



Report To:	Full Council
Date:	19 th May 2025
Subject:	Scrutiny Arrangements
Purpose:	To consider recommendations for delivering scrutiny within Boston Borough Council
Key Decision:	N/A
Portfolio Holder:	N/A
Report Of:	John Medler, Assistant Director – Governance & Monitoring Officer
Report Author:	Amanda Dickinson, Democratic Services Team Leader
Ward(s) Affected:	N/A
Exempt Report:	No

Summary

This report proposes the adoption of the recommendations made by the Corporate & Community Committee to move to a single standalone overview and scrutiny committee that meets on a regular basis. This change aims to enhance the effectiveness of oversight and accountability within Boston Borough Council.

Recommendations

That Full Council:

1. Establishes a single, standalone Overview and Scrutiny Committee to replace the current Scrutiny Committee arrangements;
2. Constitutes the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee with 15 members, ensuring it convenes regularly, with a review to take place in six months; and
3. Delegates authority to the Assistant Director – Governance and Monitoring Officer to amend the relevant sections of the Constitution accordingly to give effect to the recommendations in this report.

Reasons for Recommendations

The recommendations are based on the following advantages of a single standalone committee:

- Streamlined Decision-Making: Faster review and approval of recommendations;
- Consistency: Unified approach to oversight with all issues reviewed by the same group;
- Resource Optimisation: Cost savings on administrative support and member allowances;
- Better Use of Member Time: Avoids duplication of work, leading to more thorough scrutiny;
- Improved Focus: Holistic view of council activities, ensuring comprehensive oversight; and
- Enhanced Expertise: Members develop deeper expertise across a broader range of issues.

Other Options Considered

Not to change or update the scrutiny function within Boston Borough Council.

1. Background

- 1.1 Boston Borough Council currently operates two Overview and Scrutiny Committees each with a membership of 11 Councillors:
 - Overview & Scrutiny - Corporate & Community Committee
 - Overview & Scrutiny - Environment & Performance Committee
- 1.2 These committees were updated in 2011 following a review by the Audit Commission where they were realigned with the Cabinet portfolios and the Council's Corporate Priorities. At the time, the responsibilities were distributed equally between the two committees to ensure balanced workloads and enable comprehensive policy development, policy review, performance management, and scrutiny reviews.
- 1.3 Currently the committees are linked to old corporate priorities
 - Corporate and Community: People; Public Services
 - Environment and Performance: Prosperity; Place
- 1.4 The terms of reference for the committees are attached at Appendix 1. In the 2024/25 Municipal Year the Corporate and Community Committee met 5 times, the Environment and Performance Committee 4 times and there was 1 joint scrutiny committee meeting.
- 1.5 Given the changes to corporate priorities and the length of time since the previous review it is considered timely and good practice to review the arrangements.

2. Report

2.1 On 8th May 2025, the Corporate & Community Committee met to review the options for delivering scrutiny within Boston Borough Council. A copy of that report is attached as Appendix 1. Members considered the report and provided the following feedback:

- The current arrangements were deemed outdated.
- There was significant duplication of effort in sending reports to both Committees, which was inefficient for both officers and members.
- Reports have been submitted to the incorrect Committee due to misaligned meeting dates and deadlines.
- Task and Finish Groups should adopt a more proactive and progressive approach, led by a strong Chairman. These groups did not have to be restricted to the Committee membership.
- A single committee would have the capacity to scrutinise all matters comprehensively.
- Consolidating to one committee would lead to cost savings.
- It was suggested there should be a single, robust committee with increased membership which should meet more frequently.
- The format and clarity of submitted reports were improving.

2.2 The majority of members expressed a preference for a single, focused committee that would meet more regularly. The Committee recommended that this new committee convene on a monthly basis, a suggestion that has been incorporated into the Democratic Arrangements report, which outlines the Programme of Meetings for 2025/26. With regards the committee size it was felt that a membership of 15 would be an effective size for the new committee to deliver its work programme. The effectiveness of these new arrangements will be reviewed by the new Committee after six months.

3. Conclusion

3.1. The decision to move to a single standalone scrutiny committee is expected to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, and alignment of the scrutiny function with the council's strategic priorities.

Implications

South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

None.

Corporate Priorities

None.

Staffing

The Council's Scrutiny function is managed by the Democratic Services Team and supported by Corporate Support Officers from the Corporate Management Team.

Workforce Capacity Implications

None.

Constitutional and Legal Implications

The proposed changes to the Council's Scrutiny function will require an update to the Council's Constitution and a delegation to the Monitoring Officer to undertake these updates is requested as part of this report.

Data Protection

None.

Financial

Reducing the number of Overview & Scrutiny Committees from two to one would result in an annual saving of £7,500 on the basis of reducing the Chairmen of Overview & Scrutiny Committees and Vice-Chairmen of Overview & Scrutiny Committees allowances within the Members' Allowance Scheme, Part 5 of the Council's Constitution.

Risk Management

None.

Stakeholder / Consultation / Timescales

No consultation undertaken.

Reputation

None.

Contracts

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Equality and Diversity / Human Rights / Safeguarding

None.

Health and Wellbeing

None.

Climate Change and Environment Impact Assessment

None.

Acronyms

None.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Scrutiny Arrangements Review Report submitted to Corporate & Community Committee on 8th May 2025

Background Papers

No background papers as defined in Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the production of this report.

Chronological History of this Report

A report on this item has not been previously considered by a Council body.

Report Approval

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