

SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD
26 OCTOBER 2010

32. SCRUTINY TRAINING

Further to minute 21 (20 September 2010), the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management reported that the Member Training Steering Group had agreed that training for all Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members was 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 was seen as best practice. The cost of training by Dr Snape was £824 and could be open to all Members of the Council. The Democratic Services Manager presented Dr Snape's short CV, together with examples of past and present work she had undertaken in relation to scrutiny.

However, at the Informal Overview and Scrutiny Workshop (see minute 31 ante), Members had considered the proposed training arrangement. In the light of comments made by Members at the workshop, guidance was sought on how to proceed. Members commented specifically that it would be more cost effective for scrutiny training to be provided in-house. Members recognised the need for continued learning and expressed the view that Wirral should adopt best practice from other forward thinking and progressive local authorities. Members referred to the scrutiny of health from 2011 and referred specifically to the successful external scrutiny developed by Kirklees Council.

Although Members regarded the health scrutiny training requirement as being a matter for the Health and Well Being O&S Committee, they expressed the view that an overview for all Members of the Council could be provided by the Director of Public Health.

Members referred also to minute 19 (20 September 2010), which indicated that no further action should be taken in relation to improving the scrutiny function until the outcome of the deliberations by Group Leaders was known and the matter considered by the appropriate Committee.

Resolved –

(1) That in-house scrutiny training be provided on a political group basis, by the Scrutiny Support Officers, to be based on the I&DeA document 'A hard nut to crack? Making overview and scrutiny work' produced by Dr Snape.

(2) That the Democratic Services Manager be requested to present a report to the next meeting of the Board upon research undertaken into the external scrutiny function at Kirklees Council, with a view to a visit to Kirklees by Board Members.

(3) That the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management be requested to ascertain from the Group Leaders the outcome of their deliberations in relation to the scrutiny function and report his findings to the next meeting.

(4) That the Health and Well Being Overview and Scrutiny Committee be requested to invite the Director of Public Health to provide an overview of health scrutiny and to invite all Members of the Council to attend.