

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC)

21 July 2008



Overview and Scrutiny development programme for members of Durham County Council *Proposal from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS)*

Report of Head of Overview and Scrutiny and Development and Performance Manager.

Purpose

To consider a proposal for an overview and scrutiny development programme for members of Durham County Council from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS). (Proposal attached)

Information

1. The proposal is in line with the corporate approach we take to support and develop members:

Durham County Council has recognised the need to build the capacity of its councillors in order that they are fully equipped and supported to carry out their roles in line with the modernisation of local government. They play a significant part in providing strong community engagement/community leadership, effective overview and scrutiny, working in partnership, performance management and CPA.

–Member Learning and Development Strategy DCC 2006.

2. The proposal should also be seen within the context of the “Councillor Induction and Initial Learning Programme” and the IDeA proposal that aims to offer leading councillors an intensive programme of support that will equip them to rise swiftly to the challenge of being able to agree with the new chief executive what type of new council they want to form and lead.

3. 105 non executive members will be expected to participate in Durham County Councils Overview and Scrutiny function. A significant percentage of these will be first time members and will have a limited understanding of local government or its functions. A significant percentage will be either ex county or district councillors with some understanding.

4. Recent legislation (LGPIH Act 2007) requires overview and scrutiny to look beyond local government with growing emphasis on “scrutiny” of partners within the context of the LAA and the SCS.

5. Overview and Scrutiny adds value if it is focussed, evidence based and outcome driven. Development of a work programme is a major component of the function informed by a number of strategic drivers e.g. Councils corporate priorities, blue print

for County Durham, the Forward plan, Local Area Agreement (LAA), Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) and so on.

6. The opportunity for support to assist in all of this by a national agency with expertise in public scrutiny should not be overlooked.

7. Links to the recent evaluation undertaken by Phil Thompson, Northumbria University, on developing an effective OS function for County Durham will need to be reflected in the content of the proposed CfPS programme (note the report on progress on this agenda).

Recommendation

8. The OSMC are asked to note and support the proposal.

9. That the OSMC charge the Head of Overview and Scrutiny to make the link with the outcome/action plan from the recent evaluation on developing an effective OS function for County Durham with the programme content of the CfPS proposal.

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