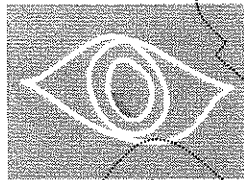


South Derbyshire District Council



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Annual Report 2005/6

1. Background

1.1 Purpose of the report

This is the fifth annual report to Council from Overview & Scrutiny, as required to be produced by article 6 of the Council's Constitution.

The report outlines how the Overview and two Scrutiny committees have discharged their functions during the period 2005 to 2006 and details the current position and outcomes of its activities.

1.2 Composition of Overview and Scrutiny (O&S)

The O&S function comprises the following: -

- Overview committee
- Community Scrutiny committee
- Corporate Scrutiny committee

Each of the 2 Scrutiny committees has 7 members, chosen to reflect the political balance of the Council. The Chair and Vice-Chair and 1 other member of each of these Scrutiny committees are 'dedicated Scrutineers' and as such do not sit on any of the 3 Policy committees. These 6 dedicated Scrutineers form the Overview committee membership.

1.3 Specific functions

The specific functions of each of the 3 committees are set out in article 6 of the Constitution, however in general they: -

- Contribute to policy development and review
- Scrutinise the decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of the Council's functions; and
- Review performance and oversee the Best Value process.

1.4 Meetings

O&S committees normally meet every 6 weeks. Occasionally, special meetings are held, usually to deal with specific issues, such as the budget proposals.

Meetings are held in public, unless there are 'exempt' items.



1.5 Development and ‘away days’

O&S give high regard to continuously improving and developing its functions and operation.

In July 2005, it held an ‘away day’ at Bretby Conference centre. Two key issues came out of this event and these were: -

- The emphasis on the need for the 2 Scrutiny committees of the Council to work together, and
- For the scoping of reviews to be undertaken to determine the outcomes required

The opportunities to work jointly with the County Council were initially explored at this meeting and have been progressed through the year. The findings of the event informed the presentation given to Full Council by Overview committee in August 2005.

In January 2006, a half-day workshop was held at the Council Offices to review the position of Scrutiny in relation to a number of operational issues. A report on the health of Scrutiny was prepared and presented to Council.

1.6 Partnership links

O&S has this year progressed partnership working with Derbyshire County Council (DCC), exploring good practice and methodology and where joint and shared reviews and working arrangements can be maximised for the benefit of both organisations.

O&S members visited Derbyshire County Council’s County Hall offices on 4 January 2006 and observed a Scrutiny meeting. Members also had the opportunity to discuss with fellow Scrutineers potential areas for joint working.

2. Overview committee

2.1 Remit and focus

Overview committee has a role in setting the O&S work programmes and ensure that the activities carried out and delivered are effective.

Where matters fall within the remit of more than 1 Scrutiny committee, or are of a cross-cutting issue, Overview determines which of the Scrutiny committees take responsibilities for particular issues to be addressed. This also minimises the potential for duplicated effort by the Scrutiny committees.

Overview also addresses relevant issues in relation to the Council's Constitution.

2.2 Call-in of Policy committee decisions

Overview 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 the year 2005/06, no Policy committee decisions were called in.

2.3 Specific areas of activity and achievements

Presentation to Council about Scrutiny

The committee gave a presentation to Council at its 11 August 2005 meeting, which was informed by the O&S away day held 7 July 2005. The issues covered were: -

- the purpose of Scrutiny,
- the role of O&S committees in 4th option Councils,
- the value of Scrutiny
- a contributor's charter
- reasons for a review
- the process involved in Scrutiny
- terms of reference
- subsequent recommendations

O&S's 2005/6 work programme was covered, together with the direction and areas for review. Also a matrix regarding the Drivers for Scrutiny was made available for members' comment and to indicate their priorities on the various areas included.

Member training

Overview progressed with reviewing member training. Working closely with the member training champions, the committee recommended to Full Council that it should sign up to the East Midlands Regional LGA Members' Development charter. Furthermore there should be an action plan produced, detailing what needs to happen to meet the principles of the charter and that a programme of Member Development Reviews be undertaken to identify training and development requirements.

Council adopted the committee's recommendations and further resolved that the Council should adopt the charter.



Street scene

Overview has taken up the initial work undertaken by the Community Scrutiny committee with this project. This will be a key focus of activity in the forthcoming year.

3. Community Scrutiny committee

3.1 Remit and focus

The activities of Community Scrutiny relate to the areas of responsibility of both the Environmental and Development Services committee and the Housing and Community Services committee, in particular housing, leisure, recreation, regeneration, waste and cleansing, crime and disorder and the protection of the environment.

This year a key focus has been progressing outstanding matters with improvements and repairs to sheltered housing sites. However the committee has been active in a number of other areas as detailed below.

3.2 Specific areas of activity and achievements

Best Value Review of Housing Stock Investment and Asset Management

The committee concluded its work with the Housing & Community Services committee in this review and in conjunction with Overview, compiled a report for their consideration. This report helped officers and members prepare for the Best Value inspection by the Audit Commission.

The BV inspection determined the service as Fair (1 star) with promising prospects for improvement.

Sheltered Housing services

The committee has continually monitored progress with the improvements and repairs to various sheltered housing schemes that were identified on site visits. Working closely with Managers from the Housing Services division, the committee has been able to maintain an overview of this important service, thus helping to improve the quality of life of the residents.

The committee will shortly be preparing the final report to the Housing & Community Services committee that will draw to a conclusion the work undertaken and acknowledge the achievements made.



Consultation on the Corporate Plan 2006 to 2009

The committee was asked to help develop the framework for undertaking the community consultation on the Council's Corporate Plan for 2006 to 2009. A wide variety of consultation methods and techniques were reviewed and assessed. Despite restricted timescales, a comprehensive programme was developed and proposed by Scrutiny and adopted by the Finance & Management committee.

Street Scene review

Community Scrutiny identified the opportunity to work closely with Derbyshire County Council on a review relating to Street Scene.

The committee effected the initial discussions with stakeholders to progress this important Derbyshire County Council project.

4. Corporate Scrutiny committee

4.1 Remit and focus

The activities of Corporate Scrutiny relate to the areas of responsibility of the Finance and Management committee, in particular assisting with the development of the annual budget, corporate plans, strategies and frameworks, management of Council's assets and revenue functions.

This year the key focus has been a comprehensive review of Strategic Planning in the Council.

4.2 Specific areas of activity and achievements

Review of Strategic Planning

Scrutiny progressed the review of strategic planning that had commenced in March 2005. The terms of reference for the review were to "assess the Council's current Strategic Planning practice. To identify barriers and opportunities and make recommendations to the Finance & Management Committee (F&M) for an improvement to current practice in a timely manner that will add value to the work of the Improvement Panel."

This has been an extensive project and has occupied a significant amount of time. Finance & Management committee have considered the review findings and the recommendations and will shortly be responding.



Review of the 2006/9 Budget proposals

As required by its duties under the Constitution, Scrutiny was engaged in the preparation and development of the 2006/9 Budget proposals.

It selected 5 key lines of enquiry those being: -

- Priorities
- Challenge
- Performance
- Risk analysis
- Revenue and capital spending

This year, the Committee again chose to focus on arrangements for the development of the budget rather than on the contents of the budget 'per se' because Members considered it to be an area, which underpins many areas of the Council's work.

Scrutiny made 7 individual recommendations intended to assist Members to ensure that financial resources are aligned to corporate and service priorities; to successfully implement the 'shifting resources' project; to ensure that 'value for money' is obtained in everything we do; and, to ensure that performance is actively managed and reported to all stakeholders.

5. Work planned for 2006/7

O&S will commence the new municipal year with the development of a comprehensive work programme. Amongst the issues and projects identified for the work programme so far are: -

- The role of Member Champions
- Progressing the Street Scene review
- 2007-10 budget proposals
- Strategic Planning project
- South Derbyshire Local Strategic Partnership
- Post Office closures
- Social Services/Primary Care Trust interaction



6. Concluding comments and acknowledgements

This report has aimed to demonstrate the tangible effect O&S can make towards improving and delivering quality services to the people of South Derbyshire.

O&S recognises and appreciates immensely the valuable contribution the elected members, officers and representatives from partner organisations make towards its work and the reviews it undertakes. Without this, its work could not take place effectively.

We express our grateful thanks to all who have helped us deliver this year's work and activity.

Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Members
Overview and Scrutiny committees

Memberships: -

- Overview: Councillors Harrington (Chair) and Bladen (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Lane, Mrs Hood and Murphy
(one vacancy)
- Community: Councillors Harrington (Chair) and Bambrick (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Mrs Hood, Jones, Lemmon, Mrs Mead and Mrs Renwick
- Corporate: Councillors Murphy (Chair) and Lane (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Atkin, Bale, Bladen, Mrs Isham and Mulgrew

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