

## WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF CO-ORDINATING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY GROUP

Thursday 17 June 2021

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:** Councillor Dermott Bambridge (Chair) , Councillors , Karen Cooper, Jo Gilford, Rosie Herring, Sam Rumens and Danielle Stone

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** James Edmunds, Assistant Manager Democratic Services  
Maisie McInnes, Democratic Services Officer  
Rebecca Peck, Assistant Chief Executive  
Tracy Tiff, Deputy Democratic Services Manager  
Cath Whitehead, Director of Legal and Democratic

**OBSERVERS:** Councillor Adam Brown (Deputy Leader)

#### 1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

The Deputy Democratic Services Manager invited the Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Group to appoint a Chair for the inaugural meeting. Councillor J Gilford proposed, and Councillor Herring seconded that Councillor Bambridge be appointed Chair.

The Coordinating Scrutiny Group discussed the rotation of the Chair for future meetings and agreed the order of rotation with Councillor Bambridge as the first nominated Chair.

**RESOLVED: That Councillor Bambridge was appointed as Chair for the inaugural meeting and the Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Group agreed on the rotation of the Chair in the following order:**

**Councillor Dermot Bambridge**  
**Councillor Jo Gilford**  
**Councillor Karen Cooper**  
**Councillor Rosie Herring**  
**Councillor Sam Rumens**  
**Councillor Danielle Stone**

#### 2. APOLOGIES

There were none.

#### 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

#### 4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were none.

#### 5. ROLE OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COORDINATING GROUP

The Chair introduced the report and read aloud the extract from section 7.2. of the West Northamptonshire Council constitution that defined the Role of the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group as responsible for approving the work programmes prepared by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, as well as policy review and budget development.

**RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group noted the report.**

## **6. WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL SCRUTINY COMMITTEES REMITS**

At the Chair's invitation, the Democratic Services Assistant Manager presented the report and clarified that as detailed in section 2.1 of the report, the West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) constitution stipulated that the Council would have three Overview and Scrutiny Committees: Corporate, People and Place Scrutiny Committees. He highlighted the finalised remits in section 5.1 of the report which set out the parameters and areas for inclusion for the Corporate, People and Place Scrutiny Committees, which also cross-referenced the statutory functions of the Council. The Democratic Services Assistant Manager concluded his report and invited the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group to ask questions and discuss the report.

The Coordinating Group discussed their role and how the Coordinating Group could be used as a sounding board for ideas and manage the work program and task and finish projects of the Committees, as well as maintaining regular communication between the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Corporate, People and Place Scrutiny Committees with an email group. They also discussed how Overview and Scrutiny would manage the scrutiny of shared services and contracts across WNC and North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) as well as services delivered by the NHS. In the discussion it was suggested that the Committee read the terms of reference for the Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (NHFT) which also cover some hospitals in Oxford so that they can understand the different legislation that affects the health service area before undertaking scrutiny.

The Monitoring Officer advised that the aim of the group was for the Coordinating Group to inform how work was carried out across the three Committees. She encouraged the Coordinating Group to determine the scope of their scrutiny work and if a topic such as contracts would be a corporate issue or a service area issue and how this would inform their scrutiny work. The Monitoring Officer informed the Coordinating Group that they could invite portfolio holders and officers to present information or answer questions if they found it useful. She emphasised the role of overview and Scrutiny and their position to advise service areas and provide their expertise on matters before decisions took place in the wider Council.

The Coordinating Group deliberated the remits of the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees and felt that some topics would require a collaborative approach as it may cross-reference the remits of more than one Scrutiny groups. The Chair commended this approach and highlighted the need for scrutiny to be carried out flexibly and transparently and to be inclusive of everyone, involving the public and officers across the Council. Considering the discussion and emphasis on collaborative working, it was proposed that the second recommendation be amended to read 'which Scrutiny Committee(s)' with the inclusion of '(s)' in case topics may include the involvement of more than one Scrutiny Committee.

The Coordinating Group agreed the amended recommendations.

**RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group:**

**a) Agreed the proposed remits for the Corporate, People and Place Scrutiny Committees set out at paragraph 5.1 of this report;**

**b) Agreed that the Co-ordinating Group may consider and recommend which Scrutiny Committee(s) is best-placed to deal with any cross-cutting matters that may arise.**

## **7. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS FOR THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COORDINATING GROUP 2021-2022**

The Chair asked members to note the schedule of meetings for the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group for 2021-2022.

**RESOLVED: That the Coordinating Group noted the schedule of meetings for 2021-2022.**

## **8. POTENTIAL WORK PROGRAMMING PROCESS FOR THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

At the Chair's invitation, the Deputy Democratic Services Manager presented the report and highlighted the options for consideration in the report. The first option outlined that all Scrutiny Members, other non-executive Councillors and Cabinet Members would partake in an interactive workshop event to determine the work programme for Overview and Scrutiny. The Deputy Democratic Services Manager explained that prior to the event a questionnaire would be devised that would include public participation and at the event this would be used to inform discussions and Cabinet Members could be invited to deliver a speech on their priorities for the year ahead. She explained that Executive Directors and Assistant Directors would also be invited so that they could be informed with potential areas for review, offer advice and inform Overview and Scrutiny of any reviews which would duplicate work already planned to take place in the service area. The workshop would comprise groups of Councillors that would have an hour to consider potential Scrutiny reviews and pre-decision scrutiny. A long list of topics would be formulated for potential inclusion in the work programmes as a result of the workshop event. The list would then be passed onto the Chairs of the Corporate, People and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committees for shortlisting and brought back to the Coordinating Scrutiny Group to finalise and formally approve the work programmes for 2021/2022. Alternatively, option 2 would include a similar format except there would be separate workshop events specific to the Overview and Scrutiny committees Corporate, People and Place, or option 3 would be an informal discussion between each of the Scrutiny Committees.

The Chair felt that option 1 would be too busy and would not allow for focussed discussion, as potential items for the work programmes of all three committees would be discussed within an hour and he felt that although option 2 would be more time consuming it would be more beneficial having 3 smaller, more focussed work programme events. Members agreed that more time planning and reviewing what had been reviewed by the respective authorities before the move to Unitary would be advantageous. They also felt that public

engagement and engagement with officers from across the Council was important as it would promote inclusivity which Overview and Scrutiny welcomed.

Members considered how the work programme would work in the inaugural year of the West Northamptonshire Council. The Monitoring Officer advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committees could put together a work programme, which could consist of longer term and short term projects, task and finish groups and any arising matters throughout the year could be added onto the work programme to give Scrutiny flexibility to carry out work on any issues they felt needed addressing in the first year of the new authority.

Members agreed that option 2 was the most suitable approach to formulating the work programme for 2021/2022 and agreed the Scrutiny work programming process and timetable for 2021/2022. The Deputy Democratic Services Manager agreed to confirm the work programme process and timetable with Overview and Scrutiny members.

**RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group considered the proposals contained the report as set out at paragraphs 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 and agreed to option 2 as well as the Scrutiny work programming process and timetable for 2021/2022.**

The meeting concluded at 6.58 pm