

**BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL**  
**RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMISSION**  
**21 JUNE 2013**

**Report of:** Service Director, Legal Services

**Title:** Annual Business Report

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. To note the Commission's Terms of Reference at paragraph 1;
2. To agree the meeting dates and times for the Commission in 2013/14 as set out at paragraph 2;
3. To note arrangements for the establishment of Select Committees, Working Groups and Inquiry Days;
4. To note the arrangements for co-options to the Commission for the 2013/14 municipal year, (on the understanding that individuals may only legally assume co-opted status once they have completed an entry in the members interests register and signed up to the Members Code of Conduct);
5. To note the Call In process.

**Policy**

Not applicable.

**Consultation**

Scrutiny Team.

**Context and proposal**

## 1. Terms of Reference

At its annual meeting on 6 June, 2013 the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee confirmed the establishment of the Resources Scrutiny Commission with the following terms of reference:-

### Overview

The role of the Resources Scrutiny Commission is the overview and scrutiny of matters relating to the budget and policy framework, the council's transformation and change programmes and the efficient and effective use of resources.

### Functions

- (i) To ensure that overview and scrutiny directly responds to corporate and public priorities, is used to drive service improvement, provides a focus for policy development and engages members of the public, key stakeholders and partner agencies.
- (ii) To develop an annual work programme concentrating on limited areas for in depth review (including the appointment of time limited task and finish groups to facilitate this e.g. Select Committees, Working Groups, Inquiry Days) using the following framework:
  - (a) Scrutiny of corporate plans and other major plan priorities with particular reference to those areas where targets are not being met or progress is slow;
  - (b) Input to significant policy developments or service reviews;
  - (c) Pre-decision scrutiny of items on the Mayor's Forward Plan
- (iii) To make reports and recommendations to Full Council, the Mayor/Executive and/or any other body on matters within their remit and on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area and to monitor the response, implementation and impact of recommendations.
- (iv) To work in collaboration with the Mayor/relevant Executive Member and receive updates from that member on key policy developments, decisions taken or to be taken and progress against corporate priorities.

- (v) To report on a half-yearly basis to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on progress against the work programme and on any recommendations it makes.
- (vi) To maintain a strategic overview of the council's service and financial performance and to make recommendations to the executive and officers as appropriate.
- (vii) To scrutinize the Council's arrangements for ensuring the efficient and effective use of financial, personnel and property resources and to make recommendations to the executive and officers as appropriate.
- (viii) To develop a policy and budget review process and ensure that budget proposals are subject to rigorous challenge.

## 2. Dates and Times of Meetings 2013/14

The proposed dates for meetings of this Commission are set out below, the details having been included in the Council diary. All meetings to commence at **9.30 am** except for budget related meetings which will commence at **6 pm**.

<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
<i>(21 June AGM)</i>	6 January (Budget)
19 July	8 January (Budget)
20 September	13 January (Budget)
18 November	24 January
13 December	28 February
	21 March
	11 April

## 3. Establishment of Select Committees, Working Groups and Inquiry Days

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSM) will retain responsibility for setting up scrutiny select committees but that responsibility for less formal forms of scrutiny such as working groups and inquiry days be devolved to the commissions, which will decide on those specific topics within their respective remits that will benefit from this sort of approach.

#### 4. Co-optees

The use of co-optees to support the work of scrutiny has been a feature of Bristol's approach, the objective being that they bring with them, a wider range of expertise and experience to the scrutiny function. They are drawn from a variety of organisations and are all non voting, apart from statutory education representatives (2 parent governors and 2 diocesan nominees) who will sit on the Children, Young People and Families Commission. Scrutiny Commissions also have the option to appoint expert witnesses to help with particular pieces of work who may be required only for one or two meetings.

In relation to co-optee and expert witnesses appointments, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has confirmed that co-options should be limited to a level which meets the basic needs of the commission only and greater use be made of expert witnesses where an external perspective is considered beneficial to the particular pieces of work being undertaken.

It was proposed that the following notes of guidance in relation to co-optee appointments should be forwarded to commissions as has been done in previous years:

- that any co-optee appointments that are offered should be directly relevant to a Commission's work programme;
- that there are different ways in which external expertise can be brought in to assist commissions with their work; annual co-options are one but not necessarily the best way of supporting scrutiny commissions. Active consideration should be given to the use of expert witnesses as an alternative, for particular pieces of work;
- that no co-optee should be given the impression that they have an entitlement to being a member of a particular commission;
- that if persons who have previously sat as co-optees on commissions are utilized, then there is now an **Internal Audit expectation** that regard shall be had to their attendance record and where there is a record of poor attendance, an appointment will not be made;
- co-options are only legally valid when co-optees have signed up to the Members Code of Conduct and have completed the Declaration of Interests Register
- appointing organisations should be asked to provide the name of a substitute for their co-optee if the nominated person is unable to attend

a meeting (subject to the substitute first signing up to the code of conduct and declaring interests in the usual way).

- the number of co-optees appointed to a commission should not exceed the number of members.

## **5. Call In**

OSM is responsible for determining all call in's which are submitted by backbench members under the provisions in the Overview & Scrutiny Rules in the Constitution. As last year, it is proposed that a dedicated entity be established to consider all call in's, known as the Call In Panel.

Members are asked to note this information.

### **Other Options Considered**

Not applicable.

### **Risk Assessment**

Not applicable.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment**

The use of co-optees and expert witnesses have created a mechanism which enables the views of the equalities groups to be fed into the Scrutiny function.

### **Legal and Resource Implications**

No comments.

**Appendices:** None

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

**Background Papers :** None