



Scrutiny Boards' Annual Report to the City Council

2007 / 2008

To be considered at the City Council meeting
on 28th October, 2008

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Contents

	Page
Foreword	2
Section A Background	3
Section B The work of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee	5
Section C The work of Scrutiny Board 1	8
Section D The work of Scrutiny Board 2	11
Section E The work of Scrutiny Board 3	14
Section F The work of Scrutiny Board 4	18
Section G Support for Scrutiny	23
Section H Future Development of Scrutiny	24
Section I Further Information	25
Appendix 1 Structure Chart	26
Appendix 2 Action Plan	27

Foreword



As the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, I am pleased to report that the Scrutiny process continued to develop during 2007/2008, building on the work of the previous year.

This report provides an overview of Scrutiny activity during 2007/2008, demonstrating the useful work done by the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee and the Scrutiny Boards. The Audit Sub-Group of Scrutiny Board 1 (which reports separately to the Council on its work) has also continued to develop, following the good start made in 2006/2007.

I believe that Scrutiny has a vital part to play in the governance of the City Council and I will be seeking to strengthen its role during my time as Chair. In particular, I will be working to raise the profile of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee in leading and developing the Scrutiny process, extending its scope and identifying key issues to be addressed.

In April this year, the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee agreed an Action Plan aimed at driving forward the development of Scrutiny so that it makes an increasing contribution to achieving the Council's objectives. Some of the developments identified in the Plan have been implemented and are already making a difference to the way that Scrutiny operates. Work on implementing the remainder of the Action Plan will continue throughout this year.

The Scrutiny Boards' work programmes are obviously the driving force for everything that Scrutiny does. Those agreed this year draw out issues relevant to improving the delivery of services and include opportunities for involving the public. I should also like to see the earlier involvement of Scrutiny in the development of Council policies so that a wider range of Members can bring their experience and expertise to this work. All of this will be challenging, as will implementing the new statutory responsibilities for scrutinising partnerships and setting up procedures for the Councillor Call for Action which will provide opportunities to work with a wider range of organisations to improve outcomes for the people of Coventry.

While we have much to do, we are building from a firm base. I was particularly pleased that the scrutiny review into the experiences of older people in hospital and after discharge carried out with partners during the year was recently recognised at the Centre for Public Scrutiny's annual awards, winning both the health and overall categories. The judges summed up the impact of this piece of work by saying that "this review added value and really made a difference to people's lives", something we are striving to achieve in everything that we do.

As Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee this year I am looking forward to the challenge we face and to realising Scrutiny's aim of further developing its effectiveness. I know that I can rely on the support of my Scrutiny colleagues, who will be doing all the hard work, to help me in delivering this aim.

Councillor Cliff Ridge
Chair, Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

Section A - Background

Scrutiny in Coventry

Scrutiny's role is to agree high-quality, relevant recommendations, that are supported by the Executive and partners and lead to measurable service improvements and/or tangible benefits for Coventry residents that would not otherwise have been achieved.

Good public scrutiny has four key features:

- It is relevant to the City Council's plans and priorities, and those of our partners
- It reflects the concerns of the public, and involves the public in what it is doing
- It is independent, open, takes the initiative and uses available resources well
- It leads to improvements in public services, and helps to secure better value for money from public expenditure

The Structure of Scrutiny

Scrutiny in Coventry is carried out by a Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, which has overall responsibility for the work of the scrutiny function, and four Scrutiny Boards, each with a remit relating to Cabinet Member Portfolios. In addition, the work of scrutinising audit issues is carried out by a sub-group of Scrutiny Board 1.

A chart showing the scrutiny structure in 2007/2008 is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

Scrutiny functions and powers

The Council's Constitution defines the functions and powers of Scrutiny as follows:

Functions

- Assist the Council and the Cabinet in the development of its budget and policy framework by in-depth analysis of policy issues
- Conduct research, community and other consultation in the analysis of policy issues and possible options
- Consider and implement mechanisms to encourage and enhance community participation in the development of policy options
- Question members of the Cabinet and/or other Committees/Forums and Chief Officers about their views on issues and proposals affecting the area
- Liaise with other external organisations operating in the area, whether national, regional or local, to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working.

Powers

- Review and scrutinise the decisions made by and performance of the Cabinet and/or other Committees/Forums and Council Officers both in relation to individual decisions and over time
- Review and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas
- Question members of the Cabinet and/or other Committees/Forums and Council Officers about their decisions and performance, whether generally in comparison with service plans and targets over a period of time, or in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects
- Make recommendations to the Cabinet and/or appropriate Committee/Forum and/or Council arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process
- Review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the Board and local people about their activities and performance
- Question and gather evidence from any person (with their consent)
- Conduct scrutiny of health related activity/services within the City

Coventry City Council Constitution, Part 2.6 Articles 2.6.7.1 and 2.6.7.2

The annual report is a requirement of the Constitution:

- "Scrutiny Boards must report annually to inform Council of their work and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate".

Coventry City Council Constitution, Part 2.6 Article 2.6.7.5

Section B - the Work of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee



Members:

Councillors Arrowsmith (Chair), Duggins, Hunter, Lee, Maton, Mutton, Ridge and Williams (Deputy Chair)

Co-opted Member for all matters: Councillor Clifford

Co-opted Members for education matters: Mrs. D. Beech, Mrs. S. Hanson, Mr. R. Potter and Mrs. L. Wainscot

Councillor David Arrowsmith

1 Remit

In 2007/2008, the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee was responsible for the overall management of the Scrutiny function (including call-ins); consideration of cross-cutting issues; and oversight of the portfolio of the Cabinet Member (Policy, Leadership and Governance).

2 Chair's Introduction

Of the Committee's work in 2007/2008, probably the most important aspect related to the continuing development of Scrutiny. A survey of Members' Support Services for 2007/2008 was carried out in March 2008 and completed by 47 Members. The results are shown as follows, along with the corresponding figures for the 2006/2007 survey (which was completed by 35 Members):-

- 59% considered that Scrutiny was effective (60% in 2006/2007)
- 79% considered that they were heavily engaged or engaged a fair amount with Scrutiny (62% in 2006/7 were satisfied with their role in Scrutiny)
- 46% were satisfied with the level of public engagement in Scrutiny (28.6% were satisfied in 2006/2007)

These results showed some improvements in 2007/2008, but also showed that there was still room for further development. Therefore in April the Committee agreed an action plan (attached as Appendix 2 to this report) aimed at addressing this.

I am pleased to report that the number of call-ins reduced by half in 2007/2008 compared with 2006/2007. In my opinion these are not the best way to influence policy-making: earlier scrutiny involvement in policy discussions is a much more effective way to do this and this is a continuing aim. I do, however, acknowledge that call-ins allow detailed examination of issues and can result in different, more informed, decisions.

3 Activity

As last year, although scheduled to meet weekly (to ensure that call-ins could be dealt with as quickly as possible) meetings were cancelled if there were no call-ins or if the amount of business did not warrant a meeting.

Issues considered by the Committee were as follows:-

Scrutiny Management issues:-

- **Call-ins** - 9 were considered during the year (compared with 18 in 2006/2007). One of these led to the establishment of a Scrutiny task and finish group to draw up revised guidelines for bailiffs dealing with vulnerable people. The recommendations of this task and finish group were adopted by the Cabinet Member.
- **Chairs' reports** - the Committee continued to receive reports from Scrutiny Board Chairs on the progress being made on their Boards' work programmes.
- **Urgent issues** - the Committee received reports which had been considered by the Cabinet as matters of urgency.
- **Annual reports on outside bodies** - The Committee also carried out an exercise to rationalise the list of outside bodies from which annual reports are required.

Cross-cutting issues:-

- **Serco contract** – the Review Group established by the Committee in 2006/2007 to consider Serco's (the Council's IT provider) performance against its contract completed its work by endorsing proposals for the future of the contract.
- **Review of Community Centres** – the Committee considered a report setting out a proposed framework for the future relationship between the Council and community centres.
- **Other issues** – other issues considered were the Lord Mayor's reports back on conferences he attended; the Council's Whistleblowing Policy ; the Sustainable Communities Strategy (forwarding comments to the Cabinet); a response to a Government consultation document on "Discrimination Law Review"; a progress report on the Value for Money Partnership and a report on the Council's pre-budget situation.

Oversight of the Portfolio of the Cabinet Member (Policy, Leadership and Governance)

- The Committee held two meetings (one in August 2007 and the other in January 2008) with the Cabinet Member to discuss his Strategic Plan.
- The Committee considered a report on progress made on the Corporate Plan and raised a number of issues, including the sometimes low attendance at Member training events and the level of educational attainment of looked after children.

4 Recommendations

- **Call-ins** – the Committee made recommendations in relation to Culture and Leisure fees and charges, the recovery of the overpayment of Housing Benefit, the policy for time off for special purposes and the relocation of EMR.
- **Annual reports on outside bodies** - in the case of two bodies (the Local Government Association Rural Commission and the Warwickshire Rural Community Council), it decided to recommend that the Council should not continue to appoint representatives to them.
- **Serco contract** – the Review Group supported the proposals for the future of the contract and recommended that the Cabinet do the same.
- **Review of Community Associations and Community Centres** – the Committee asked the Cabinet to take into account a number of factors (relating to personnel, funding and buildings) when the strategy for the future was developed.
- **Whistleblowing Policy** – the Committee forwarded to the Standards Committee recommendations aimed at safeguarding staff who "whistleblow".

5 Outcomes

- **Call-ins** – in relation to Culture and Leisure fees and charges, the Cabinet Member revised some of these, as requested by the Board. In relation to the recovery of the overpayment of Housing Benefit and to the policy for time off for special purposes, the Cabinet Members agreed to revise their decisions as requested by the Board.
- **Annual reports on outside bodies** – the Council did not appoint a representative to the Local Government Association Rural Commission, following the recommendation of the Committee.
- **Serco contract** – the Cabinet agreed to support the proposals for the future contract, as recommended by the Review Group
- **Review of Community Associations and Community Centres** – the Cabinet agreed to take into account the factors raised by the Committee.
- **Whistleblowing Policy** – the Standards Committee accepted the Committee's recommendations and asked for the policy to be amended to reflect them.

Section C - the Work of Scrutiny Board 1



Councillor Andrew Williams

Members:

Councillors Charley, Chater, Crookes (Deputy Chair), Kelsey, Nellist, Skipper, Townshend and Williams (Chair)

1 Remit

In 2007/2008, Scrutiny Board 1 was responsible for oversight of the portfolios of the Cabinet Members (Culture, Leisure and Libraries), (Finance, Procurement and Value for Money) and (Customer, Workforce and Legal Services) and for audit Issues.

2 Chair's Introduction

The work of Scrutiny Board 1 relates mainly to the Council's support functions which, whilst they may have a lower public profile than some other areas of the Council's work, nevertheless underpin the smooth running of all the Council's business.

As in previous years, the Board devoted a good deal of its time to monitoring what had been happening in various areas of its remit, for example the improvement of the Housing Benefits service, ICT related areas (including Coventry Direct and the contract with Serco, the Council's IT provider) and the Council's Equality Strategy.

However, the issue on which the Board concentrated most of its efforts was helping the Cabinet Member (Human Resources, Corporate and Customer Services and officers in her efforts to reduce sickness absence levels across the whole of the Council. Unfortunately, the Board's work (detailed below) did not achieve the desired outcome, as sickness levels were marginally higher in 2007/8 than in 2006/7. Nevertheless, the Board's activity did help to raise awareness of the issue, particularly amongst managers.

As Members know, my role has now changed to that of a Cabinet Member. However, I know that the Scrutiny Board under my successor (Councillor David Arrowsmith) intends to do further work to address this difficult issue.

3 Activity

Further details of the issues considered during the year are as follows:-

Sickness absence – as mentioned previously, this issue was the main focus of the Board's work during the year and the Board considered various aspects on a number of occasions:-

- It considered the quarterly monitoring reports made to Cabinet
- It held informal meetings with the Chief Executive, the Director of Children, Learning and Young People, the Director of City Development, the Director of City Services and the Director of Community Services to discuss the levels of sickness absence in those service areas in their directorates where sickness absence was particularly high.
- It followed up progress made on the recommendations it had made after its meeting with Cabinet Members and Directors in February 2007.

Cabinet Member Plans (initial Plans and half-year reviews) - Four meetings were held at which the Board questioned the Cabinet Members about these plans and reviews. Each meeting was preceded by an informal meeting of the Board when Members decided the questions they wished to ask the Cabinet Members.

Progress reports – the Board considered progress reports on the following:-

- Housing Benefits Improvement Plan (quarterly reports)
- ICT, Coventry Direct, Serco contract
- Debt Recovery Framework
- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Value for Money Partnership
- Community Cohesion Strategy
- Ricoh Arena finance
- Equality Strategy Action Plan

Legal Services partnering arrangement – the Board considered proposals to enter into an agreement with a private company/companies for the provision of these services. It supported the proposals and asked for a progress report in January 2009.

Task and Finish Group - Guidelines for Bailiffs – at the request of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, the Board set up a task and finish group to define revised guidelines for the bailiff service in Coventry in relation to their work with vulnerable people.

Audit Work - in June 2007/2008 the Board again appointed an Audit Sub-Group to carry out its audit responsibilities (relating to both internal and external audit issues). The Audit Sub-Group will report separately to the Council on its work.

4 Recommendations

Sickness absence – the Board recommended that managers should undertake further investigations whenever the designation "other" was used in the recording of sickness absence, to try to determine more accurately the reasons for absence.

It also asked officers to investigate the levels of sickness in other public sector bodies and the action being taken by them to deal with this issue.

Task and Finish Group - Guidelines for Bailiffs - the Board agreed to recommend the Cabinet Member (Finance, Procurement and Value for Money) to adopt the revised guidelines they had drawn up. These were aimed at ensuring that:

- realistic payment arrangements were made with debtors, in order to maximise collection of Council Tax/Business Rates and caused the fewest problems for vulnerable people.
- the process for levying distress was clear and reasonable.

ICT - the Board asked the Cabinet to closely monitor the future programme for ICT and Customer Services and to ensure that the Management Board insists that all Directorates give their maximum co-operation to this programme.

Equality Strategy – in discussing this the Board asked the Cabinet Member (Finance, Procurement and Value for Money) to:-

- a) investigate the possibility of providing more dropped kerbs to assist the mobility of electric wheelchair users.
- b) investigate the reasons why the level of unemployment appears to have risen in the Willenhall area.
- c) pursue the possibility of focusing the Council's recruitment efforts on the city's disadvantaged areas (particularly the priority neighbourhoods).

5 Outcomes

Sickness absence – in response to the Board's recommendation, when an absence has been designated as "other", more work is now done to investigate why this was used rather than a more appropriate designation. The Board has identified the reduction of sickness absence levels as one of its main areas of work in 2008/2009.

Task and Finish Group - Guidelines for Bailiffs – the Cabinet Member agreed to adopt the revised guidelines drawn up by the task and finish group. The Board will receive a report in October/November on how the guidelines are operating.

ICT – The Cabinet agreed the recommendations made by the Board. The Board has identified the IT Strategy as an issue for its work programme in 2008/2009

Equality Strategy – the Cabinet Member agreed to carry out the work requested (see above) and reported back to the Board that in the case of a) and c), there are existing programmes of work to address these issues; in the case of b), the Job Seekers' Allowance unemployment figures had in fact fallen, new jobs continued to be created and there were a number of initiatives aimed at improving the unemployment position in the area.

Section D – the Work of Scrutiny Board 2



Councillor Nigel Lee

Members:

Councillors Asif, Crookes, Dixon (Deputy Chair), Griffin, Kelly, Lancaster, Lee (Chair) and Sweet

Co-opted Members for education matters:

Mrs. D. Beech, Mrs. S. Hanson, Mr. R. Potter and Mrs. L. Wainscot

1 Remit

In 2007/2008, Scrutiny Board 2 was responsible for oversight of the portfolio of the Cabinet Member (Children, Learning and Young People).

2 Chair's introduction

In many ways, the remit of Scrutiny Board is the clearest of all Scrutiny Boards, covering one Cabinet Portfolio and one City Council Directorate. This Directorate however is one of the Council's largest spending Directorates and employs the most staff. It is also one of the most externally scrutinised parts of City Council activity and the Board have always tried to be mindful when choosing topics that they take the benefit of external inspection, avoid over-scrutiny of any particular area, add value to the work of the Directorate and try wherever possible to improve outcomes for children and young people in the City.

The Board are assisted in their work by the statutory Children and Young People's Plan. This document identifies the key actions within the City to achieve the five national Every Child Matters outcomes, and the locally determined sixth one of supportive friends families and communities. This and the Cabinet Member Strategic Plan (of which much is common) helped the Board gain a strategic understanding of the various initiatives underway in the City and allowed close questioning of officers and the Cabinet Member on the key issues facing services for children and young people in the City.

The Board returned to a number of issues, these included responses to anti-social behaviour issues, teenage pregnancy and sexual health, domestic violence and its impact on children and young people, the short breaks review and safeguarding. Additionally a number of new work programme items were introduced including arrangements for schools in the event of severe weather conditions, school places and planning and development of the 14-19 agenda in the City.

As Members will also be aware the City Council has been successful in its bid to be part of Building Schools for the Future phase 4, and this project has been the subject of a Scrutiny Review Group monitoring progress and acting as a vehicle for Members to be involved in the various decisions being taken to ensure this project is a success.

3 Activity

Further details of the issues considered by the Board over the year are as follows:

- Acceleration of the Grace Academy – the proposals to replace Woodway Park with a City Academy were brought forward by a year, resulting in the new school opening in the old school buildings.
- The Board was consulted on a Government consultation on school admissions policies.
- The Board held a meeting to review the formation of the Coventry Safeguarding Children Board. This was considered along with the Laming Audit and the Bichard Audit.
- The relevant Cabinet Member Strategic Plan and the Children and Young People's Plan were used to provide the overview and performance background to the Board's work.
- Government policy changes for 14-19 year olds were considered by the Board along with the local partnership working being delivered to achieve this. Changes to the role of the Learning & Skills Council and additional efforts to reduce those young people not in employment or training will require this issue to be revisited in the next civic year.
- The Board undertook a short investigation into the arrangements for the emergency closure of schools in the event of severe weather disruption. This piece of work followed concerns over the mixed picture in the previous instance of schools being required to close. The Board learnt about a new electronic "Snowline" programme which has yet to be tested by extreme weather.
- The Board continued its interest in the developing teenage pregnancy strategy and also devoted some time to investigating efforts to promote sexual health messages in the City.
- Concerns of Board Members over the apparent shortage of primary school places in some parts of the City prompted the Board to request information on plans for school places. This work included follow-up on the previous year's meeting on Minority Group Support Services, with the Board welcoming progress in supporting and integrating young people from across the world into Coventry's schools.
- Other issues covered included the development of Children's Centres and the delivery of the Early Years Strategy, the PE curriculum across the City's schools and Special Educational Needs support, particularly for children and young people with autism.

4 Recommendations

Acceleration of the Grace Academy - The Board expressed its concerns about the potential for the impact of the new City Academy to be diminished by it opening in the 'old' Woodway Park buildings. Further, the Board expressed concerns about the liabilities of the old buildings and the City Council being exposed to additional risk.

New City Academy - The Scrutiny Board welcomed the plans to create a new City Academy on the site of the Sidney Stringer School, whilst expressing concerns about the exact location of the new school. This issue will be picked up by the Building Schools for the Future Scrutiny Review Group in the 2008/09 civic year.

"Snowline" policy - The Board passed a series of recommendations to the Cabinet Member regarding the application of this policy. The Board concluded after careful consideration that the current policy of individual head teachers retaining responsibility over emergency closure decisions should be retained. They have asked for a report back on the application of the new software after it has been put to the test by a severe weather event.

Intensive Parenting Support programme - The Board expressed its concerns at reports that this programme (which was being trialled in the City) was to be scaled back as a result of a funding stream coming to an end.

5 Outcomes

Building Schools for the Future – the Board and its Review Group have made a considerable contribution to the development of this project, undertaking site visits to newly-built schools in and out of City, developing the rationale for the LEP and encouraging officers to ensure the maximum flexibility for facilities management be retained by schools.

Short Breaks Review - the Board's input into this Review has been considerable. Having met with a number of carers of service users and visited Broad Park House, the Board has been pleased to note the evolution of the officers' thinking about the potential to utilise Broad Park House more fully whilst also developing more community-based opportunities for respite.

Domestic Violence Joint Working Project with West Midlands Police - over the past two years the Board has been encouraging officers to develop more and more innovative approaches to tackling domestic violence in the City. The Board has particularly welcomed a pilot project involving social work staff being based at Little Park Street police station, enabling the two organisations to provide a far more thorough response to incidents of domestic violence, improving information sharing and ensuring that children are protected in a far more systematic manner than previously. The Board has been pleased to see this pilot become an established part of the two organisations' response to domestic violence in the City.

"Moving to Coventry" - the Board has encouraged officers to utilise this innovative piece of research, to ensure a wider understanding by all City Council staff of the needs of recent arrivals in the City.

Section E – the Work of Scrutiny Board 3



Councillor Cliff Ridge

Members:

Councillors Adalat, Bains (Deputy Chair), Khan, Lucas, Mulhall, Reece, Ridge (Chair) and Waters

1 Remit

In 2007/2008, Scrutiny Board 3 was responsible for oversight of the portfolios of the Cabinet Members (City Development), (City Services) and (Climate Change, Sustainability and Housing).

2 Chair's introduction

Scrutiny Board 3 had a busy and varied year in 2007/08. The addition of the Climate Change, Sustainability and Housing Portfolio to the Board's existing remit of City Development and City Services was challenging but was managed by careful prioritisation of the work programme and effective scrutiny of the relevant Cabinet Member Strategic Plans.

The City continues to develop at a pace and the Board maintained their interest in major projects by following up earlier work on the Arena with close scrutiny of plans to develop a city centre IKEA. This work resulted in the Chair representing the Board on the IKEA Project Group and contributed to ensuring that the IKEA Connections Project was delivered successfully from the City Council perspective.

The Board maintained its interest in the Commercial Property Portfolio Review, scrutinised a number of relevant government consultation documents (Micro-generation, Planning White Paper, Licensing Review etc) as well as finding time to assist officers in reviews such as the Pest Control Service Redesign, the Implementation of the Traffic Management Act 2004 and more detailed issues such as City Development recruitment and the operation of the Call Centre.

Following a specific request from the Board, City Services officers undertook an audit of pedestrian safety features outside the City's primary schools. This work, prompted by a report on efforts to improve road safety, has resulted in 2008-9 in additional safety features being provided at many primary schools in the City.

3 Activity

Further details of the issues considered during the year are as follows:

- The Board considered the CVOne Business Plan and engaged in a wide-ranging discussion with the Chief Executive including such issues as efforts to improve footfall in the City Centre, parking issues, sponsorship of the Godiva Festival and the City Centre BID re-vote.
- The Commercial Property Portfolio Review – this Review, carried out in a number of sections, sought to identify underperforming City Council assets for disposal. Whilst welcoming the Review, the Board expressed its concerns about the need for an asset acquisition strategy to complement the existing portfolio and support the Council's economic development objectives.
- IKEA was a topical subject in the City and the Board considered preparations for the coming development at a special meeting. Concerned that some aspects of the highways and traffic management developments associated with IKEA were proceeding slowly, the Board took a direct interest in ensuring that the various works were completed on time.
- The Board considered the three Cabinet Member Strategic Plans in meetings with the relevant Cabinet Member. These meetings informed the Board about major strategic issues affecting the relevant Directorates, and allowed the Board to include relevant issues in its work programme. These included concerns about the effectiveness of the Call Centre and monitoring of various recruitment problems for specialist technical positions within City Development.
- The Council continues to implement the Traffic Management Act (2004) in stages, and the Board considered a number of these in detail including plans for an Urban Traffic Management Control Centre and revisions to the parking enforcement regime.
- The Board reviewed the City Council's arrangements for managing Homelessness. This meeting identified the then declining trend in Homelessness and the relatively positive picture in Coventry regarding the use of bed and breakfast accommodation. The Board requested additional information be provided including benchmarking data comparing Coventry's performance with the other West Midlands districts. This will be reported in 2007/8.
- In seeking to understand better the impact of various road safety and traffic initiatives, the Board received reports from City Services and City Development Directorates on the Camera Safety Partnership, School Travel Plans and accident statistics. These reports prompted the Board to request officers to undertake an audit of the various safety features outside each City primary school. In particular the Board were concerned that not all primary schools had protective metal railings at entrances by roads. This work will be completed and reported to Members in 2008/9.
- The Council's early steps towards establishing a Municipal Waste Strategy has also been closely followed by the Board. Members have taken a keen interest in the various options to improve recycling, reduce waste and ensure that the City continues to be at the forefront of landfill avoidance. Members visited the

Marchwood Energy from Waste Plant in Hampshire to see the potential for a modern version of the Council's current residual waste treatment facility.

4 Recommendations

Micro-generation Consultation - The Board made recommendations on the Council's response to this. These centred around the prominence of wind turbines and solar panels on the street scene.

Planning White Paper – Members held some discussion on this, which resulted in them seeking to improve the Council's response by including references to the sub-regional dimension of planning for major developments.

Burges/Ironmonger Row - The Board recommended to Cabinet that the proposals for this initiative be amended to include a complete removal of traffic from the area. Issues raised at this meeting included the potential benefits of a traffic-free environment in improving the shopping and leisure experience in this area. Additionally some Members felt that opening up the River Sherbourne should be achieved if at all possible.

Increase house-building in the City - In considering the Council's response to Government's efforts relating to this issue, Members added a cautionary note that over-development of already well-developed areas was not to be encouraged.

Parking Enforcement Regime - The Board supported officers' suggested amendments to this, whilst requesting further information at a future meeting on the arrangements for this service in the City.

Air Quality Management Action Zones - The Board requested specific clarifications on a number of these zones in the City and held a follow-up meeting with City Services officers to monitor progress. This will be further reviewed in 2008/9.

Waste Strategy - The Board has undertaken to investigate further this developing strategy and fully consider all options for the residual disposal of the City's municipal solid waste.

5 Outcomes

Road Safety – The Board has scrutinised the current efforts to improve road safety, particularly outside schools. This has included the carrying out of an audit into the pedestrian safety measures outside each primary school. Subsequent to this work a number of schools have had parking restrictions imposed and improvement works carried out, including the erection of safety barriers.

IKEA – The Board's work in monitoring the various infrastructure improvements required to be completed before this landmark store opened have been recognised as contributing to the success of the development.

Waste Strategy / Residual Waste Disposal – This continues to be an area of close interest for Scrutiny Board 3. The Board has helped to shape the Council's recycling regimes, has supported the development of the Municipal Waste Strategy and has assisted in its formation. The Board commenced a number of visits and other work which will continue into 2008/9.

Ironmonger Row / City Centre Masterplanning / Car Parking Strategy –

Development of the City Centre continues to be an area of policy development work the Board engages in. In particular, plans to develop Ironmonger Row have been improved and encouraged by the Board. In general the Board continues to work with City Development officers in acting as a sounding Board for the development of key policy to take the City forward.

Traffic Management / Urban Traffic Management Control - Plans to introduce Bus Lane Camera Enforcement have been scrutinised and improved by the Board, and Members have made specific commitments to engage in further policy development work in this important area during 2008/9.

Government Consultations – The Board continue to engage in responses to important Government consultation documents. In a number of instances the Board input has been important in improving Council responses to consultation such as the revisions to the Licensing Act, the Planning White Paper and plans to provide incentives for recycling.

Section F – the Work of Scrutiny Board 4



Councillor Joe Clifford

Members:

Councillors Clifford (Chair), Gazey, Harper (Deputy Chair), O'Boyle, Patton, Skinner, Smith and Waters

1 Remit

In 2007/2008 Scrutiny Board 4 was responsible for oversight of the portfolios of the Cabinet Members (Community Services), (Culture, Leisure and Libraries) and (Neighbourhoods and Community Safety) and for external Health scrutiny.

2 Chair's Introduction

The Scrutiny Board has achieved much to be proud of in 2007-08.

The Board took its place at the heart of many important issues relating to health service policy and service development. For example, the new improved phlebotomy service, and the financial support to University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust, both came about, albeit in small part, thanks to the work of the Board. The Board's review of the experiences of older people in hospital and after discharge, completed in conjunction with our NHS partners, is as good a piece of scrutiny work as one will find anywhere. I would like to take this opportunity, as I have done before, to pay particular thanks to the user researchers, and colleagues at Coventry Teaching Primary Care Trust and University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust, for making this review happen.

The Board's scope is very wide, and it can be challenging to cover all the issues and service areas that everyone might see as important. It has again proved difficult for the Board to engage fully in work across all three of the Cabinet Member portfolios within its remit. The list of topics covered shows that the Board looked at a range of issues relating to all three. The fact that the Board did not make many recommendations related to the internal portfolios is partly due to capacity. I remain of the view – as do many of my colleagues – that the remit of the Board is simply too broad to do justice to the issues, and that there should be at least one additional scrutiny board. There are also opportunities to learn from the established, structured relationship we have developed with our colleagues in the NHS, where the “bread and butter” overview and scrutiny processes of engaging the Board early, consultation, handling information requests and responding to recommendations are both well understood – partly thanks to legislation and guidance – and working relatively well. We need to find a way to allow members to engage early in the Council's decision-making process, accepting that this can lead to difficult discussions and challenging recommendations. However, only by this route will members take on their proper role in the policy development process, and achieve our objective of good recommendations leading to improvement that would not otherwise have been achieved. I hope that in 2008-09, the Board will build on the work it has done to make the vision a reality.

3 Activity

In 2007-08 the Scrutiny Board's responsibilities were revised to include the following portfolios:

- Community Services
- Culture, Leisure and Libraries
- Neighbourhoods and Community Safety

Scrutiny Board 4 retains its responsibility for the overview and scrutiny of health services in accordance with section 244 of the National Health Service Act 2006.

The Board held fifteen public meetings.

These included question and answer sessions with Cabinet Members (Community Safety; Culture, Leisure and Libraries; Neighbourhoods and Community Safety), the Director of Public Health, West Midlands Ambulance Service, Coventry Teaching Primary Care Trust, University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust, Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust, and West Midlands Strategic Health Authority.

The Board considered the following issues:

Culture, Leisure and Libraries:

- The Coventry Cultural Strategy
- Charging policy in Culture, Leisure and Libraries

Adult Social Care:

- The development of services for Older People
- Eligibility Criteria for Social Care
- Commission for Social Care Inspection Annual Performance Assessment of Social Care Services for Adults in Coventry
- New Homes for Old
- Contact and Connect
- Local Involvement Networks

Neighbourhood Working and Community Safety:

- Neighbourhood Wardens
- Ward Forums
- Coventry Community Safety Plan 2008-11
- Coventry Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy

Health Services:

- The experiences of older people in hospital and after discharge (this issue also falls within the Adult Social Care portfolio)
- The financial position of University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust
- Support for mothers who wish to breastfeed
- Implementation of the ban on smoking in work places and enclosed public places
- Reconfiguration of Emergency Operations Centres by West Midlands Ambulance Service
- Coventry Teaching Primary Care Trust Local Delivery Plan
- Coventry Mental Health Commissioning Strategy
- Coventry Climate Change Strategy – health implications
- Improving access to primary care services in Coventry
- Joint Director of Public Health
- Reports of the Patient and Public Involvement Forums
- Healthcare Commission Annual Healthcheck submissions
- Hospital appointments and access to University Hospital Walsgrave
- Phlebotomy Services
- Provision of new premises for General Practice in Canley
- Proposed closure of the Lea Castle Centre
- Joint commissioning and provision of health and social care services in Coventry and Warwickshire
- Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust application for Foundation status

Officers and members participated in the County Council and Unitary Councils Network, the Regional Health Scrutiny Chairs Network, the West Midlands Local Government Association, the Centre for Public Scrutiny, Democratic Health Network, Coventry and Warwickshire Overview and Scrutiny Officers Network, and the Socialist Health Association.

4 Recommendations

Experiences of older people in hospital and after discharge

The Board agreed recommendations related to:

- The governance processes for considering issues raised by the report
- Discharge planning
- Communication with patients and carers
- Support for patients who do not meet the social care eligibility criteria, but still would benefit from some form of support
- Other aspects of the “patient experience”
- Use of the user researcher model for future research

Development of the local health economy and the financial position of University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust

The Board agreed recommendations related to:

- The governance arrangements for reporting financial information publicly
- The consultation requirements for service changes resulting from the Trust's financial position
- The Trust's status as a "tertiary" centre for specialised medical services
- The publication of an earlier review of the Trust's finances
- The allocation of financial resources to Coventry and the West Midlands
- The obligations of various stakeholders to ensure the ongoing viability and success of the Trust

West Midlands Ambulance Service Emergency Operations Centre consultation

The Board recommended that West Midlands Ambulance Service adopt a "three control centre" model, with a new control centre in Coventry.

Climate Change Strategy for Coventry

The Board agreed recommendations related to:

- Reporting mechanisms for climate change indicators
- Publicity for the strategy
- The evidence base for the strategy
- Partnership working related to the strategy
- Inclusion of indicators related to climate change in Coventry's Local Area Agreement
- Other areas for review related to climate change

Local Involvement Networks

The Board responded to a national consultation on the development of Local Involvement Networks. A copy of the response is available at:

<http://cmis.coventry.gov.uk/CMISWebPublic/Binary.ashx?Document=9233>

5 Outcomes

The experiences of older people in hospital and after discharge

As a result of the report's recommendations, University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust, Coventry Teaching Primary Care Trust and the City Council agreed an action plan that set out to address the issues raised. This action plan is in place, and the work that has followed has done much to improve the experiences of patients.

Closer joint working between partners, facilitated in part by the review, has seen a sustained fall in the number of delayed discharges, and a much more co-operative approach to managing the transition from hospital to community care. As a result of this, University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust did not introduce a fining regime for delayed discharges, and there is evidence of very close, positive working relationships across the health and social care sector. Partners have reported that the review was a catalyst for closer joint working across many issues, not all directly related to the review, demonstrating the Board's role as a forum where stakeholders can be brought together.

The methodology of the review has secured external praise, with the project winning two awards at the Centre for Public Scrutiny Annual Conference in 2008. The review's approach will be used for a forthcoming review of the experiences of people with physical and sensory impairments, and a follow-up review involving older people. There are also plans for a review based on the experiences of people receiving treatment for mental illness.

Local health economy

The Board's consideration of the local health economy and the financial position of University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust did much to bring transparency to decision making in this complex public policy area. The Board's recommendations received consideration not just locally, but also at West Midlands Strategic Health Authority and the Department of Health. Ultimately, there was a Ministerial decision in favour of a £50 million support package for University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust, including revenue from the Strategic Health Authority, local Primary Care Trusts and asset sales. The Board's work, and in particular the recommendation that stakeholders consider their obligations to the Trust, played an important part in securing this outcome, which has done much to put the Trust on a more secure financial footing.

Community phlebotomy service

Although the Board did not make formal recommendations relating to community phlebotomy services, the committee had a clear influence on the development of a new service. Informal working with the Coventry Teaching Primary Care Trust supported the development of proposals for a service based on provision by pharmacists and general practitioners from across the city – the first of its kind nationally. The Board's influence also prompted Coventry Teaching PCT to involve service users and the public in both the setting of the service specification and the selection of providers, marking a step change in the Trust's commitment to and capacity for patient and public involvement. The new service, which began operation in early 2008, has won praise from patients, and offers much greater accessibility and convenience.

Emergency Operations Centres consultation

West Midlands Ambulance Service rejected the recommendations from the Board for a control centre in Coventry, electing to proceed with their favoured proposal of two large centres in Birmingham and Staffordshire, and retaining the smaller existing centre in Leamington Spa. However, the Board received a number of reassurances from the Trust in relation to its report, and close working between the Board and the ambulance service remains in place.

Coventry Climate Change Strategy

The City Council adopted NI186 in its Local Area Agreement (Per capita reduction in CO₂ emissions in the local authority area), though it did not include NI188 (Planning to adapt to climate change), which is perhaps a better measure of the level of partnership working in this issue area. There is evidence of closer partnership working emerging, as recommended by the Board, but there remain further opportunities to be explored.

Section G – Support for Scrutiny

1 Budget

- 1.1 The Scrutiny budget (which is now held by the Performance and Scrutiny Manager and meets the cost of such things as securing expert advice, paying travel expenses for witnesses to attend meetings, refreshments, publications and conference fees) was £36,612 in 2007/2008, of which £11,657 was spent.
- 1.2 The budget in 2008/2009 is £17,000.

2 Officer Support

- 2.1 The main support for Scrutiny continued to be provided by the Scrutiny Co-ordinators (Peter Barnett, Jonathan Jardine and Corinne Steele). Until November 2007, Roger Hughes, Head of Corporate Policy, also provided significant support, with particular emphasis on developing the strategic objectives for Scrutiny.
- 2.2 From October 2007 a new structure came into effect as part of the Chief Executive's organisational review aimed at continuing the council's performance improvement. This established a new Performance and Scrutiny Team, combining the Scrutiny Co-ordination Group with Performance and Programme Officers. This is intended to help to improve forward planning and enable Scrutiny Co-ordinators to support earlier Scrutiny engagement in policy development. The appointment of Dr Jos Parry as Assistant Chief Executive, who has responsibility for Scrutiny, and Adrian West as Performance and Scrutiny Manager have also increased the direct officer support for Scrutiny.
- 2.3 Officer support from across directorates continued to grow this year, but still did not match that for the Cabinet.

Section H – Future Development of Scrutiny

- 1.1 In 2008/09 a number of legislative changes will strengthen and broaden local government Overview and Scrutiny. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the Police and Justice Act 2006 both contain provisions relating to overview and scrutiny. Government has been consulting on how some of these arrangements should be introduced and guidance is expected for at least some of these changes during the year.
- 1.2 The main impacts of these changes are:
 - the requirement for Executives to respond publicly and in writing to Overview and Scrutiny reports;
 - the requirement for external partners to supply information to Overview and Scrutiny Committees in relation to their work in achieving the targets in a Local Area Agreement, and for those partners to "have regard to [an overview and scrutiny] report or recommendation in exercising their functions" in relation to the Local Area Agreement;
 - the requirement for local authorities to designate a crime and disorder scrutiny committee; and
 - enabling individual councillors to place items on the agendas of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and to use the process to ensure that the Council responds to matters of concern to local communities (known as the "Councillor call for Action").
- 1.3 The broadening of Scrutiny's role to engage with a wider range of partners and local priorities builds on the effective arrangements already in place for the scrutiny of health issues. Coventry's strong partnership working arrangements, reflected in the recently completed Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement, put the city in a good place to respond to this agenda.
- 1.4 The introduction of this new area of work will be supported by the action plan agreed by the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee at the end of the 2007/08 year which aims to continue to build on work to strengthen the role and effectiveness of scrutiny in Coventry.
- 1.5 The plan sets out a series of actions, many of which have already been introduced. These focus on:
 - Improving clarity and understanding of the role of Scrutiny;
 - Planning and preparing for Scrutiny work/meetings and improving the use of time;
 - Improving support, training and development to everyone involved in Scrutiny;
 - Encouraging more people to get involved in Scrutiny; and
 - Strengthening the performance management of Scrutiny.
- 1.6 The plan is attached to this report at appendix 2.

Section I – Further Information

If you wish to have a copy of any of the documents referred to in this report, or any other information, please contact any of the following people:

Performance and Scrutiny Manager

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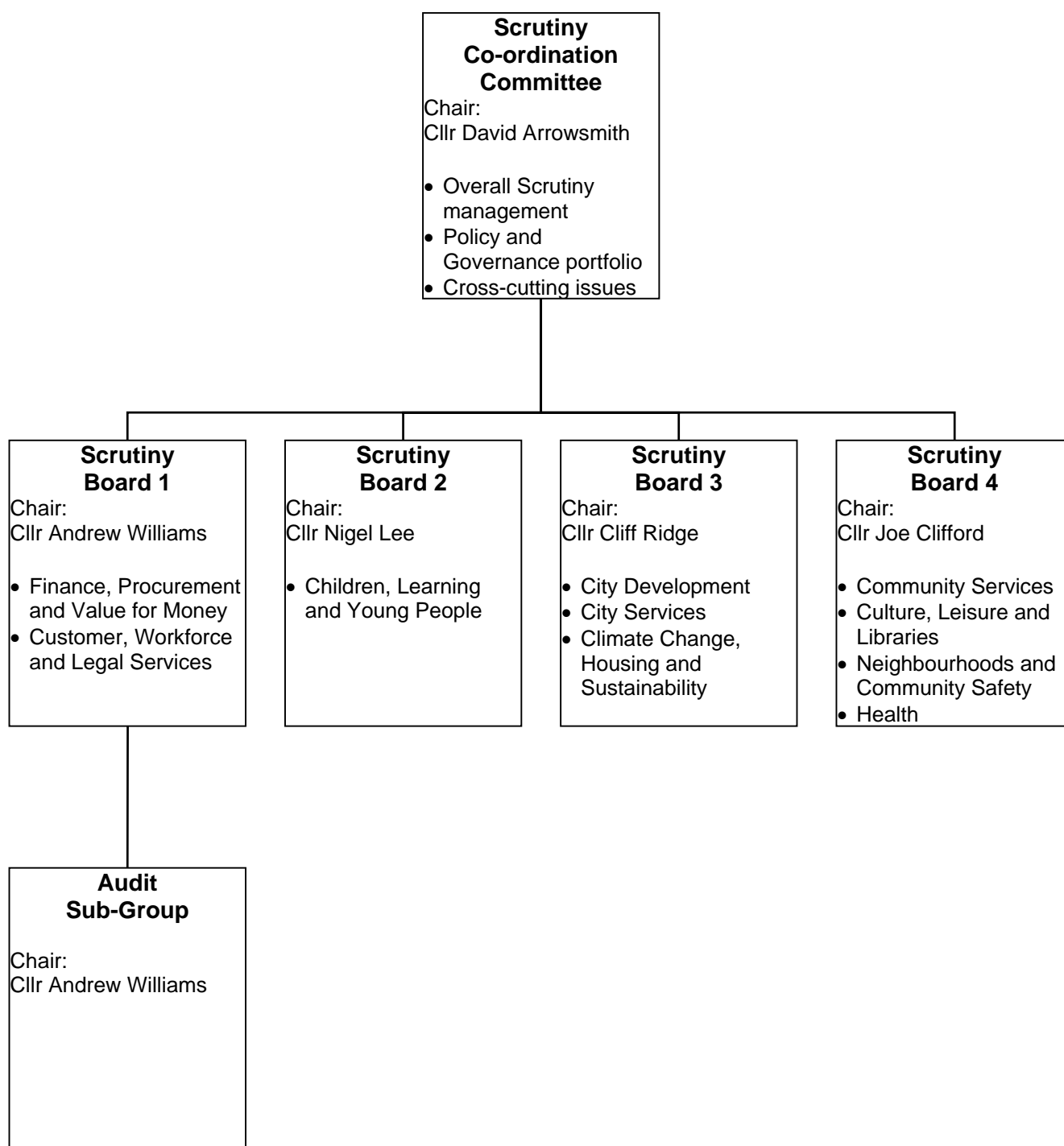
Scrutiny Co-ordinators

Peter Barnett (Scrutiny Boards 2 and 3)	telephone	024 7683 1172
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Corinne Steele (Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee and Scrutiny Board 1)	telephone	024 7683 1145
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Scrutiny Structure 2007/08



Scrutiny Development: Draft Issues and Actions for 2008/09 Municipal Year

Vision for Scrutiny: Scrutiny's role is to agree high-quality, relevant recommendations, that are supported by the Executive and partners and lead to measurable service improvements and/or tangible benefits for Coventry residents that would not otherwise have been achieved.

The Issue	Possible Action	Timescale
<p>Being clear about what Scrutiny is for</p> <p>Coventry has defined a vision for Scrutiny which sets out the objectives that it is aiming to achieve. This needs to be more widely communicated and understood.</p> <p>When organisations and individuals engage with Scrutiny, they need to be clear about how they are contributing to these objectives and what is expected of them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare short (1 side) summary on Scrutiny in Coventry setting out role, purpose, what successful Scrutiny looks like and how it fits into the governance process. • Prepare short guidelines for people involved in Scrutiny (Members, officers, partners, members of the public etc.) – what they can expect and what is expected of them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For new meeting cycle • For new meeting cycle
<p>Shaping the Work Programme</p> <p>Concentrating Scrutiny work on the most significant issues for the Council and its Local Area Agreement Partners will help make sure that it uses its time most effectively. Focussing on issues where it can support service improvement and benefits for local people will help make sure that it has the biggest impact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the work planning process and timetable for 2008/09 (This should include defining the co-ordinating role for Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee and developing some guidelines or a prioritisation framework that sets out how review issues should be identified and the key themes to be covered etc.) • Deliver presentations to Directorate Management Teams and the Local Public Service Board to help inform the work planning process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For new meeting cycle • For new meeting cycle

The Issue	Possible Action	Timescale
<p>Planning and Preparing for Scrutiny work/meetings</p> <p>To make the best use of time, proper preparation needs to be carried out. Being clear about the purpose of the piece of work being done and making sure that the right information is prepared is particularly important.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a more structured approach for dealing with Scrutiny work streams (a framework for each piece of work that sets out purpose, expected outcomes etc.) • Develop guidance for presenting information (how reports, presentations, briefings etc. should be prepared and presented) • Relevant officers to attend pre meetings to help shape items and ensure the brief is met • Ensure that report deadlines etc. met (as they would be for Cabinet Reports) • Scrutiny Co-ordinators to screen reports, presentations etc. to ensure quality control and that they meet the purpose required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For new meeting cycle • For new meeting cycle • Throughout year • Throughout year • Throughout year
<p>Improving time spent on Scrutiny activity/ in meetings</p> <p>Scrutiny does most of its work through committee style meetings. There are other ways of working that could help make the best use of time and achieve the best outcomes. When a piece of work is being planned we should consider the most appropriate way of working to achieve the outcome.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan in advance how to deal with each Scrutiny topic, including consideration of the best methods of addressing them – formal meetings, time limited groups, site visits, engagement of experts/service users/members of the public, use of public and private meetings etc. • Introduce timings to meeting agendas • Clear purpose, outcomes and recommendations for each item of business • Introduce process review at the end of each meeting to learn lessons for the future about what went well and what could be improved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throughout year • For new meeting cycle • For new meeting cycle • For new meeting cycle

The Issue	Possible Action	Timescale
<p>Improving support, training and development to everyone involved in Scrutiny</p> <p>Lots of people from Members, officers, partner organisations and members of the public get involved in Scrutiny. To help make sure that everyone contributes effectively and gets the most out of the experience, we need to provide a range of development and support activities.</p>	<p>Develop Scrutiny Training and Development Plan. To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny contribution to Member induction, including initial briefing, open session • Plan common framework for the first meetings of Scruco and each Board • Review input to officer induction • Review input to Democratic Process training in Corporate Training Plan • Review Scrutiny content in Member 1-1's • Develop joint training for Members and officers • Training/refresher training on Scrutiny for senior/middle managers • Process for sharing and introducing best practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For new meeting cycle • For new meeting cycle • Within 6 months • Within 6 months • Within 6 months • Within 6 months • Within 12 months • Within 12 months
<p>Encouraging more people to get involved in Scrutiny</p> <p>If Scrutiny is to have a bigger impact on service users and local residents, we need to increase the opportunities for them to engage with the process.</p> <p>Partner organisations will be required to engage with Scrutiny under the LGPIH Act and we will need to make sure that everyone gets the maximum benefit out of this.</p> <p>Involving experts on relevant issues could help inform Scrutiny activity and support decision-making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation to Local Public Service Board/Coventry Partnership Board • Widen officer engagement, but ensure senior managers provide support to colleagues • Use information from the Household Survey and other consultation evidence to shape scrutiny work programme and activity • Use information from Member casework, Ward Forums, Neighbourhood Management etc. to shape Scrutiny work. • Include review of opportunities for service user/public engagement in planning for how to address specific items (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For new meeting cycle • Within 12 months • Throughout year • Throughout year • Throughout year

The Issue	Possible Action	Timescale
<p>Performance Management for Scrutiny</p> <p>To help review how much Scrutiny is achieving its objective and to ensure that it is continuously improving, Scrutiny needs its own performance management framework.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a performance management framework for Scrutiny • Introduce/reintroduce a tracking system for recommendations made by Scrutiny and how they are dealt with • Set out the framework and timetable for annual report and quarterly reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 6 months • For new municipal year • For new municipal year
<p>Communication</p> <p>Planning and improving communications about Scrutiny will help address all of the issues identified above.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a communications plan for Scrutiny (particularly focussing on good practice and positive outcomes) that targets key stakeholders including Elected Members, officers, partners organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 12 months
<p>Implementing the requirements of the LGPIH and Police and Justice Acts</p> <p>Making sure arrangements are in place to meet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the requirement for Executives to respond to Overview and Scrutiny reports; • the requirement for some external partners to supply information to Overview and Scrutiny Committees, and for those partners involved in delivering Local Area Agreement Targets to have regard to the report or recommendations produced by those committees. • the provision for individual councillors to place items on the agendas of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and to use the process to ensure that the Council responds to matters of concern to local communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and agree process when guidance is published 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependant on government timetable