

<b>SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES</b>	<b>Agenda Item No. 4</b>
<b>28 NOVEMBER 2016</b>	<b>Public Report</b>

<b>Report of the Director of Governance</b>		
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## **ARRANGEMENTS FOR RURAL SCRUTINY**

### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 This report is submitted to the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities following the decision by Council on 12 October to review its scrutiny arrangements.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to ensure that the existing workload of this Commission is allocated to an appropriate committee within the new structure, to discuss proposed new arrangements for scrutiny of rural issues following consultation with the Parish Council Liaison Committee on 21 September 2016, and the Parish Council Working Group led by Henry Clark on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2016 and 4 November 2016. With the consent of the Chair, Members of the Parish Council Liaison Committee have been invited to this meeting to discuss the proposed arrangements to ensure an effective handover of work.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To agree to the proposals of the Committee Review Group, and subsequently to the Council meeting in December, that the scrutiny procedure rules ought to include provision that:
- (a) there should be one non-voting seat on each committee reserved to a Parish Council member or their substitute
  - (b) that the scrutiny committee can invite a further parish council member to become a non voting co-opted member
  - (c) the annual work programme of the scrutiny committees must take account of matters which affect the rural area.

### **3. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND RELEVANT CABINET PORTFOLIO**

- 3.1 *n/a*

### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Council at its annual meeting on 23 May 2016 agreed to set up a Committee Review Group to review the committee structure. Following a report from the Committee Review Group, Council on 12 October agreed to establish the following four committees from 1 January 2017:
- (a) Children and Education Scrutiny Committee
  - (b) Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee
  - (c) Health Scrutiny Committee
  - (d) Growth, Environment & Resources Scrutiny Committee.

- 4.2 This means that from 1 January 2017 the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities will no longer exist. Each new committee will consist of 11 councillors. The Children and Education Scrutiny Committee also includes statutory co-opted members. Each committee also has the ability to co-opt up to four non-voting co-opted members.
- 4.3 Council also agreed to defer the approval of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules to the December Council meeting, allowing for consultation with the Parish Council Liaison Committee as to how the Council might better mainstream rural affairs within its new decision making structure.

## 5. CONSULTATION WITH PARISH COUNCILS AND KEY ISSUES

- 5.1 The Parish Council Liaison Committee were consulted on 21 September on proposals to develop the role of Parish Councillors from rural areas and the role of the Parish Council Liaison Committee to ensure rural affairs were mainstreamed into the decision making process.
- 5.2 The Committee were consulted on two proposals:
- (a) Co-opting Parish Councillors from rural areas onto the new Scrutiny Committees
  - (b) Strengthening the role of the Parish Council Liaison Committee
- 5.3 The Monitoring Officer has also been consulting the Parish Council Working Group lead Henry Clark. They have talked through proposed changes to the Scrutiny Procedure rules (**Appendix 1**) and revised terms of reference of the Parish Council Liaison Committee (**Appendix 2**) on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2016
- 5.4 It was proposed that Scrutiny Committees should be encouraged to co-opt Parish Councillors from rural areas on to the new scrutiny committees. The Parish Council Liaison Committee advised that whilst they were not generally in favour of abolishing the Rural Affairs Scrutiny Committee, if Council did agree to do so they would recommend that up to two of the four available co-opted positions should be reserved for Parish Councillors from rural areas and that appointments to these positions should be nominated by the Parish Council Liaison Committee.
- 5.6 The new scrutiny procedure rules allow for up to four co-opted member positions on each committee. The purpose of the co-opted roles is to provide an independent and expert voice on matters of concern to the scrutiny committees. The scrutiny committees are therefore likely to want a considerable level of discretion in the selection of their co-opted members.

It is recognised that there is considerable value in allocating a reserved seat to a member of a rural parish council on each scrutiny committee to provide that important rural voice. In offering 4 guaranteed seats (one on each of the scrutiny committees), this reflects the current arrangement of 4 co-opted seats made available to parish council members on the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities. Therefore one reserved seat for parish councillors is recommended with the ability for each scrutiny committee to determine whether it should offer additional places, dependent upon their various interests and other persons to whom they may wish to offer seats.

Councillors who are on this Commission have transferred their membership onto the new committees. Similarly the workload of the current Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities will not come to an end in January 2017, but will be transferred to the relevant new scrutiny committee to form part of their work programme. The members of this Committee are invited to agree the proposals for the re-allocation of the workload.

- 5.7 The Committee's views are requested on
- (a) The Scrutiny Committee Procedure rules in relation to co-option arrangements (**Appendix 1 para 3.1 and 4.5**) and
  - (b) The amended terms of reference of the Parish Council Liaison Committee. (**Appendix 2**).The changes are highlighted.
  - (c) The reallocation of the work programme (**Appendix 3**).

## 6. TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS

- 6.1 If the proposals are agreed the Parish Councillors co-opted onto the Scrutiny Committee have indicated that they want to report back to the Parish Council Liaison Committee after each cycle of scrutiny committee meetings in order to plan for the next cycle. Therefore, it would be advisable for the Parish Council Liaison Committee to meet at the end of the cycle of scrutiny meetings.
- 6.2 The Parish Council Liaison Committee might wish to consider whether it wishes to have two additional meetings each year, and whether all its meetings should be scheduled at the end of each scrutiny committee cycle.
- 6.3 The table below shows the dates of the scrutiny meetings for the remainder of the municipal year. There is one scheduled Parish Council Liaison Committee meeting on 15 March and an extraordinary meeting is usually set up to consider the budget in February. The Parish Council Liaison Council may wish to:
- (a) schedule an additional meeting in January after all scrutiny committee meetings have met. Wednesday 18 January is suggested; and
  - (b) change the date of the 15 March meeting to 29 March or 5 April 2017 at the end of the March cycle of scrutiny meetings. Suggested dates are set out in the table.

<b>Committee</b>	<b>January</b>	<b>February</b>	<b>March</b>
Health Scrutiny Committee	10		14
Children and Education Scrutiny Committee	5		13
Growth, Environment & Resources Scrutiny Committee	16		23
Adults and Communities Scrutiny Committee	11		7
Scrutiny of the Budget		8	
Parish Council Liaison Committee	None scheduled  <i>A meeting could be scheduled for Wednesday 18 January (25 January is meeting of Full Council.)</i>	<i>Extra ordinary meeting usual organised in February to consider the budget. This has yet to be scheduled.</i>	15 <i>This meeting could be rescheduled for Wednesday 29 March or 5 April.</i>

- 6.4 A new schedule of meetings for the municipal year 2017/18 is being drawn up and adjustments can be made once the Parish Council Liaison Committee has agreed how it would like to coordinate its meetings with the new scrutiny committees.

## **7. NEXT STEPS**

- 7.1 Subject to the outcome of discussions at this meeting, the Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules will be reported to Council on the December meeting of Council for implementation on 1 January.
- 7.2 Parish Council Liaison Committee at its next meeting on 21 December will be asked:
- (a) to nominate one co-opted representative and a substitute representative on each of the new scrutiny committees, subject to Council on 14 December agreeing the revised scrutiny procedure rules;
  - (b) to agree amendments to their terms of reference;
  - (c) to agree whether it wishes to have two additional meetings each year, and whether all its meetings should be scheduled at the end of each scrutiny committee cycle.

## **8. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- 8.1 None

## **9. APPENDICES**

- 9.1 Appendix 1 - Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules  
Appendix 2 – Parish Council Liaison Committee Terms of Reference  
Appendix 3 – Work programme.