

## Update to Item 5 (sections 3.45 to 3.47) following further member feedback on Task and Finish Panels

Following publication of the OSC papers, feedback from two previous task and finish chairs was received. The following paragraphs include the additional feedback and officer observations, and replace sections 3.45 to 3.47 of the report.

### Task and finish panels – Chairs feedback

3.45 Chairs of task and finish panels since 2020, who are still Councillors, were contacted to obtain their views on the effectiveness of the panel. The questions asked were:

- Do you feel the panel had access to the data it needed/requested? (for example this might be key performance indicators, service usage levels etc)
- Do you feel the panel had access to the people it needed? (for example this could include officers, contractors, strategic partners and external bodies)?
- Were the objectives for the task and finish panel clear, and do you feel the panel achieved the objectives set?
- Do you feel that the Task and Finish group that you were involved with concluded in a timely manner?
- Are there any other comments or suggestions you would like to be considered?

3.46 Five Councillors were contacted (in relation to six panels), and all five responded to the questions raised. Officers discussed feedback where further clarity was required, and a summary of the responses is below:

- In five out of six panels, chairs felt the panels had access to the data the panel needed/requested. One member commented on the data driven nature of the panel they chaired and the openness of officers with the data. For one of the panels (budget task and finish), the chair felt further information, or training could have been provided to support with members understanding of the data.
- In four of the panels, chairs felt the panels had access to the people it needed. One noted that officers were especially helpful, another noted it was essential to have access to the officers that attended, and another noted the helpfulness of the officer attending the panel. For one panel, the chair flagged that they had not has access to residents

with systemic complaints, and felt panels should have access to residents. For the final panel the chair noted that they only had access to finance officers, on discussion with this Councillor, this comment was driven by the fact the panel may not have been aware that they could call other people, not that they had tried to call others without success.

- In all six panels, chairs felt the objectives for the task and finish panels were clear, and achieved what was set. One Councillor did note the challenge with having much impact on the topic (budget setting) due to the financial constraints the authority was under.
- In all six panels responses were received for, chairs felt the panels the Task and Finish groups concluded in a timely manner. One councillor however noted that the topic felt rushed (budget setting). The budget setting period is a relatively small window, and on further discussion with the councillor they would like to have drilled down into a few more areas, and were not aware that another meeting could have been requested within the budget setting period.
- In relation to other comments, one councillor mentioned that it would be useful for the panel to meet in 6 months to determine if their recommendations had been met (a function that has since been added into the role of OSC with an action status report having been presented at July OSC) and two councillors mentioned that those sitting on the budget task and finish panel should be conversant with local authority accounting / receive training on finance. Another comment received that it would be good to understand how our OSC function compares to other councils who may operate differently.

### Officer observations

3.47 In compiling the data and information for this report, officers identified a number of areas that the committee may wish to consider in its debate:

- Annual topics (crime and disorder and health) have not received any recommendations from OSC. When setting the work programme for the year, there has not been objectives set for these topics. Whilst the committee must scrutinise these topics, there is flexibility on how this is approached (for example the crime and disorder scrutiny this year could have focussed on Youth Violence rather than having a task and finish panel, with clear objectives being set on what is to be achieved.
- The committee has agreed to an action status report being presented each year. This is not currently in the protocol for the Committee and could be added via the Constitution Review Group.

- Topics highlighted by officers as key matters have not been selected by the committee. Some of these topics had been raised at other committees, including Full Council for referral to OSC, or recommendations from the previous years OSC. The committee may wish to consider if it should reserve time on the workplan to consider such matters (eg through the presentation of a report and information on the topic, to enable further discussion to take place as to whether more detailed scrutiny is required).
- There have been no minuted discussions on areas such as performance data. The committee may wish to have the performance and risk data presented with the forward work plan, to help inform if any other information or scrutiny would be appropriate. If this were requested by the committee, it should be noted it would be presented not for scrutiny, but for consideration of the workplan, so that the relevant parties could be asked to attend future meetings.
- Based on councillor feedback, the committee may wish to consider whether the protocol and procedures adequately reflect the rights and processes for the committee to access residents and/or community representatives (for example the tenants panel), and whether any further work should be done to compare how the council operates OSC to other councils. Members may also wish to consider whether any additional training should be required prior to attendance of the budget task and finish panel.
- Given that one chair noted a panel may not have been aware they could call additional people to attend, and were able to ask for an additional meeting, members may wish to consider if the council should provide additional training and/or guidance to chairs of task and finish panels, in particular those that are not members of OSC and would may not have received the OSC training and protocol.

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