

Report

Newport City Council

Part 1

29 July 2014

Item No. 10

Subject Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2013/14

Purpose: To present the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2013-14.

Author Senior Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Ward All

Summary The Scrutiny Committees are required by the constitution to submit an Annual Report each year to Council, to review how Overview and Scrutiny has operated in the last 12 months.

In the past few years we have developed the Annual Report to be a key part of the performance management cycle for Scrutiny. It is difficult to measure the impact of Scrutiny using traditional performance measures, which count the outputs from the Scrutiny Committees but do not measure the outcomes of our work, or show whether improvements have been made as a result. The Annual Report is a more useful tool in reviewing the effectiveness of Scrutiny, providing an opportunity reflect properly on how Scrutiny has operated in the past year, and to identify upcoming challenges against which future performance can be judged.

An important feature of last year's Annual Report was the action plan that resulted from the Wales Audit Office's National Scrutiny Study. The Scrutiny Improvement Group was set up to implement this plan and to drive forward the improvement programme for Scrutiny.

This year's plan details the good progress made against last year's targets, reflects on Scrutiny activity throughout the year and sets priorities for the year ahead.

Proposal To agree the content of the annual report as a basis for the work of the Scrutiny Committees in the coming year.

Contact Senior Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Action by Chief Democratic Services Officer and Scrutiny Team

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Scrutiny Committees
- Head of Law and Standards
- Head of Finance
- Head of People and Transformation

Background

- 1 The Scrutiny Committees are required by the constitution to submit an Annual Report each year to Council, to review how Overview and Scrutiny has operated in the last 12 months.
- 2 In the past few years we have developed the Annual Report to be a key part of the performance management cycle for Scrutiny. It is difficult to measure the impact of Scrutiny using traditional performance measures, which count the outputs from the Scrutiny Committees but do not measure the outcomes of our work, or show whether improvements have been made as a result. The Annual Report is a more useful tool in reviewing the effectiveness of Scrutiny, providing an opportunity reflect properly on how Scrutiny has operated in the past year, and to identify upcoming challenges against which future performance can be judged.
- 3 An important feature of last year's Annual Report was the action plan that resulted from the Wales Audit Office's National Scrutiny Study. The Scrutiny Improvement Group was set up to implement this plan and to drive forward the improvement programme for Scrutiny.
- 4 This year's plan details the good progress made against last year's targets, reflects on Scrutiny activity throughout the year and sets priorities for the year ahead.

Gwent Scrutiny Challenge

- 5 One of our most significant achievements this year has been to secure funding through the Welsh Government's Scrutiny Development Fund to hold the "Gwent Scrutiny Challenge 2014". The Newport Scrutiny Team has taken the lead in managing this project, which is being delivered in partnership with the Gwent Scrutiny Network and with additional support from the Centre for Public Scrutiny, Wales Audit Office, WLGA, CSSIW and Estyn.
- 6 The project started with a high profile, very well attended event on 6 June in the Riverfront Theatre, looking at experiences from the Mid-Staffordshire Inquiry and what lessons can be learned by local government about the quality of challenge within our organisations. We are now planning a series of training events within each authority to look at how the lessons can be applied and our skills improved. Implementing this programme will be the main focus of our training and development for the next 12 months.
- 7 We are very pleased that the Gwent Scrutiny Challenge has already attracted a good deal of interest, both locally and across Wales, as an interesting and innovative project – most notably being referenced by the Minister for Local Government and Government Business in her speech to the WLGA conference on 19 June 2014. Once complete, it is hoped this model could provide a blueprint for training in other authorities seeking to evaluate and improve the strength of challenge within their democratic arrangements.

8 Financial Summary

There are no specific costs to the adoption of this report. Support for Overview and Scrutiny is undertaken within the budget allocation.

9 Risks

Risk	Impact of Risk if it occurs* (H/M/L)	Probability of risk occurring (H/M/L)	What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect	Who is responsible for dealing with the risk?
An ineffective scrutiny function could undermine the Council's corporate governance arrangements and lead to poor quality decision making	M	L	The Annual Report informs the Council of the efforts made to strengthen the role of scrutiny in Newport and how the Committees will work to help develop policies and hold the executive to account in an open and transparent manner.	Chief Democratic Services Officer and scrutiny team.
Lack of progress in enhancing the role of scrutiny will impact on its effectiveness and esteem within the Council	H	L	The Scrutiny Improvement Group has been set up to examine what is being done well in Newport; what we need to improve upon and an action programme for improvement. From now on this Group will also hold regular meetings with the Executive to help develop that relationship and strengthen the position of scrutiny within the authority.	

10 Links to Council Policies and Priorities

The Scrutiny function has an important role in helping the Council to achieve its expressed aims:

- To make our city a better place to live for all our citizens
- To be good at what we do
- To work hard to provide what our citizens tell us they need

11 Options Considered / Available

The Council's constitution requires the production of an Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report. Submission of this report is required in order to meet this requirement. The Council may accept the report, reject it, or ask for further work to be undertaken.

12 Preferred Option and Why

The report sets out to provide a commentary on how the Council is working to strengthen the role of scrutiny and it is recommended that the report is adopted.

13 Consultation with Scrutiny Committees

This report was presented to the Scrutiny Committees on 13 May and their comments have been incorporated into the attached report. In particular, Members made the following comments:

- It was put forward that progress should be measured in relation to the original Wales Audit Office Report – general progress in meeting the planned targets could be demonstrated by the fact that Scrutiny has improved in the past year, despite limited resources.
- The Scrutiny Improvement Group was working well together and had introduced a number of innovations to make the system work more effectively.
- The Cabinet Members present confirmed the Executive's commitment to Scrutiny, recognising the need for clarity in the way the two entities work together. The Scrutiny Improvement Group and the Executive would meet on a quarterly basis from now on, so this could be used to measure progress in future.
- It was important to recognise the achievements made within the resources available. Members underlined the importance of Scrutiny and the need to ensure it is properly resourced, particularly at a time when difficult decisions needed to be taken.

14 Comments of Monitoring Officer

The Council is required to establish arrangements for effective overview and scrutiny in accordance with Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Government Measure 2011. In accordance with the reporting arrangements set out in the Constitution, an Annual Report is presented to full Council regarding the way in which the Overview and Scrutiny arrangements have operated during the preceding 12 months. The Annual report itself raises no legal issues. Each report to and from the Committees during the year has included my comments on any legal implications. The Annual Report shows that good progress has been made in delivering the targets and objectives set out in last year's Report, particularly the work carried out by the Scrutiny Improvement Group in overseeing the action plan arising from the National Scrutiny Study and the WAO Corporate assessment. This work will continue throughout the current year, with a view to further strengthening scrutiny arrangements.

15 Comments of Chief Financial Officer

There are no specific financial implications arising from the report. As a matter of course, all Committees are advised of the financial consequences of any matter before them.

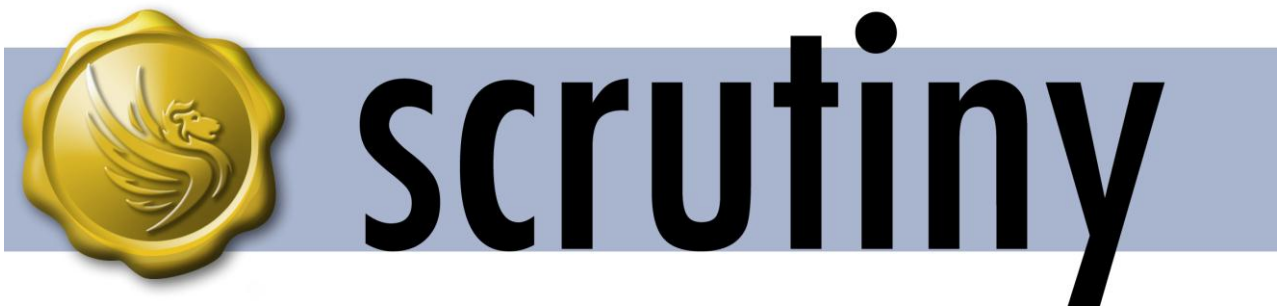
16 Comments of the Head of People and Transformation

The Annual Report demonstrates the value that the Administration places on robust scrutiny processes. Scrutiny plays a key role in reviewing and challenging service area activity -including actual/planned performance, predicted demand levels, customer feedback and actions arising from external regulators' reports and recommendations. The Annual Report 2013/14 also outlines Scrutiny's response to the recommendations of the National Scrutiny Study and the WAO Corporate Assessment which is being taken forward through the Scrutiny Improvement Group and implementation of an agreed action plan. The new processes in place in relation to Service Plans and the Improvement Plan, alongside the 'member led' work programme

should provide for increased member engagement and ultimately a stronger focus on improvement and accountability across the Council. The extent of the work of the three Committees and the progress already made against the action plan is noted along with the clearly identified work programme going forward in 2014/15.



Scrutiny Annual Report 2013-14



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Introduction

This report looks at the work of the Scrutiny Committees from May 2013 to April 2014. The Annual Report is an essential tool for measuring the performance of Scrutiny, evaluating the progress made against previous targets and setting priorities for the coming year.

Last year's Annual Report represented a "line in the sand" for Scrutiny in Newport. We had recently completed the National Scrutiny Study ("Good Scrutiny? Good Question!"); the findings of this self-evaluation process broadly mirrored the messages of the WAO's Corporate Assessment of the Council, giving us a clear picture of the improvements we needed to make to our scrutiny practice.

The action plan that resulted from the self-evaluation and peer review process was endorsed in last year's Annual Report as the basis for our improvement programme over the next year and beyond. In endorsing the Annual Report for 2013-14, Council also supported the proposal that a small working group of Scrutiny Members be set up to work through the action plan and drive forward improvements in scrutiny practice.

The Scrutiny Improvement Group was established in August 2013 and has made significant progress in achieving the targets set out in last year's plan. Their work to date is summarised in the next section, and an update on the action plan is also provided at the end of this report.

The Scrutiny Committees have continued to build their reputation as a useful tool in policy development and holding service providers and the executive to account. Work programmes were reviewed in September to refocus the Committees' priorities and ensure that the topic selection process was fully "Member-led". There is a summary page later in this report for each Committee, showing what has been achieved this year and the priorities going forward.

The penultimate section looks back at the action plan from last year's Annual Report, updated with progress in the last 12 months. The final section then sets our planned actions for the coming year. These will be reviewed in next year's Annual Report to drive forward the performance of Scrutiny as part of a cycle of continuous improvement.

Gwent Scrutiny Challenge

One of our most significant achievements this year has been to secure funding through the Welsh Government's Scrutiny Development Fund to hold the "Gwent Scrutiny Challenge 2014". The Newport Scrutiny Team has taken the lead in managing this project, which is being delivered in partnership with the Gwent Scrutiny Network and with additional support from the Centre for Public Scrutiny, Wales Audit Office, WLGA, CSSIW and Estyn.

The project started with a high profile, very well attended event on 6 June in the Riverfront Theatre, looking at experiences from the Mid-Staffordshire Inquiry and what lessons can be learned by local government about the quality of challenge within our organisations. We are now planning a series of training events within each authority to look at how the lessons can be applied and our skills improved. Implementing this programme will be the main focus of our training and development for the next 12 months.

We are very pleased that the Gwent Scrutiny Challenge has already attracted a good deal of interest, both locally and across Wales, as an interesting and innovative project – most notably being referenced by the Minister for Local Government and Government Business in her speech to the WLGA conference on 19 June 2014. Once complete, it is hoped this model could provide a blueprint for training in other authorities seeking to evaluate and improve the strength of challenge within their democratic arrangements.

Consultation with Scrutiny Committees

This report was presented to the Scrutiny Committees on 13 May and their comments have been incorporated into the report. In particular, Members made the following comments:

- It was put forward that progress should be measured in relation to the original Wales Audit Office Report – general progress in meeting the planned targets could be demonstrated by the fact that Scrutiny has improved in the past year, despite limited resources.
- The Scrutiny Improvement Group was working well together and had introduced a number of innovations to make the system work more effectively.
- The Cabinet Members present confirmed the Executive's commitment to Scrutiny, recognising the need for clarity in the way the two entities work together. The Scrutiny Improvement Group and the Executive would meet on a quarterly basis from now on, so this could be used to measure progress in future.
- It was important to recognise the achievements made within the resources available. Members underlined the importance of Scrutiny and the need to ensure it is properly resourced, particularly at a time when difficult decisions needed to be taken.

The Scrutiny Improvement Group

The Scrutiny Improvement Group was set up in August 2013, and comprises the three Scrutiny Chairs and two other representatives from each Committee.

Current Membership

Community Planning and Development: Councillors David Atwell (Chair) and Jane Mudd (Councillor Val Delahaye served on the group from August 2013 – February 2014; position currently vacant).

Learning, Caring and Leisure: David Mayer (Chair), Sally Mlewa and Mark Spencer.

Street Scene, Regeneration and Safety: Roger Jeavons (Chair), Tom Bond and Paul Huntley.

The Group has also established a link with the trade unions by inviting Steph Davies (Unison Branch Secretary) to attend SIG meetings as an advisor and to share information on specific reviews.

Progress Made

The Group meets monthly to look at ways to develop and improve Scrutiny in Newport, working to the action plan agreed in last year's annual report as well as suggestions from the Group itself. Particular progress has been made in the following areas:

Developing the Relationship with Cabinet

This was a major focus of both the National Scrutiny Study and the Corporate Assessment, highlighting the need to clarify roles and responsibilities of Cabinet and Scrutiny.

A meeting was held on 11 March 2014 between the Scrutiny Improvement Group and Cabinet, to discuss how the relationship between Scrutiny and the Executive can be strengthened. The following outcomes were put forward:

- Regular diarised meetings between Cabinet and the Scrutiny Improvement Group four times a year, with additional ad hoc meetings as required. Also informal meetings between the Chair of Cabinet and the Scrutiny Chairs where necessary.
- Regular contact / meetings between individual CMs and Scrutiny Chairs.
- A protocol for CMs' interaction with Scrutiny Committees.
- A protocol for reporting Scrutiny findings to Cabinet / CMs
- Officers to look at staff resources to ensure support for scrutiny is adequate.
- Clarification of the links between the scrutiny function and Performance Board.
- A review of policy and decision making processes to clarify roles, responsibilities and expected timescales. (This is also linked to issues around work planning and staff awareness of political processes.)
- The Chief Executive to send a message to officers that scrutiny is taken seriously and attendance is a priority.
- A new process for CM meetings / briefings with officers – that officers should produce a file note so that content and actions can be agreed in writing.

Work Planning

The issue of the timing of information to scrutiny is the subject of on-going discussions between Cabinet and the Scrutiny Improvement Group; however the Group has also made changes to work programming processes to make sure topic selection is Member-led and work is properly prioritised and focussed.

- New work programming arrangements to ensure work programmes are Member-led and properly prioritised. This included a work planning event to gather ideas from Members.
- Amended scrutiny topic selection criteria to make these clearer and simpler. Amended referral form in line with the new criteria.
- New processes for dealing with Service Plans and the Improvement Plan, to ensure earlier and better consultation with Members on high level priorities, and more focussed consideration of Service Plans.

Training, Engagement and Communication

Improving awareness of and engagement in scrutiny is a key priority for the Group. This is a complex area; we have started to make improvements but this work will continue into next year.

- Publication of the Scrutiny Witness Guide to support people attending meetings to give evidence.
- Establishing a link with the Trade Unions via the Unison Branch Secretary.
- On-going work to look at communications – resolving Members IT issues, exploring alternative communication tools and methods for conducting scrutiny business; also communication with the public / staff.
- Ongoing work to review training and development for Scrutiny to ensure this is accessible and meaningful for Members. We also plan to look at staff training on scrutiny in the future.

Meeting Organisation

The Group has also agreed a number of practical changes to improve the running of meetings and presentation of information to Members. These include:

- Action sheets – Scrutiny minutes are now accompanied by an action sheet to set out actions arising and record responses. A new process is in place to support this and ensure responses are followed up and received promptly.
- Committee reports now include a cover report by the Scrutiny Officer to give an independent view on the report and present any additional research. Cover reports are being trialled in a new “2 column” format to make them easier to read and to differentiate from departmental reports. For paper copies of agendas, scrutiny reports are printed on green paper so they are easily identified.
- A new research request form for Members to request research from the Scrutiny Team.
- Pre-meetings / briefings for Committees before main meetings – to be held as and when required by agreement with the Chair.
- Diarised joint meetings to deal with areas of business common to all Committees (e.g. Improvement Plan, Budget)

The Scrutiny Committees

Community Planning and Development

Membership:

Councillors Atwell (Chair), Delahaye, Ali, Morris, Mudd, T Suller, H Thomas, K Thomas and Watkins

Chair's Introduction:

Our Committee has a wide and varied portfolio, resulting in a challenging and heavy workload. When the work programmes were reviewed in September 2013 we decided to take a different approach to the other Committees, and set up a series of themed meetings looking at different areas of our portfolio in more detail before selecting topics to investigate. We held three meetings, looking at Adult Services and Health, People and Transformation, and Housing. This gave us the opportunity to learn more about the areas under our responsibility, and identify where Committee investigations could add the most value.

As well as holding the themed meetings, this year we have contributed to the development of a number of major policies this year, and there are on-going reviews through Policy Review Groups into Community Centres and Disabled Parking Bays. Looking to the next 12 months, we will be concluding the two ongoing reviews and starting new reviews into the Housing matters identified through the themed meetings. We will also be looking at Marketing and Mayoralty as part of the People and Transformation, and continuing to monitor major developments in the partnership working between Adult Services and Health.

The Committee continues to encourage representatives from our partners and volunteers to attend relevant meetings where necessary. The classic example is the inclusion and attendance of the Chair and several members of the Carers Forum during the debate on the Carers Strategy, where the importance of volunteers was clearly displayed as an essential element of the strategy.

Our Activities 2013-14

This year our work has included the following:

- **Draft Improvement Plan**

The Committee has made an input into the process for establishing the draft Improvement Plan priorities for the Council in 2013/14 and 2014/15.

- **Annual Information Risk Report**

The Committee considered a report upon the Annual Information Risk Report 2012 / 13 for the first time, which will be reported annually in future. Members provided comments to the Cabinet Member for consideration with the report: including concerns regarding the lack of training for Members regarding Data Protection requirements and the risk that residents data could be disclosed; the need to include Member Awareness in the Action Plan of the document; and the

need to ensure data protection compliance in all exchanges of information was raised, including: technology; paper documents; telephone and verbal conversations.

- **Ongoing Policy Development and Review**

The Committee has considered the following newly developed Policies, Plans and Strategies and provided its comments to the Cabinet Member for consideration together with the draft documents:

- Information Sharing Policy;
- Postal Services Policy;
- People Plan;
- Strategy for Houses in Multiple Occupation 2013 - 2018;
- Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy;
- Street Naming and Numbering Policy; (Member Referral)
- Customer Services Strategy;
- Draft Carers Strategy 2013-18

The Committee will be involved in the ongoing review and development of policy for other key plans and services, The Committee will also regularly undertake performance and outcomes monitoring of many and various other matters within the Committee's portfolio.

- **Newport City Homes**

As part of the role of scrutiny in examining external providers, the Committee questioned invited representatives from Newport City Homes including the Chief Executive and Director of Housing & Regeneration, upon their Annual Report, to monitor progress and performance of Newport City Homes against the promises made in the offer document prior to transfer of the housing stock.

Arising from this meeting, the progress on processing this year's Discretionary Housing Payments was monitored in the subsequent meeting.

- **Gwent Frailty Programme**

The Committee has continued to receive updates and monitors progress on the Gwent Frailty Programme and the outcomes for frail and older people.

- **Policy Review Groups**

The Committee has established Policy Review Groups to undertake the review of the following topics within the Forward Work Programme:

- Community Centres (Member Referral);
- Disabled Parking Bays.

- **2012-13 Adult Protection Annual Report**

As part of the Committee's monitoring role, it considered the statutory Adult Protection Annual Report and provided comments to the Cabinet Member for consideration together with the report.

- **Annual Social Services Complaints Report**

The Committee continues to monitor the performance of the Authority's Statutory Report upon Social services Complaints annually.

- **Health & Adult Integrated Services**

The Committee requested a themed meeting and received presentations upon an overview of Health and Social Care Matters in order to identify appropriate areas of inquiry for the forward work programme.

- **Housing**

The Committee requested a themed meeting and received a presentation on housing matters, in order to identify appropriate areas of inquiry for the Committee's work programme. As part of the themed Meeting, the Committee also monitored the progress of the implementation and delivery of the Communities First Programme to date and monitored the implementation of previous Scrutiny recommendations made regarding Homelessness.

- **People and Transformation**

The Committee requested a themed meeting upon People and Transformation and received a presentation on managing the demands and pressures across the service, in order to identify appropriate areas of inquiry for the Committee's work programme.

- **Stroke Redesign**

Representatives from Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) provided the Committee with a presentation on the redesign of stroke services across the ABUHB Partnership Area, examining the pathway for stroke services to improve services and address any gaps in provision.

Learning, Caring and Leisure

Membership:

Councillors David Mayer (Chair), David Atwell, Emma Garland; Ibrahim Hayat; Christine Maxfield; Sally Mlewa; Mark Spencer; Cliff Suller; Kevin Whitehead and David Williams.

The Committee's membership also includes statutory co-opted members where education matters are discussed, representing the Catholic Church, The Church in Wales and Parent Governors. In addition, the Committee has decided to appoint a co-opted member from Newport Youth Council.

Chairs Introduction:

The Scrutiny Team is really working on the job to find out the best way to approach the powers we have under the new Welsh Measure. We are aware of what we can do but there is no effective model that we can use to achieve a robust scrutiny of current policies or influence and amend existing practices. More importantly, we are working to develop a methodology that allows us to find authentic voices from users and frontline providers of our services that will help us to introduce more effective new policies.

To this end we have set up a cross party sub group comprising members all three Scrutiny Committees to design a model that works for Newport. We have also set up three Policy Review Sub groups in LCL to put the recommendations of the Scrutiny Improvement Group into practice. So far these have been a little frustrating, especially in relation to timescales, but we treat this as a learning process that will help us formulate much better outcomes for future sub groups.

The Committee has a challenging workload with a number of major projects to tackle this year. We will continue to look at innovative ways of working that involve the right people and achieve the right outcomes.

Our Activities 2013-14

This year our work has included the following:

- **Integrated Family Support**

The Committee has kept this service under review in the past year and has examined and questioned whether the integrated service has been successful in improving family resilience and to help prevent unnecessary admissions into care.

The Committee has also monitored the widening of the initiative across Social Services in Gwent in July 2013, for strategic and operational matters for the service, for which Newport would take the lead.

- **Allocations and Vacancies in Children and Family Social Services**

The Committee regularly reviews the case allocations and workforce variations within Children and Family Services and the potential impact on service users.

- **Pupil Referral Unit**

The Committee considered and reviewed the outcome of the Estyn Inspection of the Cylchdroi Centre (Pupil Referral Unit) in October 2012 that placed the school in the Estyn category of Special Measures. The Committee has monitored progress made in addressing the recommendations made by the Estyn Inspectors.

- **Draft Improvement Plan**

The Committee has made an input into the process for establishing the draft Improvement Plan priorities for the Council in 2013/14 and 2014/15.

- **Cultural Strategy**

The Committee acted as a consultee regarding work associated with the development of a draft cultural strategy for Newport.

- **Welsh Public Libraries Standards**

The Committee has monitored the Council's performance against the Fourth Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards.

- **Annual Self-Evaluation of Education Services**

The Committee has monitored the local authority education services for children and young people in Newport and an updated post-inspection action plan following the Estyn inspection in 2011.

- **Inspection Report for Children and Family Services**

The Committee has monitored the findings of the Inspection Report for Children and Family Services and the action plan to address the recommendations arising, the areas of progress, priorities for improvement and associated risks.

- **Specialist Substance Misuse**

The Committee received an overview of B@1, an integrated service comprising Barnardo's Cymru and Aneurin Bevan Health Board's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) working in collaboration with the Local Authority. The overall aim of the service was to reduce the impact that substance misuse had on health and wellbeing of affected children and young people up to the age of 18 years in Newport.

- **Policy Review Groups**

The Committee has established Policy Review Groups to undertake the review of the following topics within the Forward Work Programme:-

- Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers
- Delegations to Schools
- Continuing Learning and Leisure - New Delivery Models

The more flexible approach to the review achievable through this informal medium would facilitate different and more appropriate methods and sources of gathering evidence and information to maximise the outcome.

- **Ongoing Policy Development and Review**

The Committee will be involved in the review and development of policy for other key plans and services, The Committee will also regularly undertake performance and outcomes monitoring of many and various other matters within the Committee's portfolio.

- **Continuing Learning and Leisure – New Delivery Models**

The Committee concluded its review of regarding the options for delivering sport and leisure services through a new delivery model. The Committee set up a smaller Policy Review Group to investigate the options, and concluded that the preferred option for the New Service Delivery Model should be that of the formation of a new Trust. It was considered that this option best matched the Council's desire to achieve the objectives and key values the Council would wish for the service.

- **Developing a National Adoption Service for Wales**

The Committee gave an overview on proposals by Welsh Government to establish a National Adoption Service for Wales.

Street Scene, Regeneration and Safety

Membership

Councillors Roger Jeavons (Chair), Miqdad Al-Nuaimi, Tom Bond, Chris Evans, Matthew Evans, David Fouweather, Paul Hannon, Paul Huntley, Sally Mlewa and Noel Trigg.

Chairs Introduction:

As Chair of this Committee, I remain committed to developing a culture of effective Member led Scrutiny. Since refreshing our work programmes in September, we undertaken a number of key pieces of work focussed on evaluating the services within our portfolio and ensuring positive outcomes for Newport's communities.

In line with the innovations introduced by the Scrutiny Improvement Group, we have also adopted a number of new working practices as a Committee to ensure our work is undertaken in a business-like manner. Working particularly well for this Committee is the new action sheet system, making sure that Members' questions are followed up on promptly and matters resolved quickly. I have also encouraged Members to work as a team in delivering effective outcomes for tasks undertaken, working together with the Officers involved, and in developing a positive relationship with the Executive.

We have undertaken a number of important pieces of work this year, including an investigation into the options for the future delivery of the Council's Property Services. One of the key recommendations following this investigation was that scrutiny should be involved in major projects at an earlier stage, and I am pleased to see this recommendation being acted upon in some of the projects we have considered more recently.

In the coming year, I shall endeavour to build on the success achieved in 2013/14, by making the most of our strengths, building our skills of challenge and evaluation, and continuing to encouraging the early involvement of Scrutiny in major decisions and policies made by the Council.

Our Activities 2013-14

This year our work has included the following:

- **Draft Improvement Plan**

The Committee has made an input into the process for establishing the draft Improvement Plan priorities for the Council in 2013/14 and 2014/15.

- **Review of Property Services**

The review looked at potential alternative delivery models for the Council's Property Services. The Committee interrogate the work on the project to date, tested the options considered, the justification for the preferred option and progress on the development of an appropriate business case to take forward the preferred option for future delivery of the Council's Property Services.

A policy Review Group was established to undertake the investigation.

- **Southern Distributor Road**

As part of the role of scrutiny in examining external providers, the Committee met with representatives of Morgan Vinci, the Project Manager for the Road, and discussed issues raised in relation to the operation and safety record of the Southern Distributer Road.

Members had raised concerns regarding road safety in the light of recent accidents on the Southern Distributer Road. Other issues discussed included the impact of a blue light incident and the likely impact of developments at Llanwern.

- **Police and Crime Panel – Presentation**

Representatives of the Gwent Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner outlined the key duties of the Commissioner, and his current priorities. Information was also provided about the funding allocations for projects within Newport.

The Chair of the Gwent Police and Crime Panel introduced a presentation about the establishment of the Panel, its structure, key roles and powers, achievements, challenges, and future direction.

- **Wales Audit Office Neighbourhood Working**

The Committee received a report on the outcome of the Wales Audit Office review of the Local Service Board's Neighbourhood Working Project, as part of its review of the Council's transformation programme in its Regulatory Programme for Performance Audit (April 2012 – March 2013).

The Committee endorsed the Improvement Proposals made by the WAO and the implementation of the Action Plan.

- **Ongoing Policy Development and Review**

The Committee will be involved in the review and development of policy for other key plans and services, The Committee will also regularly undertake performance and outcomes monitoring of many and various other matters within the Committee's portfolio.

- **City Centre Redevelopment**

Whilst recognising issues of commercial sensitivity, the Committee was updated on the position in relation to city centre redevelopment proposals and asked for further reports on key developments as appropriate.

Action Plan 2013-14: Update

Task	Who / When	Status (R/A/G)	Progress
<p>1. Set up Working Group</p>	<p>Scrutiny Team</p> <p>Immediate</p>	<p>GREEN - completed</p>	<p>Action completed.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Improvement Group has been set up and has already introduced a number of new processes, which are outlined within the 2014/15 Annual Report. The Annual Report also sets out planned actions for 2014/15 to address outstanding issues from this plan and emerging priorities for improvement, and ensure the current pace of change is maintained.</p>
<p>2. Set up a regular joint meeting with representatives of Cabinet to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss how to enhance existing links with Cabinet • Work on common issues such as work programming, policy development and accountability • Ensure that scrutiny is involved in the early stages of policy development and scoping policy work • Clarify the links between the scrutiny function and Performance Board • Discuss opportunities to widen the scope for monitoring the outcomes of decisions where considered necessary 	<p>Scrutiny Improvement Group (SIG) / EM</p> <p>First meeting by end 2013</p>	<p>GREEN – on track</p>	<p>Relationships with Cabinet was also picked up under the Corporate Assessment. The action plan was agreed by Cabinet on 21 October and included the following action:</p> <p><i>2B: Initiate regular meetings between Scrutiny and the Executive, to clarify roles and responsibilities and establish protocols for interaction.</i></p> <p>Initial progress on this priority had been delayed, but a joint meeting between Cabinet and the Scrutiny Improvement Group was held on 11 March 2014, with a set of priorities agreed. This meeting will now convene on a quarterly basis to develop communication and protocols.</p> <p>As explained to the Joint Meeting of the Scrutiny Committees on 13 May, the main priority in the last year has been to improve work programming to make the scrutiny process more “Member-led”, so this has been the main focus for the team. Progress had been delayed in developing relationships with the Executive, but this is now being taken forward and is already making a positive impact.</p>

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<p>3. Consider and recommend a member development programme for scrutiny members and officers based around identified needs, to ensure the member development programme is member led. A questioning skills update should be included in this.</p>	<p>SIG / EM Immediate / Ongoing</p>	<p>GREEN – on track</p>	<p>This is currently being considered by the Scrutiny Improvement Group. Initial discussions have been held to discuss the pros and cons of different training approaches, and the Scrutiny Team are working with staff in HR to develop an appropriate programme, linked in with wider Member Development activities. Work is also underway on a Gwent-wide programme to enhance the “Scrutiny Challenge”, which is likely to form a large part of the training programme for the rest of the year.</p> <p>Staff training on scrutiny also needs to be planned once Cabinet and Scrutiny have agreed their protocols and any new decision making processes. This needs to be linked with the planned work on internal communications.</p>
<p>4. Meet with WAO to discuss how communication can be enhanced between the Council’s scrutiny function and the regulators, including sharing of work programmes and review outcomes; Discuss with WAO how they would see an improvement developing.</p>	<p>SIG / EM By end 2013</p>	<p>GREEN – on track</p>	<p>WAO attended the joint meeting of Scrutiny Committees on 11 November to discuss the findings and outcomes of the National Scrutiny Study, as well as the outcomes of the Corporate Assessment.</p> <p>All Scrutiny Committee agendas, minutes and reports are now sent to WAO for information.</p>
<p>5. Develop a public engagement strategy for scrutiny, to improve public access to the scrutiny process</p>	<p>SIG / EM Spring 2014</p>	<p>AMBER – delayed progress</p>	<p>This work is underway but is complex and is unlikely to be completed before the Summer.</p> <p>Public engagement is a key priority for the Scrutiny Improvement Group. Officers have started to pull together information behind the scenes; this will be considered by the SIG over the coming months with a view to developing a comprehensive strategy.</p> <p>This work is complex because it links to a number of other strands also in development at the moment: these include different ways of working / scrutiny methodologies; wider customer insight / consultation work in the council; and</p>

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			internal communications / staff training on scrutiny. All these will have an impact on the final strategy and need to be developed in tandem with each other.
6. Look at ways of working and examine the range of methods available in carrying out scrutiny work	SIG / EM Ongoing	GREEN – on track	<p>The Scrutiny Improvement Group is considering a series of reports looking at different ways of working. To date these have focussed upon improving the administration and organisation of meetings, but in future the Group will also be looking at different methodologies for undertaking scrutiny work. So far, the Group has agreed new processes for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work programming - Action sheets - Pre-meeting briefings - Improvement plan / service plan consideration - Cover reports by Scrutiny Officers <p>Initial discussions have taken place to look at the use of technology to support alternative communication methods.</p>
7. Look at how to ensure the work programme for scrutiny is Member-led and owned by the individual Committees; ensure Members own the review programme by identifying potential areas for review and considering them for further scoping and possible inclusion in the work programme.	SIG / EM Ongoing	GREEN – on track	<p>The Scrutiny Improvement Group agreed a new process for work programming, and a Work Planning Conference was held on 30 September. All Scrutiny Members were invited to attend, and discussions were held with senior officers to identify potential topics for the work programmes. Following additional research on the suggested topics by the Scrutiny Team, a shortlist of items was presented to the Scrutiny Committees at their October meetings, and a final list of topics selected. Due to the current pace of change across the Council, we will review the new programmes after six months (April 2014) to ensure they are focussed on the right issues. This will also be an opportunity for Members to reflect on the new process.</p>
8. Examine opportunities for more external scrutiny to be considered by the Committees	SIG / EM By Summer	AMBER – delayed progress	<p>“Scrutiny of the LSB” was put forward as a potential work programme topic for the Street Scene, Regeneration and Safety Scrutiny Committee. The Committee agreed to refer</p>

Task	Who / When	Status (R/A/G)	Progress
	2014		<p>the matter to the Scrutiny Improvement Group for investigation.</p> <p>Further background work needs to be done by the Scrutiny Team before this can be taken forward. This has been delayed due to staffing resources within the team, but progress is expected in the next few months with scrutiny of the Single Integrated Plan.</p>
<p>9. Look at how to develop better links between the Improvement Plan and the work of scrutiny</p>	<p>SIG / EM</p> <p>Spring 2014</p>	<p>GREEN – on track</p>	<p>The Scrutiny Improvement Group has agreed a new approach to consideration of the Improvement Plan and Service Plans, giving Scrutiny greater input into the Improvement Plan and more focussed consideration of Service Plans. The following draft timetable has been agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nov/Dec: consideration of “long list” of Improvement Plan priorities - Mar/April: final draft of proposed Improvement Plan priorities - July: Service Plans – end of year review for previous year / agreed service plan for coming year - Oct/Nov: half year monitoring of service plans <p>This approach cuts out consideration of draft service plans in favour of earlier, more meaningful involvement in the Improvement Plan. Earlier consideration of the Improvement Plan priorities should give Members much greater input into the content of the Improvement Plan, which in turn heavily influences the content of the service plans. Scrutiny Members will still be involved in monitoring service plans at the half year point, to ensure delivery is on track, and receiving end of year information to see that work has been completed. This will be presented alongside the newly agreed service plan, to see that any incomplete work is being taken forward.</p>

Task	Who / When	Status (R/A/G)	Progress
10. Develop a Witness Guide for Scrutiny	EM / JE By end 2013	GREEN – completed	This has been agreed by the Scrutiny Improvement Group and published.
11. Enhance links with the Corporate Management Team and the Council's Policy team to ensure that scrutiny plays a full role in developing key policies, developing better links with the improvement plan, and in relation to performance and outcome monitoring	Scrutiny Team / Senior Leadership Team / SIG Immediate / Ongoing	GREEN – on track	This links in with recommendations made in the Corporate Assessment in relation to governance arrangements and performance management, which will now be addressed by the action plan agreed by Cabinet on 21 October. Relevant actions include: 2D: Review current policy and decision making processes to clarify roles and responsibilities of the different parties and set out a corporate standard for the consideration of new policies, allowing for proper and full consultation with Members. 6D: The plan for delivery of the 14/15 Improvement Plan includes arrangements for public consultation and for early consultation with scrutiny in order to deliver a plan which complies further with LM 2009.
12. Develop communication by ensuring that WAO receive all agendas, minutes and reports	Team Immediate	GREEN – completed	WAO contact has been added to the distribution lists for all agendas, minutes and reports.
13. Ensure a link to the Handbook is distributed to all members of the Council annually	EM / JE Annual	GREEN – on track	Scrutiny Team is currently updating the handbook and looking at alternative ways to present this information e.g. a web-based format / via the intranet. The new Handbook will be distributed to all Members once this work is complete. We are also developing supporting information for staff about scrutiny to compliment the information provided to Members.
14. Work with colleagues in Gwent and	Team	GREEN –	The Gwent Scrutiny Network is up and running, and

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beyond to identify best practices for discussion with elected members; involvement with the Gwent Scrutiny Network	Ongoing	on track	collectively we have been successful in securing money from the Welsh Government's Scrutiny Development Fund to deliver the "Gwent Scrutiny Challenge", a conference and follow-up training package aimed at improving the quality of scrutiny and challenge within each authority.
15. Enhance links with colleagues within the Council and beyond and to look at a range of methods to promote and support the scrutiny function	Team Ongoing	GREEN – on track	Through delivery of this action plan, work is ongoing to improve scrutiny practice and enhance the reputation of the scrutiny function within and outside the Council. The findings of the Corporate Assessment broadly reflect the findings of this study, and will further support us in developing and strengthening Scrutiny in Newport. We hope that the Gwent Scrutiny Challenge will also raise the profile of scrutiny in Newport and across Gwent, providing a training model that can be promoted and rolled out nationally.
16. Examine what development opportunities are available for team members as they arise.	Team Ongoing	GREEN – on track	Training and Development is a standing item on team meeting agendas and is discussed every week. Annual PDPs look more in depth at staff development for individuals, and will be monitored in year through one-to-one meetings with EM / RJ.
17. Use a composite work programme for the Cabinet and Scrutiny functions agreed by the Chief Officer Team and used as a working document by Democratic Administration and Scrutiny Support staff to inform the work programming function.	EM / AB Ongoing	GREEN – on track	A composite work programme is in place as a working document, informed by the published scrutiny work programme. The Corporate Assessment suggests that this document is developed and distributed more widely, so officers will be looking at the best way to achieve this.
18. Work with report authors to ensure that scrutiny reviews are led by the Scrutiny Team to help ensure that information is more focussed and reports are scoped to achieve identified items.	EM / Team Ongoing	GREEN – completed	The Scrutiny Improvement Group has agreed a new process for reports to Scrutiny. Scrutiny reports will be introduced by a cover report written by the Scrutiny Officer, giving an independent view on the report and presenting any additional information and research to help Members in their scrutiny role. This new system has now been

Task	Who / When	Status (R/A/G)	Progress
			implemented.
19. Make sure there is a process followed in the early stages of every review, thinking about who needs to be consulted, involved etc.	Team Ongoing	GREEN – completed	The Scoping Report template and guidance is used at the beginning of every review to ensure that work is properly planned and the right people are involved.
20. To continue to carry out self-assessment of the scrutiny function in Newport	Team / SIG Summer 2014	GREEN – on track	Scrutiny Team to discuss when best to carry this out. Involve the Scrutiny Improvement Group in planning and conducting the self-assessment. This is likely to form part of the follow up for the Gwent Scrutiny Challenge.

Planned Actions 2014-15

The Scrutiny Improvement Group has identified the following priorities for the next 12 months:

Developing the Relationship with Cabinet

- 1 To work together with Cabinet to:
 - Continue regular meetings between Scrutiny and the Executive
 - Develop protocols for interaction between Scrutiny and the Executive
 - Clarify the links between the scrutiny function and Performance Board
 - Review policy and decision making processes to clarify roles, responsibilities and expected timescales / stages / considerations
 - Discuss opportunities to widen the scope for monitoring the outcomes of decisions where considered necessary

Training and Development

- 2 To complete the review of training and development for Scrutiny Members and officers, based around identified needs.
- 3 To oversee delivery of and take part in the Gwent Scrutiny Challenge 2014.

Communication and Engagement

- 4 To develop a public engagement strategy for scrutiny, to improve public access to the scrutiny process.
- 5 To examine links with other communication and engagement processes within the Council to ensure processes are consistent and duplication is avoided.
- 6 To review internal communication about Scrutiny:
 - To update the Scrutiny Handbook to include alternative ways of working and communication tools.
 - To review the format of internal information to improve accessibility (e.g. publishing the Handbook on the intranet).
 - To link internal communication with the agreed training and development plan for Members and officers.

Work Programming and Scrutiny Methods

- 7 To examine opportunities for more external scrutiny to be considered by the Committees, in view of the likely requirement to scrutinise LSB partners in the future.
- 8 To examine the presentation of work programme information, and how this can be linked to the Cabinet work programme and the composite work programme document used by officers.
- 9 To review ways of working, and look at the use of technology to support alternative meeting formats and information sharing between Members.