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## Performance and Finance Select Committee: Annual Scrutiny Performance 2018/19

### Background

- 1 Each year an assessment is carried out on the performance of the four West Sussex County Council select committees. This takes the form of a questionnaire which is sent to all members of the select committees. The findings are reported through an annual newsletter which is presented to the Performance and Finance Select Committee (PFSC), and also includes details of performance and outcomes. The newsletter was reviewed by PFSC in May 2019.
- 2 In February 2018 an all-member session recommended that scrutiny performance should be reported through County Council to raise the profile and benefits of strong scrutiny. This also fits with the recently-published statutory guidance issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government which encourages all members to be aware of and engaged with scrutiny processes.

### Discussion

- 3 PFSC has overall responsibility for monitoring the performance of the scrutiny function at the County Council. It carries this out through the publication and review of the scrutiny newsletter, which is intended to provide members with information to fulfil this monitoring role. The newsletter provides an annual overview of the work of the select committees, reports overall performance of the scrutiny function, shares best practice and highlights any future development or training required by select committee members.
- 4 The newsletter, **attached at Appendix 1** for the Council's approval, provides a summary of information collated from the Select Committee annual survey. The analysis shows that there are some decreases in the member statement scores from the previous year, with seven measures having decreased, whilst six improved or stayed the same. The most notable decreases in statement scores relate to:
  - Select committees' ability to influence decisions appropriately
  - Clear, measurable outcomes from the scrutiny process
  - Select committees' opportunity to input into policy development
  - The appropriateness of the timing of committee involvement

Statement scores that have improved include:

- Good support from Democratic Services support staff
  - Members' ability to commit the necessary time to undertake the role
  - The select committee work programme reflects the issues of greatest public concern/importance
- 5 The newsletter was reviewed at the May meeting of PFSC and recommendations were made to improve the independence, proactiveness and

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effectiveness of scrutiny. The Committee recommended that a review of scrutiny be undertaken by the Governance Committee to consider the new national guidance and best practice, to include consideration of arrangements for the appointment of select committee chairmen and vice-chairmen. The Governance Committee considered this at its meeting on 24 June 2019 and agreed to carry out a review of the Council's Scrutiny function. This will be carried out by a member group and will be reported to the Governance Committee at the end of November. As part of this review there will be an all-member scrutiny session on 4 September 2019.

### **Recommended**

That the Annual Scrutiny Newsletter 2018/19, as attached at Appendix 1, be approved.

### **Pieter Montyn**

Chairman of the Performance and Finance Select Committee

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### **Background Papers**

None