

**WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**6 JULY 2021**

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Remit 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 sets out the remit for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny committee as approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group.
- 1.2 The report also seeks that members of the committee reflect on how the level of public engagement in local democracy can be increased.

**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 were determined by the Co-ordinating Group.
- 2.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group, at its meeting on 17 June 2021, approved the remits for the three Scrutiny Committees: Corporate, People and Place.

### **3. Recommendations**

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3.1 It is recommended that the Corporate Scrutiny Committee:

- a) Approves the remit for the Corporate Scrutiny Committee as set out at paragraph 5.1 of this report;
- b) Notes that the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group may consider and recommend which Scrutiny Committee, or Scrutiny Committees, are best-placed to deal with any cross-cutting matters that may arise;
- c) Considers how the level of public engagement with the work of the committee can be increased over time.

#### **3.2 Reason for Recommendations**

3.2.1 The recommendations are intended to enable the West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) Overview and Scrutiny function to carry out its role effectively and to make best use of its resources by establishing a workable division of focus areas between the three Scrutiny Committees.

### **4. Report Background**

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4.1 Local government Overview and Scrutiny is based on provisions in relevant legislation, principally the Local Government Act 2000 and the National Health Service Act 2006. Whilst this legislation sets out specific functions and powers for Overview and Scrutiny it does not prescribe how the function should be organised by individual local authorities. This is largely a matter of local choice, informed by factors such as councillors' views about the organisational model that works best for their authority or guidance on good practice from relevant bodies such as the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.

4.2 Common organisational models for Overview and Scrutiny used by different authorities include a single committee that appoints sub-committees or informal working groups to carry out in-depth scrutiny work; or a varying number of 'thematic' scrutiny committees (which may also appoint sub-groups). The remits for 'thematic' scrutiny committees are, again, a matter of local choice and might consist of logical groupings of service areas, match an authority's Cabinet portfolios or departmental structure, or be based on a range of other factors.

4.3 WNC has adopted an Overview and Scrutiny structure including three 'thematic' Scrutiny Committees. These will need to carry out the following core functions of Overview and Scrutiny:

- Holding the Executive to account
- Policy development and review
- Performance monitoring
- Scrutiny of agencies external to WNC

4.4 In addition, the relevant Scrutiny Committee(s) will need to enable WNC to carry out scrutiny of some services or functions that is identified specifically in different legislation:

- Scrutiny of the planning, provision and operation of the health service in the area (NHS Act 2006 as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012)
- Scrutiny of decisions and actions taken by organisations making up Community Safety Partnerships in connection with their responsibility for developing and implementing a strategy for the reduction of crime and disorder in the area (Police and Justice Act 2006)
- Scrutiny of flood risk management functions by a lead local flood authority (Local Government Act 2000 as amended by the Localism Act 2011)

4.5 In practice, the statutory health scrutiny function is the most prominent of these areas.

## 5. Issues and Choices

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5.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group considered and approved remits for each of the three Scrutiny committees. Detailed below are the remits for all Scrutiny Committees. The remit for the Corporate Scrutiny Committee is highlighted:

<b>Corporate Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>People Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>Place Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Finance and resources</b>	Adult care, public health and wellbeing	Built and natural environment
<b>Corporate services</b>	Housing and communities	Transport and highways
<b>Shared services under the WNC and NNC Shared Services Joint Committee (the WNC Constitution assigns this focus area to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee or equivalent at each authority).</b>	Statutory health scrutiny	Community safety and regulatory services (including statutory crime and disorder scrutiny)
<b>Corporate strategy and priorities</b>	Children, families and education	Economic development, regeneration and growth
		Statutory scrutiny of flood risk management

5.2 The remit for each Scrutiny Committee is broadly reflective of WNC’s directorate structure and Executive portfolios, without matching them exactly in order to recognise the potential for changes in these areas over time.

5.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group recognised that the remits for each Scrutiny Committee means that potential focus areas may come within the remit of more than one Scrutiny Committee. For example, housing could be scrutinised as an issue affecting wellbeing or as an aspect of local development.

- 5.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group considered potential cross-cutting matters that may arise and agreed that it would consider and agree which Scrutiny Committee(s) is best placed to deal with any cross-cutting matters. The WNC Constitution also already states in relation to matters referred to Overview and Scrutiny under the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules that: “In the case of cross-cutting matters, the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Group may recommend a particular Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers such matters.” The Coordinating Group agreed, at its recent meeting, that cross cutting matters could come under the remit of more than one Scrutiny Committee.

### **Public Engagement**

- 5.5 In a separate briefing with the Executive Director – Finance, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee highlighted that they wanted to improve the level of public engagement and were hopeful that members of the Committee could consider how to improve the levels of public engagement in these meetings. Members of the Committee are therefore asked to consider and reflect on how public engagement can be optimised.

## **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 remit for the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

### **6.2 Legal**

- 6.2.1 The approach adopted by the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group reflects the statutory duties relating to local authority Overview and Scrutiny and the requirements of the WNC Constitution. It is considered that the remits of each Scrutiny Committee achieve this.

### **6.3 Risk**

- 6.3.1 The remits for the three Scrutiny Committees set out in this report have been identified in the context of the establishment of WNC as a new authority. There is the potential for issues or challenges to arise when the final agreed version is put into practice. This is likely to be the case with any arrangement of remits adopted by WNC at the start of its life. This risk is also mitigated by the ability of the Overview and Scrutiny function to monitor its own operation and effectiveness and to consider any improvements that may seem necessary in light of experience.

### **6.4 Consultation**

- 6.4.1 The overall Overview and Scrutiny committee structure for 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.

6.4.2 The Monitoring Officer has been consulted on the proposed remit for this Scrutiny Committee presented in this report ahead of the Co-ordinating Group meeting that was held on 17 June 2021.

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

6.5.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the remits for the three Scrutiny Committees at its meeting on 17 June 2021. The Coordinating Group determined the final remits for the three Scrutiny Committees.

6.5.2 Each Scrutiny Committee will receive and note 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.

## **4 Background Papers**

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Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group – 17 June 2021