

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 4 DECEMBER 2019
POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SCRUTINY
COMMISSION

Overview and Scrutiny Statutory Guidance

Members will be aware that the Government issued new statutory guidance on overview and scrutiny earlier this year. The Scrutiny Commissioners have compared the guidance to current practice at the County Council and we are satisfied we are meeting the requirements.

The guidance makes a number of important points about the culture of the organisation. I'm happy to be able to say that here in Leicestershire all three political parties recognise scrutiny's legal and democratic legitimacy, treat the process with respect and fully engage with it. Each Committee has early and regular engagement with its Lead Member and I know how much this is valued.

Where I do think we were falling a little short of what is recommended in the guidance was in ensuring that we maintain the interest of full Council in the work of the overview and scrutiny committees. That is why I have brought this position statement today and why the Scrutiny Commissioners have agreed that I should continue to give position statements on our work on a regular basis.

A document setting out our response to the statutory guidance has been prepared and I will make sure a copy of it and the guidance is circulated to all members of the Council.

Volume of Work

It won't have escaped members' notice that all our overview and scrutiny bodies have been very busy recently, scrutinising issues across the range of services provided by the County Council. I would like to thank all members of the overview and scrutiny committees for the time and effort they put into the scrutiny process. I would also like to thank the officers who have supported us by providing full and frank reports and giving us plenty of opportunity to delve into the issues that are causing us concern.

Work of Scrutiny Review Panels

Members will recall that the Scrutiny Review Panel on Corporate Parenting completed its work in June of this year. I am pleased to report that a number of the Panel's recommendations have already been acted on. Three Member Champions for children in care have been appointed and are due to start in their new roles later this month. The key roles of a County Councillor, set out in the Constitution, now include the need to fulfil our responsibilities as a corporate parent for children and

young people in the care of the local authority. The Corporate Parenting Strategy is currently being revised and will be submitted to the full Council in February for approval.

I am pleased to report that the work of the Scrutiny Review Panel on Multi Academy Trusts is nearing its conclusion. The Panel has held four meetings to date and has met with Chief Executive Officers from two MATs, one for primary schools and one for secondary schools, who have helpfully shared examples of good practice. The Panel has recognised that the link between elected members and MATs needs strengthening and will make a series of recommendations to this effect. The Panel's report will go to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 March for approval and then on to the Cabinet for consideration. I would particularly like to thank Dr Feltham for chairing the Panel.

Simon Galton CC
Chairman of the Scrutiny Commission
4 December 2019