

DRAFT



**SCRUTINY ANNUAL
REPORT**

2006/07

FOREWORD

The purpose of scrutiny is to put forward proposals to develop and improve policy, ensure the needs of the people of Leicestershire are being met and to that end hold the Executive to account. However, scrutiny too must be accountable for the work it does, and this annual report provides a basis for that accountability.

The scrutiny function is continually developing and in May 2006 the arrangements were reviewed, aiming at improving effectiveness, focusing on more in-depth review as well as scrutiny of partnerships and external bodies.

The Local Government Bill recognises the significant role scrutiny can play in terms of policy development as well as focussing on issues of concern to local people and communities. The County Council scrutiny process has begun to respond to this emerging agenda through the establishment of the new Community Engagement Scrutiny Committee, focusing on the outcomes of the partnership activity such as the Local Area Agreement and scrutiny of external organisations whose activities impact directly on the residents of Leicestershire, for instance, our work with Severn Trent. More work needs to be done!

I am delighted to present the annual report and in doing so would wish to acknowledge the contributions members of all parties have made. I am confident that the forthcoming Comprehensive Performance Assessment will recognise the improvements to the scrutiny function and the role it plays in the County Council's improvement agenda.

Scrutiny processes are a way of ensuring the views of local members representing the opinions of local communities and people are heard by those making decisions. All our meetings are open to the public and we encourage the public to let us know their views.

The following weblinks provide information on:

- How to present a petition – http://www.leics.gov.uk/presenting_a_petition.pdf
- Asking questions at meetings – http://www.leics.gov.uk/asking_questions.pdf
- Your rights to attend meetings and inspect papers – http://www.leics.gov.uk/your_rights.pdf
- Committee papers and Decisions - <http://politics.leics.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.asp?bcr=1>

Details of officers who support the Scrutiny process are set out at the end of this report.



Matthew O'Callaghan CC
Chairman of the Scrutiny Commission

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN LEICESTERSHIRE

One of the main objectives of the Local Government Act 2000 was to make it clearer to people who was really making the decisions which affect them and in whose hands power actually lay. Under the new system, the majority of decisions fall to the Executive. In Leicestershire, this is the Leader and a Cabinet, consisting of nine members.

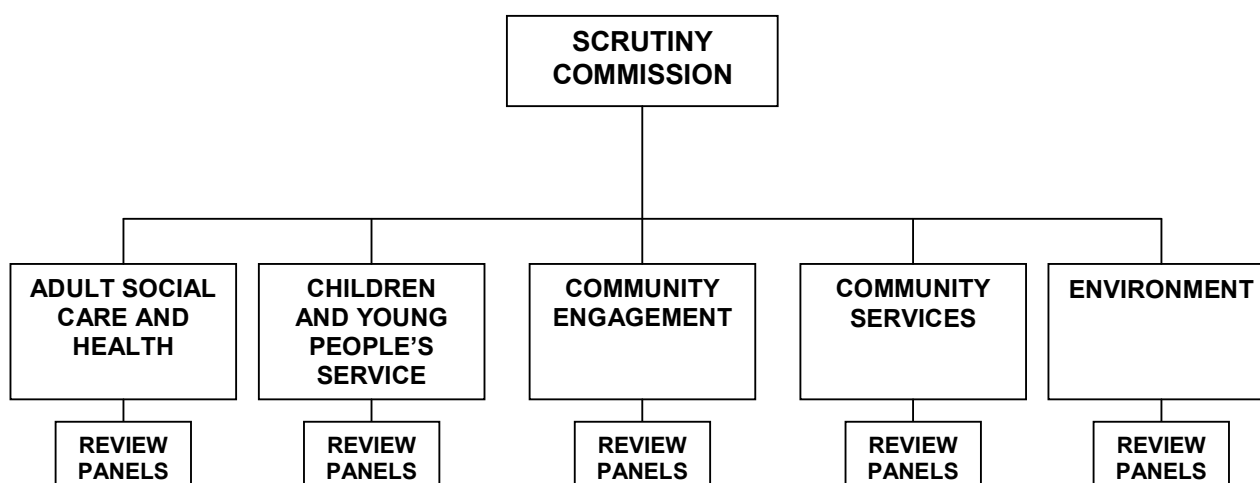
The Overview and Scrutiny role is designed to support the work of the Council by providing a means for members to:-

- . review and scrutinise decisions taken by the Cabinet;
- . consider aspects of the performance of the Council;
- . assist in research, policy review and development;
- . represent the interest of the community in the Council's work;
- . ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by effective collaborative working with other organisations operating in the County.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees are not decision making bodies but bodies which seek to influence and monitor those that are.

Meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committees are held in public. Chairmen are encouraged to run meetings as informally as possible by promoting discussions between members, officers and invited guests who may be service users or external bodies such as Health Bodies.

The scrutiny committee structure is as follows:



In addition, Scrutiny Committees set up time limited review panels to look in detail at particular issues of concern. Details of the Panels that have completed reviews in the current year together with a web link to their final reports are set below:-

Panel topic	Chairman	Links to final report
School Meals	Dr M. O'Callaghan	School Meals Cover School Meals Report
Support for the Scrutiny Function	Mr P. C. Osborne	Final Report Appendix B
Energy and Water Usage	Mr E. D. Snartt	Energy Report Appendix A Appendix B Appendix C
Street Lighting	Mr P. A. Roffey	Front Cover Final Report Appendix 1 Appendix 2 Appendix 3 Appendix 4 Appendix 5 Appendix 6 Appendix 7
The Arts	Mr P. G. Lewis	Final Report Appendices

The following Panels are due to complete their reviews shortly and report their findings:-

- Access to NHS Dentistry
- Improving the Educational Attainment of Looked After Children

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH SERVICES

Role of the Committee

The Adult Social Care and Health Services Scrutiny Committee is responsible for reviewing and scrutinising the Council's functions in relation to social care provision for adults. We also scrutinise the activity of the Leicestershire County and Rutland Primary Care Trust which has responsibility for commissioning health care services across the County and Rutland.

Work Undertaken

Adult Social Care issues

This year we have considered a wide range of issues surrounding the provision of Adult Social Care in Leicestershire. Following consideration of the White Paper 'Our Health, Our Care, Our Say – A New Direction for Community Services' at our May meeting, we received a report in July providing further details of the implications the Paper would have for Adult Social Care Services in Leicestershire.

We were advised on the outcome of the consultation by the County Council with stakeholders of two major reviews:

- (i) day services for people with a physical disability;
- (ii) modernisation of management and administration of the in-house Home Care Service.

Our comments were then forwarded to the Cabinet and informed the development of these important services.

We noted with satisfaction the results of an external assessment by the Commission for Social Care Inspection which showed the County Council's Adult Social Care services as one of the top performers in the country. However there is no room for complacency and we will continue to monitor the performance and activities of the Adult Social Care Service.

Health Service

As a result of the scale of financial deficit that the new Primary Care Trust was faced with, we asked for and received regular updates on the Financial Recovery Plan throughout the year. This has been a difficult issue in terms of recognising the need for financial balance whilst also ensuring frontline services are protected.

We also looked at joint working between Adult Social Care and the Health Sector. Whilst welcoming the principle of providing care closer to home, we made it clear that changes in service provision to achieve this should be made because they produce better outcomes and should be carefully planned to ensure front line services are not detrimentally affected. In the coming year we will be receiving more information on this issue.

As a result of considerable public concern we decided to set up a Panel to look at the provision of NHS Dentistry in the County. The Panel has met with the Health Trust, the Local Dental Committee and has conducted a survey to seek the views of the public. At the time of writing the Panel is still working on the issue and we look forward to receiving its report and recommendations.



David Houseman CC
Chairman of Adult Social Care
and Health Services Scrutiny Committee

NOTE:

A separate joint health scrutiny committee (comprising County, Leicester City and Rutland Councillors) scrutinises the activities of the following NHS trusts which provide services to the area served by all three councils:-

- University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust*
- Leicestershire Partnership Trust (which provides mental health and learning disability services)*
- East Midlands Ambulance Trust*

The Joint Committee has looked carefully at the financial plans of these three bodies and the impact on services. It has also monitored and commented on their performance against the key targets set nationally.

It is pleasing to note the commitment of all three organisations to work with the Primary Care Trusts to address the challenges ahead and the willingness of senior managers to attend meetings to explain their plans.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE

Role of the Committee

The Children and Young People's Service Scrutiny Committee is responsible for reviewing and scrutinising the Council's functions in relation to the provision of services for Children and Young People.

Work Undertaken

It has been a busy year for us in overseeing the continuing evolution of the former Education Department and Children's Social Care elements of the former Social Services Department into the Children and Young People's Service. As such we focused our attention on monitoring the performance of the Children and Young People's Service and the action that needs to be taken on those areas where there is a need for improvement.

Two of the major pieces of work undertaken during the year were:

- A review of school meals looked at the issues of healthy eating and recommended a way forward for providing school meals after the current contract ends on 31 March 2008. Schools are currently being consulted on the Panel's recommendations and a further report will be coming to the Committee in July 2007 on the outcome of this consultation;
- A review of educational provision in Melton Mowbray and the Vale of Belvoir has been undertaken by the County Council's Executive during the period of this report and we have commented in detail on the proposals as they have emerged from consultation. This has been a major piece of work that will be the forerunner for reviewing provision across the remainder of the County in the years ahead.

The 2006 Annual Performance Assessment (APA) judged Leicestershire's performance in Social Care for Children as Excellent overall; Children's Services as Good overall and the capacity to improve services for Children and Young People in Leicestershire as Excellent. These results reflect well on the hard work done by the Children and Young People's Service during a challenging period of transition. Although the outcome of the APA was very satisfactory there are a number of issues to be addressed:

- Educational Achievement and School Attendance of Looked After Children;
- Educational Achievement at Key Stage 4;
- Introduction of the 13-19 Strategy.

A Review Panel has been established to examine in detail how action can be taken to improve Educational Achievement and School Attendance of Looked after Children and this will be reporting its findings later in 2007. Reports on action being taken on the other two issues referred to in the bullet points above have been considered and will continue to be scrutinised.

We are also scrutinising the preparations being made to prepare for the first Joint Area Review of the Children and Young People's Service in Leicestershire (currently scheduled to take place during October 2007). This will be the first time that services provided by the Council and its partners (e.g. the Health Sector and Connexions) will also be taken into account in assessing our performance.



Nick Brown CC
Chairman of Children and Young
People's Service Scrutiny Committee

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Role of the Committee

The Community Engagement Scrutiny Committee reviews and scrutinises the development of the County Council's Neighbourhood Engagement Policy, the operation of Community Forums and other proposals for meeting the needs of local people and communities.

Work Undertaken

Our Committee was established by the County Council in December 2006. Since its inception we have been concentrating on scrutinising the preparations to develop Neighbourhood Engagement activities and the introduction of Community Forums.

The Neighbourhood Engagement Policy is seeking to establish strong links between the County Council and local neighbourhoods to allow local people to shape and influence service delivery leading to more responsive services and greater public satisfaction. An example of this is the new charter the County Council has developed with parish councils. This Charter recognises the important role played by parish councils and sets out how parish councils will assist in improving the County Council's understanding of local needs, and hence, service delivery.

The development of Community Forums is an exciting and innovative proposal to allow local communities to come together and discuss issues as well as raise issues of concern with officers of the Council and other bodies such as Health and the Police.

Both of these policy areas should reinforce the role of the County and District Councillors as the main link between the neighbourhoods within their areas and the service delivery agencies and as a representative voice for the wishes and needs of residents.



**Richard Shepherd CC
Chairman of the Community
Engagement Scrutiny Committee**

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Role of the Committee

The Community Services Scrutiny Committee is responsible for reviewing and scrutinising the County Council's functions in respect of Libraries and Information, Museums, Arts and Records, Country Parks, Regulatory Services and grant aid to community organisations.

Work Undertaken

We have had a constructive year in seeking to improve the County's Community Services.

The Committee advised on the budget proposals being put forward to the County Council and made detailed comments to the Cabinet. In particular we were concerned to ensure that the proposals about the future management of Country Parks should safeguard the public's access to these important green spaces.

One of the most influential developments during the year has been the report of a Scrutiny Review Panel seeking to improve the number of visitors to County libraries. Leicestershire had been underperforming in this area when compared to neighbouring authorities and this led to a number of meetings between the Panel and library staff and visitors in an effort to improve performance and increase visitor numbers. Arising from the Panel's report were a number of recommendations to increase partnership working with County schools and reader groups and to boost promotion of libraries as community facilities. As a result of this and the considerable investment by the County Council in improving library buildings we have seen a 3.4% increase in visitor numbers.

A Scrutiny Review Panel on The Arts has just concluded and the final report includes a list of innovative ideas to ensure that we improve our working with partners so that the County Council is well placed to meet the new requirements of the cultural block within the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. The findings of the report were considered and supported by the Cabinet.

We have scrutinised the Enforcement Programme for Underage Sales in the County. The Programme has become more vigorous and now includes more test purchase projects, monitoring of statutory notices and increasing involvement of the media in ensuring that businesses do not break the law. It also helps in reducing incidents of anti-social behavior by restricting the sale of such things as alcohol, tobacco and aerosols to young children.

Marketing the work of the Department is essential in ensuring that the residents of Leicestershire are made aware of the wide range of activities available, not least Museums and Country Parks. The publicity received for Bosworth Battlefield exceeded all expectation, with coverage on BBC Radio 4 and an excavation on Channel 4's *Time Team*.



Michael Griffiths CC
Chairman of Community Services
Scrutiny Committee

ENVIRONMENT

Role of the Committee

The Environment Scrutiny Committee is responsible for reviewing and scrutinising the Executive functions of the County Council in respect of:

- Highways and Transportation;
- Environmental Management;
- Planning;
- Rights of Way;
- Waste Management.

Work Undertaken

We have been working to address local concerns following the submission of petitions expressing concern over the withdrawal of bus services as a result of a budget decision. We acknowledged public concerns and asked the Cabinet to rethink the withdrawal of four bus services. Following representations made, the Cabinet agreed there was justification for retaining three of the services.

In November we reviewed the way we dealt with petitions about local highways and transportation issues. We decided that the Highway Forums should now look at these. The reasons for doing this included enabling people to present petitions more locally at times and places which are likely to be more convenient to them. In addition we were of the view that members of the Highways Forums who are local County Councillors and District Councillors would bring their local knowledge to bear on the matter.

A key issue facing the country and this Council is the increasing amount of waste produced and the increasing cost of disposal. We welcome the efforts being made by both the County Council (as the waste disposal authority) and the District Councils (as waste collection authorities) to promote waste reduction and increase recycling. Much more needs to be done during the forthcoming year and the Committee will continue to urge all Councils to work together to meet this major challenge.

A major piece of work undertaken this year was that of the Scrutiny Review Panel established to look into the management and maintenance of street lighting. Its findings were reported to and welcomed by the Cabinet. We were particularly pleased with the high level of satisfaction that Leicestershire residents have with the service. We hope that, as a result of the Panel's investigations, the County Council will benefit from long term savings from reduced

energy use through further investigation of the merits of advancing street lighting technology.

We were also particularly pleased this year to invite representatives of Severn Trent Water to a meeting. The informative way that they responded to questions on works undertaken on roads, emergency responses and service improvements was very helpful. We now hope that, as a result, Severn Trent will look at its processes to address public concerns.



Rob Fraser CC
Chairman of the Environment
Scrutiny Committee

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

The role of the Commission is twofold. Firstly, it has the responsibility for providing direction to the scrutiny process, and to that end, has looked carefully at the focus of scrutiny and ensuring that it looks at issues of concern to the people of Leicestershire as well as the support available to do this effectively.

The second role, as the corporate scrutiny body, is to focus on those issues which cover the whole organisation. In discharging this part of its role the Commission has:-

- Looked critically at the proposals of the East Midlands Regional Assembly for additional housing in the County;
- Monitored the overall performance of the County Council. This was done by examining in detail the progress being made in achieving the key performance targets as well as receiving quarterly reports on the revenue and capital expenditure to ensure that the County Council was providing the right services in a cost efficient way;
- Examined corporate policies. Of particular note was the consideration given to ensure the County Council was addressing equality issues in employment and service delivery and arrangements for improving our procurement of goods and services;
- Considered the activities of the Council and its partners in addressing a key concern to the public, namely, that of tackling crime and antisocial behaviour;
- Scrutinised how the County is promoted both as a tourist destination as well as an area of business opportunity and development.

Climate change is a major issue facing the world today. A Panel of members was established to examine the County Council's use of energy. The findings of this Panel which were fully supported by the Cabinet will, over time, improve our energy efficiency, reduce costs to the County Council and lower carbon emissions. This Panel has now been asked to look at other aspects of the Council's activities which impact on the environment and climate change. It has also been asked to look at the County Council's leadership role in this increasingly important area.

Increasingly, the County Council is required by Government to work with partners (District Councils, Health bodies, the Police and the voluntary sector) to deliver services through arrangement under a Local Area Agreement. The members of the Commission have been concerned about accountability of partnership bodies and have now put in place arrangements for scrutinising performance of partners in the Local Area Agreement process.



Matthew O'Callaghan CC
Chairman of the Scrutiny Commission

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