

Information/Discussion Paper

Overview and Scrutiny Committees:-

Economy and Business Improvement 30 March 2006

Social and Community 03 April 2006

Environment 06 April 2006

Scrutiny Improvement Project

Report of the Scrutiny Improvement Working Group

- 1.1** This paper will provide a basis for discussion at the meeting when comments are invited from members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The working group are seeking support for the objectives they have set out in this report and comments on their outline proposals. The working group are keen to get your comments at this stage before embarking on further detailed work on some of the proposals. With your support some of the proposals could be implemented immediately as they have no resource implications.
- 2. Progress to date**
- 2.1** In September 2005 Group Leaders were asked to nominate members to form an all-party scrutiny working group. This was to be a member led working group, supported by officers, tasked with producing an improvement plan for the scrutiny process.
- 2.2** The members of the working group are Councillors Allen, Britter, Franklin, Garnham, Hale, Mrs Hale and Wall. The group is supported by Jane Griffiths, Rosalind Reeves and Ruth Kenrick.
- 2.3** To date the group has had six meetings and are planning further work before producing an interim report for Council on 29th June 2006. They have also had meetings with Group Leaders, informal Cabinet Board, senior officers, the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and observed a meeting of the County's Scrutiny Management Committee.
- 2.4** At it's first meeting the group decided the project should look at all aspects of scrutiny but with particular emphasis on the weaker areas already identified namely:
- Cabinet/scrutiny relationships
 - Role of scrutiny members

- Scrutiny guidelines
- Resources needed to support the scrutiny process
- Role of lead officers
- Questioning of witnesses in scrutiny meetings
- Politics in scrutiny
- Achieving positive outcomes from scrutiny
- Use of co-optees and public involvement and understanding
- Identification of success measures for scrutiny would be essential to measure the success of this group's work
- Agenda setting process
- Meeting style and room layout
- Structure changes
- Role of Chairman and Vice Chairman

2.5 The group felt it was important to produce an interim report as quickly as possible but clearly it would not be feasible to look at all these areas in depth. Therefore they agreed to focus on five objectives which they felt were most critical to scrutiny's success.

- To increase public participation in the scrutiny process
- To increase member engagement and satisfaction with scrutiny
- To improve the Cabinet/ Officer/Scrutiny member relationship which is critical to the success of scrutiny
- To introduce a performance measurement system to measure the effectiveness of the scrutiny process and monitor any improvements that are made. This would include some assessment of whether scrutiny is making a difference and having an impact on service delivery.
- To recommend the optimum structure for scrutiny which will support the above

3. Scrutiny Committee views

3.1 The group is keen to seek your views on any aspect of scrutiny but in particular would like to focus on their proposals for improving the effectiveness of scrutiny outlined in the questionnaire sent to all Scrutiny Committee members on 10th March 2006 (Appendix 1)

3.2 It should be noted that some of the proposals would require additional resources before they can be implemented. If supported, these proposals will need to be included in future budget reviews.

4. Next Steps

4.1 At their final meeting before the elections the group will review all the feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and agree which proposals they would like officers to do further work on. Following the election the group will then reconvene and produce their report of recommendations to Council on 29th June 2006.

Background Papers	none
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Accountability	John Morris, Deputy Built Environment and Democracy
Scrutiny Function	Economy and Business Improvement Overview and Scrutiny committee