

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee
Date:	28 November 2023
Subject:	Launching a Resident Engagement Task and Finish Group
Chief Officer:	Sarah Hayward, Executive Director for Strategy and Improvement
Contact Officer:	Caroline Adlem, Head of Communications & Resident Engagement Alexander Polak, Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	No
Appendices:	Appendix A – Draft Scope for Resident Engagement Task & Finish Group

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report recommends launching the committee's next Task and Finish Group immediately, as per the committee's forward plan. Appendix A sets out the draft scope. The topic is 'Resident Engagement'. This contributes directly towards the council's improvement & recovery, being linked to the council's corporate plan.

Recommendation:

- a. That a 'Resident Engagement Task and Finish Group be launched as per the draft scope at Appendix A, including appointment of its chair and, if possible, its membership.

Commissioner Review

The Commissioners noted the report.

2. Report

- 2.1 In accordance with this committee's work programme, most recently [considered by the committee on 24 October](#), this paper proposes to launch a 'task and finish group' on the topic of 'resident engagement'.
- 2.2 This topic was originally recommended for the CISC forward plan due to the low levels of trust identified in our resident survey in early 2023, and the importance of this issue in terms of the overall improvement and recovery of the council.
- 2.3 [Slough Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2023-27](#) sets out five principles, three of which relate to the interaction between residents and the council. This reflects that finding from the 2023 resident survey. Delivery of this strategy is a key driver of the

council's improvement and recovery journey, and effective resident engagement has been identified as key to successful delivery of the plan. This Task and Finish group will explore the degree to which the council has both a vision that sets out its resident engagement ambition and a plan for delivering it, aiming to make recommendations which would assist and improve the council's approach to engaging with residents and building their trust.



Resident
Focused



Providing
financial
sustainability



Enabling
residents and
communities



Strengthening
partnerships



Building
trust

- 2.4 Appendix A is a new format for presenting a draft scope for a proposed task and finish group. Members' views on this format would be welcomed, to assist scrutiny officers with the continuous improvement of Slough Borough Council's overview and scrutiny arrangements.
- 2.5 If the committee wishes to commission this T&F to commence now, it must elect one of the councillors from its 'pool of chairs' to lead the work. The most important criterion for this choice is: "which councillor is most enthusiastically interested in the subject matter?" Experience has shown that this is by far the greatest determinant of a T&F group's success.
- 2.6 Ideally, the committee would also agree membership of the T&F group at this meeting. There must be a minimum of three to proceed. These do not have to be CISC Members – T&F members may be drawn from any councillor except members of the Cabinet. Again, enthusiasm should be the strongest criterion for inclusion in the group, however it is also desirable to ensure a degree of political proportionality ie members of at least two Groups being on the T&F.
- 2.7 If Group Leaders have provided the Chair with any suggested volunteers from outside the committee, the Chair will announce their names in the meeting.
- 2.8 The constitution allows for T&F groups to run for a maximum of 4 months but the T&F group can determine its own timescales within that if it wishes to conclude more quickly – subject only to the availability of officer and member resource to support a faster exercise. Extension beyond 4 months is possible with the approval of the chair of the parent committee.

3. Implications of the Recommendations

3.1 Financial implications

- 3.2 This is not a decision-making report so there are no direct financial implications. Where further work is required to respond to the issues identified, any recommendations from CISC will be made to the Cabinet.

3.3 Legal implications

- 3.4 The Local Government Act 2000 introduced a new political management system for local councils in England and Wales, requiring them to have a separate 'executive'

in the form of a leader, or elected mayor, and cabinet. To provide a counterweight for this, the Act also introduced the concept of 'overview and scrutiny' – sometimes referred to simply as 'scrutiny' – whereby every council with an executive management structure is required to have an overview and scrutiny committee. This enables the rest of the council to scrutinise the executive by investigating their decisions and policies, and issuing reports and recommendations where any shortcomings are identified.

3.5 *Risk management implications*

3.6 Overview and Scrutiny, commonly referred to as Scrutiny, is a statutory function and is currently subject to government direction in Slough. It is important that topics selected by the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee clearly contribute to the overall improvement drivers for the council, in order to demonstrate that the conditions of the government intervention are being met.

3.7 *Equality implications*

3.8 There are no specific equalities implications arising at this stage, however it is intended that the work will identify ways to engage residents from all backgrounds with the councils work and so ultimately should improve equalities outcomes. A detailed assessment will be done on the T&F group's final recommendations.

4. **Appendices**

Appendix A – Draft scope for Resident Engagement Task and Finish Group