

**SCRUTINY PANEL REPORT – CONSULTATIONS**

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**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee met on the 20th June 2023 and considered the findings arising from a scrutiny panel established to look at non statutory consultation processes within the Council. The Committee were of the view that it would be of benefit that the final report be communicated to Council.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an overview of findings arising from a recent scrutiny review of public consultations in order that all Members are aware and informed in relation to the conclusions and recommendations made by the Panel.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To consider and note the findings of the report.

**3. DETAILS**

- 3.1 The consultations scrutiny review was carried out as per the 2022/23 scrutiny plan agreed by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee at their 15 September 2022 committee meeting.
- 3.2 The consultations process was chosen for inclusion in scrutiny priorities of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee for 2022/23 due to its importance in terms of any significant planned change in approach by a local authority.
- 3.3 A substantial amount of time was invested in the review in order to accurately assess the current approach and benchmark that against deemed 'best practice', together with identifying any areas for further improvement. The main findings arising from the scrutiny review are outlined in paragraph 3.4 of this covering report.
- 3.4 The panel noted the following :
- There is a comprehensive suite of guidance available to officers on the Council's intranet site, the Hub, however, this guidance does not advise the reader to avoid consultations during an election period.
  - New Elected Members are provided with induction training promptly after elections take place as well as regular development sessions, however, these do not currently include details regarding the Council's consultation process and the differentiation between statutory and non-statutory requirements.

- There may be some ambiguity on the part of some Elected Members regarding the role of Elected Members in terms of policy and operational matters and it is considered that induction and development training do not provide sufficient information to clarify the boundaries.
- Elected Members consider that they are not being adequately informed when consultations are about to take place, however, there are additional resources they can view on the website or receive upon subscribing to the Council's weekly bulletin that contains a consultations section.
- Results of consultations are not always published on the council's website in a timely manner.
- There is no metric in place to report on the timely publication of consultation results.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 The Audit and Scrutiny Committee approved the findings of the Scrutiny Panel established to consider the Council's approach and procedures for undertaking non-statutory consultations, together with the recommendations made and action plan agreed with officers. The report and action plan are appended to this report as Appendix 1.

#### **5. IMPLICATIONS**

5.1	Policy:	Regular review of existing arrangements against various sources of 'best practice' promote continuous improvement
5.2	Financial:	None
5.3	Legal:	None
5.4	HR:	None
5.5	Fairer Scotland Duty:	None
5.5.1	Equalities:	None
5.5.2	Socio-Economic Duty:	None
5.5.3	Islands Duty:	None
5.6	Risk:	None
5.7	Customer Service:	None

For further information please contact Internal Audit (01546 604108)

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**14 September 2023**

#### **Appendices:**

- 1. Scrutiny Panel's Report, Conclusions and Findings - Consultations**