



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Task and Finish Groups

Date: 5 November 2024

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Director of Law and Corporate Governance (Head of Scrutiny and Member Development)

Outline and recommendations

The purpose of this item is for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to establish, and agree the membership of, three new time limited Task and Finish Groups.

1. Summary

- 1.1. The intention of this item is for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to (a) establish three new time limited Task and Finish Groups (TFGs); and (b) agree the membership of each body. The new TFGs will aim to conclude after 7-8 months (by 30 June 2025). However, TFGs are intended to be a flexible resource and, following the scoping process, it may become clear that the proposed TFGs require less or more time. TFGs cannot last longer than 12 months.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to agree that:

- 2.1. Three new time limited task and finish groups are established looking at Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB); Community at the Heart of Housing; and Delivering Homes in Partnership.

- 2.2. The membership for each TFG is agreed. *(Proposed memberships will be tabled at the meeting).*

3. Policy context

3.1 The proposed TFGs will support the Council's corporate priorities (outlined in the current Corporate Strategy 2022-26), in particular:

- Quality Housing; and
- Safer Communities.

3.2 The ASB TFG links to the Safer Lewisham Plan, which is produced by the multi-agency Safer Lewisham Partnership pursuant to its duty to formulate and implement a strategy or strategies for purposes including the reduction of crime and disorder (including anti-social behaviour adversely affecting the local environment). Housing Services also has an ASB policy which outlines how Housing Services will respond to any reports of ASB or nuisance and what they will do to try to reduce ASB, working alongside residents and partners. The TFG will take the local policy framework into consideration as part of its work.

3.2 The Council's Local Development Framework sets the vision, objectives, strategy, and policies that will guide development and regeneration in the borough to 2025 and together with the Mayor of London's 'London Plan', forms the statutory development plan for the Borough. The proposed Housing TFGs will consider the relevant policy framework including Lewisham's Local Plan and Housing Strategy (2020-2026). The Building for Lewisham programme is designed to deliver new social homes for families on the housing waiting list and Lewisham's Mayor is committed to delivering a further 800 new social homes for those families, which means delivering a total of 2,000 new social homes in Lewisham between 2018 and 2026.

4. Task and Finish Groups

4.1 It has been agreed that:

- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will agree which TFGs should be established and their duration; but TFGs will not last longer than 12 months.
- Each TFG will meet at least twice in public (one meeting to scope out the work required and one to agree a final report and recommendations).
- Evidence will be collected in between formal meetings in a variety of ways. Methods will include, but will not be limited to, desktop research, telephone/MS Teams conferences, site visits, good practice visits and a wide range of engagement activities. Some evidence may be collected at a formal, public meeting of the TFG where, for example, expert witnesses may be asked to give evidence.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will agree the membership of TFGs on the basis of political party nominations. The membership will be politically proportionate.
- Each TFG will have five members. However, the membership of any TFG looking at education matters will be open to the statutory parent governor and diocesan representatives, who can choose to sit on the group (as full members with voting rights) if they wish. Such TFGS will therefore have more than 5 members.

- TFGs are effectively time limited Select Committees with the same constitutional powers as standing Select Committees. This includes the power to make reports to the Executive.
- The TFG will conduct an investigation into the issue it was established to scrutinise, agree a report on the basis of the evidence heard and report directly to Mayor and Cabinet / the relevant external organisation for a response within two months.
- TFGs will focus on producing a small number of focused, evidence-based recommendations.
- The TFG will be disbanded once it has made its final report. Its final set of minutes will go to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for agreement.
- The Mayoral response to the TFG will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The relevant TFG Members will be invited to lead the discussion on the response. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may request an update on the implementation of agreed recommendations in six or 12 months' time to itself or an appropriate Select Committee.

5. Proposed Groups

5.1. Three groups have been proposed:

- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Community at the Heart of Housing
- Delivering Homes in Partnership

5.2. The detailed draft proposals for each of these groups, prepared by the proposing councillor, can be found in the appendix to this report.

5.3. The following officer comments have been made in relation to the proposals:

Anti-Social Behaviour:

- The multi-agency response to ASB on and around housing estates is important. The scope should include all of the council's related roles and also those of partner agencies, especially the Police. It would also be useful for ASB beyond that occurring in and around council housing estates to be considered, as that does not occur in a vacuum.
- To understand scale and locations of ASB, and how they are changing, reporting to Housing, Safer Communities and the Police and through councillor casework should be considered.
- The link to the Tenant Satisfaction Measure re ASB management and the delegation of powers to Housing ASB teams should be considered.
- Housing Services' ASB policy is currently being reviewed to take account of recent informal changes. Residents and councillors will be consulted.

Community at the Heart of Housing and Delivering Homes in Partnership:

- There is a significant overlap between the focus areas of the two proposed TFGs- "Community at the heart of housing" and "Delivering homes in partnership". One of the areas officers expect the 'Delivering homes in partnership TFG' to look at would be community led approaches to housing delivery which is covered by the 'Community at the heart of housing TFG'. There is a strong self-build and CLT (Community Land Trust) legacy in

Lewisham and it is one of the areas of partnership that the Council has and intends to continue to pursue as a way of securing affordable housing delivery- the example of RUSS and their Church Grove scheme cited in the 'Community at the Heart of Housing TFG' highlights this as the Council granted this land on the basis that we secure the affordable housing nominations.

- Whilst there are a range of private finance led housing development models and types of partnerships with Councils, the topics suggested in the 'Delivering homes in partnership TFG' (i.e. alternative financing models such as social finance bonds) are the types of financing mechanisms being pursued by community led housing movements (covered in the other TFG). Therefore, there is a significant risk of overlap between these two subjects.
- There is a likelihood that both these TFGs would end up pursuing similar lines of inquiry and require similar stakeholder input. Therefore, the officer recommendation is to consider merging these two topics into one single TFG to streamline efforts.

6. Proposed Membership and time frame

- 6.1. Nominations for membership of each of the groups will be set out at the meeting. The membership of any TFG looking at an education matter is open to the statutory parent governor and diocesan representatives. The proposed TFGs do not look at education matters.
- 6.2. Statutory scrutiny guidance suggests that scrutiny bodies may wish to work with independent local experts who can provide advice and assistance in *understanding and evaluating evidence* (not in formulating recommendations – this is for members). Such experts would be appointed as technical advisors to the scrutiny body. This is different from engaging experts who *provide evidence*. To date, experts have generally been used to provide rather than evaluate evidence. Appointing technical advisors can have resource implications as it can require paying a daily allowance (per diem) to cover the advisor's expenses and/or a fee, although some experts may provide support for free as part of their organisation's commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility. It is suggested that technical advisors are not appointed these TFGs, but experts are engaged to provide evidence. However this matter can be further explored during the scoping process.
- 6.3. The TFGs will hold their first formal meetings once scoping papers have been produced. This is likely to be Mid December/early January to allow time for the papers to be developed in consultation with Members. The scoping papers will contain a provisional timetable for each group. TFGs cannot last longer than 12 months unless they are re-established. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider the response to any recommendations made by the groups and consider whether any follow up work / progress updates on recommendation implementation are required.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1. Scrutiny work is managed within existing budgets. Formal recommendations to the Mayor arising out of any TFG investigations; specific work items within select committee work programmes; or items considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are evaluated in the usual way through the process of formal reports.

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1. The Council's Constitution provides that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may from time to time appoint sub-committees, to be known as task and finish groups which will exist for a period of no less than 3 months, nor more than 12 months from the date of their creation. It further adds that "Any task and finish group shall consist of 5 members and be established for the purpose of examining a particular issue in depth. The terms of reference of any task and finish group shall be agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which shall also appoint members to it."

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1. The delivery of the Council's equalities objectives is to be achieved through the delivery of all of the Council's strategies, plans and procedures. As such, scrutiny bodies, when planning their work and scrutinising items, bear in mind the delivery of the Council's equality objectives.
- 9.2. Scrutiny tries to make sure that its work reflects the diversity of Lewisham's communities and that the views of residents are fairly represented in scrutiny processes. Any recommendations arising from scrutiny work support the Council's corporate strategy and reflect the needs of local residents.
- 9.3. The proposed TFGs will specifically consider matters of equality.
- Anti-social behaviour blights the lives of some Lewisham residents on a regular basis. It can leave victims feeling helpless and unsafe, and with a reduced quality of life. Perpetrators can also be vulnerable. The TFG will consider the profile of victims and perpetrators in terms of protected characteristics. Any safeguarding issues that arise during the course of the TFG will be referred on using established channels to ensure appropriate action is taken.
 - The Council is committed to ensuring housing is inclusive and residents have access to affordable, accessible and adaptable homes that meet their needs.

10. Climate change and environmental implications

- 10.1 There are no direct climate change or environmental implications arising from this report. However the work of the TFGs, in particular the housing related groups, may encompass consideration of climate change matters. New housing can be delivered in a sustainable way and can provide an opportunity to enhance natural environments, enhance the landscape around housing and enhance amenity space.

11. Crime and disorder implications

- 11.1 There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report. However the work of the TFGs, in particular the ASB group, will encompass consideration of crime and disorder issues.

12. Health and wellbeing implications

- 12.1 There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from this report. However the work of all three TFGs may have positive health and

wellbeing implications via the making of recommendations which enhance residents' feeling of safety or which contribute to the provision of safe and secure housing which meets residents' needs.

13. Glossary

Term	Definition
Overview & Scrutiny	Overview and scrutiny is the way in which Mayor and Cabinet (the 'Executive'), officers and external organisations are held to account for the decisions that they make. It is led by councillors who are not members of the Executive. They also influence policy development and investigate issues of local concern, making recommendations for improvement.
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	<p>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is made up of the chair and vice-chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the chair of each of the Select Committees, and two other non-Executive councillors.</p> <p>The main functions of OSC are looking at key strategic and cross-cutting issues; reviewing key decisions once they have been taken but not yet implemented (call-in); coordinating and approving the overall scrutiny work programme; allocating scrutiny work in the event that it crosses the remit of more than one scrutiny body; and establishing task and finish groups.</p> <p>Three parent governors and two diocesan representatives sit on OSC, alongside the councillor members, when education matters are discussed. This is primarily when key decisions that are education matters are reviewed (called-in).</p>
Task and Finish Group	A time limited scrutiny body which gathers evidence in relation to a topical issue of concern in order to make recommendations to improve outcomes for residents.

14. Report author and contact

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Appendices

The attached TFG proformas have been submitted by the proposing councillors. Any TFGs formally established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will meet formally to agree an officer written scope for the investigation.