

COMMITTEE: OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

DATE: 29th OCTOBER 2009

SUBJECT: OPERATIONAL GUIDE (a) COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION & (b) SCOPING A TASK & FINISH GROUP

REPORT BY: SCRUTINY MANAGER

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IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL	✓	COMMUNITY SAFETY
EQUALITIES		ENVIRONMENT
FINANCIAL		CONSULTATIONS
STAFFING		OTHER

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

PURPOSE

1. To seek Board approval for the operational guidelines on dealing with Councillor Calls for Action and for scoping a Task and Finish Group review.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The Overview and Scrutiny Board is recommended to:
 - (i) approve the process for dealing with Councillor Calls for Action, at Appendix A
 - (ii) approve the process for scoping Task and Finish Group reviews, at Appendix B.

BACKGROUND

3. At the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting on the 29th September, it was reported to members that further operational guidelines would be brought forward to the Board for consideration.
4. Given the Government has published statutory guidance on Councillor Call for Action, it is essential that the Council adopts a guideline for dealing with them.

5. With tonight's Board meeting being asked to agree a number of Task and Finish Groups, members are asked to support the proposed operational guideline for scoping them from the start. This is to ensure that the Task and Finish Groups are effectively project managed.
6. The guidelines have been developed by the Scrutiny and Democratic Team's and reflect established good practice. The Councillor Call for Action guideline meets the requirements contained within the Government's statutory guidance.

REPORT

(a) Councillor Call for Action

7. The Government as part of a package of measures to strengthen the role of locally elected members, legislated for Councillor Call for Action to enable elected members to raise issues on behalf of their constituents and the communities that they represent.
8. Under the operational guideline proposed, elected members will have the right to ask the Overview and Scrutiny Board to examine issues that the Council or its partners have not responded to their satisfaction. To ensure that Councillor Call for Action is not used to deal with issues that could be effectively dealt with by other courses of action, the proposed guideline, places emphasis on using Councillor Call for Action as a measure of last resort.
9. To enable elected members to submit a Councillor Call for Action, a form has been written to take members through a step-by-step process to ensure that they have a Councillor Call for Action. Councillor Call for Action forms will need to be submitted to the Democratic Services Team, who will then forward it for review to the Scrutiny Team. They will ensure that the form contains all the necessary information and will help determine if it meets the Board's validation criteria.
10. Following this, a valid Councillor Call for Action will be submitted to the next available Board meeting. It is then proposed that the Board decides whether the Councillor Call for Action is examined either by the Board or through a Task and Finish Group using the criteria outlined in the guideline.

(b) Scoping a Task and Finish Group

11. Once a Task and Finish Group has been established it is proposed that the scoping form is used to establish the terms of reference of the review and to establish the practical arrangements. The reason for this is to ensure that reviews are properly project managed, which should ensure that the review achieves its aims and has measurable outcomes. One of the most effective ways to make sure that a review goes well is to ensure that it is well defined at the outset; this will help ensure that the review is

less likely to get sidetracked or be overambitious in what it hopes to examine.

12. A well completed scoping form is also a great communication tool in helping others to understand what the review is about. The plan is to publish the completed form on the Overview and Scrutiny sections of the Council's website.
13. The form includes a section for the Department or partner representative advise elected Members on how the review can best add value.
14. The Scrutiny Manager will allocate a Scrutiny Officer to support members in carrying out the review. They will help to project manage the review to ensure its successful completion. They will be responsible for the completion of the scoping form and will consult the Board Chair and Vice-Chairs on it's content. The Task and Finish Group will have the ability to review it's scope, but will need to seek permission from the Board or alternatively the Chair and Vice-Chairs to alter it. This process will help the Board to effectively manage the work of the Task and Finish Groups.

PROPOSAL/OPTION

15. Members are asked to endorse, amend or reject the proposed operational guidelines for Councillor Call for Action and scoping a Task and Finish Group review.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

16. The proposed operational guideline for Councillor Call for Action is designed to meet statutory guidance. There are no legal implications in relation to the proposed guideline for scoping a Task and Finish Group review. This has been agreed by Richard Stevens in Legal Services on 15th October 2009.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Operational Guideline, Councillor Calls for Action.

Appendix B - Operational Guideline, Scoping a review.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100D

Council Minute 104/09 and Council report 11.1 (15th September 2009)