

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT MAY 2007 – APRIL 2008

Foreword

I believe that to make a positive difference to Local Government the work of Scrutiny must be of a sufficient standard to encourage our decision makers to listen to and take seriously their advice.

Therefore, there has to be a good relationship between scrutineers and those responsible for the work being scrutinised. To achieve this requires several important functions.

Firstly, Scrutiny Committee must prove by its work that it has important things to say after proper examination of the evidence.

Secondly, while its decisions may be critical of the establishment they should also be supportive and even handed.

Thirdly, we should be cooperative with policy development groups in trying to avoid the overlapping of work. However our decisions must not be compromised.

Fourthly, we also need to play our part in ensuring maximum effectiveness in the wider arenas such as health and education. Closer cooperation is also needed with other Scrutiny organisations.

These principles are relatively easy to identify but more difficult to implement. However, I am pleased to report that our Committee Members and officers have achieved a great deal towards these aims and it is a pleasure to congratulate them on their positive contributions.

I attended a meeting about Parliamentary Select Committees and their relationship with Scrutiny. It was pleasing to see that we were adopting many of their procedures. In particular there was complete cooperation between members of different political parties. I am really grateful as Chairman for this partnership which makes our decisions so much more forceful. Thank you all.

Councillor Ken Joynson
Scrutiny Committee Chairman

Introduction

Overview and Scrutiny was introduced as part of the modernisation agenda for Local Government in the Local Government Act 2000. The Overview and Scrutiny process influences decisions, but does not make them.

The role of scrutiny:

- To provide a “critical friend” challenge to the Executive as well as external authorities and agencies
- To reflect the voice and concerns of the public and its communities
- Scrutiny Members should take the lead and own the Scrutiny Process on behalf of the public
- Scrutiny should make an impact on the delivery of public services

The Scrutiny Committee is politically balanced and made up of 11 non-Executive members of the Council. The Committee provides an opportunity for Members to challenge decisions made by the Executive.

The Scrutiny Committee has a responsibility to monitor the performance of the Council, consider its decisions, question how those decisions were made and to recommend improvements.

The Scrutiny Committee also undertakes external Scrutiny to examine the wider issues that affect people living within the district.

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Chairman: Councillor Joynson

Vice Chairman: Councillor Mrs Smith

Meeting Date	Commentary
29 May 2007	The Committee met for the first time to discuss the work programme for the year and to consider the "Shaping Health in Lincolnshire" consultation document received from Lincolnshire Primary Care Trust. The Committee agreed to establish a Health Working Group to attend consultation events and to consider the matter further at the July 2007 meeting.
20 June 2007	This meeting was a call-in of a decision regarding the appointment of consultants to undertaken a market service review. The Committee discussed the agreed to accept the portfolio holder's decision to appoint the consultants and it was therefore implemented.
31 July 2007 Held at New College, Stamford	<p>The Principal of New College presented the plans for the future of the college and the Committee discussed these plans and the performance of the college. The Committee scrutinised education provision for the 16-19 age group within Stamford.</p> <p>The Committee discussed a report by the Health Working Group in response to the Shaping Health in Lincolnshire consultation document. The Committee recommended how the Council respond to the consultation. It was agreed that the Health Working Group continue to monitor health matters.</p>
25 September 2007	The performance of the new Customer Service Centre was scrutinised by the Committee. The Committee toured the Customer Service Centre and possible solutions to missed calls and improving customer service were discussed. The Committee endorsed the steps set out in the recovery plan and

	<p>resolved to establish a working group to monitor the future performance of the Customer Service Centre.</p> <p>Members considered the issue of proposed Post Office closures and the importance and viability of services within rural areas.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the issue of Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's) and members of the Committee had attended and agreed to attend further meetings of the South Holland District Council's PCSO Scrutiny Task Group. It was felt that there was a general public apathy towards the Police Community Panels within the district. The Committee agreed to receive regular updates.</p>
2 November 2007	<p>The Scrutiny Committee held a joint meeting with the Engagement PDG to discuss the consultation document from the Post Office regarding the proposed closures of various Post Offices within the district and the replacement of some Post Offices with limited Outreach services. The meeting raised a number of issues with regard to the Post Office service, particularly the importance of Post Office services in rural areas. The Committee recommended the Council oppose a number of the closures and formulated the Council's response to the consultation. The Post Office on Ryhall Road in Stamford was successfully kept open.</p>
20 November 2007 Held in the Guildhall Arts Centre	<p>The working group monitoring the Customer Service Centre advised the Committee of the improvements in performance that had been made since the September meeting and would continue to monitor developments.</p> <p>The Committee scrutinised Council representation on the board of South Lincolnshire Blind Society. It was agreed to recommend that the Council appoint a representative at the next full Council meeting.</p> <p>Members discussed the issue of rural transport, including the Dial-A-Ride scheme and any future replacement service. The Committee agreed to</p>

	<p>establish a Transport Working Group to investigate the issue of rural transport and the Dial-A-Ride scheme.</p>
<p>22 January 2008</p> <p>Held at Grantham College</p>	<p>The Scrutiny Committee discussed the performance of Grantham College and its plans for potential development.</p> <p>The Customer Service Centre Working Group reported that the CSC was continuing to improve its performance.</p> <p>The outcome of the consultation relating to Post Office closures was scrutinised. The Committee noted its disappointment that more information regarding the business case for the closure of various Post Offices could not be provided.</p> <p>The Committee noted their concerns regarding section 106 agreements and other planning issues. It was agreed to request a member of the Scrutiny Committee be invited to sit on the Development Control Committee Working Group looking at various planning issues.</p> <p>The use of "exempt session" within various Council meetings was scrutinised by the Committee. The Committee took the view that, particularly within Development Control Committee meetings, exempt session was used too often which could harm the public's perception of transparency within local government.</p>
<p>26 February 2008</p>	<p>The Scrutiny Committee scrutinised planning issues, with a focus on section 106 agreements. The Committee discussed current policy and what future changes might occur.</p> <p>The Health Working Group reported on their last meeting concerning the response to the "Shaping Health in Lincolnshire" consultation. There was some concern that the Council's representations had largely been ignored.</p>

	<p>The Transport Working Group were looking into alternative arrangements for Dial-A-Ride.</p> <p>Staff and Councillor communications were discussed. It was noted that the new intranet was particularly useful. Team SK booklets providing a "who's who" of staff within the Council and posters and booklets to raise Councillor profiles had been produced. Councillor "speed dating" sessions had been held to allow Councillors to meet staff from different service areas to improve understanding between staff and Councillors.</p>
<p>1 April 2008</p> <p>Held in Guildhall Arts Centre</p>	<p>The Scrutiny Committee reviewed their work over the course of the year and concluded that it had been a successful year. It was noted that the Scrutiny Committee welcomed Councillors who were not members of the Committee to attend, and particularly welcomed attendance by members of the public.</p> <p>The Committee agreed meeting dates for the 2008/09 year and discussed possible issues to consider over the forthcoming year, both externally and internally within the Council.</p>

WORKING GROUPS 2007-2008

Working Group	Remit
<p>Health</p> <p>Councillors Farrar, Higgs, Jalili and Hearmon</p>	<p>To monitor health related issues and to report to the Committee on any issues that may affect health within the District. The group has reported on the "Shaping Health in Lincolnshire" consultation for the Scrutiny Committee.</p>
<p>Customer Service Centre</p> <p>Councillors Mrs Bosworth and Higgs</p>	<p>To continue to monitor and report on the performance of the Customer Service Centre.</p>
<p>Transport</p> <p>Councillors Farrar, Helyar, Mrs Smith and Williams</p>	<p>To investigate alternatives to the Dial-A-Ride scheme and to consider general transport issues within the district, particularly in rural areas.</p>