

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 5th DECEMBER 2007

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

This Statement provides an update on scrutiny activity since my last report.

Review of Overview and Scrutiny

The review of scrutiny being undertaken by Jessica Crowe of the Centre for Public Scrutiny and Steve Nicklen of the Leadership Centre for Local Government is making progress. Members have now had the opportunity to visit a number of local authorities to see how the scrutiny function is delivered and have also visited the House of Commons to see the operation of a Select Committee.

The next stage will be to draw together the findings from these visits and to reflect on how they might be used to improve our processes using the CfPS self evaluation framework. I would urge all scrutiny members to contact me or their Spokespersons and share their views on the operation of scrutiny and how they think it could be improved. There will be a series of further meetings to involve members in discussions as to the way forward

The Forward Plan

The Forward Plan is an important document that sets out the Key Decisions to be taken by the Executive in the next few months.

I am concerned that notices have been sent adding items to the Forward Plan following its publication. Chairmen and Spokesmen of Overview and Scrutiny Committees should be using the Forward Plan to plan their work programmes. I am encouraging this to take place and I hope that any difficulties in constructing the Forward Plan can be ironed out.

Issues before Overview and Scrutiny bodies

Since the last Council meeting there have been a series of reports to Overview and Scrutiny Committees in relation to the introduction of a Sustainable Community Strategy for Leicestershire. This is a process of considerable importance and will help determine the priorities of the key local agencies through the Leicestershire Together Board and feed into the new Local Area Agreement.

I recognise that it has not been easy for members to engage in this process and I believe we need to consider, as part of the review of overview and scrutiny, how best to engage all members in the development of key strategic policies. Nevertheless, I believe the discussions at the various overview and scrutiny committees have made a valuable contribution to the development of the Strategy and in informing members of its importance.

We have also had detailed debate about the proposals for Supported Accommodation for Older People and Transit Sites for Travellers, both issues which have generated considerable public interest. Members of the public have presented petitions at meetings and local members had the opportunity to present their views.