

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Report Title	Rationalisation of Committees
Meeting / Date	Council - 26 February 2026
Directorate	Resources
Report author/ Contact details	Rianna Terry Assistant Director of Leadership and Democracy Rianna.terry@walthamforest.gov.uk Emily Wood Head of Democratic Services Emily.wood@walthamforest.gov.uk
Wards affected	None specifically
Public access	Open
Appendices	None

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report proposes minor changes to the Council's Scrutiny Committee structure, following a short review carried out by the Constitution Working Group between late 2025 through early 2026.
- 1.2. The changes proposed seek to rationalise Scrutiny Committees to ensure better alignment with the current structure of the Council and consolidate scrutiny of budget and performance reports, information and data within the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee.
- 1.3. The changes are proposed from May Council AGM 2026.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That the Audit and Governance Committee recommend that Council:
 - Agree to merge Budget Scrutiny Committee with Scrutiny Coordinating Committee from May Council AGM 2026.
 - Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Governance and Law to make relevant amendments within the Constitution to the terms of reference if the proposals are to be agreed.
 - Note that the full six members as stated in the terms of reference for Audit and Governance will be appointed to from May Council AGM 2026.

3. Background

- 3.1. In September 2025, the Constitution Working Group agreed to hold a review of the Council's committee structure alongside its regular meetings. These meetings consisted of the Constitution Working Group membership, and some additional representatives appointed by each political group. The group convened three times and were presented with information collated by officers. This included current Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) data, and modelling for different committee options such as, the number of committees and the size of committees.
- 3.2. The scope of the review included the number of, the size of and remits of Scrutiny Committees. Although the size of Ordinary (Regulatory) Committees was within the scope, the structure was not as these committees are statutory therefore cannot be structurally altered.

4. Proposals

- 4.1. The group discussed the different options presented and although highlighted the importance of an efficient structure, they agreed that any changes to the structure of committees should be incremental.
- 4.2. The group proposed and agreed for Budget Scrutiny Committee to be merged with Scrutiny Coordinating Committee from May 2026. The group discussed the benefit of aligning financial reporting with performance reporting. This would allow for greater oversight by the coordinating committee, the ability to embed performance and finance across all Scrutiny Committees and a more strategic approach by coordinating committee.
- 4.3. This would bring the total Scrutiny Committees to five themed committees plus Scrutiny Coordinating Committee.
- 4.4. The group also proposed and agreed for Audit and Governance Committee to appoint to its full membership of six members, as stated in the terms of reference from May 2026. The group discussed how appointing six members, plus recruiting for an independent member would bring further expertise and enrich discussion at committee.
- 4.5. The group noted that officers would review the remits of all Scrutiny Committees before May, following the disaggregation and the embedding of the Stronger Communities Directorate into the wider organisation, to ensure the remits were proportionate, sufficiently aligned and reflected the Council's priorities.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1. If Council agrees the proposals as set out above, these changes would be implemented from Council AGM in May 2026. Following the Local Elections in May, all groups will be provided with a list of committees with their full remits to assist groups when appointing to committees.

5.2. Future iterations, or where appropriate a more substantive governance review is advised to take place after May 2026 and before April 2030.

6. Implications

6.1. Finance, Value for Money and Risk

6.1.1. The proposed changes to the structure of scrutiny will result in a reduction of one SRA for Scrutiny Chair, meaning the changes would incur a like-for-like saving for the Council.

6.2. Legal

6.2.1. Section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 requires the Council to have at least one overview and Scrutiny Committee and that these committees must have the power:

- to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive,
- to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive,
- to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive,
- to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive,
- to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area,

6.2.2. The further provisions of Section 9F as well as associated statutory guidance issued in 2019 by the then Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, provide wider legal context. The proposals set out in this report are consistent with these provisions and the statutory guidance.

6.3. Equalities and Diversity

6.3.1. There are no specific equalities implications. However, wider considerations of the benefits of these changes could bring to the Council's ability to critically assess the impact of decision making on different groups within our community through improvements in overall governance and transparency.

6.4. Sustainability (including climate change, health, crime and disorder)

6.4.1. There are no specific sustainability implications.

6.5. Council Infrastructure (e.g. human resources, accommodation or IT issues

6.5.1. There are no specific council infrastructure implications.

Background Information (as defined by Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

None.