Aberdeenshire
C O U N C I L   **Business Services**

REPORT TO PROCEDURES COMMITTEE – 24th MAY 2019

SCRUTINY AT ABERDEENSHIRE – TRAINING PROPOSALS

1   Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

1.1   consider and comment on the proposed training programme on the Scrutiny at Aberdeenshire process for Members and Officers, as detailed in Appendix 1.

2   Background / Discussion

2.1   The Independent Auditor's report in 2017/2018 highlighted an issue relating to the scrutiny arrangements implemented as part of the Scheme of Governance in January 2017. It was considered that the new scrutiny arrangements had not been used by the Council's policy committees and this could present a risk that Council decisions were not subject to effective scrutiny. The report recommended that support and training on the scrutiny process be delivered to Members and Officers. A commitment to deliver such support and training was provided by the Director of Business Services and is the subject of this report.

2.2   Training on the implementation of the Scheme of Governance, including the new Scrutiny arrangements, was delivered to Officers and Members over October 2016 to January 2017. Since then however, a new Council has been appointed in May 2017, and some Members may not have benefitted from this earlier training. Support to committees on undertaking scrutiny work has been provided on a case by case basis by the Governance Team and Governance Service Champions. During delivery of the original training, a need for further in-depth training on scrutiny workshops and investigations (i.e. Stages 2 and 3 of the Scrutiny at Aberdeenshire process) was identified and delivery of this training remains outstanding as, to date, there have been no decisions by any committee to proceed beyond a Stage 1 scrutiny report and all scrutiny activity has completed without the need for a workshop or investigation. It is also apparent that committees are not applying the formal Scrutiny at Aberdeenshire process, although are likely carrying out scrutiny of a more informal nature. It is hoped that by providing training on the Scrutiny at Aberdeenshire process, that committees will be able to identify service delivery areas where such scrutiny could be usefully applied, and in turn will be empowered to make full use of their scrutiny role.

2.3   Discussion has taken place with the Training and Development Unit with a view to developing a program for delivery of further training and a draft training plan is attached at Appendix 1 for consideration. The Training and Development Unit is of the view that the first training sessions should be based on the Scrutiny at Aberdeenshire guidance itself, which provides clear and concise advice and information on the scrutiny process.

2.4   It is proposed that an initial series of workshop sessions be delivered over the months of September and October 2019 (dates to be agreed). An online version of the training will also be considered and made available on ALDO, if required. Feedback from these training workshops will be used to identify any amendments required to the Scrutiny at Aberdeenshire guidance document and to confirm the requirements and timeline for the delivery of additional in-depth training on Stages 2 and 3 i.e. the management of workshops and investigations.

2.5   In addition to the scrutiny training, work has been ongoing within the Strategic Policy Team to review performance monitoring reports to link to Council priorities, provide more meaningful information to Members at area and policy committee level and to more clearly demonstrate the connection between performance monitoring and the scrutiny role of committees.

2.6   The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and they are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

3   Scheme of Governance

3.1   The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section R of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to matters arising from the Scheme of Governance.

4   Implications and Risk

4.1   An equality impact assessment is not required because the proposals contained in this report will not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.

4.2   There are no direct staffing and financial implications arising as a result of the proposals contained in this report.

4.3   The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level: ACORP004 Business and organisational change (including: ensuring governance structures support change; and, managing the pace of change). The Council needs to be assured that it has the best fit of decision making so as to make it an agile and efficient body and a governance structure that reflects and serves well the communities whose priorities it is here to deliver. The link is here to the *Corporate Risk Register).*

Ritchie Johnston
Director of Business Services

Report prepared by Ann Riddell (Principal Committee Officer)
2nd May 2019

APPENDIX 1

Proposal for Scrutiny Training in Workshop – Elected members and Officers

To develop a meaningful learning opportunity by providing experiential workshops which are learner centred and engage participants in real activities.

The workshops will be designed to encourage discussion by using actual reports to identify where improvement could be made in preparing and presenting reports and areas of good practice.

Workshop for Members:

Brief overview of the Scrutiny in Aberdeenshire reinforcing scrutiny is the responsibility of every Member and every Committee.

Examples of undertaking continual scrutiny – formal and informal with examples.

Where Committees seek further assurance describe 3 Stage process.

Using reports to facilitate discussion around the areas of good questioning for the Officer to provide a report containing adequate re-assurance for the Committee.

Monitoring – annual report.

Workshop for Lead Officers:

Brief overview of the Scrutiny in Aberdeenshire reinforcing the role of scrutiny.

Triggers for further reassurance

The roles and responsibilities at each stage of the scrutiny process.

Using reports to identify whether the response is as comprehensive as requested or is lacking in detail.