

**AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET**

**Name of Committee** Overview And Scrutiny Coordinating Groups

**Date of Committee** 21 June 2005

**Report Title** Report from Members' Seminar on the Role of Overview and Scrutiny

**Summary** This report summarises the outcomes of the discussions of members attending a briefing session on Overview and Scrutiny on 2 June 2005 and asks the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group to consider whether there are any issues they wish to progress.

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**Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework?** No.

**Background papers** None

**CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-** Details to be specified

- Other Committees  .....
- Local Member(s)
- Other Elected Members  Those present at briefing session
- Cabinet Member  .....
- Chief Executive  .....
- Legal  .....
- Finance  .....
- Other Chief Officers  .....
- 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  .....

To Cabinet  .....

To an O & S Committee  .....

To an Area Committee  .....

Further Consultation  .....

**Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group  
21 June 2005**

**Report on the Members' Seminar on the Role of Overview  
and Scrutiny**

**Report of the County Solicitor and  
Assistant Chief Executive**

**Recommendation**

Members' views of the suggestions made are welcomed, and Members are invited to identify issues they wish to progress.

**1. Introduction**

A briefing session on the Overview and Scrutiny function was held on 2 June 2005. It was attended by 17 members and facilitated by David Carter and Kate Nash.

This report summarises the key points made in the discussions.

Members' views on the suggestions made are welcomed, and Members are invited to identify issues they wish to progress.

**2. Reviewing Overview and Scrutiny**

In general those Members present felt that no major changes should be made to scrutiny processes, or to the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Group until the new Council had had time to settle and new Chairs had some experience of the current system and processes. It might be appropriate to review processes and to review the relationship between O&S, Cabinet and Council in six months' time.

**3. Objectives/Purposes of Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

The group identified the purposes of Overview and Scrutiny and suggested that there should be a clearer distinction between the two functions. Detailed suggestions for the way overview and scrutiny should work include:

- To ensure effective management, monitoring and evaluation of services.
- To find out why a service is not being delivered or why contracts are not in place.
- To find out if decisions / strategies are being delivered.
- To investigate and scrutinise inspection / audit reports.
- To recommend or scrutinise action plans / responses and make sure actions fit within policies.
- To ensure the view of users of services are heard.
- To help develop/amend policies – at a high level and to keep a “reality check” of policies.
- Scrutiny of outside bodies in an appropriate way where activities impact on Warwickshire County Council, for example District Housing.
- To question Portfolio Holders and to Call-in Cabinet decisions.
- To ensure that the objectives and expected outcomes are clear.
- To learn from / reinforce best practice.

#### 4. Selecting Topics

The group suggested that topics for scrutiny should be selected using the following criteria:

- Fulfilment of statutory duties.
- Relationship with corporate business plan and corporate review programme.
- Relationship with Cabinet's business.
- Focus on strategic issues arising from performance management and where members can engage with performance

#### 5. Reports and Agenda and Information Management

- 5.1. The group suggested that reports should be:
- exception based (for performance management)
  - focused and concise
  - summarised with good executive summaries for all reports and web links to further information.
- 5.2. The group suggested that agendas:
- should be clear on what items are for overview and what items are for scrutiny
  - should not have reports for information or noting.
- 5.3. In relation to information the group agreed:
- More work needs to be done to agree what information needs a committee has and how these are best delivered.
  - There is an onus on members to use electronic information – creation of an electronic “library” of information would allow shorter reports with links for further detail.

- More use could be made of the Members' library in the Members' Room at Shire Hall.

## **6. Meeting Management**

The group suggested that:

- There needs to be a consistent approach to joint 'briefings' with Chairs, Spokespersons and relevant officers. Cross party briefings were preferred.
- Briefings / pre-meetings should be about the management of the meeting (timing, order, attendance etc); should give the Chair an opportunity to control items; should enable discussion of the work programme.
- Pre-meetings should not rehearse meetings and should not discuss agenda reports in detail.
- It might be helpful to change their title from "Briefings".

## **7. Additional Methods for scrutiny**

Members suggested additional methods might include:

- possible use of surveys to 'fact find'
- short sharp reviews to identify whether issues exist.

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Chief Executive

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13 June 2005