



COUNCIL: 12 October 2022

Report of: Corporate Director of Transformation, Housing and Resources

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor Y Gagen

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22 AND REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To present the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22 and consider how Overview and Scrutiny is working at West Lancashire and seek additional resources in order to undertake the additional work arising from the creation of the four Task & Finish Groups that have been established and the additional pressures in Democratic Services.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22, appended to this report, be noted and the Overview and Scrutiny Committees be commended on their work.
- 2.2 That a permanent allocation of 20 hours per week at Grade SO1 be assigned to facilitate the additional work arising from the creation of four Task & Finish Groups, either as a standalone Democratic Services Officer role or a more substantive role combined with other duties.
- 2.3 That an additional post 'Principal Democratic Services Officer' at Grade PO2 be created, as set out in paragraph 6.3 of this report to address the current resource issues.
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3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report, appended to this report, provides a retrospective insight into the important work undertaken by each of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees during 2021/22 that has made a real difference

to the work of the authority and contains information on some of the subjects our Committees will be scrutinising during 2022/23.

- 3.2 In January 2022 the Council approved a number of recommendations following a review of the Overview & Scrutiny Function in West Lancashire, undertaken by the Member Development Commission. It was resolved "that the Corporate & Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee establish Task and Finish Groups to undertake in depth scrutiny work, rather than the work being undertaken by the main Committee". It was also resolved "that a permanent allocation of 10 hours per week at Grade SO1 at 10 hours per week be assigned to facilitate this work, either as a standalone Member Services Officer role or a more substantive role combined with other duties".

4.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 It was envisaged, when submitting those recommendations to Council in January 2022, that only one Task & Finish Group would be established, to reflect the previous commitment of the Committee, however in 2022/23, four Task and Finish Groups have been established in respect of the following:

1. Community Environmental Improvements, Including Community Orchards
2. Litter Clearance in West Lancashire, Including 'Fly Tipping' And 'Grot Spots'
3. Shop Front Improvements
4. Ormskirk Market

It is therefore apparent that this additional work cannot be accommodated within the current 10 hour per week allocated resource. Commencing the work of Task & Finish Groups has been unachievable within the current resource allocated. This report is therefore seeking approval for an additional 20 hour resource in order to progress this work.

- 4.2 Democratic Services provide a pivotal role in delivery of the Council's governance and decision-making processes. In May 2021 the Council went into a position of no overall control. As a result of which, in addition to the four Task and Finish Groups, new Committees and Working Groups have been created to allow for cross party involvement in key corporate projects. The creation of the new Committees and increased task and finish groups have resulted in a situation where current work demands cannot be met within current resources. Additional resource is required to ensure that proper governance and decision making processes are undertaken correctly irrespective of whether there is a change in governance arrangements and in order to maintain a support service for Councillors in their role.

5.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Overview and Scrutiny arrangements can assist in involving the community in decisions which affect their lives.

6.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are specific financial and resource implications arising from this report. The additional work associated with introducing additional task and finish groups

will require a permanent allocation of 20 hours per week at Grade SO1, either as a standalone Democratic Services Officer role or a more substantive role combined with other duties. A budget commitment of approx. £24,000 is required, which includes on-costs. The additional hours will facilitate and add value to the work being undertaken by the Council and build and evolve the scrutiny function in line with the corporate direction of travel.

6.2 The current staffing structure in Member Services consists of 1 x Democratic Services Manager – FT – Managing Member Services and Elections and the following are details of purely the Members Services Team who also have responsibility for Mayoral Services and Civic Engagements:

- 1 x Senior Democratic Services Officer – FT
- 2 x Democratic Services Officers – PT (4 days per week)
- 1 x Democratic Services Officer – PT (10 hours per week)
- 1 x Apprentice – FT (1 day in college)

6.3 Given the current extensive workloads currently experienced in Member Services, referred to at paragraph 4.2 above, the Council is also asked to approve the creation of one additional member of staff = 1 x full time Principal Democratic Services Officer at Scale PO2 at a cost of up to £53,000, which includes on-costs. Further staffing resources may be required if the proposed change in governance arrangements is approved and once officers have a full understanding of the work required both prior to and after implementation, a full review of staffing will be undertaken.

7.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

7.1 Effective overview and scrutiny arrangements are important in holding the executive to account, policy development and meeting statutory requirements.

8.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from this report, however it is inevitable that there will be future implications arising from the work that scrutiny will undertake at Committees and in the Task and Finish Groups, which will be considered.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

The decision does not have any direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members, or stakeholders. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Appendices

Appendix - Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22