

## **SECTION 7**

### **SELECT COMMITTEES**

#### **1. General Role of Select Committees**

- 1.1 Select Committees are appointed as the County Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees under section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 (and retained in the Localism Act 2011) to review, and scrutinise the Council and its partners in delivering the Council's Vision and priorities and to monitor performance against relevant plans and strategies.
- 1.2 To undertake this role each Select Committee will:
- Assist and advise on the development of new policy or reviewing current policy;
  - Review and/or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of the Council's or relevant partners functions;
  - Make reports and/or recommendations to the full Council, the Cabinet and/or relevant partners in connection with the discharge of any functions;
  - Consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants including any matters raised by a Councillor Call for Action;
  - Exercise the right to call-in, for reconsideration, decisions made but not yet implemented by the Cabinet/ Cabinet Member; and
  - Respond to direct requests from Council or the Cabinet when appropriate.
- 1.3 By law, neither a Select Committee nor any Sub-Committee of a Select Committee has any power to take any decisions on behalf of the Council and therefore there are no delegations to them.

#### **2. Specific functions**

- 2.1 A Select Committee may within the scope of its allocated terms of reference:-
- Assist the Council and the Cabinet in the development of its budget and policy framework by in-depth analysis of policy issues;
  - Conduct research, community and other consultation in the analysis of policy issues and possible options;
  - Consider and implement mechanisms to encourage and enhance community participation in the development of policy options;
  - Question members of the Cabinet and/or Committees and Directors about their views on issues and proposals affecting the County Council's area; or about their decisions and performance, whether generally in comparison with service plans and targets over a period of time, or in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects;
  - Liaise with other external organisations operating in the area, whether national, regional or local, to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working;
  - Review and scrutinise the decisions made by, and performance of, the Cabinet and/or Committees and Directors both in relation to individual decisions and over time;
  - Review and scrutinise the decisions made by, and performance of, relevant partner organisations (as defined in legislation) in the area;
  - Review the performance of relevant external organisations which impact on the County Council's functions or services and to submit reports thereon to the

Council subject to such reports being first submitted to the Cabinet and the appropriate Portfolio Holder and the external organisation in question for comment;

- Review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the Select Committee and local people about their activities and performance;
- Question and gather evidence from any person (with their consent);
- Make recommendations to the Cabinet, appropriate Committees, Council or Relevant Partner Organisation as appropriate arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process;
- Scrutinise policies strategies procedures and performance in respect of any function which is the responsibility of the County Council;

### 3. Terms of Reference of Select Committees

3.1 The Council currently has four Select Committees, which have the following terms of reference:-

3.2 The **Corporate Review Committee** is the Council's Principal Scrutiny Committee. It is responsible for leading on the overall management and co-ordination of Select Committee work programmes as well as:

- Holding the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council to account for their leadership and performance.
- Scrutiny of the Council's overall performance and approach to managing performance and Strategic Corporate Planning
- Scrutiny of the Council's ongoing programme of improvement and transformation.
- Scrutiny of the Local Enterprise Partnership
- Dealing with any Executive decisions that have been called in.
- Scrutiny of the Council's support services including Finance, ICT, Human Resources, Organisational Development, Legal and Member Services

3.2.1 Corporate Review will also establish an MTFFS Working Group on an annual basis. The Working Group will be responsible for the scrutiny of the development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, Annual Budget and Council Tax setting process.

3.3 The **Health Staffordshire Select Committee** is responsible for scrutiny of matters relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services in the Authority's area, including public health, in accordance with regulations made under the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and subsequent guidance including the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013. In accordance with these Regulations the County Council has agreed for these regulations to be discharged through the designated Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee has the power to make reports and recommendations to NHS bodies conferred by the Health and Social Care Act 2001.

The Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee may, within the scope of its allocated roles and responsibilities, respond independently to health related consultations from Government and external agencies.

The Committee will take the lead in scrutinising the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board and developing a working relationship to enable this to be undertaken effectively and constructively.

- 3.4 The **Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee** is responsible for scrutiny of achievement against the Council's strategic ambitions for promoting prosperity and economic growth. The committee is also responsible for the scrutiny of highways infrastructure and connectivity.

In addition the committee will be responsible for priorities around education, learning and skills. As such the statutory education co-optees will sit on this committee.

- 3.5 The **Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee** is responsible for scrutiny of safeguarding vulnerable people, community safety and localism. In particular it will include priorities around:

- Safeguarding children
- Safeguarding vulnerable adults
- The Council's responsibilities regarding reducing crime and the fear of crime and wider Community Safety priorities (referring matters as appropriate to the Police and Crime Panel where responsibility sits with the Police and Crime Commissioner).

There will be occasions when the committee will undertake joint working with the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee especially in regard to safeguarding issues and the Corporate Parenting Panel in respect of safeguarding children.

#### **4. Membership of Select Committee**

- 4.1 All Councillors, except members of the Cabinet, may be members of a Select Committee.

- 4.2 The County Council Members of the Select Committees will be appointed, in accordance with the relevant political balance provisions, at the Annual meeting of the County Council as follows:-

- Corporate Review Committee (13 Members)
- Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee (13 Members + 8 District and Borough Members)
- Prosperous, Staffordshire Select Committee (10 Members)
- Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee (10 Members)

#### **5. Co-optees**

- 5.1 The Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee will include in its membership the following co-optees who shall have voting rights when the Committee considers education matters:

- At least one Church of England diocese representative;
- One Roman Catholic diocese representative; and
- Three parent governor representatives.

5.2 If the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee deals with non-education matters, the co-optees shall not vote on those other matters, though they may stay in the meeting and speak.

5.3 The Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee shall have 8 co-opted members (1 per District Council, each having voting powers).

5.4 In its capacity as the Council's designated crime and disorder Committee, the Safe and Strong Staffordshire Select Committee may co-opt additional members who, unless the Committee decides otherwise, shall not be entitled to vote. Such a co-opted member can only be a person who is an employee, officer or non-Executive member of a responsible authority or a co-operating body or a co-operating person.

5.5 The other Select Committees do not have any statutory arrangements for co-optees, but may appoint non-voting co-optees at any time to assist them in the completion of their work programme.

## **6. Meetings of the Select Committees**

6.1 Each Select Committee shall meet at such intervals as the Council may decide and at other times as may be appropriate.

6.2 A special meeting of a Select Committee may also be called by the Chairman of the Committee (See Standing Order 24.2 of Section 12).

6.3 Meetings of the Select Committees shall be conducted in accordance with the Procedural Standing Orders in Section 12, although where appropriate a more informal style may be adopted for a particular meeting, to suit the subject matter of the meeting. In such cases, the Chairman's word shall be final in matters of running the meeting.

6.4 The order of business for meetings of Select Committee will be determined by the Chairman, and will include the following business:-

- Minutes of the last meeting;
- Any declarations of interest by Members (including the declaration of any party whip);
- Community engagement, as appropriate
- The work programme and items for future meetings of the Committee;
- The business otherwise set out on the agenda for the meeting.

6.5 No Member may be involved in scrutinising a decision they were involved in making (i.e. an executive decision taken when they were a Member of the Cabinet or a decision by a non-scrutiny committee they were a Member of). If such a decision is scrutinised by a Select Committee the Member must inform the Chairman of their involvement and withdraw from the room while the item is considered.

## **7. Agenda items**

- 7.1 County Councillors, officers, partners and members of the public shall be entitled to propose issues for Select Committees to consider. In order to put forward an issue for consideration the person or body must submit their request to the Director of Democracy, Law and Transformation in writing or by email using the prescribed form.
- 7.2 If the matter has been proposed by a County Councillor then on receipt of such a request the Director of Democracy, Law and Transformation will ensure that the proposal is included on the next available agenda of the appropriate Committee. A councillor can submit a request to any Select Committee not just those on which he or she sits. Should the matter have been raised by an officer, partner or member of the public then the Committee will consider the issue when prioritising their work programme. The person or body making the request for scrutiny may be invited to attend the Committee meeting to explain the reasons for the request. The Select Committee Chair will decide how much time will be given to the person or body for addressing the Committee.
- 7.3 All proposals for scrutiny will be considered by the appropriate Committee taking into account agreed criteria. Where a Select Committee decides not to undertake a piece of work the reasons for the decision shall be minuted. Where the person or body who made the request is not in attendance at the meeting the Director of Democracy, Law and Transformation will inform them of the Committee's decision.
- 7.4 In addition, all elected Members of the Council have a statutory right to ask for a local government matter affecting their constituents to be considered by overview and scrutiny as a Councillor Call for Action.
- 7.5 The Leader of the largest Minority Group may on up to 2 occasions per year require the Director of Democracy, Law and Transformation to include an item on the agenda of a Select Committee. They will inform the Director of Democracy, Law and Transformation of the request, who will make arrangements for the matter to be included on the agenda at the next available meeting of that Select Committee.
- 7.6 Where a Select Committee is proposing to scrutinise a matter which also falls (whether in whole or in part) within the remit of another Committee, then it shall seek clearance from the Chairman of the Corporate Review Committee to carrying out that work, and will, if requested by the Chairman of the Corporate Review Committee, invite members of the other committee to attend and speak but not vote at meetings when it is undertaking that work.

## **8. Work Programme and Budget**

- 8.1 Each Select Committee will be responsible for preparing its own work programme and in doing so it shall take into account the wishes of the Committee as a whole. These work programmes will then be submitted to the Corporate Review committee for approval to ensure that the overall programme of Scrutiny activity is consistent, coherent and free of duplication and can be properly resourced and supported by the Council.

- 8.2 The Corporate Review Committee may also identify issues which it wishes a Select Committee to review. Select Committees must undertake any work which is identified by Corporate Review and will be expected to amend their work programmes to accommodate such items.
- 8.3 The lead Director and/ or senior officer(s) supporting a relevant Committee will be consulted on a regular basis about the contents and upcoming issues on the work programme. Directors and Wider Leadership Team officers will be notified of forthcoming issues to enable officers' time to prepare reports and presentations on the subject under consideration.
- 8.4 The Council will allocate and make available to each Select Committee a budget for reasonable expenses to be incurred by the Select Committee in the discharge of its work programme. Such budget shall not be exceeded.

## **9. Members or officers giving account**

- 9.1 A Select Committee may scrutinise and review decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any Council functions and will normally do so through the consideration of written reports. In addition the Select Committee may ask for the detail of any Community Impact Assessment, public consultation or financial implications pertaining to the decision or action under scrutiny.
- 9.2 A Select Committee may not scrutinise a decision of a Director acting under delegated powers. The only exception is where the Committee can evidence that the decision has wider implications on County Council policy and service delivery or has a specific impact upon particular communities or relates to a function of the Council and falls outside the day to day administration of the service for which the Director is responsible.
- 9.3 As well as reviewing documentation, Committees may also require the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members, the Chief Executive and/or any senior officer<sup>1</sup> to attend before it to explain in relation to matters within their remit:-
- A particular decision or series of decisions;
  - The extent to which the actions taken implement Council policy; and/or
  - Their performance.
- 9.4 Senior officers will also be required to attend Committee meetings to give account of themselves following the receipt of a petition with the prescribed number of signatures under the Council's petition scheme.
- 9.5 Officers or other invited guests that are asked to give evidence will be given a minimum of 15 working days notice. In practice additional notice will normally be given. Where, in exceptional circumstances, the member or officer is unable to attend on the required date, then the Select Committee shall arrange an alternative date to attend and give evidence. This would normally be the next scheduled meeting of the Committee unless urgency requires a special meeting to be organised.

## **10. Cabinet Member Accountability Sessions**

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1. The term 'senior officer' means any officer who is employed upon the Conditions of Service of the JNC for Chief Officers.

- 10.1 The Leader and each Cabinet Member shall be required to attend, a minimum of twice a year, a meeting of the relevant Select Committee to report on their activities, the performance of services they are responsible for and to answer any questions on their work and responsibilities.
- 10.2 When the Leader or Cabinet Member attends the Select Committee for an accountability session, they shall be given 10 minutes to present the report before answering questions for a period of 1 hour, which may be extended by the Chairman.
- 10.3 Members may, but shall not be required to, submit questions for the Cabinet Member in writing prior to the meeting and the Chairman will deal with any written questions immediately after the Cabinet Member has presented their report.
- 10.4 The Chairman will have absolute discretion to determine the order of questions, any supplementary questions and their ruling on such matters will be final.

## **11. Attendance by others**

- 11.1 A Select Committee may invite people other than those referred to above to address it, discuss issues of local concern and/or answer questions. It may for example wish to hear from residents, stakeholders and members and officers in other parts of the public sector and other agencies and bodies and shall invite such people to attend.
- 11.2 Attendance by such invitees will normally be obtained by mutual agreement. Overview and Scrutiny does however have the right to require information from partner organisations in respect of delivery against local improvement targets. The organisations listed in legislation include:-
- Any district council which is not a responsible local authority;
  - The fire and rescue authority;
  - The National Park authority;
  - The Broads Authority;
  - A joint waste authority established under section 207(1);
  - The waste disposal authority established under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1985 (c. 51);
  - The metropolitan county passenger transport authority established by section 28 of the Local Government Act 1985 (joint arrangements);
  - Transport for London;
  - Primary Care Trusts;
  - Development agency established by section 1 of the Regional Development Agencies Act [1998 \(c. 45\)](#);
  - The local probation board established by section 4 of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act [2000 \(c. 43\)](#);
  - The youth offending team established under section 39 of the Crime and Disorder Act [1998 \(c. 37\)](#);
  - The National Health Service trust;
  - An NHS foundation trust;
  - The Arts Council of England;
  - The English Sports Council;
  - The Environment Agency;

- The Health and Safety Executive;
- The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission;
- The Learning and Skills Council for England;
- The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and Natural England.

In addition to their requirement to provide evidence for the purposes of an Overview and Scrutiny investigations, the above named bodies are also required to give consideration to any recommendations arising from such investigation.

- 11.3 When a witness attends a meeting regard will be had to the following principles:-
- 11.3.1 That the investigation be conducted fairly and all members of the Committee be given the opportunity to ask questions of attendees, and to contribute and speak.
- 11.3.2 That those assisting the Committee by giving evidence be treated with respect and courtesy; and
- 11.3.3 That the investigation be conducted so as to maximise the efficiency of the investigation or analysis.

## **12. Select Committee Working Groups**

- 12.1 The Corporate Review Committee may establish Select Committee Working Groups as and when required to advise the Cabinet on the development of Policy for the Council.
- 12.2 The membership of these groups will not be fixed and will be determined by the relevant Committee from the non-Executive Members of the Council, depending on the skills and experience required for the particular policy work in question.
- 12.3 Each Working Group will have clearly defined aims and terms of reference and agreed start and end dates. Working Groups will report their findings and recommendations to the Cabinet, Cabinet Member(s) or relevant partners. The person or body to whom the report is submitted shall consider it within two months. The work of the Working Groups will be monitored by Corporate Review and the implementation of recommendations will be monitored by the relevant Select Committees.

## **13. Policy review, development and investigations**

- 13.1 The role of the Select Committees in relation to the development of the Council's budget and policy framework is set out in detail in the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules.
- 13.2 In relation to the development of the Council's approach to other matters of policy not forming part of its budget and policy framework a Select Committee may make proposals to the Cabinet for the development of policy so far as they relate to matters within its scope.
- 13.3 A Select Committee may hold enquiries and investigate the available options for future direction in policy development and may invite advisers and assessors to assist it in this process. The Committee may undertake site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission research and do all other things that

it reasonably considers necessary to inform its deliberations. It may ask witnesses to attend to address it on any matter under consideration and may, subject to paragraph 8.4 above, pay advisers, assessors and witnesses a reasonable fee and expenses for doing so.

#### **14. Reports from Select Committees**

- 14.1 Once it has formed recommendations on proposals for policy development above, the Select Committee will prepare a formal report and submit it to the Director of Democracy, Law and Transformation for consideration by the Cabinet or the Council as appropriate.
- 14.2 If a Select Committee cannot agree on one single final report to the Council or the Cabinet as appropriate, then up to one minority report may be prepared and submitted for consideration.
- 14.3 The Council or Cabinet shall consider the report of the Select Committee within two months of it being submitted to the Director of Democracy, Law and Transformation .

## **15. Making sure that Scrutiny reports are considered by the Cabinet**

- 15.1 Once a Select Committee or Working Group reports on any County Council matter it will forward a copy of its report to the Proper Officer (Director of Democracy, Law and Transformation ) who will allocate it to the Council, Cabinet or Cabinet Member as appropriate for consideration.
- 15.2 The process for the involvement of the Select Committees in the development of the Council's budget and policy framework is set out in detail in the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in Section 5 of the Constitution. Where the Council considers a scrutiny report, it shall have regard to the response of the Executive to the recommendations.
- 15.3 For reports allocated to the Cabinet as a whole, the report shall be included on a Cabinet meeting agenda to enable a response to be produced within two months. The Cabinet will respond in writing to the appropriate Committee. The response will be reported to the next meeting of the Committee.
- 15.4 For reports allocated to a portfolio holder, the portfolio holder will consider the report and respond in writing to the Committee within two months of receiving the report. The response will be reported to the next meeting of the Committee.
- 15.5 If for any reason the Cabinet or portfolio holder does not respond to the Scrutiny Committee report within two months, then the matter will be referred to the Council for review.
- 15.6 Select Committees will have access to the Cabinet's Forward Plan of Key Decisions and timetable for decisions and intentions for consultation. They will use the Forward Plan of Key Decisions to identify potential items for scrutiny when work programme planning. However, even where an item is not the subject of detailed scrutiny/proposals from a Select Committee the Committee will nonetheless be able to respond in the course of the Cabinet's consultation process in relation to any key decision.
- 15.7 Where scrutiny recommendations are agreed by the Cabinet or Cabinet Member then an action plan for their implementation will be included with the response. The appropriate Select Committee shall monitor their implementation accordingly. Any issues with the implementation of scrutiny recommendations shall be brought to the attention of Cabinet for resolution.
- 15.8 Once a Select Committee report on any matter relating to the functions of another body, it will forward a copy of the report to that body requesting a response. Where appropriate, notice will be given of any applicable requirement for the body to respond and/or have regard to the report
- 15.9 The Council shall publish scrutiny reports and responses in accordance with the Access to Information Rules.

## **16. Rights of Select Committee members to documents**

- 16.1 In addition to their rights as councillors, members of Scrutiny have the additional right to documents, and to notice of meetings as set out in the Access to Information Rules in Section 14 of this Constitution.

16.2 Nothing in this paragraph prevents more detailed liaison between the Cabinet and a Select Committee as appropriate depending on the particular matter under consideration.

## **17. Call-in of Executive Decisions**

17.1 Executive decisions made by the Cabinet, by Cabinet Members under delegated powers or by other bodies with executive powers may be 'called in' for reconsideration by the Corporate Review Committee. If they deem it appropriate, the Chairman of Corporate Review may delegate consideration of a Call In to the relevant select committee. Should the matter be delegated to a different committee then only the County Councillors on that Committee would be able to vote on the matter. The Committee can either agree that the decision be implemented or refer the decision back, with recommendations, to Cabinet or the relevant decision maker.

17.2 Executive decisions will be published electronically by the Director of Democracy, Law and Transformation and shall be available for inspection at the County Buildings, Stafford as soon as practicable, normally within three working days of being made. The published record of the decision will state the date of publication and whether the decision is urgent and cannot be called in. If the decision is not urgent, it will be implemented on the fourth working day after the publication of the decision, unless it is called in.

17.4 During the period between the publication and implementation of a decision not less than four voting members of the relevant Scrutiny Committee, eight members of the Council who are not members of the Cabinet or a Group Leader with a group of eight or more members (excluding members of the Cabinet) and who is not a Cabinet Member may call the decision in either in writing or by e-mail. The call in will then be considered at the next meeting of the Corporate Review Committee (or the relevant Committee if delegated) and the decision shall not be implemented until the relevant Committee have dealt with it.

17.5 The call-in notice shall specify a 'Lead Member' who will speak at the Committee meeting to explain the reasons for calling the decision in and answer any questions from Committee Members. The Cabinet Member responsible for the decision will also be invited to explain the reasons behind the decision and answer questions. The remaining members who have called the decision in who are neither members of the Corporate Review Committee nor "local members" shall be entitled to attend and may answer questions from Committee Members.

17.6 If the Committee decides to refer the decision back for reconsideration then the decision shall not be implemented until the Cabinet have reconsidered the matter, having regard to the Committee's views. The Committee may nominate up to two representatives, who may be from the relevant Select Committee, for the purpose of attending and speaking (but not voting) on the matter at the Cabinet meeting. The decision of the Cabinet on such reconsideration shall be final.

17.7 If the Committee decides that a proposed decision relates to a matter which by law cannot be determined by the Council's Cabinet or must be determined by the full Council (and the Monitoring Officer confirms this) then unless the proposal is withdrawn the Committee shall refer the matter to the full Council for a decision.

- 17.8 If the Committee consider that the decision is one which raises issues of such exceptional significance and public interest as to justify consideration by the full Council before the decision is implemented the Committee may refer the decision to the full Council for consideration and the decision shall not be implemented until after the meeting of the Council to which it has been referred and the Cabinet have reconsidered the matter having regard to the Council's views on the decision.
- 17.9 If the Committee (or the Council) decides not to refer the decision back then it may be implemented on or after the first working day following the meeting of the Committee or Council.
- 17.10 Whichever course of action the Committee decides to take the reasons for taking that action and the concerns of the Committee about the decision shall be recorded in the minutes and reported to Cabinet.
- 17.11 If the Committee do not consider the call-in at their next meeting after expiry of the appropriate period the decision may be taken or implemented on or after the first working day after the meeting of the Committee at which the matter should have been considered.

## **18. Call-in and urgency**

- 18.1 The call-in procedure set out above shall not apply where the decision being taken by or on behalf of the Cabinet is urgent and any delay likely to be caused by the call-in process would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interests or the interests of any person(s) to whom the decision relates.
- 18.2 The record of the decision, and notice by which it is made public shall state, with reasons, whether in the opinion of the Cabinet the decision is an urgent one and therefore should not be subject to call-in.
- 18.3 The Chairman of the Corporate Review Committee must agree that the decision is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred. If they are unwilling or unable to act, the Chairman of the County Council or in their absence the Vice-Chairman of the County Council may agree that the decision is urgent but the reasons for the Chairman of Corporate Review failing to agree must be recorded.
- 18.4 The operation of the provisions relating to call-in and urgency shall be monitored, and a report submitted to Council on the use of the procedure on a quarterly basis.