



Scrutiny Programme Board

Date:	Tuesday, 26 October 2010
Time:	6.15 pm
Venue:	Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall

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AGENDA

1. MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

Members are asked to consider whether they have personal or prejudicial interests in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state what they are.

Members are reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they are subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

2. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 6)

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2010.

3. SCRUTINY WORKSHOP UPDATE (Pages 7 - 8)

4. SCRUTINY TRAINING (Pages 9 - 36)

Further to minute 21 (20 September 2010), the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management will report that the Member Training Steering Group has agreed that training for all Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members is a priority and that Dr Stephanie Snape, Research Director of the English Regions Network Research & Development Programme at the Institute of Governance & Public Management, University of Warwick, should be commissioned to provide it. Dr Snape had provided Wirral with training a few years ago

and refresher training is seen as best practice.

However, at the Informal Overview and Scrutiny Workshop (agenda item 3 refers), Members considered the proposed training arrangement. In the light of comments received, guidance is sought on how to proceed.

5. FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan for the period November 2010 to February 2011 has been published on the Council's intranet/website. Members are invited to review the Plan prior to the meeting in order for the Scrutiny Programme Board to consider, having regard to the work programme, whether scrutiny should take place of any items contained within the Plan and, if so, how it could be done within relevant timescales and resources.

6. WORK PROGRAMMES OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (Pages 37 - 50)

- Council Excellence (attached)
- Children and Young People (to be circulated separately)
- Economy and Regeneration (to be circulated separately)
- Health and Well Being (to be circulated separately)
- Sustainable Communities (attached)

7. REVIEW OF SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 51 - 58)

8. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR

SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD

Monday, 20 September 2010

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	H Smith (Chair)	
	Councillors	C Meaden S Mountney G Watt	G Davies M McLaughlin P Gilchrist
<u>Deputies:</u>	Councillors	L Rowlands (In place of J Hale) W Clements (In place of S Taylor)	

17 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

Members were asked to consider whether they had personal or prejudicial interests in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state what they were.

Members were reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they were subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

Councillor Mrs C Meaden declared her personal interest in agenda item 9 (Work Programmes of Overview and Scrutiny Committees) (see minute 25 post) insofar as it relates to the work of the Children and Young People O&S Committee, by virtue of her daughter's employment within the Children and Young People's Department.

18 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 3 June and 18 August 2010, be approved.

19 MEMBERS' QUESTIONNAIRE ON SCRUTINY

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management presented a report, which highlighted the recommendations aimed at improving the scrutiny process that had been agreed by the Scrutiny Programme Board following the 2008/2009 questionnaire. He set out the reasons for the recommendations and provided details of progress since September 2009.

The Director's report also contained an analysis of responses that had been received to the 2009/2010 questionnaire, which had been circulated to all Members of the Council during April/May 2010. It was noted that Members may have been campaigning at the time the survey was distributed and this could have contributed to the disappointing response to it. Members were therefore requested to review the purpose and format of the questionnaire before any survey work was undertaken for 2010/2011.

A number of issues had been raised by those that had responded to the questionnaire and it was suggested that the Scrutiny Programme Board may wish to reflect on why a majority of participants in the questionnaire process were dissatisfied with Scrutiny arrangements.

The Scrutiny Workshop held on 1 September 2010 (see minute 20 post) gave Members further opportunity to discuss related issues and the views of the Board were sought as to whether, having regard of the responses to the questionnaire, it wished to prioritise the following areas for further work –

- Improve the engagement of Members with the scrutiny process
- Review the purpose and format of the Members' annual scrutiny questionnaire
- The current plans for scrutiny training
- The role and potential benefits of the Scrutiny Programme Board
- Review of the 'Call-In' process, including the current guidelines
- Review the use of the Forward Plan in the scrutiny process
- Encouraging more members to participate in working groups undertaking 'in-depth' reviews
- Consider the suggestions for potential improvements set out in paragraph 4.7 of his report.

Members considered the summary of responses to the survey and referred to ongoing discussions between the three political Group Leaders, specifically in relation to Overview and Scrutiny support arrangements. Members expressed the view that no further action should be taken until the outcome of those discussions were known.

Resolved – That the report be noted and that no further action be taken in relation to improving the scrutiny function until the outcome of the deliberations by Group Leaders is known and the matter considered by the appropriate Committee.

20 SCRUTINY WORKSHOP UPDATE

The Democratic Services Manager referred to the informal Overview and Scrutiny Workshop that had taken place on 1 September 2010 and thanked Members for their attendance. The aim of the workshop had been to develop an Action Plan for strengthening and improving the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function and it had been prompted by issues which came to light from the LGA Conference in 2009, and by the results from the 2009 Annual Centre for Public Scrutiny Survey. It provided an opportunity for those issues to be considered and the outcomes from the workshop included a shared understanding of the role of scrutiny, a suggested vision of the look and feel of an excellent Overview and Scrutiny function and the perceived barriers to it.

The Chair commented that a second meeting of the Workshop had been arranged for 5 October 2010 to continue discussions around possible options for strengthening the Overview and Scrutiny function and to draw up an Action Plan. However, he referred to conflicting views that had been expressed by Members as to the time the workshop should commence and sought the views of the Board.

Resolved –

- (1) That the update report on the informal workshop be noted.**
- (2) That the second meeting of the workshop on 5 October 2010 commence at 5.00pm and that all attendees be advised accordingly.**

21 **SCRUTINY TRAINING**

The Democratic Services Manager reported that the Members Training Steering Group had agreed that further Overview and Scrutiny training should be provided to all Members involved in the scrutiny function. The training would be provided at a cost of £824 by Professor Stephanie Snape of Warwick Business School. She had been provided with details of the work undertaken at the first Overview and Scrutiny Workshop and would be provided with the resultant Action Plan from the second meeting to be held on 5 October 2010. Based upon consideration of those matters the training would be tailored accordingly.

Resolved – That the report be noted and Members be advised of the arrangements for the training at the earliest opportunity.

22 **FUTURE CHALLENGES FOR SCRUTINY**

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management submitted the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) Policy Briefing Note 'Future Challenges for Scrutiny', which was intended to provide information related to the development of Government policy around local accountability and transparency. The Briefing Note referred to the developing policy agenda of the coalition government and outlined those matters that, at this stage, had become clear in relation to the Health White Paper; abolition of the CAA; place-based budgeting/community budgeting; financial cutbacks and the Localism and Decentralisation Bill.

The Paper outlined the significant challenge for scrutiny and set out the practical contributions that scrutiny could make, particularly in the pursuit of openness in decision-making on behalf of local people.

The Chair of the Health and Well Being Overview and Scrutiny Committee referred specifically to the Health White Paper, which indicated that Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) would be abolished. She commented that although, as part of the proposals, the existing statutory health scrutiny powers were being abolished, a more recent paper published by the Department of Health had indicated a continued role for the Health and Well Being O&S Committee in carrying out the health scrutiny function.

Resolved – That the content of the Briefing Note be noted.

23 **THE FUTURE FOR SCRUTINY**

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management submitted a briefing note 'The Future for Scrutiny' from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), which referred to the significant pressure to find efficiencies and cost savings in all areas of the public sector. This was being felt particularly keenly in local government, which needed to battle to retain front line services while coping with significant reductions in funding from the centre. The briefing note referred to the need to work more in partnership

with other agencies and also to the Total Place programme, which had been about finding opportunities for radically different ways of working in local areas. The paper indicated that this was now the ideal time for scrutiny to be looking at commitments, responsibilities and capacity, in order to maximise value for money.

The briefing indicated that scrutiny needed to be responsive to change and commented that the Total Place programme, the need to demonstrate value for money and a decline in public trust all had an impact on the future of scrutiny. It indicated that there would be a need for more targeted, direct reviews and task groups looking at specific issues, and also a need to build relationships with local partners and other scrutineers, with whom joint scrutiny could be undertaken.

Resolved – That the content of the briefing paper be noted.

24 **GOOD SCRUTINY AWARDS**

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management reported upon the annual Good Scrutiny Awards, which had recently been presented by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), and which provided examples of best practice in scrutiny achieved in some authorities. He provided an explanation of the categories in the awards and indicated that although the awards were national, five of this year's winners (out of ten categories) were geographical neighbours of Wirral.

Members referred to the substantial amount of scrutiny being undertaken in Wirral and expressed the view that the achievements in scrutiny should form the basis of a submission for the Good Scrutiny Awards 2011.

Resolved – That the officers be requested to present a report, highlighting examples of excellent scrutiny, to a future meeting of the Board, in time to prepare a submission for the 2011 CfPS Awards.

25 **WORK PROGRAMMES OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

Members received reports outlining the work programmes of the following Overview and Scrutiny Committees, which included indications of how each scrutiny topic was being dealt with, comments on progress and estimated timescales for work to be completed. –

- (a) Children and Young People
- (b) Council Excellence
- (c) Economy and Regeneration
- (d) Health and Well Being
- (e) Sustainable Communities

Updates were circulated for Members information following recent meetings of the Children and Young People, Economy and Regeneration and Health and Well Being Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Resolved – That the reports be noted.

26 **REVIEW OF SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair presented an updated Monitoring Report on the Committees Work Programme, in order to give Members the opportunity to review it and to ask for new

items to be added. The Democratic Services Manager referred to the significant work undertaken as part of the Alcohol Scrutiny Review and suggested that it could form the basis of a submission to the CfPS Good Scrutiny Awards 2011 (see minute 24 ante). She also sought the views of Members as to additional topics to form the basis of further scrutiny reviews.

Resolved –

- (1) That the Alcohol Scrutiny Review form the basis of a submission to the CfPS Good Scrutiny Awards 2011.**
- (2) That additional topics for review be considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Workshop to be held on 5 October 2010.**

27 **FORWARD PLAN**

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management reported that the Forward Plan for the period October 2010 – January 2011 was published on the Council's intranet/website. Members had been invited to review the Plan prior to the meeting in order for the Scrutiny Programme Board to consider, having regard to the work programme, whether scrutiny should take place of any items contained within the Plan and, if so, how it could be done within relevant timescales and resources.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

28 **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR - CONSULTATION TASK FORCES**

As an item of urgent business, the Chair referred to the four Task Forces, which had been set up to assist the Council in formulating a consultation document with a view to achieving budgetary savings. He proposed that the Scrutiny Programme Board should receive a detailed overview report upon the background to the task forces, the cost of them to the Council and upon the process that was followed in the selection and appointment of the Task Force members, together with any register or declaration of interests that may have been completed by Task Force members.

Members expressed the view that it may be more appropriate for such information as falls within their remit to be requested by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Resolved – That the matters referred to by the Chair in relation to the Task Forces be referred to each of the themed Overview and Scrutiny Committees and they be requested to seek information in relation to those issues which fall within their remit.

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Update Note – Overview & Scrutiny Workshop

5th October 2010

Aim – The aim of the second Workshop was to develop an Action Plan for strengthening and improving the Overview & Scrutiny function in Wirral Council and to gain a better understanding of future training and future review topics for the Scrutiny Programme Board.

Background – The first workshop explored the current approach to Overview & scrutiny at Wirral Council and came to the conclusion that it would be useful to consider good practice from other Authorities.

Workshop Approach

The Workshop provided an opportunity for the exploration of practice from other Authorities. Information from three Authorities was presented (Blackpool, Hartlepool and Hertfordshire) and thoughts about the approach taken and any interesting practice were discussed.

Outcomes – What was achieved at the end of the Session

1. A suggestion that the Overview and Scrutiny undertaken at Wirral Council should be more widely promoted.
2. A suggestion that a leaflet/booklet detailing success stories could be produced.
3. That future training (to be delivered by Dr Stephanie Snape of Warwick University) include something around how Overview & Scrutiny works within Committees.
4. An agreement that all Chairs of Committees would give serious consideration to future topics for review and what could be included in the Scrutiny Programme Board's Work Programme (and send ideas/suggestions to the Democratic Services Manager by email)
5. That future training for Members around Overview & Scrutiny should include -:
 - Feedback / Challenge skills
 - Assertiveness / impact questions
 - Finance service knowledge
 - How to form and ask the right questions
6. That an internal "Buddying" scheme be considered to support Councillors new to the Overview & Scrutiny role.
7. That Overview & Scrutiny Committees and the Scrutiny Programme Board's agendas should be Member led rather than determined by officers.

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Short C.V. for Dr Stephanie Snape

Dr Stephanie Snape (BA Hons Oxon, PhD Bristol) is Research Director of the English Regions Network Research & Development Programme at the Institute of Governance & Public Management, University of Warwick. She took up her Warwick post in November 2002. Prior to moving to Warwick, Stephanie was Associate Director of the Institute of Local Government Studies (INLOGOV), University of Birmingham. During her time at INLOGOV, Stephanie built up a national reputation for her work on new council constitutions. She was project leader for the national evaluation of new political management arrangements in local government, funded by IDeA and DETR, and was lead author of the final report and author of the *Self-Evaluation Toolkit* for new political structures (published by DETR/IDeA). Stephanie has spoken on various aspects of new political structures at a variety of conferences and workshops. She completed a project with Chris Skelcher of INLOGOV on Political Executives and the New Ethical Framework (for DETR/IDeA). She has undertaken research, consultancy and training for a number of authorities who have developed new political structures. She was a member of the core project team of the Modular Constitutions project which was commissioned by DETR. In January 2001, Stephanie was appointed Specialist Adviser to a Parliamentary Sub-Committee inquiry on new political structures. She also led the INLOGOV team which undertook a DTLR project on identifying good practice in overview and scrutiny. This project reported in September 2002. Stephanie also worked on a range of other local government issues at INLOGOV, including unitary local government, partnership working, the history of local government, comparative local government and the interface between health and local government. She is a specialist on the evaluation of public policy and has written extensively on the subject. She edits the premier local government academic journal, *Local Government Studies*.

Current & Recent Research Projects

- Research Director for Warwick ERN Research & Development Programme, which for 2003/04 involves five research projects.
- Project Leader for ERN funded evaluation of regional scrutiny. Reported in Spring 2003.
- Project Leader for DTLR funded evaluation of overview & scrutiny arrangements in English local government. Reported in September 2002.
- Project Leader for DETR/IDeA funded national evaluation of new political management arrangements in local government, which reported in April 2000.
- Worked with Chris Skelcher on a DETR/IDeA funded project examining the relationship between political executives & the new ethical framework.

- Co-convenor (with Dr Shirley McIver of the Health Services Management Centre) of an ESRC funded seminar series, 'Improving Partnerships between Health and Local Authorities'.
- Undertook research and development to support inter-agency working to improve the health of a deprived community in South Cheshire, funded by a range of statutory agencies, with M. Willis & Shirley McIver.
- Evaluated scrutiny arrangements of Wiltshire County Council, with Frances Taylor.

Selected Academic & Practitioners Outputs

'Closer to the Customer? Local Government and International Experience', *Public Policy & Administration*, 1996, Vol 11 No 4, pp.45-55, with J. Fenwick.

'Modernising Standards of Conduct: Ethics & the Councillor', *Parliamentary Affairs*, forthcoming January 2001, with C. Skelcher.

'New Political Management Arrangements', *Local Governance*, Issue 3 of 2000.

'Scrutiny', *Local Governance*, Issue 3 of 2000, forthcoming, with F. Taylor.

'The Performance of New Unitary Councils in England', *Local Governance*, 1999, Vol 2, Issue 3, with J. Raine.

'Three Years On: Reviewing the Local Government Modernisation Programme', *Local Governance*, Issue 3 of 2000, forthcoming.

'New Political Structures: Learning from the Pioneers', *Solace Journal*, Summer 2000, pp12-13.

A Hard Nut to Crack? Making Overview & Scrutiny Work, Paper in the LGA Designing Governance: Issues in Modernisation series, April 2001, with F. Taylor.

'Chapter Five: Councillors and Overview and Scrutiny', in *A Councillor's Guide 2001*, IDeA, 2001.

Overview and Scrutiny Module: Advanced Level, IDeA Modern Members programme, IDeA, 2001, with L. McQue, F. Taylor & V. Hewitt.

Methodological and Theoretical Approaches to Evaluation, Discussion Paper, April 1997, PHRRC, University of Salford.

New Forms of Political Management Arrangements, IDeA/DETR, 2000, with S. Leach, D. Hall, F. Taylor, J. Stewart & M. Clarke.

New Forms of Political Management Arrangements: Self Evaluation Toolkit, IDeA/DETR, 2000.

Political Executives & the New Ethical Framework: Interim Report, INLOGOV, for DETR/IDeA, with C. Skelcher, May 2000.

Political Executives & the New Ethical Framework: Final Report, IDeA/DETR, with C. Skelcher, November 2000.

Editorial Positions

Editor of *Local Governance* from November 1999 to March 2001.

Currently Editor of *Local Government Studies* (from January 2001).

a hard nut to crack?

making overview and scrutiny work

this paper has been prepared by
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Introduction

Since its first mention in the 1998 green paper, *Modernising local government: Local democracy and community leadership*¹, it is fair to say that it has been the issue of 'scrutiny' which has caused the greatest discussion. Whilst 'scrutiny' has become 'overview and scrutiny' and 'back-benchers' have become 'non-executives' the topic is still one that is hotly debated in town halls across the country. It has divided councillors and in many cases it has divided councils. To many the separation of executive and scrutiny was seen as a way of sidelining the vast majority of councillors, giving them little to do but nit-pick over decisions already taken by an elite few.

There is now though, a growing acceptance that 'overview and scrutiny' is not the only role for councillors not on the executive. An LGA task group for example found a range of other important roles for these members². However, 'overview and scrutiny' is a key part of the checks and balances necessary to hold decision-makers to account in all of the new arrangements.

It is clear that developing effective overview and scrutiny arrangements will be one of the most difficult tasks facing authorities over the next two to five years. Everyone working in local government – its members and officers – is well aware of the scale of the task facing them. Scrutiny is a hard nut to crack.

¹ DETR, *Modernising local government: Local democracy and community leadership*, 1998, HMSO, London

² LGA, *Real roles for members: role of non-executive members in new structures*, 2000, LGA, London

Many of the early experimenting authorities – those that have been running scrutiny committees for two or more years – are still struggling to make scrutiny work. Why? There are a multitude of reasons: the unfamiliarity of scrutiny ways of working; insufficient officer support; distrust from cabinet members and chief officers; disengaged scrutiny councillors; and poor management of scrutiny processes.

However, scrutiny has to be made to work. And to pay dividends. All four models of new political management arrangements have to include at least one overview and scrutiny committee. In most authorities the majority of councillors will sit on scrutiny committees. Local government is already unsettled by the groundswell of discontent and disquiet felt by some non-executives in experimenting authorities.

Providing substantive roles in successful and influential overview and scrutiny committees will be one very important part of the formula for developing real roles for non-executive councillors. Local authorities also cannot afford to create new political structures which remain under-developed and frail. All parts of the new system must be healthy and serve a useful purpose if the success of the whole is to be ensured.

And there is no doubt that scrutiny can serve many valuable purposes. It does not have to represent 'a review too far'. It could add substantial value to the work of an authority, providing gains in terms of:

- better informed members, who become adept at investigating below the surface of policies and strategies and consequently develop a range of useful skills;

- complementing the strategic and policy-setting work of the executive (or in 'alternative arrangements' the policy committees);
- 're-politicising' the work of Best Value within authorities, by providing meaningful member oversight of continuous improvement;
- overall, providing an interesting and valued role for non-executive councillors;
- developing deeper, more knowledgeable relationships with partner organisations, through involving them in scrutiny work or through scrutinising their own work;
- encouraging public involvement in political management arrangements, ultimately contributing to a necessary re-working of local councils' relationship to its communities;
- tackling key 'cross-cutting' or 'wicked issues' such as social exclusion, ill health and poverty and low educational standards;
- stimulating a more reflective, evaluative and evidence-based culture within local government; and
- contributing significantly to local councils' community leadership and planning role and giving meaning to the new power of well-being.

In many councils the reality is far removed from this vision of how scrutiny could work. But, local government must find ways of realising these benefits. The main purpose of this paper is to examine the common pitfalls facing scrutiny and to suggest some practical ways forward, which will go some way to realising the potential.

What is scrutiny?

But first things first. Any publication on scrutiny must address the issue of 'what is scrutiny?' Many of the problems that have dogged scrutiny committees and, flipping the coin over, much of its potential, comes right back to the problems that have surrounded its definition. 'Scrutiny' is a slippery, contested concept. There is simply no one definition.

Some of this confusion has been produced by the government's own evolving view of how scrutiny committees should work. So, instead of 'scrutiny', which was considered to place too much emphasis on nit-picking over executive decisions, the government developed the term 'overview and scrutiny', introducing the concept of scrutiny councillors having a powerful role in 'overview' of the development and review of key policies and strategies. This did not end the debate. Confusion remains over the precise definition. But such confusion can work to the advantage of scrutiny; where no clear boundary exists, scrutiny can push boundaries or shape a definition to suit the individual authority.

Part of the confusion over definition results because scrutiny performs not one function, but many. In the government guidance (DETR, 2000), the following five key roles are set down.

1. Holding the executive to account

This comes in two forms:

- scrutinising decisions before they are made or before they are implemented, through call-in mechanisms and, more generally, being consulted by the executive; and

- scrutinising decisions after they have been implemented.

It is the former which is potentially the most difficult scrutiny role to undertake successfully. And, it will be a challenge for all authorities to develop the right balance in 'holding the executive to account'. Too hostile and adversarial, and the executive will simply refuse to co-operate, producing dangerous, damaging divisions within an authority. But, too cosy and cordial, and overview and scrutiny will have failed to undertake its 'critical friend' role.

It is no surprise that many of the experimenting authorities have ducked the issue altogether, failing to develop a substantive role in this area and, instead, concentrating upon the other roles for scrutiny. However, such a position will be difficult to maintain since all authorities have to develop call-in mechanisms, and overview and scrutiny committees have a clear role in scrutinising the forward plans which will be produced by the executive.

2. Policy review

This is a far more appetising and appealing role for scrutiny members (and supporting officers). Undertaking investigative, deliberative reviews of policy is a seductive endeavour. Policy reviews can take many forms:

- undertaking a review as part of developing key policies to be included in the policy framework of the council;
- a policy review might examine how well a policy has been implemented and whether the desired outcomes have been met; or

- councils could conduct wide-ranging reviews of policy, for example, a review of housing policy in general.

They could be cross-cutting, or client-focused, concentrate on the 'big picture' or investigate more detailed issues. Some authorities have tended to style such policy reviews on the parliamentary select committee approach, with a focus on oral hearings and written evidence. Others have used a wider range of methods, including workshops, seminars, public meetings, press releases, mystery shopping, commissioning internal and external research, and so on.

This is surely a welcome change from the meetings-based approach of the traditional committee system. And, in those authorities which are pioneering more creative approaches to scrutiny – such as Bedfordshire County Council, Barnsley, Haringey, Hartlepool – many scrutiny members find this role particularly interesting and satisfying.

3. Policy development

Overview and scrutiny committees can also play a significant role in policy development. Authorities can decide to create separate policy development forums, and many have, including Suffolk County Council and Herefordshire. Certainly, it is a common complaint of non-executive councillors that they often miss the close involvement in policy development that the committee system provided. Whether an authority creates separate policy development forums or decides to subsume this role in overview and scrutiny committees, the message is clear: non-executives must have a substantive role in developing policies.

However, in reality there is no neat separation between development and review of policy. If scrutiny committees review policy, then they will necessarily make suggestions for its development (unless the policy is deemed to need no revisions).

4. Best Value reviews

It is at the discretion of individual authorities as to how they relate Best Value to their new political structures. The executive must have a role in leading the search for continuous improvement, but councils can also decide to allocate the oversight of individual Best Value reviews to overview and scrutiny committees. Many authorities are seeking to intertwine Best Value and scrutiny.

There are various ways to make the connection:

- authorities can create a Best Value scrutiny committee, which is charged with the task of examining all Best Value reviews;
- individual reviews can, instead, be allocated to their respective overview and scrutiny committee (education reviews to the education and lifelong learning committee, refuse collection to the environment committee, and so on); and
- individual or paired 'lead' members can be allocated to individual reviews, drawn from the membership of the relevant scrutiny committees.

In practice, many authorities are struggling to make successful connections between scrutiny and Best Value. Largely this is because Best Value has become such a managerial and technical process. Best

Value documents are often so polished and 'complete' that members find it difficult to find a way to 'chip into' them. In the longer term, however, scrutiny could provide a valuable role in 're-politicising' Best Value, something which is urgently needed.

5. External scrutiny

The government also envisages a role for overview and scrutiny committees in 'external scrutiny' – the examination and investigation of the work and impact of outside bodies on the communities that a council serves. There is great potential in this role to support the community leadership role of local government and to give meaning to the new power of well-being. But, there are also great dangers; skill will be required to ensure that relationships with outside bodies are not made worse by scrutiny rather than deepening the council's understanding of partnership working. Generally, experimenting authorities have been nervous of developing this role.

However, there are some notable exceptions. Kirklees Council has been developing an external scrutiny role for some years, with some useful success stories. And Bedfordshire County Council has now undertaken a number of external scrutiny reviews. It will be important to capitalise on the practical lessons from these pioneering authorities.

In particular, local authorities need to develop the knowledge and skills to undertake health scrutiny - given that the government has outlined proposals in the *NHS Plan* and the *Health and Social Care Bill* for a major role for local authorities in undertaking scrutiny of health service organisations.

These five key roles for scrutiny collectively represent an enormous challenge – and work programme – for overview and scrutiny committees. However, scratch a little deeper and it is possible to extend these roles further. Figure 1 identifies 13 roles for scrutiny. A number are inter-linked and inter-dependent.

In addition to the five roles detailed above, scrutiny can be shaped around a general oversight role in *performance management and review*. And some authorities have largely honed their scrutiny function around this approach, with Best Value reviews as the staple diet for scrutiny committees. Related to this, it is also possible to design a key task for scrutiny in ensuring that *corporate priorities* are met.

Figure 1: roles for overview and scrutiny

- holding the executive to account – both before and after decisions are made;
- policy review;
- policy development;
- Best Value reviews;
- external scrutiny;
- performance management and review;
- ensuring corporate priorities are met;
- area scrutiny;
- monitoring and revising the constitution;
- engaging partner organisations;
- engaging the public;
- engaging the media; and
- providing satisfying roles for non-executive councillors.

Authorities can also choose to undertake *area scrutiny*, examining key policies which relate to a particular location or community. These can be undertaken in partnership with

area bodies – and at least ensure that there are good communications between area structures and scrutiny. Some authorities have also given their scrutiny function a leading role in *monitoring and revising their new constitutions*.

And, as stated above, scrutiny has great – sadly usually untapped – potential to *engage partners and the public*. And in order to engage the public, authorities often have to engage the *media*, and some have done so successfully. Finally, scrutiny will fail if it does not provide *satisfying roles for non-executives*.

Looked at from one perspective, such an extensive list of potential roles could be viewed as handcuffs, fettering the successful development of scrutiny. Certainly, such a list is daunting. But, looked at in another way, such a wide definition – and so many potential roles – is a wonderful *carte blanche* for any scrutiny committee.

Principles for overview and scrutiny

But it is not just a question of roles. It is also useful to consider underlying principles of working – which can shape the work and development of scrutiny. Figure 2 outlines such principles. In undertaking policy review and development work, adopting a *deliberative, investigative and evidence-based* approach is likely to produce the greatest results. Such work will also require scrutiny committees to be *proactive*, willing to shape their own agendas and workloads.

However, in holding the executive to account, committees will need to be *responsive* and *flexible*. Overall, good practice would involve working in an *open, transparent, accountable* and *inclusive* manner. And many of the greatest gains

could come through adopting an *outward-looking* focus, involving the partners and public.

Ultimately, overview and scrutiny committees are not decision-making committees, they are *influencing* bodies, and their success will depend on how well they develop influencing skills and channels. And, scrutiny is strengthened if it can draw on *cross-party* support – but developing cross-party working will always be more problematic in some authorities.

Figure 2: principles of working

- deliberative;
- investigative;
- evidence-based;
- open;
- transparent;
- accountable;
- responsive;
- outward-looking;
- inclusive;
- proactive;
- flexible;
- cross-party; and
- influencing.

Common pitfalls and risks

Roles and principles of working are important but making scrutiny work in action is far more challenging. The experience of experimenting authorities suggests that there are a number of key pitfalls or risks which authorities frequently encounter in developing scrutiny (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: common pitfalls and risks

- conflicting definitions of overview and scrutiny;
- re-creating the committee system;
- under-resourcing overview and scrutiny;
- unrealistic and unmanageable work programmes;
- poor management of scrutiny processes;
- lack of co-ordination of scrutiny committee work;
- weak links to other new structures;
- marginalised opposition role; and
- inexperienced chairing.

Conflicting definitions of scrutiny

One of the most obdurate limiting factors is the existence of conflicting definitions of scrutiny. In experimenting authorities there can be four or five different interpretations of scrutiny's role, held by various individuals and groups. A typical 'set' of interpretations – though admittedly a caricature – would go something like this:

- the chief executive and chief officers - concerned about the potential divisions that scrutiny can spawn and workload implications – argue that scrutiny should be closely linked to Best Value, with no separate dedicated officers;
- the leader and cabinet members – concerned about the potential for divisions within and between party groups - concur with the chief executive, and also want to play down the 'holding the cabinet to account' role;

- scrutiny chairs and councillors want to be actively holding the cabinet to account, as well as undertaking a wide-ranging policy review and development role, and want separate dedicated support;
- the opposition emphasise that scrutiny is best led from the front by the 'natural scrutineers' ie themselves; and
- the officers providing direct support to scrutiny committees see the potential of scrutiny, and are often sympathetic to the views of scrutiny chairs and councillors, but also understand officer workload concerns.

Such varying interpretations are a natural consequence of the above-mentioned difficulties in providing a neat, tidy definition for scrutiny. They also clearly reflect the differing power structures within authorities. And such differences of opinion are to be expected in the short-term.

However, they should be explicitly and openly debated within authorities, through the use of workshops and facilitated seminars. There are obviously also opportunities for scrutiny councillors and support officers to exploit this confusion and to seize the initiative. However, in the longer term such different interpretations are likely to hamper and hamstring overview and scrutiny.

Recreating the committee system

Changing the working practices, habits, rituals and culture of a system of decision-making which dominated local government for over 150 years will not happen overnight. New political structures have a natural tendency to reshape and reform back into traditional practices and processes.

It is quite common for overview and scrutiny committees to continue to use committee system processes: using the same committee rooms, set out in the same style; continuing the same officer-member pattern of work; re-creating the same format for minutes and reports; and, even, in some authorities continuing to vote on recommendations and resolutions. Such a continuation of traditional practice is a denial of the needs of scrutiny. The wide-ranging roles set out here will rarely be achieved through such a meetings-based style of working.

Under-resourcing overview and scrutiny

Many experimenting authorities have reflected the broad range of roles possible for scrutiny with what read as highly influential terms of reference. But these 'paper powers' will remain just that if overview and scrutiny committees are not provided with adequate resourcing. Currently, many authorities are under-resourcing scrutiny. And there are many genuine reasons why this is the case. In particular, there is often a desire to evolve scrutiny resourcing gradually or resource constraints limit progress.

For some authorities, especially the smaller district councils, under-resourcing is likely to continue for some time. But, is it really sustainable to simply resource officer support through a committee clerk – with no other direct support? And how sustainable will it be in the long-term to allocate no separate budget for scrutiny? Undertaking the investigative, deliberative policy review role alone can be highly resource intensive, especially if authorities develop more creative scrutiny processes such as commissioning internal and external research, site visits, workshops, public meetings, press launches and so on.

Unrealistic and unmanageable work programmes

It is surprising how quickly what appear to be very light workloads for scrutiny can soon escalate into very heavy, unrealistic work programmes. Indeed, if a scrutiny committee was to undertake all of the roles laid down by government totally comprehensively, it would be meeting daily!

Just overseeing individual Best Value reviews can be a substantial workload. It is not surprising that only three to six months after starting work scrutiny committees can feel that their workloads are becoming unmanageable. Regularly holding scrutiny meetings with ten, 12 or more items pushes out the more proactive, deliberative work and can be a powerful force supporting the re-creation of the committee system.

Poor management of scrutiny processes

Related to both unmanageable work programmes and under-resourcing is the issue of poor management of scrutiny processes and outcomes. Much of the policy review and development work, the Best Value work and even a great part of 'holding the executive to account' requires good project management skills. There needs to be clear forward programmes of work, so that both the scrutiny committees and officers within departments can prepare in advance for scrutiny reviews.

There is also a temptation with scrutiny work to ask for more and more information, which leads to reviews taking far longer than expected. But scrutiny reviews need to have firm deadlines and clear outcomes – another issue which has tended to be neglected in the early experimentation period for scrutiny. All this requires good

management processes and mechanisms. This does not all have to be undertaken by officers. Scrutiny chairs and committees also have responsibility for managing their time and workloads. However, a certain level of officer support is needed.

Lack of co-ordination of scrutiny committee work

There is a tremendous amount of – welcome – diversity in the structures that authorities have created for scrutiny. However, one common approach is to create a series of cross-cutting, mixed with functional, committees. These can number from three up to 12 (the number that Birmingham City Council currently have). In the early days authorities understandably overlooked the importance of co-ordinating the work of scrutiny committees. But such co-ordinating forums can play a vital part in sharing the learning around scrutiny and simply co-ordinating potential gaps and overlaps.

Weak links to other new structures

In the first years of experimentation authorities have tended to concentrate on establishing the main foundations of their new arrangements: the 'structures', such as committees, executive, and so on. Understandably, less attention has been paid to the relationships that need to develop between these structures.

In consequence, the linkages between scrutiny and the cabinet, full council, area arrangements (if any), quasi-judicial committees and policy forums (if any) have been weak. Given that scrutiny is an influencing body at heart developing effective relationships with the other parts of the system will be crucial to its success.

Marginalised opposition role

Opposition parties and councillors often view scrutiny as their natural territory. And this in itself is enough to terrify some majority party councillors. One of the key political debates around scrutiny – rehearsed in every experimenting authority – is ‘what role should the opposition play in scrutiny?’

Some majority party councillors (if there is a majority) are adamant that scrutiny should not be ceded to the opposition, in the belief that they could do much damage if they were given a leading role. This has led to the majority party taking all chairs and vice-chairs in some councils. The danger is that opposition parties feel marginalised from one of the few functions in executive systems in which they believe they can make a difference.

Inexperienced chairing

A common concern has related to inexperienced chairing. This does not mean that scrutiny chairs have not had years of experience at chairing traditional service committees; they often do. What it means is that chairing scrutiny is fundamentally different from chairing a traditional service committee. Scrutiny chairs and vice-chairs are the first people to admit this. But why is it so different? There are a number of explanations:

- the range of roles that a scrutiny committee is expected to fulfil is very wide, which can lead to a potentially high volume of work to undertake;
- the most innovative scrutiny committees use a wider range of activities and processes than the traditional service committee;

- scrutiny is expected to working cross-party, ‘outside’ of the party group system;
- as an influencing body, scrutiny must establish the right balance in its relationships with the executive, chief officers, the public, partners and press. Many times the chair is working as a ‘diplomat’.

Figure 4: role of scrutiny chairs and vice-chairs

- provide leadership and direction;
- ensure that work is member-led eg that members lead on developing a work programme;
- ensure that members have necessary skills;
- endeavour to engage all members of committee;
- ensure that adequate resources (financial and officer support) are provided;
- act as a ‘gatekeeper’, prioritising (with committee) main work;
- work to minimise common pitfalls that befall scrutiny;
- co-ordinate work with other scrutiny committees and chairs (and share learning);
- develop a constructive, ‘critical friend’ relationship with the executive, especially with relevant portfolio holder(s); and
- develop a constructive, ‘critical friend’ relationship with the chief officers in the departments that committee scrutinises.

And so chairing scrutiny represents a real challenge. A number of the key roles for scrutiny chairs are outlined in Figure 4. It is a daunting role description. However, scrutiny chairs and vice-chairs can be a very powerful force in energising their committees. And it is time to begin to pay attention to the *individual* roles within new political management roles. Few will be as important as that of scrutiny chair.

This is not an exhaustive list of pitfalls and risks. And not all councils are demonstrating these weaknesses. Other concerns expressed by members and officers in experimenting authorities include problems with engaging all members, conflicts between officers supporting scrutiny and officers within departments and queries relating to appropriate questioning styles for oral hearings.

Some authorities voice particular concerns about how to relate scrutiny to the party group. Encouragingly, many authorities appear to have established effective cross-party working and some work is now being undertaken on how party groups need to change to meet the challenges of new political structures (see in particular Copus, 2001³).

Realising the potential

Local authorities are quick learners. Although scrutiny is a particularly hard nut to crack, many authorities are beginning to find practical solutions to the common pitfalls outlined here. Although there are a multitude of good practice examples emerging, the paper concentrates on three key areas: identifying and managing work

³ Colin Copus, *It's my party: the role of the group in executive arrangements*, 2001, LGA, London

programmes, officer support to scrutiny and developing effective scrutiny processes.

Identifying and managing work programmes

There are some relatively sensible guidelines which, if followed, will avoid overloaded, unmanageable work programmes. The first, and most important, is that scrutiny committees need to filter potential items of work; to be selective and to prioritise.

Different items may require different approaches. For example, scrutiny committees will need to examine the executive's forward plans but may only choose to examine one or two items in any depth. Similarly, scrutiny committees may be asked their views by the executive on key policies and plans but such consultation does not have to involve in-depth investigation. And, is it always necessary to examine every Best Value review to the same level? A more selective approach, examining more problematic Best Value reviews in greater depth and others more cursorily (if at all) may pay more dividends.

An essential part of this filtering and prioritisation process is simply saying 'no'. If an issue is deemed not to be high priority, or if the time is not considered right, or if another internal or external body has just reviewed the issue or is about to do so, then refusing to take on an issue is a logical step. The Local Government Act does provide that any member of an overview and scrutiny committee can place any relevant item on the agenda, ensuring in particular that members from minority parties can raise specific issues. However, in order to keep work programmes manageable all members will need to ensure that this right is used responsibly.

It is also important to select only a small number of issues per year to examine in depth. Given the limited resources often available – in particular the constraints on member and officer time - it is unrealistic to select more than a few items for intensive, deliberative investigation. Some of the experimenting authorities have argued that a single committee cannot undertake more than two to three in-depth scrutiny reviews per year. And, these scrutiny reviews need careful project planning and management.

It is a mistake to plan a two-year programme of work and then become so entangled in undertaking this work that scrutiny committees never reflect back on their progress against their original intentions. Work programmes should be reviewed and revised regularly. Six month work programmes are probably more workable than annual or two yearly programmes. Some authorities have adopted the practice of reprinting and reviewing their work programmes at each formal meeting.

Probably the best advice is to start small, find your feet, learn what works and what does not and then be more ambitious. It is far easier to add items to your workload than to remove them – and while one is disheartening, the other breeds a sense of achievement. Scrutiny committees should never completely fill up their work programmes; there is always a need to leave some space free for urgent, unpredictable issues to be addressed.

In order to increase confidence amongst scrutiny councillors it is sensible to identify some quick wins. And do not avoid politically contentious or high profile issues; these might just be the type of 'meaty' work that scrutiny councillors will really enjoy working on. Topical issues, such as flooding,

the petrol debate or foot and mouth are just the sort of issues which will engage members (and the public). Certainly, scrutiny members need to take a lead in selecting and revising their work programmes. Scrutiny will only ever work if it is led and owned by members. And officers supporting scrutiny need to understand the 'world of members'; what motivates and interests them. This is essential to supporting a member-led process.

Authorities are also experimenting with using different ways of working in order to manage their workloads. Some scrutiny investigations are undertaken in 'task and finish' small working groups, meeting weekly and reporting back to the main committee. Other authorities have experimented with 'paired members' or individual 'lead' members whose role is to thoroughly understand a part of the committee's remit and to take a lead in the committee deliberations on these items.

Officer support

One of the most controversial – and potentially divisive issues – concerning scrutiny is officer support. There are many points of view on how officer support should be organised. Many scrutiny councillors argue for separate, dedicated – and to their mind independent – officer support. Chief officers tend to be concerned about the potential for separate scrutiny units to produce divisions and tensions within the traditionally unified officer structure. And the spectre of the client-contractor split is a rather too recent example of the dangers of specialist units. District councils, in particular, worry about resourcing the rising demands and expectations of scrutiny councillors for officer support.

To date, three main approaches have emerged in experimenting (which are summarised in Figure 5). The *minimal* approach, which often dominates in small authorities, involves the allocation of committee officers to scrutiny committees – on a part-time basis. This is the only direct officer support provided in such authorities. In the longer term it is doubtful if this will prove sufficient.

Figure 5: approaches to officer support

Minimal

Direct officer support is provided by committee officers, who also provide support to other political forums, such as the executive, full council and so on.

Integrated

Direct officer support is provided, on a part-time basis, from a variety of sources, including committee services, officers within departments and corporate policy officers. All these officers also undertake work for the executive.

Specialist

Direct officer support is provided by a scrutiny support unit with dedicated officers, who only work to their overview and scrutiny committees.

The most popular approach, in larger authorities, is for *integrated* officer support. In this model, officer support – all part-time – is drawn from a range of sources, from committee services, policy and operational officers in departments and from corporate policy and research officers. A good example of this model in practice is Kirklees. The least common of the three models is the *specialist*, dedicated scrutiny unit. This usually consists of policy officers and committee clerks, but can also include

officers with a background in audit, value for money work and Best Value. There are still relatively few dedicated units – the most commonly quoted are Bedfordshire County Council, Haringey and Barnsley, but there are others including Cardiff County, North-East Lincolnshire and West Sussex County.

While the minimal approach will be difficult to sustain, most authorities will have to make a judgement between the integrated and separate models. There are advantages and disadvantages to both approaches. One of the key debates is the one already mentioned: the danger of separate scrutiny units producing divisive tensions.

Some also worry about the cost of separate units. Bedfordshire County Council's support to scrutiny is currently costing in the region of £300,000. This may seem a lot but it represents less than one tenth of one per cent of the total expenditure of the council.

The integrated approach will also have costs attached – but they will simply be less visible. Another concern is how attractive scrutiny posts in such separate units would prove. The answer is probably that short-term seconded posts will prove less of an incentive, however, full-time posts will attract officers seeking to undertake varied and interesting policy work. For district councils many of these arguments will appear rather academic; an integrated approach may be the only logical or practical model to adopt.

Regardless of the decision over separate or dedicated direct officer support, there are a range of good practice guidelines which authorities might wish to follow. These are summarised in Figure 6.

Figure 6: direct officer support: good practice guidelines

- allocate a senior officer (second or third tier) to provide an officer lead for scrutiny. This can be either a full-time or part-time role for the officer;
- ensure that officer support to scrutiny provides an effective mix of the following types of officer and skills (on a part-time or full-time basis): corporate policy officers, research officers (if any), service or issue-specific officers, operational/technical officers, committee services officers;
- other useful skills may include: community development officers, officers experienced in consultation processes, Best Value officers, audit and value for money officers;
- do not require officers to take on scrutiny work in addition to their existing workload; and
- provide training and development for officers directly supporting scrutiny, including committee officers (whose role in scrutiny is very different from that in traditional service committees).

This just covers direct officer support to scrutiny. In reality, there are four key officer implications of developing scrutiny functions: direct officer support (as discussed); supplying information and evidence; responding to scrutiny findings; and general awareness of the work of scrutiny. Each of these requires careful consideration and thought.

Developing effective scrutiny processes

At their best scrutiny committees can work in more effective, creative and interesting ways than a traditional service committee. Authorities can avoid the danger of recreating committee processes and culture.

Councils may choose to do this by styling their scrutiny committees on parliamentary select committees; with U-shaped committee tables, seating for the press and public, nameplates for scrutiny councillors and allocated tables for internal and external witnesses. This is a seductive model to develop. But, would it be as restrictive as the traditional committee system?

Certainly, it is possible to develop a very wide range of scrutiny committee processes, which could be selected from depending on the priority of the issue, the resources available to allocate to it and the nature of the issue. In this way scrutiny would have a 'menu' of processes to choose from (Figure 7 summarises some of the key internal and external processes that could be adopted).

As well as oral hearings, scrutiny committees can use site visits, public meetings, mystery shopping and other user research methods, workshops and seminars and so on.

The more scrutiny committees use different methods, the greater is the need to manage the process of investigation and review. In-depth, intensive investigation needs to be project managed.

Figure 7: scrutiny processes and activities

Internal processes:

- discussion within committee meeting(s) and/or special meetings;
- officer reports and presentations to overview and scrutiny committees;
- interviewing officers;
- interviewing executive members;
- interviewing non-executive members (eg chairs of area forums, chairs of quasi-judicial forums, etc);
- desk-based review of available internal and external documentation (eg relevant strategies and plans, budgetary and financial information, etc);
- site visits within the authority;
- case studies of individual cases; and
- commissioned internal research.

External processes – general:

- interviewing expert witnesses;
- conference attendance;
- visits to other authorities and other organisations; and
- commissioning external research.

External processes – engaging partners (business sector, other public agencies, voluntary and community):

- co-option of representatives of partner organisations on overview and scrutiny committees;
- joint working party with partner organisations;
- interviewing representatives of partner organisations;
- visits to view work of partners; and
- workshops/discussions with partners.

External processes -engaging the public and users of services:

- co-option of representatives of user groups on overview and scrutiny committees;
- interviewing representatives of user groups;
- workshops with representatives of user groups;
- public meetings;
- commissioning research to determine public/user views; and
- press releases and media launches.

Interestingly, some authorities, such as Tameside, are developing a more project planning approach to scrutiny. In these authorities a short report is prepared before a review is begun which sets out the framework for the investigation: its terms of reference, objectives, methods of inquiry, available resources, timescales and desired outputs. However, such management of scrutiny should never become so bureaucratic and inflexible that members become excluded from the process.

Attention is also increasingly being paid to the different styles of report and minute taking that scrutiny committees require. Shorter, summary reports, with key points clearly identified are better suited to the needs of scrutiny than very long, detailed reports. There is also a great potential for the role of committee officers to develop further, with a move away from minutes which record decisions, to fuller transcripts which capture the content and substance of debate.

Alongside using a wider range of activities and changing reporting styles, authorities are beginning to realise the importance of the physical environment for scrutiny. If you want to engage the public, partners and the press, take a good look at your committee rooms. Will they support this process? Simple changes to the layout of a committee room can make a tremendous impact on the style of working. Could scrutiny committees meet occasionally in a more seminar style room and format? And a number of authorities are taking their committee meetings outside the town and county hall or civic centre and holding meetings in community centres, libraries, leisure centres and so on.

Conclusions

Scrutiny currently is not working effectively in many experimenting authorities. But it can work. And it has the potential to add considerable value to the work of local councils. The obstacles to developing more effective scrutiny arrangements are considerable – in particular, resource constraints and the opposition of powerful individuals and groups in authorities. But, there are practical solutions to many of the common pitfalls. And local authorities are learning fast. That learning must be captured and shared.

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Scrutiny Solutions Development Programme For Local Government



WARWICK
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'Scrutiny Solutions' is an innovative development programme of learning activities designed to support local authorities in meeting the challenges facing their overview and scrutiny functions. It has been developed by the Local Government Centre, University of Warwick with key partners. The Scrutiny Solutions programme includes a two day residential course for scrutiny councillors, one day seminars, a wide range of 'modular sessions' which can be delivered in-authority, action learning sets, observation and mentoring for scrutiny chairs and committees, improvement-focused evaluations of scrutiny functions and research on key aspects of scrutiny work.

A number of the development opportunities are delivered at Warwick, at our award-winning conference facilities. But many are also available to be delivered in your authority or to a grouping of authorities. This provides the opportunity to tailor our programmes to your particular needs and situation.

The touchstone of Scrutiny Solutions is our focus on learning and improvement. Our Warwick-based residential programme and seminars have limits on numbers in order to ensure that they are learning tools rather than large scale, impersonal conferences. All our in-authority work, including member development, evaluations and observations, focuses on improvement; working to ensure transformational change.

The 'Scrutiny Solutions' Programme Director is Dr Stephanie Snape, widely known within local government for her work on overview and scrutiny, which has included extensive member development work for individual authorities, in-authority evaluations, research for central government, LGA and IDeA, the development of member development programmes for IDeA and others, advising parliamentary select committees, academic research and much more. She has brought together a highly experienced team – both within the Local Government Centre at Warwick and amongst our partners – to provide a wide-ranging programme of improvement-focused learning tools for local authorities.

All activities are competitively priced, essential given the economic climate and drive to make efficiency savings in the public sector.

Please read more about our Scrutiny Solutions programme below.

1. Two Day Residential Programme for Scrutiny Councillors

Scrutiny Solutions: Unlocking the Potential 15 – 16 September 2010

This two day residential course provides an innovative, cutting-edge programme for experienced scrutiny councillors. It addresses the key contemporary challenges facing scrutiny functions; from undertaking scrutiny of partnerships such as LSPs and the emerging Total Place pilots; to meaningful scrutiny of local council finances and the contribution scrutiny can make to recent efficiency drives. There is also bang-up-to-date information on new powers and duties. As with all our Scrutiny Solutions events, the focus is on learning and improvement and throughout the two day course there are opportunities for participants to discuss their own particular problems and challenges in 'Scrutiny Surgeries'. The residential course is being delivered by Dr Stephanie Snape from Warwick Business School and Mark Palmer, from South

East Employers. They have a long history of working together to develop scrutiny learning tools, including development seminars and in-authority evaluations. The third facilitator is Claire Edwards, our Scrutiny Solutions Programme Manager and herself a scrutiny chair.

Please note there is a limit on numbers, in order to ensure the course provides an effective learning environment for participants.

Programme

Day One

- 10.30 Coffee & registration
- 11.00 Introductions
- 11.30 Being an Effective Scrutiny Leader
- 12.30 Influencing Strategies & Styles
- 1.30 Lunch
- 2.30 Scrutiny Surgery
- 3.30 Coffee break
- 3.45 Partnership Scrutiny: Making it Work Locally
- 5.45 Review of Day One
- 6.00 Close
- 7.30 Dinner

Day Two

- 9.00 Introduction to Day 2
- 9.15 Finance & Efficiency Scrutiny
- 10.45 Coffee Break
- 11.00 Scrutiny Surgery
- 12.00 Choice sessions:
 - Relating to the Executive
 - OR...
 - Questioning Skills & Techniques
- 1.00 Lunch
- 2.00 Scrutiny Surgery
- 3.00 Taking the Learning Forward
- 3.30 Close

2. One Day Learning Seminars

Our one day national seminars have been selected to cover topics which are a current high priority for scrutiny councillors and officers but where there is often little guidance or information available. The emphasis is on learning and improvement. Please note that places are limited in order to ensure that there is an effective learning environment.

Scrutinising Partnerships

New scrutiny powers have placed an increasing expectation on scrutiny committees to address the 'holy grail' of scrutiny: effective scrutiny of partner bodies. Such external scrutiny is widening from the initial focus on 'health scrutiny' to examining Local Area Agreements (LAAs) and all the partners involved in contributing to LAAs. LAAs alongside developments such as Comprehensive Area Agreements and Total Place pilots means that external scrutiny is increasingly involving the scrutiny of 'place'. This seminar addresses these new powers and their possibilities, alongside case studies of partnership scrutiny and the opportunity to discuss participants own challenges in this area.

Scrutinising Shared Services

The 'Shared Services' agenda has taken a real hold in authorities, with councils working with neighbouring authorities and/or other organisations to transform their services. Shared services do take a range of forms: integrated front office services such as two or more authorities developing a 'one stop shop' for the public; one authority providing expertise on back office functions such as legal services for a neighbour; or shared management arrangements such as a shared chief executive or senior management. All these arrangements pose particular challenges for scrutiny. This seminar examines this emerging area for scrutiny.

Financial & Efficiency Scrutiny

This seminar provides an essential guide for scrutiny councillors who want to understand how to undertake financial and efficiency scrutiny. It will consider how elected members can effectively scrutinise their authority's Medium Term Financial Strategy, revenue and capital budgets and budget monitoring information. It will also consider the contribution scrutiny can make to the search for value for money and efficiency savings.

Scrutiny of Children's Services

Scrutiny of Children's Services is one of the most challenging areas for scrutiny to work in; complex legislative frameworks, high expectations, vulnerable clients and the potential for high profile service breakdown. This seminar seeks to work with members and officers tasked with taking forward scrutiny in this difficult but rewarding area. It is provided in partnership with Continyou, the well known and regarded community learning organisation working in the field of children and young people's services.

These seminars are scheduled to take place from July 2010. If you are interested in attending one of the seminars please express an interest by emailing our Programme Manager (contact details below).

The above seminars can be tailored and shaped for in-authority delivery. Contact the Programme Director or Manager (details below) for more information.

3. In-Authority Scrutiny Seminars, Modules & other Learning Tools

As well as our national programmes, we work with individual authorities – or groups of authorities – to tailor in-authority 'scrutiny solutions'. We can provide tailored learning opportunities which can vary from single modules of two hour duration to half day, full day or more, with seminars incorporating several sessions. We can also deliver member development programmes involving a series of day or half day seminars. Modules can be provided in the evening or at week-ends.

Listed below are a range of single modules which we can provide organised into six key areas:

Scrutiny Issues	Single Modules Available
Scrutiny Leadership & Team Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effective Leadership for Scrutiny (including a self-assessment tool designed for those councillors with a leadership role)• Improving your Chairing Skills• Building an Effective Scrutiny Team (for single scrutiny committees or panels)• Effective Scrutiny Councillor – Scrutiny Officer Relationships
Scrutiny Tasks, Strategies & Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Influencing Strategies & Styles• Developing an Effective Work Programme

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capturing the 'Impact' of Scrutiny • Effective Questioning & Listening Strategies
The Politics of Scrutiny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relating to the Cabinet • Building Effective Cross-Party Working
Scrutinising Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutinising Local Strategic Partnerships & Local Area Agreements • The Scrutiny of 'Place': Area Based Scrutiny • Scrutiny in Two Tier Areas
Scrutinising Specific Service or Cross-Cutting Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny of Children's Services • Effective Health Scrutiny • Scrutiny of Fire & Rescue Services • Scrutiny of Economic Development • Financial & Efficiency Scrutiny
Community-Focused Scrutiny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Community-Focused Scrutiny • Involving the Media in the work of Scrutiny • Councillor Call for Action (CCFA)
Scrutiny Powers & Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Scrutiny Powers • Transferring the Learning from Other Scrutiny Arenas: Lessons from Parliamentary Select Committees

While formats and content for modules varies according to the topic, our approach is to deliver modules which are highly interactive, with a focus on learning and improvement.

Scrutiny Solutions can also offer authorities or groups of authorities:

- **Learning Set** approaches, which use the action learning technique to address key challenges and problems over a series of meetings with an experienced learning facilitator.
- **Observation & Feedback of scrutiny chairs and vice chairs or of scrutiny meetings.** Such observation and feedback can be very useful in identifying and addressing effective and ineffective strategies for managing meetings, building teams and questioning and listening strategies and techniques.
- **Mentoring & Coaching.** Similarly, scrutiny chairs and scrutiny officers often find it beneficial to have a mentor or coach to support their development.
- **Induction Training.** If your authority has a high turnover of scrutiny councillors or is a new unitary, induction training can be an essential learning intervention which ensures a good start to scrutiny work.

All in-authority work would be tailored to the specific requirements of your council.

4. In-Authority Evaluation & Research

Overview and scrutiny functions can benefit enormously from evaluations undertaken by credible external researchers. A number of members of the Scrutiny Solutions Team are highly experienced at

undertaking formative, improvement-focused evaluations of individual scrutiny functions. When undertaken by a skilled evaluator, such research can be a highly effective learning tool for all involved and a catalyst for substantial change.

Evaluations for individual authorities typically involve a range of methods:

- observation of scrutiny meetings and briefings;
- interviews with key individuals such as scrutiny chairs and vice chairs, scrutiny officers, chief officers, cabinet members etc;
- focus groups with, for example: representatives of partner organisations: departmental officers who have had contact with scrutiny, through, for example, giving evidence or providing written reports: representatives of partner organisations;
- surveys of councillors, officers and partners and public;
- document analysis of scrutiny reports, agendas and minutes.

Through our extensive experience of undertaking scrutiny evaluations, we have developed a range of key evaluation instruments, such as topic guides for interviews and focus groups, observation frameworks for meetings observation, surveys and document analysis frameworks. However, every authority operates scrutiny in their own way and scrutiny evaluations must be designed to the individual authority. And, when undertaking scrutiny evaluations, we work to ensure practical, realistic recommendations which we encourage authorities to take forward into action plans. For examples of our scrutiny evaluation reports, please see our website.

The Scrutiny Solutions team also has extensive experience of undertaking **national research** on scrutiny issues and can be commissioned to undertake both quantitative and qualitative research on key scrutiny issues for individual councils or groups of councils.

To discuss scrutiny evaluations or research, contact our programme director or manager.

5. The Scrutiny Solutions Team

The Scrutiny Solutions Programme Director is Dr Stephanie Snape, with extensive experience of a wide variety of work in the field of overview and scrutiny. She is supported in managing the programme by Claire Edwards, the Programme Manager, who is an administrator in the Local Government Centre and a councillor and Scrutiny Chair in her own right.

The Programme Director and Manager have brought together an impressive team to deliver the Scrutiny Solutions programme, drawn from Local Government Centre staff, associates and our partners. They include: Mark Palmer, Head of Improvement & Governance at South East Employers who has extensive experience of supporting scrutiny and recently has led innovative work on scrutiny of partnerships; Ines Newman, previously of LGIU and with extensive scrutiny involvement; Howard Davies, Director of the Local Government Centre who has investigated public involvement and scrutiny; Judi Billing, previously Director of the Leadership Academy at IDeA; Ian Bottrill, previously Leader of Warwickshire County Council and Director of Operations Continyou and Module Leader for Module 3 of the IDeA Leadership Academy; Fiona Campbell, former Director of the Democratic Health Network and former Head of Scrutiny at the GLA – a recognised national expert of health scrutiny.

6. Contacting Us

For more information on Scrutiny Solutions please contact either the programme director or manager:

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UPDATE ON WORK PROGRAM : COUNCIL EXCELLENCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 18/11/10

Reports to assist in monitoring the Committee's work programme

It was agreed by the Scrutiny Chairs Group in September 2008 to use the following reports to monitor the work programme for each Scrutiny Committee. The last item on each Scrutiny Committee agenda should be 'Review of the Committee Work Programme'.

Report 1 - Monitoring Report for Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

This report will list all items that have been selected by the Committee for inclusion on the work programme for the current year.

It will also include items, such as previous Panel Reviews, where recommendations have been made to Cabinet. It is important that the implementation of these recommendations is monitored. Otherwise there is no measure of the success of scrutiny.

For each item on the work programme, the report will give a description, an indication of how the item will be dealt with, a relative timescale for the work and brief comments on progress.

Report 2 - Suggestions for Additions to Work Programme

The Work Programme for the Committee should be reviewed at each meeting. This will enable members to ask for new Items to be added to the programme. This report will list any newly suggested items. Committee will then have the opportunity to agree (or not) for them to be added to the programme.

Report 3 - Proposed Outline Meeting Schedule for the Municipal Year

The report will, for each scheduled Committee meeting, list those items which are likely to be on the meeting agenda. This will give the opportunity for Committee members to take a greater lead in organising their work programme.

Report 4 - Progress Report on In-Depth Panel Reviews

This report will give a very brief update on progress / timescales for in-depth panel reviews which are in the 'ownership' of the Committee.

REPORT 1
MONITORING REPORT FOR SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME
COUNCIL EXCELLENCE : 2010 / 2011

Date of New item	Topic Description	How the topic will be dealt with	Estimated Complete Date	Comments on Progress	Complete?
17/03/10	Community Cohesion	Officer Report (Carolyn Curr)		Council Excellence Committee meeting of 17 th March 2010 requested that this item be included on the Committee's work programme for 2010/11.	
17/03/10	Freedom of Information Act	Officer Report (Ian Coleman)		Follow-up report (from meeting held on 17 th March 2010) presented to 8 th July meeting. No further actions requested.	Complete
08/07/10	Future of Performance Management / replacement of CAA: - How will performance management operate once the CAA and statutory Performance Indicators have been removed? - Who collects the current PI data, how much effort is involved, and what use is made of it? - Which Performance Indicators are relevant and should be retained? - What information do members need to monitor the local authority effectively?	Officer Report (Carolyn Curr)		A verbal report on the current view of the future for performance monitoring in the authority was provided at the meeting on 21 st September. Further report to meeting on 31 st January 2011 to include: - Performance Indicators that could be useful in the future; - How might comparative data with statistical neighbours be delivered?	
08/07/10	Performance Monitoring (Quarterly updates on existing performance indicators – 'Exceptions' only will be reported).	Officer Reports (Carolyn Curr)		Quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports will be included on each agenda from September onwards.	
08/07/10	Strategic Change Programme: - Regular updates on proposed savings; - Monitor the effectiveness of the Change Programme;	Officer Reports (Dave Green)		A report on the progress of the Strategic Change Programme Board was provided for the meeting on 18 th November. A further report is planned for the Special meeting arranged for 28 th October 2010.	

Date of New item	Topic Description	How the topic will be dealt with	Estimated Complete Date	Comments on Progress	Complete?
08/07/10	Common Administrative Processes	Officer Reports (Dave Green)		Suggested report on progress of the project at the meeting on 18 th November.	
08/07/10	Financial Reporting / Budget: - Monitoring the financial statements - How the authority performs against savings targets; - Review the impact on local residents where savings are made; - Impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review on the borough;	Officer Reports (Ian Coleman)		Financial / Budget Monitoring reports will be included on each meeting agenda.	
08/07/10	'Total Place': - What is the role for the concept of 'Total Place' in the borough?; - What is happening with partners to establish areas for cooperation, for example, how will DASS and NHS work together to streamline 'elderly' care?	Officer Reports (Carolyn Curr)		Report on the background to 'Total Place and successor arrangements – Community Budgets' provided at the meeting on 21 st September. Report to be produced for the meeting on 31st January to include: - Examples of both successful and unsuccessful practice from elsewhere; - Further Government advice; - Progress on discussions with local partners regarding shared services, etc..	
08/07/10	Office Accommodation: - The EC Harris report was referred to the Council Excellence Committee by Cabinet (24 June 2010); - Need to understand the Cabinet timetable; - What are the implications for the Council's Data Centres?; - Future role for agile working	Officer reports plus site visits. (Bill Norman / Ian Brand)		Special meeting of the Committee arranged for 24 th August 2010. Further report provided at the meeting on 21 st September. Further report requested for the meeting on 18/11/10.	

Date of New item	Topic Description	How the topic will be dealt with	Estimated Complete Date	Comments on Progress	Complete?
08/07/10	Future of Cultural Services: - Where should Cultural Services fit in the organisation?; - How can the service be best managed?;	Possible joint work with Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee		Suggested report at the meeting on 31 st January 2011. As a report is due to be discussed at Cabinet on 23/09/10, the Council Excellence meeting of 21/09/10 agreed to take this item no further.	Close
08/07/10	Monitoring of items of expenditure exceeding £500: - How does the system operate?	Officer report to a future meeting (Ian Coleman)		Issue initially raised by a member at the Committee meeting on 08/07/10. Report on 'Publication of Expenditure' provided at the meeting on 21 st September. A further report, expected on 31/01/11, was requested to explain the staffing implications of publishing the expenditure data.	
21/09/10	Employee Forums – What issues do they cover? What are the participation levels? What is the cost of providing the Forums?	Officer report (Carolyn Curr)		Issue initially raised by a member at the Committee meeting on 21/09/10. Report planned for the meeting on 18 th November.	
21/09/10	Reaching Excellent Level of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG)	Officer report (Carolyn Curr)		Progress report presented to meeting on 21/09/10. Further report, expected 10/03/11, requested in six months time. Report to include the reasons for low levels of Black and Ethnic Minority individuals accessing mainstream services.	
21/09/10	Income from Golf Courses, to include: Why is projected income not met on an annual basis? Is security of courses a determinant in loss of income?	Officer report (Jim Lester)		Issue initially raised by a member at the Committee meeting on 21/09/10. Report requested for meeting on 18/11/10.	

Date of New item	Topic Description	How the topic will be dealt with	Estimated Complete Date	Comments on Progress	Complete?
21/09/10	Measures to reduce the number of payments by cheque	Officer report (Ian Coleman)		Issue initially raised by a member at the Committee meeting on 21/09/10. Report planned for the meeting on 18 th November.	
21/09/10	Policy on mobile phone entitlement and operation of the system	Officer report (Ian Coleman)		Issue initially raised by a member at the Committee meeting on 21/09/10. Report planned for the meeting on 18 th November.	
21/09/10	Allowances paid to staff (on top of salary)	Officer report (Bill Norman / Chris Hyams)		Issue initially raised by a member at the Committee meeting on 21/09/10. Report planned for the meeting on 18 th November.	
21/09/10	'Wirral's Future – Be a part of it' – Independent Task Forces	Officer report		Issue initially raised by a member at the Committee meeting on 21/09/10. Report planned for the meeting on 28 th October.	

REPORT 2
SUGGESTIONS FOR ADDITIONS TO WORK PROGRAMME
COUNCIL EXCELLENCE : 21/09/10

Topic Description	Topic suggested by	How the topic will be dealt with	Estimated Completion Date
Several additions to the Work Programme were agreed by members at the Council Excellence meeting held on 21/09/10. These items are listed above (on Report 1), where the 'Date of New Item' column is shown as 21/09/10.			

REPORT 3
PROPOSED OUTLINE MEETING SCHEDULE FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR
COUNCIL EXCELLENCE : 2010 / 2011

Meeting Date	Topic Description
08/07/10	Financial Monitoring Housing Benefit / Council Tax Benefit Annual Report Customer Services Annual Report Treasury Management Annual Report Audit Commission Performance Management Review Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy Freedom of Information requests (follow-up report from meeting held on 17 th March 2010) Forward Plan Office Accommodation Work Programme Update Forward Plan
24/08/10	Office Accommodation (Special Meeting)
21/09/10	Update on Strategic Change Programme Financial Monitoring Revenues & Benefits Budget Projections 2011-15 Treasury Management Customer Services Focus Group Publication of Expenditure Audit Commission Report - Managing Attendance Delivering efficiency and measuring and reporting Value for Money Gains in Local Services Q1 Performance Monitoring – Report concentrating on red / amber ‘exceptions’ plus a verbal update on the future plans for performance monitoring ‘Total Place’ and successor arrangements – Community Budgets Office Accommodation / Rationalisation Reaching Excellent Level of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) – Quarter One 2010/11 Work Programme Update Forward Plan Catering tenders Schools Risk Management

Meeting Date	Topic Description
28/10/10	<p>Special Meeting: Strategic Change Programme Board – Update on progress (Dave Green) ‘Wirral’s Future – Be a part of it’ – Independent Task Forces</p>
18/11/10	<p>Financial Monitoring (Ian Coleman) Revenues and Benefits (Ian Coleman) Budget Projections 2011-15 (Ian Coleman) Treasury Management (Ian Coleman) Impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review – Initial View (Ian Coleman) Presentation – Operation Black Vote (Carolyn Curr) Q2 Performance Monitoring – Report concentrating on red / amber ‘exceptions’ (Carolyn Curr) Common Administrative Processes (Dave Green) Office Accommodation / Rationalisation (Bill Norman / Ian Brand) Golf Income (Jim Lester) Employee Forums (Carolyn Curr) Measures to reduce the number of payments by cheque (Ian Coleman) Policy on mobile phone entitlement and operation of the system (Ian Coleman) Allowances paid to staff (on top of salary) (Bill Norman / Chris Hyams) Work Programme Update Forward Plan</p>
31/01/11	<p>Financial Monitoring (Ian Coleman) Revenues and Benefits (Ian Coleman) Budget Projections 2011-15 (Ian Coleman) Treasury Management (Ian Coleman) Publication of Expenditure – Update on Staffing implications (Ian Coleman) Community Budgets (formerly ‘Total Place’) - Update (Carolyn Curr) Progress of Change Programme (Dave Green) Q3 Performance Monitoring – Report concentrating on red / amber ‘exceptions’ (Carolyn Curr) Future of Performance Management (Carolyn Curr) Work Programme Update Forward Plan</p>

Meeting Date	Topic Description
16/03/10	Financial Monitoring (Ian Coleman) Revenues and Benefits (Ian Coleman) Budget Projections 2011-15 (Ian Coleman) Treasury Management (Ian Coleman) Reaching Excellent Level of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) (Carolyn Curr) Work Programme Update Forward Plan

REPORT 4
PROGRESS REPORT ON IN-DEPTH PANEL REVIEWS
COUNCIL EXCELLENCE : 18/11/10

Title of Review	Members of Panel	Progress to Date	Date Due to report to Committee
None at present			

**SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WORK PROGRAMME 2010/11**

Title:	Department:	Comments/ Justification:/outcome
<p>7th June 2010: Review of the Impact of the Severe Weather in January 2010</p> <p>Highway & Engineering Services Contract – Annual Review</p> <p>Carbon Reduction Progress Update - NI 185 (Council activity)</p> <p>2009/10 Quarter 4 Performance Report</p>	<p>Technical Services</p> <p>Technical Services</p> <p>Technical Services</p> <p>Technical Services Law, HR & Asset Management</p>	<p>Progress report and formal presentation – item requested by Cabinet and O&S Committee – REPORT NOTED WITH CABINET RECOMMENDATION 7.6.10</p> <p>Progress report and formal presentation on the new strategic contract with Colas Ltd that commenced on 1st April 2009 – PROGRESS NOTED 7.6.10</p> <p>Progress report on delivering Corporate Priority 2.2: - REPORT NOTED 7.6.10</p> <p>Regular report covering performance and financial issues – REPORT NOTED 7.6.10</p>
<p>14th September 2010: United Utility - Operations</p> <p>Scottish Power – Street Lighting</p> <p>Gateway 5</p>	<p>Technical Services</p> <p>Technical Services</p> <p>Technical Services</p>	<p>REPRESENTATIVES ATTENDED OSC - DISCUSSION HELD AND IMPROVED LIASION ARRANGEMENTS NOTED</p> <p>REPRESENTATIVES ATTENDED OSC – DISCUSSION HELD OVER RESIDENT DISSATISFACTION OVER STREET LIGHTING – attendance requested Jan 11</p> <p>Officer report on the outcome of Gateway 5 review – REPORT NOTED 14.9.10 – FURTHER REPORT REQUESTED JAN 11</p>

Highway and Engineering Services – Annual report/presentation	CE – Colas	MR NEILL THANKED FOR PRESENTATION
Road Safety Progress Update – NI 47 & NI 48 (All KSI and Child KSI) (including review of Road Safety Audit procedure)	Technical Services	Progress report on delivering Corporate Priority 2.4: Reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents - DEFERRED
Carbon Reduction Progress Update – NI 186 (Wirral-wide activity)	Technical Services	2ND PROGRESS REPORT – PERFORMANCE NOTED AND FUTURE PROJECT PROPOSALS ENDORSED
Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy Review Update	Technical Services	Update on the review of the Merseyside JMWMS – REPORT NOTED
Beach Management	Technical Services	Report requested by Chair – CTEE AGREED REPORT WITHDRAWN
Business Plan for Wirral’s Parks	Technical Services	Business Plan linked with ongoing PACSPE Procurement Exercises - DEFERRED
Physical Activity for Hard to Reach Groups	Technical Services	Review of the provision of physical activity for this group - DEFERRED
2010/11 Quarter 1 Performance Report	Technical Services Law, HR & Asset Management	Regular report covering performance and financial issues – REPORT NOTED
17th November 2010:		
Local Environmental Quality Update – NI 195	Technical Services	Progress report on delivering Corporate Priority 2.3: Create exemplary levels of street cleanliness
Arrowe Park Hospital Travel Plan	Technical Services	Annual review of the Hospital Travel Plan in accordance with Section 106 condition (could be delegated to Highways & Traffic Representations Panel with Committee approval)

Flood Working Group Progress Report	Technical Services	Progress report of the formal Working Group established by the O&S Committee
Carbon Reduction Progress Update – NI 185 (Council Activity)	Technical Services	6 monthly progress report on delivering Corporate Priority 2.2: Reducing the Council's carbon footprint
Arts & Museums Development Plan	Technical Services	Development Plan for Arts and Museums
Food Safety and Nutrition	Law, HR & Asset Management	Review of the work of Environmental Health and Trading Standards
Dog Fouling	Law, HR & Asset Management	Review of Dog Fouling initiatives
Doorstep Crime	Law, HR & Asset Management	Progress in Tackling Doorstep Crime
2010/11 Quarter 2 Performance Report	Technical Services Law, HR & Asset Management	Regular report covering performance and financial issues
20th January 2011:		
Waste Recycling/ Minimisation Update – NI 191 & NI 192	Technical Services	Progress report on delivering Corporate Priority 2.1: Sustain improved levels of recycling
Streetscene Environment Services Contract – Fourth Annual Review	Technical Services	Progress report and formal presentation on the strategic contract with Biffa that commenced in August 2006
Review of second phase Pavement/ Verge Parking Enforcement initiative	Technical Services	Review of second phase of initiative as requested by O&S Committee (could be delegated to Highways & Traffic Representations Panel with Committee approval)
Scottish Power	Technical Services/Scottish Power#	Reps to attend OSC (See mins 14 Sept) – report on work schedules for council and Scottish Power.
Gateway 5	Technical Services	Further report request – (see mins Sept 10)

10th March 2011:		
Flood Working Group Progress Report	Technical Services	Progress report of the formal Working Group established by the O&S Committee
Carbon Reduction Progress Update – NI 186 (Wirral-wide activity)	Technical Services	6 monthly Progress report on delivering Corporate Priority 2.2: Reducing Wirral's carbon footprint
Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC)	Technical Services	CRC Initiative Progress Report
Underage Sales	Law, HR & Asset Management	Progress in the Control of illicit sales to Young People.
Quarter 3 Performance Report	Technical Services Law, HR & Asset Management	Regular report covering performance and financial issues

NB: The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee is the designated committee to provide the statutory scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership. The scrutiny work is still to be identified and is the subject of consultation between the Scrutiny committee and the community Safety Partnership.

Updated Work Programme Scrutiny Programme Board Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

BEGINNING OF THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2010 /2011

It was agreed at the Overview and Scrutiny Chairs meeting to adopt the following procedure to allow the committee members to monitor their work programme. It is felt that the work programme should be a 'living' document and as such is intended to act as a guide for the Committee throughout the year, while providing the degree of flexibility needed to respond to any emerging or pressing issues as they arise. Committee members, and particularly the Chair, should have a major role in owning and managing the work programme.

The final item on the agenda for each Scrutiny Committee will be 'Review of the Committee Work Programme'.

It is suggested that there should be four short reports. I have attached the following reports:

REPORT 1 - Lists all the issues the committee agreed to include in their Work Programme:

This report lists all items that have been selected by the Committee for inclusion on the work programme for the current year.

It also includes items, such as previous Panel Reviews, where recommendations have been made to Cabinet. It is important that the implementation of these recommendations is monitored. Otherwise there is no measure of the success of scrutiny.

For each item on the work programme, the report gives a description, an indication of how the item will be dealt with, a where possible a relative timescale for the work and brief comments on progress.

REPORT 2 - Suggestions for Additions to Work Programme

The Work Programme for the Committee should be reviewed at each meeting. This will include members having the opportunity to ask for new Items to be added to the programme. This report will list any newly suggested items. Committee will then have the opportunity to agree (or not) for them to be added to the programme.

REPORT 3 - Proposed Outline Meeting Schedule for the Municipal Year

The report lists those items which are likely to be on the meeting agenda. This will give the opportunity for Committee members to take a greater lead in organising their work programme.

REPORT 4 - Progress Report on In-Depth Panel Reviews

This report will give a very brief update on progress / timescales for in-depth panel reviews which are in the 'ownership' of the Committee.

Report 1

MONITORING REPORT FOR THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD START OF MUNICIPAL YEAR 2010/2011

(UPDATES IN RED)

Date of item	Topic Description	How the topic will be dealt with	Comments on Progress	Complete
3 RD JUNE	<p>The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management provided an update on the current status of the Scrutiny Programme Board's Work Programme for the 2009/2010 municipal year and invited suggestions from Members regarding the work programme for 2010/2011. He outlined the functions of the Scrutiny Programme Board and indicated that the work programmes of the five themed overview and scrutiny committees would be presented to each meeting of the Board for progress to be reviewed.</p> <p>He set out guidance for the selection of topics for review and commented that an in-depth review should have the potential to make a difference and be carefully chosen with reference to objective criteria. He commented upon sources of ideas for topics for review and referred also to reasons for the rejection of suggested topics..</p>			
3 RD JUNE	<p><u>It was agreed:</u> That the impact on partnerships of any savings that may be required in relation to specific grants, form the basis of a scrutiny review as more information is known.</p>	PANEL REVIEW		
3 rd JUNE	<p><u>Alcohol Scrutiny Review</u></p> <p><u>It was agreed:</u> That the Alcohol Scrutiny Review remain as part of the work programme for the new municipal year.</p>	PANEL REVIEW		
3 rd JUNE	<p><u>One Council' Scrutiny Review</u></p> <p><u>Resolved</u> – That no further work be undertaken in relation to the 'One Council' Scrutiny Review at the present time.</p>	PANEL REVIEW	Further to minute 44 (4 March 2010), the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management provided an update upon progress of the 'One Council' Scrutiny Review. He outlined the objective of the review and appended to his report the scoping document previously approved by the Board. The Director sought the views of the Board as to whether the review should remain as part of the work programme for the new municipal year.	

The Chair presented an updated Monitoring Report on the Committees Work Programme, in order to give Members the opportunity to review it and to ask for new items to be added.

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management reported upon the annual Good Scrutiny Awards, which had recently been presented by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), and which provided examples of best practice in scrutiny achieved in some authorities. He provided an explanation of the categories in the awards and indicated that although the awards were national, five of this year's winners (out of ten categories) were geographical neighbours of Wirral.

Members referred to the substantial amount of scrutiny being undertaken in Wirral and expressed the view that the achievements in scrutiny should form the basis of a submission for the Good Scrutiny Awards 2011.

The Democratic Services Manager referred to the significant work undertaken as part of the Alcohol Scrutiny Review and suggested that it could form the basis of a submission to the CfPS Good Scrutiny Awards 2011 (see minute 24 ante). She also sought the views of Members as to additional topics to form the basis of further scrutiny reviews.

Resolved –

That the officers be requested to present a report, highlighting examples of excellent scrutiny, to a future meeting of the Board, in time to prepare a submission for the 2011 CfPS Awards.

Resolved –

- 1 That additional topics for review be considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Workshop to be held on 5 October 2010.
2. That the Alcohol Scrutiny Review form the basis of a submission to the CfPS Good Scrutiny Awards 2011.

Report 2

SUGGESTIONS FOR ADDITIONS TO WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD START OF MUNICIPAL YEAR 2010/2011

Topic Description	Topic suggested by	How the topic will be dealt with	Estimated Completion Date

Report 3

PROPOSED OUTLINE MEETING SCHEDULE FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD START OF MUNICIPAL YEAR 2010/2011

Meeting Date	Topic Description
	▪
	▪

Report 4

PROGRESS REPORT ON IN-DEPTH PANEL REVIEWS FOR SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD START OF MUNICIPAL YEAR 2010/2011

Title of Review	Members of Panel	Progress to Date	Date Due to report back
<p><u>Alcohol Scrutiny Review</u></p>	<p>Councillor Ann Bridson Councillor Chris Meaden Councillor Sue Taylor Councillor Dave Mitchell</p>	<p>Further to minute 17 (14 September 2009) and minute 33 (14 January 2010), members of the Alcohol Scrutiny Panel presented an update on progress for the Alcohol Scrutiny Review. The central focus of the review was the "access to alcohol by young people in Wirral" and the issues which would be focused upon were contained within a scoping document appended to the report. Evidence had been gathered from meetings with officers of Wirral NHS, Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT), Children and Young People, Licensing, Trading Standards and Merseyside Police. The Panel members proposed to continue with further evidence gathering, in particular focusing on the education of children (regarding alcohol) and the investigation of progress of initiatives at statistical and geographical neighbours. Members of the Panel indicated that young people would also be interviewed during the course of the review and it was proposed that this would be achieved with input from the Youth Parliament and the Youth Outreach Team.</p> <p><u>(1) That the Alcohol Scrutiny Review remain as part of the work programme for the new municipal year.</u></p> <p>(2) That with the continued input and support from Mr A Veitch (Scrutiny Officer aligned to the Liberal Democrat Group), the following Members be re-appointed to serve on the Alcohol Scrutiny Panel in 2010/2011</p>	<p>It was planned that the final report for the Alcohol Scrutiny Review would be completed by the current panel members in due course</p> <p>This review is now coming to a close and a report is due to be produced shortly. They are waiting for data regarding alcohol-related hospital admissions' including by age, gender & geographical breakdown of the patients. Also, comparative data with geographical and statistical neighbours.</p>

<p><u>'One Council' Scrutiny Review</u></p>		<p>Further to minute 44 (4 March 2010), the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management provided an update upon progress of the 'One Council' Scrutiny Review. He outlined the objective of the review and appended to his report the scoping document previously approved by the Board. The Director sought the views of the Board as to whether the review should remain as part of the work programme for the new municipal year.</p> <p><u>Resolved – That no further work be undertaken in relation to the 'One Council' Scrutiny Review at the present time.</u></p>	
<p>That the impact on partnerships of any savings that may be required in relation to specific grants, form the basis of a scrutiny review as more information is known.</p>	<p>tba</p>		

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