

Report 8.1

# **Scrutiny Boards' Annual Report to Council**

## **2011/2012**

To be considered at the City Council meeting  
Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2012



## **Scrutiny Boards' Annual Report to Council 2011/2012**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction by Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Council Resources, Communities and Sport Scrutiny Board (1)</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Children, Young People, Learning &amp; Culture Scrutiny Board (2)</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Economy, Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Board (3)</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Board (4)</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Health and Safety Care Scrutiny Board (5)</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Details of how to find out more about Scrutiny</b>	<b>17</b>

## **Scrutiny Annual Report 2011/2012**

### **Introduction by Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee**

#### **Introduction by Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee**

In May this year the Council appointed me as Chair of the Scrutiny Coordination Committee. This is a role which is new to me, although I have many years experience as a member of various Council committees and more recently as a Cabinet Member. I am very keen to use the opportunity my appointment gives me to help to steer the development of Scrutiny during the coming year.

Recent developments in Scrutiny have been positive, such as the closer involvement with the abc Transformation Programme, and it now looks very different from its early days. Members undertook some good work across a wide range of issues. This report summarises just a few examples which illustrate the breadth of topics covered by the Boards.

Deciding priority issues for their work programmes, and achieving the right balance across Cabinet portfolios, is a continuing challenge for the Boards. This is especially the case in the current economic climate in which Local Government and its partners face some very difficult decisions. However, Scrutiny has an important role to play in this process, helping to make sure that the best possible decisions are made for local people.

I am looking forward to working with all my Scrutiny colleagues, and others who express an interest in being involved with particular issues, to continue to build on the effectiveness of Scrutiny in improving the Council's performance and influencing the development of policy.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Bigham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Councillor Linda Bigham  
Chair, Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

## Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

### Remit

In 2011-2012 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 Blundell, Foster, Lakha, Lancaster, Lucas (Chair), McNicholas (Deputy Chair), M. Mutton, Ruane, Sawdon, Taylor, and Welsh.

**Co-opted members for education matters:** Mr R. Potter (Roman Catholic Church), Mrs S. Hanson (Church of England) and 3 vacancies (Primary and Secondary Parent Governors and Other Faiths).

### 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 brought addressed and that business was co-ordinated effectively across the boards. Some shared pieces of work were undertaken such as the group looking at young people, crime and unemployment (see below). The committee also looked at the wide-ranging impacts of the changes due to the Government's Welfare Reform Act.

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee also received the 6 month progress report on the Council Plan and identified issues that needed to be referred to Scrutiny Boards. Seven decisions made by Cabinet or Cabinet Members were called in for Scrutiny consideration, two of which were determined to be invalid.

#### Examples of Scrutiny work undertaken by the Committee in 2011/12

##### abc Transformation Programme



The major focus of the Committee's work in 2011/12 was the Council's abc Transformation Programme which is carrying out fundamental reviews of all council services.

The Board received regular progress reports on all of the reviews, explanations about new ways of working and savings targets identified across the programme, as well as future reviews.

One of the most successful ways of engagement with the abc programme had been the briefing sessions which have been chaired by the chair of Scrutiny and have been open to all members.

These briefings have covered the fundamental service reviews of:

- Children, Learning and Young People
- Public Health
- Sustainability and Low Carbon
- Money Matters
- Advice Services
- CCTV
- Commissioning & Strategic Procurement

The briefings have given Members the opportunity to find out more about the reviews; aims and objectives as well as progress. Members were also able to raise their own concerns and question officers on the content of the reviews. Following discussions at one of the briefings, a Scrutiny task and finish group was established which provided recommendations to the Customer Management review.

### **Customer Management Task and Finish Group**

As a follow on to an earlier abc briefing on the Customer Management review, a task and finish group was set up to specifically look at:

1. Improvements to the customer experience, both for the public and elected members
2. Improved feedback
3. Elected members are more aware of the process for using the Contact Centre

The group, chaired by Cllr Fletcher, included Cllr Johnson, Cllr Lucas, Cllr M Mutton and Cllr Ruane. This group met over a period of four months, hearing evidence from managers in the Contact Centre as well as City Services and Development to specifically look at how reports of pot holes and missed bin collections are dealt with. They also looked at the possibilities for IT solutions to improve customer contact.

This led to the following recommendations which were presented and accepted at Scrutiny on

- a) that the Customer Management abc review includes the following :
  - i) an end-to-end review of the process for dealing with complaints/requests about potholes and bin collections, aimed particularly at improving the speed of feeding back information from the back office to the Contact Centre, so that responses to customers'/Members' requests are made more quickly. Any proposals for improvement must be capable of being applied to all services, not just these two, and any future complaints/requests process must include service standards, particularly target response times.
  - ii) work to see how the City Services Business Services Centre could be used to address the issue of closing down service requests, with the current backlog being given top priority and cleared as a matter of urgency.
  - iii) work to see how the Customer Relationship Manager system (CRM) and IT solutions could be used to improve the service to customers/Members in the longer term, including how the Members' Casework Tool and the CRM could fit together.
- b) that the Cabinet Member Community Safety and Equalities considers authorising the purchase of a "bolt-on" for the Council's website, which will make it more accessible for customers using smart phones and which will eventually allow customers to report issues/problems more easily;

- c) that, at the same time, in order to improve customer contact as quickly as possible, the Cabinet Member asks officers to investigate the feasibility of providing appropriate mobile phone applications as an interim measure, which could be implemented should it become apparent that the "bolt-on" solution is likely to take some time to implement;

Scruco will receive an update on progress in July 2012.

### **Young People, Crime and Unemployment**



Young street dancers from the Coventry Partnership Annual Conference

The issues of young people, crime and unemployment, were identified as cross-cutting issues that covered the remits of Scrutiny Boards 2, 3 and 4. The Chairs met with key officers from the Youth Offending Service, Youth Service, Community Safety Partnership, Jobs Strategy, as well as a representative from the Probation Service. The group identified the level of services available to young people at risk of being involved in crime and unemployment which was included in a report to Scruco on the 4<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

All three chairs attended the Coventry Partnership Annual Conference "16+ - raising aspirations, celebrating opportunities and the way forward"

The group found that there was a significant amount of work being done in this area, through good partnership links. Scruco accepted the content of the report and the board requested further updates on progress at future meetings.



## Income Generation

The Board has focussed on several issues related to income generation this year. In October the Board received a report on the fundamental service review of Income Generation as well as a briefing on income generated by selling advertising space.

In November the Board also discussed the income generated by selling space on the Metropolitan Area Network. The Board discussed savings made in this area as well as potential income generation. A progress report on income generated from schools' use of the network and the outcomes from the Services to Schools task and finish group will be received in 2012/13.



The task and finish group recommendations as mentioned above also have a focus on maximising income for the Council.

## i-Cov Project



Following the involvement of the Scrutiny Board in monitoring the implementation of the fundamental service review of ICT (i-cov) during 2010/11, the Board were also keen to receive further updates on progress.

The Board has been particularly interested in the identified savings from bringing the service in-house, as well as progress on recruiting to vacancies and the efforts made to fill these vacancies.

The issues from i-Cov have cross cutting themes across a variety of issues from the Scrutiny Board work programme, including recommendations made on the Members' IT policy, use of agency staff and also income generation.

Scrutiny will review the 12 month post implementation report as part of next year's work programme.



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

### Remit

In 2011/12 the Scrutiny Board was responsible for the scrutiny of issues relating to children and young people, education and culture.

### Membership

**Councillors:** Councillors Auluck, Chater, Dixon, Fletcher, Hetherton, Johnson, Mal Mutton (Chair) and B. Singh (Deputy Chair).

**Co-opted members for education matters:** Mr R. Potter (Roman Catholic Church), Mrs S. Hanson (Church of England) and 3 vacancies (Primary and Secondary Parent Governors and Other Faiths).

### Activities and outcomes

The Board scrutinised a range of issues under its remit and papers from their meetings are available via the weblink on page 17.

### Examples of Scrutiny work undertaken by the Board in 2011/2012

#### Consultation process – abc review of Day Care in Children’s Centres

This review was proposing revised day care arrangements and the Board was asked by the Cabinet to oversee the associated consultation process. The Board arranged for all Councillors to be invited to consultation events involving parents, carers and other interested parties and then considered the outcomes from these events. Following this it made recommendations to the Cabinet relating to:-



- Delaying the start of the proposed revised arrangement from April to September 2012; and
- Allowing each children’s centre to make its own arrangements for sessional day care so that it best meets the need of the parents/carers who wish to use it.

The Cabinet agreed to these recommendations.

#### Task and Finish Group – Children’s Centres

The Board established this Group in November 2011, with the objective of making recommendations to the Cabinet aimed at ensuring that the proposals of the Children, Learning and Young People Fundamental Service Review relating to the reconfiguration of children’s centres did not have a detrimental effect on service delivery across the city.



The Group met three times between December 2011 and January 2012, after which it informed the Cabinet that it supported the Review proposals. However, it gave this support only on the understanding that a number of issues which had become apparent during the Group's work would be addressed. This would ensure that, in future, services currently delivered from children's centres would be targeted at those families which were in need or vulnerable and that access in the future to these services would be based on the needs of the individual families, wherever they lived.

The Cabinet agreed to address these issues.

### **Overcoming Barriers to Learning Programme**

The Board had identified this programme as one which it wished to find out more about, given that it was crucial to improving the life chances of students. Therefore officers came to the Board's March 2012 meeting to give details about the impact of the programme so far, including improvements in school attendance rates and in attainment levels by pupils in vulnerable groups, such as looked after children and black/mixed black students.



At the meeting the Board heard first hand from one of the secondary school Head Teachers closely involved in the programme about how it was helping the students in her school and how work was progressing to connect with primary schools and other agencies.

The Board were pleased to hear that the programme was progressing, but recognised that there was still much work to be done and therefore asked for a further report in a year's time.

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

### **Remit**

In 2011/12, the Board continued to be responsible for the scrutiny of issues relating to the economy and the regeneration of the city, including housing and transport.

### **Membership**

Councillors Harrison (until 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2011), Howells, Lakha (Chair), McNicholas, Maton, Miks (from 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2011), Noonan (Deputy Chair), Ridley and Walsh.

### **Activities and outcomes**

The Board scrutinised a range of issues under its remit and papers from their meetings are available via the weblink on page 17.

### **Examples of Scrutiny work undertaken by the Board in 2011/12**

#### **Economic Development and Regeneration Issues**

During the year, the Board were given information on various aspects of economic development and regeneration in the city, including:

- a) the progress made by the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).
- b) two particular LEP initiatives – the Growing Places Fund (which will provide support for projects aimed at generating sustainable employment) and the proposed Coventry Gateway (a major employment development scheme centred around land near Coventry Airport).
- c) the re-development of the southern precinct and Bishopgate.
- d) the Council's job strategy.



A low carbon vehicle – one of the key sectors for development by the LEP

The Board will need to consider monitoring these as part of its 2012/2013 work programme.

#### **Coventry Homefinder Nominations and Lettings Policy**

This policy has been operating since September 2007, underpinning a system which provides customers in housing need with the opportunity to express an interest in social housing properties being advertised and generate a short list of applicants based on priority need and date of registration.

The policy is reviewed regularly and in February 2012 the Board considered changes proposed by the Cabinet Member (Neighbourhood Action, Housing, Leisure and Culture) following the latest review, which had been undertaken because the arrangements in the existing policy did not reflect current needs. Although the Board supported the majority of the proposed changes, it did not support a proposal to increase from 7 years to 10 years the upper age of children of different genders that may share a room and therefore asked a Cabinet Member not to approve this proposal.

In addition the Board asked the Cabinet Member:-

- a) To make some changes to the wording of the policy
- b) To ask officers to explore options for funding the costs of assessments by occupational therapists to determine whether a household has a medical priority with a view to reporting back to a future meeting of the Board.

The Cabinet Member agreed to all these requests.



Properties available  
on Homefinder  
April 2012

### **Other Housing-related Issues**

Other issues considered by the Board included:

- a) The Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the recent changes to the Local Housing Allowance and the possible impact of these on the housing situation in the city. The Board received updates on these measures firstly in September 2011 and secondly in April 2012. As the proposals develop it will be important to understand the full impact of these measures and the Board will include a further report in its work programme for 2012/13.
- b) Private sector empty homes. The Board were pleased to learn that, following its encouragement, the 2010/2011 target of bringing 110 empty homes back into use was extended by 32 and that in 2011/12 the number was 201. They asked for a further report in 12 months' time, to monitor progress following the Directorate restructure. This has led to the development of a new team who will work together to address key priorities, including empty properties.

## Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Board (4)

### Remit

In 2011/12, the Board continued to be responsible for the scrutiny of issues relating to the environment, including refuse collections, roads and sustainability as well as being the designated Board for scrutinising the Community Safety Partnership.

### Membership

Councillors Andrews, Auluck (Deputy Chair), Harrison (until 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2011), Lakha, Lancaster (Chair), Lapsa, Lucas, Miks (from 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2011) and Nellist.

### Activities and outcomes

The Board scrutinised a range of issues under its remit and papers from their meetings are available via the weblink on page 17.

### Examples of Scrutiny work undertaken by the Board in 2011/12

#### Winter gritting work and waste collection – progress



Members visit the Waste to Energy Plant

Following problems with the 2009 Christmas waste collection, and subsequent reports to the Board, the Board had made suggestions to officers for an improved recycling collection looking ahead to Christmas 2011. The Board were pleased to note that these suggestions had been put into practice and had contributed to an improved collection over the Christmas and New Year period. As part of this work, the Board visited the Whitley Depot and the Waste to Energy Plant to see the work in action.

#### Domestic Violence and Abuse



Through the Coventry Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment, domestic violence and abuse was highlighted as one of the key priorities for the work this year.

This led to the Board receiving several reports on this subject. As part of the Community Safety Partnership's six month progress report, these were a particular focus on the work being delivered on domestic violence and abuse.

Officers from the Police and the Probation Service were present to share the partnership work that was being delivered across the city. The discussions led to a recommendation that there should be information made available to school governors about the awareness-raising training.

In February the Board also contributed to the Community Safety response to the government's consultation on a revised definition of domestic violence and abuse,



as well as information about proposals on a new approach to domestic violence and abuse. The Board will continue to receive updates on progress in this area.

### **Street Trading Policy**

At the meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> December the Board were able to review and comment on the draft Street Trading Policy and the licensing scheme proposed for street traders across the whole of the city. This was an opportunity offered by bringing the responsibilities of CVOne into the Council. The Board made recommendations which were considered by the Cabinet Member (Community Safety and Equalities).

This item also linked to the issues of nuisance car sales on the highway, which is an issue of particular concern to the Members constituents. A report on approaches to dealing with this issue came to the Board on 29<sup>th</sup> February and the Board will receive further update in the next municipal year.



### **The effects of an elected Police and Crime Commissioner**

With the changes being introduced with an elected Police and Crime Commissioner, the Board were very interested to know more about the new structures and the relationship with the Police and Crime Panel which will be holding the Police and Crime Commission to account. The Board received a briefing from the West Midlands Police Authority as well as progress reports from Council officers. The Board will continue to be updated on this subject.

## Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5)

### Remit

In 2011/12, the Scrutiny Board continued to be responsible for scrutinising issues relating to community services, as well as being 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, Bailey, Gannon, Gazey, Lepoidevin, Ruane, B. Singh, Sweet (Deputy Chair), and Welsh (Chair).

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

### Activities and outcomes

The Board scrutinised a range of issues under its remit and papers from their meetings are available via the weblink on page 17.

### Examples of Scrutiny work undertaken by the Board in 2011/12

#### Fluoridation

On two occasions the Board considered a petition by 'Coventry Against Fluoridation' regarding their desire for the Board to conduct a full scrutiny inquiry into the local practice of drinking water fluoridation.

During an initial meeting, largely devoted to consideration of the petition, the Board heard arguments from the petitioners regarding their concerns. They also heard from the Acting Joint Director of Public Health about the role of fluoridation in tackling dental health inequalities in the City.



At the first meeting Members decided not to proceed with the petitioners request, whilst observing that should time permit in the future they might return to the issue. Following the resubmittal of a second similar petition the Board resolved not to pursue the requested inquiry and confirmed that they were satisfied by the case put forward extensively by the Acting Joint Director regarding the benefits of fluoride in Coventry's drinking water supply.

### Regulation of Adult Social Care Providers

At their August meeting the Board met with the Director and the local account manager for the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to discuss their concerns regarding the inspection and promotion of quality for adult social care providers. This meeting was prompted by national concerns regarding the failure of a large private residential care home provider, and was a useful opportunity for members to discuss with the CQC their local regulatory activities and how these related to the commissioning functions of the local authority.



## Public Health / NHS reforms

On a number of occasions the Board has met with executives from both the City Council and the NHS to monitor the local implementation of the Government NHS reforms. The latest meeting took place in March when the Board met with local GP leaders to discuss their plans for a Clinical Commissioning Group for the City. The Board also has a co-opted member from the Coventry Local Involvement Network (LINK), and Members considered both the LINK Annual Report and the latest developments in the move from LINK to HealthWatch.

The Board has also met with the Acting Joint Director of Public Health on a number of occasions, including a meeting to discuss his Annual Report '**Staying Focused**' and a subsequent meeting where further information was provided on a number of topical issues.



Cllr David Welsh meeting Barbara Hay, Head of Diversity UHCW



**Details of how to find out more about Scrutiny 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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