

DISTRICT OF EASINGTON COUNCIL

SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2006/7

Scrutiny in Easington

Annual Report 2006/7

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Introduction

This annual report details the work of the District of Easington's Scrutiny function exercised via the Scrutiny Management Board and the three Scrutiny Committees. It highlights the impact of Scrutiny upon the Council's decision-making processes and ultimately the impact on those services provided either directly by the Council or in partnerships with other agencies to the people of Easington.

The report examines the work during 2006/7 of the Scrutiny Committees, details the developments and improvements made to the Scrutiny processes within the Council and also suggests areas of work to be undertaken during the 2007/8 municipal year.

The past year has continued to see significant challenges for Easington – the Local Government White Paper “Strong and Prosperous Communities”, the Regional Spatial Strategy Examination in Public Panel Report, the continued development of a three Star Strategy for East Durham Homes, the reconfiguration of the County Durham PCT's and the Darzi Review of Acute Services North and South of the Tees and the Review of East Durham Local Strategic Partnership have all featured strongly within the work of the Council's Scrutiny Committees.

The continuation of the review of the Council's Political Management Arrangements has considerable implications for the Council's Scrutiny functions, not least of which is to: -

- Reduce the number of Scrutiny Committees from 4 to 3
- Align the three new Scrutiny Committees with the Executive portfolios
- Reaffirm the retention of a co-ordinating Scrutiny Management Board

Whilst the Scrutiny function continues to develop, there are still a number of areas where we could do better. Public participation remains an area which needs to be developed although the Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee continues to have an appointed representative of the Tenants Federation as a co-optee on that Committee. The Council has recognised the importance of and need to improve the amount of information readily accessible to the public in respect of its decision making process.

The Scrutiny Committees continue to utilise the Council's 'Infopoint' newspaper to promote their work and this has led to a number of public questions being asked at the Council's Scrutiny Committees. We want this to continue and improve and the Council is fully committed to full and open engagement with the local community regarding how and why decisions are made. The Council is committed to improving its community engagement arrangements and this will continue during the coming year.

Further development work is to be undertaken with Councillors to assist them in nurturing the skills needed in their role as both scrutineers and community representatives. A detailed review of members training and development needs has commenced which will ultimately lead to the Council securing Charter status for its member development service. As part of this development and in accordance with the Member Induction programme which will take place following the May Elections, members of the Council's Scrutiny Committees will receive further training on Scrutiny.

As a Scrutiny Management Board we are committed to the principles of strong scrutiny of those issues which we as community representatives know are of high importance to the residents of Easington. All of the Council's Scrutiny Committees welcome representatives and contributions from the community of Easington as an essential element of good scrutiny.

In summary, this has been a busy and productive year for the Scrutiny Committees as you will see from the individual reports from committees. The Scrutiny Management Board and Scrutiny Members are continually striving to ensure that our work complements the strategic and policy setting work of the Executive and that those corporate priorities and performance targets agreed by the Council are met.

Councillor Colin Patching
Chair of Partnerships Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Richard Burnip
Vice Chair of Partnerships Scrutiny Committee

Councillor A Burnip
Chair of Resources Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Sarah Mason
Vice Chair of Resources Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Dennis Raine
Chair of Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Alphonsus Holmes
Vice Chair of Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee

What is Scrutiny?

Scrutiny is an important part of the Government's drive to modernise local government – the way in which decisions are made and public services are improved. Government legislation required the Council to replace the old Committee system with a new decision making process. This process is set out under the Council's Constitution which was amended in May 2007 and consists of:

- An Executive, chaired by the Leader of the Council and elected by the Council who make policy and service delivery decisions.
- Three Scrutiny Committees
- Regulatory Committees dealing with issues such as Development Control, Licensing and Standards
- An Audit Committee independent of the Executive and Scrutiny functions.

The Scrutiny Committees' key roles are to:-

- Review and/or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any Council functions.
- Make reports and/or recommendations to the Council and/or the Executive in connection with the discharge of any functions.
- Consider any matter affecting the District of Easington or its inhabitants.
- Exercise the right to ask the Executive to think again about decisions made but not yet implemented (Call-in).

The Scrutiny Committees assist the Council in developing and reviewing its policies by:

- Conducting research, community and other consultation into policy issues and proposals
- Engaging with members of the local community in examining policies.
- Questioning other Councillors and Officers about their views on issues and proposals affecting the district.
- Liaising with other organisations to try and improve the services provided to the residents of Easington.

The committees also review and scrutinise the performance of the Council in terms of the success of its policies against its priorities and objectives, its performance indicators and measures and how well Council services are received.

The Scrutiny Committees decide which areas they wish to examine and may investigate particular issues in depth. The issues examined may arise following representations from the public, concerns of Councillors or follow on from reports about the Council's activities or the Best Value Inspectorate.

On 26 October 2006, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DECLOG) published the White Paper “Strong and prosperous communities”. The vision of the White Paper is of revitalised local authorities, working with their partners, to reshape public services around the citizens and communities that use them.

In order to strengthen the ability of local councillors to speak up for their communities and demand an answer when things go wrong, it is proposed that this ability should be exercised by individual councillors through a “Community Call for Action” or collectively through the Scrutiny function.

The White Paper recognises the key role of Councillors to ensure that local peoples’ concerns are listened to by the appropriate authorities, whether raised formally by the community or where they become aware of them through their engagement with the community. Whilst guidance on how the “Community Call for Action “ might operate is awaited, it is evident that the White Paper will have some far reaching implications for Scrutiny within the Council.

In short, the Scrutiny process is about improving services for people by being responsive to their needs and making the Council’s decision-making processes more open, accountable and inclusive to residents and the proposals detailed in the White Paper build on these principles whilst introducing new requirements for Partner Organisations to co-operate with Local Authority Scrutiny arrangements where necessary.

The implications of the Local Government White Paper are also considered later in this report in the “Future developments in Scrutiny” Section.

The Scrutiny Management Board

Consisting of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Council's Scrutiny Committees, the Scrutiny Management Board was first established in 2000. At that time, the Board was an informal meeting of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny with Cabinet Portfolio holder for Scrutiny Liaison and E-Government.

The Scrutiny Management Board meetings continue to provide the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs, with the information and deliberations of the Executive, when they had made their decisions at their previous meeting. This gives members of the Board an opportunity to pre-empt any potential call-in references or requests for further information when the minutes of the Executive are formally reported to the Scrutiny Committees.

The Scrutiny Management Board acts as a sounding board for policy development and changes to service delivery at an early stage and will refer issues down to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee. This serves two purposes:-

- Firstly, it gives non-executive members a chance to view policy development and service delivery proposals prior to their being agreed by the Executive, hence giving these members a sense of ownership to the end of the decision of the Executive.
- Secondly, it provides both report authors and the Executive with a valuable mechanism for feedback and challenge regarding their proposals.

The Board has continued its pre-scrutiny role for a number of key corporate policy and service review proposals including:-

- Pride in Easington Initiative
- Choice Based Lettings
- Implications for Scrutiny Arising from the Local Government White Paper
- Gambling Act – Statement of Principles
- Use of Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005 Powers
- Procedures for Responding to Unauthorised Encampments
- DTI Consultation – The future of the Post Office Network
- Care Services and the Supporting People Partnership

The Scrutiny Management Board, in conjunction with the Chairman of the Council is also responsible for authorising the waiving of the "call-in" procedures for decisions made by the Executive and deemed to be urgent. The waiving of call-in can only be agreed when both the Scrutiny Management Board and Chairman of the Council are satisfied by the explanations given by the Executive Member and/or Lead Officer as to the reasons behind the urgency of the issue.

The waiving of call-in was agreed by the Scrutiny Management Board in respect of Restructuring Proposals for the Housing Strategy Service at its meeting in May 2006.

As highlighted in the introduction to this report, the Council have agreed a number of changes to its political management arrangements. The main change affecting the Scrutiny Management Board has been the removal of the “E-Government and Scrutiny Liaison” portfolio within the Executive. This was agreed in order to ensure that the Scrutiny challenge to the Executive was improved and driven by the Scrutiny Members themselves. As a result of this, greater emphasis has been placed on the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees in monitoring the decisions of the Executive. This will be enhanced in the revised Scrutiny Structures agreed by the Council in April 2007 and which will be implemented with effect from 17 May 2007.

Partnerships Scrutiny Committee

The role of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee involves the review and scrutiny of the working relationships between the Council and outside organisations acting in partnership with the Council to deliver public services to the community in Easington.

During the last year, the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee have continued to develop existing and new relationships with external partners. The principal objective of the Committee remains ensuring that the interests of local people and the community well being within Easington are enhanced by robust partnership working.

The Committee carries out its work mainly through a combination of formal meetings of the Committee with representatives of the Council's external partner organisations. The Committee is constantly looking at areas of best practice from other local authorities and believes this to be one of the strengths of its working.

The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee conducted a major Scrutiny review of the East Durham Local Strategic Partnership based upon the following terms of reference:-

- To examine the role of East Durham LSP, its composition, accountability and scrutiny/governance arrangements
- To review the monetary value of the LSP and the risk management issues there from
- To review the delivery of the Community Strategy Targets and how these address the priorities of the community
- To analyse the methods of Community Engagement undertaken to influence the Community Strategy
- To identify how the partnership intends to develop its role, working arrangements and proposals for the future
- To examine the awareness within the community and the Council of the role and activities of the LSP and how these compare with awareness levels in other partner organisations.

A report was approved in April 2007 which included detailed recommendations based upon the aforementioned terms of reference. The report was agreed by the Executive and will be referred on to the East Durham Local Strategic Partnership for consideration and comment back to the Council's Scrutiny Committees.

The Partnerships Scrutiny Committee receive monitoring and progress reports on partnership issues from Executive Members and Political leaders. However, due to the work undertaken in respect of the Review of the East Durham Local Strategic Partnership and the Darzi Review, only the report of the Executive Member for Regeneration was received.

In 2005/06, the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee undertook investigations regarding the Darzi Review of Acute Health Services North and South of the Tees. The Darzi Report included a number of key recommendations which would change the way in which some NHS services are provided North and South of the Tees and which would impact upon some of the residents of the District of Easington, especially in terms of access/transport to NHS services.

The review was undertaken concurrently with the formal consultation timescales of the Darzi Review from September to December 2005 and a formal report and recommendations were agreed by the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee and endorsed by the Leader of the Council as this Council's formal response to the Darzi Review consultation process.

In late 2006, the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee found out that the recommendations of Professor Darzi had been referred by the Secretary of State for Health to an Independent Reconfiguration Panel to further investigate a number of issues. A detailed report on this progress was prepared by the Director of Regeneration and Development in conjunction with the Executive Members for Health, Regeneration and Housing.

The outcome of the IRP investigations were reported to Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on 20 February 2007. In essence, the IRP recommendations dismissed the Darzi Review and recommendations in favour of the development of “ a new modern hospital within easy reach of people in Hartlepool, Stockton, Easington and Sedgefield, to replace the existing out of date hospital buildings at North Tees and in Hartlepool. However prior to a the new hospital option being advanced, the Panel’s Report concluded that consultant-led maternity and paediatric services should be centralised at the University Hospital of North Tees with a midwife-led maternity unit and a paediatric assessment unit - in addition to elective surgery and emergency medical services - provided at the University Hospital of Hartlepool.”

As this represents a complete reversal of the Darzi proposals, the Committee agreed that the Council will work with its colleagues in Hartlepool Borough Council to ensure that the proposals implemented do not adversely affect the level of service enjoyed by the residents of the south of Easington District. This work will be picked up by the Regeneration Services Scrutiny Committee in 2007/8.

In view of the work that has been undertaken by the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee in respect of the Darzi Review and which was unscheduled within the 2006/7 work programme, a number of issues which were to be examined have been deferred. These will be picked up within the 2007/8 work programme by successor Scrutiny Committees and includes:-

- > Community Consultation and Engagement
- > Community Development – support to Community and Voluntary Organisations

Resources Scrutiny Committee

The role of the Resources Scrutiny Committee involves reviewing decisions made or actions taken in connection with the Council's resources including staff, finance, land and property and information.

The Committee carries out its work based upon its work programme which is set at the start of the municipal year. Work is primarily undertaken within formal committee meetings although working parties are established on a task and finish basis for specific issues.

To enable both planned and urgent work programme issues to be undertaken, regular meetings with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee are held to monitor progress against work programme issues as well as one-off pieces of work.

For 2006/07, the Resources Scrutiny Committee identified the following as their main work programme issues:-

- Management of Vacant Posts on the Council's establishment
- Community Centres Service Plan
- Supporting People
- Procurement

The Resources Scrutiny Committee has also continued to develop its role in shaping and developing policy in respect of budget setting and monitoring; the Council's medium term financial strategy and the Government's efficiency agenda.

Specifically, the Resources Scrutiny Committee gave consideration to reports on proposals in relation to the Council's budgets for 2007/8 to 2009/10 prior to the report being submitted to the Executive.

These included proposals in respect of efficiency savings, proposed growth areas within the General Fund budget, Council Tax and Rent increases and also the management fee for East Durham Homes.

The Resources Scrutiny Committee have considered policy development reports relating to:-

- the Review of Financial Monitoring Arrangements and Budget Monitoring
- the cleansing and maintenance of Bus Shelters
- the development of the Council's Customer Service Centre
- the resource implications of the Electoral Administration Act 2006
- the Redevelopment of Hackworth Road Depot
- Sickness Monitoring

The Resources Scrutiny Committee have also continued its training and development in respect of the Council's procurement strategy and has developed the Council's

procurement code of practice which has aimed to ensure that the procurement strategy fits consistently with the Council's agreed financial regulations and Standing Orders relating to contracts.

Resource implications have also been investigated by the Resources Scrutiny Committee in respect of the Peterlee Hotel Feasibility Study and staffing shortages within the Council's Planning section.

Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee

The role of the Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee involves reviewing decisions made or actions taken in connection with the performance of the Council's front-line services.

The Committee carries out its work in a number of different ways. Formal committee meetings are held every three weeks to consider regular service position statements in respect of the various service units. These service position reports are assigned specific dates as part of the committee's agreed work programme. However, working parties can also be set up to investigate specific issues. Site visits have been undertaken by members of the committee to view service delivery in respect of services under review at first hand.

In order to monitor the Committees agreed work programme and to consider urgent issues of concern which may arise, informal meetings between the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee and appropriate officers are held regularly.

Regarding the reporting of service position statements, Members have focussed their work on how service delivery within the Council reflects the Council's agreed corporate priorities. The new report format also sets out a degree of performance measurement whereby Members are given clear information relating to:

- achievements/non-achievements in service delivery
- performance measures against which achievements are benchmarked
- performance indicators
- tasks and targets specific to the service unit to which the reports relate
- timescales for achievements and the evidence base to reinforce outcomes and achievements.

The Service Position statements have been further refined to reflect the increased priority placed within the Council on maintaining compliance with the Council's approved Environmental policy. As a result, Service Units now had to include Environmental Policy Monitoring Statistics within each quarterly report as well as an Annual Performance report.

The Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee has received regular service position statements relating to the following units/services:-

Regeneration and Partnerships
Neighbourhood Initiatives
Revenues and Benefits
Housing Services
Environmental Services
Planning and Building Control
Leisure Services
Environmental Health and Licensing
Corporate Development Unit
Energy Efficiency/Conservation
Sickness Monitoring
Customer Contact Centre including Corporate Complaints

East Durham Business Service
Democratic Services and Administration

The Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee concluded its work in respect of the development of a policy for the maintenance of closed churchyards and memorials. A policy was agreed by the Committee and adopted by the Council in March 2007.

Over the past twelve months, the Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee have continued to monitor the introduction of the Green Waste Recycling service together with the Council's Kerb-it recycling service. In doing so, members were keen to ensure that:-

- both services were well used by the public
- the services enabled the Council to meet its statutory recycling targets set by the Government
- the services brought about a reduction in the amount of household waste collected by the Council and sent to landfill.

Members of the Committee were pleased with the level of take up for both recycling schemes and steps have been considered to extend the recycling scheme further via a "PARC – It" scheme which will allow the range of material that will be collected using the recycling scheme to be extended.

During the course of this work, the Committee have also received information from representatives of Premier Waste, the operators of the kerb-it scheme, not only in respect of how the scheme has performed but also how the company have addressed concerns raised by both residents and local Councillors regarding complaints in respect of missed collections, the recyclable material collected and how the kerb-it boxes are collected and returned by operatives.

The Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee has also been attended by members of the public when issues of public concern/importance have arisen. Issues such as recycling and summer play activities have generated debate with a number of School children and members of the District of Easington Youth Forum attending meetings of the Committee. It is hoped that this trend will continue during 2007/8 as it is vital that the Scrutiny process is seen to be accessible by the community, particularly young people.

The Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee has also considered Policy Development reports in respect of:-

- The roll-out of the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder into North Peterlee
- The role of the County Wide Fly Tipping Officer

The Service Delivery Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group continues to meet and have made great strides in monitoring and co-ordinating the work of the various service units of the Council in addressing the district wide problem of anti-social behaviour. Regular reports have been considered by members of the working party which include:-

Performance Reports for the Street Wardens Scheme

Tenancy Relations Performance Statistics

Anti-Social Behaviour Unit Performance Report

Development of the District of Easington Private Landlord Accreditation Scheme

The working group continues to lead on the development of policies and procedures to tackle anti-social behaviour within the district and is also regularly attended by representatives of Durham Constabulary.

WORK PROGRAMMES 2007/8

As highlighted earlier in this report, the Council has continued the review of its political governance arrangements by amending the structure of its Scrutiny Committees. Three new Scrutiny Committees have been established based around Executive Portfolios as follows:-

Community Services Scrutiny Committee – Liveability, Neighbourhood Engagement and Communications and Social Inclusion and Culture

Regeneration Services Scrutiny Committee – Housing, Health and Regeneration

Resources Scrutiny Committee – Resources, Improvement and Customer Services

In accordance with good practice, Scrutiny Committees must take cognisance of the Council's agreed strategic objectives, priorities and targets when formulating their work programmes.

In view of the fact that the new Scrutiny Committees are not yet established, it is proposed that the Scrutiny Management Board meet to consider a range of issues that feature highly amongst the aforementioned objectives, priorities and targets and which they feel would merit specific scrutiny. Thereafter these will be submitted to the three Scrutiny Committees for adoption alongside the final version of this Annual Report.

The proposed Work Programme for each of the Scrutiny Committees will be prepared in accordance with these criteria. The Work Programmes should allow for urgent items to be referred to each Committee by either the Executive or other Scrutiny Committees. Furthermore, from time to time issues may arise at a national or local level which will necessitate an input by the Scrutiny Committee(s). However, in such instances, the Committee should assess the relative priority of such referrals and issues against its agreed Work Programme.

The Work Programmes will be supplemented by the Scrutiny Committees' key role in holding the Executive to account by closely scrutinising its decisions and ensuring that Scrutiny is involved in the formation stages of policy development and service delivery.

Community Services Scrutiny Committee

As part of the 2007/08 work programme for the Community Services Scrutiny Committee will consider periodic Service Unit Position statements in respect of:-

- Environmental Services – Lead Officer Paul Penman
- Neighbourhood Initiatives – Lead Officer Steve Arkley
- Marketing and Communications – Lead Officer Mike Lavender
- Leisure – Lead Officer Paul Irwin
- Revenues and Benefits – Lead Officers Alan Stevenson/Charlie Thompson
- Energy Efficiency/LA 21 – Lead Officer Cliff Duff

The Committee will also interview the Executive Portfolio holders for Liveability; Neighbourhood Engagement and Communications and Social Inclusion and Culture to receive updates regarding the Partnerships and Partnership Working which exists within their Portfolios.

Scrutiny Review issues carried over from 2006/7 and which fall within the remit of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee are:-

- Community Consultation and Engagement
- Community Development – Support to Community and Voluntary Organisations

Areas of high Council priority identified within the Council's Corporate Plan and which fall within the remit of this Committee include:-

- Review of Clean and Green Teams/Zonal Working
- Environmental Enforcement
- Equality and Diversity – Progress to CRE Level 3
- Community Centres – Transfer of Assets to Community Groups
- Energy Efficiency – Climate Change Action Plan
- Pride in Easington – Review of Initiatives against Targets and Outcomes
- Leisure Facilities, Land and Sports Schemes
- Smoke Free legislation and enforcement

Regeneration Services Scrutiny Committee

As part of the 2007/08 work programme for the Regeneration Services Scrutiny Committee will consider periodic Service Unit Position statements in respect of:-

Housing Services – Lead Officer Ian Morris
Planning and Building Control – Lead Officer Graeme Reed
Regeneration and Partnerships – Lead Officer Peter Coe
East Durham Business Service – Lead Officer Sarah Slaven
Environmental Health and Licensing – Lead Officer Keith Parkinson
Asset Management and Estates – Lead Officer Dale Clarke

The Committee will also interview the Executive Portfolio holders for Housing; Health and Regeneration to receive updates regarding Partnerships and Partnership Working which exists within their Portfolios.

Scrutiny Review issues carried over from 2006/7 and which fall within the remit of the Regeneration Services Scrutiny Committee are:-

- The Darzi Review/Acute Hospital Services North and South of the Tees
- East Durham Homes – Performance Monitoring Arrangements

Areas of high Council priority identified within the Council's Corporate Plan and which fall within the remit of this Committee include:-

- Local Enterprise Growth Initiative – Benefits
- Tourism Development
- Regional Spatial Strategy – Impact on the Regeneration of the District of Easington
- Choice Based Lettings
- Private Sector Housing – Non Decent Homes Standards
- Local Involvement Networks (LINKS) for Health
- County Wide Scrutiny of Public Transport
- Lifelong Learning Strategy
- Educational Attainment - Adult Learning
 - 16-18 year olds Not in Employment Education or Training

Resources Scrutiny Committee

As part of the 2007/08 work programme for the Resources Scrutiny Committee will consider periodic Service Unit Position statements in respect of:-

Corporate Development Unit – Lead Officer Joy Brindle
Customer Services – Lead Officer David Payne
Personnel and Payroll – Lead Officer Reg Gott
Democratic Services – Lead Officer Barry Garside
Finance – Lead Officer Dave Temple
Information Technology – Lead Officer Barry Nicholson

The Committee will also interview the Executive Portfolio holders for Resources; Improvement and Customer Services to receive updates regarding Partnerships and Partnership Working which exists within their Portfolios.

Scrutiny Review issues carried over from 2006/7 and which fall within the remit of the Resources Scrutiny Committee are:-

- Value for Money/ Efficiency Agenda
- Asset Management/Register

Areas of high Council priority identified within the Council's Corporate Plan and which fall within the remit of this Committee include:-

- Customer Relationship Management system – Data Capture/Useage/Effectiveness
- Rollout of Customer Services Centre
- Customer Satisfaction – Corporate Measures
- Corporate Training and Development Plan
- Shared support services
- Best Value Review of Support Services – Improvement Plan

Future Developments in Scrutiny

During 2006/7, the Council has continued to invest in a programme of development activities which aimed to build on our leadership strengths following a period of political and managerial change. A key driver of discussions has been our desire to respond to the challenges facing local government in the future, as set out in the Local Government White Paper “Strong and Prosperous Communities.”

The final element of the Council review of its Political Management Structure has been the review of the Council’s Scrutiny arrangements. In undertaking the review, the Council sought to ensure that:-

- the four key Scrutiny Roles are undertaken
- there are clear opportunities to demonstrate the linkages between the work of the Scrutiny Committee and the Council's agreed corporate priorities and objectives
- there is a balanced and manageable workload between **all** Scrutiny Committees
- there is a demonstrable opportunity to challenge the Executive
- there is an opportunity to realistically engage with members of the public in the work of the Scrutiny Committee(s)
- there is opportunity to develop some specialisation amongst Scrutiny Committee Members in the areas of work which they undertake
- the Scrutiny Committees(s) can deal with cross-cutting issues
- there is a reduction in the overlap between Scrutiny Committee(s) workloads that has been demonstrable on the past
- there is better use of officer support

The new arrangements agreed by the Council will achieve the aforementioned issues and will also assist the Council in meeting the challenges of the Local Government White Paper.

The White Paper has far reaching implications for the Council’s Scrutiny function not least of which is the proposal for the introduction of the ‘Community Call for Action’.

Reference is made within the White Paper to the need for best practice guidance to be published on the new powers for overview and scrutiny and the Council’s procedures will be reviewed during the course of the year as and when guidance is published. The White Paper is clear however, that local authorities will be free to draw up their own procedures and protocols for dealing with Community Calls for Action which reflect local priorities and circumstances. Accordingly such a procedure will need to be drawn up for agreement by the Council and also to be communicated to those partners and “other public bodies” identified in the White Paper.

The aforementioned policy should include:-

- the role of Councillors in the Community Call for Action process and the procedures to be adopted at each stage of the process

- the frequency of which the Community Call for Action will be exercised and guidelines to determine what may be frivolous or vexatious complaints
- guidance for members of the public, Council Officers and representatives of “other public bodies” on the Community Call for Action procedures

The Council will also have to consider how it intends to facilitate the proposals within the White Paper to focus overview and scrutiny committees on strategic issues particularly the links to Community Strategy, Local Area Agreements and other key strategies.

There will also be implications for the Council’s constitution to reflect the proposals agreed by the Council in respect of the Community Call for Action methodology as well as those other issues detailed within the White Paper.

The above work will proceed alongside the “bedding in “ of the new Scrutiny structures and the Member Induction programme scheduled for the new administration. Work has already commenced in arranging a member seminar on the Scrutiny process which will be facilitated by the Institute of Local Government Studies (INLOGOV), University of Birmingham. In adopting this approach the Council is ensuring that members of the Council will be kept fully abreast of the latest National developments in Scrutiny.

Scrutiny Committee Membership

Members of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee are:

Councillor B Burn
Councillor R Burnip
Councillor P J Campbell
Councillor Mrs A Laing
Councillor T Longstaff
Councillor Mrs J Maslin
Councillor Mrs S Mason
Councillor D Milsom
Councillor C Patching
Councillor T Unsworth

Members of the Regeneration Services Scrutiny Committee are:

Councillor S Bishop
Councillor Mrs E Connor
Councillor Mrs S Forster
Councillor H High
Councillor A J Holmes
Councillor D Raine
Councillor M Routledge
Councillor Mrs B Sloan
Councillor D J Taylor-Gooby
Councillor C Walker

Members of the Resources Scrutiny Committee are:

Councillor Mrs M Bland
Councillor A Burnip
Councillor A Collinson
Councillor J Haggan
Councillor D Maddison
Councillor Mrs J Maitland
Councillor Mrs J Maslin
Councillor M Nicholls
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key documents/draftworkingdocuments/Scrutiny Annual Report 2006-7