

---

**Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development**

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Date: 11<sup>th</sup> September 2007**

**Subject: Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Work Programme and Draft Terms of Reference**

---

**Electoral Wards Affected:**

**Specific Implications For:**

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

---

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 At the July meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members established a Working Group to draft Terms of Reference for a series of Inquiries. The purpose of this report is to report back to the full Committee the deliberations of the Working Group.

Membership

1.2 The Working Group consisted of Councillor Grahame, Councillor W Hyde, Councillor Pryke and Councillor Hanley. It met on 20th July 2007 to discuss terms of Reference for the following Inquires;

- Support to Group Offices
- Responding to the needs of migrants and their families
- ALMO structure
- Direct Payments

1.3 The conclusions of the Working Group are detailed below.

Support to Group Offices

1.4 Terms of Reference have been drafted and are presented to Committee as Appendix 1.

- 1.5 In line with the Constitution comments on the proposed Inquiry have been sought from the relevant Director and Executive Member. These are detailed below.

Comments from the Chief Democratic Services Officer.

*I can fully understand the interest of the Committee in staffing arrangements within Group Offices as I acknowledge that there have been a number of recent difficulties, notably that we have not yet fully addressed the impact on staffing resources of the 2007 elections. However, we have recently been in dialogue with all of the groups regarding their staffing requirements and I am very hopeful of being able to effect a package of appropriate staffing adjustments in the near future. I am a little concerned that the planned timetable for the Inquiry might in fact delay this process (exacerbated by the fact that I will have some personal difficulty in meeting one of the planned Inquiry dates)*

*In addition, I understand that there has been concern expressed from a number of staff about the impact of any review on the introduction of job evaluation process. There is a degree of unease both amongst staff involved in phase 1 of the process (outcomes of which are, I understand, likely to be made known in around September/October) and phase 2 of the process (work on which is currently underway with results to be known next year). I have to say that, in my view, we could if necessary integrate a more fundamental review of staffing arrangements with the implementation of job evaluation but, clearly, I am sensitive to the views of staff and would wish, if possible, to avoid any additional pressures on them at this time.*

*I am not sure of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's other priorities but, in the light of the above, it may wish to consider not proceeding with the proposed Inquiry at this time. However, should it wish to pursue such an Inquiry then I would, of course, be more than happy to assist the Committee as detailed in the proposed terms of reference. I would, however, have some difficulty in meeting the timetable as set out because I will be on leave for a little over two weeks in October and will not therefore be able to attend the rearranged October meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.*

Comments from the Councillor Mark Harris - Central and Corporate Executive Member.

*I should advise you that I have asked officers to review staffing levels in the Group Offices and to bring forward recommendations at the earliest opportunity. In the light of this, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may like to consider whether it wishes to postpone or proceed with the planned Inquiry into Group Office staffing*

*However, as the Central and Corporate Executive Member, I should stress that I am of the view that I should not seek to influence the scrutiny process in any way and am therefore in the hands of the Overview Scrutiny Committee as to whether this Inquiry should go ahead or not.*

Responding to the needs of migrants and their families

- 1.6 Terms of Reference have been drafted and are presented to Committee as Appendix 2. In line with the Constitution comments on the proposed Inquiry have been sought from the relevant Director and Executive Member. These were not available at the time of agenda dispatch.

ALMO structure

- 1.6 It was agreed that there were a number of preliminary questions in relation to the decision to reduce the number of ALMOs which required answering prior to the final

the drafting of Terms of Reference. It was agreed that this would be best done in a Working Group. It is recommended therefore that a Working Group is established.

### Direct Payments

- 1.7 The Working Group recommends that prior to agreeing Terms of Reference; the Committee should receive a briefing on Direct Payments. The Working Group is of the view that such a briefing may influence whether the Committee considers an Inquiry worthwhile or not. This has been arranged for the October meeting.

## **2.0 WORK PROGRAMME**

- 2.1 The Committee's current Work Programme is attached as Appendix 3. The Forward Plan of Key Decisions is attached as Appendix 4

## **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Members are asked to;

- (i) Consider the draft Terms of Reference shown at Appendix 1 and 2 and confirm whether these Inquiries are to take place.
- (ii) Establish a working group to progress the ALMO Inquiry
- (iii) Receive a presentation on Direct Payments before consideration of any Terms of Reference for an Inquiry
- (iv) Consider the Committee's work programme as a result of decisions made today.