

## Regulatory and Other Committee

### Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills, Executive Director responsible for Democratic Services

Report to:	<b>Audit Committee</b>
Date:	<b>26 January 2015</b>
Subject:	<b>Future working between Overview and Scrutiny and Audit</b>

#### Summary:

This report provides the Committee with the opportunity to consider the role of Overview and Scrutiny at Lincolnshire County Council and how the Audit Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny function might work together in the future.

#### Recommendation(s):

1. To consider the role of Overview and Scrutiny at Lincolnshire County Council.
2. To consider how the Audit Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny function might co-operate in the future.

#### Background

Overview and scrutiny committees were established in English and Welsh local authorities by the Local Government Act 2000. The Act required local authorities to adopt a political management system with a separate executive and at least one overview and scrutiny committee to scrutinise the work of the executive. The Localism Act 2011 retained the Executive / Scrutiny model but also introduced an option for all English councils to adopt a system that was previously only available to district councils in England and Wales i.e. a 'fourth option' of a streamlined committee system. This option still requires councils who adopt this approach to retain at least one overview and scrutiny committee to scrutinise decision-making.

#### Overview and Scrutiny at Lincolnshire County Council

Lincolnshire County Council currently has ten scrutiny committees that are mostly aligned to the key service areas for which the Council is responsible. Appendix A contains an organisational chart which explains this structure in more detail. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee co-ordinates the activity of the service area committees and also the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire

and the Flood and Drainage Management Scrutiny Committee which works on a partnership footing to address flooding issues in the County.

All scrutiny committees have a Work Programme containing anticipated items of business for future meetings. These Work Programmes are managed at the committee meetings and also at agenda setting meetings for each committee which take place in the weeks leading up to each meeting. These agenda setting meetings are attended by the chairman and vice-chairman of the committee along with relevant lead officers and officers from Democratic Services

Scrutiny committees are focussed on the successful planning and delivery of services to the people of Lincolnshire. At the core of this work is the quarterly monitoring of the Council's performance against key targets, major programmes and project and customer satisfaction.

Another key activity for scrutiny committees is performing the role of pre-decision scrutiny i.e. to review a proposal to be put before the Council's Executive or Executive Councillor immediately prior to decision and to determine if the Committee supports the proposal and if it has any additional comments to make to assist with the decision-makers deliberations.

Scrutiny committees regularly receive reports on services that fall within their remit. Scrutiny committees also have the opportunity to establish working groups to investigate a matter in more detail outside of normal committee meetings and this work will usually be done in conjunction with senior service-area officers. Scrutiny committees may also propose topics for Task and Finish Group review and these proposals are then considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. These reviews can take up to six months and culminate in a final report and recommendations that are submitted to the Council's Executive for consideration and response.

### **Overview and Scrutiny and Audit at Lincolnshire County Council**

In performing their respective roles it is likely that the work of Overview and Scrutiny and Audit may at times complement each other and at other times overlap. In previous years the Value for Money Scrutiny Committee has had the opportunity to comment on the Corporate Risk Register and the former Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee attended a workshop with colleagues from Audit to help develop the current approach to the Risk Register. Combined Assurance Reports have been mentioned from time to time as having a relevance to the work of scrutiny as well as Audit and it may be that it could be beneficial for scrutiny committees to have formal sight of these reports in the future.

Closer co-operation and increased communication may strengthen the roles of both Audit and Overview and Scrutiny and raise the overall level of assurance regarding the Council's governance and performance. There are a number of ways in which closer co-operation and communication could be achieved. These may include;

- Exchange of Work Programmes for Audit and Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
- Regular liaison meetings between lead officers and / or chairmen / vice-chairmen for Audit and Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
- A periodic item at both Audit and Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee updating each other on current and planned activity.
- Ad hoc reports as required when a specific issue arises.

Members of the Audit Committee may wish to consider these options and any other methods for closer working. Should any ways forward be recommended then these could initially be relayed to the next scheduled meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 29 January with the potential for a further item to formally agree an approach if this is required.

### **Conclusion**

The Audit Committee is invited to consider the role of Overview and Scrutiny at Lincolnshire County Council, to reflect on the merits of closer working between Audit and Overview and Scrutiny in the future and, if deemed desirable, ways for this closer working to be achieved

### **Consultation**

#### **a) Policy Proofing Actions Required**

n/a

### **Appendices**

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Overview and Scrutiny Structure Chart

### **Background Papers**

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by David Hair, who can be contacted on 01522 552080 or davidr.hair@lincolnshire.gov.uk

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