

Purpose of Report:

To consider proposed changes to the Council's Scrutiny Structures.

Recommended Action:

- (i) That the Council's four Select Committees (set out below) be abolished.

Environment and Public Protection
Community Care and Housing
Children and Young People
Strategy and Resources

- (ii) That the Business Management Group and Budget Scrutiny Review Group be abolished.

- (iii) That the Council introduces one Overview and Scrutiny Commission based on the Articles and Rules of Procedure set out in Appendix 8(b) and determines the number of Members to be appointed thereto.

- (iv) That the Council introduces three Policy Development Commissions reporting to the Executive, aligned to the three main Local Area Agreement Blocks of Children and Young People, Safer and Stronger Communities and Healthier Communities and Older People based on the Articles and Rules of Procedure set out in Appendix 8(c) and determines the number of Members to be appointed to each Commission.

- (v) That the consequential amendments to all Parts of the Constitution set out in Appendix 8(d) be approved.

- (vi) That the proposed changes be effective from 1 January 2006.
None

List of other options considered:

Key background documentation:
(bulleted list format)

Local Government Act 2000

Contact Officer Details

Name: Andy Day
Job Title: Policy Manager
Tel. No.: 01635 519459
E-mail Address: aday@westberks.gov.uk

Supporting Information

1. Background

- 1.1 The Governance and Audit Committee will recall that at its meeting on 10 August 2005 it agreed, in principle, to recommend to Council' changes to the Council's existing Scrutiny Structures based on the introduction of one Overview and Scrutiny Commission and three Policy Development Commissions.
- 1.2 The proposals put before the Task Group and agreed were:
- (i) To abolish the four Select Committees of:

Environment and Public Protection
Community Care and Housing
Children and Young People
Strategy and Resources
 - (ii) To introduce one Overview and Scrutiny Commission which would meet on a similar cycle to the Executive and have meetings on the Tuesday following the meeting of the Executive. The purpose of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission would be to hold the Executive to account (call in). The Overview and Scrutiny Commission would have the power to establish Task Groups and would be chaired by the Leader or nominated representative of the largest opposition Political Group.
 - (iii) To introduce three Policy Development Commissions aligned to the Executive which would meet according to a work programme and not a timetable of meetings based on the three main Local Area Agreement Blocks of:

Children and Young People
Healthier Communities and Older People
Safer and Stronger Communities
 - (iv) To abolish the Business Management Group and Budget Scrutiny Review Group. The Task Group considered, at that time, that the Health Scrutiny Panel should continue to report direct to Council.
 - (v) The number of Members to be appointed to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and the three Policy Development Commissions was undecided at this stage although variations on 10, 11 and 12 Members were proposed.
- 1.3 The attached structure charts (Appendix 8(a)) helps to show the Council's existing structures and how they will be changed under the new proposals.

2.0 Overview and Scrutiny Commission

- 2.1 Attached as Appendix 8(b) to this report are the new Articles and Rules of Procedure which have been drafted to support the introduction of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission. It is proposed that the Commissions terms of reference be those set out in Paragraph 2.7.2 of Article 7 and Paragraph 6.1.2 of the Rules of Procedure.

2.2 The only issue outstanding in relation to Article 7 is the number of Members to appointed to the Commission.

3.0 Policy Development Commissions

3.1 Attached as Appendix 8(c) to this report are the new Articles and Rules of Procedure which have been drafted to support the introduction of the three Policy Development Commissions. By aligning these Commissions to the Executive, the Council will be clearly defining the Policy Development (Executive) and Policy Review (Overview and Scrutiny Commission) roles within the Council.

3.2 The Policy Development Commissions will have a role in reviewing, on an annual basis, the Council's Corporate Plan to ensure that it is "fit for purpose". The annual review of the Local Area Agreement could also be another activity for these Commissions particularly as this exercise would extend the remit of the Members to partnership activity rather than just Council business. In relation to shared outcomes (Crime, Domestic Violence, Home Safety etc) the Local Area Agreement could also afford the opportunity for Members to undertake joint reviews with Members from Wokingham and Reading.

3.3 It is proposed that the three Policy Development Commissions have the terms of reference set out in Paragraph 2.6.2A of Article 2.6A and Paragraph 5.1.2A of the Rules of Procedure.

3.4 The only issue outstanding in relation to Article 2.6A is the number of Members to appointed to the three Commissions.

4.0 Other Constitutional Changes

4.1 If the Committee agree to recommend to Council the introduction of one Overview and Scrutiny Commission and three Policy Development Commissions then a significant number of other consequential changes will be required to be made to the Constitution. These changes are set out in Appendix 8(d) attached to this report.

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 That the Council's four Select Committees (set out below) be abolished.

Environment and Public Protection
Community Care and Housing
Children and Young People
Strategy and Resources

5.2 That the Business Management Group and Budget Scrutiny Review Group be abolished.

5.3 That the Council introduces one Overview and Scrutiny Commission based on the Articles and Rules of Procedure set out in Appendix 8(b) and determines the number of Members to be appointed thereto.

5.4 That the Council introduces three Policy Development Commissions aligned to the three main Local Area Agreement Blocks of Children and Young People, Safer and Stronger Communities and Healthier Communities and Older People based on the Articles and Rules of Procedure set out in Appendix 8(c). and determines the number of Members to be appointed to each Commission.

5.5 That the consequential amendments to all Parts of the Constitution set out in Appendix 8(d) be approved.

5.6 That the proposed changes be effective from 1 January 2006.

Appendices

Appendix 8(a) – Structure Charts.

Appendix 8(b) – Overview and Scrutiny Commission's Articles and Rules of Procedure.

Appendix 8(c) – Policy Development Commissions' Articles and Rules of Procedure.

Appendix 8(d) – Consequential Changes to the Constitution.

Implications

Policy: This proposal accords with the Council's policy of reviewing its Constitution and Structures to ensure that they continue to provide the most effective and efficient decision making possible.

Legal: This proposal is in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000.

Consultation Responses

Local Stakeholders: None

Officers Consulted: Nick Carter, David Holling, Corporate Board

Trade Union: N/A