

**28 September 2017**

**Scrutiny reports – the approach of the Education and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Ward(s)** All

**Report:**

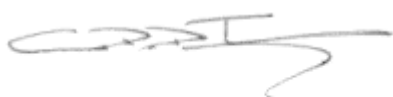
At the last meeting of the Scrutiny Overview Committee in June 2017 the Committee discussed issues with Members being presented with long and complex reports and whether or not there were any alternative approaches that could reduce this but still ensure that Members were well informed.

The Education and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (E&CS OSC) are currently piloting an approach which seeks to reduce the length of reports to no more than 6 pages. At the meeting reports are not presented by officers, as members are expected to have read the papers, and the item moves directly to questions. A copy of the guidance note issued to officers is attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

**Recommendation:**

**That:**

- 1. the approach of Education and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee be debated, and;**
- 2. the Committee continue the pilot on the described approach to the production and presentation of reports and provide feedback on the approach to the Scrutiny Overview Committee on 13 March 2018.**



**Councillor Chris Towe**  
**Chair, Education and Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

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## **Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee: A guide on the production and presentation of reports to the Committee**

This document encapsulates the views of the Chair of the Committee and the Executive Director (Children's Services). It is intended to perform two functions. Firstly, it is a guide to preparing committee reports; secondly, it offers advice on presenting a committee report effectively.

### **Producing your report**

1. Committee reports should follow the standard format approved by Corporate Management Team and the appropriate template is provided by Democratic Services.
2. In order for Members to reach informed decisions, reports must contain accurate, relevant and sufficient information, and they should not normally exceed 6 sides of A4.
3. Reports must be concise, focused and well-reasoned; they should not contain information that is irrelevant, repetitive or superfluous. Jargon, clichés and colloquialisms are to be avoided and if acronyms are used they must be explained at the first point of usage.
4. Recommendations must be given under the 'Recommendations' section of the report template and not elsewhere in the report. They must be clearly expressed and imprecisions, such as: 'That the course of action set out in the report be approved' should be avoided.
5. Appendices should be used sparingly. If additional documents have been used in a report's preparation, it is usually unnecessary to append them to the report. Either provide a link to a website so that the document can be downloaded or include a sentence advising Members to contact the report's author directly for further information and provide relevant contact details.
6. To minimise printing costs and turnaround times, colour documents should be avoided unless absolutely essential. Wherever possible, reports will be printed in black and white.
7. If spreadsheets are included they must be correctly formatted by the author so that they are ready to print and they must be easy to read, even if this means using A3 paper size.
8. The agenda/reports are produced in booklet form and pagination for the whole document occurs at the printing stage. Therefore, do not include page numbers or headers/footers. If a cross-reference needs to be made in the report, refer to the relevant section of the report rather than to a page number.

### **Presenting your report**

1. The Chair, Executive Director (Children's Services) and Democratic Services Officer will have planned the Committee's agenda and the times allocated per item to be considered to reflect the priorities and the remit of the Committee, and to enable it to undertake the fullest scrutiny.
2. A running order will have been prepared, so that each agenda item is allotted a period of time for consideration and discussion by the Committee that is both reasonable and sufficient.
3. Consideration of each item will commence with questions from elected Members. In addressing these, officers should ensure that responses are succinct and explanations not overly elaborate. Officers should expect that the Chair will ask them to summarise to bring Members into the discussion and enabling them to ask any supplementary questions.
4. Officers should also adhere to the timing because to do otherwise may be a cause of inconvenience to other colleagues who are attending to report on subsequent items.
5. If invited to give a presentation to the Committee, a suggested format would be as follows. Give an overview of the topic, explaining why the report has been made and what action is proposed; provide a succinct explanation of the principal points contained within the report; offer a brief concluding statement and reiteration of the recommendations being made.

6. The presentation should not simply repeat what has already been stated in the report, as Members will have read this; nor (unless unavoidable) should it introduce new material that has not been included, as Members will question why it was not featured in the report.

**Councillor Chris Towe**  
**Chair of the Education and**  
**Children's Services**  
**Overview and Scrutiny**  
**Committee**

**Executive Director**  
**(Children's Services)**

**Dr Paul Fantom**  
**Democratic Services Officer**