

STRATEGY & PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

25 February 2013

IMPROVED MEMBER ENGAGEMENT & STREAMLINED GOVERNANCE

Governance Review Further Details

Background

1. At its meeting on 17th January the Strategy & Partnerships Committee agreed the principles for the future development of governance and back bench member engagement following the May election.
2. The following proposals (based on a review led by a member working group) were agreed to be recommended to Cabinet and Council in March and April respectively:
 - Creation of task and finish Cabinet Advisory Groups
 - Creation of a standing Transport Advisory Panel
 - Streamlining of the overview and scrutiny function from 6 committees to 3 (Performance, Education and Health)
 - Abolition of the Democracy & Organisation Committee with the re-alignment of its functions to Council, the Remuneration Committee and Audit & Governance committee
 - Strengthening of engagement via Locality Working
3. This paper sets out further detail on how these new arrangements will operate.

Cabinet Advisory Groups

	Frequency	Membership	Chairman
Cabinet Advisory Group	Up to 5 groups per year Task and finish groups meeting as required depending on the topic / issue being discussed. Meetings could range from one day select committee style meetings to a longer term project.	Each group to involve no more than 7 members. Nominations via group leaders according to interest in the topic. Final membership agreed by Chairman.	Relevant Portfolio Holder

4. Cabinet Advisory Groups will primarily examine topics selected by Cabinet which align to corporate council priorities. This will enable back bench members to be more closely involved with issues of greatest importance to the council.
5. The Performance Scrutiny Committee will be able to recommend to Cabinet performance concerns that may benefit from a Cabinet Advisory Group. It will be up to the Cabinet to agree if a group should go ahead.

6. The Groups will be supported by officers from the relevant Directorate and a member of the Research & Major Programmes team. (In a similar arrangement to current support for scrutiny).

Transport Advisory Panel

	Frequency	Membership	Chairman
Transport Advisory Panel	At least six times a year.	12 members covering all 9 localities	Relevant Portfolio Holder

7. The Transport Advisory Panel will support the Cabinet member for transport with their delegated decision making. The 12 members of the panel will be nominated by group leaders who will have regard to the aim to create a geographical spread within the panel.
8. The Panel will also advise the Cabinet member on transport policy developments and ensure policies are developed with the needs of Oxfordshire's diverse communities in mind.

Overview and Scrutiny

	Frequency	Membership	Chairman
Overview and Scrutiny Meetings	Meet at least four times a year (with the ability to call more meetings if needed).	Education* - 7 OCC members plus 4 co-opted members. Performance - 10 OCC members HOSC - 7 members plus 5 District Council and 3 Co-opted members	Best person for the job regardless of party appointed by the Committee.

*Retention of the current provision on political proportionality. The number of Councillors may be adjusted to ensure that a group with an overall majority on the Council has a voting majority (when voting co-optees are counted)

9. The Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee will focus on the following areas:
 - a. The work of the Education Transformation Board, (two way relationship with the Board which oversees the education strategy), including review of the annual report of the Board.
 - b. Constructive challenge on performance issues. Education Transformation Board to highlight issues where the committee could support the improvement dialogue.
 - c. Remaining OCC education functions (e.g. early years, Special Education Needs and school place planning).
 - d. Regular review of progress / issues report from the School Organisation Stakeholder Group on admissions patterns and arrangements.

10. The Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be linked to the Council's quarterly performance monitoring timeframes. It will focus on:
 - a. Review of corporate performance and finance reporting
 - b. Budget scrutiny
 - c. Arrangements for any call – in will be led by this committee
11. The remit of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee will remain the same.
12. The proposals outlined create up to 71 places for councillors to participate in the scrutiny and cabinet advisory function. (There are currently 59 places within the scrutiny function).

Locality Working

13. As discussed in January the changes to electoral boundaries and the reduction in members requires the Council to reconsider its own locality boundaries (a map outlining the proposals is attached at appendix A).
14. Localities will continue to meet twice yearly and provide an opportunity for members to influence and comment upon local services and commissioning intentions.
15. Localities are not formal decision making bodies, and do not as a matter of course have specific resources allocated to them. However they provide an important avenue of influence for members and a forum in which local issues can be shared with officers.

Member Induction

A programme of member induction activities are being developed to help support members in effectively carrying out their role post-election. This will include opportunities to meet on a locality basis with relevant officers and receive briefings on current issues in the area.

Changes to other committees:

16. It is proposed to reduce the number of members on the Planning and Regulation Committee from the current 15 to 12. This reflects the reduction in members of the council overall. This change will not affect the remit or operation of the committee.

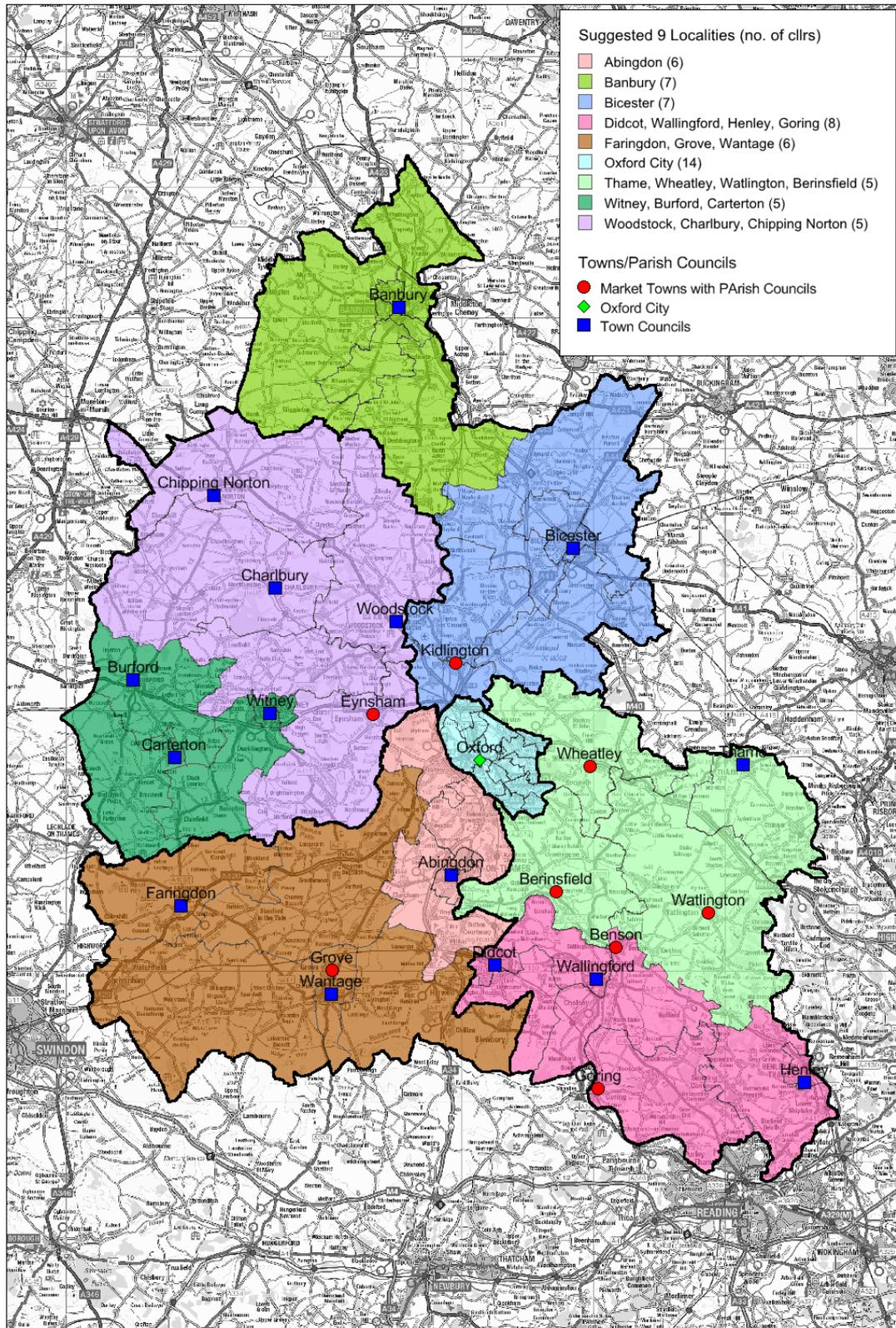
Recommendation

The Committee is asked to comment on and endorse the proposals outlined prior to Cabinet and Council.

If supported the Constitution will be updated accordingly, with changes due to come into effect following the election.

Peter Clark & Alexandra Bailey
25 February 2013

Appendix A – Proposed Localities



Appendix B – PROPOSED GOVERNANCE MODEL

