

Report To:	SCRUTINY PANEL A	Date:	23 JANUARY 2018
Heading:	SCRUTINY REVIEW OF OUTSIDE BODIES		
Portfolio Holder:	NONE		
Ward/s:	ALL		
Key Decision:	NO		
Subject to Call-In:	NO		

Purpose of Report

This report provides Members with an update on its review of Outside Bodies. The Panel were first introduced to the topic in September 2017, with the objective to complete its considerations in early 2018. The Panel have held 2 meetings on the topic so far.

In addition to the information in this report, invitations have also been circulated to a selection of Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies, as requested by the Panel. Feedback from the Outside Bodies will also be presented to Members at the meeting.

Recommendation(s)

- Note the information contained in this report;
- Identify any further information required to carry out the review;
- Discuss any potential recommendations for consideration by Cabinet.

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

In September 2017 Members identified that a review of Outside Bodies should be undertaken as part of its work programme for 2017/18. The aim of the review was to investigate the appropriateness and effectiveness of Member representation in promoting community leadership and working successfully with strategic bodies and community groups.

The terms of reference for the review were agreed as the following:

- to identify the criteria to be applied in determining whether or not the Council will appoint representative to serve on an outside body;
- to identify appropriate arrangements to ensure that information is passed between the Council and the outside body through the Council's representative; and
- to ensure that a proper records management system is in place for appointments to outside bodies.

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.

Feedback on Outside Body Activity

There are currently no prescribed arrangements for providing feedback to the Council about Outside Bodies. Therefore, this is done on an inconsistent basis through anecdotal updates at group meetings / cross party meetings.

This was highlighted by the Member survey discussed at the last meeting of the Panel, whereby 8 representatives did not feedback on activity on outside bodies and those that did, where either to the Political Group or the relevant Ward Member.

At the last meeting of the Panel, Members expressed the desirability for formalising feedback on Outside Body activity. Whilst some have expressed that this could be an additional burden upon already busy Members, others would welcome such an initiative and believe that there is a responsibility for Member representatives to provide periodic reports either through group leaders meetings, Members Digest, Cabinet or Council.

Without some form of reporting mechanism, it is difficult for any objective appraisal to be conducted of the basis for continuing involvement with an Outside Body and therefore, the Panel has suggested that all Member representatives on Outside Bodies should be invited to report back on at the least an annual basis.

Relationships between Members' and officers regarding Outside Bodies are generally informal with officer support provided on a number of statutory appointments and on others if requested by the Member.

The Panel considered the possibility of clearer arrangements whereby a designated officer is named as a contact for each representative, this did not mean that the officer would need to attend each meeting, however they would be there if needed for advice or assistance. This could help to improve internal communications should matters arise at meetings of an Outside Body which require further consideration.

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 discussed 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.

The Panel recognised that going forward representation on the Outside Bodies deemed Statutory Bodies would need to continue so for the purposes of this review the Panel would only need to consider representation on those Bodies identified within the Strategic/Regional and Community/Citizenship categories.

Roles of Representatives

The Members' Survey has shown that whilst most stated that they were aware of their role on their appointed outside body, some Members were unsure of their exact role and whether it linked in to any priorities identified by the Council.

Organisational contact with Outside Bodies in a formal capacity appeared to be inconsistent with little monitoring of attendance or outcomes. Therefore, the Panel discussed whether protocols in regard to Members' roles on Outside Bodies are in need of development. The Council has in the past produced some guidance and this may need updating and reissuing to the Council's representatives.

The Panel also discussed the Outside Bodies responsibility in providing basic information in the form of a Constitution, priorities, objectives and outcomes etc to enable them to have a positive input into the work of the organisation.

Current Approach and Best Practice

Outside Bodies currently 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 has been undertaken into the approaches adopted by other Councils to seek best practice.

A number of neighbouring authorities have been contacted to ascertain how they decide on which Outside Bodies to appoint to but none of these Councils have reviewed their representation on Outside Bodies in recent years and appointments are still mostly made because of historical Connections rather than because of strategic or financial considerations. Neither does there appear to be any formal guidance issued to Members on their roles and responsibilities.

Outside Bodies Feedback

A short questionnaire has been sent to all Outside Bodies. Further efforts are currently being made to chase up any outstanding responses. Feedback on this will be provided at the meeting.

Next Steps

The Scrutiny Manager will present any feedback provided by Outside Bodies on their views on the value of Member / Council representation. Further examples will also be provided to Members on options for feedback mechanisms and Outside Bodies requirements for representation at the meeting.

Members will need to consider all of the information provided to discuss potential recommendations for Cabinet consideration. 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 presented in due course.

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
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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.

Reason(s) for Urgency

N/A

Reason(s) for Exemption

N/A

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