



## **Overview and Scrutiny Board –**

### **Task Group/Short, Sharp Inquiry Procedure Guidelines**

There are two ways in which the Overview and Scrutiny Board can complete an in depth investigation of a topic.

#### **Task Group**

The first, is for the Overview and Scrutiny Board to set up a task group, which is separate from the Board and can include Members who are not Members of the Board (Members of the Cabinet cannot join a task group). When setting up a task group the following steps need to be considered:

1. For any task group that is proposed a Topic Proposal Form (*Appendix 1*) must be completed and presented, with a covering report, for Members' consideration at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board. This can be a topic put forward by a Councillor (not necessarily a Member of the Board) or from a member of the public.

#### **Chairman of a Task Group**

2. If the Board agrees to commission the task group the Chairman will ask at that meeting whether there were any volunteers from amongst the Members of the Board to act as Chairman (the Chairman of the Board is not expected to be the Chairman of the task group).
3. All task groups will be chaired by a member of the Board and each Chairman (assisted by the Democratic Services Officer) is required to provide an written update on the progress of the task group at future meetings of the Board in order for it to be able to hold the task group to account for the work it is carrying out (the terms of reference will be included within this update to ensure that they continue to be met).

#### **Membership of a Task Group**

4. If the Topic Proposal Form was completed by a Councillor (who is not a Member of the Cabinet) they will automatically have the right to be on the Task Group.
5. Following the Board meeting, when a task group has been approved, copies of the completed Topic Proposal Form, will be circulated amongst non-Cabinet Members for consideration. Members will be asked to complete a short "application form" (*Appendix 2*) detailing why

they are interested in the topic and what skills they could bring to the Group. The completed form should be returned to the Democratic Services Officer within the timescale specified.

6. Membership of task groups must be at least 4 but no more than 7 Members (including the Chairman).
7. If there is insufficient interest from Members, the Group Leaders will be asked to nominate Members for the task group, in order that membership can then be confirmed relatively quickly.
8. If interest is in excess of 7 Members then the Chairman of the Task Group together with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board will consider the "application forms" and put forward a proposal to the next meeting of the Board for approval.

### The Investigation Process

9. The Head of the relevant Service will attend the initial meetings (maximum of 2) of the task group when the details of the topic proposal will be discussed. This will include:
  - a) Whether the topic can contribute towards the Council's strategic purposes and assist in improving the service being investigated.
  - b) How the Head of Service and his team can support the Task Group.
  - c) Agreeing who the task group wish to interview,
  - d) What evidence they wish to receive and how this will be gathered.
10. The task group may appoint people as non-voting co-optees if they so wish and with agreement of the Board.
11. Following the initial meetings (maximum of 2) and before any further meetings are held, the Chairman of the task group, supported by the Democratic Services Officer, will provide a written update to the next convenient meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board. This report will include the terms of reference in order for the Board to then discuss:
  - a) Whether or not there is a need for the Group to continue the investigation.
  - b) If the Group is to continue then the terms of reference will be reviewed and revised if necessary.
  - c) A timescale for completion of the investigation will also be set (usually 3-5 months from the date of the first meeting).

## The Final Report

12. The Democratic Services Officer will compile the final report on behalf of the task group, based on recommendations proposed by Members. The content of the draft report will be approved by Members.
13. The Chairman of the Task Group will take a lead in giving a short presentation containing a summary of the task group's findings and recommendations for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Board. Support will be provided by the Democratic Services Officer where required.
14. If approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Board the Chairman of the task group (accompanied by the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board) will then give a similar presentation when the final report is being considered at Cabinet. Support from the Democratic Services Officer will also be provided where required.
15. The Portfolio Holder will then present the Cabinet response to the next Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting.
16. The Cabinet decision on recommendations will be placed on the Quarterly Recommendation Tracker to be monitored and, with the approval of the Board, removed when completed.
17. After 12 months the Democratic Services Officer will review the final report to ensure that those recommendations approved by Cabinet have been implemented. If any remain outstanding the Head of Service will be contacted to discuss any further actions which may be necessary to move those recommendations forward.
18. The Democratic Services Officer will compile a report for the 12 month review of the task group, for presentation at the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting.

## **Short, Sharp Inquiry**

The second, a “short sharp inquiry” is carried out through a mix of both formal Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings and informal meetings involving all Members of the Board and chaired by the Overview and Scrutiny Board Chairman. This type of inquiry can be used for the investigation of a topic already on the Board’s work programme or a topic on the Cabinet Work Programme which the Board felt warranted a more in depth investigation being carried out. However, it can also be used to consider matters of local concern, that have not been scheduled on either the Board or Cabinet’s Work Programme but which Members feel would merit inclusion and further investigation.

The guidelines below should be followed when carrying out a “short sharp inquiry”:

1. The Board decide that a specific topic requires a more in depth investigation and agree to carry out a “short sharp inquiry” and all Board Members will be involved in the investigation.
2. As it is likely that such an inquiry will need to be completed fairly quickly, the Board will discuss broad terms of reference and set a time scale for completion of the inquiry at the same time as agreeing to carry out the investigation.
3. Members will also stipulate who they wish to interview, what evidence they wish to gather etc and set a date for the initial informal meeting of the inquiry. The Board may appoint people as non-voting co-optees if they so wish.
4. The Chairman of the Board, Democratic Services Officer and relevant Head of Service (if necessary) will then meet, as quickly as possible after that meeting to complete a Topic Proposal Form (*Appendix 1*).
5. At the first meeting of the Inquiry, the Terms of Reference will be confirmed, and if possible initial witnesses interviewed.
6. A progress update will be given at each formal meeting of the Board and if appropriate, some witness sessions will also be included within the formal Board meetings.
7. The Democratic Services Officer will compile the final report on behalf of the Board, based on recommendations proposed by members. The content of the draft report will be approved by Members.
8. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board will then give a short presentation when the final report is being considered at Cabinet. Support from the Democratic Services Officer will also be provided where required.

9. The Portfolio Holder will then present the Cabinet response to the next Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting.
10. Cabinet decisions on Inquiry recommendations will be placed on the Quarterly Recommendation Tracker to be monitored and, with the approval of the Board, removed when completed.
11. After 12 months the Democratic Services Officer will review the final report to ensure that those recommendations approved by Cabinet have been implemented. If any remain outstanding the Head of Service will be contacted to discuss any further actions which may be necessary to move those recommendations forward. .
12. The Democratic Services Officer will compile a report for the 12 month review of the inquiry, for presentation at the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting.

## Appendix 1



**Bromsgrove**  
District Council  
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

### **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY TOPIC PROPOSAL**

This form can be used for either a Task Group or a Short Sharp Review topic proposal.

Completed forms should be returned to [scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk) – Democratic Services, Bromsgrove District Council.

<b>Name of Proposer:</b>	
Tel No:	Email:
Date:	

<b>Title of Proposed Topic</b> (including specific subject areas to be investigate)	
<b>Background to the Proposal</b> (Including reasons why this topic should be investigated and evidence to support the need for the investigation.)	
<b>Links to national, regional and local priorities</b> (including the Council's strategic purposes)	
<b>Possible Key Objectives</b> (these should be SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely)	
Anticipated Timescale for completion of the work.	

Would it be appropriate to hold a Short Sharp Review or a Task Group? (please tick relevant box)	Task Group		Short Sharp Review	
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**OFFICE USE ONLY - TO BE COMPLETED WHEN THE TOPIC PROPOSAL IS ACCEPTED**

<b>Evidence</b>	
Key documents, data, reports	
Possible Site Visits	
Is a general press release required asking for general comments/suggestions from the public?	
Is a period of public consultation required?	
<b>Witnesses</b>	
Officers	
Councillors (including Portfolio Holder)	
Any External Witnesses	

## Appendix 2



**Bromsgrove**  
District Council  
[www.bromsgrove.gov.uk](http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk)

### **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY TASK GROUP MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM**

Please complete and return to [scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk) or Democratic Services Officers by the deadline (*date and time to be included*)

<b>Task Group Title</b>					
<b>Councillor Name</b>					
<b>Contact Details</b>					
<b>Date</b>					
<b>Availability</b>	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
(please stipulate morning, afternoon, evening)					
<b>Why are you interested in joining this task group?</b>					
<b>What skills could you bring to this task group?</b>					