

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

Date: **1 April 2021**

Title: **Feedback from Outside Bodies – Task and Finish Group Concluding Report**

Portfolio Area: **Leader – Cllr Judy Pearce**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: *Some conclusions arising from the Review will need to be reported to the Annual Council Meeting on 20 May 2021 as part of the Outside Bodies Appointments report.*

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be RECOMMENDED to approve the conclusions of the Feedback from Outside Bodies – Task and Finish Group (as set out at Sections 3.5.1 to 3.5.6 below).**

### **1. Executive summary**

1.1 In line with the request from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Minute O&S.42/20 refers), this report presents the conclusions from the Task and Finish Group Review into Member representatives providing feedback on Outside Bodies to which they have been formally appointed by the Council.

### **2. Background**

2.1 At the Full Council meeting held on 11 February 2021, Cllr Abbott asked the following Question on Notice (Minute 42/20 refers):

*'Will the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be prepared to request the Panel to scrutinise the means of reporting back to Council and to evaluate the benefit to the Council of it being represented on the Outside Bodies?'*

2.2 In responding to this Question, Cllr Birch stated that:

*'In thanking Cllr Abbott for his question, Cllr Birch stated that, at the next meeting of the O&S Panel to be held on 25 February 2021, he would seek to obtain the Panel's agreement to set up a Task and Finish Group to examine the matters raised in the question. In doing so, it would be required to report back with any recommendations to the meeting of the Panel on 1 April 2021. Furthermore, Cllr Birch informed that it would be his intention to propose that membership of the Task and Finish Group would extend beyond the Panel's membership.'*

2.3 As a result, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel met on 25 February 2021 and resolved that:

1. *a Task and Finish Group be set up to scrutinise the means of reporting back to Council and to evaluate the benefit to Council of it being represented on Outside Bodies;*
2. *the Group would report back with any recommendations to the Panel meeting on 1 April 2021, with the Panel consisting of three Members of the Conservative Group and three Members of the Opposition Group and to be chaired by Cllr Spencer; and*
3. *the draft Terms of Reference (as presented to the Panel meeting) be approved.*

2.4 Following consultation with the Leader of Council and the Leader of the Opposition Group, Cllrs Abbott, Austen, Pannell, Rowe, Spencer (Chair), Sweett were subsequently nominated to serve on the Task and Finish Group.

2.5 The agreed Terms of Reference for the Review are attached at Appendix A to this report.

### **3. Task and Finish Group Conclusions**

3.1 The Group met on Wednesday, 10 March and was joined by the Chief Executive; Monitoring Officer; Democratic Services Manager and Cllrs Baldry, Birch and Pearce. The conclusions arising from this Group meeting are set out below;

3.2 As a starting point to the Group's deliberations, Cllr Abbott had posed the following questions:

- Can the Council receive a more analytical report from an Outside Body (rather than just the minutes arising from a meeting)? With such a report including an evaluation of why our representative attended; what they had learned over the last twelve months; what changes had occurred to the Outside Body; and what (if any) added value had been obtained by the Council and/or its local communities;
- Is there anything that the wider membership can do to support the Outside Bodies and our appointed representatives?

- Should the Council develop an annual reporting system that focuses on:
  - A description of the Outside Body; its work; and its relevance to the Council;
  - The range and number of meetings that had been held during the year and why our representative(s) had chosen to attend the meetings that they did;
  - The expenses incurred (if any);
  - Changes to the Outside Body over the course of the year;
  - Consequences (and (any) added value) to our residents, local communities and to the Council; and
  - Publicity resulting from the work of the Outside Body?

3.3 To further provide some context to the Review, officers also reminded the Group that, in the absence of an Annual Council meeting in May 2020, the current list of Outside Bodies had not been reviewed for two years. Furthermore, it was confirmed that the appointments process was outside of the scope of this Review and was also an Annual Council function;

3.4 In its deliberations, Group Members made particular reference to:

- The importance of representatives advising local Ward Members when matters relating to their local Wards are to be discussed at a future Outside Body meeting;
- The current picture was a mixed one with some representatives already complying with the requirements to feedback, whereas others were not;
- Any additional requirements arising from this Review being the responsibility of the appointed Member representatives and not to place any additional work pressures on officers;
- The extent to which a representative needs to provide feedback being a matter for their own judgement; and
- The need to develop a mechanism to enable the Council to review the performance of the Outside Bodies.

3.5 Having discussed the key issues and challenges, the Group proceeded to recommend that:

3.5.1 As part of its Annual Work Programme deliberations, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel be requested to schedule an Annual Report on the performance of each of the Outside Bodies to which the Council has made appointment(s). This Annual Report to be considered early in the Calendar Year in order that the Council has the opportunity to consider the value of re-appointing to each Outside Body at the Annual Council meeting in May. In making this recommendation, the Group has stated that appointed representatives will need to report more frequently when Outside Bodies are to make

decisions (or have discussions) about matters deemed of significance / relevance / importance to the Council;

- 3.5.2 Representative(s) be required to inform local Ward Members when matters specifically relating to their local Ward(s) are to be discussed at a future Outside Body meeting;
- 3.5.3 That reports produced by representatives should summarise any such discussions or decisions made and explain how the Council (or its residents) will be impacted or what the Council is being requested to do. In so doing, representatives will be required to consider how these discussions or decisions will contribute to the delivery (once adopted) of the Corporate Strategy;
- 3.5.4 That, in order to facilitate reporting, the Democratic Services Manager be asked to produce a template for completion by representatives on Outside Bodies. The template (once drafted) to be appended to the Outside Bodies report for adoption at the Annual Council meeting to be held on 20 May 2021;
- 3.5.5 That such reports from representatives be published via the Members' Bulletin publication. In so doing, that officers be asked to revisit the format of the Bulletin to ensure that its content can be copied and pasted; and
- 3.5.6 That a role profile ('Job Description') for Members be drafted and also appended to the Annual Council report on the Constitution for adoption.

#### **4. Options available and consideration of risk**

- 4.1 Adoption of the recommendations should provide added value to the Council whilst enabling for improved performance monitoring.

#### **5. Implications**

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	The Council Constitution requires the Council to approve the list of (and subsequent appointments to) Outside Bodies.
Financial implications to include reference	Y	There are no financial implications linked to this report.

to value for money		
Risk	Y	The risk implications are set out at Section 4 above.
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	Council Theme – <i>Efficient and effective</i>
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	N	N/A
Climate Change & Biodiversity	N	N/A
Safeguarding	N	N/A
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	N/A
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	N/A
Other implications	N	None

**Appendices:**

A – Review Terms of Reference

**Background Documents:**

Council Constitution;  
Annual Council Agenda and Minutes – 16 May 2019 Meeting;  
Council Agenda and Minutes – 11 February 2021 Meeting; and  
Overview and Scrutiny Panel Agenda and Minutes – 25 February 2021 Meeting