

## **The workshop session**

**Present: Cllrs Bill Williams (chair), Helen Dennis, Peter Babudu, Alice MacDonald, Hamish**

**McCallum, Leanne Werner, Jason Ochere, Maria Linforth-Hall, David Noakes, Jon Hartley**

**Officers: Sunita Sharma (external facilitator), Stephen Gaskell, Julie Timbrell, Shelley Burke**

Cllr Bill Williams set out the purpose of the evening - for OSC to own the process of moving to the new model, holding to the principals of openness, transparency, and being dynamic. He suggested that the committee build a review of the changes into their work programme and be open to the idea that the council may want to strike a balance between sub-committee and task and finish approach and so ultimately move to hybrid model. Constitutional steering panel had also asked for a further paper and this would need to be timed so that any constitutional changes could be recommended to council assembly.

Sunita Sharma asked the members to state the values they hold for scrutiny, and suggested these are used to look back and review the model. To assist the discussion, she shared experience she had gathered from other councils who are operating a task and finish model for scrutiny. She suggested that the review of model should focus on what was intended and what impact has there been - what's been gained and what's been lost? She also suggested it was important to hold on to strengths where Southwark had received external accreditation e.g. LGA peer review and Ofsted. It would be important to be disciplined about the work programme and to manage carefully incoming referrals to scrutiny

Values:

I want Southwark scrutiny to be

- Effective
- Objective
- Responsive
- Affect change
- Accessible
- Transparent
- Independent
- Open
- Efficient
- Flexible
- Rigorous
- Fair
- Well thought out
- Representative
- Participatory

## **Discussion**

There was consensus around moving to some degree of task and finish style of working. The issue for further consideration is how that applies to all areas of scrutiny work, particularly ongoing scrutiny of the local NHS bodies.

Scrutiny operating style:

- meeting design and approach – some task and finish models include holding meetings in private in order to gather sensitive information that a witness might not share in an open session. This would need to be balanced against principle of transparency – not necessarily a desired approach.
- the more focussed task and finish approach might create opportunity for enhanced communication and public engagement
- accessible language important – not convinced by the term “task and finish” – suggest shift to time limited “commissions”
- how to prioritise? Could task and finish groups look at the 4 most “wicked” issues and leave all other business matters to OSC?
- Consider lead member reps at OSC e.g. health as the starter focus.
- Reporting back into Executive – how to ensure flow in, to and from OSC

Structural points:

- concern over loss of health standing committee and risk of reduced scrutiny of NHS – could a hybrid model work?
- could a sub group be established to look only at call ins?
- numbers on task & finish – be flexible, maybe look at smaller groups but need to be mindful of proportionality.

### **Conclusions (Chair)**

- General agreement to establish lead OSC members to focus on areas of concern / focus e.g. health as the starting point
- Reframe task and finish and call them Scrutiny Commissions
- Plan and next steps:
  - Start date (July?) including 6 month stock take and 12 month review.
  - Outline terms of reference for each of the commissions
  - Focus from previous years' work – how best to feed in/capture?
  - Read across into community councils – how to bring in a public element to agenda setting?