

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Committee Report

Public

Date of Meeting:

7th November 2002

Title: DEVELOPMENT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Report of: Town Clerk and Chief Executive

Report reference: TC 209/02

Summary:

The report gives information on a major Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) research report on the development of Overview and Scrutiny. It also deals with the annual review and report on Overview and Scrutiny under the Council's Constitution. Lastly it provides details of matters arising from the latest meeting of the Cumbria Overview and Scrutiny Practitioner's Network.

Recommendations:

1. The research and council input to it be noted.
2. A date be agreed for a workshop to review Overview and Scrutiny development (including learning from the research report) and initiate the Annual Report process.
3. Participation in a joint countywide training event(s) on Chairing Skills for Overview and Scrutiny be agreed.
4. Consideration be given to a possible County Overview and Scrutiny Member Network and how it may operate.

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2. **ODPM Research Report**

At the end of September the ODPM published an important report entitled '*The Development of Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government*'. The research having been undertaken for OPDM by INLOGOV, University of Birmingham and De Montfort

University, Leicester.

The report covers the development of Overview and Scrutiny since its introduction and identifies best practise drawn from the research conducted.

The Head of Corporate Policy and Strategy was invited to give evidence to the research team and several examples of our approach in Carlisle appear in the report as illustrations of good practise.

A copy of the Research Summary is appended to this report; the full document is available at www.local.odpm.gov.uk/research/research.htm. A full copy is also available in the Members library.

3. Review and Annual Report

Under the Council's Constitution it is required that '*Overview and Scrutiny Committees must report annually to full Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate.*'

Members will recall that last year this process started with a half-day workshop for Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice-chairmen together with Group Leaders.

This process then input to a draft Annual Report which was then considered in turn by each Overview and Scrutiny Committee before being referred to full Council.

It is suggested that this process is followed again this year and that a date, in January, is agreed for the Workshop.

It is also suggested that the findings of the above report be included as an input to the annual review of Overview and Scrutiny at that Workshop.

4. Cumbria Overview and Scrutiny Practitioners Network

The Head of Corporate Policy and Strategy initiated formation of the above officer network (for Overview and Scrutiny support staff from each council in Cumbria) last year and continues to lead on its administration. There have been a number of changes in representation as Overview and Scrutiny 'settled in' in each authority and the arrangements for officer support were agreed.

The latest meeting took place on 8th October was well-attended (12) and with good discussion on a range of issues. Members were enthusiastic about what they were getting out of participation.

A significant development was the inclusion of a specialist officer from District Audit Regional Office who has joined the network. This reflects the importance attached to this function by that organisation and the central role they see for it in future inspection regimes

Two specific matters from the last agenda need to be reported to Members.

Firstly it was agreed that the Head of Corporate Policy and Strategy should explore the possibility of joint training in Chairing Skills for Overview and Scrutiny. This was

felt to be a training need common to all Cumbrian authorities and there are economies of scale together with networking and joint learning opportunities in such joint provision.

It is suggested that this approach be supported.

Secondly a suggestion made at an earlier meeting of this committee was discussed, namely the possibility of a parallel County Overview and Scrutiny Member Network. There was support expressed for the principle with some concerns as to how it would be organised and facilitated. It was agreed that each authority should arrange for Member views to be reported back at the next officer network meeting.

It is suggested the idea be supported on the basis that participation would be for Chairmen and Vice-chairmen and that organisation and facilitation is on a shared basis to be agreed by the officers.

5. Recommendations

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4. Consideration be given to a possible County Overview and Scrutiny Member Network and how it may operate.