

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

Meeting: 26 April 2021

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Lisa Smart (Chair) in the chair; Councillors Keith Holloway, Steve Gribbon, Wendy Meikle and Mark Roberts.

1. MINUTES

The Minutes (copies of which had been circulated) of the meeting held on 8 February 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors and officers were invited to declare any interest which they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

The following interest was declared:-

Personal Interest

Councillor	Interest
Lisa Smart	Agenda item 4 – ‘Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, Scrutiny Review Panel – Governance of Outside Bodies’ as an Associate for the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny that was mentioned in the report.

3. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

4. SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE, SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL - GOVERNANCE OF OUTSIDE BODIES

The Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer (Legal and Democratic Governance) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) outlining the previous decision of the Scrutiny Committee that it would undertake a Scrutiny Review entitled “The Scrutiny of Outside Bodies” which would include within its remit the governance of those bodies established by the Council to manage or exercise certain functions with regard Totally Local Company, Stockport Homes Limited and Life Leisure; specifically the Contributors Committee, the Member Committee and the Funding Committee.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- The progress made by the Scrutiny Committee in undertaking this review was behind where it had hoped to be and it was acknowledged that the review could not be completed within the remainder of the current Municipal Year.
- The report provided a useful baseline in understanding where and how the Council developed the structures that it currently had in place.
- There was a general consensus amongst members of the Scrutiny Committee that the current structure by which these functions were exercised was non-optimal.
- There were a range of examples of how these governance-related functions were discharged elsewhere in the country by councils with similar arms-length arrangements for its housing, direct operations and leisure services from which Stockport could learn.
- It would be useful to have an understanding of the benefits and disadvantages of the current arrangements in Stockport.
- It was important that an appropriate distinction was drawn between the role of members as decision-makers and scrutineers when exercising the functions of these committees.
- A discussion took place in relation to the Stockport Mayoral Development Corporation and how this had been established.
- Clarity was requested with regard to the date on which leisure functions were transferred to Stockport Sports Trust.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Cabinet be recommended to investigate the current arrangements for the discharge of the governance-related functions relating to the Council's partner organisations currently exercised by the Contributors, Funding and Member Committees and to determine whether these remained the most appropriate structures for this purpose in the light of the experience and examples of good practice from elsewhere in the country.

5. REVIEW OF BUSINESS PROGRAMME - REDUCTION IN NUMBER OF CYCLES

The Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer (Legal and Democratic Governance) submitted a report (copies of which had been circulated) providing a review of the impact of the reduction in the business programme during 2020/21 from nine cycles to six cycles of committees per municipal year as agreed by the Council Meeting on 16 January 2020.

Councillor John McGahan had also been invited to attend the meeting to contribute to the discussion on this item.

The following comments were made/ issues raised:-

- There had been fewer meetings, however, there had been a consequent increase in the length of individual meetings.
- A number of extraordinary meetings had been held during the course of the year to deal with Greater Manchester related business that could not be accommodated within the existing business programme.
- It was noted that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee had previously requested that items of businesses should not routinely be submitted to more than one scrutiny committee.

- The reduction in the number of cycles of committee within the business programme for 2020/21 had been achieved by 'lifting' cycles out of the already approved nine-cycle business programme which had resulted in an uneven distribution of meetings throughout the year.
- It was commented that the revised distribution of meetings had worked well during 2020/21.
- The use of remote meeting technology had facilitated participation by external partners that might otherwise have been difficult or not happened.
- Consideration should be given to the use of hybrid meeting technology and the physical infrastructure and staffing resource needed to support this.
- A judgement was awaited on a recent case taken before the High Court to seek a declaration that remote meetings were not prohibited by the Local Government Act 1972.
- Remote meetings had been very successful in achieving the continued transaction of business by the Council and had been beneficial for officers and members with caring responsibilities.
- There was a case for continuing to use remote meeting solutions for certain categories of meetings.
- Although the number of cycles of committees had been reduced, Scrutiny Chairs had used their powers to call for additional extraordinary meetings to consider specific issues.
- It was noted that the position of the Conservative Group was that they would wish to revert to nine cycles of committees.

RESOLVED – (1) That the proposed arrangements for the scheduling of the Business Programme for 2021/22 on the basis of six cycles of meetings per year be endorsed.

(2) That the Statutory Scrutiny Officer and the Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer (Legal and Democratic Governance) be requested to ensure that items of business where only scheduled for a single scrutiny committee except in those very limited and exceptional circumstances where an item needed to be considered by more than one committee.

(3) That it be recommended that the continued use of remote meeting technology for certain categories of meetings, where permissible under the law, should be permitted by the Council and be at the discretion of the committee concerned.

(4) That the Statutory Scrutiny Officer and the Strategic Head of Service & Monitoring Officer (Legal and Democratic Governance) be recommended to advise the Greater Manchester Combined Authority of this Council's approved business programme and that such items of business that required this Authority's approval should be submitted in alignment with that rather than necessitating additional extraordinary meetings.

6. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED - That approval be given to the change of the date for the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee such that the meeting be held on Thursday, 27 May 2021 at 6.00 pm.

The meeting closed at 6.39 pm