

Report To:	SCRUTINY PANEL A	Date:	7 NOVEMBER 2017
Heading:	SCRUTINY REVIEW OF OUTSIDE BODIES - UPDATE		
Portfolio Holder:	NONE		
Ward/s:	ALL		
Key Decision:	NO		
Subject to Call-In:	NO		

Purpose Of Report

Members of Scrutiny Panel A were introduced to a new review to consider Outside Bodies at the last meeting of the Panel, held on the 12 September. Members agreed to consider the following;

- Number of outside bodies
- Strategic and community benefit of outside bodies
- Criteria for appointment
- Reporting mechanisms

This report provides an update on the research work that has been undertaken so far and work still to be completed.

Recommendation(s)

- Note the information contained in this report;
- Identify any further information required to carry out the review.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

Membership of Outside Bodies was identified and approved as a topic in 2017 following consultation on the Scrutiny Workplan.

Alternative Options Considered (With Reasons Why Not Adopted)

None at this stage. Consideration of this topic is aimed at understanding and discussing current appointments to outside bodies.

Detailed Information

Members are currently appointed to Outside Bodies for varying terms of office (ranging from 1 to 4 years) at the Annual Meeting of the Council in May of each year. Outside Bodies are then provided with contact details for the appointed Council representative(s) and asked to make contact with the Member(s) to attend meetings, seminars, workshops etc. as appropriate.

As part of the initial discussions Members agreed that feedback from those currently appointed to outside bodies was required to ascertain;

- Understanding of the role on any particular outside body;
- Potential benefits to Ashfield District Council;
- Officer support;
- Feedback mechanisms.

A telephone survey was conducted with Members on Outside Bodies in October 2017. Of the 13 Members who responded the following feedback was received;

Question	Responses
Has the Outside Body advised you what its role is?	10 = Yes 3 = No
What do you consider the benefits to ADC are in providing a Member to this outside body?	A range of comments were received relating to the perceived benefits from Membership of an outside body. These included; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insight into what is happening in the community; • Provides ADC with a voice; • Ensuring fair distribution of Grant Aid; • Influencing and contributing to important local and national decisions; • More effective partnership working; • Providing crucial support to groups;
Is any officer support provided?	Yes = 3 No = 10
Do you feed back to anywhere on your activities as a Member of an outside body?	Yes = 5 No = 8 * feedback was mainly reported back verbally to Group meetings or relevant Ward Member.

In addition to ascertaining Members views, the Panel also requested that an additional data capture exercise, to elicit the views of Outside Bodies regarding Ashfield Council Member attendance at meetings and their contribution/interest into the work of the particular organisation be undertaken. Work on this exercise is still ongoing and will be presented to Members at the Panel meeting in November.

Regarding feeding information back following the attendance at a meeting of an outside body, the initial findings suggest that, if done, this is mainly done verbally at a group meeting. At the initial meeting of the Scrutiny Panel, Members expressed a concern that if information updates are not supplied, important information both locally and nationally could be missed.

Whilst the Council do not currently have a formal reporting framework for members appointed to outside organisations, Members of the Panel felt that the idea of a short Member report could be provided when the individual Member felt that there was something significant to report back on. Initial discussions suggested that this could either be through a quarterly update to all Members or through a more formal meeting such as Group Leaders or Council.

This could help share information about each organisation's work between Members, and also provide the opportunity for all members to ask questions and seek clarification where necessary. Some Councils have introduced such reporting frameworks which require appointed members to complete a quarterly or annual report on the work of the organisation they have been appointed to, outlining the benefits to the Council and the community of the work of the organisation, information on activities and achievements, the number of meetings attended and whether member support should continue to be provided.

Once completed these would then be filed and held for members of the Council to view. This approach ensures members have the opportunity to express their views as to the value of Membership on a particular outside organisation. It also enables members to confirm on an annual basis if they have the time to continue to devote to the role or even whether member support should continue to be provided.

Current Approach and Best Practice

Outside Bodies approach the Council for the nomination of a Member in accordance with their Constitution. The Council has, in the past, responded positively to such requests and has not formally scrutinised them to establish the benefits which may accrue through Member representation.

Research is currently ongoing to gain an understanding of the approaches adopted by other Councils to seek best practice, an update will provided at the Panel meeting in November.

Strategic Representation

At the last meeting of the Panel Members agreed that, at present it was unclear, without a formal appraisal system, as to what potential benefit appointing a representative to each of the 40 outside bodies has.

There are no formal exercises currently undertaken to enable ADC to clearly define at a strategic level, where there is a clear benefit to the Council and its support to the delivery of the Corporate Plan.

Members will need to consider whether a broad classification of Outside Bodies should be adopted To define the relationship between the Outside Body and the Council as this will help with determining which Outside Bodies appointments should be made in future. There are three broad categories of involvement:

- Strategic;
- Statutory;
- Community/Citizenship.

It is recognised that the Council has supported some of these bodies for many years and Members in some cases have developed strong relationships with these Outside Bodies particularly if it serves their Ward or if it is an area where they can bring specific expertise.

Next Steps

The Scrutiny Manager will present the findings of the Outside Bodies survey and best practice information at the next meeting of the Panel. Members will need to consider a range of information to move this review forward. This includes;

- Agreeing an appropriate feedback mechanism;
- Discussing definitions and strategic links for each Outside Body;
- Understanding the time commitment required for each outside body;
- Reviewing overall costs of appointing to Outside Bodies;
- Reviewing the current list of outside bodies.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

It is essential that the Council has an understanding of the value of appointing to outside bodies to better understand engagement, partnership working and Councillor Development.

Legal:

None arising directly from this report.

Finance:

As part of the ongoing research an understanding of the current costs associated from appointing to an outside body is currently being undertaken. This includes annual Membership Fees, travel and accommodation and event hosting. Advice from Finance will be undertaken to gain an overall understanding of costs.

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	N/A
General Fund – Capital Programme	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	N/A
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	N/A

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
None arising at this stage of the review.	Any risks identified will be reviewed to explore appropriate solutions.

Human Resources:

None arising directly from this report.

Equalities

None arising directly from this report.

Other Implications:

None arising directly from this report.

Report Author and Contact Officer

Mike Joy, Scrutiny Manager

M.joy@ashfield.gov.uk

Tel: 01623 457232

Ruth Dennis

Director of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer)