

<b>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>8 MARCH 2017</b>
<b>COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY</b>
<b>REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR STRATEGY AND RESOURCES</b>

**1 Purpose**

- 1.1 An opportunity to provide a response to the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Select Committee inquiry into local government overview and scrutiny.

**2 Action required**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to comment on the attached draft response to the inquiry, and delegate authority to the Chair to sign off the final version before submission.

**3 Background information**

- 3.1 On 24 January 2017 the CLG announced a national inquiry into overview and scrutiny in local government. The Select Committee will consider whether overview and scrutiny arrangements are working effectively and whether local communities are able to contribute to and monitor the work of their councils.
- 3.2 Overview and scrutiny arrangements were introduced by the Local Government Act in 2000 when there was also an increase in decision making powers of Leaders and Cabinets, or directly elected mayors.
- 3.3 The CLG feel that operational shortcomings have been exposed in some areas following a number of high profile cases, including child sexual exploitation in Rotherham, high mortality rates at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust, and governance failings in Tower Hamlets.
- 3.4 Clive Betts MP will Chair the Select Committee, and has stated:

“This inquiry is long overdue. Local authority executives have more powers than ever before but there has not been any review about how effectively the current overview and scrutiny arrangements are working since they were introduced in 2000.

Local authorities have a considerable degree of discretion when it comes to overview and scrutiny. We will examine these arrangements and consider what changes may be needed to ensure decision makers in councils and local services are better held to account.”

- 3.5 The Select Committee has invited written evidence on:
- whether scrutiny committees in local authorities in England are effective in holding decision makers to account;
  - the extent to which scrutiny committees operate with political impartiality and independence from executives;
  - whether scrutiny officers are independent of and separate from those being scrutinised;
  - how Chairs and members are selected;
  - whether powers to summon witnesses are adequate;
  - the potential for local authority scrutiny to act as a voice for local service users;
  - how topics for scrutiny are selected;
  - the support given to the scrutiny function by political leaders and senior officers, including the resources allocated (for example, whether there is a designated officer team);
  - what use is made of specialist external advisers;
  - the effectiveness and importance of local authority scrutiny of external organisations;
  - the role of scrutiny in devolution deals and the scrutiny models used in combined authorities;
  - examples where scrutiny has worked well and not so well.
- 3.6 The deadline for written submissions is Friday 10 March 2017.

#### **4 List of attached information**

- 4.1 Draft response to the inquiry

#### **5 Background papers, other than published works or those disclosing exempt or confidential information**

- 5.1 None

#### **6 Published documents referred to in compiling this report**

- 6.1 None

#### **7 Wards affected**

- 7.1 N/A

#### **8 Contact information**

- 8.1 Laura Wilson  
Senior Governance Officer  
0115 8764301  
[laura.wilson@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:laura.wilson@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)