



Select Committee Annual Report & Recommendations Monitoring Report

Date: 27 April 2017

Report of the Select Committee Chairmen

Recommendation

Council is asked to note the Annual Report and Recommendations Monitoring Report of the Select Committees 2016/17

Purpose of this Report

The Select Committee Annual Report provides an overview of the work of the Council's scrutiny function for the year 2016/17. In addition, the recommendations monitoring section of the report provides an overview of Inquiry recommendations and the results of Select Committee monitoring of implementation.

Annual Report

Each year the Chairmen of the Select Committees produce an Annual Report reflecting on the work and outcomes achieved by their Committees over the past year. The 2016/17 Annual Report is attached at Appendix A.

Measuring the Impact of Scrutiny

The role of the scrutiny function is to provide an independent cross-party challenge to decision-makers for public accountability and to improve outcomes for Buckinghamshire's residents.

The recommendations monitoring report for 2016/17 is attached at Appendix B. This report summarises the total number of recommendations made through scrutiny Inquiries, and the implementation of agreed recommendations by decision-makers.

The quantitative information on the impact of scrutiny provides:

- A picture of the collective impact of the work of the four Select Committees;
- Members and Senior Officers with an overview of progress, enabling further action to be taken as needed on specific issues, or the identification of improvements in scrutiny processes to ensure that the scrutiny function maximises its impact and provides value for money from its work.

However, measuring the effectiveness of scrutiny is complex and the data on impact needs to be considered in conjunction with qualitative information. The National Centre for Public Scrutiny does not recommend using performance indicators alone as a measurement for a number of reasons:

- A change may be a result of a number of factors and it can be hard to attribute influence to a scrutiny committee alone;
- Using quantitative measures alone can lead to perverse incentives. For example, does it matter if more or fewer recommendations are accepted by decision-makers? Arguably if fewer recommendations are accepted this might mean that scrutiny has been more challenging. Alternatively if recommendations are 'too easy' for example referring to work already underway then they can be easily delivered;
- The scrutiny function has a wider and unseen role in improving the transparency of decision-making to the public which has an inherent value in strengthening the quality of decision-making. This cannot be quantified or underestimated. In cases where there are serious organisational failures in the public and private sector, a common inspection finding is that there was a failure in public transparency and scrutiny.

The four Select Committees therefore monitor the implementation of recommendations through agenda items, to secure qualitative feedback alongside the quantitative information.

The Monitoring Process

To provide a transparent and consistent approach, a protocol on how each of the Select Committees monitors recommendations is in place, reflecting the Constitution and local practice agreed by Select Committee Chairmen. This is refreshed annually and key elements are:

- Where recommendations are agreed by Cabinet, the relevant lead officer remains responsible for implementation, providing update reports as required to the Cabinet Member for sign-off;
- Each Select Committee monitors implementation of recommendations at 6 and 12 months, and for longer as needed;
- The Select Committees assess progress using a RAG status template, published with the relevant Select Committee meeting minutes.

Key Findings

- **In 2016/17 94% of recommendations made were agreed by decision-makers (Cabinet & partners)**
- **Of the recommendations for the County Council agreed by Cabinet in 2015/16, 84% are either fully complete or on track for completion (an increase from 71% in 2014/15)**

Next Steps

- The guidance on Select Committee Inquiries, including recommendations monitoring, will be shared in the scrutiny induction programme in June 2017

- The Annual Report will be published on the scrutiny pages on the County Council's website
- All Select Committees will continue to monitor progress on recommendations and raise issues as needed

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SELECT COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN