

## AMBITIOUS SCRUTINY AT STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

### ACTION PLAN AND THE WAY FORWARD following Training Session on 7 February 2008

Action Ref	ACTION	METHODOLOGY	LEAD	TIMESCALE	DEMONSTRABLE BENEFITS
A1	Involve Cabinet Members in scrutiny development and training.	<p>Continuation of quarterly meetings with the Leader and Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny.</p> <p>Cabinet Member participation in scrutiny training. Should this be strongly encouraged?</p> <p>Joint Member/Officer training around the scrutiny function.</p> <p>Joint Cabinet Member and Scrutiny Member attendance to be encouraged at quarterly meetings with Heads of Service.</p>	<p>PDSO programme meetings.</p> <p>PDSO</p> <p>PDSO</p>	<p>to Ongoing.</p> <p>To be implemented from May 2008 as part of the induction for new Councillors.</p> <p>Beginning of next Civic Year.</p>	<p>Will raise awareness and understanding of the overview and scrutiny function in a positive way, demonstrating how it can add value to the organisation and give focus to corporate priorities.</p> <p>Enable knowledge and experiences to be shared within a particular area of work and to take projects forward positively.</p>

## **A1 UPDATES ON PROGRESS**

- Quarterly Meetings arranged for 2009-10.
- Scrutiny & Performance Training scheduled for 5 June postponed – new date to be arranged.
- All Members, including Cabinet Members, were invited to a County-wide Scrutiny Conference in October 2008.
- A county-wide training session took place for lead scrutiny members at Kingsholm on Wednesday, 15 April 2009, to focus on core scrutiny skills including how to ask the right questions, the role of witnesses, achieving consensus, planning and preparation and running meetings.
- Project Management Training for members of the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11 June 2009, in advance of meeting with the Canal Project Manager on 18 June 2009.

Action Ref	ACTION	METHODOLOGY	LEAD	TIMESCALE	DEMONSTRABLE BENEFITS
A2	Encourage and motivate Members and Officers, including the Cabinet and Chief Officers to fully participate in their Scrutiny role.	<p>All Overview and Scrutiny Members are eligible to serve on inquiry teams or working groups of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, together with officer support as necessary. Extend this to all non Executive Members.</p> <p>The Chair of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Leader to send a joint invitation, at the appropriate time, to all non Executive Members to invite them to participate in new inquiries.</p> <p>Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny to hold bi-annual discussions with Cabinet Members and Chief Officers on the effectiveness of scrutiny and the way forward.</p>	<p>Scrutiny Chairs with any proposals being considered at the annual update of the Constitution.</p> <p>Scrutiny Chairs &amp; Leader of Council</p> <p>Scrutiny Chairs</p>	<p>AGM 2008.</p> <p>To commence October 2008.</p> <p>First meeting to be held in November 2008.</p>	Will highlight the importance and significance of the scrutiny function and an acceptance of such that will allow Members and Officers to participate to their full potential.

#### UPDATES ON PROGRESS

- The first bi-annual meeting of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny with Cabinet Members and Chief Officers took place on 3 November 2008. A further meeting took place on 22 June 2009.

Action Ref	ACTION	METHODOLOGY	LEAD	TIMESCALE	DEMONSTRABLE BENEFITS
A3	Overview and Scrutiny to be involved in early stages of policy development.	<p>Agree a protocol to identify issues/areas of work where the overview and scrutiny function can be engaged at the outset by the Executive and how this can be achieved.</p> <p>To be discussed at the first joint meeting with the Executive in November 2008.</p>	Chief Executive		Early engagement to ensure that Council policies are robust and effective; likely to negate the need for call-in.

#### UPDATES ON PROGRESS

- Use of one page strategies and selection criteria can assist with this.

Action Ref	ACTION	METHODOLOGY	LEAD	TIMESCALE	DEMONSTRABLE BENEFITS
A4	Look at issues not identified by the Cabinet.	<p>Current arrangements allow Overview and Scrutiny Councillors to request items to go on overview and scrutiny committee agenda.</p> <p>Proactive and influential focus on high impact issues affecting the District rather than a greater number of smaller issues. Produce one page strategies setting out way forward, engaging appropriate expert and specialist advice as required.</p> <p>Under the Councillor Call for Action, Councillors will be able to raise matters on behalf of their constituents to the overview and scrutiny committees.</p>	<p>SDS+EO</p> <p>Scrutiny Chairs in consultation with the Chief Executive.</p> <p>PDSO</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Civic year 2008/09</p> <p>Upon publication of guidance to implement the provisions of the L G and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.</p>	<p>Will demonstrate a proactive and effective overview and scrutiny function, rather than reactive which can positively benefit the community and the Council by working with the Executive on issues raised.</p>

#### UPDATES ON PROGRESS

- The Committees have each produced and continue to develop their own business plan which is reviewed regularly, allowing Committee Members the opportunity to shape the future work of the Committees.
- One page strategy, selection criteria and optional form available for Scrutiny Members to use to request an item to go on scrutiny agenda are available.
- Councillor Call for Action – National Guidance on implementation has been received. Protocol for Councillor Call for Action approved at the Council AGM on 21 May 2009.

Action Ref	ACTION	METHODOLOGY	LEAD	TIMESCALE	DEMONSTRABLE BENEFITS
A5	Increased resources to support the scrutiny function in terms of dedicated officer support, Member development and training.	<p>Employment of dedicated Scrutiny Officer(s) to undertake specific aspects e.g. conduct inquiries/consultations.</p> <p>Establish an ongoing programme to develop scrutiny skills and subject knowledge for OSC members.</p> <p>Development of job role for Overview and Scrutiny members that will clearly define what is expected of an overview and scrutiny Member.</p>	<p>Chief Executive</p> <p>PDSO/Scrutiny Chairs/Member Development Working Group.</p> <p>As above.</p>	<p>To be dealt with as part of the consideration of the Annual Report.</p> <p>Ongoing from Civic Year 2008/09.</p> <p>As above.</p>	<p>Provides dedicated support and advice for each of the Committees, enabling business programmes and work arising therefrom to be co-ordinated and undertaken as necessary.</p> <p>Confirms requirements of overview and scrutiny members with a development programme meeting skills and knowledge necessary to enable roles and responsibilities to be carried out effectively.</p>

#### UPDATES ON PROGRESS

- Issue of dedicated scrutiny officer support considered by both Overview and Scrutiny Committees in April and October 2008. The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, in consultation with the Strategic Directors, undertook a further review (November 2008), the outcome of which had been to leave the current arrangements in place for the next 18 months.
- CfPS Guide - Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government: A handbook for elected Members issued to all O&S Members at start of 2008-09.
- New date to be arranged for Scrutiny and Performance training (postponed 5 June 2008).
- County-wide Autumn Conference – 22 October 2008 – Scrutiny: Making a difference in Gloucestershire – all Members of the Council invited to attend.
- County-wide training for lead scrutiny members took place on 15 April 2009 to focus on core scrutiny skills.

Action Ref	ACTION	METHODOLOGY	LEAD	TIMESCALE	DEMONSTRABLE BENEFITS
A6	<p>Raising the Profile of Overview and Scrutiny both internally and externally.</p> <p>Make greater use of the community when undertaking research/consultation around inquiries or specific areas of work and promoting and publicising the outcomes by the means set out in action A7 below.</p>	<p>Examine the current function of overview and scrutiny and how it is undertaken and can be improved.</p> <p>Inform staff of overview and scrutiny's aim and purpose, via Proud of Stroud sessions.</p>	<p>SDS+EO</p> <p>SDS+EO</p>	<p>May 2008.</p> <p>Summer 2008.</p>	<p>Will change the negative perception of overview and scrutiny, making clear its function and purpose within the organisation and how internal and external customers can play a part in effective scrutiny.</p> <p>Will introduce a positive perception of overview and scrutiny by embracing the wishes of the community.</p>

#### UPDATES ON PROGRESS

- Improvements made to format of agenda and format and development of business plans.
- In light of training provided by external audit, Performance and Audit Overview and Scrutiny Agenda reformatted to separate audit matters from performance and scrutiny matters.
- Production of Scrutiny Action Plan to take the overview and scrutiny function forward. To be reviewed in light of Constitutional and Management changes.
- New Scrutiny webpages constructed and implemented.
- Introduction of Chair's agenda for each meeting to assist the Chair with the running of the meeting.
- Agenda planning meetings held approx six weeks in advance of next Committee meetings to enable greater forward planning for meetings.
- Improved format for Annual Report – also available on website.
- Canal Inquiry day – 25 March 2008, used to consult internally/externally around proposed canal development project.
- Presentations on aim and purpose of Overview and Scrutiny undertaken at Proud of Stroud during September 2008, with Member involvement.
- PAOSC has been given a new role to monitor and keep under review the Council's treasury management systems and processes.
- Excelsis training (performance management system) undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny members to help monitor the performance of the Council's services.
- New Audit Committee established at Council AGM on 21 May 2009. Audit responsibilities no longer a part of the Performance and Audit Overview and Scrutiny Committee, now re-designated Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Action Ref	ACTION	METHODOLOGY	LEAD	TIMESCALE	DEMONSTRABLE BENEFITS
A7	Recognition of Scrutiny and its achievements.	<p>Annual report 2007-08 and recommendations to Council for implementation.</p> <p>Publicise the value that scrutiny has added to an area of work in Council publications, on the Council website and via press releases.</p>	<p>SDS+EO.</p> <p>SDS+EO.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>From May 2008.</p>	<p>Will raise the profile of overview and scrutiny, how it has added value to the organisation and how it can continue to do so, demonstrating that overview and scrutiny is a critical friend and can work effectively with the Executive.</p>

#### UPDATES ON PROGRESS

- Improved Annual Report format – Annual Report for 2007-08 submitted to and approved by Council on 17 April 2008. There are some areas of work to be picked up and taken forward by Overview and Scrutiny, from the Annual Report.
- Annual Report for 2008-09 approved by Council on 16 April 2009.

Action Ref	ACTION	METHODOLOGY	LEAD	TIMESCALE	DEMONSTRABLE BENEFITS
A8	Logical process for projects from scoping through to implementation of recommendations – make a reality!	Develop and implement standard short/shape templates and processes for projects, e.g. report for scoping, report for updates and final report with recommendations.	Policy Officers.	From May 2008.	Will enable all projects to be structured and processed equally, allowing consistency.

**UPDATES ON PROGRESS**

- Lead Officers to use existing scoping report templates, alongside the 'one page strategy' arising from the scrutiny training event.

Action Ref	ACTION	METHODOLOGY	LEAD	TIMESCALE	DEMONSTRABLE BENEFITS
A9	Use overview and scrutiny as a reference point for continuous improvement.	Develop and implement new and/or review existing frameworks for monitoring the quality of services and the Council's performance.	Policy Officers.	From May 2008.	Will demonstrate how overview and scrutiny can provide effective challenge by improving performance levels and quality of services in a proactive and positive manner.

**UPDATES ON PROGRESS**

- Implementation of new performance management system 'Excelsis' – April 2008; Excelsis training undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny Members during October 2008.

Action Ref	ACTION	METHODOLOGY	LEAD	TIMESCALE	DEMONSTRABLE BENEFITS
A10	Admit to being wrong in order to put right – learning to be better.	Find and listen!  Listen to others and take on constructive criticism, with a view to adapting or making changes to put right.	Scrutiny Chairs.  Scrutiny Chairs.	Ongoing.  Ongoing.	Will ensure that work is being done in the best interests of the community and the Council and shows a willingness to listen and to accept when change needs to happen to make things work.

**UPDATES ON PROGRESS**

ENDS