

Performance and Finance Select Committee

22 May 2019

The Committee's Business Planning Group

Report by Director of Law and Assurance

Summary

Each Select Committee has a Business Planning Group (BPG) to oversee the Committee's work programme and prioritise issues for consideration by the Committee. This report sets out the role and responsibilities of the BPG and invites the Committee to make appointments to it.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to appoint five members to the Business Planning Group.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Each Select Committee must set up a business planning group (BPG) to take responsibility for:

- Overseeing the work programme for the Committee and prioritising issues for consideration by the Committee, including the proposed methodology and time tabling.
- Agreeing objectives and planned outcomes for agenda items, and any witnesses to be invited and/or any visits or further information required by the Committee prior to its formal scrutiny of an issue.
- Establishing Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups (TFGs).
- Deciding whether or not call-in requests should be accepted for matters exclusively within the Committee's portfolio. Requests for call-in of a cross cutting issue will also be considered by this Committee's BPG.
- Identifying areas of common interest with other Select Committees and liaising with the BPGs of those Committees to agree how those issues should be addressed.
- Liaising with the relevant Cabinet Members with regard to the development and scrutiny of portfolio services.
- Monitoring service and corporate performance.
- Monitoring scrutiny performance, including the work programme and TFGs, and sharing best practice.
- Monitoring expenditure on external witnesses.

1.2 The BPG should have five members, be cross-party (three members from the majority political group on the County Council and two from the

opposition), and include the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Select Committee. Other members of the committee may be invited to attend individual meetings as appropriate. The Chairman of the Select Committee will be the Chairman of the BPG. Membership is reviewed annually.

- 1.3 The BPG will meet at least three times a year. Meetings are attended by the BPG members, a Democratic Services Officer and relevant officers from within the portfolio service areas as appropriate.
- 1.4 Cabinet Members may be expected to attend part of the meeting to discuss the development and scrutiny of portfolio services as necessary to enable the BPG to plan the work of the Committee.
- 1.5 Some of the work of the BPG will be undertaken virtually, with members contributing to discussions and decisions via email or virtual meetings.

2.0 The Role of the BPG

- 2.1 The BPG has a significant role in assisting the successful scrutiny of issues and the efficient running of the scrutiny function.
- 2.2 Members of the BPG need to commit significant additional time outside of any structured meetings to handle queries/respond to issues virtually, e.g. by email and to consider the value or otherwise of scrutinising an issue.
- 2.3 BPG members should also ensure that they are up to date with the performance standards across the portfolio, and corporately, and use the information to help them in prioritising issues for the select committee to consider.
- 2.4 BPGs must ensure that they prioritise the work of the Committee so that sufficient time is allowed for detailed scrutiny of the most important issues within the resources available.
- 2.5 In prioritising issues and setting the ongoing Committee work programme accordingly, the BPG should ensure that each Committee agenda does not contain a large number of items, as the Committee will not be able to give numerous items sufficient time and focus to produce meaningful outcomes. Items which are for information only should not be included on an agenda. Alternative channels of communication should be used, for example, newsletters and/or written or electronic briefings.
- 2.6 BPGs should consider the most effective way to undertake different items from the approved work programme and any further topics which arise during the year.
- 2.7 Further information on BPG tasks, objectives, the guidance available to members, and the BPG checklist are included in the Appendix.

3.0 Cross-cutting scrutiny topics

- 3.1 Where scrutiny work relates to the responsibilities of more than one service specific Select Committee (i.e. cross-cutting work) BPGs of the relevant Committees liaise through their Chairmen to identify how the issue should be scrutinised. The work will usually be undertaken by a cross-cutting Task and Finish Group (TFG).
- 3.2 Agreement to set-up a TFG can be made virtually by the BPG.

4.0 Reporting the BPG's work to the Committee

- 4.1 A short report will be provided for the Select Committee following each BPG meeting. The Committee will be asked to support the outline work programme as recommended by the Business Planning Group and to consider any other matters referred by the BPG.

5. Implications

- 5.1 There are no resource, risk management, Crime and Disorder Act or Human Rights Act implications arising directly from this report.

Tony Kershaw

Director of Law and Assurance

Contact Susanne Sanger, Senior Advisor, Democratic Services
033 022 22550

Appendix

A BPG Tasks, Objectives and Guidance, and BPG Checklist

Background documents

None