

WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD - 20th SEPTEMBER 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

MEMBERS' QUESTIONNAIRE ON SCRUTINY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides details of responses to the members' questionnaire on scrutiny (2009/10) that has been recently circulated. The report also provides an update to the recommendations which were agreed by the Scrutiny Programme Board following the analysis of the 2008/9 version of the questionnaire.

1. Background

- 1.1 It was agreed by the Scrutiny Chairs' Group in November 2008 that a questionnaire should be sent to all Council members to give them an opportunity to express their views on scrutiny arrangements.
- 1.2 The questionnaire was sent to members in April 2009 and the responses were analysed. The Scrutiny Programme Board reviewed the results of the questionnaire at the meetings held on 27th May 2009 and 7th September 2009. A number of recommendations were agreed at the meeting on 7th September 2009. An update on the implementation of those recommendations is provided in Section 2 of this report.
- 1.3 The Scrutiny Programme Board (7th September 2009) agreed that the format of the Members' scrutiny questionnaire should be reviewed and that a questionnaire should be issued on an annual basis. As steps are taken to improve the scrutiny function, it is important that the views of members are taken into account. Again, it was agreed that the survey should be undertaken at the end of the municipal year. The results of 2009/10 survey, undertaken during April and May of 2010, are analysed in Section 3 of this report.

2. Outcome of the recommendations following the 2008/9 questionnaire

The meeting of the Scrutiny Programme Board held on 7th September 2009 agreed a number of recommendations aimed at improving scrutiny processes. Each of those recommendations is reviewed below:

- 2.1 Recommendation: Each of the five Scrutiny Committees undertake at least one detailed review of a relevant topic and produce a report with recommendations for improvements.

2.1.1 Reasons for the recommendation

In the 2008/9 survey, the most frequent response to the question of 'How could we make our Scrutiny Committees more effective?' related to there being more working groups undertaking 'positive' scrutiny on a specific issue. Furthermore, when asked in the Questionnaire, 'Does Scrutiny have a positive impact on the services provided by

the Council?', approximately half of the recipients reported positive impact of scrutiny, with the reviews undertaken by Children's Services Scrutiny Committee (Fostering and Youth Outreach Reviews) and by Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee (Hospital Discharge Review) being cited as examples by most of these members.

The standard practice in many Councils is for small groups of councillors to undertake a detailed review into a specific topic of particular interest to the members. The process is member-led involving more informal meetings and visits in order to gather 'evidence' on the topic. The outcome of the review is a report which includes recommendations for improvements that is reported to the relevant Scrutiny Committee and then, if agreed, to Cabinet.

By September 2009, only a small number of such reviews had taken place in Wirral. These include 'The Support given to schools pre- and post-Ofsted Inspections', 'The Fostering Service', 'Youth Outreach' and 'Hospital Discharge: The Patient Experience of the Older People in Wirral'. In all of these cases, a substantial number of the recommendations have been / are being implemented. Therefore, scrutiny can influence service provision. The influence of scrutiny members was more likely to be increased by their participation in detailed Scrutiny reviews.

2.1.2 Progress since September 2009

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee has undertaken 'in-depth' reviews for a number of years and has developed investigative scrutiny as a way of working. This practice continued in 2009/10 with the completion of the 'Literacy Levels at Key Stage 2' review. The 'evidence gathering' was carried out by an all-party working group (Cllrs Sheila Clarke, Frank Doyle and Tony Smith), which resulted in a report being agreed by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on 21st January 2010. Subsequently, the report was included on the Cabinet agenda of 24th June 2010. Cabinet resolved that:

- (1) Cabinet thanks the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for an excellent piece of work;
- (2) Cabinet supports the contents and recommendations of the Literacy Levels Scrutiny Review and requests that a further report be brought to Cabinet on the implementation of the Review's recommendations.

Subsequently, the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee established a working group to undertake a review of "Narrowing the gap – Impact of deprivation funding". This review has yet to be completed.

During 2009/10, the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee established a working group comprising Cllrs Ann Bridson, Denise Roberts, Sheila Clarke and Chris Teggins to review 'The care of patients with dementia in acute hospital'. The members have worked with experts, voluntary groups and carers to identify issues from the perspective of the patient with dementia and their carer(s) and also from the viewpoint of other patients sharing a ward with a dementia patient. The 'evidence gathering' is almost complete and a report is due to be produced before the end of 2010.

An all-party panel of four members (Cllrs Dave Mitchell, Sue Taylor, Chris Meaden and Ann Bridson) was established by the Scrutiny Programme Board to review the over-arching issue of the Council's approach to tackling the problem of increased drinking by young people. The review is focusing on the access to alcohol by young people. Members are discussing the problem with Council officers, NHS staff and the

police as well as talking to young people on the streets and in parks in the company of trained outreach workers. How and why are young teenagers getting hold of three-litre bottles of cider that cost less than £3 per bottle? A report will be produced by the members in the autumn.

The remaining three Overview and Scrutiny Committees – Council Excellence, Economy and Regeneration and Sustainable Communities - did not undertake any 'in-depth reviews in the 2009 /10 municipal year. Subsequently, during the new municipal year, none of the six Committees have started any new 'in-depth' reviews.

2.2 Recommendation: Encourage Scrutiny Committees to facilitate greater involvement of residents and community organisations during reviews on specific topics.

2.2.1 Reasons for the recommendation

In the national context, there are many examples of scrutiny being used to engage with communities rather than being an internal Council process. In Wirral, the Hospital Discharge Scrutiny Review assessed the 'patient experience' of older people. A major part of the 'evidence' was formed by focus groups of people who had recently been through the discharge process. This provided first-hand examples from residents, which presented powerful evidence that was used to increase the influence of the report. However, it was agreed that, in general, Wirral's Scrutiny processes would be improved by greater involvement of residents and community organisations during reviews on specific topics.

2.2.2 Progress since September 2009

The working groups undertaking 'in-depth' reviews have involved the general public during their 'evidence gathering'. Examples include:

- Visits to schools, including discussions with head teachers, teachers, governors and pupils during both the Literacy Level and Deprivation Funding reviews.
- Meetings with representatives of Alzheimer's Society and Age Concern (including a visit to the Devonshire Centre) as part of the Dementia Review.
- Two Focus groups with carers of people with dementia as part of the Dementia Review.
- Visits on to the streets and into parks in the company of outreach workers to meet young drinkers during the Alcohol Review.

In addition, the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee has established a healthy working relationship with Wirral LINK. Other committees have involved community representatives or partner organisations in debates on specific issues.

2.3 Recommendation: Support the production of a short 'aide memoire' document to highlight examples of good scrutiny practice.

2.3.1 Reasons for the recommendation

The 'Scrutiny Toolkit' was produced and issued to all members in 2008. However, this is a lengthy document. It was agreed that a shorter 'aide memoire' document should be produced to highlight examples of good scrutiny practice.

2.3.2 Progress since September 2009

The Scrutiny Programme Board supported the introduction of the scrutiny leaflet, 'Scrutiny – A Guide for Wirral residents'. In addition, the 'Scrutiny Toolkit' is also available in the Library section of the Wirral Council Intranet and website. However, consideration needs to be given to any further guidance that members may require.

2.4 Recommendation: Request that training opportunities are identified for scrutiny members and chairs. In addition, further work should be done to identify examples of good scrutiny practice from other Councils and reports are prepared for future meetings.

2.4.1 Reasons for the recommendation

When asked in the 2008/9 Questionnaire, 'As a Scrutiny member, how could you become more effective?', a number of members requested further training on scrutiny processes. In addition, the Audit Commission Annual Letter of March 2009 highlighted the following: "New members and chairs of scrutiny have not yet received training for their new roles. Members felt that they required more support in their roles, such as performance management and that training should be ongoing".

It was, therefore, agreed that training opportunities should be identified for scrutiny members and chairs. In addition, further work should be done to identify examples of good scrutiny practice from other Councils, which will form the basis of further reports to the Scrutiny Programme Board in the future.

2.4.2 Progress since September 2009

The Scrutiny Programme Board has debated the types of training that might be beneficial to members of scrutiny committees. Scrutiny training has also been discussed by the Members Training Steering Group. It is expected that a members' training event will be held in the near future.

In addition, a number of items on Scrutiny Programme Board agendas have sought to illustrate best practice in scrutiny. As an example, the report on 'Successful Scrutiny 2009', included on the Scrutiny Programme Board agenda of 14th January 2010, highlighted examples where scrutiny was deemed to be working well. The examples were all winners in the Good Scrutiny Awards, organised by the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

2.5 Recommendation: Agree that the Forward Plan should be included as a standard item on the agenda of future Scrutiny Programme Board meetings.

2.5.1 Reasons for the recommendation

The 2008/9 questionnaire highlighted some concerns that too much scrutiny is reactive rather than proactive. In order to give members the opportunity to request further pre-decision scrutiny of specific issues, it was agreed that the Forward Plan should be included as a standard item on the agenda of future Scrutiny Programme Board meetings. It was not anticipated that the details of the Forward Plan would be

distributed with the meeting agenda as details are available on the website. However, members of the Scrutiny Programme Board would then have the opportunity to raise items for further scrutiny by either the Board or by any of the other five Scrutiny Committees (as appropriate).

2.5.2 Progress since September 2009

The Forward Plan has been included on the agenda of all Scrutiny Programme Board meetings since September 2009. However, to date, no items have been selected for further scrutiny.

In addition, the format of the Forward Plan has been debated in more detail by the Scrutiny Programme Board. At the meeting on 4th March 2010, the Board agreed: "That Chief Officers ensure that all new items to be included within the Forward Plan include an informative narrative of the key decisions to be taken, together with more accurate timescales for decisions to be taken".

2.6 Recommendation: Request that examples of good practice on members' scrutiny questionnaires are identified from elsewhere and that the Questionnaire be amended if necessary before the end of the current municipal year.

2.6.1 Reasons for the recommendation

When the 2008/9 questionnaire was introduced, it was intended that it would be distributed on an annual basis. It was agreed that further work would be done to identify examples of good practice from elsewhere and the Questionnaire be amended if necessary.

2.6.2 Progress since September 2009

The Scrutiny Programme Board agreed the amended format of the 2009/10 questionnaire during the meeting held on 4th March 2010. Prior to use, the format of the questionnaire was also agreed by the Council's public relations team.

3. **Responses to the 2009/10 Questionnaire (undertaken April / May 2010)**

3.1 Participation in the questionnaire (Question 1 and 1a)

For this year's questionnaire, it was agreed that forms would be sent to the co-opted members of Scrutiny Committees and to the Directors who service those committees, as well as to all 66 members of the Council.

Of the 66 members of the Council, **20 responses** were received.

Of the participants:

16 were on a Scrutiny committee during 2009/10 municipal year.

4 were NOT on a Scrutiny committee during 2009/10 municipal year, of which 2 were Cabinet members.

Responses were received from one co-opted member of a Scrutiny Committee and three Directors.

Therefore, in total, **24 responses** were received.

The response rate is not high. Members may, therefore, wish to review the purpose and format of the questionnaire before any survey is undertaken for 2010/11.

3.2 Overview of responses

A significant number of respondents appear to be unenthusiastic about current scrutiny arrangements. This is a common theme that is developed through a number of the questions. Allied to the relatively low number of responses, there is clearly a challenge to make scrutiny work more effectively for members. There is a view among respondents that scrutiny has little voice in the authority. However, the positive messages that are apparent in some responses generally relate to the achievements of the working groups undertaking 'in-depth' reviews on specific topics. The Scrutiny Programme Board may want to reflect on why a majority of participants are dissatisfied with Scrutiny arrangements.

3.3 Detailed responses

The responses from all participants have been combined onto a single document (see Appendix 1). All responses have been made anonymous.

A summary of the major messages arising from the responses is given in Section 4 below.

4. **Summary of the Comments and matters for consideration by members**

4.1 Scrutiny Training (Question 1b)

There was a very mixed response regarding the question 'When did you last receive training on the Overview and Scrutiny function?'. The issue of scrutiny training for members had already been identified and is being pursued through the Members' Training Steering Group.

4.2 Satisfaction with Scrutiny Support (Question 3)

There was an inconclusive response to the question 'Are you happy with the Scrutiny Support available to the Board and committees or would you like to see some improvements?' Some respondents referred directly to the work being done by the Scrutiny Support Officers; others responded with far more general points. Only six respondents agreed that they were happy with the current arrangements, although few raised alternative suggestions. Some members did comment that there are too many meetings, while the point was also made that further effort should be made to ensure that scrutiny is a member-led process which includes members leading the way on agenda-setting and planning the work programme.

Despite the current difficult financial climate for local authorities, the case was also made for a small budget to enable scrutiny committees to independently arrange any research or visits which may assist their work.

4.3 Satisfaction with the Scrutiny Programme Board (Questions 4 and 5)

The responses revealed a significant lack of understanding among members regarding the role of the Scrutiny Programme Board. The majority of members answered 'NO' when asked whether they 'knew enough about the role of the Scrutiny Programme Board and its work programme'. In addition, when asked 'How successful has the Scrutiny Programme Board been in leading the development of Overview and Scrutiny' the majority answered 'Unsuccessful' (12), while only five respondents thought that it had been 'Successful'. There is clearly work to be done to ensure that all members are aware of the role and the potential benefits of the Scrutiny Programme Board.

4.4 Effectiveness of scrutiny at holding the Executive to account (Questions 6 to 6c)

The responses showed an equal number of those who are 'Satisfied' (11) and 'Dissatisfied' (11) regarding the ability of scrutiny in holding the executive to account. However, twice as many members think that the Call-In process has been 'Unsuccessful' (14) at holding the Executive to account than think it is 'Successful' (7). There is perhaps a case for the Scrutiny Programme Board to review the 'Call-in' guidelines and the process for allocating Call-In notices to specific committees. Recommendations for any proposed improvements could then be passed to Cabinet.

When asked 'Does the Forward Plan assist Overview and Scrutiny Committees in holding the Executive to account, many respondents answered 'Don't Know' (10). A further 7 answered 'No', while 7 thought that the Forward Plan had been of assistance. The evidence suggests that the Forward Plan is not yet being used actively to enable Scrutiny Committees to plan their work programmes and meeting agendas. Although, during the 2009/10 municipal year, the Scrutiny Programme Board has discussed the use of the Forward Plan in scrutiny, the responses to the questionnaire would suggest that further work is required.

With regard to holding the Executive to account, it is worth noting the practice in some councils of Cabinet members, on occasions, attending the relevant Scrutiny Committee to take part in a 'question and answer' session on matters relevant to their portfolio. This approach may help those members who feel that their views are ignored by Cabinet. A constructive dialogue between scrutiny and Cabinet could enhance the role of scrutiny.

4.5 The influence of scrutiny with respect to the delivery of local services (Questions 7 and 8)

With regard to the ability of scrutiny to influence the delivery of policies and services, a small majority of respondents were 'satisfied' (12) compared to those who were 'dissatisfied' (9). However, a clear majority of respondents did not record any examples of work carried out by Overview and Scrutiny Committees which had

contributed to improved Council services. Of the eight respondents who gave examples, all referred to the 'in-depth' reviews undertaken by working groups.

4.6 Strengths of the current Overview and Scrutiny process (Question 9)

It was noticeable that a significant number of respondents failed to record any strengths of the current Overview and Scrutiny process. There appears to be a general scepticism about the system working well. However, of those who did respond, the most frequent responses related to the 'in-depth' reviews undertaken by working groups.

4.7 Potential improvements to the current Overview and Scrutiny process (Question 10)

The respondents' suggestions for potential improvements to the current Overview and Scrutiny process included the following areas:

- Implementation of a monitoring process to ensure that the recommendations agreed by scrutiny committees have been implemented. If they have not been implemented, have reasons been given?
- Funding of scrutiny - is there scope for a Scrutiny budget?
- Greater involvement of the public, residents and service users in the Council's scrutiny processes.
- What can be done to speed up the 'in-depth' review process?
- Training of members and support staff, focusing particularly towards the actual situation in Wirral
- Reduce the number of reports on agendas that are for 'noting'
- The work plan would benefit if fewer items were explored in greater depth.
- Consider the role of co-opted members on scrutiny committees - some do not have full voting rights
- Create a centralised team of Scrutiny Support Officers, not aligned to the three Political Group offices
- Change the culture and attitudes towards scrutiny, including the need for:
 - Members to take a more active role in scrutiny
 - Cabinet to treat scrutiny more importantly
 - Members to be convinced of the positive benefits that can be attained from good scrutiny

5. **Conclusion**

A number of issues have been raised by the respondents to the questionnaire. In general, the Scrutiny Programme Board may want to reflect on why a majority of participants in the questionnaire process are dissatisfied with Scrutiny arrangements. The Scrutiny Workshop on 1st September gives members further opportunity to discuss related issues. Taking regard of the responses to the questionnaire, members of the Scrutiny Programme Board could 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 potential improvements listed in paragraph 4.7 above

6 Financial implications

None

7 Staffing implications

None

8 Equal Opportunities implications

None

9 Community Safety implications

None

10 Local Agenda 21 implications

None

11 Planning implications

None

12 Anti-poverty implications

None

13 Human Rights implications

None

14 Social Inclusion implications

None

15 Local Member Support implications

None

16 Background Papers

None

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the Scrutiny Programme Board considers the potential improvements listed in paragraph 5 of the report for further action.

WIRRAL SCRUTINY MEMBERS ANNUAL QUESTIONNAIRE – APRIL / MAY 2010

The responses to each question are analysed below. The responses from all participants have been combined onto this single document. All responses have been made anonymous.

General Comments on responses

Of the 66 members of the Council, **20 responses** were received.

Of the participants:

16 were on a Scrutiny committee during 2009/10 municipal year

4 were NOT on a Scrutiny committee during 2009/10 municipal year, of which

2 were Cabinet members

Of the participants:

6 were members of the Conservative group

4 were members of the Labour group

8 were members of the Liberal Democrat group

2 were unknown

In addition, the survey form was distributed to all co-opted members of Scrutiny Committees and to all Directors. Responses were received from one Co-opted member of a Scrutiny Committee and three Directors.

Therefore, in total, **24 responses** were received.

The answers to each question are detailed below:

1 Please tick which of the following Overview and Scrutiny Forums you sit on:

Scrutiny Programme Board	<input type="text" value="4"/>
Children and Young People	<input type="text" value="5"/>
Council Excellence	<input type="text" value="7"/>
Economy and Regeneration	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Health and Well Being	<input type="text" value="4"/>
Sustainable Communities	<input type="text" value="4"/>
None of the above	<input type="text" value="3"/>

1a Please tick which of the role descriptions below applies to you.

Elected Member Co-opted Member Cabinet Member Director

1b When did you last receive training on the Overview and Scrutiny function?

Cannot recall

.....
Some years ago when it was first introduced

.....
Never

.....
I attended training on general financial matters.
I would hope that 'teach-ins' could be organised by officers for all members in view of the serious budgetary issues.

.....
While not strictly O&S training but relevant:
- 04/12/09 Personalisation Conference, Wirral
- 23/02/09 How to produce effective recommendations in scrutiny reports (Health Scrutiny Support programme provided by the Centre for Public Scrutiny)
15/06/10 Training on safeguarding adults.

.....
None

.....
About a year ago

.....
January

.....
Social services – about 2 years ago

.....
3 years ago

.....
Finance training Sept '09

.....
Last year 2009

.....
Last year – Audit & risk Management

.....
No response

.....
Can't remember – Too many training events are called

.....
2009

.....
Cannot recall, if or when

.....
No response

.....
3 years ago

.....
2005?

.....
None

.....
Prior to moving to Wirral

.....
Cannot recall

.....
Never

2 What do you believe to be the main purpose of Overview and Scrutiny?

Examines decisions of the Council (Cabinet)
Make recommendations to Cabinet
Call-In decisions of Cabinet when appropriate

.....
Monitoring Executive decisions of Cabinet
Advising where alternative or enhanced decisions might be considered by Cabinet – or ultimately, calling in decisions for reconsideration where there are genuine grounds to believe that decisions are flawed.

.....
To evaluate proposals that appertain to that committee.
Review Cabinet decisions
Make decisions on agenda items

.....
To hold the cabinet to account
To discuss issues with cabinet members before they embark on courses of action

.....
A better understanding of local services delivered to local residents, including good or poor levels of service, leading to appropriate recommendations to raise and maintain high standards.

.....
Deeper investigation into issues

.....
The scrutiny of the way in which Council decisions are put into effect by the Cabinet, and an overview of the administration of the Council

.....
Make sure the Cabinet and Council work for the benefit of all communities

.....
Overview of Council policy developing options
Scrutiny of decisions made by Cabinet

.....
To investigate and constructively comment on officers' and Cabinet decisions inside and outside the Council, particularly of the health service.

.....
To monitor provision of service; challenge arrangements and report on possible improvements, ie, review and development of policy

.....
To oversee decisions made by Cabinet are correct

.....
To question decisions made by Cabinet

.....
No response

.....
It should examine the services that we provide, where we can make improvements or where we are going wrong.
.....

It should examine the services that we provide, where we can make improvements or where we are going wrong.

.....
To make improvements on services we provide if required

.....
To ask questions and send reports to the Cabinet of things that would be of interest to the general public

.....
To hold Cabinet decisions to scrutiny

To investigate items of public interest

To 'Call-In' and review Cabinet decisions we are not happy with

To investigate areas of function of the Council plus partners and make recommendations

.....
Check outcomes

Examine policy of Executive

Suggest policy to Executive

.....
To receive reports from officers and other invited parties.

To ask questions concerning items within those reports.

Hopefully to make recommendations to Cabinet on certain issues

.....
To scrutinise decisions and hold executive to account

To explore critical policy issues in department

To link health and local authority actions

.....
Scrutinise decisions and contribute to executive Management of the Authority through use of impartial, expert testimony.

.....
To add value through in-depth reviews; constructive challenge and performance monitoring

3 Are you happy with the Scrutiny Support available to the Board and Committees or would you like to see some improvements? Please suggest any improvements.

Satisfied

.....
I would like to see improvements as it is perceived that many scrutiny committees are 'toothless tigers' in that genuine and constructive recommendations are not acted upon – or taken any real notice of. In other words, some deem scrutiny to be going through the motions without subsequent benefit to the people of Wirral.

.....
Don't know what's available

.....
It depends on the willingness of officers to supply information; the same officers providing or refining options in the first instance.

As the budgets will be constrained there will be no funding for independent sources of information.

.....
Not entirely happy. More training to ALL members. Also an allocation of funding specifically for Scrutiny Committees to spend on reviews, research, etc..

Yes

.....
We have had some excellent support from officers and co-operation from senior officers. We do not yet have a shared understanding of what we are trying to do. Training should focus more on achieving this shared understanding.

.....
Needs to be funded to allow more work to take place in and outside of Council

.....
Suggest that all appointed officers take more part in scrutiny support

.....
Needs to be greatly expanded

.....
Progress has been made but improvements still possible through greater positive involvement from members.

.....
Officers are sometimes pushed but in general quite good

.....
Yes

.....
No response

.....
No, sometimes useful. But FAR TOO MANY meetings clashing with numerous councillor commitments.

.....
No. On occasions they can be useful – mostly I find them a waste of time. They relegate most members powerless.

.....
Happy with support, but too many meetings are called at last minute

.....
Yes

.....
Would like clearer statement of what support is available and how we access it

.....
More support

.....
As a diocesan representative it would always be helpful to have ALL papers with Committee members at least 24 hours before the start of meetings.

.....
Yes in general. Still some way to go in Members setting the entire agenda.

.....
Cannot comment

.....
No. Embedding the Support Officers in the Group offices risks politicising Scrutiny and a divisive approach.

4 Scrutiny Programme Board

Scrutiny Programme Board Members are requested to answer 4a only and non-Scrutiny Programme Board Members are requested to answer 4b and 4c.

4a As a Member of the Scrutiny Programme Board, what role do you think the Board has in leading the development of Overview and Scrutiny and ways of working?

Overarching issues can be addressed both in individual scrutiny committees and findings drawn together by the Programme Board, leading to final recommendations, for example, as currently with the review of alcohol and young people.

.....

It has the ability to push work programmes

.....

Needs to improve scrutiny coordination so scrutiny can be focussed.

.....

Must admit I found this quite a strange committee. Two goods things came out of it last year: 1) Call-In notices 2) Alcohol review

.....

Oversight and co-ordination
Offer suggestions to other areas
Overarching view of how other Scrutiny Committees fit together
To monitor activities of other Scrutiny Committees

.....

4b As a non-member of the Scrutiny Programme Board, do you consider that you know enough about its role and its work programme?

Yes No Don't know

4c If you consider that you do not know enough about the Scrutiny Programme Board's role and its work programme, what other information do you feel would be beneficial to non-members?

Their specific role needs to be clarified. It appears that they may only provide another layer of ineffectual bureaucracy in scrutinising other scrutineers without much subsequent benefit.

.....

A short course would help

.....

It is more a question of the shared understanding mentioned above. We really need to sort out the roles of Cabinet, statutory committees, Scrutiny and Council.

.....

I am assuming that the information is available on the intranet. It is my own fault for not looking up this information.

.....

What is its role?

.....

Training at times when I am available and not held for a day; It is far too long to sit and listen.

.....

Why does it exist?

More definite briefings about Overview and Scrutiny Committee procedures

5 How successful has the Scrutiny Programme Board been in leading the development of Overview and Scrutiny and ways of working in its first year in existence?

Unsuccessful Successful Very successful Don't know

6 One of the main roles of the Overview and Scrutiny function is to hold the Executive to account. Overall how satisfied are you that Scrutiny has been able to hold the Executive to account over the past year?

Dissatisfied Satisfied Very satisfied Don't know

6a How effective do you feel the 'Call In' process has been in holding the Executive to account for its decisions?

Unsuccessful Successful Very successful Don't know

6b Does the Forward Plan assist Overview and Scrutiny Committees to hold the Executive to account?

Yes No Don't know

6c If you are not satisfied with the way in which Overview and Scrutiny has held the Executive to account, please state what more you consider Scrutiny should be doing.

Cabinet (and officers) should respond formally and specifically to any and all 'genuine' attempts to question, enhance or challenge decisions made. But some strong mechanism must be found to eliminate, or at least minimise, pure political posturing and mischief making, which does not well serve the people of Wirral.

It depends on the willingness of cabinet members to be open and accountable. Scrutiny can huff and puff but if Members are not keen to grill their own people, the opposition in a balanced Council might be compliant, but would get more involved as issues emerge

The approach is still too party political. We must be realistic in the time which members can devote to their work.

Not enough work done by the select Committees

Call-In used for political reasons with no possible constructive outcome

Scrutiny Committees are powerless. We need to get back to the Committee System, with direct input from all 66 councillors.

Overview & Scrutiny discuss the Call-In, send it back to Cabinet who usually confirm their original decision.

Taking more ownership

Being constructive rather than just pulling apart

Not being afraid to rock the boat

Three parties working together and not playing party political games

Requires a culture shift

Examine more Executive decisions and outcomes

Having only attended 2 O&S meetings I am unable to comment

Note sure forward plan used actively – and it could be!

More proactive and a more impartial issue-based contribution

The reasons for calling-in decisions should be more fully set out in the Call-In Notice.

- 7 Another central purpose of Overview and Scrutiny is to influence the Executive to make tangible improvements to the policies and services provided by the Council and local Health Services that will ultimately benefit the people of Wirral. Overall, how satisfied are you that Overview and Scrutiny has influenced the Council and local Health Services to the benefit of the people and communities of Wirral?**

Dissatisfied

9

Satisfied

12

Very satisfied

1

Don't know

2

- 8 Are you able to provide any examples where the work of Overview and Scrutiny Committees has contributed to improved Council service?**

No

Not off hand.....

No response

Work on hospital discharges and youth service has been valuable

In Health, improved discharge services

Recommendations from Children & Young People work now being implemented

No

No response

No response

Only as far as Children Services and Adult Social Services

No response

.....
The Health & Wellbeing working party on hospital discharge.
Similar working parties in Children's Services.
Council Excellence monitoring of spend.

.....
No response

.....
No response

.....
No response

.....
Quite a few cases

.....
Oaklands and Children in Care; Children's literacy – In four years that is all we have to show. I do not believe that other O&S committees have much to show.

.....
No response

.....
On Council excellence last year we were able to help achieve the Level 2 for Equality and Diversity which I feel is working well

.....
No response

.....
Hospital discharges

.....
No

.....
Hospital discharge work – linked to the broad whole system approach taken to Health and Social Care. However, agenda needs to be broader to all Council services, for example, Valuing People Now – People in Wirral with a learning disability not simply a DASS / Health issue.

.....
No response

.....
No response

9 What do you consider to be the strengths of the current Overview and Scrutiny process?

The process is achieving its objectives as far as I can see

.....
The actual procedure for discussing matters at scrutiny committees is fine – if only the executive and officers would note and be seen to take note of sensible recommendations.

.....
No response

.....
Insufficient experience to judge properly
I was brought up in the days of powerful and challenging committees and the grit isn't there in the new system.

-
- Working groups successful in working on a non-political basis in best interests of residents
 - Opportunities to consider issues raised by residents
 - Support staff if used correctly
-

No response

.....

The varying approaches by different committees mean that we have tried most of them. There should be more cross-fertilisation rather than being lectured to about what others do.

.....

The work done by so few

.....

No response

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There have been individuals in Children's Services and Adult Social services who have been instrumental in producing reports which have changed Council policy.

.....

Those areas where small groups have conducted in-depth reviews and made clear recommendations for the future

.....

No response

.....

Its independence

.....

No response

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In some cases good work has been done. But system does not work well.

.....

Are there any?

.....

Make up of committees

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No response

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Some committees do detailed and constructive work (for example, fostering – young peoples)

In some cases the public have become engaged in issues. Members are taking more control from officers

.....

None

.....

Regarding Children's and Young Peoples O&S Committee, the support and superb information given by the Director and his senior staff

.....

In general consented membership with members who understand agenda and demonstrate real interest

.....

No response

.....

No response

10 Are there any aspects of the current Overview and Scrutiny process that you consider require improvement?

No

.....
A formal and constructive procedure needs putting in place that gives a clear sequence of actions that confirm and demonstrate that the advice of scrutiny committees is being fully taken into account and ACTED upon when appropriate. Mere 'political point-scoring' should ultimately have the sanction of reporting to Standards as 'time wasting' at a time when we all need to pull together to find solutions to current problems.
.....

No response

.....
It all depends on the spirit and willingness to co-operate of a limited number of members
.....

- Funding to allow greater flexibility in training and research
 - Opportunity to work with public, residents and service users regarding Council & Health services
 - Speeding up review process
 - Greater enthusiasm from some members
 - All support staff should take opportunities for training and be of high standard
-

Too much information just for 'noting'

.....
We need to focus training / development on the actual situation in Wirral
.....

No response

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No response

.....
Training which is accessible to all councillors, which members should attend.
Change in culture so that all members are committed to scrutiny.
.....

We still need to encourage more members to take an active role in scrutiny by setting clear agendas and work programmes and investigating themselves instead of passive receipt of reports
.....

No response

.....
No response

.....
All aspects.
Scrutiny in Wirral only works if all parties are prepared to participate.
As can be continually demonstrated the controlling parties' scrutiny members simply rubber stamp their masters' decisions.
.....

A new system. Overview & Scrutiny is not a good system. We need to go back to the previous procedures.
.....

Impossible. You will probably glean the opinion that I am not a fan of O&S. I believe that the council reached better decisions and every councillor was involved in decisions in programme committees.

.....
No response

.....
No response

.....
Members need more confidence
Public need to be more engaged
Cabinet need to treat it as more important
Members need to be convinced of the positive benefits that can be attained from good scrutiny
It needs to be made more difficult for members to play out party political games through scrutiny

.....
Abolition

.....
Regarding Children's and Young Peoples O&S Committee, for political groups to consider the roles of diocesan and other representatives
As requested at the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting on 2nd June, a need for a voluntary group's representative to have equal representation rights as diocesan representatives.
The most important education and Children's decisions are made in Cabinet, without diocesan representative's involvement at meeting – Very frustrating!!

.....
Work plan would benefit if fewer items were explored in greater depth.
As suggested earlier there is a need, in my opinion, for a broader approach to be taken to a range of our work areas. The 'Transforming Adults' agenda requires a whole system approach that moves away from traditional "welfare" solutions into whole system inclusive activities. Some broader exploration of that would be helpful.

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No response

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The Scrutiny Support Officers should work in a team and not be allocated to the three Group offices.