

THE ROLE OF POLICY OVERVIEW AND SELECT COMMITTEES

Committee name	External Services Select Committee
Officer reporting	Nikki O'Halloran, Chief Executive's Office
Papers with report	Appendix A – Review Topic Selection Scorecard
Ward	n/a

HEADLINES

To provide Committee Members with information about:

1. The general purpose and role of the Council's policy overview and scrutiny arrangements;
2. The Committee's updated remit, i.e. Terms of Reference agreed by Council on 10 May 2018;
3. How reviews are undertaken and ways in which Members can add value to their findings; and
4. Consider potential next review topic ideas.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Committee:

- 1. notes the information within the report;**
- 2. considers potential next review topic ideas; and**
- 3. provides any comments or feedback to Democratic Services.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Larger local councils are required to have more than one overview and scrutiny committee as part of their core governance arrangements. The structure is local choice and most unitary councils have a number of such committees usually structured around cross-cutting service areas, engaging Councillors not in the Cabinet in a variety of activity. Their role is similar to that of Select Committees in Parliament, broadly to:

1. assist in the development of Council policy;
2. question and evaluate the actions of the Executive, both before and after decisions are taken; and
3. have the power to make reports and recommendations on such matters.

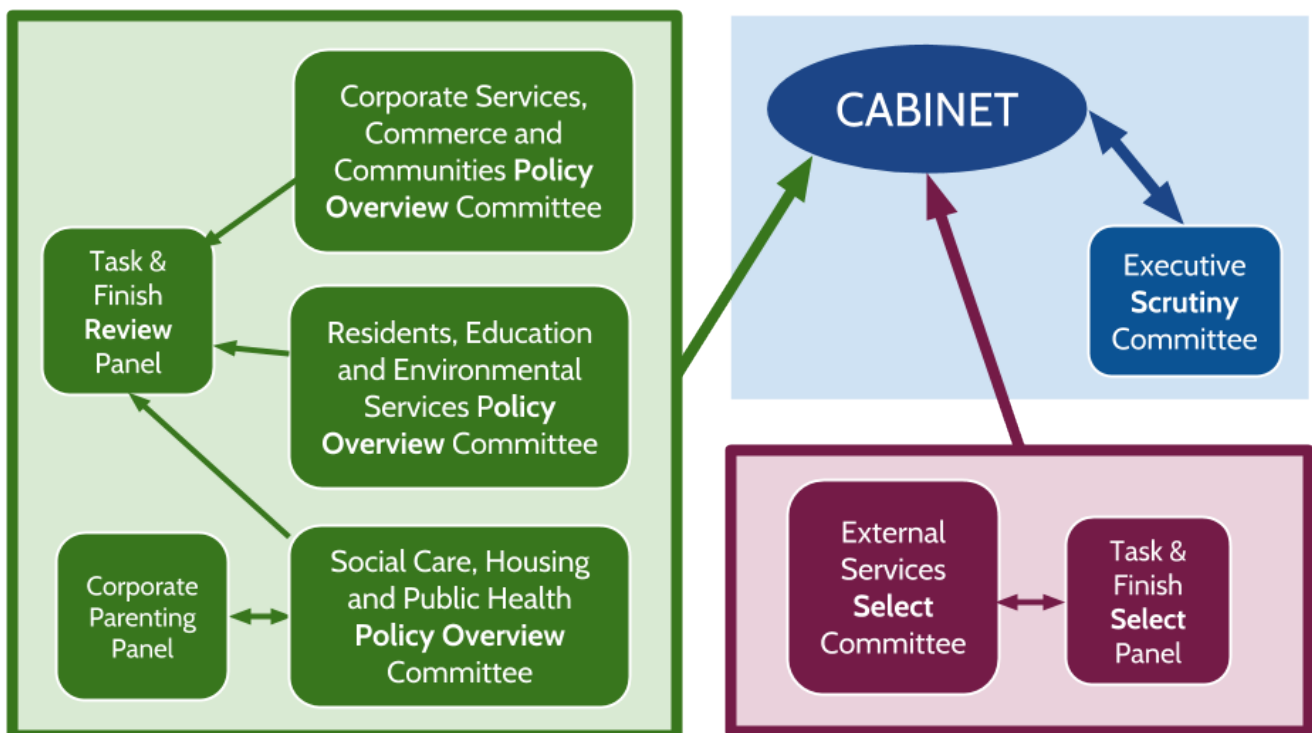
In Hillingdon, our policy overview, scrutiny and select committees undertake a wide range of work in support of the above role, including:

- monitoring the Forward Plan / pre-decision input on the Cabinet's upcoming business (undertaken by the Policy Overview Committees);

- formal post-Cabinet decision scrutiny (call-in option undertaken by the Executive Scrutiny Committee only);
- undertaking statutory Health / Crime and Disorder scrutiny activity (this is undertaken by the External Services Select Committee only);
- reviewing past decisions / Council actions;
- undertaking policy reviews on topics within their remit;
- reviewing implementation of previous reviews;
- commenting on the annual budget before it's approval (undertaken by the Policy Overview Committees);
- providing comments on key policy framework documents before approval, e.g. Local Plan;
- monitoring budget / performance / services / complaints twice a year;
- receiving information reports on areas within their remit; and
- overseeing the statutory "Councillor Call for Action" (mechanism of last resort) which has not yet been used in Hillingdon.

Changes agreed by Council on 10 May 2018

Full Council recently agreed structural changes to the way the Council's overview and scrutiny arrangements operate, streamlining the number of Policy Overview Committees and refreshing and consolidating their terms of reference as shown below:



Multi-year work programmes

Fundamentally, and this will be outlined in a later report on the agenda, Council was agreed that individual Policy Overview and Select Committee work programmes will span across multiple

municipal years to provide more flexibility in undertaking in-depth reviews, timetabling and reporting of findings to Cabinet (or reporting to full Council should the Government introduce anticipated changes in guidance as set out in the Council report). Also, as the conventional 'deadline' of completing reviews within a traditional municipal year will no longer exist, this opens up greater opportunities to engage with witnesses and residents, increasing the value of the Committee's findings. Multi-year work programmes also enable the Committee to better plan ahead for monitoring purposes, e.g. past reviews and update reports on matters.

A report later on this agenda sets out the initial "draft" multi-year work programme that the Committee will update and refine as the months and years progress.

Task and finish review activity

Council also enabled (only should it be decided) that the Chairmen of the three new Policy Overview Committees may jointly agree to establish a single Task and Finish Review Panel at any one time to undertake either a focussed review within a particular committee's remit, or a cross-cutting review that covers the remit of more than one committee.

New Terms of References

All Policy Overview Committees have generic Terms of Reference as set out below:

- To conduct reviews of policy, services or aspects of service which have either been referred by Cabinet, relate to the Cabinet Forward Plan, or have been chosen by the Committee according to the agreed criteria for selecting such reviews;
- To monitor the performance of the Council services within their remit (including the management of finances and risk);
- To comment on the proposed annual service and budget plans for the Council services within their remit before final approval by Cabinet and Council;
- To consider the Forward Plan and comment as appropriate to the decision-maker on Key Decisions which relate to services within their remit (before they are taken by the Cabinet);
- To review or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken by the Cabinet, a Cabinet Member, a Council Committee or an officer;
- To make reports and recommendations to the Council, the Leader, the Cabinet, a Policy Overview Committee or any other Council Committee arising from the exercise of the preceding terms of reference;
- In accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, to consider 'Councillor Calls For Action' (CCfA) submissions.

The Committee's direct remit of activity

This Committee's specific Terms of Reference are set out below. This sets the parameters (or service areas) in which the Committee can undertake reviews, present findings, request reports and provide direct input on matters. It is important and Committee remains wholly within their Terms of Reference and Democratic Services can advise further on this if required at meetings:

The External Services Select Committee may:

1. Undertake the powers of health scrutiny conferred by the Local Authority (Public Health,

Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013.

2. Work closely with the Health & Wellbeing Board & Local Healthwatch in respect of reviewing and scrutinising local health priorities and inequalities.
3. Respond to any relevant NHS consultations.
4. Scrutinise and review the work of local public bodies and utility companies whose actions affect residents of the Borough.
5. Identify areas of concern to the community within their remit and instigate an appropriate review process.
6. Act as a Crime and Disorder Committee as defined in the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 and carry out the biannual scrutiny of decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions.

Undertaking policy reviews

Over the years, Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committees have undertaken successful in-depth reviews of Council services and policies. This has resulted in a number of positive changes locally, with some also affecting policy at a national level. Such committees engage Councillors in a wide range of Council activity and build a greater understanding about service provision to residents.

Review phases

The typical phases of a review are as follows:

1. Selection of topic
2. Scoping the review / setting out objectives
3. Witness and evidence stage (this is the main activity for which the External Services Select Committee may establish a Select Panel to undertake detailed reviews)
4. Draft recommendations / early draft of review report considered
5. Final report approved by Committee
6. Referred to Cabinet for consideration
7. Monitoring the implementation of recommendations once approved / amended by Cabinet at meetings, i.e. in six months

Selecting review topics

It is always best to sound out potential review topics early on. With regard to ideas of areas to review, these can come from a variety of sources, e.g., Committee Members; Council officers; external partners, residents and Cabinet Members. When a Committee considers a potential review topic, we recommend running it past the following criteria as part of our scorecard (see Appendix A); i.e. topics that are:

- Resident-focused
- Under the correct remit of the Committee
- Matters the Council has influence over

- New issues
- Achievable for the Council
- Can gain wider organisational buy-in and support
- Drive improvement / efficiency
- Provide early warning or resilience for national changes
- Investigate the 'big issues' locally or nationally within Hillingdon

Witness and evidence stage

Ultimately, any Policy Overview or Select Committee's efforts are at their best when external witnesses and residents participate, adding value to intelligence gathering and findings. In support of this, Committees have undertaken a variety of both formal and informal activity "in meetings" and "outside meetings". It is important to pull together a broad evidence base for any potential findings later on. Additionally, the ability for Councillors to bring their 'local' insight is highly valuable. Activities the Committee can undertake include:

- Surveys / social media
- Promotion of review to seek views
- Invite the relevant Cabinet Member to attend for their views
- Question key Council officers
- Hold informal workshops
- Networking events, e.g., with partners
- Have closed meetings, i.e., confidential, such as social care clients
- Commission reports from Council officers / externally
- Request data and intelligence on the topic
- Visits to other local authorities
- Undertake site visits within the Borough or Council facilities
- Appoint experts or advisors to join the Committee throughout its review
- Selecting the best range of witnesses to get a real user / resident perspectives
- Invite national experts in their field

Whilst information will be provided to Councillors, it may be helpful when preparing for this stage of a review for Councillors to:

- Prepare their draft questions for each witness in advance;
- Read a witness bio or find out more about their organisation;
- Do their own additional research on the topic - you may find something officers don't!
- Use their network of Councillors in other local authorities to seek views; and
- Tell residents at Surgeries / Ward Walks about your review and get their thoughts.

Drafting recommendations

After hearing from witnesses and receiving evidence, the Committee then will meet to pull together all the information and shape its collective findings. Any final recommendations that come to Cabinet ideally should:

- Meet the initial aims / objectives of the review
- Be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound

- Not be a short-term fix, but have a lasting outcome
- Affordable or can be aligned neatly with the MTFP process
- Based on as a broad an evidence base as possible
- Seek to review or amend existing approved policies (as opposed to new ones)
- If publicity or wider engagement or education is recommended, to target such communications as best as possible
- Consider 'conclusions' as well as specific recommendations

Nearer this time, Democratic Services staff supporting the Committee will advise further on drafting recommendations. Throughout this process, their role is critical to the Committee, to guide Members and secure the information and witness activity that Members wish to undertake. They also draft, alongside the Chairman, the final report for the Committee to consider.

Possible next review topic ideas

Below is a list of recent review topics over the last 4 years (within the Committee's revised remit) to give an example of what has already been done:

- Community Sentencing
- Criminalisation of Looked After Children
- Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation in Hillingdon
- Alcohol Related Admissions Amongst Under 18s
- Review into Family Law Reforms
- Policing and Mental Health Services
- Hillingdon Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy

In discussion with the Chairman, and also suggestions raised through other sources, the following initial topic ideas are presented to the Committee for consideration. Clearly, Committee Members may also have their own ideas to suggest as part of this first stage in the review process and these can be discussed under the Work Programme item later on the agenda.

- Telecommunications - plans in place by BT regarding advancements made in mobile technology
- Mental health discharge
- Post Offices
- Collaborative working between THH and GPs in the community
- Opportunities for local oversight of services provided in Hillingdon that had been commissioned from outside of the Borough

Implications on related Council policies

Policy Overview and Select Committees are at the heart of how the Council shapes policy at Member level.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

Policy Overview and Select Committees directly engage residents in shaping policy and recommendations from the Committees seek to improve the way the Council and its partners provide services to residents.

Financial Implications

None at this stage.

Legal Implications

None at this stage.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Council Constitution

Appendix A - Review topic selection scorecard

<p>Resident-focused - High impact on residents and the community, with public interest and scope for making a positive difference (whether universal or a targeted group or area, e.g., young people or a particular town centre)</p>	
<p>Correct remit - is it covered within the Committee's Terms of Reference (ToR) and does it cut across into the domain of other Committees? If it does, narrow the topic or consider suggesting the Corporate Services POC considers it, or perhaps that a joint Committee Task and Finish Review Panel reviews it if the respective Chairmen and Committees agree.</p>	
<p>Influence - A topic that affects residents, groups, businesses and other key stakeholders in Hillingdon and relates to a service, event or issue for which the Council has control, a significant stake in or has influence over, e.g., with partners.</p>	
<p>New - A new and fresh topic preferably. One which has not previously been reviewed by a Committee in the last 2-3 years, or which is not currently being reviewed by another Committee or internally.</p>	
<p>Achievable - A good level of expertise, best practice and information is available to draw on to complete this review. Committee resources, departmental plans and organisational timings permit a successful review with positive recommendations. Are the review's ToR too wide and do they need to be narrowed to be achievable? Will the Committee's Work Programme accommodate the review?</p>	
<p>Wider organisational support - A topic that is likely to receive organisational buy-in from the Committee and wider Council. Possibly support from partner organisations to add value to existing work.</p>	
<p>Drives improvement - A service or area of partnership that has been identified internally or externally that requires improvement in the medium-long term and would benefit from Members' insight. Performance risks or areas of consistent under-performance.</p>	
<p>Drives transformation and efficiency - In support of the Council's objectives, any areas where service re-modelling is under consideration in the longer-term which, with Members' insight, can help to deliver future savings, efficiencies and VFM.</p>	
<p>National and local - A topic that will assist the Council in the implementation or awareness of external challenges, new legislation, national policy or the changing role of the public sector. A topic relevant to Hillingdon's residents that seeks to lobby change in national legislation, policy or practice.</p>	