

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL - Overview and Scrutiny

Key Issues to consider for discussions with CPA Inspectors

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

KEY PRINCIPLES

Our Overview and Scrutiny approach is:

Evidence based - e.g. the need for a community buildings strategy

Outcome focussed - e.g. narrowing the gap between boys/girls at key stage 4 (GCSE)

About Community Leadership and Strategy development - e.g. Influencing domestic violence policy through the County Durham Domestic Violence Executive; shaping OS function of partnerships via Children's Trust arrangements in County Durham;

Inclusive - e.g. involving LGBT communities, Victim Support, Durham Racial Equality Council etc. in gathering evidence on Domestic Violence

Creative and Innovative - e.g. working with Investing in Children Services to engage young people as facilitators for the NEET review; weekend site visits to see the impact of alcohol misuse on our streets and hospitals;

Involving local people and community organisations in scrutiny activity - e.g. defining what community trustees want for their community buildings;

Developing dialogue with public service providers outside and inside the council - e.g. work with the NHS to inform a strategic approach to scrutiny of health services and health improvement issues;

Reviewing whether goals are being achieved - e.g. systematic review of scrutiny recommendations. Inviting Cabinet to respond with an action plan

Being Member led - e.g. responding to community concerns about broadband "not spots"; setting OS work programme within context of corporate priorities/forward plan

MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

CPA THEMES:

What is the Council, together with its partners trying to achieve?

Ambition for the Council:-

The County Council is committed to developing a prosperous, safe and sustainable future for County Durham, listening to/working with local people, leading and shaping communities and working in partnership to ensure quality, cost-effective services. Overview and Scrutiny contributes to this vision by holding the executive to account; scrutinising NHS impact on health outcomes; and scrutinising partnership arrangements via the LAA; all of which seek to make a difference to the communities we serve. Early engagement with OS informs policy development.

Prioritisation:-

Overview and Scrutiny contributes to policy development and review in line with the Local Government White Paper. Specific issues relevant to the Council/its partners are undertaken via "light touch" reviews, involving smaller numbers of members.

The work programme is informed by the County Council's Corporate Plan, Forward Plan and input from Cabinet Portfolio holders, Chief Officers and the NHS. It is set within the context of the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

What is the capacity of the council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

Capacity:-

Local government reorganisation presents opportunities to improve capacity of County Durham Overview and Scrutiny, bringing together eight OS teams into one resource.

Members understand new ways of working will be required in the future. Investing in project management and other skills for members will be a priority for Personal Development Plans and may well include targeted training events.

We are building leadership capacity for healthy communities. The executive (Cabinet), non executive (Overview and Scrutiny) and non executive directors in the NHS are working together on an IDeA sponsored programme to promote healthier communities through healthy public policy.

Performance management:-

Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committees receive quarterly "performance" reports on Corporate Aims and improvement priorities. The members are able to challenge and seek explanations about what actions are required to improve performance.

Overview and Scrutiny members have contributed to the review process of our medium term improvement priorities.

A workshop for members to better understanding of how targets are set and what performance measures are used is scheduled for November /December 07.

What has been achieved?

- Annual reports provide information to a range of stakeholders on the work of Overview and Scrutiny over the past year;
- Overview and Scrutiny recommendations have been used to inform strategic financial planning in the County Council. An opportunity to invest in service improvement issues, through a windfall opportunity, informed by OS recommendations, is part of the Medium Term Financial Plan process;
- Agreement between County Durham PCT and DCC`s Overview and Scrutiny function for a Health Scrutiny Liaison Manager (a joint appointment);
- Hosting a PhD placement from Northumbria University for a 3 year period;
- Facilitating a light touch review in order to inform Cabinet decision of how best to allocate funding against Urban and Rural initiatives (URRI) schemes;
- Progressing overview and scrutiny arrangements in partnership with District councils with a focus on Transport, NEETs, Residential care, Health scrutiny;
- Consolidating our engagement mechanisms/involving local people in what we do – e.g. Domestic Violence and LGBT communities; Alcohol and children and young people; Community buildings and community trustees.