

Appendix A

Joint Scrutiny Framework

Background

In establishing the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership, members of each of the partner councils recognised that there would be matters of common strategic interest which would benefit from a co-ordinated partnership approach.

In progressing such items, it is sensible to establish a joint scrutiny function to consider the matters in depth from a Partnership perspective.

Proposed Approach to Joint Scrutiny

It is important that scrutiny of any topics agreed as being important to the Partnership is conducted jointly but it is also important that such scrutiny is legally and constitutionally robust from the perspective of each sovereign council.

In order to achieve both of the above requirements, each agreed topic will be considered by a Joint Task and Finish Group. The members of each Task and Finish Group be appointed by each of the sovereign councils' appropriate overview and scrutiny committee which are:

- For SHDC, Policy Development Panel or Performance Monitoring Panel
- For ELDC, the Overview Committee
- For BBC, the Overview & Scrutiny – Corporate and Community Committee or the Overview and Scrutiny Environment and Performance Committee

Each principal scrutiny committee will appoint a maximum of three elected members to each established Task and Finish Group (whether from the membership of the 'parent' scrutiny committee or any other non-executive members of the relevant sovereign council) in accordance with their usual process for appointing to Task and Finish Groups. This will enable a wide range of members to be appointed to different Task and Finish Groups. Principal scrutiny committees may also appoint other suitable individuals to Task and Finish Groups as necessary (an example might be an individual from the NHS for a health-related topic).

Where a council has more than one principal scrutiny committee, the scope for a Task and Finish Group will be taken to the principal scrutiny committee whose terms of reference most closely match the topic in question – but with the intention of equal allocation overall so far as practicable.

In order to create the necessary governance link in each council's decision-making process, the Task and Finish Group's recommendations and/or updates will be reported back to each sovereign council's principal scrutiny committee for approval and/or information as appropriate.

Principal scrutiny committees will set the remit of each Task and Finish Group at a high level, but authority to determine the detail of the remit and the required lines of enquiry/witnesses will be delegated to Task and Finish Groups by each parent scrutiny committee.

The Deputy Chief Executive, within whose portfolio the scrutiny topic resides, will appoint the Lead Officer to support the Task and Finish Group; and the final report of any Task and Finish Group will be drafted by the Lead Officer (in consultation with the Task and Finish Group) in order to avoid any suggestion of bias towards any one of the Partnership councils.

In order to ensure that capacity is managed, any joint scrutiny work must have clear benefits and no more than four topics will be scrutinised in any municipal year.

Recommendations from Task and Finish Groups, if supported by the parent scrutiny committees, will be taken through the relevant decision-making process of each Council. The decision-maker will depend upon whether the matter in question is an executive or non-executive function. Recommendations will be tracked by the DEMS Team(s) in liaison with the Lead Officer.

It is recognised that a free and frank exchange of ideas, together with the willingness of witnesses to engage, may be best served by meetings taking place in private. Task and finish groups will, however, be free to meet in public where they feel that this best serves the public interest. Recommendations will in any event be reported to parent scrutiny committees. These meetings will be considered in public unless it is clearly in the public interest not to do so.

The partner Councils will keep this process, and the way it operates alongside place-based scrutiny, under review

Flowchart

