

Review of Outside Bodies Final Report

Report of the Panel Lead Member, Councillor C Dowden

Recommended:

That the findings of the panel be endorsed.

SUMMARY:

- This report brings together the final conclusions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee panel to review the arrangements in place for councillor's representation on outside bodies. This report follows the initial findings report that was presented to the committee in April 2021.
- The panel felt that the overall benefits of members being appointed to outside bodies was an important aspect of their community leadership role.
- The panel concluded that there shouldn't be any significant changes to the current arrangements regarding member representation on outside bodies. However, the panel agreed that there are opportunities to improve the way in which members report on their work as part of serving on an outside body, so that the council is able to have a broader understanding of the contribution these organisations are making and any issues they may be facing. This report brings together the work to develop this further.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report brings together the final conclusions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee panel to review the arrangements in place for member representation on outside bodies.

2 Background

- 2.1 In 2021 Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned a panel to review the arrangements in place for member representation of outside bodies. The Panel, chaired by Councillor C. Dowden, reviewed the current list of organisations, the process for how member representation was requested and considered the mechanisms in place for how members could add most value by being a representative on an outside body.
- 2.2 The Panel reported its initial conclusions in April 2021 and Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved that it would endorse the overall findings of the panel. In addition the committee requested that the panel work with the council's Member and Community Development group to take forward some of the proposals contained within the review and explore how they could be developed further. This work has now been undertaken and this report brings together the final proposals for consideration by the committee so that the review can be concluded.

3 Findings of the panel

- 3.1 The panel met on five occasions and was chaired by Cllr Celia Dowden. It also included; Cllr Lodge, Cllr Parker, Cllr Hamilton.
- 3.2 The panel felt that the overall benefits of members being appointed to outside bodies was an important aspect of their community leadership role. This was seen as a reciprocal arrangement in that it not only provides support to such bodies in their endeavours, but also enables the council to have a deeper understanding of the invaluable work that such bodies fulfil and the benefit they bring to local communities across the borough.
- 3.3 The panel accepted that representation on outside bodies was not a one-size-fits-all approach. Some members will be more involved than others with some taking on key roles within the organisation and others providing more of an ambassadorial role or being a key contact. Overall the panel felt that this provides an opportunity for the council to hear more about local organisations, what they do and how they serve the community.
- 3.4 The panel concluded that there should not be any significant changes to the current arrangements regarding member representation on outside bodies. However, the panel agreed that there are opportunities to improve the way in which members report on their work as part of serving on an outside body, so that the council is able to have a broader understanding of the contribution these organisations are making and any issues they may be facing. The panel requested that the Member and Community Development Group, be asked to further develop these options for how to improve the feedback mechanisms for members who are representatives on outside bodies so that it is developed within the wider context of the council's work with local communities.
- 3.5 The Member and Community Development has now completed its work and has fed back to the panel. The following conclusions have been adopted by the panel and form the basis of its conclusions for consideration by Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.5.1 The current list of outside bodies (attached in annex one) are categorised into the following groups:
- Mayoral
 - Local charity/group (predominantly ward or town based)
 - TV-wide charity/group
 - Partnership
 - Strategic Body
- 3.5.2 These groupings provide a clearer view of the types of organisations that seek representation from the council. They help define the level and type of communication that may be relevant dependent on the scale of the work of the organisation.

- 3.5.3 The panel felt that some of the groups to which the Mayor is appointed should be reviewed in future years. The Democratic Services Manager will undertake more research about the nature of Mayoral appointments to outside bodies, to determine how the council can best support these organisations alongside managing the demands placed upon the Mayor.
- 3.5.4 The panel recognised that the number of organisations requesting a representative has reduced over recent years. In the main, representation on outside bodies are linked to specific portfolios or are ward-specific. In general the panel felt that there needs to be greater clarity on what organisations are looking for from a representative of the council, and what role they would like councillors to fulfil. To support this, council officers will be more proactive each year in seeking this information from prospective organisations as part of the annual review before a member is nominated to take up a role.
- 3.5.5 In considering how Members could be better inducted/supported in taking up a role with an outside body, the panel felt that more information is required upon appointment. In conjunction with the Member and Community Development Group, the panel have developed an Outside Bodies Information Sheet (annex two) which will be used to provide members with bespoke information on the organisation that they have been appointed to, the nature of the role, how they can access relevant training and support and the methods they can best use to communicate information about the organisation they are working with. Where required for more in-depth roles such as trusteeships, the Democratic Services Manager will work with respective members to ensure access to appropriate training and accessible guidance to support them is in place.
- 3.5.6 The panel also concluded that it would be beneficial for the wider membership of the council if the process by which representatives on outside bodies report back be improved. The panel recognised however, that this needs to be proportionate and informative rather than procedural as it is about understanding the added value of organisations rather than a form of performance management.
- 3.5.7 To support members in being able to communicate about the organisation they are supporting, it is proposed that this should now be aligned with the categories of the groups which reflects the scale or reach of the organisation. Democratic services will work with members who are appointed to outside bodies to support them in sharing information through the most appropriate channels using internal methods such as the new Members Information Bulletin and through wider communications channels where appropriate. The panel felt that members should also be encouraged to provide a first report via the members information bulletin which should be a fuller description, introducing the organisation what it does and the value for TVBC residents. It is suggested that this first report is produced following appointment to an outside body in the first year of the council. It is proposed that this commences from 2023.

- 3.6 The panel's final conclusion recognises the difference between those organisations who are outside bodies and are seeking a representative from the council (as listed in the spreadsheet in annex one), compared to those voluntary sector organisations who receive funding from the council. For those organisations who receive funding, separate reporting and monitoring of this will be undertaken by the Community Manager who will provide a report to Overview and Scrutiny committee on an annual basis

4 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 4.1 The council's corporate plan sets out a clear commitment to support local communities and recognises the important democratic role local councillors play in ensuring the needs of all our communities are heard. Working with local organisations and outside bodies forms an important way in which members can advocate on behalf of the needs of local communities and support local voluntary action.

5 Consultations/Communications

- 5.1 Each year the council seeks feedback from the outside bodies which request a representative. As part of this overview and scrutiny review, members were given the opportunity to feedback on their experiences to inform the work of the panel.

6 Options

- 6.1 OSCOM has the option to endorse the findings of the panel, make amendments and endorse or not to endorse the findings of the panel.

7 Resource Implications

- 7.1 None

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1 None

9 Equality Issues

- 9.1 None

10 Other Issues

- 10.1 Wards/Communities Affected – All

11 Conclusion

- 11.1 The panel felt that the overall benefits of members being appointed to outside bodies was an important aspect of their community leadership role. The panel concluded that there shouldn't be any significant changes to the current arrangements regarding member representation on outside bodies. However, the panel agreed that there are opportunities to improve the way in which members report on their work as part of serving on an outside body so that the council is able to have a broader understanding of the contribution these organisations are making and any issues they may be facing. The final conclusions of the panel have been developed in conjunction with the Member and Community Development Group and could be implemented in time for 2023.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u>			
None			
<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:	2		
Author:	James Moody	Ext:	8130
File Ref:	N/A		
Report to:	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Date:	2 March 2022