
REPORT TO:	OVERVIEW COMMITTEE (SPECIAL)	AGENDA ITEM: 5
DATE OF MEETING:	2 MAY 2002	CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINTS:	NEIL BETTERIDGE (EXT. 5895) SALLY KNIGHT (EXT. 5728)	DOC:
SUBJECT:	REVIEW OF THE NEW POLITICAL STRUCTURE	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- summarise progress to date on the Committee's review of the Council's new political management arrangements
- outline the contents of the final report from the District Auditor on *Democratic Renewal*
- develop an Action Plan for implementing the necessary changes to the Council's Constitution and methods of working (in the light of current resources)

2.0 Review of Progress

- 2.1 The Committee is responsible for reviewing the Council's political management arrangements which were adopted in an interim form in July 2001. The aim is to submit a report and recommendations to the Annual Meeting of Council on 16 May 2002.
- 2.2 At the meeting on 3 April 2001, the Committee received a presentation from Clive Mitchell (District Audit) on his review of the current arrangements, along with contributions from Members and Officers. There was a wide ranging discussion and the Committee resolved that:
- the recommendations set out in the Management Team's report be approved in principle
 - the number and size of committees together with the frequency of meeting is acceptable
 - the composition of agendas for policy committees be reviewed

- the terms of reference for policy committees be reviewed to resolve any overlapping issues
- policy frameworks/guidelines be strengthened to support delegation arrangements
- the feasibility of allowing members of the public to speak at meeting be investigated
- the call-in arrangements be reviewed together with feedback to policy committees following any call-in
- the possibility of combining County and District Area Meetings be explored
- new ways of involving local people in the work of their Council be explored
- the feasibility of holding Committee meetings throughout the district be explored
- the review of political management arrangements should be linked to the Council's community leadership role.

2.3 Since the meeting, the final report from the District Auditor has been received (discussed in section 3 of this report) and a composite Action Plan has been produced (as explained in section 4).

2.4 An important point made in the District Auditor's report is that it is the Council's responsibility to ensure that its political management arrangements and Constitution comply with the law.

2.5 Accordingly, a copy of the Constitution, along with relevant supporting papers has been sent to Derbyshire County Council to obtain an opinion on compliance. (Derbyshire County Council has kindly agreed to help in the absence of the Council's own Legal and Member Services Manager.) Officers are due to meet County Officers on 7 May and the outcome will be reported to the next meeting of this Committee on 13 May.

3.0 District Auditor's Report

3.1 A copy of the final report from the District Auditor is attached at Annexe A.

3.2 The main conclusions are that:

'The Council has responded positively to the modernising agenda by introducing its new arrangements in an interim form prior to their formal adoption, planned for May 2002. This is enabling the Council to 'learn by doing'.

We are very impressed by the extent of innovation in developing the overview and scrutiny function. There is much to commend here and we would encourage the Council to continue to build on these foundations.

There is perhaps some way to go in developing an more streamlined decision making process. The Council needs to think about developing more of a strategic, policy-orientated role for the Policy Committees.

The Council is currently reviewing its political management arrangements. We would encourage the Council to continue with this reflective approach, and from time to time ask itself: How are we doing?'

- 3.3 The report also makes a series of recommendations designed to help the Council to strengthen and further develop its political management arrangements.
- 3.4 These are set out in an Action Plan (found at the end of the report) which also incorporates the recommendations made by the Council's Management Team. Members will note that the various recommendations have been classified as having either a high, medium or low priority.
- 3.5 The Council is required to formally respond to the District Auditor's report.

4.0 Developing the Council's Action Plan

- 4.1 Annexe B comprises a 'composite' list of the issues/recommendations made by Members, Officers and the District Auditor. They are grouped under the same headings as those adopted in the District Auditors report and are referenced as follows:
- OVER/1 - refers to an issue/recommendation made by Members at the last Overview Committee
 - DA/1 - recommendations from the District Auditor
 - CMT/1 - recommendations from the Management Team
 - EXTRA/1 - other issues identified by Officers
- 4.2 A first task will be to ensure that all the various issues (particularly those of concern to Members) have been listed.
- 4.3 A second task will be to confirm priorities. The table at Annexe B shows in **bold** the priorities defined by the District Auditor. Suggested priorities for the other recommendations are shown in *italics*.
- 4.4 The next stage (which it is hoped to complete in time for the scheduled meeting of this Committee on 13 May) is to identify the actions that will need to be taken, timescales and responsible Officers and/or Members.
- 4.5 At this meeting, the Committee will also need to consider how Members will be involved in 'shaping' the changes and how the work will be progressed by Officers (given that a new Legal and Member Services Manager is unlikely to be in post before September).

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. However, there will be a need to address this issue at the next meeting (especially if temporary support is required).

6.0 Background Papers

'Democratic Renewal' - District Auditor (April 2002)
Draft Minute No OV/30 Overview Committee (3 April 2002)

