

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

18th October, 2006**Quarterly Report on the Work of Scrutiny Board (1) – June to September 2006**

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee identified four themes for Scrutiny Boards to bear in mind when doing their work in 2006/2007. This note shows the work done by the Board during the period June to September, in the light of these themes.

Relevance

1. **Sickness absence** – the Board held a meeting with all Directors and Cabinet Members to explore in depth the action being taken to reduce levels of sickness absence, which is one of the Council's priorities. The Board made a number of recommendations to the Cabinet on how improvements could be achieved, all of which were accepted. A further meeting will be held next February, to hear what progress has been made on the Board's recommendations.
2. **Cabinet Member Plans** – in common with the other Boards, Scrutiny Board 1 held meetings with its relevant Cabinet Members to question them about their Plans, which identified some possible additional issues for the Board's work programme (relating to Culture and Leisure strategies).

Public Engagement

The Board has not involved the public in its work during this quarter. It will need to think more about this in future, although much of the Board's remit does not lend itself easily to this.

Value for Money

The Board has had an initial briefing on the work of the Value for Money Team and the questions which Members need to ask when they are considering issues, in order to find out if value for money is being achieved.

The Board intends to monitor the progress of the Council's Value for Money Strategy.

Achieving Improvement

1. The meeting on sickness absence was devoted solely to this issue, which meant that Members were able to focus on this, ask detailed questions and make useful recommendations.
2. The Board held a meeting to plan for the sickness absence meeting. Members decided the questions they wished to ask and gave them to Directors in advance. This meant that the Board were given informed responses and learned more as a result. This did not preclude supplementary questions being asked at the meeting.

A similar process was followed for the Cabinet Member Plan meetings.

3. The Board set up a task and finish group to examine the process for installing the new Benefits IT system, as it was concerned that the service might be severely reduced for some weeks. The group asked detailed questions of officers and were reassured that the impact on the public would be minimal. The Board will receive a report on this at its October meeting.
4. The Board has now appointed an Audit Sub-Group to carry out its audit role, which should leave it freer to consider other issues, whilst at the same time ensuring that audit issues are scrutinised fully.
5. The Board has monitored the following issues, and will continue to do so during the year:-
 - the Coventry Direct project
 - the Benefits Improvement Plan
 - the capital and revenue programmes
 - ICT infrastructure

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