



South Derbyshire District Council

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Annual Report 2007/08

1. Background

1.1 Purpose of the Report

This is the seventh Annual Report to Council from Overview and Scrutiny, as required to be produced by Article 6 of the Council's Constitution.

The report outlines how the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has discharged its functions during the municipal year 2007/08 and details the current position and outcomes of its activities.

1.2 Composition of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee has eight Members, being five Members of the Conservative Group and three Members of the Labour Group in accordance with the political balance of the Council. For 2007/08, the following Members were appointed to the Committee:-

Conservative Group

Councillor Atkin (Chairman), Councillor Jones (Vice-Chairman) and Councillors Mrs. Farrington, Mrs. Hood and Mrs. Plenderleith.

Labour Group

Councillors Bambrick, Lane and Mrs. Mead.

1.3 Main Purposes of Committee

The main purposes of the Committee are as follows:-

- (a) Make reports and/or recommendations to Full Council, Policy Committee or Area Meeting in connection with the formulation of Policy and the discharge of any functions.
- (b) Consider any matter affecting the District or its inhabitants.
- (c) Review and/or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's functions.
- (d) Exercise the Call-In procedure in respect of decisions made but not yet implemented by any Policy Committee or Area Meeting.
- (e) Oversee the Best Value process and report findings to the relevant Policy Committee.

1.4 Meetings

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee normally meets every six weeks. Occasionally, Special Meetings are held, usually to deal with specific issues, such as the budget proposals. Meetings are held in Open session, unless there are Exempt items for consideration.

1.5 Call-In of Policy Committee Decisions

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the power to 'call-in' decisions of any Policy Committee made but not implemented, as set out in the Local Authorities (Alternative Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2001.

During 2007/08, no Policy Committee decisions were 'called-in'.

2. Specific Areas of Activity and Achievements

2.1 Flooding Issues

During the year, the Committee conducted a review of emergency planning arrangements concerning flooding, together with flood preventative measures. During the process, a member of the Environment Agency's Flood Incident Management Team and a representative of Severn Trent Water attended Meetings of the Committee and contributed to the deliberations.

This review culminated in a report and recommendations to the Environmental and Development Services Committee in April 2008. The recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were received and it was requested that the Committee's future work programme includes the consideration of representations on household drainage.

2.2 Broadband Provision

The Committee considered the quality of service and delivery of broadband provision in the District. Contributors to the discussion at Committee Meetings included the Head of IT and Customer Services and the BT Regional Manager for the East Midlands. A report is to be submitted to the Environmental and Development Services Committee on the work undertaken to date relating to the availability of broadband provision in areas throughout the District. There is the potential for further scrutiny stemming from this work.

2.3 Budget Proposals 2008/09 and Financial Plan to 2013

The Committee has a specific role to assist the Finance and Management Committee to develop the budget proposals. The Committee made representations to the Finance and Management Committee that the future Work Programme should include projects based on the budget requirements associated with staffing for partnership arrangements and the funding arrangements for the Rosliston Forestry Centre.

2.4 Public Transport Issues

The County Council undertook a review of public transport issues and in conjunction with the Environmental and Development Services Committee, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee submitted the following issues for inclusion within the scope of the review:-

- Bus services to facilities (such as hospitals) in the neighbouring district
- Communication and consultation with local residents about changes to bus services
- Bus services to the new Etwall Leisure Centre
- Train services from Willington Station (with parking facilities)
- Long-term funding of the Gold Card Concessionary Fare Scheme
- Concessionary fares for taxis (as well as buses) through the Gold Card Scheme
- Barriers to the use of the public transport system

Although these were all issues for possible inclusion in the review, it was considered this would make the review's scope too broad. Therefore, the review focused on Willington Station, as described below.

2.5 Willington Station

Following proposals by Arriva to reduce severely the frequency of passenger rail services at Willington Station from December 2008, representatives from Willington Parish Council attended the Committee Meeting in December 2007. Following this, a survey was undertaken, with the assistance of local Members, to identify usage of the current services operated from the Station. This matter attracted significant press coverage at that time.

Representatives of train service companies and public transport authorities attended the Committee Meeting in May 2008 to discuss this topic further.

2.6 Other Issues Considered

- Telephone calls to Emergency Services
- Scrutiny Webpages
- Delivery of Council services via the Rural Post Office Network
- Derbyshire County Council's Improvement and Scrutiny Work Programme
- Feedback from Policy Committees on Work Programme
- Street Scene
- Derbyshire County PCT – Scrutiny of Health Services

3. Work Programme 2008/09

Following the Annual Council Meeting, a focus session will be held to undertake a review of the Committee's operation and consider the Work Programme for 2008/09. Specific drivers for such a review include the forthcoming scrutiny of the Local Area Agreement, the Use of Resources Assessment and the scoping of future proposed scrutiny areas.

4. Concluding Comments and Acknowledgements

This report has aimed to demonstrate the tangible effect that overview and scrutiny can make towards improving and delivering quality services to the residents of South Derbyshire.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recognises and appreciates immensely the valuable contribution that elected Members, Officers and representatives from partner organisations make towards its work and acknowledges that without this support and co-operation, it could not fulfil its constitutional remit.

Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Members
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

May 2008
