

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS  
FOR DISCUSSION  
November 2008.

KEY PRINCIPLES:



APPROACH/FUNCTION:

- A) Critical Friend role contributing to policy development, policy review and service improvement with a focus on partnerships within the context of the Sustainable Communities Strategy/Local Area Agreement. (Strategic Overview and Scrutiny)
- B) Enables the voice and concerns of the public with a focus on the effectiveness of Area Action Partnerships in line with proposed functions of working with communities, people, power, local action and reviewing performance. (Holding to account and challenge on behalf of communities Overview and Scrutiny)

- C) Drives improvement in public services with a focus also on area (neighbourhood services) and Parish and Town councils as providers of service.(Service Improvement Overview and Scrutiny)
- D) Independent minded governors (overview and scrutiny councillors) responding to local concerns by facilitating community engagement in addressing solutions and taking action on specific issues for example use of public toilets or environmental odours from local recycling and collection depots (Area based review Overview and Scrutiny)

The challenge for overview and scrutiny must be to ensure for this approach to work:-

- Is Scrutiny effectively holding decision makers to account?
- Is it contributing to more effective policies?
- Is it helping to improve services?
- Is it building links between the council, its partners and the community?
- Is it helping to improve the quality of life for local people?
- Is it adding value?

## FORM

1. Overview and Scrutiny of partners through thematic overview and scrutiny committees (as proposed in the new constitution).The primary function here will be about contributing to policy development and assessing the impact of policies through challenge, holding to account and performance monitoring.
2. Overview and Scrutiny of Area Action Partnerships (AAP`s) initially through a light touch review process via the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board. This is an important first step to enable AAP`s to settle and establish themselves in delivering on their function. Liaison with the leadership and officer support for AAP`s will be essential. (What should follow?)
3. Overview and Scrutiny of neighbourhood service planning and delivery including Parish and Town Council as providers of services could be facilitated through a service improvement light touch review by the most appropriate scrutiny thematic committee. For example environmental issues addressed by the Environment and Sustainable Communities scrutiny committee.
4. Area based overview and scrutiny (review of a specific issue of concern to local communities) will be progressed through a task and finish process involving members who are not part of that community/locality (avoiding a conflict of interest) from the most relevant thematic overview and scrutiny committee. These task and finish scrutiny reviews will aim to work with local communities and be time limited.