

Open Report on behalf of Tony McArdle, Chief Executive

Report to:	County Council
Date:	18 December 2015
Subject:	Review of Scrutiny

Summary:

This report gives councillors an opportunity to consider the recommendations contained in an independent report following a review of the County Council's scrutiny arrangements.

Recommendation(s):

- 1) That the Council welcomes the independent report following a review of scrutiny arrangements at Lincolnshire County Council (attached as Appendix A).
- 2) That the Council endorses the recommendations contained within the report and invites the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to oversee the implementation of Recommendations 1-15 with immediate effect.
- 3) In relation to Recommendation 15 in the independent report, the Council transfers responsibility for the scrutiny of the Council's budget and performance from the Value for Money Scrutiny Committee to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and amends the Council's Constitution accordingly.
- 4) That the Council supports a revision of the governance structure for scrutiny, and invites the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to review structural options, including those put forward by Dr Young, and to make a recommendation to this Council.

1. Background

1.1 At its meeting on 20 February 2015 the County Council resolved to ask the Chief Executive to secure external advice and support in conducting a review of the Council's scrutiny arrangements and to present recommendations for making those arrangements more effective.

1.2 Subsequently, the Chief Executive invited East Midlands Councils to undertake a review into the County Council's approach to overview and scrutiny. To assist the review a cross-party group of councillors was established to act as a sounding board during the work.

1.3 The review carried out by Dr Stuart Young, Executive Director of East Midlands Councils, included informal discussions with councillors and officers, first hand observations at scrutiny meetings and research into good practice elsewhere.

1.4 The product of the review was a 44-page document with 17 recommendations; suggesting ways to improve scrutiny at the County Council (see Appendix A).

1.5 Fifteen of the recommendations relate to 'cultural' issues, including:

- Improving communication and engagement between the Executive and scrutiny committees
- Developing and supporting scrutineers
- Firm leadership of scrutiny and agenda management

1.6 Key to the success of any cultural change is the role and standing of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. This is recognised by Dr Young in paragraph 15.15 of his report. While it is accepted that changes to the governance structure could quite reasonably be delayed until the start of the new Council term in 2017, including the disestablishment of the Value for Money Scrutiny Committee, it is recommended that the Overview and scrutiny Management Committee should take a lead on scrutinising the Council's budget and performance with immediate effect.

2. Conclusion

2.1 Having commissioned an external and independent review of its scrutiny arrangements, the Council has before it a number of recommendations that seek to make those arrangements more effective.

3. Legal Comments:

The Council is required by section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 to appoint one or more committees to undertake overview and scrutiny of the executive. The Report makes recommendations as to the way in which the Council should go about fulfilling its overview and scrutiny function.

The recommendations are within the remit of the Council.

4. Resources Comments:

There are no material financial implications arising from acceptance of the recommendations in this report. Some modest savings in members' allowances may arise as a consequence of the proposed net reduction in the number of scrutiny bodies.

5. Consultation

a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?

n/a

b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?

n/a

c) Scrutiny Comments

The Review of Scrutiny at Lincolnshire County Council Final Report was considered by the Review of Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on 17 November 2015 and the Group supported the recommendations contained therein.

Group Leaders considered the Final Report on 1 December 2015. They supported the implementation of the suggested structural changes in 2017, while advocating earlier introduction of the recommended cultural changes.

d) Policy Proofing Actions Required

n/a

6. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report

Appendix A	A Review of Scrutiny at Lincolnshire County Council - Final Report, 26 November 2015
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7. Background Papers

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Council Meeting Minutes - 20 February 2015	Democratic Services

This report was written by Nigel West, Head of Democratic Services and Statutory Scrutiny Officer who can be contacted on 01522 552840 or nigel.west@lincolnshire.gov.uk.