

To: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 17 May 2018
Report of: Scrutiny Officer
Title of Report: Scrutiny Operating Principles and Standing Panel Arrangements

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To adopt a set of operating principles for the Scrutiny Committee for the 2018/19 municipal year, establish Standing Panels and appoint Standing Panel Chairs.
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Gant, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee 2017/18
Corporate Priority:	'An Efficient and Effective Council.'
Recommendations: That the Scrutiny Committee resolves to:	
1.	Agree the Committee Operating Principles for the 2018/19 municipal year, as set out in Appendix 1;
2.	Agree to re-establish the Finance, Housing and Companies Standing Panels for the 2018/19 municipal year;
3.	Elect Chairs of the Finance, Housing and Companies panels; and
4.	Note the schedule of meetings for the 2018/19 municipal year.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Draft Scrutiny Committee Operating Principles

Introduction and background

1. At the start of a new administrative year there is a need to re-establish the key principles by which the Scrutiny Committee, and its standing panels, will operate. An updated set of operating principles proposed by the Scrutiny Officer is set out in Appendix 1 for the Committee's consideration.
2. The Committee is able to delegate responsibility for scrutiny of certain issues to specific standing panels, which report back to the Committee with recommendations. The

Committee should consider whether it wishes to re-establish the previous standing panel arrangements, or any new arrangements. Once the standing panels have been agreed, it is recommended that the Chairs of the panels also be appointed by the Committee.

Role of the Scrutiny Committee

3. Scrutiny operates to provide public assurance that the City Executive Board is carrying out its business effectively, and taking decisions in the best interests of the residents of Oxford. To provide this assurance, the Committee carries out research, reviews and hears from independent experts, making recommendations for service improvement where necessary. The focus of the Committee's work is to hold the Executive Board to account, and assist the Council in developing policy. As outlined in the Council's Constitution, the Committee can:
 - a) Carry out research and consultation on policy options, and introduce schemes to involve the public in developing policy;
 - b) Review the performance and decisions of the Board, and council officers (but not decisions on individual planning or licensing applications);
 - c) Review the progress of the Council and individual services in achieving its policy aims and performance targets;
 - d) Work with national, regional and local organisations to promote the interest of local people.
 - e) Review executive decisions in respect of any companies wholly or partly owned by the Council and hold the shareholder to account for the performance of those companies. The decisions of Council-owned companies do not fall within the remit of the scrutiny committee.
 - f) Require the attendance of Board Members and Senior Officers to answer questions about their decisions and performance.
 - g) Hold other public service providers to account (though there is no requirement for them to respond).
4. Members of the Committee are encouraged to read the Council's Scrutiny Guide for Councillors which provides a detailed review of how the Committee operates, how to be effective, and the support and development opportunities available to members. Hard copied of the guide will be available at the meeting on 17 May 2018.

Operating Principles

5. The Council's Constitution sets out the role and procedures of the Scrutiny Committee, as outlines above, but it is not prescriptive about how the scrutiny function will be organised and managed. In previous years, the Committee has agreed a set of operating principles to govern key aspects of their work that are not covered by the Constitution. Key matters addressed in the document include: resource expectations, membership guidelines for panels and meeting frequency.
6. The Operating Principles are designed as a reference document to guide the Committee's work, and a draft set of principles for adoption are set out in Appendix 1.

The Committee may make revisions as it sees appropriate within the confines of the Constitution, relevant legislation and resource capacity.

Standing Scrutiny Panels

7. In previous years, the Committee has established Finance, Housing and Companies Panels to undertake detailed scrutiny of decisions and issues relevant to their remit. The Committee are invited to agree a set of standing panels for the year, and are recommended to continue with the current arrangements, or a similar provision. As a guide, in assisting with the Scrutiny Committees workload, 39 of the 74 reports considered by scrutiny in 2017/18 were done so by standing panels.

Standing Panel chairs must be members of the Scrutiny Committee in order that there remains a direct line of reporting and accountability. After identifying which panels to appoint, the Committee is requested to also appoint Chairs of these panels, who will take an organisational role until each Panel's full membership is established at the next Committee meeting on 5 June. The number of members to sit on each Panel can be decided by the Committee at the meeting on 5 June 2018, once all nominations have been received.

8. This provides sufficient time for any new members to become familiar with the scrutiny function, and consider whether they want to be involved in any Panels.
9. The Scrutiny Officer will ask group secretaries for membership nominations for each of the Panels, in accordance with the Operating Principles. It is recommended that the Companies Panel membership continues to be constituted of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, and the Chairs of the other standing panels plus one member from any group not already represented as was done in the previous year.
10. The Members Allowances Scheme allocates an additional 25% of the basic member allowance (£1,254 in 2018/19) to a maximum of two standing panels chairs, on the basis that panels meet at least 5 times a year. Where there are more than two standing panels, 50% of the basic allowance (£2,508) will be divided between the panel chairs. This Special Responsibility Allowance is to reflect the additional responsibility of panel chairs. Members can forgo this additional allowance if they wish.
11. The number of members to sit on each Panel will be decided by the Committee at the meeting on 5 June 2018.

Alternative options

12. Standing Panels, and the recommendations that are developed as part of their work, have a track record of being effective at Oxford City Council. This report proposes that the Committee establishes Finance, Housing and Companies Standing Panels for the 2018/19 municipal year. However, the Committee is not required to accept this recommendation, and may choose to form alternative arrangements. An outline of other options considered in producing this report include:
 - a) Merging the Finance and Companies Panels into one single standing panel. This option is not proposed on the basis that it would be more appropriate to keep council and companies business separate.

- b) Merging the Finance and Housing Panels. This option is not proposed on the basis that the workload, meeting frequency and duration would be unfavourable for members of the Panel.
- c) Adding council performance to the remit of the Finance Panel (performance scrutiny is currently undertaken by the whole Scrutiny Committee each quarter). This option is not proposed on the basis that all members of the Scrutiny Committee will likely want to review this information which relates to a wide range of Council services.

13. If the Committee decides to set up alternative Standing Panel arrangements, the Scrutiny Officer will liaise with the Chair and return to the next available Committee meeting with a revised proposal for agreement.

Scrutiny Work Plan

14. The fundamental role of scrutiny is to achieve positive outcomes for local people by undertaking a targeted and thorough examination of the council's service to residents. However, even between the Scrutiny Committee and its standing panels, it is not possible to examine every service in detail. Therefore, the Committee must prioritise and plan its work accordingly.
15. The Committee will be invited to agree an indicative Work Plan for the year at their meeting on 5 June 2018. This allows reasonable time for new members to contribute to the Work Plan longlist, which is being coordinated through the Scrutiny Officer. Please send any items to the Scrutiny Officer before 21 May 2018, together with any background information, so that they may be included in a report for 5 June 2018. The Work Plan is kept under review throughout the year and will remain reactive to the Forward Plan and new suggestions.
16. In previous years, the Scrutiny Committee has created various time limited review groups to carry out in depth research and scrutiny into a specific issue. For example, the Oxford Living Wage and Devolution reviews. The establishment of any Scrutiny Review Groups can be considered at the same time as the annual work plan on 5 June 2018, with review group membership being confirmed at the next committee meeting on 3 July 2018.

Member Support

17. The Scrutiny Officer is the lead officer responsible for ensuring that members of the Committee receive the support they need in order to be effective in their role. New and returning committee members will be offered an informal 1-2-1 induction meeting with the Scrutiny Officer. This meeting can also be used to discuss personal development needs, explore how the Committee can be most effective over the coming year, and reflect on the work of previous years. The Scrutiny Officer will be available year round to support the Committee, its standing panels and review groups, together with the wider Committee and Member Services Team.
18. There is also a variety of external training and development opportunities open to all members. The Scrutiny Officer will send out prompts throughout the year for upcoming development sessions. More information on support and training opportunities can be found in the Scrutiny Guide for Councillors. The first scrutiny training event in the new

year will be a session on 4 June run by the [Centre for Public Scrutiny](#) called *key skills and knowledge for effective scrutiny*. New members are encouraged to attend. A second training session called *advanced finance scrutiny* will be held on 26 June. Finance Panel members may wish to attend.

Key Scrutiny Dates: May – July 2018

Date	Event
9 May	The Scrutiny Committee agenda for 17 May is published
15 May	The Scrutiny Committee members are appointed at Annual Council
17 May	The Scrutiny Committee will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elect a Chair and Vice-Chair; • Establish standing panels and their Chairs; • Consider any outstanding business from 2017/18.
21 May	Deadline for submitting items for the Scrutiny Work Plan report.
5 June	The Scrutiny Committee will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an indicative Work Plan for 2018/19 • Agree standing panel membership • Establish review group(s) and chair(s) • Consider any outstanding business from 2017/18..
3 July	The Scrutiny Committee will establish the membership of any review groups and prioritise and start review(s).

Schedule of meetings

Members of the Committee are invited to take note of the schedule of meetings for the next 12 months:

Scrutiny Committee	Finance Panel	Housing Panel	Companies Panel (Provisional Dates)
5 June 2018	4 July 2018	5 July 2018	7 June 2018
3 July 2018	10 September 2018	11 October 2018	31 July 2018
30 July 2018	6 December 2018	12 November 2018	11 September 2018
(Provisional)	7,8,9 January 2019	4 March 2019	29 October 2018
6 September 2018	(budget review)	8 April 2019	12 December 2018
8 October 2018	16 January 2019		3 January 2019
6 November 2018	30 January 2019		
4 December 2018			
14 January 2019			
5 February 2019			
5 March 2019			
2 April 2019			

A 6 month forward view of meetings will be included on each agenda throughout the year.

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Background Papers: None