers make the necessary changes to the Council's Constitution in respect of the proposed revisions to Overview and Scrutiny.

**Recommendation:**

**Subject to the approval of Governance Committee, that the changes to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee arrangements outlined above, be accepted by Council.**