

REVIEW OF SCRUTINY

The table below sets out the recommendations arising from the Review of Scrutiny undertaken by Steve Nicklen and Jessica Crowe, and actions suggested by the Chairman and Spokesmen of the Scrutiny Commission which were discussed with Scrutiny Chairmen and Spokesmen and the Leader.

RECOMMENDATION	CURRENT POSITION/PROPOSED ACTION
1. The Council renews its action to co-ordinate scrutiny activity with the Borough, Districts and City Councils.	<p>A Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee which comprises councillors from Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council and Rutland Council is already in place and working successfully.</p> <p>The new Performance Management Framework currently being developed will be reporting performance against targets and commitments in the SCS and LAA2. District Councils should be involved in the scrutiny process to avoid duplication of effort. Previous attempts to involve District Councils were not met with a positive response.</p> <p>It is proposed that the Scrutiny Commission will write at member level to all District Council Scrutiny Chairs, with a copy to District Council Leaders, inviting them to be involved in the County Council scrutiny process on the same basis as in 2005.</p> <p>An Annual Meeting, in the form of a conference or forum, should also be held between the Scrutiny Reference Group (or wider group including the Chairmen and Spokesmen) and District Scrutiny Chairs. Further planning of this event was needed and a view was expressed that this should be further developed before the proposed action was agreed.</p>

<p>2. Council adopt one of the two options below (or another mechanism that it feels appropriate to LCC) to involve scrutiny even earlier in a constructive approach to formulating and challenging the Medium Term Financial Plan</p> <p>(a) A specialised task group</p> <p>(b) Committees hold a series of sessions, individually and jointly, throughout the year</p>	<p>To build on recent developments which have meant that Scrutiny has been involved earlier in the process, each Committee should look at proposals for improved efficiency in their service area. A workshop in the summer has been suggested; this would be an opportunity for 'blue sky' thinking. It was recognised that this would have to take place in private, and that efficiencies based on process alone which did not impact on service delivery were not the main concern of scrutiny, which should focus on substantial change for services.</p> <p>A commitment has also been given to involve Scrutiny in the efficiency agenda and it is intended to bring reports to the Commission in the Summer/early Autumn.</p> <p>The new Performance Management Framework will bring together financial and performance data in a single document and this offers an opportunity for scrutiny. These reports will be available quarterly; the first of which will be in September 2008. The Scrutiny Reference Group was asked to consider how scrutiny of these reports should be undertaken.</p> <p>Committees will have to plan carefully the best way to approach these issues to achieve a balance between engaging all members and making use of specialised task groups.</p>
<p>3. Group leads on the Scrutiny Commission enact scrutiny committees meetings after the AGM to develop their work programmes and that the Scrutiny Commission should have a role in co-ordinating these to avoid duplication and manage resources, and that further options should be examined for further involving scrutiny in policy development.</p>	<p>Recent changes, particularly the regular meetings between the Chairman, Spokesmen and Cabinet Lead Member have resulted in greater member involvement in agenda planning and a work programme being produced for each Committee. The report notes that 'significant progress has been made'.</p> <p>Concerns remain about the number of items of some agendas. An attempt to produce an agenda in 2 parts – reports for action/decision and reports for information (ie. no discussion) has not met with universal support. The agenda proposed for use by the CYPS Overview and Scrutiny Committee which would list items for information or briefing notes circulated between meetings will be drawn to the attention of the Chairmen and Spokesmen of other Scrutiny Committees. If this</p>

	<p>approach is adopted, items for information should be agreed by the Chair and Spokesmen of the Committee; this should not be a tool for officers to add reports to agendas. Members would have to state at the start of each meeting if they wish to discuss an item that is identified as 'for information only' and state reasons why. Chairmen would have to exercise rigour in curtailing debate.</p> <p>Targeting Members Information Service items and other methods of imparting information to particular Committees could also be used as a means to manage agendas.</p> <p>The process of establishing panels, as set out in Appendix 'E' to the Guide to Scrutiny should be followed. Some amendments were needed:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Stages 1 and 2 should be combined; (ii) Terms of Reference were now agreed by the Chairman and Spokesmen of the Scrutiny Commission via email; (iii) In defining the scope of the review, the resources required by the Review Panel need to be identified. <p>There are some members who serve on a number of Review Panels and others who do not take part in Panels. To avoid this and ensure that work is being shared out more equally amongst members, a list of Panels and the members who served on them should be sent to the Group Leader alongside the request for nominations.</p> <p>Scrutiny Review panels have played a role in policy development and a more rigorous approach to establishing panels, linked to performance monitoring, may help scrutiny shape the policy agenda.</p>
<p>4. Members involved in O&S should seek more systematically to prepare themselves for committee panel meetings.</p>	<p>Officers should not give summaries of reports at Scrutiny Committee meetings; they should only be invited by the Chairman to provide members with new information.</p> <p>One of the roles of the Chairman is to point out to members if the answer to a question can be found in the papers. Group Spokespersons also have a role to play</p>

	<p>in ensuring that members of their Group have read the papers. Persistent problems should be reported to the Group Whips.</p>
<p>5. Scrutiny Commission lead all Scrutiny Committees and Panels in looking for ways of both increasing external perspectives on their work and involving the public more in it, and that the Council start to develop its approach to implementing Councillor Call for Action.</p>	<p>The involvement of external witnesses is well developed in the Scrutiny Review Panel process. To date all Panels have had external witnesses. The work of Panels should also be publicised on the website, and Leicestershire Matters if time allows.</p> <p>The process of involving external witnesses at Scrutiny meetings has been less successful. The process, if it is to be successful, requires a degree of forward planning and an agreement, at least by the Chairman and Spokesmen, on the person(s) to be invited, the reasons for the invitation and a general indication of the question/issues to be addressed. (As required by the Scrutiny Witness Protocol (Appendix F of the Guide to Scrutiny)). The protocol should be looked at further with a view to revising it to make it more user friendly. Wherever possible, witnesses should include service users as well as managers of the service.</p> <p>The website should include pages dedicated to Scrutiny, which outline the work that Committees are currently doing and work that is planned for the future. This could possibly be done through the 'Have Your Say' pages on the website. Consideration should be given to the possibility of webcasting Scrutiny meetings.</p> <p>The use of questionnaires and surveys is less well developed. This should be considered further in the light of the role of Community Forums raising local issues.</p> <p>Reports to Scrutiny Committees should where possible list alternative options considered.</p>
<p>6. Scrutiny Chairs take a consistent lead in managing agendas actively and in ensuring that all committee and panel members ask appropriate questions at meetings.</p>	<p>See 3 above and 7 and 8 below in relation to the roles of Chairmen and Spokesmen.</p>

<p>7. All members involved in O&S seek opportunities to improve their questioning skills.</p>	<p>The CfPS guide "Forensic Questioning Skills" has been circulated to all members. The issue of further training needs to be addressed.</p>
<p>8. Training sessions be made available for Scrutiny Chairs, on the one hand, and for all members involved in O&S, on the other hand, to enable them to re-examine their respective roles, to identify the skills they need to carry these out effectively and to develop these skills.</p>	<p>The Member PDRs undertaken by an external consultant, Margaret Martin, identified a number of training needs. Members have been asked to comment on the process that has been undertaken and, subject to that, it is hoped to repeat the PDR process with the new Council in May 2009.</p> <p>The Training needs that have been identified to date are as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Questioning Skills - see 7 above; (ii) Speed Reading – Training offered and taken up by a number of members; (iii) Chairing Skills – Some Scrutiny members have had mentoring by external consultants. Training has also been undertaken by Chairs of Highway Forums. However, it is recognised that the skills needed to Chair an Overview and Scrutiny Committee are different and include facilitating and developing arguments. Specific training should therefore be provided to Chairs, Deputy Chairs and Spokesmen of Scrutiny Committees. <p>The importance of a structured programme and identified outcomes for training was recognised.</p> <p>Specific training sessions have been provided on health issues during the course of the year, particularly when it is known an issue is likely to come before the O&S Committee. The implementation of recommendations 3 and 6 would enable Scrutiny Committees to consider forthcoming issues and identify both training needs and potential external witnesses.</p> <p>Member attendance at training sessions is an issue which should be addressed by the Group Whips.</p>

<p>9. Scrutiny Commission should keep under annual review the effectiveness of committees and panels.</p>	<p>Job Descriptions</p> <p>The attached Job Descriptions for Scrutiny Committee Chairmen and Spokesmen were agreed by the Scrutiny Commission in November 2003. Some amendments were needed:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The information from the Articles of the Constitution should be an Appendix; (ii) The subheadings 'Chairman and Spokesmen of Committees' and 'Chairman and Spokesmen of Scrutiny Commission' would be useful; <p>Job descriptions for members had not yet been produced. As this would cover a wider area than scrutiny, it was felt that the work should be undertaken by the Member Learning and Development Working Party.</p> <p>Effectiveness of Committees</p> <p>The Chairman of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee should report on performance of the Committee to the Scrutiny Reference Group on an annual basis. This would enable the performance of Committees to be evaluated. The Scrutiny Reference Group would expect to be advised of the outcomes of the scrutiny processes and what added value Committees had brought to the decision-making process.</p> <p>The effectiveness of Review Panels should be considered by the Committee receiving the final report.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Reference Group was asked to consider this further.</p> <p>Effectiveness of Chairman and Spokesmen</p> <p>Evaluating the effectiveness of the Chairmen and Spokesmen of Overview and Scrutiny Committees should be undertaken by the Groups as appointments were made through the Group process and members were therefore accountable to their Group.</p>
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<p>10. The Leader and the Chief Executive look for early opportunities to reiterate the importance they attach to O&S and to the Administration's and organisation's consistently constructive support for it, for example, in corporate induction sessions.</p>	<p>Induction sessions from the Head and Assistant Head of Democratic Services and the Head of Legal Services were provided to staff in the Change Management Unit and to Chief Officers and Assistant Chief Officers. This detailed the political processes including the role of Scrutiny.</p>
<p>11. The relevant Chairs and Spokesmen be informed periodically about follow-up to committees' and panels' recommendations.</p>	<p>The practice of follow-up reports on action taken in implementing review findings has been tightened up since 2006 and progress reports on review panels have been submitted to Scrutiny Committees</p> <p>Reports for progress reports on issues identified during debates at scrutiny meetings are logged and followed up</p> <p>Review Panels and Scrutiny Committees should be encouraged to agree a timetable for progress reporting when findings are presented</p>
<p>12. Scrutiny Committees play a greater role in performance management (added at request of Scrutiny Reference Group).</p>	<p>A Panel to consider how to address the issue of performance management should be established. This could be considered in the context of the report on Performance Management, which will be considered by the Scrutiny Commission on 18 June.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Commission asked the Scrutiny Reference Group to consider this further.</p>