



Coventry City Council

# 5.1

## Public report

### **REPORT BACK ON CONFERENCE/SEMINAR**

**REPORT TO:** Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee                      **Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2006  
**REPORT OF:** Councillor Crookes and Corinne Steele (Scrutiny Co-ordinator)  
**TITLE:** Local Government Information Unit  
Good Practice Seminar - "Influential Scrutiny"  
**DATE:** 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2006  
**VENUE:** London

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#### **1. Recommendation**

The Committee is recommended to note this report.

#### **2. Background**

**2.1** The programme for the seminar is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

**2.2** The presentation by Dr. Stephanie Snape examined how Scrutiny Committees can develop strategies to increase their influence in decision-making, focusing on the following:-

- Agreeing desired outcomes of scrutiny work
- Identifying who to influence e.g. decision-makers, stakeholders
- Adopting appropriate influencing style (which style is best suited to the decision-maker involved)
- Shaping and influencing the scrutiny system e.g. the creation of a co-ordinating body for chairs and deputy chairs (which will then provide a more powerful base for exercising influence); selecting issues to investigate which are important and will be of interest to the general public and stakeholders; robust project planning; engaging partners, the general public and media in issues; producing user-friendly, evidence-based reports with good recommendations.
- "Working the politics" (e.g. identifying who is likely to be for and against Scrutiny's proposals, working to show how Scrutiny's work can improve things and connecting to others' priorities)
- Achieving parity of esteem with the Cabinet

**2.3** During the course of this presentation, those attending the seminar identified the following as the ingredients for a successful scrutiny review:-

- A pro-active chair
- Interested members
- The review is "useful" and relevant
- Production of a "scoping document" for the review and sticking to it
- Engaging senior politicians and managers
- Good recommendations
- The topic is important for local people
- Bringing in information from other authorities
- Raising the profile by e.g. involving national bodies

**2.4** Dr Snape's presentation was followed by a presentation from Councillor Stuart Bodsworth, Chair of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee of Stockport Council, describing a successful scrutiny review (relating to developing a Mills Strategy) carried out in his authority and indicating why he thought it was successful, as follows:

- It was timely – there was scope for councillors to influence in this strategy, as it was timed to feed into the budget process, with outcomes contributing to Council objectives
- There was close working with officers
- There was a good executive/scrutiny relationship – the Executive Councillor (Regeneration) attended meetings of the scrutiny review which helped to build consensus before the review was concluded
- It involved stakeholders and the public
- It looked for best practice elsewhere

**2.5** In addition to these presentations, information was given to participants on the new responsibilities which may be given to Scrutiny through the Police and Justice Bill (in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour) and the Local Government White Paper, the timetable for which has been delayed. Participants identified a number of questions for the Home Office in relation to the Criminal Justice Bill, which the LGIU will take forward.

**2.6** The afternoon session was largely devoted to a Scrutiny clinic, which offered participants the opportunity to submit questions about Scrutiny to a panel. Areas covered in this session were as follows:-

- How can Scrutiny show that it can be useful

- How can Scrutiny improve its resources
- Area-based Scrutiny
- Performance measures for Scrutiny

### 3. Cost of Attendance

Seminar cost: £100.00 per person

Travel cost : £93.00 per person

Total cost: **£386.00**

### 4. Benefits of attending

- 4.1** The event provided useful information in relation to increasing the influence of Scrutiny, which we could use in Coventry as we develop our Scrutiny processes.
- 4.2** It also provided the opportunity to share experiences and good practice with representatives of other local authorities.

### 5. Date of Cabinet Approval

30<sup>th</sup> May, 2006 (Minute 9. 2) b) refers)

#### List of background papers

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Papers open to Public Inspection : Nil