

## **Quarterly Report on the Work of Scrutiny Board (1) – October to December 2005**

### **Finance and Audit**

The Board have continued to focus much of their effort on their audit and financial roles, as follows:

- a) Monitoring the work of Internal Audit. The regular report on Internal Audit is now less concerned with statistics and more with the results of audit work, which gives the Board a clearer idea of the effectiveness or otherwise of the Council's systems and procedures.
- b) The External Audit process. They considered the Auditors' Statement of Auditing Standards 610 before it was considered by the Cabinet.
- c) Monitoring the Council's capital and revenue programmes. These reports are now considered by the Board before being considered by the Cabinet.
- d) Monitoring the Benefits Improvement Plan.
- e) The Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Board was consulted on this before it was considered by the Cabinet.
- f) Presentation on "Delivering Efficiency in Local Services".
- g) At the suggestion of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, the Board considered a report on how the Local Housing Allowance scheme is working, before it was considered by the Cabinet Member.

The work shown in a) to d) above will continue during the rest of 2005/6.

### **Human Resources**

1. The Board have been concerned at the continuing high levels of sickness absence within Council directorates. They recently discussed this with all Directors and found out what they are doing to improve the situation. They have asked the Cabinet to ensure that Directors continue to treat the reduction of sickness absence as a high priority and that they share with each other examples of good practice.

The Board will continue to monitor sickness absence and will discuss the situation again with Directors in 6 months' time.

2. The Board have had a presentation on the proposed new Integrated HR and Payroll Solution.

### **ICT**

1. The Board were given (at their request) information about how local organisations and community groups are being helped to create and manage their own information online (part of the Council's e-government programme).

2. The Board will receive information on the progress of Coventry Direct in January and March 2006.

### **Review Work**

The Debt Recovery Policy Review has now finished and reported its findings and recommendations to the Board and to the Cabinet Member (Finance and Equalities) The Review started in 2004/5 and took longer than envisaged, largely because of other pressures on the time of the officers supporting it.

The Committee will see from the information above that the Board now often consider reports before the Cabinet/Cabinet Members and therefore have more opportunity to make recommendations before decisions are taken.