

**AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET**

***Name of Committee***                      **Health Overview And Scrutiny Committee**

***Date of Committee***                      **28 March 2007**

***Report Title***                                **Health Scrutiny Champions' Network**

***Summary***                                    A copy of the February 2007 issue of the Health Scrutiny Champions' Network Bulletin is attached for Information.

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# February 2007

## scrutiny champions' network

### *In this edition:*

- CfPS: Annual Survey 2006
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## February 2007

There has been much discussion on the Local Government White Paper and current Bill on the CfPS discussions forum since the start of the year. In this bulletin we have made available a copy of CfPS's submission to the Public Bill Committee outlining our thoughts and concerns regarding the changes for overview and scrutiny in its current form. Please continue the debate online at [www.cfps.org.uk/talk](http://www.cfps.org.uk/talk), it would be particularly interesting to hear more elected member views as this will influence our future approach to amendments.

Also in this edition we hear some initial thoughts on how to approach the new overview and scrutiny roles based on the experience of health scrutiny in Leeds City Council.

February sees publication of our report on the annual survey for 2006, details of which are in the adjacent article. Thanks to all those who took part!

Finally, watch out for an article in next month's bulletin from the London Borough of Southwark which has managed (through a joint scrutiny committee with Lambeth) to argue for £6m to be reinstated for a new Psychiatric A&E facility in response to a combination of scrutiny's referral to the Secretary of State, and local and parliamentary campaigns.

### CfPS, February 2006

The scrutiny champions network aims to develop a powerful and persuasive voice on behalf of scrutiny practitioners throughout the country.

If you would like to contribute an article, or have an idea for inclusion in a future edition of this bulletin, please forward to:

[info@cfps.org.uk](mailto:info@cfps.org.uk)

## Research update

February's bulletin coincides with publication of CfPS's report of the 2006 Survey of Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government.

This is the Centre's fourth such annual survey. Building on previous findings we have continued to collect quantitative and qualitative data to benchmark some of the factual information about overview and scrutiny (structures, resources, etc.) as well as perceptions of its value and success.



CfPS would like to thank everyone who was able to complete the questionnaire, which has enabled us to achieve one of the highest response rates ever received for the annual survey (63%).

This year we have highlighted some interesting results, including:

- a slight increase in the average number of scrutiny officers (3.1 fte)
- a significant decrease in the amount of discretionary budget available to conduct o&ts (down from approx £18,000 to approx £11,000)
- a positive view of the new legislative developments for overview and scrutiny
- a clear indication that policy development and review is the function's most effective role

A copy of the report and full data set is available from [www.cfps.org.uk/survey](http://www.cfps.org.uk/survey)



## **INLOGOV:** overview and scrutiny seminars, Feb-July 2007

### **Principles and Practices of Overview and Scrutiny**

13 March 2007 and 5 June 2007

Convenor: Colin Copus

Overview and scrutiny provides elected members with a new set of processes by which to influence and develop policy, a forum in which to act as a political representative and is a vital part of the checks and balances that exist around the council executive. Moreover, it is a tool by which councillors can influence the policies and activities of a wide range of bodies and agencies outside the council. Yet, many councils are struggling to develop the full potential of overview and scrutiny, or to fully integrate overview and scrutiny into the policy and political processes of the council.

The seminar sets out and explores the principles on which overview and scrutiny is based and provides a framework for conducting effective overview and scrutiny reviews. The seminar is based on the results of a number of research projects for the ODPM, and, provides practical examples and methods by which overview and scrutiny can reach its full potential.

### **Scrutinising Finance**

18 April and 18 June 2007

Convenor: Peter Watt

An understanding of finance is vital for having a real influence on policy review and development within scrutiny. A well-designed scrutiny function can be effective in working with the executive as a constructive as well as a critical friend. This seminar looks at the overall process of effective overview and scrutiny and how the financial implications of the authority's decisions can be effectively scrutinised. The seminar also provides a briefing on

developments to the local government finance system and to capital finance.

### **Holding the Executive to Account: The Roles of Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

20 March 2007 and 10 July 2007

Convenor: Andrew Coulson

This seminar will examine how scrutiny committees can be most effective in holding executives to account. This may be achieved through the processes of call-in, although only a few councils have so far managed to make this effective. There are also other methods of holding to account, such as regular questioning of Executive Members, and analysis of council performance. All these will be developed and assessed on the basis of successful practice, so that those who come to the seminar can develop and improve their own effectiveness.

### **Scrutinizing Outside the Council**

17 April 2007

Convenor: Andrew Coulson

The scrutiny of agencies outside the local authority - whether in the public sector (for example the health service, the police, Learning and Skills Councils, the Benefits Agency, or Local Strategic Partnerships) or the private sector (a local bus company, water company, or the Special Purpose Vehicle which has negotiated a PFI contract) - is increasingly seen as central to the scrutiny function. To be effective it requires special tact and techniques, because senior executives from these organisations are usually willing to attend, but will try and control the agenda when they come. This seminar will set out the issues and then use case studies of best practice to show what can be achieved.



## Scrutiny for Officers

1 May 2007

Convenor: Andrew Coulson

This seminar will examine the following key issues:

- The officers' role in managing the scrutiny process, dealing both with holding the executive to account and policy reviews
- the officer-member relationship through all the stages in the scrutiny process, from scoping to report writing and follow-up
- officers in departments supplying information, being called as witnesses and responding to findings
- good practice in dealing with conflict and controversy; and
- awareness of the role and importance of overview and scrutiny amongst senior officers - not solely those directly supporting overview and scrutiny.

## The Councillor, the Community Call for Action and the Role of Overview and Scrutiny

16 May

Convenor: Colin Copus

The government are considering extending the Community Call for Action (CCfA) included in the Police and Justice Act, to include local authority responsibilities. The proposed CCfA process builds on, and is designed to strengthen, the councillor's role as a community champion and local political representative. Moreover, the proposed CCfA process provides councillors with a mechanism to challenge, hold to account and integrate with local communities a range of public bodies and even private concerns.

The day-long seminar is designed for new and long-serving councillors alike and is aimed at developing new, and strengthening existing, political skills for councillors. The seminar will explore the following areas:

- the councillor as a local representative
  - representing communities of place and interest
  - pastoral care for the patch and individuals
  - securing resources for local communities
  - integrating community opinion into council policy
- the councillor and the Community Call for Action
  - working with overview and scrutiny overview and scrutiny as a community resource
  - the role of the party (or independent) group
  - working with party colleagues on community issues
  - party loyalty or community opinion: reconciling differing views

## Chairing Scrutiny

22 May 2007 and 2 July 2007

Convenor: Colin Copus

Chairing an overview and scrutiny committee, or any other overview and scrutiny event, is not like chairing an old style council committee. Nor, is it like chairing a business meeting, or, for that matter chairing a meeting of a political party. Scrutiny chairs require an entirely new set of skills and expertise to meet the new setting that is an overview and scrutiny event and to meet the demands of those



events. The seminar will explore the skill requirements of overview and scrutiny chairs and set out a practical plan for the development of those skills. It will also examine what scrutiny chairs need to do before, during and after scrutiny events. The seminar will consider:

- skill requirements and a practical plan for developing those skills
- planning, running and progressing a scrutiny event
- identifying sources of evidence
- encouraging investigation and evidence collection and assessment
- stimulating deliberation and exploration
- working with people outside the council
- the political process of a scrutiny event
- the party political dimension

### **Scrutiny of Partnerships**

**22 June 2007**

**Convenor: Andrew Coulson**

This seminar aims to identify the key issues in the effective scrutiny and democratic assessment of partnerships. It is aimed at council members and officers engaged in the overview and scrutiny function, as well as Partnership managers or members, with an interest in the strengthening of accountability in partnership work and effectiveness in policy delivery.

### **Scrutiny for Officers**

**28 June 2007**

**Convenor: Andrew Coulson**

This seminar will examine the following key issues:

- The officers' role in managing the scrutiny process, dealing both with holding the executive to account and policy reviews
- The officer-member relationship through all the stages in the scrutiny process, from scoping to report writing and follow-up
- Officers in departments supplying information, being called as witnesses and responding to findings
- Good practice in dealing with conflict and controversy; and
- Awareness of the role and importance of overview and scrutiny amongst senior officers - not solely those directly supporting overview and scrutiny.

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## CfPS: officer development forum 2007

CfPS is pleased to launch the 2nd Scrutiny Officer Development Forum.

Building on the success of our first scrutiny officer development forum last year, this second series has been designed for scrutiny officers who support lay scrutiny members.

The forum will be of interest to officers working at all tiers of government who want an opportunity to develop their practice, learn from others working in similar contexts and network with a facilitated group in a comfortable learning environment.

Three one-day forum sessions during 2007 will be constructed around the following elements:

- presentations and seminar-style discussions with senior policy-makers, practitioners and academics on the current and future agenda for public scrutiny
  - interactive, skills-based facilitated workshop sessions to develop professional practice
  - exchange of knowledge and experience
- CfPS will facilitate the agenda for all forum events in response to the needs of participants.

CfPS host facilitators will include Jessica Crowe, CfPS Executive Director, Gareth Wall, CfPS Research & Information Adviser and Rodger Mann, Head of Scrutiny and Democratic Support at Wolverhampton City Council.

For the duration of forum membership, participants will also have access to a CfPS secure on-line discussion and advice forum where resources relevant to each seminar will be available and participants will be encouraged to develop ideas from each session.

The sessions will be held bi-monthly in a range of locations to suit delegate needs.

Provisional dates are:

- 29th March 2007
- 24th May 2007
- 26th July 2007

The annual fee for forum membership for 2007 is £695 plus VAT and includes all materials and refreshments. Numbers will be limited to a maximum of 40 participants on a first come first served basis. To

secure your place please complete the booking form available from [www.cfps.org.uk/officer](http://www.cfps.org.uk/officer) and email to [info@cfpsorg.uk](mailto:info@cfpsorg.uk).

## CfPS: Scrutiny and CPA - the road to improvement

Councils with a strong scrutiny function are more likely to be recognised as high performers under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment, CfPS will announce next week on the release of an in-house research project.

The research results will be discussed at a seminar on **March 26th 2007, 11.15 - 3.30 in Westminster.**

Speakers will include Jessica Crowe, Executive Director, CfPS, Ian Hickman, Director, Local Government Performance and Improvement, Audit Commission and Lucy de Groot, Executive Director, IDEA.

Attendees from policy, performance and scrutiny backgrounds will hear how Overview and Scrutiny Committees have an important role to play on the road to council improvement, and gain practical tips on how to ensure the scrutiny function supports progress towards excellence.

The research report and full details of the event will be released next week. In the meantime, please email Raj Chitnavis - [raj.chitnavis@cfps.org.uk](mailto:raj.chitnavis@cfps.org.uk) - to register your interest.



## Leeds: duty to co-operate

### Initial thoughts on developing relationships with outside bodies.

One of the most exciting elements of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill has to be the duty of a number of named organisations to co-operate with Overview and Scrutiny.

Whilst we can put up good arguments to say that the list in the Bill excludes some important players, for example the utility companies and transport providers, nevertheless this is an important step in putting some legislative muscle behind a council's community wellbeing remit.

How best then, from an officers point of view, to manage this process?

In Leeds we are looking at our experiences with Health Scrutiny to answer this question and to shape our activities over the coming months.

Scrutiny, to a large extent, is about relationship management. Getting relationships on the right footing from the onset is invaluable; it defines the legitimate roles and responsibilities of respective organisations. It builds credibility, and reduces mutual suspicion.

When we embarked on Health Scrutiny, and even before we formally had the powers, we spent a good few months building up relationships. In practical terms this meant meeting with Directors of Public Health, Trust Chief Executives, Nursing Heads, PCT Chief Officers and others in order to understand the organisations they represent, their cultures, pressures and

political tensions and they ours. This was done between officers but most importantly between elected members and health officials.

This activity continued after we were given scrutiny powers. It was many months before any 'specific scrutiny' took place.

This process was cemented with an agreed protocol between the Health Scrutiny Board and Health Services in Leeds. The objective of the protocol was;

“To provide guidance and a common understanding for how Health Scrutiny will operate in Leeds and provide a framework for the scope and style of Scrutiny in the City. In so doing the aim is for all parties to help ensure that Scrutiny remains a positive and challenging process.”

We are now about to repeat this same process with those Local Area Agreement partners who will have a duty to co-operate. For some organisations (the police, etc.) the learning curve may not be a steep, but for others it will be.

As with the Health Service, a series of meetings will take place which will hopefully generate a common understanding of our organisations coupled with an agreed written protocol.

We can't script or predict how the duty to co-operate will manifest itself over the next few years; however we do believe we will have a fighting chance if we start of on the right footing.





## Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill

### CfPS Evidence to Public Bill Committee

#### Introduction

The Centre for Public Scrutiny welcomes the commitment in last year's [White Paper](#) on local government and in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill to strengthen the role and powers of the local government overview and scrutiny function. We believe this is recognition of the progress that has been made in developing scrutiny since its introduction only six years ago, and of the successes that many overview and scrutiny committees (OSCs) have had in:

- holding decision-makers and service providers to account
- providing local democratic accountability
- reviewing policies and practice for the benefit of local communities

However, there are some gaps and limitations in the Bill, compared with the White Paper and what could be possible if we were to be really ambitious for the contribution that overview and scrutiny could make to public governance in a local community.

#### *Why do the new powers not extend to districts?*

It appears from paragraph 95 of the Bill that the new powers to require partner authorities to supply information to scrutiny and respond to recommendations do not extend to District Councils (other than Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) bodies under the Police & Justice Act). See extract below, relevant paragraph in bold:

“21C Reports and recommendations of overview and scrutiny committees: duties of certain partner authorities [...]  
 (7) In this section-

“the authority”, in relation to a relevant committee, means-

(a) in the case of an overview and scrutiny committee, the local authority by which it is established, and  
 (b) in the case of a sub-committee of an overview and scrutiny committee, the local authority by which the overview and scrutiny committee is established,

“the executive”, in relation to a relevant committee, means the executive of the authority,

“local improvement target” and “local area agreement” have the same meanings as in Chapter 1 of Part 5 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (local area agreements),

“relevant committee” means-

(a) any overview and scrutiny committee of-  
 (i) a county council in England,  
 (ii) a district council for an area in England in relation to which it has the functions of a county council, or  
 (iii) a London borough council, or  
 (b) a sub-committee of an overview and scrutiny committee within paragraph (a), and

“relevant partner authority”, in relation to a relevant committee, means any person who is a partner authority in relation to the authority for the purposes of Chapter 1 of Part 5 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, other than-

(a) a police authority, or

(b) a chief officer of police;

and references to a target relating to a relevant partner authority are to be construed in accordance with section 80(3) of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.”

We feel that this is an unnecessary diminution of district councillors’ roles and responsibilities and comes from the CLG’s insistence on focusing only on the Local Area Agreement (LAA) partners that can be easily identifiable in legislation (see below).

It will also be confusing for the public who already often do not understand why they have to ask District councillors one thing and County councillors another, but exacerbates this since



even if the external agency's activities are relevant to the District Council's responsibilities eg the Environment Agency or Waste Authority, they have to ask a County Council scrutiny committee to investigate the matter. There are also questions about the skills and expertise within the County Council (members and officers) to support inquiries into such external agencies, where such knowledge would be more readily available in the District.

### *Why does the Bill not require partners to attend scrutiny meetings when invited?*

The Bill does not seem to require attendance at a committee by a partner authority, only provide information. The requirement to attend which comes in paragraph 93 (Power of overview and scrutiny committee to question members of authority) applies to "any other member of the authority" ie the local authority of which the scrutiny committee is a part. This power already exists in the [2000 Act](#) in relation to executive members of the authority and council officers and we welcome its extension to all members with delegated authority, i.e. through ward budgets.

However the bill wording does contrast with the intention in the White Paper in paragraph 3.35:

"we will require:

- those public service providers (other than the police who will instead be subject to the new scrutiny arrangements set out in the Police and Justice Bill), covered by the duty to co-operate set out in chapter five either to appear before the committee or provide information to the committee within 20 working days (corresponding to the Freedom of Information Act deadline), insofar as their actions relate to functions or service delivery connected with the authority"

We know that overview and scrutiny committees have imaginative ways of shaming agencies into attending. One committee, holding an inquiry into service failure by one of the water companies which had resulted in households lacking water supplies for an unacceptable length of time, found that the water company refused to attend to explain what they were doing to put things right. Following the example of TV's *Have I got News for You*, and the tub of lard which replaced Roy Hattersley when he refused an invitation, they placed a leaky, rusty bucket on the table labelled with the name of the water company and got press interest in the company's failure to attend. They turned up at the second meeting, demanding their right to appear before the committee to put their case!

However, this is an unnecessary gap in the Bill, and would seem to result from lobbying from agencies against having to appear when asked. We understand from CLG officials that the Highways Agency has a policy of not appearing in front of local authority committees and this had been held up to us as evidence of the difference that the White Paper and Bill would make, but this appears to have been lost.

It contrasts not only with the pledge in the White Paper but also with the statutory power of Select Committees to require attendance. The status of select committees is always held up as what local government should emulate; some of this status comes from their clear powers. It also contrasts with the powers in the [NHS Act 2006](#) to require attendance by NHS bodies at health overview and scrutiny committees, and the powers in the [Police and Justice Act 2006](#) to require attendance by CDRP partner agencies. The wording in the NHS Act 2006, Chapter 3, Section 244, could offer a useful model:



“(2) Regulations may, in relation to an overview and scrutiny committee of an authority to which this section applies, make provision-  
[...]  
(f) requiring any officer of a local NHS body to attend before the committee to answer questions.”

As could the wording in the Police and Justice Act 2006, Chapter 48, Part 3, Section 20:

“(3) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision supplementing that made by section 19 in relation to local authorities in England.  
[...]  
(5) Regulations under subsection (3) or (4) may in particular make provision-  
[...]  
(e) requiring officers or employees of the responsible authorities and the co-operating persons and bodies to attend before the crime and disorder committee to answer questions;”

***Could the list of agencies covered by the duty to co-operate be extended for scrutiny’s purposes?***

We understand a need / wish to keep the list of partner authorities limited for the purposes of requiring co-operation in the LAA; there would be concern that non-core local agencies were being required to take on an unnecessary burden. It is for others to make a case for extending this in relation to the duty to co-operate in the LAA; there are some obvious omissions such as NHS Acute and Foundation Trusts.

However, we feel that with reference to a duty to respond to scrutiny inquiries, the list could be much longer and we do not see why there has to be only one list. For one thing, the risk of any unnecessary work burden will be much lighter than being required to co-operate in an LAA as scrutiny committees are not going to carry out inquiries into all local

partners all the time. For another, retaining an umbilical link to the LAA is another reason for excluding Districts from the new scrutiny powers since Counties have been given the overarching responsibility for pulling together and co-ordinating the LAA.

We understand that the list was at one time longer and that certain key organisations were subsequently removed. We feel that they should be put back - in relation to scrutiny if nothing else. Such organisations could include, inter alia:

- registered social landlords with housing stock in the local authority area
- former public utilities - water companies, electricity and gas supply companies, etc.
- train and bus operating companies
- the post office
- The proposed new Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) - both hosts and members

All these organisations could be classified as performing “a public function” and so could be added in later under the provision which gives the Secretary of State powers to amend the list. However, we see no reason why they should not be added to the list now. They are all quasi-public bodies whose activities have a key impact on the lives of local communities and residents and who should therefore be under a duty to publicly explain their actions and policies and work with the local authority to make improvements. We do not understand why the [Freedom of Information Act](#) definition of bodies “performing functions of a public nature” or contracted to provide services of a public nature cannot be used to cover all such organisations, rather than relying on a future amendment by government regulation.



Social care and disability charities are arguing for any organisation providing a service under contract to the local authority to be required to respond to scrutiny inquiries. It is particularly relevant in the social care sector due to the increasing level of commissioned or contracted services but could apply more broadly to other commissioned or contracted out services. If the Bill is not amended in Committee, guidance should set out how councils could write these requirements into their procurement and contracting processes. If it does not matter who provides the service then their sector or status should not matter in terms of their accountability for use of public funds and/or provision of a service to the public, and there should be a level playing field between service-providers, whether public, private or voluntary sector.

Arguably at least some of the organisations and service providers suggested in 5.3 above (Registered Social Landlords for example) have a greater affinity with local accountability mechanisms than some of the agencies included on the list already. For example bodies like the Environment Agency already have very clear accountabilities to Parliament for their statutory functions but they are included in the list. Registered Social Landlords are likely to have a Board of Trustees which could include tenants' or community representatives and even local councillors. Registered Social Landlords with a large housing stock locally will also probably already be involved in the Local Strategic Partnership, and may even be partners with responsibility for some LAA targets, where some of the bodies identified in the list are unlikely to be. Their exclusion from the duty to co-operate and be held to account is strange.

The requirement for LINKs (hosts and

members) to provide information and attend meetings of OSCs would mirror to some extent the requirement for OSCs to respond to referrals from LINKs. It would also enable the OSC to be the 'guardian of involvement' in its patch by making sure that LINKs are delivering outcomes for local people and meeting their aim of reaching out to involve local people.

In all of the above, it has to be borne in mind that many scrutiny inquiries have already been carried out where the agencies mentioned have co-operated and played a full part in assisting the committee with their inquiry with no need for formal powers. The powers in the Bill are essentially a backstop and a means of enhancing the status of scrutiny by giving scrutiny committees more formal "teeth". However, that said, if the government is serious about enhancing the power and status of scrutiny, it is important that these backstop powers are drawn as widely and logically as possible.

### *The need for joined-up government*

With this Bill there will be three different new Acts of Parliament granting specific powers of local scrutiny over different elements of the public sector:

- NHS Act 2006 for health scrutiny
- Police and Justice Act 2006 for CDRP scrutiny & CCA
- Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 for other public agencies as listed and CCfA

It seems to us that this Bill is a missed opportunity to put all these arrangements on the same legislative footing, with one set of unified powers and arrangements for local authorities to implement. In particular it is ridiculous to have two different kinds of Community Call for Action (CCA seems to be the Home Office variety, CCfA the CLG



version!), since this provision is closest to the public. How will they understand which version is to be used and why there are different arrangements for crime and disorder matters and local government matters?

The Home Office is commissioning CfPS to write the wider guidance for CDRP scrutiny under the Police and Justice Act; however they have agreed to delay writing CCA guidance until it can be written jointly for CLG CCfA as well. The commitment in the White Paper Implementation Plan to working in partnership with interested organisations and in a coherent way across government is very welcome, but needs to be genuinely followed through.

### *Capacity issues*

The new powers envisaged by the White Paper and Bill are welcome but there is concern around capacity to deliver. It is already an issue - not just in terms of funding but also in member and officer time and resources to support committees and inquiries. The White Paper's [Regulatory Impact Assessment](#) estimated that the new scrutiny powers would cost £25m a year to implement. It will be vital for this funding to be forthcoming via the [Comprehensive Spending Review 2007](#) and next year's grant settlement. CfPS research shows that scrutiny cannot be done on the cheap. Councils have already been expanding the number of officers supporting the scrutiny

function. This will need to continue if they are to take on this broader remit.

Specialist knowledge is also likely to become more of an issue if scrutiny inquiries are likely to be looking at more external bodies covering issues where no policy or practical knowledge is readily accessible within the council. Councils will need to be able to commission external expert support to build capacity and provide support and information to members. This has been part of CfPS's [Health Scrutiny Support Programme](#) which offered a number of days free expert advice on health issues to support health scrutiny committees' work. We also offer a [paid-for service](#) on other issues in partnership with LGIU.

CfPS's Health Scrutiny Support Programme has also demonstrated the importance of awareness-raising and a learning curve that has to be gone through by all partners where external scrutiny is involved. Health partners had to understand the difference between executive councillors with whom they might have engaged previously and the scrutiny councillors who were now calling them in to ask questions. Scrutiny members had to expand their knowledge and understanding of health language and ways of working in order to enable them to ask the right questions. Support and information-sharing will be important across the much wider range of partners brought under scrutiny by the Bill, and this will require funding.

## Rossendale: improvements in scrutiny

A transformation of the overview and scrutiny working arrangements has taken place since September 2006. It was agreed at that time that a new way of working was required so that the Overview and Scrutiny function is recognised as an effective part of the decision-making process and to use scrutiny to strengthen the Council's Community Leadership role.

There were previously two Overview and Scrutiny Committees:

- Audit and Performance (which looked at internal audit reports and internal performance)
- Policy Development (which looked at Council Policy)

This model was very structured and once the work programmes for the year had been agreed there was no scope to change. The Committees were also predominantly inward looking and Members had little confidence in challenging Portfolio Holders and Officers. There were also no clear linkages between the Scrutiny role and the Council's Community Leadership role. The meetings met in a very formal environment which was not conducive to scrutinising and challenging information.

In August the Committee Services Manager and Scrutiny Support Officer held a scrutiny training session with Elected Members to look at how the scrutiny function could be strengthened and to define the Members' role in the scrutiny process.

Different ways of working were discussed and it was agreed to undertake a three month pilot of the agreed way of working. At the end of the pilot an evaluation was undertaken and everyone agreed that scrutiny was working very well under the new arrangements. These are detailed below.

The **Policy Scrutiny Committee** bases its work programme on the Forward Plan and it selects Policies to develop prior to approval by the

Cabinet. This Committee also reviews existing policies to ensure that recommendations have been implemented.

The **Audit Scrutiny Committee** receives reports from the Internal Auditors including progress reports. They also receive reports from the Audit Commission who undertake external scrutiny of the Council. If it was felt there was a need for an explanation from Officers on recommendations within the auditors reports, they are invited to attend to explain how they intend to make improvements to their service area.

The **Performance Scrutiny Committee** receives reports on the Council's Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs). Following the presentation, the Head of Service together with the Portfolio Holder for any

underachieving service area is invited to meet with the Group to provide an explanation for their under-achieving targets and to seek information on how they intended to improve their service.

**Task and Finish Groups:** These are groups that undertake a specific piece of work for a short period of time, produce a report and then finish. Over the year we have had 7 Task and



*Councillors looking at whether the size of the bins are appropriate in the park*



Finish Groups focusing on Car Parking in the Borough, external scrutiny of Highways, Enforcement, Litter Bins, Community Cohesion, Polling Stations and a Review of Ombudsman Complaints. There are usually 4 or 5 members on each of these Groups (politically balanced where possible). They can take anything from 1-3 months to complete their work. A report is then sent to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for consideration and recommendations are then made to Cabinet, Council or the external organisation they are scrutinising.

The **Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee** meets bi-monthly to receive reports of the above groups and any Task and Finish Group which may produce a report. The Chief Executive of the Council also ask this Committee to look at a particular consultation. A small working group is established to respond to the consultation on behalf of the Council, these include, health consultations, Children’s Trust in Lancashire and Government Proposals for the Post Office Network.

Over the last 12 months we have produced a Scrutiny bulletin which is sent to Members and Officers on a quarterly basis, updating them on the work of Scrutiny. We have also produced a Scrutiny Toolkit, which at the present time is being revised to take in the new arrangements. For further information please log on to the Council’s website on [www.rossendale.gov.uk](http://www.rossendale.gov.uk)

Overview and Scrutiny is now increasingly effective in terms of exercising its community leadership role. Recent examples include the reviews of litter bins, bus shelters and car parking together with an outward looking focus on services provided by other organisations such as the review of Lancashire County Council’s highways function.

Other examples include:

- Considering the six health reorganisations facing the Borough
- Input into Fire Service consultation



*Councillors checking where repairs are required on the Highways*

- Contribution to discussions on Children’s Trusts arrangements across Lancashire.
- Signing the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change and a joint meeting with Rossendale’s Climate Change Group.
- Post Office closure consultations

During 2007/08 it is proposed to extend the focus of external scrutiny to include reviews of lsp theme groups and other main partners.

Training has been provided to Members and, as a result Member confidence in using and challenging information can be seen to have substantially increased. Reviews have included:

- improving sickness absence,
- improving creditor payments
- disabled access to buildings
- Recovery of debts

**Contact:**  
Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer  
Heather Moore, Committee Services Manager

## CfPS: new library monitor report

The library is an indexed, searchable repository of reports produced by scrutiny bodies across the UK. These are made available online to provide an essential resource that enables scrutiny practitioners to learn from each other's work. The library can be found on our website at [www.cfps.org.uk/reviews](http://www.cfps.org.uk/reviews)

The aim of this series is to provide an overview of reports submitted that address similar subjects or issues. The reviews are taken from all tiers of governance in order to present how different authorities and arrangements apply 'scrutiny'.

The third monitor report is now available online. The subject is the 23 reviews submitted to date that have focussed on anti-social behaviour.



## [www.cfps.org.uk/reviews](http://www.cfps.org.uk/reviews) - library update

### Fylde Borough Council: customer services

Customer services was identified in an IDeA training session for Cabinet and Scrutiny Members as an area of concern which needed to be addressed as a priority.

A Task and Finish Group of the Performance Improvement Scrutiny Committee was appointed to undertake the review.

The report summarises the results of the investigations and made several recommendations to the Cabinet. The review revealed that primarily the issues to be resolved centred around telephone contact, rather than customer services as a whole and accordingly the focal point of the investigations has been on the contact centre, and the recommendations reflect that.

### Cambridgeshire: life after school

Three members of the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee, plus a co-opted member, undertook an in-depth investigation of current transitions support to young people with learning disabilities, and opportunities and barriers to improving provision beyond school.

The sub group conducted extensive research, interviewed parents, carers and young people, and questioned a series of service providers and partners.

The group were impressed by the range of opportunities available in Cambridgeshire, and by the dedication of many service providers. However, they concluded that the range of provision needs to be more diverse and flexible, and that Cambridgeshire County Council has a key role in improving such provision and promoting a real culture of inclusion.





## London Ambulance Service: request for scrutiny

The London Ambulance Service would like to give all the London Overview and Scrutiny Committees the opportunity to comment on its final declaration to the Healthcare Commission.

As the only Pan London Trust it also has managers connecting with each borough who can talk to each other but it would help them if each OSC could make contact and let them know what information they would like before they decide to send any comments.

Last year only a few provided comments so any help or advice would be appreciated.

**Contact:**

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More information on OSCs involvement in the Health Check process is available in our publication at:

[www.cfps.org.uk/publications/item.php?itemid=51](http://www.cfps.org.uk/publications/item.php?itemid=51)