

Constitution Working Party			
Report Title	Matter referred by the Housing Select Committee		
Key Decision	No	Item No.	4
Ward	All		
Contributors	Housing Select Committee		
Class	Part 1	Date	19 March 2009

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report informs the Constitution Working Party of the comments and views of the Housing Select Committee arising from discussions on the future of the Select Committee. These views are set out in section three below.

2. Recommendations

The Constitution Working Party is asked to:

- 2.1 note the Housing Select Committee's recommendations on the future of the Housing Select Committee, when making its own recommendation to Council on 1 April 2009. Specifically:
- (i) that the Housing Select Committee continues on a time-limited basis for the period of the 2009/10 municipal year, with the same terms of reference (attached at Appendix A) but with an increased focus on the implementation of the Decent Homes Standard.
 - (ii) that the Constitution Working Party examines the Scrutiny Committee Structure (the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Business Panel and Select Committees) towards the end of the 2009/10 municipal year.
- 2.2 ask the Head of Law to comment and provide advice on the views of the Select Committee.

3. Select Committee Views

- 3.1 On 25 February 2009, the Housing Select Committee considered its future, noting that it had been set up for a time-limited period of one year (the 2008/09 municipal year). The following comments were made by the Select Committee:
- 3.2 The Committee agreed that it was important to continue scrutinising housing issues in an in-depth manner, given that there was going to be considerable ongoing council activity in relation to achieving the Council's Decent Homes agenda over the next year (a number of stock transfers would be completed and Lewisham Homes would have its two star inspection). On balance, members felt that the best way to achieve this in-depth scrutiny would be to continue the Housing Select Committee for another year, with the same terms of reference but with an increased focus on

the implementation of the Decent Homes Standard. The Committee could then be reviewed at the end of the next municipal year and before the start of the new administration. In relation to this, the Committee felt that it would, in fact, be beneficial for the Constitution Working Party to review the complete Scrutiny Committee Structure (the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Business Panel and Select Committees), with cross-party input.

- 3.3 The Committee was also in agreement that site visits were an important element of the Housing Select Committee's work and that, if possible, meetings should be held in the community, outside the Civic Suite.

4. Financial Implications

Should the Housing Select Committee be continued the cost would be met from existing budgets.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The continuation of the Housing Select Committee on a time-limited basis for the period of the 2009/10 municipal year, with the same terms of reference does not pose any constitutional problems. The constitution states that:

"From time to time, the Council may want to make changes to its overview and scrutiny arrangements. For example, it may wish to appoint time limited select committees to examine particular issues in depth, alter the terms of reference of existing select committees or the business panel, or change their constitution. Changes to the overview and scrutiny arrangements will not be considered to be a change to the Constitution which would require consultation unless any of the following criteria are met:

- (a) the number of scrutiny select committees in total would fall to less than four, or rise to more than ten;
- (b) the number of places on any select committee would fall to less than five;
- (c) the terms of reference and or composition of the business panel would change in a manner other than to effect a change which in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer is minor. Changes in the composition of the business panel to reflect changes made under (a) or (b) will not require consultation."

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Review of the Housing Select Committee – report to the Housing Select Committee on 25 February 2009

If you have any queries on this report, please contact Charlotte Dale, Scrutiny Manager (020831 49534) or Kevin Flaherty, Head of Business & Committee (020831 49327).

**Housing Select Committee
Terms of Reference**

To fulfil all overview and scrutiny functions in relation to the discharge by the authority of its housing functions. This shall include the power to:

- review and scrutinise decisions made or other action taken in connection with the discharge of the Council of its housing function
- make reports or recommendations to the authority and/or Mayor and Cabinet with respect to the discharge of these functions
- make recommendations to the authority and/or Mayor and Cabinet proposals for housing policy
- to review initiatives put in place by the Council with a view to achieving the Decent Homes standard, making recommendations and/or report thereon to the Council and/or Mayor and Cabinet
- To establish links with housing providers in the borough which are concerned with the provision of social housing