Governance Working Group
Proposed changes to Overview and Scrutiny

27 February 2020
Drivers for change

• Current arrangements not satisfactory.

• Pre-Scrutiny of Cabinet reports the night before a Cabinet decision not effective.

• Scrutiny should be advisory, with involvement in shaping council policy, to influence decision-making on major issues facing the council.

• Scrutiny is best undertaken without political interference.
A clear role for Scrutiny

• An opportunity for Members to have an impact and influence the work of the council.
• Focus more on pre-scrutiny at an early stage, i.e. assist in the development of major, strategic policies, programmes of works, projects, etc.
• Not just act as a rubber stamp
• Work plan items to be properly scoped, allowing for clear outcomes.
• Less busy agendas, allowing members to give more time and focus to consider individual issues on matters of significance to the work of the council.
“Scrutiny should be a strategic function of the authority.
It should be central to the organisation’s corporate governance, a crucial cog in the decision-making machine”.

Centre for Public Scrutiny –
Taking Scrutiny Seriously - January 2020
Proposed changes

- Reduction in number of meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from 11 to 5 or 6 per year.

- Creation of a finance and performance sub-group to meet quarterly.

- Committee work plan to include about 12 clearly scoped topics, allowing for a deep dive into two topics per meeting.

- Work plan topics to have clear lines of enquiry, questions, and to draw on external expertise as necessary.

- Members to lead the items at Scrutiny meetings.

- Call-in function remains available.
Proposed next steps:

• If supported by the Governance working group:
  o Meeting schedule to be considered.
  o Work plan topics to be considered (see next slide).
  o Members encouraged to develop lines of enquiry and questions for the work plan.
  o Training to be provided to Members and staff.
  o Clear expectations established – cultural change and continuous improvement.

• Formal proposal for agreement at Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April, then Annual meeting of Council in May.

• Ongoing support from CFPS through change in 20/21.
Potential topics:

- CIL - Strategic Investment Framework and governance for decision-making.
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS)
- Fireworks
- Modern slavery
- Licensing policy; Taxi policy; Discretionary Business Rates Policy
- ED Strategy.
- HRA: new build & acquisition programme; estate renewal programme.
- Homelessness
- Update from Climate and Ecological Working Group, including pesticide motion.
- Update from Town Centre Working Group – progress, impact,
- PREVENT & Safeguarding (statutory item)
- Oportunitas
- Waste
- Car parking

- Potential for OSC Chairman to assign a named OSC Member to scope each topic being considered.
Questions?