

# Scrutiny Solutions Development Programme For Local Government



WARWICK  
BUSINESS SCHOOL

Learning and Improvement Focus ...  
Expert Delivery ... Competitively Priced



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

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

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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