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# **Scrutiny Boards' Annual Report to Council 2010/2011**

To be considered at the City Council meeting  
on 28th June, 2011



Coventry City Council

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# **Scrutiny Boards' Annual Report to Council 2010/2011**

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# Scrutiny Annual Report 2010/2011

## Introduction by Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

In May 2010 the Council appointed me as Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee. This was a new role for me, although I have many years' experience as a member of various Council committees and more recently as a Cabinet Member and a Scrutiny Board member.

During the past 12 months I've enjoyed the challenge of my role and it has been a privilege to get involved in almost every area of the Council's work during that time.

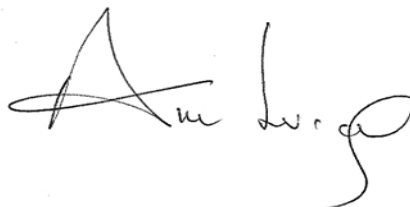
Highlighted in this report are just a few examples of scrutiny work which illustrate the range of issues covered by the Boards: these have included how the Council is supporting the creation of jobs in a challenging economic climate; the role of the organisation in looking after vulnerable children and adults; and the Council's approach to gritting the roads to keep the city moving in the winter. The report also provides links to more information about the full range of activity undertaken by Scrutiny during the year.

Sometimes, it's easy to think of Scrutiny as a junior player in the Council. It has no budgets to allocate, services to direct or any executive decision-making powers of its own. But I do believe that it has a very important role to play on behalf of the people of Coventry in challenging performance, helping to shape policy development and holding the Cabinet Members to account.

In fact, the majority of councillors are Scrutiny councillors and the Scrutiny function enables them to make the best use of their knowledge and experience to improve the decision-making process.

We have continued to strengthen Scrutiny over the last 12 months by building on the developments made in recent years, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Scrutiny Board Chairs and members who have worked so hard during the year.

I look forward to this continuing into the future. Councils up and down the country are facing unprecedented challenges and I do believe that strong and effective Scrutiny has an important part to play in making sure that the best possible decisions are made for local people.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ann Lucas'.

Councillor Ann Lucas  
Chair, Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

## **Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee**

### **Remit**

In 2010/11 the Committee continued its responsibility for overseeing the Scrutiny function (including call-ins), for considering cross-cutting issues and also for overseeing the portfolio of the Cabinet Member (Policy, Leadership and Governance).

### **Membership**

**Councillors:** Councillors Foster, Lakha, Lancaster, Lucas (Chair), McNicholas (Deputy Chair), M. Mutton, Noonan (co-opted member), Ridley, Ruane, Sawdon and Taylor.

**Co-opted members for education matters:** Mr R. Potter (Roman Catholic Church), Mrs S. Hanson (Church of England), Mrs R. Hickingbotham (Primary Parent governor - resigned September 2010), Mrs D. Beech (added Governor non-voting) and 1 vacancy.

### **Activities and outcomes**

#### **Scrutiny Management issues**

At the start of the year, the Committee reviewed the proposed overall work programme for scrutiny to ensure that priority issues were being addressed and that business was co-ordinated effectively across the boards. Some shared pieces of work were undertaken such as the joint meeting between the Health and Social Care and Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Boards on 26th January which considered shared issues relating to health inequalities and school meals.

On 27th April 2011, the Committee received a report from Scrutiny Chairs summarising the work of their respective boards during 2010/11.

For details visit the Council's website: [Scrutiny Activity 2010/11](#)

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee also received reports on outside bodies (the external organisations to which the Council appoints representatives). Seven decisions made by Cabinet or Cabinet Members were called in for Scrutiny consideration, two of which were determined to be invalid.

#### **Cross-cutting issues**

The Committee considered progress reports on the Coventry Partnership, the Local Area Agreement and on the Corporate Plan. It also assessed the implications for the Council of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review.

## Examples of Scrutiny work undertaken by the Committee in 2010/11

### abc Transformation Programme

The major focus of the Committee's work in 2010/11 was the Council's abc Transformation Programme which is carrying out fundamental reviews of all council services.



It received quarterly progress reports on all of the reviews included in the Programme. The reports contained information about the costs of the reviews, explanations about new ways of working and savings targets identified across the programme.

After consideration of these reports, the Committee asked for:

- more detailed information on the review of Corporate Transport, which had not been progressing as quickly as had been expected;
- information about timescales and on the possible risks involved in each review to be included in the quarterly progress reports.
- briefings on the major reviews to be arranged for all Members, so that they could be provided with more detailed information.
- officers leading on the abc programme to look at how Members might be most usefully involved in the reviews.

As a result of the Committee's input into the programme, Members are more aware of the reviews and the foundations were laid for greater involvement of councillors in the abc programme. This has included the introduction of a series of monthly briefings on individual reviews.

### Coventry Partnership



In 2009/10 the Committee had looked at the work of the Coventry Partnership, to understand to what extent it added value to the delivery of public services and how it contributed to improvements in the quality of life for people in Coventry.

As a result of this work the Committee had made a number of recommendations for improving the work of the Partnership, relating to communications and publicity, performance management, finance and adapting to change.

In 2010/11 the Committee considered a report on the outcomes of these recommendations. This showed that the Partnership had taken action on all of them, which had resulted in improving its effectiveness.

## **Finance, Corporate and Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Board (1)**

### **Remit**

In 2010/11, the Scrutiny Board was responsible for monitoring and reviewing services relating to Council resources, equality of opportunity, cohesive communities and neighbourhoods.

### **Membership**

Councillors Bains (Deputy Chair). Foster, Lepoidevin, Mulhall, Nellist, Ruane (Chair), Sehmi, Welsh and Williams.

### **Activities and outcomes**

The Board scrutinised a range of issues under its remit. A summary of these is set out in the report to the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee referred to on page 4.

### **Examples of Scrutiny work undertaken by the Board in 2010/11**

#### **Electoral Registration**

The Board considered information on how the annual electoral registration household survey was approached in Coventry and the levels of response and spending compared with the other West Midlands metropolitan authorities. It also reviewed suggestions made by the Electoral Commission on how to increase public awareness to ensure that everyone eligible to vote is registered.



The Board discussed this information at length and asked officers to take the following action aimed at improving voter participation:

- use the guidance provided by the Electoral Commission about initiatives for a public awareness strategy, particularly in relation to contacting faith groups and including voter registration forms in Housing Associations' welcome packs;
- review opportunities to promote registering to vote via text;
- contact Headteachers about opportunities to work with 6th form students in February/ March, 2011.

In 2011/12, the Board will look at how these issues have been progressed.

## **Council Use of Agency Workers**

On two occasions the Board considered information about the use of agency workers by the Council, which was generally considered to be too high. During the course of its discussions, the Board asked about:

- the numbers of agency workers used;
- how long they were used for;
- the reasons for using agency workers for more than 360 days;
- the action being taken to cease using them.

Officers from the Directorates which had the highest use of agency workers attended one of the Board's discussions to explain why this was.

As a result of the Board's work councillors were able to understand more about the Council's use of agency workers.

## **i-Cov Project progress**



Adult Learners Week at Whitley Depot

i-Cov was a key abc review which involved bringing the Council's IT provision back in-house from the previous provider Serco.

As it was such a large project and its success is so crucial to the way in which the Council works in future, the Board decided to monitor its progress to satisfy itself that it was on time and meeting its objectives.

The Board will continue to receive progress reports on the implementation of the new service in 2011/12.

## **Children, Young People, Learning & Leisure Scrutiny Board (2)**

### **Remit**

In 2010/11 the Scrutiny Board was responsible for the scrutiny of the Children and Young People, Education and Culture, Leisure, Sport and Libraries Portfolios.

### **Membership**

**Councillors:** Councillors Asif (Deputy Chair until December 2010), Auluck, Blundell, Chater, Dixon, Johnson, Mal Mutton (Chair) and Singh (Deputy Chair with effect from December 2010).

**Co-opted members for education matters:** Mr R. Potter (Roman Catholic Church), Mrs S. Hanson (Church of England), Mrs R. Hickingbotham (Primary Parent Governor - resigned September 2010), Mrs D. Beech (added Governor non-voting) and 1 vacancy.

### **Activities and outcomes**

The Board scrutinised a range of issues under its remit. A summary of these is set out in the report to the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee referred to on page 4.

### **Examples of Scrutiny work undertaken by the Board in 2010/11**

#### **Looked after Children Leaving Care Task and Finish Group**

The Board set up a group to look at the service the Council provides to looked after children when they leave care. A cross-party group of three members and a co-opted member worked with four young people from the Voices of Care Council to scrutinise the service. The review raised a number of concerns about the quality and consistency of the support being given to the young people and recommendations were made to the Cabinet Member to look at ways to improve this service.

#### **Visits to the Referral and Assessment Service, Neighbourhood Teams, Multi-Disciplinary Teams and Positive Parenting Headquarters**

Members visited frontline services to children, young people and their families who are at risk of harm, or who require some additional support. Following the visits, a report was taken to the Cabinet Member acknowledging the hard work and commitment of the Council's social workers, and the improvements made in the recruitment and retention of social workers since the visits during 2009/10. As a result of the visits the Board also asked the Cabinet Member to consider targeting further resources to early intervention and prevention under the 'invest to save' principle.



Moat House Leisure and Neighbourhood Centre, the location of the North-East Neighbourhood Team



## 2012 Olympics and Local Preparations



Sidney Stringer pupils help to launch the Community Games Fund

The Board have considered two items during the year on Coventry's preparations to co-host the 2012 Olympics. The Board asked the Cabinet Member to consider providing additional resource to communities to enable them to engage with local related events and other activities that are generated by Coventry's involvement in the 2012 Games. It also made a recommendation to the Cabinet Member (which was accepted) that a bid for £15,000 be put forward for the Community Games activities rather than realigning Small Grant Schemes.

## **Economy, Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Board (3)**

### **Remit**

In 2010/11, the Board was responsible for the scrutiny of the work undertaken by the Council on the economy and the regeneration of the city, including housing and transport.

### **Membership**

Councillors Crookes, Lakha (Chair), Lepoidevin, Lucas, Maton, McNicholas, Ridley (Deputy Chair) and Sehmi.

### **Activities and outcomes**

The Board scrutinised a range of issues under its remit. A summary of these is set out in the report to the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee referred to on page 4.

### **Examples of Scrutiny work undertaken by the Board in 2010/11**

#### **Community Asset Transfer Policy**

The Board had advised officers on the approach the Council should take to transferring council-owned land or property to voluntary or community organisations. It asked for the final policy on Community Asset Transfer to be amended prior to being taken to the Cabinet Member to ensure it explained the active involvement of Ward Councillors, the protection of the interests of all the local community and how organisations were being provided with sufficient freedom to be able to raise funds. These were reflected in the final report.

#### **Social Housing - Downsizing Task and Finish Group**

Following a meeting with the new Chief Executive of West Mercia Housing Group, the Board identified that there was a piece of work to be done to look at the number of social houses in the city which are currently under-occupied, given that there is a shortage of family-sized properties available. The cross-party group of three Members involved West Mercia Housing in their discussions and took a recommendation to the Cabinet Member to investigate and support the development of a pilot downsizing scheme with West Mercia Housing, with a view to working with all Registered Social Landlords in the future to develop a city-wide approach. The Cabinet Member agreed and work is currently underway on a pilot scheme.



Encouraging people to downsize from a three bedroom property... to a small home, or flat, like this



## **Car Parking Strategy – Task and Finish Group**

This cross- party group of three Members was set up to help to develop a car parking strategy, with initial emphasis on the provision of parking in the city centre.

The group gave its views and advice on the many aspects which needed to be addressed in order to develop a strategy. During this consideration the scope of the strategy was widened to include areas outside the city centre. The group then recommended the Cabinet to approve the strategy and to incorporate it into the Local Development Framework documentation.



Barracks Car Park

## **Challenging Economic Environment**



Binley Business Park

The Board has been working with partners to monitor and respond to the difficult economic environment the city is currently facing. This work has included meeting the Economy, Learning, Skills and Employment Theme Group of the Coventry Partnership, monitoring the development of the Local Economic Partnership and the development of a jobs strategy for Coventry. The Board will have a continuing role engaging with partners as the jobs strategy is implemented.

## Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Board (4)

### Remit

In 2010/11, the Board was responsible for the scrutiny of the work undertaken by the Council on the environment, including refuse collections, roads and sustainability as well as being the designated Board for scrutinising the Community Safety Partnership.

### Membership

Councillors Auluck (Deputy Chair), Bailey, Gazey, Hammon, Harrison, Lakha, Lancaster (Chair) and Walsh.

### Activities and outcomes

The Board scrutinised a range of issues under its remit. A summary of these is set out in the report to the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee referred to on page 4.

### Examples of Scrutiny work undertaken by the Board in 2010/11

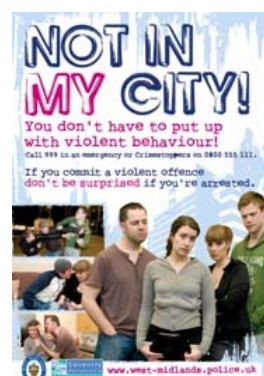
#### Collecting Waste at Christmas



Following problems with the 2009 Christmas waste collection, the Board asked officers to bring details of the work being done to prevent the same problems occurring in 2010. In February, the Board followed up the issue and found out about the improved service which had been delivered in 2010. The Board also made suggestions to officers for an improved recycling collection looking ahead to Christmas in 2011. These proposals will be investigated as plans are developed for the festive season.

#### Community Safety

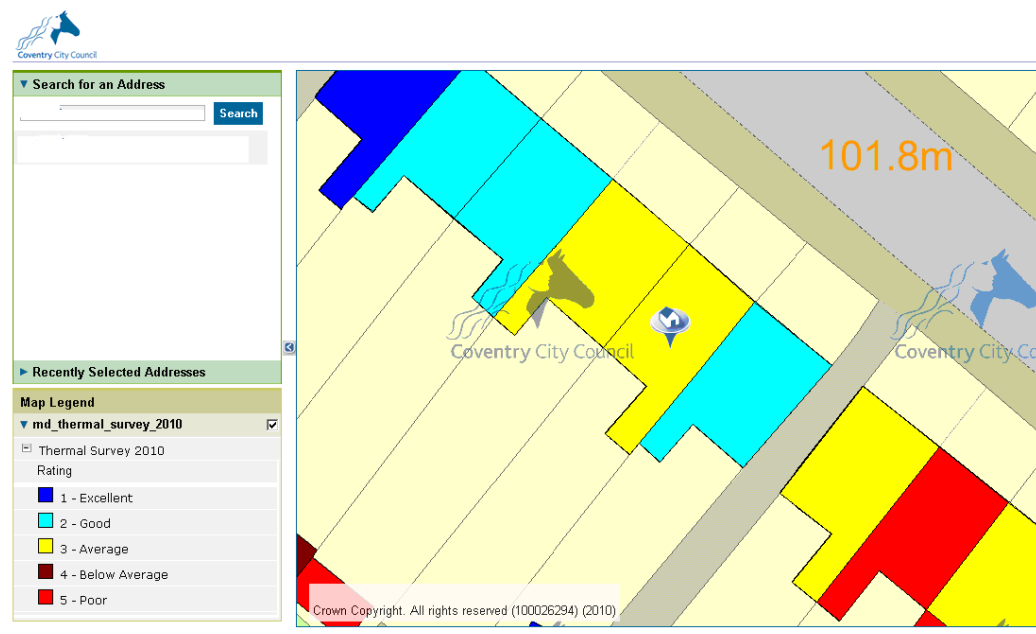
The Community Safety Partnership has been dealing with some challenging issues, following the Comprehensive Spending Review. The Scrutiny Board have monitored the progress of the Partnership and have looked in more detail at Domestic Violence and fed into the Home Office Consultation on Anti-Social Behaviour.



Tackling violence in the community. An example of a successful campaign run by the Community Safety Partnership.

## Sustainability and Climate Change

The Board looked into the implications of the changes made to the Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency scheme as a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review. It also considered the outcome of the Aerial Thermal Imaging Survey, which took place last winter and identifies specific properties that may benefit from energy saving measures. The Council is keen to direct vulnerable households out of fuel poverty and has been working with the Energy Saving Trust to target households.



An extract from the aerial thermal survey, showing the energy ratings for a typical row of terraced houses in Coventry

## Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5)

### Remit

In 2010/11, the Scrutiny Board was responsible for scrutinising the Community Services portfolio. It was also the Council's designated Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee under the Health and Social Care Act 2001, incorporating scrutiny of local NHS services.

### Membership

**Councillors:** Councillors Abbott, Asif, Blundell, Lepoidevin, Noonan (Chair), Ruane, Skinner, Sweet (Deputy Chair) and Welsh

**Co-opted member:** David Spurgeon (representing Coventry LINK).

### Activities and outcomes

The Board scrutinised a range of issues under its remit. A summary of these is set out in the report to the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee referred to on page 4.

### Examples of Scrutiny work undertaken by the Board in 2010/11

#### NHS Reforms

In July 2010 the Government published a white paper outlining its proposals for wide-ranging reform of the structure of the NHS. In 'Equity and Excellence – Liberating the NHS' the Government set out plans to abolish Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities and replace them with new structures in the form of GP Commissioning Consortia. These proposals have had a significant impact on the Scrutiny Board's work programme, with a number of meetings held to establish an overview of the local implementation of the Government's reforms.



In March the Board held its first meeting with the two Coventry GP commissioning consortia - Godiva and InSpires. At this meeting the Board expressed some concerns at the relative lack of details around accountability in the proposed structures. The Board also supported a move by the Council to establish a Health and Well-being Board to secure some accountability ahead of the statutory requirement to do so.

The establishment of a Health and Well-being Board will offer an opportunity to re-consider the health scrutiny function of the Council. Therefore, the Board has requested that next year's work programme should include consideration of the respective roles of the two bodies to ensure that they are complementary and avoid duplication.

## Personalisation and Independent Living

In December the Board held their meeting at the Opal Centre for Independent Living. This facility is an invaluable tool in the preventative work going on in the city to promote independence and to delay the point at which older people and people with disabilities become dependent on services. The Centre has a range of displays providing tested solutions to enable people to live comfortably in their own homes for longer.



The meeting also considered the Council's Personalisation project under which social care clients achieve significant personal control over the services which improve their quality of life. The Board was particularly concerned with the ways in which the risk between developing more personalised and individual services and safeguarding vulnerable adults was being managed. It has been assisted in its scrutiny of Personalisation by the inclusion of the Chair of the Coventry Local Involvement Network (LINK) as a co-opted member of the Board. Coventry LINK has supported the Council in assisting with client feedback on the project as it develops.

## Safeguarding

The City's Safeguarding Adults Board has issued two Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) during this municipal year, relating to Mrs A and Mr B. To demonstrate significant transparency the Council has used the public forum of the Scrutiny Board to publish the case summaries and for key officials from local agencies to make themselves available for questioning on the cases themselves and the action plans developed to prevent recurrences.

SCRs are only held when there is concern about possible multi-agency failure and the Scrutiny Board has taken its responsibility seriously, particularly with regard to the steps taken by local agencies to improve inter-agency working, training and practice. In the case of Mrs A, who died and was found to have experienced significant problems with bed sores, the Board submitted a number of requests for further information from the Director of Community Services regarding commissioning, training and multi-agency working. The Board also insisted on the publication of the action plan from the SCR and requested that the Safeguarding Adults Board allow an observer from the Scrutiny Board to attend their meetings. These recommendations were accepted by the Cabinet Member and completion of them was reported to subsequent meetings.

The case of Mr B, an elderly gentleman who arrived at a care home with C Difficile after discharge from hospital, was considered by the Board at their February meeting. All relevant local agencies attended the meeting to discuss the case and the steps taken subsequently to ensure better exchange of information between agencies to prevent similar occurrences.

**Agendas, papers and minutes for all Scrutiny meetings are on the Council's Committee Management Information System at [www.coventry.gov.uk](http://www.coventry.gov.uk)**

**More information on Scrutiny at Coventry City Council is available on the Council's website at [www.coventry.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/scrutiny) or from:**

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