

Final report of the review of the informal process for selecting the Chairman of OSCOM

Report of the Chairman of the Panel, Councillor Celia Dowden

Recommended:

That OSCOM endorses the final conclusions of the panel and that the informal process piloted in 2021 is adopted for use in future years.

SUMMARY:

- This report brings together the final conclusions of the panel that has reviewed the informal process for selecting the candidate for Chair of OSCOM following the piloting of a new approach in 2021.

1 Introduction

1.1 In February 2021 OSCOM considered the initial findings of a review chaired by Cllr Celia Dowden. The review sought to identify if there are opportunities to refine the current informal process to select the proposed candidate for Chairman of OSCOM for consideration at Annual Council. A copy of the report can be found via the following link:

<http://modgov1-tvbc/documents/s13980/OSCOM%20chair%20report.pdf>

1.2 The review focused on how the informal process can enable members to learn more about prospective candidates and how they will meet the qualities of the role description and what they will bring to the role of chairman if selected.

1.3 OSCOM endorsed the findings of the panel, and a new informal process was piloted in 2021. The panel then reconvened for a further meeting to evaluate the pilot and make any final recommendations as a result. The final conclusions of the panel are set out in this report and if endorsed, the informal process will run again in 2022 and in subsequent years should the committee wish to continue to do so.

2 Background

2.1 The Chair of OSCOM is appointed each year at Annual Council in May. Appointment by Council is a constitutional requirement.

2.2 For several years OSCOM has undertaken an informal process which culminates in a secret ballot of members that enables a nomination for the role of OSCOM Chairman to be put forward to Annual Council. Members of OSCOM expressed a desire to refine the informal process so that members can feel more informed about the role, skills and attributes required which they can then consider when selecting a nomination for chairman.

- 2.3 The rationale for the review was in recognition of the important role that OSOCM (and therefore the Chairman) plays as part of the council's governance both scrutinising the work of the Cabinet and playing an active and collaborative role in supporting policy overview and development.
- 2.4 The panel's work focused on two key areas; namely the role of the chairman and what this means in practice for the person fulfilling the role, and secondly, on the informal process and proposals for how this could be undertaken in the future to enable members to learn more about candidates wishing to be considered for the role.
- 2.5 The informal process that was piloted in 2021 as a result of the review involved the following elements:
- All members (excluding those serving on Cabinet) of the Council were invited to put their names forward if they wished to be considered for the role of Chairman of OSCOM
 - Prospective Candidates wishing to be considered for the role of Chairman made a 10-minute presentation to members on what they would bring to the role (this was undertaken online due to pandemic restrictions).
 - The presentation session was chaired by the Mayor
 - A secret ballot then followed the presentations which was open for two weeks.
 - The selected candidate was then put forward as the nomination to Annual Council for approval.

3 Feedback following the pilot of the informal process

- 3.1 Members were invited by the panel to provide feedback on the pilot of the new informal process. In general terms there was a consensus that the new process had enabled members to learn more about prospective candidates and therefore had added value to the process. A small number of issues were highlighted which the panel have now considered, and their recommendations are set out below.
- 3.2 ***Should the presentation by the candidates be undertaken online or in person?*** The panel felt that on balance the presentations should take place in person where possible and potentially ahead of an OSCOM meeting similar to when roundtables normally take place.
- 3.3 ***Should the presentations be recorded and made available for members to watch if they are unable to attend the main session?*** The panel felt that this should be supported and would enable all members to be able to take part and be more inclusive by making the presentations available online ahead of the secret ballot taking place.
- 3.4 ***Should candidates be given three specific questions to answer in their presentation or should it be a more generic question about the role and what they will bring to it?*** The panel felt that given the nature of the role it is incumbent on candidates to bring together a presentation based on their understanding of what the key issues for the committee are, and what they will bring to the role so a more generic question would be more appropriate.

- 3.5 ***Should the process be undertaken annually?*** The Panel felt that it should be undertaken annually as the Chairman of OSCOM is appointed by Council each year.
- 3.6 ***Should the work undertaken by the panel to develop the Job Description of the Chairman be included as an annex to the OSCOM handbook?*** The Panel felt this would be appropriate.
- 3.7 If OSCOM is supportive of these recommendations then it is proposed they form part of the informal process that was piloted and is set out in 2.5.

4 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 4.1 OSCOM has a vital and statutory role to play as part of the council's governance structure both scrutinising the work of the Cabinet and playing an active and collaborative role in supporting policy overview and development. Examples such as the committee's role in the development of the corporate plan and the council's climate change action plan demonstrate the important role of OSCOM of which the Chair plays a significant role in bringing together.

5 Consultations/Communications

- 5.1 The chairman of the panel has brought together a number of members from across the overview and scrutiny committee to undertake this piece of work. Following the completion of the initial review, consultation with the political group leaders was undertaken ahead of piloting the informal process. Members were then subsequently invited to provide feedback on their experience of the new process which has informed this final report of the panel.

6 Options

- 6.1 OSCOM can endorse the proposals, endorse with amendment or not endorse.

7 Resource Implications

- 7.1 None

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1 The proposals contained within this report reflect the informal process of the selection of the chairman and therefore do not have any legal or constitutional implications.

9 Equality Issues

- 9.1 None

10 Other Issues

- 10.1 None

Conclusion

- 10.2 The purpose of the panel was to explore options for how the informal process for the selection of chair could be enhanced to enable members to learn more about perspective candidates and how they will meet the qualities of the role description and what they will bring to the role of chair if selected. The rationale for this is in recognition of the important role that the OSCOM Chairman fulfils in enabling the committee to meeting its overview and scrutiny responsibilities. The proposals of which the recommendation refers to will provide a practical and proportionate way in which to undertake the informal process.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u>			
<u>Confidentiality</u> It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.			
No of Annexes:	1		
Author:	Cllr Celia Dowden	Ext:	
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