

**WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**6 JULY 2021**

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Role of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>
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**List of Appendices**

**None**

**1. Purpose of Report**

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- 1.1 The report highlights the various roles that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee could have in fulfilling its function.

**2. Executive Summary**

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- 2.1 The West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) Constitution specifies that the Council will have three Overview and Scrutiny Committees: Corporate, People and Place Scrutiny Committees; together with a Coordinating Group made up of the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs. Arrangements for the remits of the three Scrutiny Committees have been recommended by the Co-ordinating Group for approval by the Scrutiny Committees. The remit for this Committee is detailed in a later agenda item.
- 2.2 Overview and Scrutiny is a key part of the democratic decision-making process at West Northamptonshire Council. It provides non-Executive councillors with the opportunity to contribute to shaping Council policy, community well being and accountability. This is carried out by: reviewing Council services and policies, investigating community issues and key decisions and putting forward recommendations for improvement.

### **3. Recommendations**

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3.1 It is recommended that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- a) Notes the roles of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out at paragraph 5.1 of this report.

### **3.2 Reason for Recommendations**

3.2.1 The recommendations are intended to emphasise the various roles of Overview and Scrutiny for the Committee's information. A later agenda item lists the terms of reference (remit) for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **4. Report Background**

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4.1 The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) states the four principles of good scrutiny:

- Provides a constructive "critical friend" challenge
- Amplifies the concerns of the public
- Is led by independent people who take responsibility for their role
- Drives improvement in public service

4.2 To demonstrate the four principles of good scrutiny as detailed above, the Committee should be able to demonstrate that it has:

- Held Cabinet to account
- Supported the development of effective policies and initiatives, which have a benefit impact on the community
- Contributed to continuous improvement in services
- Had a positive impact on the work and outcome of external agencies and partners
- Had a positive effect on the lives of residents

4.1 The roles of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee help to inform Council policies and decisions to ensure that they reflect the needs of residents and community groups. To further develop this, the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee may invite residents and community groups to suggest issues for future review to be included within the work programme of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee will monitor both Cabinet and Council decisions, which helps to make the decision-making process more community focused. The Committee will investigate services of the Council, within its remit, to ensure that high quality services are provided to residents. As part of the review process, the Committee will put questions to the Executive, senior officers, external organisations and the to the public. The Committee will review policies and services and put forward recommendations for improvement.

4.3 Pre-decision scrutiny is an important part of the Committee's role. The Committee may make, comment on and provide Scrutiny contribution to a decision before it has been made. By doing

this, the Committee is able to offer Cabinet the benefit of its capacity to focus on an issue in depth over a longer period.

- 4.4 The Committee may exercise the right to call in for reconsideration decisions made, but not yet implemented, by the Cabinet.
- 4.5 Public engagement within the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees is very important. Only on rare occasions when certain types of confidential information is being discussed are members of the public not allowed to attend a meeting of the Committee. The public can become involved in the work of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee in a number of ways:
- (a) Write to Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, or to the Chair of one of its Task and Finish Groups, or attend one of the scheduled meetings. For example: if a member of the public has a particular interest in a topic that the Committee or Task and Finish Group is reviewing, they could write or email the Chair and provide their views on this topic.
  - (b) Become a witness. One of the main ways that Overview and Scrutiny gathers evidence to inform a review is through inviting individuals with a particular knowledge of the subject to attend a meeting. This enables non-Executive councillors to make better informed recommendations and it also gives individuals and organisations from outside the Council a way of having their voice heard.
  - (c) Become a co-opted member to Task and Finish Group of the Committee. If an individual has particular knowledge of the subject they may be invited to attend a meeting. This enables non-Executive councillors to make better informed recommendations and it also gives individuals and organisations from outside the Council a way of having their voice heard. The public cannot be both a witness and a coopted member to the same Scrutiny review.
- 4.6 The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee can undertake performance management scrutiny and review. The Committee has a key role within its remit, in helping to approve the performance of the Council. This role can be undertaken by assessment performance data against performance indicators and scrutinising external performance and inspection reports.
- 4.7 In undertaken external scrutiny, the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee may scrutinise the work and impact of external agencies and partners.
- 4.8 The role of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee includes policy development and review. Policy development involves shaping the formulation of key plans and polices by examining alternatives against needs, resources and other issues. Policy reviews can be carried out in a number of ways: In-depth Scrutiny reviews, short sharp scrutiny reviews or inquiry days for example.

## **5. Issues and Choices**

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- 5.1 This report details the various roles of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and is for noting. There are no options associated with this report.

## **6. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **6.1 Resources and Financial**

- 6.1.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from the proposals. WNC has agreed its overall Overview and Scrutiny Committee structure and Scrutiny Committee members have been appointed. This report details the various roles for the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

### **6.2 Legal**

- 6.2.1 The duties to undertake Overview and Scrutiny are set out in the Local Government Act 2000, the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. It has had specific powers relating to health services since 2001, flooding since 2000 and crime and disorder since 2006.

### **6.3 Risk**

- 6.3.1 None arising directly from this report.

### **6.4 Consultation**

- 6.4.1 The overall Overview and Scrutiny committee structure for West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) was subject to consultation with the West Northamptonshire Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Governance Task and Finish Group during the development of the WNC Constitution in 2020/21.

### **6.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

- 6.5.1 The Coordinating Group determined the final remits for the three Scrutiny Committees at its meeting on 17 June 2021. This report emphasises the various roles for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 6.5.2 The meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee will approve the remit of the Committee at its meeting on 7 July 2021.

- 6.5.3 Each Scrutiny Committee will receive and approve its remit at its inaugural meeting.

### **6.6 Climate Impact**

- 6.6.1 There are no immediate climate implications arising from the proposals.

## **6.7 Community Impact**

- 6.7.1 There are no immediate community implications arising from the proposals. The work of the Scrutiny Committees will deal with issues affecting communities living or working in West Northamptonshire and may cover issues with specific implications in areas such as equalities or community cohesion.
- 6.7.2 This report details the various ways that residents can become involved in the work of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **4 Background Papers**

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None