

**AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET**

**Name of Committee** Overview And Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group

**Date of Committee** 30 April 2008

**Report Title** Draft O&S Action Plan

**Summary** Attached to this report is a draft O&S action plan for taking forward the Strategy agreed by the Group in January 2008

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

**Background papers**

**CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-**

Details to be specified

- Other Committees  .....
- Local Member(s)  N/A
- Other Elected Members  Cllr Richard Grant
- Cabinet Member
- Chief Executive  Jim Graham
- Legal  Sarah Duxbury
- Finance  .....
- Other Chief Officers  David Carter
- District Councils  .....
- Health Authority  .....
- Police  .....
- Other Bodies/Individuals  .....

**FINAL DECISION YES**

**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  .....

## Agenda No

# Overview And Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group - 30 April 2008.

## Draft O&S Action Plan

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

#### Recommendation

That the Group considers any additions/amendments to the draft O&S action plan

Approves the draft O&S action plan with/without amendment.

#### Introduction

1. The Council on 31 October 2006 passed the following resolutions:
  - (1) That, wherever possible, joint scrutiny arrangements with partner agencies should be undertaken and each overview and scrutiny committee should consider these opportunities on a regular basis as part of the development of its work programme.
  - (2) That each overview and scrutiny committee should include within its work programme monitoring progress on the outcomes of the relevant Local Area Agreement block(s) and the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group should maintain an overview of this work.
  - (3) That there should be a joint scrutiny arrangement with partners to review the overall progress of the Local Area Agreement and partnership working generally.
  - (4) That the chair of each overview and scrutiny committee should meet the relevant portfolio holder(s) at least quarterly to discuss:
    - areas where the committee could help the Council achieve its overall objectives.
    - areas about which the committee has concerns or suggestions for improvement.
  - (5) That some form of community meeting be held in each locality every year to identify, amongst other things issues, where the community has

concerns which should be pursued by overview and scrutiny committees.

- (8) That each overview and scrutiny committee should increase its use of the following:
- select committee style
  - small working groups of members on a task and finish basis.
  - site visits
  - visits to other authorities

This should be done by members proactively managing the work programme and identifying areas of work to be pursued in these ways.

- (9) That partners, service users and members of the community play a larger role in overview and scrutiny by ensuring that their potential contribution receives specific consideration as part of each scrutiny exercise and that they are also encouraged to contribute in ways which help them to do so.
- (10) That the role of overview and scrutiny committees in performance management should focus on in-depth reviews using the data from the Council's performance management system and identifying issues arising from exception reports.
- (11) That a suite of initiatives be developed to promote and publicise the work of overview and scrutiny committees.
- (12) That within the overall member development framework, there should be opportunities for members to develop their collective and individual skills in a practical way, with a recognition that listening and constructive questioning skills are essential to fulfil the potential of scrutiny.
- (14) That each overview and scrutiny committee should produce an annual report to the Council.
- (15) That each overview and scrutiny committee should monitor the progress on actions arising from its recommendations.

2 The Council on 11 December 2007 in approving the action plan to respond to the peer review agreed

- All scrutiny activities should have demonstrable links to Corporate and LAA priorities, and community concerns.
- Local Area Scrutiny exercises should be underway and providing outcomes for local people.

- Develop Scrutiny within the partnership environment to a clear specification

## **Overview and Scrutiny Strategy and Draft O&S Action Plan**

- 3 The Group agreed the Overview and Scrutiny Strategy for 2008-2013 at its meeting on 30 January 2008 and a copy is attached for information as Appendix 1. A draft O&S action plan to take forward the Strategy is attached as Appendix 2 for comment/amendment.

DAVID CARTER  
Strategic Director of  
Performance and  
Development

Shire Hall  
Warwick

3 April 2008

Draft Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2008-09

Issue	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<b>Developing and supporting the work programme</b>												
Core programme consulted on and agreed by Council	13 <sup>th</sup> 2008	May	<b>Core issues scheduled into appropriate OSC committee work programmes</b>									
Work programme for committees reflects the agreed criteria for the selection of topics	<b>Implementation of agreed criteria</b>											
Mapping the key partnerships relating to each Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Mapping undertaken				Identification of any specific partnership reviews to be undertaken				<b>Implementation</b>			
Developing effective arrangements for joint/partnership scrutiny	Proposals made for agreement						<b>Implementation</b>					
Develop protocols between the County and Districts for the Scrutiny of CDRP's	Proposals made for agreement								<b>Implementation</b>			
Review of the scrutiny toolkit	Review toolkit and consider how best to make available via intranet and/or website									<b>Implement</b>		
<b>Critical Friend Challenge to policy makers and decision-makers</b>												
Develop a programme of visits/video-conferences etc with other authorities to identify best practice	Development of initial programme				<b>Implementation and updating of programme as opportunities arise</b>							
Develop protocols for the new councillor call for action	Draft protocol			Protocols agreed via Council			<b>Implementation</b>					
Developing the skills of members to be effective participants through the member development programme	Identification of any specific training programmes for overview and scrutiny members				<b>Putting agreed training programme in place</b>							
Development of role descriptions/job descriptions for OSC Chairs	Proposals for agreement				<b>Implementation</b>							

Draft Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2008-09

Issue	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<b>Engaging with the community</b>												
Develop protocols between the new LINKs and the relevant OSCs to support their new role/relationships	Development of protocols and 'events' meetings to start building robust relationships							<b>Review of progress</b>				
Develop protocols for local area scrutiny based on the new locality arrangements	Develop proposals for agreement							<b>Implementation</b>				
Develop media plans to publicise the work of each committee	Develop plans				<b>Implementation</b>							
<b>Driving improvement in public services</b>												
Quarterly monitoring of Council and LAA performance	<b>Ongoing implementation</b>											
Developing effective arrangements for LAA scrutiny	Agreeing proposals					<b>Implementation</b>						
Review the arrangements for tracking the outcomes of review recommendations	<b>Ongoing implementation</b>					Review effectiveness of arrangements and make proposals for improvements						
Sharing best practice from O&S reviews with relevant services	<b>Ongoing implementation</b>											
<b>Adding Value and Demonstrating Effectiveness</b>												
Annual reports to Council in accordance with timetable	<b>Implementation of rolling programme</b>											
Implementation of O&S Performance Management framework	<b>Ongoing implementation</b>					Review effectiveness and make nay proposals for improvements						
Developing proposals for 'Outcomes' reports	Make proposals for agreement				<b>Implementation</b>							
Develop a refresher programme for officers/partners about overview and scrutiny	Programme developed				<b>Implementation</b>							



# Overview and Scrutiny Strategy 2008 - 2013



# 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. It is member-led and key roles for overview and scrutiny committees are

- holding the Cabinet and other decision-makers to account
- using the call-in process to challenge executive decisions before they are implemented
- policy review and development
- engaging with the community
- ensuring that public services are effective, efficient and responsive to the needs of the community

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 sets an ambitious agenda to empower individual councillors and overview and scrutiny committees to hold public service providers in their area to account and to ensure the concerns of communities are considered in local decision-making. Enhanced powers are given to individual councillors through the 'Councillor Call for Action' to refer matters of public concern to overview and scrutiny committees for consideration. Overview and Scrutiny Committees are given new powers to require information and have their reports and recommendations taken into account by public service partners in relation to matters falling within the scope of the Local Area Agreement.

The development of the new Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) provides another avenue for the public to express their views and concerns about health and social care services in their area and provides an opportunity to further strengthen the ability of overview and scrutiny committees to reflect public opinion.

Whilst it is hoped that by demonstrating the value of its work overview and scrutiny can gain the co-operation of partners voluntarily these new powers do provide a framework for enhancing both the democratic accountability of public services at a local level and the crucial leadership role for councillors as champions of their communities.

# Our Vision For The Future

How would we like to see the overview and scrutiny function in Warwickshire develop over the next five years? Our aspirations are for an overview and scrutiny function that

- is a key driver of the local public service improvement agenda
- is viewed as an essential part of the decision-making process on important public service issues
- makes a positive difference to the lives of people living and working in Warwickshire
- encourages proactive engagement by the public, partners and communities
- enhances the community leadership role of councillors
- is valued by the council, public and partners
- is relevant to local people
- is recognised locally and nationally for the work it carries out

# Good Overview & Scrutiny

- Provides 'critical friend' challenge to policy makers and decision-makers
- Provides an opportunity to debate the principles and values which lie at the heart of policy development
- 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**

# Our Strategy

## Engaging Members

- Actively engaging members in the development of the work programme.
- Providing all members with the requisite skills to be effective participants through the member development programme.
- Implementing effective arrangements for dealing with any councillor call for action under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
- Ensuring all members are aware of how the procedures for call-in of executive decisions operate
- 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 relevant council publications.

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

- Carrying out evidence based 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
- Using the call-in process in appropriate circumstances to challenge executive decisions before they are implemented

## Engaging with the Community

- Providing all members with the opportunity to represent the views and concerns of their communities
- Inviting relevant partners and other organisations to participate in reviews and meetings
- Promoting the work of overview and scrutiny through the press and media
- Promoting the work of overview and scrutiny through the website and 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 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
- Implementing effective arrangements to monitor the performance of the local area agreement
- 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

## Key Skills for Overview and Scrutiny

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 as 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.

# Selecting Topics for Overview and Scrutiny

1. Whether or not any particular issue will be addressed is determined by members 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