MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COORDINATING GROUP HELD ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2005

Present:

Members of the Group:

Councillors: David Booth
Ken Browne (Chair)
Richard Grant
John Haynes
Mick Jones
Sid Tooth

Officers: Jean Hardwick- Principal Committee Administrator
Kate Nash – Head of Democratic Services
Jane Pollard – Assistant County Solicitor

1. **General**

   (1) **Apologies for absence**

   Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alan Cockburn, Jerry Roodhouse, Bob Stevens and David Carter.

   (2) **Members' Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**
   None

   (3) **Minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2005**

   The minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2005 were agreed as a correct record subject to:

   In respect of minute 4 Review of the Corporate Review Programme 2005/06, it being noted that the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee would lead on road safety issues rather than Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2. **CPA 2005-08 and its Implications for Overview and Scrutiny in Warwickshire County Council**

   The Group considered the report of the County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive that provided an overview of the main new provisions of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and detailed how Overview and Scrutiny Committees could contribute to the County Council's success under this assessment regime.

With regard to how Overview and Scrutiny Committee could improve the experience of Warwickshire residents receiving local services, paragraph 3 of the report, Implications and for Overview and Scrutiny Function, –

Community Leadership

It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committees' work programmes should demonstrate the effectiveness of scrutiny and its contribution to the CPA improvement plan and on-going improvement in services.

Community Leadership

Members commented -

- On the pro-active work currently undertaken to engage and involve the community in the work of Overview and Scrutiny Committees e.g. inviting pressure/interest groups to attend and contribute to meetings, website and Citizen Panel consultation;
- On the benefits of inviting people to meetings who could contribute to the debate on specific issues.
- That public attendance at meetings might be improved if they were held in the evenings;

The Group concluded that –

(1) With regard to Community Leadership each Committee to demonstrate its links with the Community and where this does not exist to initiate a link;

(2) The Corporate Review Officers be asked to be responsible to alert each Committee to CPA specific issues;

(3) Scrutiny should be Member lead;

(4) The Interim Corporate Review Manager be asked to provide Members with a briefing note to explain the terms "Level 1 and Level 2" in Appendix 1 to the report.

3.   Developments in Scrutiny

The Group considered the report of County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive that addressed a number of issues raised at the previous meeting of the Group.

With regard to protocols for dealing with Government Consultation documents Members commented that –

- This could be addressed in different ways e.g. use of the website and "Chat Rooms" which was being trialled by Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee;

- It was more appropriate for officers to prepare the response to Government Consultation documents because they had the technical knowledge and expertise to understand the proposals. The response prepared could then be circulated to Members to comment as to whether it was "fit for purpose" and then forwarded to Cabinet for final approval;

The Group supported the proposed developments in Scrutiny (set out in Section 2 of the report) subject to all relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members being circulated with the consultation documents and the officers being given the flexibility to prepare the response.

4.   Measuring the Impact of Scrutiny Reviews

The Group considered the report of the County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive that provided a summary of the current approaches taken to measuring the impact of scrutiny reviews conducted by Overview and Scrutiny Committee and which had been compiled at the request of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group.

The Group expressed support for the current and proposed approaches to measuring the impact of scrutiny reviews subject to, in respect of paragraph 5 "Assessing potential scrutiny review items", that –

(1) there should be more emphasis on the political dimension (Members' concerns);

(2)   each Committee's work programme should include a list of ongoing and unresolved issues (scrutiny topics not followed up) and the reasons why they had not been reviewed;

(3) the work programme should include "exception" reporting.

5.   Development of an Electronic Library

The Group considered the report of the County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive that outlined options for the development of an electronic library.

The Group considered that an electronic library would be of great benefit for Members and that –

- it should also be available to the public;
- electronic versions of background information should also be accessible.

The Group concluded that –

(1) an electronic database be developed that will contain information for Members in the manner described in the report and that it should be as 'user friendly' as possible.

(2) whilst the database is being developed, items be put in the committee administration system, under the appropriate committee.

(3) a report is brought back to members on proposals for a different approach to reports/briefings for committee.

(4) Members are piloted on the new electronic 'Inform'.

(5) There was need for a better "search engine" to access information.

6 Date of Next Meeting

The Group noted that the next meeting was scheduled 15 November 2005.

………………………
Chair