

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee **Adult and Community Overview And Scrutiny Committee**
Date of Committee **12 July 2006**

Report Title **Review of Scrutiny**

Summary This report advises members of the arrangements for the review of the overview and scrutiny function. Seeks views on the future role of overview and scrutiny and how its effectiveness can be improved.

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 No.

Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework?

Background papers None

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

- Other Committees Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group 3 May 2006; Leaders Liaison Panel 11 May 2006
- Local Member(s) N/A
- Other Elected Members
- Cabinet Member
- Chief Executive Jim Graham
- Legal Jane Pollard
- Finance
- Other Chief Officers David Carter, Strategic Director of Performance and Development
- District Councils
- Health Authority

Police

Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION NO

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

Further consideration by this Committee

To Council *Council 31 October 2006*

To Cabinet

To an O & S Committee *Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group
September 2006*

To an Area Committee

Further Consultation

Agenda No

Adult and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 12 July 2006.

Review of Scrutiny

Report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development

Recommendation

That members comment on

- ❖ the future role of overview and scrutiny
- ❖ the changes they would like to see to improve the effectiveness of overview and scrutiny

Introduction

- 1.1 The national picture suggests that there are low expectations and satisfaction levels with the role of overview and scrutiny. The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group has commissioned a review to look at how we can deliver effective overview and scrutiny which makes a real difference to the delivery of public services. A copy of the terms of reference for the review are attached as an Appendix.
- 1.2 One of the key functions of a local authority is to improve the quality of life of the public it serves. If one applies scrutiny to that concept there is the potential for the local authority to develop effective mechanisms to hold to account all the public agencies engaged in servicing their local community. The LAA will offer post-2007 a way of holding not just the County Services and Executive to account, other public bodies, the For Profit sector, voluntary and community sectors. For example, if you develop the current concept of Health scrutiny, the LAA could enable local members to exercise considerable influence over the performance of a range of bodies on behalf of the public we collectively serve. This would place scrutiny at the heart of the business of the Council.
- 1.3 The option of Getting out of "Committee" style meetings could find Members dealing directly with the public in evaluating the effectiveness of how we are meeting needs. For example, the way in which the infrastructure of post offices is evolving and the concerns expressed by local communities, could be explored with Postwatch ... or ... the public expectation for access to all public services in Warwickshire where we tailor ways of working to meet the public demand could be explored by combining scrutiny at County & District level.
- 1.4 Doing active research outside the Council is a valid enterprise in scrutiny. Similarly extending Scrutiny beyond the County Council and sharing it with District and Boroughs would develop capacity to meet local needs.

- 1.5 Having a forward business plan which identifies a series of start and finish projects could be used to drive up standards across the organisation.
- 1.6 There is increasing concern over the level of external inspection one of the best ways to tackle this issue would be to develop our own internal mechanisms so that we are seen to regulate ourselves without the need for in depth external regulation and scrutiny. If scrutiny is seen as peripheral, regulators tend to see this as a sign of weakness or under achievement inside an organisation.
- 1.7 Another issue is how we deploy our scrutiny activity. Should we use scrutiny as a vehicle to hold each bit of the organisation to account in an equitable fashion or should we deploy and focus our scrutiny resources and activity on those areas where we need to do better? We could also develop new approaches to performance improvement.
- 1.8 Should each "scrutiny body" act on its own or should it be part of an overall strategy? Having a collective view as to what outcomes the various scrutiny bodies are trying to achieve might be a better way of developing the skills of a large body of Elected Members across a range of subjects.

2 Some Key Questions

- 2.1 What are we trying to achieve for the benefit of the public by undertaking scrutiny?
- 2.2 How can we deliver effective Scrutiny in a politically balanced Council environment?
- 2.3 How can we develop the skills of scrutinisers to pursue an evidence based model of working?
- 2.4 What methods of scrutinising can we adopt to expand our range of tools available?
- 2.5 How would we propose to engage with the public in establishing community and individual need and evaluation of service efficacy?
- 2.6 Could inter-authority models be adopted?
- 2.7 How can we play a part in developing scrutiny of the LAA targets we establish by April 2007, which will hold not only the County Council to account but other bodies?
- 2.8 How can Scrutiny contribute to an effective internal regulatory/critical friend culture?
- 2.9 How can scrutiny assist in the raising of performance in those service areas where we are not achieving as well as we would wish to?

3 Answers?

3.1 Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee is being asked to consider these issues and to comment on:-

- The future role of overview and scrutiny
- The changes they would like to see to improve the effectiveness of overview and scrutiny

3.2 A questionnaire has also gone to members so that each member can comment individually. Other elements of the review are set out in the timetable in the Appendix.

3.3 All the information which is gathered will be brought together for consideration by members in autumn 2006.

DAVID CARTER
Strategic Director of Performance
and Development

Shire Hall
Warwick
21 June 2006

Terms of Reference for a Review of Overview and Scrutiny

Aims and Objectives

Aim

To put forward proposals for the effective delivery of overview and scrutiny which contributes to the delivery of effective outcomes for the public.

Objectives

To clarify the future role and aims of overview and scrutiny carried out by the Council

To put forward proposals for any changes to member structures and/or amendments to the constitution to facilitate the new arrangements

To make proposals about the most effective approaches for developing and handling the work programme of overview and scrutiny

To make proposals for any member training and development needs to support the new arrangements

Develop a common understanding of how effective overview and scrutiny can add value and make a positive difference to the delivery of public services

To make proposals about how the new arrangements may be supported

To explore the role and opportunity for scrutiny with regard to other public services

Scope

In order to achieve the aim set out the review will

- Explore the expectations of members and officers and key partners over the future role and aims of overview and scrutiny carried out by the Council
- Consider how proposed legislative changes may impact on the future role of overview and scrutiny
- Provide a forward plan outlining the development for overview and scrutiny
- Review the current member structures for delivering overview and scrutiny and the underpinning constitutional arrangements and make recommendations for changes to facilitate the proposed future role for overview and scrutiny
- Identify any training and development needs of members
- Consider best practice in developing and handling the work programme of overview and scrutiny and the conduct of specific scrutiny reviews
- Explore how effective overview and scrutiny can add value and make a positive difference to the delivery of public services
- Review the resources available to support any proposed new arrangements

Member Reference Panel

Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group

Resources

Overview and Scrutiny Manager.

Methodology

Member Seminars

Discussions with Senior Officers

Review of research reports, legislative proposals etc.

Timetable

| Activity | Timescale |
|---|----------------------|
| Draft Terms of Reference for Review of Overview and Scrutiny presented to Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group | 3 May 2006 |
| Carry out review | June –September 2006 |
| Member Questionnaire | June 2006 |
| Meetings with Members | June-September 2006 |
| O&S Group Seminar | 19 July 2006 |
| Discussions with Senior Officers | June/July 2006 |
| Discussions with key public sector partners | July -September 2006 |
| Write up draft proposals | August 2006 |
| Member Seminar | September 2006 |
| Meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group – proposals for revised arrangements | 13 September 2006 |
| Report to Council on proposed revised arrangements | 31 October 2006 |