

## **Update Note – Overview & Scrutiny Workshop**

**9<sup>th</sup> September 2010**

**Aim** – The aim of the Workshop was to develop an Action Plan for strengthening and improving the Overview & Scrutiny function in Wirral Council.

**Background** – This workshop was prompted by two pieces of research that each commented on the future of Overview & Scrutiny.

The first emerged from the LGA Conference in 2009 where four key issues came to light -:

1. The need to develop greater awareness regarding the potential role of Scrutiny
2. The need to improve practice in Scrutiny
3. The need to increase resources for Scrutiny
4. The need to enhance Scrutiny powers

The second resulted from the 2009 Annual Centre for Public Scrutiny Survey. The results suggested that Local Authorities need to improve in the following areas-:

1. Creating a positive attitude to scrutiny
2. Developing the effective chairing of Committees
3. Providing dedicated officer support
4. Providing a dedicated budget for Scrutiny activities
5. Offering robust training and development on Overview & Scrutiny
6. Engaging with the local community

### **Workshop Approach**

The Workshop provided an opportunity for the above points (and more) to be considered and discussed. It was an informal event facilitated by an experienced Officer (Melissa Holt, Organisational Development Manager, Wirral Council). The group was guided through topic areas in a clear and organised way with opportunities for all to contribute.

### **Outcomes – What was achieved at the end of the Session**

- A shared understanding of the role of Overview & Scrutiny
- A view of current Overview & Scrutiny practice – the areas of Overview and Scrutiny we do well at Wirral and the areas we could develop
- A suggested “Vision” of what an excellent Overview & Scrutiny function would look and feel like.
- A list of the perceived barriers in place to having a “perfect” Overview & Scrutiny function.

## **Next Steps**

- A second workshop will be held to continue discussions around Wirral's Overview & Scrutiny function and possible options to strengthen our approach.
- It was suggested that a commitment be given by attendees of the first workshop to participate in a second event to ensure consistency.