

**AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET**

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

**Date of Committee** 28 November 2007

**Report Title** Overview and Scrutiny Strategy

**Summary** This reports puts forward a draft Overview and Scrutiny Strategy for members comments.

**For further information please contact:** Jane Pollard  
Overview and Scrutiny Manager  
Tel: 01926 412565  
janepollard@warwickshire.gov.uk  
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  .....
- Local Member(s)  N/A
- Other Elected Members  Cllr Ken Browne 'Nothing that can't be considered at the meeting', Cllr Richard Grant
- Cabinet Member  .....
- Chief Executive  .....
- Legal  Sarah Duxbury
- 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  Approval of the proposed strategy following the incorporation of members comments

To Council  .....

To Cabinet  .....

To an O & S Committee  .....

To an Area Committee  .....

Further Consultation  .....

## Agenda No

# Overview And Scrutiny Coordinating Group - 28 November 2007.

## Overview and Scrutiny Strategy

### Report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development

#### **Recommendation**

That the Group considers the proposed strategy and suggests any amendments or additions.

Please find attached for comment a draft strategy for overview and scrutiny. The Group might like to consider whether the addition of some 'scenarios' by the Chairs of the various committees would help to promote the aims of the strategy i.e. 'What would overview and scrutiny look/feel like to you if it was working effectively?'

DAVID CARTER  
Strategic Director of  
Performance and  
Development

Shire Hall  
Warwick

02 November 2007

# Overview and Scrutiny Strategy

## Introduction

Overview and scrutiny is part of the process of checks and balances that seeks to ensure that the Council and public services in Warwickshire are delivering on its promises.

Key roles for overview and scrutiny committees are

- holding the Cabinet and other decision-makers to account
- policy review and development
- engaging with the community
- ensuring that public services are effective, efficient and responsive to the needs of the community

## Overview & Scrutiny is not

- A witch hunt: It is not about apportioning blame or seeking to interrogate people in public aggressively.
- The opposition: Members work across party boundaries to engage in a critical but constructive dialogue with the Cabinet.
- A complaints forum: Overview and Scrutiny focuses on strategic delivery of services not individual issues.
- Independent of the Organisation. Although overview and scrutiny is independent of the Cabinet both are part of the Council structures and need to work together to improve Council performance and services
- A poor relation. Done well, there is no reason why overview and scrutiny cannot be at the forefront of the Council's agenda of performance improvement and community engagement.

## Good Overview & Scrutiny

- Provides 'critical friend' challenge to policy makers and decision-makers
- Enables the voice and concerns of the public to be heard
- Is carried out by 'independent' minded people who lead and own the scrutiny role
- Drives improvement in public services
- Adds value and is able to demonstrate its effectiveness

**Overview and Scrutiny is about increasing  
accountability, improving performance and engaging  
local people**

## **THE STRATEGY**

### **Engaging Members**

- Providing all members with the requisite skills (see Appendix 1) to be effective participants through the member development programme.
- Demonstrating the benefits of what good overview and scrutiny can achieve
- Providing members with the opportunities to go on best practice visits
- Providing members with the opportunity to engage directly with service providers and service users
- Chairs and spokespersons of Overview and Scrutiny Committees acting as scrutiny champions within and outside the Council
- Publication of annual reports to Council and the outcomes of reviews in other relevant council publications.

### **Critical friend challenge to policy makers and decision-makers**

- Carrying out evidence based scrutiny reviews
- Ensuring recommendations are achievable and practicable and draw on best practice
- Building relationships of trust with members and officers of the Council and relevant partners
- Engaging policy makers and decision-makers in the work of overview and scrutiny to ensure their issues and concerns are understood
- Ensuring the voice and concerns of the public are heard.

### **Engaging with the Community**

- Inviting relevant partners and other organisations to participate in reviews and meetings
- Promoting the work of the overview and scrutiny through the press and media
- Promoting the work of the overview and scrutiny through the website and the publication of leaflets
- Proactive publicity and consultation in relation to appropriate reviews
- Publishing the outcomes of reviews to the community and relevant partners
- Using the new locality arrangements and the new Local Involvement Network (LINK) to identify issues of local concern and to feedback the outcomes of reviews
- Responding promptly to issues of concern raised by the LINK

### **Driving improvement in public services**

- Ensuring the work programme is focussed on issues where the overview and scrutiny function can add value/make a difference
- Implementing the agreed criteria for the selection of topics (See Appendix 2) to ensure the work programme remains relevant to local people

- Developing and implementing a core work programme to ensure that priorities are dealt with
- Monitoring the performance of the Council to identify areas for improvement
- Through reviews or other activities providing a forum for the exchange of views on particular issues from stakeholders
- Ensuring the voice and concerns of the public on specific issues are heard
- Learning from best practice

### **Adding Value and demonstrating effectiveness**

- Implementing the agreed performance management framework for overview and scrutiny
- Monitoring the response to review recommendations.
- Monitoring the impact of recommendations on the delivery of public services
- Publicising the outcomes and impacts of reviews through appropriate press and media
- Publication of annual reports

Scrutiny requires members to assess, probe, analyse and adopt a number of different, often innovative techniques in order to achieve their objectives, requiring the application of a variety of skills.

### Chairing Skills

Chairing Skills are key to an effective meeting. An effective chair manages the use of time by:

- ❖ Helping to interpret, clarify and summarise
- ❖ Helping move the discussion on
- ❖ Remains focussed on outcomes
- ❖ Gets a result which is then accepted at the collective will
- ❖ Shows a commitment to achieving objectives
- ❖ Holding respect through impartiality
- ❖ Managing and taking ownership of the work programme
- ❖ Ensuring balance
- ❖ Encouraging appropriate participation
- ❖ Using officers appropriately
- ❖ Communicating effectively, including through the media

### Project Planning Skills

The ability to plan events to a conclusion taking into account resources and timescales. This includes planning scrutiny reviews and also planning work programmes for the Committees and identifying desired outcomes.

### Team Working

Getting members of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or panel working effectively together towards a common goal

### Questioning Skills

The ability to probe and prod for information, managing to question and challenge officers without interrogating

### Listening

Genuinely listening to others whose views and opinions may differ from your own.

### Analytical Skills

The ability to review and interpret data and reach well reasoned conclusions and recommendations. Developing SMART recommendations

### Report writing

The ability to write clear and concise accounts with recommendations for action

### Negotiating

The ability to negotiate to reach a consensus

### Developing relationships

Promoting scrutiny by developing relationships with the Cabinet, Officers, Partners, Key Stakeholders, members of the public, other Committees (Other Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Area Committees) and the media.

1. Whether or not any particular issue will be addressed is determined using the following criteria.
  - Does this issue have a potential impact for significant section(s) of the population?
  - Is it a matter of general public concern?
  - Is the issue to be reviewed a key deliverable of a strategic and/or partnership plan?
  - Is it a key performance area where the Council needs to improve?
  - Is there a legislative requirement to undertake the review?
  
2. Secondly to ensure that reviews add value/ make a difference consideration will be given to whether it is practicable to undertake the review by asking the following questions-
  - Are there adequate resources available to do the activity well?
  - Is the overview and scrutiny activity timely?
  - Is there a clear objective for scrutinising this topic?
  - Is there evidence to support the need for overview and scrutiny?
  - What are the likely benefits to the council and its customers?
  - Are we likely to achieve a desired outcome?
  - What are the potential risks?

### Reasons to Reject Items for Overview and Scrutiny

3. There will sometimes be very compelling reasons why an item should not be subject to overview and scrutiny. Most commonly this arises where
  - An issue is being examined elsewhere - e.g. by the cabinet, working group, officer group, other body
  - An issue was dealt with less than 2 years ago
  - New legislation or guidance is expected within the next year
  - There is no scope for overview and scrutiny to add value/ make a difference



