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| <b>Title of Report</b>                     | <b>SCRUTINY CROSS PARTY WORKING GROUP<br/>PROGRESS REPORT</b>   |                           |
| <b>Presented by</b>                        | Councillor Robert Ashman<br>Deputy Leader   |                           |
| <b>Background Papers</b>                   | Findings of the Corporate<br>Peer Review  | <b>Public Report:</b> Yes |
| <b>Financial Implications</b>              | The cost of the scrutiny training is £4200. However, in view of the fact the training has arisen from an LGA Peer Review, the cost will be shared equally between the Council and the LGA, therefore costing £2100 plus VAT. There is provision for this in the Member training budget. |                           |
|  | <b>Signed off by the Section 151 Officer:</b> Yes   |                           |
| <b>Legal Implications</b>                  | There are no legal or constitutional implications   |                           |
|  | <b>Signed off by the Monitoring Officer:</b> Yes  |                           |
| <b>Staffing and Corporate Implications</b> | There are no staffing implications at this stage. However, the Working Group have requested that this be kept under review. Should workloads shift significantly, there may be a need for additional scrutiny resources.  |                           |
|  | <b>Signed off by the Head of Paid Service:</b> Yes  |                           |
| <b>Purpose of Report</b>                   | To outline the work of the Scrutiny Cross Party Working Group in addressing the recommendation arising from the Corporate Peer Review in relation to the scrutiny function.   |                           |
| <b>Recommendations</b>                     | <b>THAT THE PROGRESS REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY<br/>CROSS PARTY WORKING GROUP BE NOTED.</b>   |                           |

## 1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Last year, the Council invited and subsequently underwent a Corporate Peer Review which resulted in a number of recommendations. One of these recommendations was to “continue to improve the scrutiny function. Make it more robust and be seen to be more robust. Explore good practice regarding scrutiny, such as training and make better use of working groups, establishing a forward looking work programme and involve scrutiny early in the decision making progress. This is an area where there has been significant improvement over the last two years with the development of two scrutiny committees with an enhanced number of meetings, however there is recognition that the council needs to

support members in understanding their role and maximising the benefits effective scrutiny can bring to the council”.

- 1.2 A Cross Party Working Group was established in order to address this recommendation.

## **2.0 CROSS PARTY WORKING GROUP**

- 2.1 The membership of the Cross Party Working Group comprises Councillors R Ashman, D Harrison, T Eynon, T Saffell, S Sheahan and N Smith. Councillor Neil Clarke from Rushcliffe Borough Council represents the Local Government Association as a Peer Member to help provide an independent view; and officer contributions and support are provided by both Directors, the Monitoring Officer and Democratic Services.
- 2.2 The Working Party has met four times on 24 February, 15 June, 6 July and 3 August to discuss how the scrutiny function currently operates; what works and what doesn't; how improvements can be made and to gain a clearer understanding of Member's views of scrutiny.
- 2.3 A number of actions have been considered and agreed with the prime focus being around gaining a better understanding of the role of scrutiny and identifying wider training needs.

## **3.0 TRAINING**

- 3.1 The Group created and circulated a questionnaire in an attempt to gauge the current level of understanding of councillors around scrutiny and to seek other areas of potential interest to members in terms of training needs.
- 3.2 Taking account of the feedback received, a series of workshops are being organised on subject matters including enforcement, finance & budgets, use of social media, partnership working and planning matters.
- 3.3 Quotes for comprehensive bespoke training on scrutiny were sought and following in depth discussions it was agreed that scrutiny training be provided by the Local Government Association (LGA) in the Autumn. This training would address issues such as managing work programmes, chairing and leading scrutiny and working with Cabinet.
- 3.4 The cost of the training is £4,200 plus VAT. However, in view of the fact that this training has arisen from an LGA Peer Review, the cost will be shared equally between the Council and the LGA.

## **4.0 OTHER ACTIONS**

- 4.1 The Working Group considered how best to correlate the work of each of the Scrutiny Committees and the Audit and Governance Committee. It was determined that each should remain separate but their work programmes could be better aligned and understood.
- 4.2 It was therefore agreed that the Directors, as well as their pre-meeting briefings, would also meet twice yearly with the Chairs of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, Community Scrutiny Committee and the Audit & Governance

Committee to discuss and agree their work programmes to ensure that the most appropriate route was being taken.

- 4.3 To help encourage wider engagement ahead of each meeting, the Chairman of each Scrutiny Committee will invite all Members to submit questions or queries through the Directors ahead of the meeting once the agenda has been sent. Members can choose whether they wish to copy the Chairman in to any queries they submit. It is thought this may address some finer points of the reports ahead of the meeting to help Members better understand the subject matter on which they are scrutinising.
- 4.4 It was also agreed that an additional column be included on the Executive Decision Notice which would indicate where the Cabinet reports had been or were intended to be scrutinised where appropriate; and where not, the reason being given.
- 4.5 Report templates for all scrutiny reports have been amended to make clear the reason why a report is going to a Scrutiny Committee as it was acknowledged that reports should not be submitted for simply noting. This would assist members of the scrutiny committees in understanding what it was they were being asked to do for each report on the agenda.
- 4.6 Scoping reports will be completed when items are requested for inclusion on the agenda to provide the report author with the appropriate information required to ensure the report is relevant to the request.
- 4.7 The Working Group considered that no additional resources were required at this stage within Democratic Services as they liked the ownership by Directors and relevant service areas. However, it was considered that this should be kept under review should workloads increase significantly in the future.
- 4.8 Members of the Working Group consider that there may still be lessons to be learned and, with this in mind have undertaken to visit another authority in the future to watch effective scrutiny taking place. In view of the current COVID-19 pandemic, this has been put on hold until such time that a visit would be appropriate.
- 4.9 A further meeting of the Working Group will be held after the workshops in order to assess their outcomes and determine whether any further actions are required.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Working Group has carefully considered the recommendation arising from the Corporate Peer Review and has listened to the views of Members in proposing and taking forward actions in an attempt to provide clarity and understanding of the scrutiny process
- 5.2 Council is therefore asked to note the work of the Cross Party Working Group.

| Policies and other considerations, as appropriate |   |
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| Council Priorities:                               | Insert relevant Council Priorities:<br><br>- Supporting Coalville to be a more vibrant, family- |

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|------------------------------------|--|
|                                    | friendly town <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support for businesses and helping people into local jobs</li> <li>- Developing a clean and green district</li> <li>- Local people live in high quality, affordable homes</li> <li>- Our communities are safe, healthy and connected</li> </ul> |
| Policy Considerations:             | Not applicable   |
| Safeguarding:                      | Not applicable   |
| Equalities/Diversity:              | Not applicable   |
| Customer Impact:                   | Not applicable   |
| Economic and Social Impact:        | Not applicable   |
| Environment and Climate Change:    | Not applicable.  |
| Consultation/Community Engagement: | All Members were invited to complete a questionnaire.  |
| Risks:                             | Not addressing the issues raised following the Corporate Peer Review would risk damaging the council's reputation and may lead to a dysfunctional scrutiny process.  |
| Officer Contact                    | Insert details of the lead officer in the following format:<br><br>Elizabeth Warhurst<br>Head of Legal and Commercial Services<br><a href="mailto:elizabeth.warhurst@nwleicestershire.gov.uk">elizabeth.warhurst@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</a>   |