

Item no.

Report to: **Partnerships Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **24 January 2006**

Report of: **Scrutiny Support Manager**

Subject: **IDeA Member Development Project – Development of Scrutiny**

Ward: **All**

1.0 **Purpose of Report**

1.1 To advise Members of the Committee of the potential areas arising out of the IDeA feedback report of future action for improvement in respect of the Council's Scrutiny function and how these can be progressed.

2.0 **Consultation**

2.1 In preparing this report I have consulted with the Head of Democratic Services and Administration, the Council's Monitoring Officer and the Chair of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee.

3.0 **Background**

3.1 At the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee's meeting held on 15 November 2005, Members considered a feedback report in respect of the IDeA Member Development project that had been undertaken between January 2004 and September 2005.

3.2 In receiving the report, the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee noted a number of areas of work which had been identified in respect of the further development of the Council's Scrutiny function.

3.3 Accordingly, the Scrutiny Support Manager was charged with producing an action plan for positive and prompt changes in respect of the areas of work identified and report back to the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee in January 2006.

4.0 **Position Statement and Option Appraisal**

4.1 The IDeA feedback report identified the following key issues which would have to be addressed if the Council's Scrutiny function is to progress further:-

- Greater clarity around the role of Members and Officers in Scrutiny
- Skills requirements amongst Members
- Linkage between Scrutiny and the Council's Corporate Objectives
- Engagement of the Public in the Scrutiny process
- Involvement of opposition Members in Scrutiny

- 4.2 A series of tables attached to this report (Appendix A) outline potential ways forward in addressing the aforementioned issues and who might be responsible for implementing the proposals.
- 4.3 In examining the aforementioned issues and proposed way forward, it is clear that there are some that could be actioned in the short-term whilst others will be dependent on other factors to be determined in respect of the Council's decision making structures as well as organisational development proposals. Accordingly progress on these matters may be delayed for some 12-24 months.
- 4.4 In considering the timescales within which the proposed actions could be implemented, it is considered that these realistically could be grouped as follows:-
- Short term – within 6 months
 - Medium term – within 6 – 18 months
 - Long term – over 18 months hence
- 4.5 When applying these timescales to the potential areas for development and proposals for addressing these, it is felt that the following implementation plans would be appropriate.

Short Term Issues

- Develop protocol outlining expectations of Officers/Members
- Structured pre-meetings to establish questioning patterns and what is to be achieved
- Attach summarised corporate objectives to each Scrutiny Agenda
- Production of guidance sheet and set questions for Scrutiny meetings relating to corporate objectives
- Attendance by Scrutiny Members at Executive meetings and subsequent feedback to Scrutiny Committees
- Develop a Scrutiny Guide for Members of the Public as well as internal/external stakeholders
- Organise Scrutiny reviews which look at issues driven by the public
- Hold meetings out in the community

Medium Term Issues

- Externally Facilitated session enabling Officers and Members to be open and honest
- Members continuing to improve questioning skills
- Members improving planning skills needed for undertaking reviews ie Time Management, Project Management, Resource Planning and Management
- Running practical exercises to test self awareness (possibly as part of Member Development Programme)
- Reviewing/establishing clear job descriptions for Scrutiny Members

Long Term Issues

- Providing a Scrutiny mentor to work with Chairs and Vice Chairs on a One - 2- One basis
- Providing a Member peer to work with Scrutiny opposition Members
- Review self-assessment template from IDeA 'Taking Scrutiny Forward' session

- Further external observational work of the Council's Scrutiny arrangements
- 4.6 In identifying the aforementioned implementation plan, there are a number of issues that are currently being examined within the Council that will impact upon these plans. These include:-
- Political Management arrangements and decision making structures
 - Scrutiny Structures
 - Member Training and Development Strategy and Programme
 - Audit Committees
- 4.7 Accordingly, the ability to implement those proposals identified in Section 4.5 may depend upon the progress made by the Council of the issues detailed above.
- 4.8 Furthermore, there is a great deal of interaction between the issues insofar as changes to for example, Audit Committees may impact upon the Council's political management and scrutiny structures. As such, developing witness guides, scrutiny handbooks and Member training and development events might only be achieved when the Council's scrutiny structures have been finalised.
- 4.9 Whilst this report has been commissioned by the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee, the proposed areas of improvements identified in respect of the Council's Scrutiny function will, if agreed, impact upon all of the Council's Scrutiny Committees.
- 4.10 In view of this, it is suggested that the report be referred to the Scrutiny Management Board to gauge feedback from the other Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs.

5.0 **Implications**

5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1 This report has no financial implications.

5.2 Legal Implications

5.2.1 This report has no legal implications.

5.3 Policy Implications

5.3.1 The report highlights the fact that the Member Development Strategy when agreed by the Council will impact upon the Council's Organisational Development Strategy.

5.3.2 The areas identified within Section 4.6 of the report will impact upon the Council's ability to implement most, if not all, of the proposals for development Scrutiny. It is therefore essential that these issues are considered by an early meeting of the Council's Political Management Working Group and Member Development Steering Group.

5.4 Risk Implications

5.4.1 A risk assessment has been undertaken and controls are in place to manage those risks.

5.5 Communication Implications

5.5.1 This report has no communication implications.

6.0 **Corporate Implications**

6.1 Corporate Plan and Priorities

6.1.1 The issues identified within the report will contribute to Council Priority 2, Striving for Excellence in the workplace, specifically Objective SFE2, developing capacity to achieve in the organisation.

6.2 Service Plan

6.2.1 The issues identified within the report form part of the Democratic Services and Administration Unit work plan.

6.3 Equality and Diversity

6.3.1 Whilst there are no direct Equality and Diversity issues arising from the report, there is an acknowledgement that access to and timeliness of member training and development opportunities will need to be addressed as part of the Member Development Strategy.

6.4 E-Government

6.4.1 This report has no E-Government implications.

6.5 Procurement

6.5.1 This report has no procurement implications.

7.0 **Recommendations**

7.1 Members are requested to receive the report, note the issues detailed therein and consider how to progress those areas identified for developing Scrutiny.

Background Papers

1 Agreement between District of Easington Council and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) to undertake consultancy work in respect of Member Development.

2 Feedback Reports from IDeA.

3 Project Review Report from IDeA.

4 District of Easington Council Corporate and Performance Plan.

5 Democratic Services and Administration Unit Service Plan.

APPENDIX 'A'

Issue 1:		
Greater clarity around the role of Members and Officers in Scrutiny		
Need	Action	Who
Discuss the role of Officers and Members in Scrutiny	Facilitated session enabling Officers and Members to be open and honest	External facilitator
Establish greater clarity around roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review/establish clear job descriptions for Scrutiny Members Develop protocol outlining expectations of Officers/Members 	Officers
Members to lead and shape discussion further	See section on skills	
Outcome		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members leading and shaping discussions within meetings and in all planning sessions Officers providing brief updates on reports in meetings which are used as a base for strategic discussions 		

Issue 2: Skills requirements		
Need	Action	Who
Chairs and Vice Chairs to be shaping discussions more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a scrutiny mentor to work with Chairs and Vice Chairs 1-2-1 	External
Members to start planning their approach to meetings more so that they can drive the meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run a pilot exercise where a facilitator meets with members 20 minutes prior to their meeting to establish what they want to achieve and help plan out questions and then review how far they actually achieved this 	External
Members continuing to improve questioning skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers to remind members about learning in 6 months time • Run refresher course on questioning skills 	Officer/External
Members improving skills they need to plan Scrutiny reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide skills sessions looking at skills such as time management, project management, Scrutiny resource management 	Officer/External
Outcome		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny Members having the skills they need to drive and shape Scrutiny 		

Issue 3: Linkage between Scrutiny and corporate objectives		
Need	Action	Who
Members to be clear about corporate objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing session • Attach summarised corporate objectives to each Scrutiny agenda 	Officers
Members to proactively ask questions about corporate objectives within Scrutiny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of crib sheet for Members to use • Members to note set of questions and ask them in the meetings 	Officers and Members
Scrutiny messages taken back to Cabinet	Scrutiny Member to regularly attend Cabinet and then feedback outcomes to Scrutiny committees	Members
Outcome		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny members driving and shaping corporate objectives and issues more • Officers providing more information about corporate objectives in their reports 		

Issue 4: Other issues		
Need	Action	Who
Engaging the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise Scrutiny reviews which look at issues driven by the public • Hold meetings out in the community • Develop a Scrutiny guide for members of the public 	Officer/Member
Involvement of the opposition in Scrutiny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a member peer to work with Scrutiny opposition members 	External
Raising Members level of self awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review self assessment template used in IDeA "Taking Scrutiny Forward" session • Run practical exercises to test self awareness out 	Officer/Members/External
Ensuring Members of Scrutiny are making progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further observational work to take place within a year 	External