

## APPENDIX 2

### SCRUTINY COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10

1. This is my first report since the introduction of the new Scrutiny arrangements following the County Elections last year. I and the other members of the Commission have been committed to taking the skeleton reforms and making them work. Good progress has been made by members and officers towards building an effective scrutiny system that has the potential to hold the Administration to account.
2. Whilst I am aware of the comments made by some members of the Administration on my Chairmanship, I would highlight the ongoing need for members of all parties to be prepared to fully engage in the scrutiny process. This does mean from time to time that members of one party have to be seen to challenge their own political group, or government but this is the role and purpose of scrutiny and is I believe the best way to serve the communities we represent.
3. It is important that scrutiny focuses on the services members believe need reviewing either because they are in the spotlight or because they are affected by new legislation or other changes.
4. As the new structure does not have a standing committee for the Environment, the majority of review panels were based around topics which would normally have been reported to the old Environment Committee. I do feel that this is an area that the Commission may wish to revisit in the next year.
5. The Commission has met a total of six times during the first year of the new Council and I am pleased that Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners and Committee Chairs have sought clear lines of enquiry to scrutinise the wide range of subjects we have dealt with that affect Leicestershire. It is difficult to cover every decision in detail, but significantly, the Commission looked at the East Midlands Regional Plan and proposed to defer the partial review of the Plan, given the ongoing uncertainties surrounding the Housing Market following the Recession.
6. Alongside this I was pleased that the Commission had the chance to review the 'Total Place' project. The fact that Leicestershire was selected as a pilot area was encouraging and built upon the Council's reputation and impressive score in the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). The Commission was wholly supportive of the overall aim of Total Place, in reducing the costs of better co-ordinated services to the public. We accept that such an ambitious project would be challenging, and would require the ongoing backing of

Government, suitable powers for the lead authority as well as clarification over the role of scrutiny in the process.

7. As I have mentioned, the Commission was pleased with the Council's performance in the CAA and we felt that the Council could easily build upon this achievement especially concerning the engagement of the public in local democracy and volunteering despite the negative impact of the previous Government's bureaucracy. However the recent announcement by the Coalition Government that CAA will be abandoned does raise questions about the impact of new legislation on the plethora of assessments, strategies and reports that we as an authority are engaged in and Scrutiny may wish to look into this matter over the course of the next year. I also feel that some effort will need to be made (either through a report or panel) to improve the public's overall satisfaction level with the Council. The amount spent on communications and surveys don't seem to be returning their investment, and the future uncertainty over services makes this an even more pressing issue.
8. In my opinion, Scrutiny's biggest responsibility and contribution to the democratic function of this Council, emanates through our work on the Medium Term Financial Strategy. At the Commission we raised specific concerns around the proposed savings in relation to the 'Breaking the Barriers Team', as well as the reduction in subsidy for the 'Arts in Education' service and the effects this would have on the quality of post -16 dance and drama education in schools. Overall the Commission was apprehensive about the compound affect of savings by different agencies and partners, on services that local communities rely upon.
9. It has also been a key part of my role to work with the other Commissioners to establish Review Panels to look in depth at key activities. Initially the Commissioners invited suggestions via the political groups and a total of 6 panels commenced work during the year. In addition I am grateful to Mr Lewis and Mr Hunt for their efforts on the 'light touch review'. These reviews allow us to explore an issue of interest and assess the need for a full panel.
10. Our topics were:
  - Procurement of Waste Treatment Facilities;
  - Safeguarding and Quality in Social Care;
  - Flooding;
  - Road Safety;
  - Concessionary Travel;
  - Sex & Relationships Education and its affect on Teenage Pregnancy;
  - Light Touch reviews on Alcohol Abuse and the County's artwork collections;

11. Finally, I am grateful for the presentations and contributions the Commission has received particularly from BMG research for their explanation of the data behind 'Total Place'.

12. I thank members and officers for their efforts over the last year. Overview and Scrutiny requires a longstanding commitment to challenge and we have made a good start on which to build over the next 12 months.



**Simon Galton CC**  
Chairman of the Scrutiny Commission

## ANNEX A

### ITEMS CONSIDERED SEPT 2009 TO PRESENT

#### REPORTS:

*End of Year Performance Report 2008/09*  
*Medium Term Delivery Plan*  
*Operation of New Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements*  
*Leicestershire Safer Communities Agreement 2009-10*  
*Leicestershire Safer Communities Plan 2009-10*  
*East Midlands Regional Plan*  
*Outcome of Light Touch Reviews on Binge Drinking and the Council's Arts Collection*  
*Partial Review of the East Midlands Regional Plan: Advice to the Regional Assembly*  
*MTFS 2010/11 to 2013/14*  
*Comprehensive Area Assessment*  
*Economic Assessment and Economic Strategy*  
*Enforcement Programme for Underage Sale of Tobacco and Aerosol Paints*  
*Medium Term Delivery Plan*  
*Youth Justice Plan*  
*Draft Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Strategy*  
*Review Panel Final Reports on Road Safety Measures and Concessionary Travel*

#### PRESENTATIONS

Leicestershire Place Survey  
The Role of the Communities and Places Group  
Sub-Regional Economic Arrangements and the role played by the County Council's Community Planning Branch in Supporting the Economy.