

**SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 14<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2006.**

**FINAL REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL ON  
SCRUTINY SUPPORT**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**Purpose of report**

1. The purpose of this report is to present the final report and recommendations of the Scrutiny Review Panel on Scrutiny Support.
2. The Commission is asked to consider the report and recommendations with a view to forwarding it to the Cabinet.

**Policy Framework and Previous Decisions**

3. At its meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2006 the Scrutiny Commission considered the future structure of Scrutiny with reference to the Green Paper 'Getting the Best out of Scrutiny'. Arising from its consideration of the Green Paper the Commission decided to establish a 5 member review panel '*to review the support and resources needed for the Scrutiny function of the Council and the training requirements of Scrutiny Members*'.

**Background**

4. The Green Paper 'Getting the Best out of Scrutiny' arose out of discussion at the Scrutiny Reference Group reviewing the role of scrutiny and how best it might be improved. The Green Paper included a section on Scrutiny Support which referred to the pressure on resources to support scrutiny in the context of options for future scrutiny structures. Reference was also made in that section of the Green Paper to the issues of creating a dedicated Scrutiny Support Unit and to creating additional policy officer posts to support the Council's general scrutiny function in a similar way to the support provided for Health Scrutiny by the Senior Policy and Research Officer (Health).
5. The Green Paper also referred to training for scrutiny members and to the specific skills required by members to undertake effective scrutiny, such as questioning and examination of witnesses, as well as their learning and development as elected members

6. It was in the context of these issues, amongst others raised in the Green Paper, that the Commission felt that it was appropriate for a more in-depth review of the current arrangements for Scrutiny Support and Scrutiny Member Learning and Development to be conducted by a scrutiny review panel.
7. A copy of the Review Panel's report is attached.

### **Resources Implications**

8. As the report indicates, there are sufficient staffing resources available to cover the existing workload. However, should any aspect of committee support increase, for example, as a result of the local Government White Paper or community engagement activity, then additional staff and, therefore, financial resources may be required. The position will be carefully monitored and, if necessary, a bid for growth will be submitted at the appropriate time.
9. There is sufficient provision in that part of the Chief Executive's Department budget relating to Members to cover the implementation of the Member Learning and Development Strategy, which includes training in relation to scrutiny activities.
10. The Director of Resources has been consulted on the contents of this report.

### **Timetable for Decisions**

11. Subject to the comments of, and approval by the Scrutiny Commission, the Review Panel's report will be submitted to the Cabinet on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

### **Equal Opportunities Implications**

12. A Member Briefing was held on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2006 on the Equality Standard for Local Government to which all Members of the Council were invited. Further learning and development opportunities will be made available to elected members in relation to equality issues.

### **Background Papers**

13. A list of information provided to the Review Panel is given in Appendix A of the Review Panel's report.

### **Circulation under the Sensitive Issues Procedure**

14. None.

### **Officers to contact**

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