## Informal Procedures/Responsibilities for Portfolio Coordinators

## Portfolio Coordinators

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## the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall appoint a pair of Portfolio Coordinators for each of the Council's cabinet portfolios. Where possible, each member of the pair shall be from a different political group, which will promote interworking and reduce any personal bias. The role of these Coordinators is to be the resident specialists on each portfolio and to be responsible for suggesting the questioning of their respective Portfolio Holder at their annual review.

## It should be noted that the Portfolio Coordinator role is defined strictly within the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and confers no additional authority upon the role holder outside of the Committee;

## Portfolio Coordinators keep a general watch on all matters relating to their portfolios and remain aware of the most important strategic issues currently influencing the portfolio (eg. performance measured against the Corporate Plan, financial pressures, controversial issues, unforeseen difficulties, successes and failures, specific complaints, new initiatives, on-going studies or experiments and future plans and objectives);

## At the meeting immediately prior to a portfolio review, the Coordinators advise the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the most appropriate topic and lines of questioning which might be followed during the review. These are then refined and agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;

## At the portfolio review the Chairman will invite the Coordinators to initiate the questioning of the Portfolio Holder; and

## Following the review, the Coordinators will ensure that any actions arising, either by the Portfolio Holder, Head of Service or the Overview and Scrutiny Committee itself, are subsequently carried out.

## Portfolio Holder presentation at the review

## Portfolio Holders and their Heads of Service will be informed, either by the Chairman or by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Legal and Democratic Officer, of the specific topic(s) that will be examined during their review;

## This will normally be done with a minimum of 1 month's notice;

## The topic may cover specific strategic issues, or more general matters such as: performance against the Annual Service Plan; successes and failures; reasons for any failures, actions taken and lessons learnt; how significant complaints were addressed; unexpected happenings and how they were dealt with; new strategic initiatives, trials and experiments; financial investments; and personal aspirations of the Portfolio Holder and/or Head of Service.

## The Chairman will advise the Portfolio Holder of the time allocated to his/her presentation and to questioning (normally a total of 45 mins); and

## Where the Portfolio Holder intends to present a slide show, he/she should send a copy to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee members in advance (even if it is not a final draft).

## Questioning of the Portfolio Holder at the review

* The Chairman will invite the Portfolio Coordinators to ask the first questions;
* It is expected that Portfolio Holders will personally answer questions but it is understood that an attendant Head of Service may need to be called upon to provide answers to detailed or specialist questions;
* Questions on topics of a strategic nature and those looking towards the future, are especially encouraged;
* Time will always remain critical during reviews, so it will be for the Chairman to be watchful of irrelevant or non-strategic questions, and of nebulous or lengthy answers. The Chairman will also ensure that all targeted topics are explored and will be the ultimate arbiter of the time spent on a review;
* Questioning should follow the Dos and Don'ts of the 'critical friend' philosophy outlined in Annex 4 of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Handbook, this should not however, deter members from asking questions of a challenging or robust nature whenever necessary; and
* The required outcome from scrutiny is that it should improve the Council's efficiency in such a way that the process is viewed constructively by all concerned and that it builds upon the strong reputation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a vehicle for positive advancement.