

REVIEW OF PUBLIC SPEAKING AT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL MEETINGS

Overview and Scrutiny Panel **25 April 2017**

Report Author	Committee Services Manager
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Derek Crow-Brown, Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance
Status	For Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision	No
Previously Considered by	Constitutional Review Working Party – 8 June 2016 Standards Committee – 28 June 2016 Council – 14 July 2016

Executive Summary:

This report summarises the trial of public speaking at Overview and Scrutiny Panel meetings. It outlines the number of people that spoke at meetings of the panel and the subjects they spoke on, the experience of Democratic Services in administering the scheme and allows the Panel to express their views on whether they felt public speaking added value to the Scrutiny process. It then allows the Panel to express a view as to whether they feel the trial should be extended.

Recommendation(s):

The Panel could:

- 1) Choose to express the view that the trial should be extended for a further period of time (suggested above to be a year).
- 2) Note the report and take no further action.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money	There are no financial implications to the report.
Legal	Under section 37 of the Localism Act 2011, the Council must prepare and keep up to date a constitution. Whether to allow public speaking or not is a matter for the Council to determine.
Corporate	Introducing public speaking to committees relates directly to the Council Value 3: Promoting open communications.
Equalities Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty	Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a

	<p>protected characteristic and people who do not share it.</p> <p>Protected characteristics: age, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Please indicate which aim is relevant to the report.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.</td> <td style="text-align: center;">✓</td> </tr> </table> <p>Introducing public speaking has opened up the Council's decision making process and allowed more people to engage in the democratic process. If the scheme is continued the Council would continue not discriminate or restrict the ability to speak at meetings for any of the protected groups and would always try to accommodate requests for additional help where possible.</p>	Please indicate which aim is relevant to the report.		Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,		Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it		Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.	✓
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CORPORATE PRIORITIES (tick those relevant)✓	
A clean and welcoming Environment	
Promoting inward investment and job creation	
Supporting neighbourhoods	

CORPORATE VALUES (tick those relevant)✓	
Delivering value for money	
Supporting the Workforce	
Promoting open communications	✓

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 This report reviews the trial of the public speaking at Overview and Scrutiny Panel meetings and allows the Panel to recommend that it either continues or ends.

2.0 The Public Speaking Trial

- 2.1 Full Council agreed at its meeting on 14 July 2016 to amend the council's constitution to allow a trial of public speaking at meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to take place. The report explained that a review of the scheme would be scheduled for Spring 2017 and part of this the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel would be sought.
- 2.2 The scheme allowed Members of the public to register to speak for a maximum of three minutes on any item under discussion by the Panel. The trial period covered O&S meetings on 16 August, 25 October, 21 November, 13 December, 26 January and 14 February.
- 2.3 Only two members of the public have taken up the opportunity to speak to the Panel; these were on the subjects of the Thanet Local Plan consultation and Fulfilling Thanet's growth and development opportunities.
- 2.4 The communications team have been publicising the ability to speak at Overview and Scrutiny Panel meetings via Twitter through the trial period and especially so after Christmas.

2.5 It is self-evident that the level of take up has been disappointing. However, anecdotally the evidence from those people who have taken the opportunity to speak has been good and they appreciated the opportunity to share their views on the matters under discussion.

3.0 What happens next?

3.1 Whilst there is little evidence to suggest that the trial has been a success there is little to no evidence to say that it has been a failure. It is the view of Democratic Services that the scheme was straightforward to administer and did not take up much officer time. Whilst it is for members to form a view regarding the conduct and flow of meetings when there was public speaking, it is the view of Democratic Services that the flow of the meetings were not adversely affected by the addition of public speaking.

3.2 The view of Democratic Services is that there is no evidence from the trial to support the expansion of public speaking to other committees at TDC not already covered by their own public speaking rules. However Democratic Services believe that an extension of the trial for a further year could be justified as more people become aware of the ability to speak, the positive response of those that did speak and the minor levels of Democratic support needed to run the scheme.

3.3 The Panel could however take the view that the evidence provided does support any extension of the scheme. If this is the case then the Panel should simply note the report, as the amendments that were made the Council's constitution to allow for the trial were time limited and so not further action would be needed.

4.0 Options

4.1 The Panel could:

- 1) Choose to express the view that the trial should be extended for a further period of time (suggested above to be a year).
- 2) Note the report and take no further action.

5.0 Next Steps

5.1 If the Panel wishes to further extend the trial then Democratic Services will write a report to Council asking that the trial be continued for another year, making the views of the Panel known.

Contact Officer:	Nicholas Hughes, Committee Services Manager
Reporting to:	Tim Howes, Director of Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer

Annex List

None	N/A
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Background Papers

Title	Details of where to access copy
None	

Corporate Consultation

Finance	Nicola Walker, Finance Manager - HRA, Capital & External Funding
Legal	Tim Howes, Director of Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer