

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COMMUNITY) 14 JANUARY 2014
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (ECONOMY) 16 JANUARY 2014
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (RESOURCES) 22 JANUARY 2014

FUTURE WORKINGS OF SCRUTINY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report informs Members of some proposed changes to the way that Scrutiny Committees will be working in a way to make them more efficient and effective.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Members will recall that a Task and Finish Group was established to consider the way in which Scrutiny should operate to make it more effective and efficient and that the results of that Group were reported to, and accepted by, Executive in 2013. The main aspects of this were:-

- The creation of a separate Audit and Governance Committee;
- The creation of a dedicated part time Scrutiny Programme Officer;
- The formation of a regular meeting between the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees to discuss a work programme;
- The identification of topics which could form the basis of Task and Finish Groups

2.2 Since then, a Part Time Scrutiny Programme Officer has been appointed and has been tasked with developing a Scrutiny Work Programme, which aims to ensure an even workload as well as evolving, developing and co-ordinating the Scrutiny process and systems within the Council, in line with express wishes from Members and also the corporate priorities.

2.3 As part of this process, several meetings have been held between the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the relevant Scrutiny Committees and officers to suggest a way forward, including the structure of the meetings themselves and their agenda.

2.4 The proposed changes are as follows:-

- A new format of Agendas to be trialled for a cycle of Scrutiny Committee Meetings. The new style will include three main sections:-
 - 📌 Items for discussion.
 - 📌 Items for Executive (recommendations).
 - 📌 Items for information only (accompanied by a link on the Agenda).
- Unless requested by Scrutiny Chairs, the Chief Executive or the Deputy Chief Executive, Council Officers will not present their reports at Committee.
- If Members have questions regarding Officer Reports, they can notify the relevant Officer and Committee Services Officer of these questions in good time prior to the Committee meeting. Members will then have the opportunity to put these questions directly to the Officer at the Committee meeting.

- The Scrutiny Chairs will take a more active role in the Committee Meeting “pre-meet” specifically to decide what should be included within the Agenda and what should be excluded.
- Portfolio Holders’ Reports will be separated out from the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme/Agendas and extra time given prior to the Full Council Meetings for Members to address the Reports and ask questions of the Portfolio Holders. This would seem to present an ideal opportunity as all 6 Portfolio Holders would already be available to attend the Full Council meeting together with all other Members. This would free capacity on the Scrutiny Work Programme and free further time at Scrutiny Committee Meetings for other issues to be debated.

2.5 Further meetings between the Scrutiny Chairs, Deputy Chairs and officers will continue to be held to consider additional ways in which the Scrutiny role in the Council can be developed, which may include additional proposed changes. These will be the subject of further reports to Scrutiny Committees as and when appropriate.

3. THE PROPOSAL

3.1 It is suggested that the proposals detailed above be trialled through the next cycle of Scrutiny meetings (March 2014), whilst the proposal concerning the portfolio holder reports would be trialled at the Council meeting scheduled for 29 July 2014.

4. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee supports the proposed changes.

John Street
CORPORATE MANAGER, DEMOCRATIC & CIVIC SUPPORT