

Scrutiny Management Board Report

Draft Options Appraisal for Scrutiny 2013/14 onwards

Given the current budget pressures both officers and members are having to make difficult decisions about how services are to be effectively delivered in future. Scrutiny should not be immune to this debate and as such this paper has been put together to stimulate discussion on how members can support the efficiency drive.

Below is the 'As-Is' of how Scrutiny is currently delivered at Bolsover:

The current Scrutiny arrangements are three Scrutiny Committees which meet on a monthly basis and each Committee is responsible for monitoring two of the Council's Corporate Plan Targets.

In addition to the Scrutiny Committees, a Scrutiny Management Board oversees the work of Scrutiny, sets the annual work programmes for the three Scrutiny Committees and has responsibility for Health Scrutiny. The Scrutiny Management Board is made up of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the three Scrutiny Committees, an opposition Member with the Leader (or Deputy Leader) and Chief Executive also in attendance. The Scrutiny Management Board meets bi-monthly.

A Budget Scrutiny Committee also meets bi-monthly which is made up of all 30 Scrutiny Members. Budget reports were previously taken to each of the three Scrutiny Committees however, it was decided last year that one meeting would take place rather than Officers attending three Committees. The Scrutiny Officer does not currently support the Budget Scrutiny Committee. This was agreed with Members as there was no spare capacity to support an additional meeting within the Scrutiny Officer's current working pattern.

The Scrutiny Officer provides dedicated support to the Scrutiny function, working three days per week (Monday – Wednesday, 8.30 am – 4.30 pm). Support is provided on a secondment basis from North East Derbyshire District Council and this has been the case since July 2010.

The following are options for Scrutiny Management Board consideration:

Option 1

Reduce the three committees to two and re-name. Each would have three corporate plan targets as follows:

- Environment, Regeneration and Community Safety
- Customer Focused Services, Strategic Organisational Development and Social Inclusion.

The two Committees would meet on a monthly basis.

Scrutiny Management Board would remain. ✓

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A slightly larger remit for two committees would ensure that there are plenty of varied items on the work programme for each of the two committees. ▪ Increased number of members to contribute to scrutiny reviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Care would need to be taken that just because it is the Safe & Inclusive Committee remit that has been split in two, that it is not automatically that Chair and Vice Chair who will lose their roles. In the interest of fairness, two new Committees should be established and then the usual process to nominate Chairs and Vice Chairs to these two new Committees. ▪ With the potential for more policies and strategies and more members on each Committee, it is likely that the meetings will last longer, particularly if review work is still carried out within the meetings.
<p>Savings</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ £4,890.72 saving from Chair and Vice Chair allowances. (Chairs Allowance - £3,260.48 and Vice Chair - £1,630.24) <p>Additional savings would include,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Paper/print costs - approx £308.00 per year (based on 10 x doubled sided sheets, stapled (20 copies) 14 meetings per year (based on 2012/13 meeting schedule). ▪ Officer time – approx 253 hours per year (based on an average of 5.5 hours per week x 46 weeks, spent on Committee and review work for each of the Committees in preparation, report writing, preparing agendas, pre-meets, supporting the Chair, etc) plus the time spent in the meetings (approx 28 hours). NB: Not all of this time would be saved as the workload for the Scrutiny Officer will not reduce but it will mean less meetings and pre/meetings to attend.) ▪ Meeting room space - approx 28 hours per year (based on 2 hours per meeting x 14 meetings) ▪ Associated energy costs 	

- Other officers time (Democratic Services, etc) – reduction of 14 meetings and pre-meetings to attend, agendas to prepare and minutes to produce.

Option 2

Reduce to one Scrutiny Committee with task and finish groups to complete at least three reviews per year (target within the Strategy and Performance Service Plan) – suggest no Democratic Services support for Task and Finish groups.

This Committee would meet once a month.

There would be no requirement for Scrutiny Management Board.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Full and focused agenda for all meetings ▪ No confusion about the remit of the Committee (will cover all 6 corporate plan targets). ▪ <u>All</u> Scrutiny Members will receive information on <u>all</u> policies and strategies, etc. ▪ Task and Finish Groups could meet as and when with a small number of dedicated Members to carry out review work. ▪ It is possible that there may be capacity to carry out more than three reviews per year as a smaller review panel may complete reviews in a shorter timescale when meeting outside of the Scrutiny Committee meeting. ▪ Opportunity for more Members to Chair a Task and Finish Group and present the report to Executive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 30 Members of the Committee – Officers attending to give reports or updates may be required for longer than usual as more Committee Members may mean more questions. ▪ Strong Chairman required in order to ensure that meetings run smoothly.
Savings	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2 x Chair's Allowance - £6,520.96 ▪ 2 x Vice Chair's Allowances - £3,260.48 ▪ Scrutiny Officer time (Preparing agendas, pre-meets, etc) ▪ Print costs - £616.00 (based on the calculation set out in option 1) 	

- Meeting room space – 56 hours (based on the calculation set out in option 1)
- Associated energy costs
- Democratic Services Officers time – reduction of 28 meetings to attend, pre-meetings, agenda preparation and time taken to produce the minutes.
- Additional savings from disestablishment of Scrutiny Management Board including £132 print costs, officer time and meeting room space (approx 6 meetings per year).

Further comments: Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) report in the Annual Survey that the most common number of committees per authority is one and the largest increase in popularity is seen with the 'one overview and scrutiny committee that commissions time limited panels', with a 320 % increase from 5% to 20.6% since 2010/11. These statistics may be as a result of increasing budget pressures on Local Authorities to reduce the number of Committees and make savings.

This is not to say that this is the best model for a Scrutiny function and the multiple overview and scrutiny committee structure remains the most popular model for a local authority according to the results of the CfPS Survey.

Option 3

Keep current Scrutiny Committee structure but meet on a six weekly basis rather than monthly.

Scrutiny Management Board would remain.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Savings from a reduction in meetings to 9 per year (per committee) ▪ Reduce the number of meetings cancelled or with few agenda items ▪ Full and focused agenda for every meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More items on some agendas than what members currently receive will result in longer meetings. ▪ Could cause delay in approval process for strategies and policies ▪ No further savings from disestablishment of Scrutiny Management Board
Savings	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Print costs - £330 (based on the calculation set out in option 1) ▪ Officer time – difficult to quantify as the workload will not change. Time will be freed up from attending meetings and pre-meetings which equates to approximately 37.5 hours. 	

- Meeting room space – reduction of 15 meetings per year (approx 30 hours, based on the calculation set out in option 1).
- Associated energy costs

Option 4

Merge the performance meetings with the budget meetings and hold quarterly meetings to consider both subjects.

Scrutiny Management Board would remain. ✓

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scrutiny Officer supporting the Committee. ▪ Reduction of 12 meetings per year (3 x quarterly performance meetings in the individual committees and 4 budget meetings). ▪ Could be arranged so that meetings don't clash with Cabinet meetings when Portfolio Holders are not able to attend. ▪ All Scrutiny Members receive performance information on all corporate plan targets. ▪ Only one performance report to be produced and presented by Assistant Director – Strategy and Performance rather than 3 ▪ Some performance meetings only last 10 – 15 minutes. This isn't a good use of time, Members travelling to the meeting, etc. (specifically relates to Safe and Inclusive which falls on the same day as Cabinet when the Portfolio Holders cannot attend). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential to be a longer meeting if all portfolio holders are required to attend to answer questions ▪ No further savings from disestablishment of Scrutiny Management Board
Savings	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Print costs - £264 (based on the calculation set out in option 1) ▪ Officer time – Mainly relates to the Assistant Director of Strategy and Performance who attends three consecutive meetings to provide the quarterly report to Members. Scrutiny Officer and Democratic Services Officer time in attending these meetings will also be reduced. 	

- Meeting room space - a reduction of 12 meetings equates to 24 hours based on the calculation set out in option 1.
- Associated energy costs

Option 5

Create an Audit and Corporate Governance Scrutiny Committee that oversees performance, budget monitoring, medium term financial plan and any other governance issues incorporating the current Audit Committee.

Scrutiny Management Board would remain. ✓

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creates a position for Scrutiny Chair and Vice Chair. ▪ Ensures that all audit and budget information is scrutinised appropriately. ▪ Only one performance report to be produced and presented by Assistant Director – Strategy and Performance rather than 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Chair of Audit currently does not receive an allowance (would as a Scrutiny Chair) ▪ Co-optees on the current Audit Committee – need to consider if these would remain under a new Scrutiny arrangement. ▪ Not all Members would scrutinise performance/budgets, etc. Would be the responsibility of the Committee Members.
Savings	
<p>The Audit Committee meets monthly, Scrutiny currently have 3 x quarterly performance meetings and Budget Scrutiny Committee is held bi-monthly so there would be a reduction to the number of meetings if all these functions were amalgamated into one committee.</p>	
<p>Savings would be made as a result of the reduction in meetings.</p>	

The Joint Director of Corporate Resources has provided comments on this option and is happy to look at this approach although would take the view that the committee should consider risk but not performance.

Scrutiny Management Board are asked to provide a steer as to whether any changes are to be proposed so that these can be considered as part of the Civic arrangements for May 2013 onwards.

Councillor Karl Reid – Chair of the Scrutiny Management Board