

Law & Governance
7 Newington Barrow Way, London, N7 7EP

Report of: Councillor Flora Williamson, Chair of the Policy and Performance
Scrutiny Committee

Meeting of: Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee

Date: 21 September 2023

Ward(s): N/A

Subject: Proposed Review of Scrutiny

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. At its meeting on 13 July 2023, Council agreed that ‘a review of the Overview and Scrutiny function should be undertaken and will include revised Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Committees and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.’
- 1.2. The current scrutiny committee structure was established in 2014 and whilst most of the scrutiny committees retain a very clear focus, the Council’s priorities have developed and both the Executive Member portfolios and the Council’s structure have changed over time.
- 1.3. The new Community Wealth Building directorate, focussed on tackling economic inequality, has no clear relationship to the remit of any committee and other reporting lines are now complex and resource intensive to manage.
- 1.4. The Islington Together 2030 Plan has clarified the Council’s priorities for the future and created an opportunity to review the scrutiny committee structure to ensure that it has effective oversight of delivery of the plan, that it remains effective and is appropriately supported and facilitated.
- 1.5. A review also presents an opportunity to consider and update the related procedures, how the work of the scrutiny committees is conducted and supported and how to promote the work of the scrutiny committees more effectively and improve engagement in their work.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To approve the draft project plan, including the review terms of reference and timeline, attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.2. To agree to establish an informal member project board, chaired by the Chair of Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Local Government Act 2000 required an end to the established committee system of governance and introduced alternative forms of governance, including Executive governance arrangements. The form of governance to be employed locally was selected by local residents via a referendum.
- 3.2. The Act also required formal Scrutiny arrangements to be established, to ensure oversight of all decisions made or actions taken and to make recommendations to the authority or the Executive on matters which affect the authority's area or its residents.
- 3.3. In 2002 an Executive form of governance was introduced in Islington and the scrutiny function established. Although the arrangements have been reviewed from time to time since, the current committee structure and the procedures supporting their operation, have remained unchanged since 2014.
- 3.4. There are currently five scrutiny committees:

Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee
Children's Services Scrutiny Committee
Health and Care Scrutiny Committee
Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Housing Scrutiny Committee
- 3.5. The main overview committee, with responsibility for oversight of Executive functions is the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee. The remaining committees largely operate as review Committees, although both Children's Services and the Health and Care Scrutiny Committee have some statutory functions.
- 3.6. The proposed review will consider this structure and alternatives, to determine the most effective structure to ensuring oversight and delivery of the Islington Together 2030 plan.

- 3.7. The proposed review will also consider the operation and procedures supporting the committees, as detailed in the proposed terms of reference, and take the statutory scrutiny guidance issued by the government and the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (GfGS) 'Good Scrutiny Guide', both issued in 2019, into consideration.

4. Implications

4.1. Financial Implications

- 4.1.1. There are no financial implications arising from the review. It is a pre-requisite, stated within the review Terms of Reference, that any recommendations arising from the review must be supported within existing resources.

4.2. Legal Implications

- 4.2.1. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. The scrutiny function was established under the Local Government Act 2000. There is discretion about the structures and procedures, as long as they continue to meet the legal requirements. Legal advice will be sought on any proposed changes arising from the review to ensure that the arrangements continue to be appropriate and lawful.

4.3. Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030

- 4.3.1. There are no environmental implications arising from this decision.

4.4. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 4.4.1. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
- 4.4.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment screening has been completed. The report has no negative impacts on protected characteristics and a full Equalities Impact Assessment is therefore not required.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 5.1. The proposed review of the scrutiny function was agreed by Council on 13 July 2023. It is recommended that the proposed terms of reference and timeline detailed in Appendix 1 are approved to agree how the review will be undertaken and that a project board is established to oversee and approve the work, subject to final agreement by Council.

Appendix 1: Proposed Scrutiny review project plan

Background papers: None

Final report clearance:

Authorised by:

Councillor Flora Williamson, Chair of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee

Date: 13 September 2023

Report Author: Philippa Green, Head of Democratic Services and Governance
Tel: 020 7527 3184
Email: Philippa.Green@islington.gov.uk

Legal Implications approved:
Marie Rosenthal, Interim Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Email: Marie.rosenthal@islington.gov.uk

There are no financial implications arising from this report.