1. **Decisions required**

   This report makes the following recommendations to the decision-maker:

1.1 Cabinet is asked to comment on the eight recommendations of the Communities and Local Government Committee Report on the Effectiveness of Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees. (Appendix A).

1.2 Cabinet is asked to note the Government response to the Communities and Local Government Committee report recommendations. (Appendix B).

1.3 Cabinet is asked to note that new guidelines on Scrutiny were due to be published by Government in November 2018 but these are still awaited.

1.4 Cabinet is asked to agree the request of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that Scrutiny should report directly to Full Council by presenting update reports from each panel on a rotational basis.

2. **Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

2.1 To comment on the recommendations of the Communities and Local Government Committee Report on the Effectiveness of Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees, (Appendix A) and give their views on whether any of the recommendations should be adopted in Royal Borough of Greenwich.
3. **Introduction and Background**

3.1 The Communities and Local Government Report was published in December 2017 and resulted in them giving a series of recommendations to Government. (Appendix A).

3.2 The Government published their responses to these recommendations in March 2018 (Appendix B) which broadly advise that the way scrutiny is run and how it is supported is up to each individual authority to decide for itself.

3.3 The Government was due to publish new guidelines for Scrutiny in November of last year, but this is still awaited.

3.4 The report and the Government response were discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting of 17 September 2018, and it was requested that a report be brought to Cabinet for comment before the item is discussed again at Overview and Scrutiny on 30 April 2019.

3.5 One of the recommendations in the Select Committee report is that Scrutiny should report directly to Full Council. Members would like Cabinet to endorse this and arrange for update reports from each panel to be taken to Full Council meetings on a rotational basis.

3.6 At their meeting on 17 September 2018, Overview and Scrutiny members also discussed the support of scrutiny by officers and raised some concerns about the new support arrangements which were put in place following a reorganisation in April 2018.

3.7 Since April 2018 Scrutiny has been supported by 8 officers (7.6 fte), two of whom are senior managers. With the exception of the Head of Service, these officers are also responsible for the servicing of other meetings as well as Scrutiny, and it was this that gave Scrutiny members some concern. Even so, there was still slightly more support to Scrutiny than with the previous arrangement before the reorganisation.

3.8 The level of work expected from the department has increased substantially from the previous year. There have been three in-depth reviews undertaken with more expected; five call-ins have been arranged; several visits have been undertaken; and over a dozen reports have been written by Corporate Governance Officers since last April.
3.9 As a result of Scrutiny Members’ concerns and the level of work expected of Corporate Governance Officers, another member of staff was recruited on a PO2 salary on a short-term contract and this will be reviewed at the end of six months. This now means that there are 9 officers (8.6fte) supporting the Scrutiny function over the next six months. It should be noted, however, that the additional post is not budgeted for.

3.10 A comparison with other London boroughs was undertaken in September 2018 which showed the complete disparity there is both between the numbers of scrutiny panels in each authority (which range from 1 to 8), and the officer support given to those panels. The average number of council officers across London working with Scrutiny is 3.5 fte compared to 8.6 fte in Greenwich.

3.11 Approximately fifty percent of London boroughs also combine scrutiny support with other committee work.

4. **Available Options**

4.1 Cabinet can agree the request of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that Scrutiny should report directly to Full Council by presenting update reports from each panel on a rotational basis.

4.2 Cabinet can decide that the current reporting arrangements are appropriate and not agree to the request from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4.3 Cabinet can agree to await the new guidelines on Scrutiny before making a decision but it should be noted that these were originally scheduled to be published in November 2018.

5. **Preferred Option**

5.1 Cabinet should agree to the request of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that Scrutiny should report directly to Full Council by presenting update reports from each panel on a rotational basis.

6. **Reasons for Recommendations**

6.1 It will increase the transparency of the reports produced by the Council’s Scrutiny Panels.
7. **Consultation Results**

7.1 None.

8. **Cross-Cutting Issues and Implications**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Implications</th>
<th>Sign-off</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legal</strong> including Human Rights Act</td>
<td>Section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 sets out the legal requirements for a local authority in terms of its overview and scrutiny arrangements. This report provides feedback from the Parliamentary Select Committee consultation, together with Government feedback, and a specific recommendation from RBG’s Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee. Cabinet is able to choose one of the three available options for its decision at recommendation 1.4.</td>
<td>John Scarborough, Head of Legal 08.03.2019</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Finance</strong> and other resources including procurement implications</td>
<td>There are no financial implications arising as a result of the recommendations within the report. The government response (Appendix B) is clear that it is a matter for local authorities regarding the resourcing of their scrutiny committees. Greenwich, along with many other authorities, has a number of staff engaged in various corporate governance roles (para 3.11 refers). The corporate governance budget is forecast to overspend by £56k in the current financial year and overspend pressures on this budget are likely to continue into 2019/20, which will be exacerbated by the additional six-month placement (para 3.9 refers).</td>
<td>Damon Cook, Asst Director Finance &amp; Deputy s151 Officer, 07.03.19</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Equalities</strong></td>
<td>The decisions recommended through this</td>
<td>Veronica</td>
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paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no apparent equality impact on end users.

9. **Report Appendices**

9.1 The following documents are to be published with and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: *Communities and Local Government Committee Report on the Effectiveness of Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees.*
- Appendix B: *Government Response to the Communities and Local Government Committee Report on the Effectiveness of Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committees.*

10. **Background Papers**

None.

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