



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Establishment of Task and Finish Groups

Date: 26 May 2021

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Assistant Chief Executive

Outline and recommendations

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

1. Summary

- 1.1. The intention of this item is for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to establish three time limited Task and Finish Groups for a period of 6-9 months (ending by no later than the end of February 2022) and agree the membership of each body.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to agree that:

(a) Three time limited task and finish groups are established to look at:

- Improving digital inclusion for Lewisham residents with a learning disability to improve quality of life
- Improving Wi-Fi access and connectivity to improve educational outcomes for Lewisham's pupils, particularly those most in need
- Retrofitting and insulating homes in Lewisham to achieve climate change targets.

(b) The following memberships for each group are agreed:

Improving digital inclusion for Lewisham residents with a learning disability to improve quality of life:

1. Cllr Jacq Paschoud (Chair)
2. Cllr John Paschoud
3. Cllr Joan Millbank
4. Cllr James Walsh
5. Cllr Samantha Latouche

Improving Wi-Fi access and connectivity to improve educational outcomes for Lewisham's pupils, particularly those most in need:

1. Cllr Colin Elliot (Chair)
2. Cllr Paul Maslin
3. Cllr Jimi Adefiranye
4. Cllr Liz Johnston-Franklin
5. Cllr Caroline Kalu
6. Clive Casely (Secondary School Parent Governor Representative)

Retrofitting and insulating homes in Lewisham to achieve climate change targets:

1. Cllr Louise Krupski (Chair)
2. Cllr Patrick Codd
3. Cllr Aisling Gallagher
4. Cllr Tauseef Anwar
5. Cllr Stephen Penfold

3. Policy context

3.1 The Task and Finish Groups will support the Council's corporate priorities (outlined in the Corporate Strategy 2018-22), in particular:

- Making Lewisham Greener
- Building an inclusive local economy
- Delivering and defending: health, social care and support
- Giving children and young people the best start in life.

4. Task and Finish Groups

3.1 As a result of the Local Democracy Review, the Local Democracy Working Group recommended some changes to the Council's practice and approach to scrutiny, including the introduction of time limited Task and Finish Groups (TFGs) to look at topical issues of importance or concern. Most of the practice changes were put into practice during the 2021/22 municipal year, apart from the introduction of TFGs. This was put on hold due to the pandemic. It is now proposed to establish three TFGs.

3.2 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 expert witnesses are 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.
- A copy of each TFG's final report will be circulated by email to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to note, and the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny may suggest that the report is presented to full Council to allow for wider debate, in addition to it being considered by the Mayor and Cabinet for an executive response¹.
- 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.

4. Proposed Groups

4.1 Three groups have been proposed:

Improving digital inclusion for Lewisham residents with a learning disability to improve quality of life

This TFG will consider how greater digital inclusion might be achieved for residents of Lewisham who have a learning disability. This will include specific actions that the Council could take to foster digital inclusion amongst this cohort, including ensuring that council online services are accessible to residents with a learning disability. Over the past year there has been an enormous escalation in the speed of implementation of digital platforms for work and leisure activities – and whilst many people with a learning disability have become digitally enabled, there are still those who have been left behind. Lewisham Speaking Up has researched and produced a report on this issue which articulates some of the key issues that need to be further explored. The Council wants

¹ Statutory Scrutiny Guidance suggests that full Council should be informed of the work of scrutiny and that one way in which this can be done is by reports and recommendations being submitted to full Council rather than solely to the executive. It does not, however, prescribe this, stating that “*Scrutiny should decide when it would be appropriate to submit reports for wider debate in this way, taking into account the relevance of reports to full Council business, as well as full Council’s capacity to consider and respond in a timely manner*”.

and needs to increase the use of universal services by people with extraordinary needs, and as services increasingly move on line, the more enabled residents with all levels of need become, the better they will be able to use the services made available to them.

Improving Wi-Fi access and connectivity to improve educational outcomes for Lewisham's pupils, particularly those most in need

This TFG will consider how access to the internet/wifi can be improved for young people, especially those pupils most in need, as home schooling during the pandemic has suggested this is a significant issue for some young people. The TFG will look to identify failings in internet access and wifi connectivity relied upon by pupils, particularly those already identified as under achieving prior to lockdown due to the pandemic, who may now need to catch-up on learning, via online means outside of the school environment. The Mayor of London has launched a new taskforce to tackle the digital divide, and has allocated £1.5m over the next two years for this, with part of the work being to map out reliable connectivity across London. The TFG can make use of this work, and feed into it, and work alongside schools/officers to help identify those households most in need and provide detailed information for targeted pupil support and to pass on to the Mayor's taskforce team for inclusion in future applications for external funding.

Retrofitting and insulating homes in Lewisham to achieve climate change targets

This TFG will explore how Lewisham Council can ensure that it is doing everything it can to retrofit and insulate homes, both owned and managed by Lewisham and in the private sector, in order to reach its Climate Change target by 2030. Members will look at what is being done to upgrade the Lewisham Homes housing stock; how what we are currently doing compares with other, similar London Boroughs; and good practice from other boroughs and Local Authority advisory bodies. It will consider how we can enforce the Minimum Energy Efficiency standards in terms of private landlords; how we can help home owners to upgrade their own homes and the relationship of retrofitting to the wider economic recovery for Lewisham Post-Covid.

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

5. Proposed Membership and time frame

- 5.1 Nominations for membership of each of the groups are set out in the report recommendation.
- 5.2 The TFGs will hold their first meetings in June. It is envisaged that the groups will complete their work within 6-9 months, by no later than the end of February 2022. 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.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 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 full 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.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The Council's Constitution provides at paragraph 6.11, Article 6 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.”

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 The proposed Task and Finish Groups will specifically consider matters of equality including digital inclusion for pupils from underachieving/marginalised groups and for people with learning disabilities; and how to address matters such as fuel poverty and health inequality when retrofitting homes to make them more sustainable.

9. Climate change and environmental implications

- 9.1 There are no direct climate change or environmental implications arising from this report.

10. Crime and disorder implications

- 10.1 There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

11. Health and wellbeing implications

- 11.1 There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.

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	A committee made up of all non-executive councillors which carries out scrutiny focussing on strategic and cross cutting issues.
Overview & Scrutiny Business Panel (OSBP) and Education OSBP	Lewisham has two Business Panels (sub-committees of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee). OS Business Panel 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. The main functions of Business Panel are reviewing key

	<p>decisions once they have been taken (potentially “calling in” key decisions that have been made but not yet implemented); coordinating and approving the overall scrutiny work programme; and allocating scrutiny work in the event that it crosses the remit of more than one scrutiny body.</p> <p>Three parent governors and two diocesan representatives sit on the Education Business Panel, alongside the councillors that make up the regular Business Panel. The Education Business Panel reviews (and can call-in) key decisions that are education matters.</p>
Task and Finish Group	<p>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.</p>

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