

Scrutiny Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference

ENHANCING DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING

Intended outcome of the scrutiny work:

To identify actions that will increase and enhance opportunities for deliberative democracy and active citizen participation in decision-making in Norwich.

Purpose of the task & finish group:

The purpose of the task & finish group is to develop an understanding of:

- how opportunities for deliberative democracy and active citizen participation in decision-making in Norwich could be increased and enhanced;
- how more participatory/deliberative forms of democracy could help improve council decision-making and facilitate input from a diverse range of residents;
- how more opportunities for active democratic participation could help increase residents' democratic participation skills/capacities and improve information sharing with residents.

The task & finish group will gather relevant evidence by exploring the experiences of and lessons learned by institutions, including other local authorities, government departments and universities, that have trialed/implemented participatory and deliberative forms of democracy.

Governance:

The task & finish group will consist of up to 7 members and does not need to be politically balanced but should be politically representative (i.e. all groups have at least one member). The quorum will be 3.

The Scrutiny Committee shall appoint to the task & finish group and select a Chair.

The task & finish group will determine its own schedule of meetings.

The group shall aim to form a consensus on its recommendations and proposals. Where this cannot be achieved, then votes may be taken by a show of hands, with the Chair holding a casting vote.

The task & finish group is a non-decision-making group and any recommendations must be fed into the Scrutiny Committee.

Support for the task & finish group:

The task & finish group will receive governance and administrative support from the Head of Legal and Governance and the Democratic Services Team.

Other council officers will be made available to provide the task & finish group with expert and technical advice as required.

The task & finish group may also wish to invite external experts to participate in the review to help support and complement their work.

The task & finish group does not have an allocated budget, therefore any work incurring expenditure (beyond officer time) must be approved by the appropriate decision maker.

Stakeholders and Engagement:

The task & finish group will necessarily need to consult and engage with a range of stakeholders and persons with relevant experience as part of this review.

The tasks & finish group will agree these key persons and organisations at its first meeting.

Methodology and timeframes:

To be agreed at the first meeting of the task & finish group.

A progress report on the work of the task & finish group should be made at regular intervals to the Scrutiny Committee.

Expectations on members of the task & finish group:

All members of the task & finish group will be expected to actively contribute to its effective operation. This will include:

- Supporting the group in delivering against its objectives as set out in these terms of reference;
- Being prepared for meetings, having read papers and ensured they are familiar with the subject matter of the meeting.
- Actively contributing to debate and the reaching of conclusions.
- Be creative in their thinking and challenge preconceptions.
- Act responsibly, focusing on what's achievable within the Council's budgetary constraints and competing priorities.
- Think about the benefits to the wider City and not just specific individuals or areas.

Members may also be called upon to undertake specific tasks as agreed by the group which could include briefing committees or members of their own group on the progress achieved; acting as spokespeople at stakeholder events or undertaking research on behalf of the group.

The task & finish group is expected to form ideas and proposals. To do so, group members may exchange ideas in a free and frank way; they may test sensitive or controversial proposals that may then be rejected. To discuss these in a public forum without collective agreement could be damaging and undermine the work of the group. To be effective, the group must operate in a manner of mutual trust and respect which includes:

- a) Even if members may individually disagree with proposals put forward, once the group has resolved a matter, recognising that there is then collective accountability for the decision reached
- b) Not attributing specific ideas to individuals unless specifically agreed otherwise
- c) Treating private discussions of the group as confidential.

It is expected that unless stated otherwise, all papers and reports of the group should be treated as confidential.

Expectations on the Chair of the group:

The Chair's primary role is to ensure the effective operation of group meetings. This will include supporting effective debate amongst group members and ensuring the group reaches sound and clear conclusions.

However, the role goes deeper and the chair may be called upon to undertake the following specific roles in addition to their duties as a task & finish group member above:

- a) Liaising with Council Officers on the progress of the group's work, ensuring that points raised by group members have been reflected in research and reports
- b) Liaise with the Portfolio Holder(s), keeping them informed on the work of the group and testing ideas and proposals for their acceptability
- c) Contacting stakeholder groups
- d) Acting as a lead spokesperson on behalf of the group
- e) Presenting reports of the group, including progress reports, to the appointing committee.