

Report of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group ,
2 Committee System Pilot.

Background and Timeline.

The 2 Committee System pilot scheme was introduced in May 2012 following a Full Council decision, the pilot is due to end in May 2013.

A T&FG was set up with Members from O&S that are cross political group and cross Borough. Scoping meeting was held to decide on objectives and desired outcomes, criteria and sources of information.

It was decided to use the objectives as set in the original Democratic Arrangements T&FG so that a comparison of outcomes could be scrutinised Those Members and Officers with relevant information were identified as, Members, Chairs of Community Services Committee and Resources Committee,(CSC and RC), Heads of Service and Committee Officer.

Information was gained by formal interview, informal council, informal discussions, group meetings, observation of meetings and Members survey.

The deadline for reporting to Overview &Scrutiny is 15th Jan 2013, the report will then go to Full Council Meeting of 12th February. This deadline is so that any decision on or amendments to the 2 Committee System can be brought to Full Council before the end of the pilot date in May 2013.

Sources of Information.

Interview between Chairs of CSC and RC and T&FG, 14th Nov 2012.

Main Points.

- • CSC identified as having greater workload than RC.
- • Committee meetings time of 2 hours thought to be sufficient however more time now spent at Briefing meeting in order to reduce full meeting time.
- • Lead Members at Briefings are then able to clarify issues at full meeting, concern was raised that briefings and discussions involving all Lead Members were thought to exclude all committee members and were therefore not democratic.

- • Some Lead Members relished the role whilst others were more reluctant.
- • Members should do more to present reports.
- • Chairing CSC was highlighted as being very time consuming and required full commitment. Time was needed for report reading, emails, presentation. Major issues were leisure, waste and Core Strategy which because of their complexity are very demanding.
- • Pressure on Chair of CSC to lead at committee meeting. A clear direction was needed.
- • Chair of CSC has to have time available and be able to manage that time.
- • Frequency of meetings was thought to be about right, any increase in meeting dates would increase the huge amount of Officer time needed.
- • There was concern over the workload of the Committee's Officer, Mr Tony Rose. Concern was also expressed over officer sickness time and morale if overloaded with committee work.
- • RC recognised that not much has changed and is run well.
- • If 2 Committee System retained first point of contact should be Chair and Vice Chairs.

Interview with Mr Tony Rose, Committees Officer.

Main Points

- • Workload has increased but partly due to Shared Services. Was not given personal interview for Job Evaluation process.
- • Provides agendas and papers for all committee meetings plus external bodies and attends all P&L site meetings.
- • Core Strategy and Legislative changes going to increase workload.
- • Introduction of Lead Members has not been clarified or how it will work.
- • Length of meeting times thought to be about right for agenda.
- • Although workload was heavy enjoyed his working environment.

Informal interview with Heads of Service.

Main Points.

- • Lead Members thought to be good idea but individuals must be allowed to work without interference from Chair.
- • Workload of some Officers increased.
- • Workload increased when explanations need to be given twice.
- • Concern over forthcoming Core Strategy and the resultant increase in time needed.

- • Good working relationship between Lead Members and Officers.
- • Recognised that CSC has a huge agenda.
- • Recognised that it was early days in the 2Committee System and that adjustments could be made.

O&S, T&FG Meeting held 6th Dec. 2012.

Main Points.

- • Update on progress so far.
- • Discussions with, Members, Chairs and Officers had taken place, Survey forms had been returned but there had been a disappointing shortfall.
- • The overall picture being formed was that RC was running smoothly but CSC was causing concern due to the size of agenda and the perceived workload of its Chairman.
- • Committee meetings were such that not enough time was given to some items which resulted in rushed decisions.
- • Concern was voiced over the Lead Member (LM) system stating that meetings of LM were excluding other CSC members who were then not party to discussions and the decision making process.
- • Although LM's were introduced to relieve the workload of the Chair and the length of time of the main meeting it was thought that the overall time (LM's plus full meeting) was counter productive.
- • It was recognised that the Chair of CSC had an excessive workload resulting a huge time and commitment requirement.
- • It was felt that the time commitment of all Councillors was becoming a concern not only CSC members.
- • More T&FG /Working Groups that reported to main committee could be employed to relieve some of the pressure on the CSC. The system was currently working well within the O&S Committee.
- • The Group felt that a discussion with Heads of Service to determine the forthcoming year's workload would be an advantage when considering if future amendments were needed to the 2Comittee System.
- • The Group felt that the current pilot needed to run its full extent before definite recommendations could be made but recognised that changes could be made before May 2013. If necessary.

Report to go to O&S 15th Jan 2013.

- • The current 2 Committee System pilot should run until May 2013, after which a final review could take place. Amendments to the system could be introduced before the pilot ended. ie, introduction of Working Groups.
- • The current cycle of meetings was adequate, however more use could be made of dates set aside for special meetings. This would mean that additional CSC meetings could be held if necessary allowing full discussion of some agenda items.
- • Input from Hof S should be held to determine workload for the coming year.
- • The alignment between Hof S and Committees was working well and it was felt that no changes were needed.
- • The sequence of meetings culminating with Full Council was working well increasing council efficiency.
- • Lead Member meetings were too exclusive, meaning other Committee Members were excluded from decision making.
- • The workload of CSC was thought to be excessive and needed addressing. ie, moving some agenda items to RC, splitting FP&H.
- • The Chair of CSC was an exacting position that needed a huge input of time, work and commitment.
- • Members were now leading more than previously on policy issues. However, they still needed a large amount of input from Officers as they did not possess the background skills and knowledge.
- • RC was thought to be running well with little change to the agenda.
- • O&S was thought to be running well but more use to be made of Working Groups, ie WG to cover individual committees CSC,RC and report back.