



Report To:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	30 th April 2026
Subject:	Scrutiny Arrangements Review
Purpose:	To present the findings following a review of the Council's scrutiny arrangements.
Key Decision:	N/A
Portfolio Holder:	N/A
Report Of:	John Medler, Service Director – Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Report Author:	Amanda Dickinson, Democratic Services Team Leader
Ward(s) Affected:	N/A
Exempt Report:	No

Summary

This report sets out the findings of a review of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements following the move to a single-committee model in May 2025. The review was undertaken to assess how the current arrangements have operated in practice.

The review draws on consultation feedback from Members and officers with experience of both the former two-committee structure and the current single-committee arrangement. A clear majority of respondents expressed support for continuing with a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The report presents the key findings from the consultation, summarises the main themes arising and sets out the practical implications of each option for Members' consideration.

Recommendations

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes and considers the findings of the scrutiny arrangements review.

Reasons for Recommendations

- To review the effectiveness of the Council's current scrutiny arrangements which were agreed in May 2025.

Other Options Considered

- Return to a redesigned two-committee scrutiny structure, with updated remits and work programming arrangements – not pursued further due to feedback received through the review.

1. Background

- 1.1 On 19th May 2025, Full Council resolved to amend the Council's scrutiny arrangements, moving from a two-committee structure to a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In approving that change, Members recognised that it would be prudent to keep the new arrangements under review to ensure they were operating effectively and proportionately.
- 1.2 Following a period of operation sufficient to allow the arrangements to be tested in practice, officers were asked to review how the scrutiny function had operated and to present the findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.3 The review focused on comparing the current single-committee arrangements with a two-committee model. The intention was to provide Members with clear, evidence-based information to support decision-making.

2. Scope and Methodology

- 2.1. The review was designed to be proportionate and evidence-led. It focused on practical experience of scrutiny arrangements rather than constitutional theory. Evidence was gathered through targeted questionnaires issued to Members and officers who engage with scrutiny in different roles, including Overview and Scrutiny Members, Cabinet Members, Group Leaders, senior and service-level officers, and Democratic Services Officers.
- 2.2. All questionnaires included a set of core questions to enable comparison across respondent groups. Additional role-specific questions were included to capture perspectives on matters such as Cabinet engagement, political balance, officer workload and administrative sustainability. Responses were analysed to identify common themes and areas of divergence, and these are reflected in the findings set out below.

3. Legislative, Statutory and Best-Practice Context

- 3.1. The Council's Overview and Scrutiny function operates within a statutory framework established by the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended), with further powers and responsibilities set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- 3.2. In undertaking this review, officers have had regard to the Government's Overview and Scrutiny: Statutory Guidance for Councils, which requires local authorities to have regard to its principles and encourages councils to keep their scrutiny arrangements under review to ensure they remain effective and fit for purpose.
- 3.3. The statutory guidance is clear that there is no single prescribed model for scrutiny and that authorities should determine arrangements that reflect their local context. It emphasises the importance of culture, clarity of purpose, constructive challenge and effective engagement with decision-makers, rather than focusing solely on structural arrangements.
- 3.4. Officers have also had regard to recognised sector-led best practice, including guidance from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny and the Local Government Association. This guidance consistently highlights that effective scrutiny is supported by clear work programming, strong Member leadership, manageable workloads and constructive relationships between Members and officers.
- 3.5. This context has informed both the scope of the review and the way in which evidence has been considered and presented.

4. Consultation Overview – Headline Finding

- 4.1. A total of 21 responses were received as part of the consultation exercise.
- 4.2. Of these, 20 respondents expressed a clear preference regarding the future structure of the scrutiny function. One respondent did not indicate a preference for either model.
- 4.3. Of those respondents who expressed a preference:
 - 16 respondents (80%) supported the continuation of a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and
 - 4 respondents (20%) expressed a preference for a two-committee scrutiny model.

5. Summary of Consultation Feedback – Core Questions

5.1. Effectiveness of the Scrutiny Model

- 5.1.1. Responses to the consultation reflected a range of views based on respondents' experience of scrutiny under both the former two-committee structure and the current single-committee arrangements. While opinions differed on specific aspects of operation, the consultation demonstrated a clear majority preference among respondents for the continuation of a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee structure.

- 5.1.2. Respondents supporting the single-committee model commonly referred to improved visibility of scrutiny activity, greater continuity in discussions and a clearer collective understanding of the committee's role and priorities. Officers also noted that a single forum for scrutiny had reduced uncertainty around where items should be considered and enabled more consistent preparation.
- 5.1.3. Those respondents who favoured a two-committee structure identified benefits in terms of focus and the ability to concentrate on specific subject areas. However, these views were expressed by a smaller number of respondents and were not reflective of the majority position.

5.2. **Manageability of Workload**

- 5.2.1. A majority of respondents indicated that scrutiny workload under the single-committee model is manageable. While some acknowledged that individual meetings can be longer, this was commonly viewed as being balanced by the reduction in the overall number of scrutiny meetings and the elimination of duplicated agenda items.
- 5.2.2. Under the former two-committee model, some respondents recalled issues around duplication of reports, overlap between committees and uncertainty over which committee should consider particular items.
- 5.2.3. Several respondents commented that, under the single-committee model, the overall time commitment associated with scrutiny had become more predictable, with fewer meetings and less duplication of papers. Where longer meetings were identified, respondents generally considered this preferable to attending multiple scrutiny committees considering overlapping business.

5.3. **Engagement and Working Relationships**

- 5.3.1. Responses suggested that engagement between Members and officers has generally benefited from the move to a single scrutiny committee. Respondents highlighted clearer communication routes and a more coherent forum for discussion. Although engagement was also regarded as broadly positive under the previous two-committee structure, fewer respondents identified it as a strong advantage of that model when compared with the current arrangements.
- 5.3.2. Officers from across service areas reported clearer expectations around attendance and reporting, with a single scrutiny committee providing a more straightforward point of engagement. From a Member perspective, respondents cited improved continuity of debate and more consistent attendance as contributing to stronger working relationships.

5.4. **Influence on Decision-Making**

- 5.4.1. Views on scrutiny's influence on decision-making varied. However, several respondents indicated that the single-committee model provides clearer alignment with Cabinet and Full Council decision-making timetables, making it easier for scrutiny to engage at the appropriate stage.

5.4.2. A number of responses also noted that scrutiny impact is influenced by factors such as leadership, culture and preparation, rather than committee structure alone.

5.4.3. A number of respondents observed that the alignment of scrutiny meetings with the Forward Plan and decision-making timetable had improved under the single-committee model, supporting earlier and more structured engagement where appropriate.

5.5. **Preferred Model Going Forward**

5.5.1. When asked which scrutiny structure would best support the Council going forward, the majority of respondents indicated support for retaining a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This preference was expressed by both Members and officers and represented the majority position across respondent groups.

6. **Role - Specific Feedback**

6.1. In addition to the core questions, respondents provided feedback from their specific perspectives.

6.2. Cabinet Members commented on the clarity provided by having a single point of scrutiny engagement, noting predictable timings and a clearer interface with decision-making. Group Leader feedback highlighted differing views on representation and participation, with some identifying advantages in a larger scrutiny forum and others noting that additional committees could provide broader opportunities for involvement.

6.3. Officer feedback emphasised improved clarity around where reports should be presented, more predictable reporting timelines and reduced confusion compared with the previous two-committee arrangements. Democratic Services Officers highlighted benefits in terms of workflow, publication cycles and the sustainability of supporting scrutiny within existing resources.

7. **The Way Forward – Options for Consideration**

7.1. The options set out below reflect the evidence gathered through the review and outline the practical implications of each approach:

7.2. **Option 1: Continue with a Single Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

7.2.1. Continuing with a single scrutiny committee would build on the arrangements introduced in May 2025 and supported by the majority of respondents to the consultation. This option would focus on refining and strengthening existing practice rather than introducing further structural change at a time when the Government is looking to reorganise local government in Lincolnshire.

7.2.2. In practical terms, this would include continued development of the scrutiny work programme, consideration of agenda management to ensure adequate time for key items, consideration of task groups for in depth work where this is considered appropriate and ongoing Member development to support effective scrutiny. From

an officer perspective, this option is considered administratively sustainable within existing resources.

7.3. Option 2: Return to a Two-Committee Scrutiny Model

- 7.3.1. A decision to return to a two-committee model would not represent a simple reinstatement of previous arrangements as these were based on old corporate priorities. If Members were minded to pursue this option, further work would be required to redesign committee remits, update terms of reference and align work programming with current corporate priorities.
- 7.3.2. Additional considerations would include scheduling, Member capacity and officer support requirements. Further preparatory work would therefore be necessary before such a change could be implemented.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1. The review demonstrates that both single-committee and two-committee scrutiny models are capable of supporting effective scrutiny when appropriately designed and supported. However, consultation feedback shows that a clear majority of respondents who expressed a preference favoured the continuation of a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Implications

South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

None.

Corporate Priorities

Effective overview and scrutiny supports good governance across all corporate priorities.

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

Any changes to the Council's Scrutiny function would require an update to the Council's Constitution.

Data Protection

None.

Financial

Increasing the number of Overview & Scrutiny Committees from one to two would result in an additional expense on the basis of increasing the number of allowances paid to Chairmen of Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Vice-Chairmen of Overview & Scrutiny Committee within the Members' Allowance Scheme, Part 5 of the Council's Constitution.

Risk Management

Ineffective scrutiny arrangements may weaken governance and accountability.

Stakeholder / Consultation / Timescales

Targeted consultation with Members and officers was undertaken between March and April 2026.

Reputation

Effective scrutiny arrangements support public confidence in the Council's governance and decision-making.

Contracts

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Equality and Diversity / Human Rights / Safeguarding

None.

Health and Wellbeing

None.

Climate Change and Environment Impact Assessment

Not undertaken.

Acronyms

None.

Appendices

None.

Background Papers

Background papers used in the production of this report are listed below: -

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Scrutiny Arrangements Review	Overview & Scrutiny – Corporate and Community Committee on 8 th May 2025: http://modgovbb.bostonad.dom/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=2341&Ver=4
Scrutiny Arrangements	Full Council on 19 th May 2025: http://modgovbb.bostonad.dom/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=132&MId=2153&Ver=4

Chronological History of this Report

Name of Body	Date
Overview & Scrutiny – Corporate and Community Committee	8 th May 2025
Full Council	19 th May 2025

Report Approval

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