

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT MAY 2008 – APRIL 2009

Foreword

In last year's report I identified what I thought were the four principles to deliver worthwhile scrutiny. They were:

- 1.) Scrutiny must make important comments. I believe we have been fairly successful here.
- 2.) Balanced reporting. We have been careful to do this and to support the groups we have interviewed.
- 3.) Co-operation with other policy groups. This has been more difficult. However, we do attend regional meetings (not well supported) and plans are being implemented for a Lincolnshire Scrutiny Group.
- 4.) Reaction of the organisations we scrutinise. There needs to be more work in this area as our reports should be taken seriously although not necessarily accepted. With regard to Council scrutiny our Cabinet and officers have always been supportive, but it is not always the case with external organisations.

Finally a warning. Government is expecting scrutiny to become more involved with community affairs causing more work for members and officers. This will inevitably mean more Council resources.

On that note, can I thank the Committee and officers for their support. It is a pleasure to Chair such a friendly, lively and interesting Committee. A special word for the Vice-Chairman and her wholehearted support. 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. The Government has recently announced that it proposes to extend scrutiny powers to bus, train and utility companies as well as local police and health authorities.

During the year covered by this report, the Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) has been introduced. Under CCfA a member can arrange for an item of local concern (ie his or her ward) to be considered by the Scrutiny Committee. This is a legal requirement and the Council’s Constitution has been amended to reflect these new arrangements. Elsewhere on the Council agenda members will have considered a further legal requirement to establish a crime and disorder scrutiny committee.

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Chairman: Councillor Joynson

Vice Chairman: Councillor Mrs Smith

Meeting Date	Commentary
<p>6 May 2008</p> <p>Meeting held at Bourne Corn Exchange</p>	<p>The Committee met to discuss secondary school provision within the district. Representatives of Bourne Grammar School, Deepings Comprehensive, the Robert Manning School and Willoughby Special School attended the meeting to discuss issues in education with the Committee.</p>
<p>12 June 2008</p>	<p>The Committee were updated on procurement arrangements within Lincolnshire, with Procurement Lincolnshire having gone live in April 2008.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the proposed closure of BT Telephone Kiosks and agreed to oppose their closure.</p> <p>An overview of the Local Area Agreement was also provided to the Members.</p>
<p>29 July 2008</p>	<p>The Committee met to discuss health issues, including the issue of polyclinics and new prescription arrangements. Members agreed to follow this matter up in further detail.</p> <p>The Committee responded to the proposals for an “outreach” postal service for South Witham, noting that any service was better than no service at all.</p>
<p>30 September 2008</p>	<p>A representative of the Caythorpe and Ancaster Medical Practice met with the Committee to further discuss proposals within the recently published “Pharmacy in England: Building on Strengths – Delivering the Future” white paper and proposals for changes to prescription and dispensing arrangements. The Committee noted concerns that any changes could have a detrimental effect on health provision in rural communities. The Committee also noted there was little drive for polyclinics within rural areas.</p> <p>A representative of the County Council met with the Committee to discuss a variety of transport issues within the district.</p>

	<p>The Committee were updated on plans for Members IT provision.</p>
18 November 2008	<p>The Committee reviewed the Council's performance report, which was now due to be reviewed on a six monthly basis. Members noted performance against a number of strategic level targets.</p> <p>A further update on the Local Area Agreement was provided to the Committee.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the issue of reports being withdrawn at a late stage from Council meetings. Members recommended that where this happen an explanation of the reasons for withdrawal be made to Members.</p>
20 January 2009	<p>Members considered the issue of Equality and Diversity within the district, and the Council's role with that. Members noted that a Corporate Equality Scheme was due to go to Council in 2009. Members noted the Community Contact Group had been formed to liaise with representatives of various nationalities and that the Council worked with various other agencies to reach various groups within the district.</p> <p>The Committee also discussed how the Council used its fleet of pool cars and the efforts being made to ensure they were used in the most efficient manner.</p> <p>Members also considered the issues they wished to consider over the following 12 months.</p>
24 February 2009	<p>The Committee listened to the concerns of members of the public regarding bus services within Stamford. It was noted that improvements to services in Grantham resulted from contributions made by developers.</p> <p>Members scrutinized the issue of the economic environment and housing and homelessness, considering the impact of the economic downturn within the district. Members scrutinized what the Council was doing to aid businesses and the work with town centre partnerships. Members considered how the Council worked to prevent homelessness. It was noted that a desk had been set up at the Court to assist people facing repossession.</p>

8 April 2009	<p>Members were updated on Councillor Call for Action which had gone live at the start of April 2009.</p> <p>The Committee considered the work of the voluntary sector within the district and noted that it was an issue they would consider in more detail at a future meeting.</p> <p>Members looked at the issue of town twinning and noted that while they supported the arrangements, twinning was not something the Council should actively pursue.</p>

WORKING GROUPS 2008-2009

Working Group	Remit
Health Councillors Farrar, Higgs, Jalili and Hearmon	To report any health issues that the Committee should scrutinize in further detail.
Customer Service Centre Councillors Mrs Bosworth and Higgs	To continue to monitor and report on the performance of the Customer Service Centre.
Transport Councillors Farrar, Helyar, Mrs Smith and Williams	To investigate alternatives to the Dial-A-Ride scheme and to consider general transport issues within the district, particularly in rural areas.
Education Councillor Joynson	To update on any education issues that the Committee should scrutinize in further detail.