

**Title: Hoople Spotlight Review - terms
of reference**

Meeting: Scrutiny Management Board

Meeting date: Monday 12 October 2026

Report by: Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Classification

Open

Report purpose

To provide the committee with draft terms of reference for a proposed spotlight review of Hoople Ltd.

Background

1. Hoople Ltd was established in 2011 as a shared services company that in 2011 was owned jointly by Herefordshire Council and Herefordshire Primary Care Trust. Its original purpose was to consolidate “back office” functions, such as IT, HR, payroll, finance, and training, across public bodies to:
 - a. deliver efficiency savings
 - b. reduce duplication, and
 - c. create a platform for wider public sector collaboration.
2. The company was initially designed with a semi commercial outlook, with the intention of expanding to additional partners and generating income through external trading.
3. Over time, Hoople’s portfolio expanded due to variety of reasons. This includes new business from external parties but in the whole most of the work is still received from the Council. The Council’s reasons for transfer of services are varied including for convenience of use and due to the actions of third parties (such as when private providers collapsed and the absorption of functions). This has resulted in a patchwork of services such ICT, Revenues and benefits, HR, payroll, canteen, buildings maintenance, finance processing, social care staffing, and others, without what is, a clearly articulated strategic rationale.
4. At the moment the committee cannot see a shared, clearly stated vision and business model for the council and Hoople. As a result, there is some uncertainty about whether Hoople’s structure supports value for money, service quality, and the council’s strategic objectives

5. Some members also feel that there is a tension between Hoople's company structure and members' wish for greater democratic oversight, noting difficulty accessing information necessary for casework, particularly in revenues and benefits and social care.
6. This proposed review seeks to explore these issues.

Meeting objectives

7. To determine whether to proceed with a spotlight review of Hoople Ltd, according to the terms of reference attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

Report information

8. The spotlight review terms of reference are attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

Consultees

9. None

Appendices

Appendix 1 Hoople Spotlight Review terms of reference

Background papers and resources

None identified.