

## COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 23<sup>RD</sup> MAY 2007

### POSITION STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Since my last Statement to the Council two Scrutiny Review Panels (on Street Lighting and the Arts) have concluded their work and presented their findings to the Cabinet. At the next meeting of the Council I will present the Annual Report which will set out the work and achievements of scrutiny during 2006/07.

In this Statement I want to focus on the issue of scrutiny of the MTFS.

#### **Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)**

The budget process for 2007/08 differed from that of previous years. The County Council in February not only agreed the detailed budget proposals for 2007/08 but also made decisions regarding savings whose impact would be felt in 2008/09 and subsequent years.

The question is how does scrutiny find out about the details underlying a single line entry in the budget? Two recent examples, Welfare Rights and Implementation of the Highways Review, have highlighted this problem where concerns have been expressed about the long term implications of the proposals in terms of staffing and service provision.

The Scrutiny Commission has received a report on the issue of scrutiny of the MTFS. That report provided some reassurance in that it contained the following commitments:

- 'When the MTFS is rolled forward, savings proposals which are due to be implemented in 2008/9 or 2009/10 will be shown as individual items and not 'lost' within the overall figure for the full year effect of previous years' decisions.
- Where key decisions have to be taken in relation to implementing savings for 2008/9 and 2009/10 these can be scrutinised under the normal procedure e.g. extra care schemes.'

The commitments given will ensure key decisions are identified and brought to the attention of scrutiny. This will, however, not identify those issues not falling within the definition of 'key decisions' but which members consider to be important. Scrutiny Chairmen and Spokesmen will therefore have a key role to play in identifying these issues.