

## **Overview and Scrutiny Peer Review South Derbyshire District Council**

### **Proposal**

South Derbyshire District Council have approached James Doble to carry out a peer review of the Overview and Scrutiny arrangements at South Derbyshire District Council.

The review will take place in March 2009 with a draft report provided to the authority in late April 2009.

### **Methodology**

The review will essentially be composed of two research elements, a desk top review of information and the formation of assumptions and conclusions based on that evidence.

Additionally, two visits to South Derbyshire District Council to test and confirm the assumptions and conclusions.

A report will be produced which will be submitted to the Council in draft for any comments and amendments of issues of a factual nature, before it is finalised and presented to the Council for its use.

### **Timetable**

- Submission of Brief – 2 March
- Submission of evidence – 11 March
- Development of Key Lines of Enquiry – 12-16 March
- Visit 1 (Full Day) – 19 March
- Visit 2 (Afternoon/Evening) – 25 March
- Submission of Draft Report – End of April
- Submission of Final Report – Early May

### **Biography – James Doble**

Born and raised in Norfolk, James has been interested in Local Government from an early age.

With a background in student politics, he graduated from Keele University with a BA Honours in Politics and Philosophy and also holds a Diploma in Management Studies from Kingston University.

James joined the London Borough of Hounslow in 1998 as a Committee Administrator under the 'Committee System'. In 2000 he was promoted to Scrutiny Officer working in a small dedicated scrutiny team and part of a scrutiny process that was described by the Audit Commission, in the Corporate Performance Assessment as 'robust and effective'.

From 2003 to 2008 he has worked as Principal Democratic Support Officer, within Democratic Services at Lancaster City Council, managing the Overview and Scrutiny process and the team supporting the Council meetings, charities, grants process and emergency control centre.

James took up the post of Democratic, Scrutiny and Elections Manager at Cherwell District Council, North Oxfordshire in 2008 and has reviewed and re-launched the Overview and Scrutiny function of the Council.

James is an experienced trainer, delivering training for both Officers and Members. He regularly delivers national scrutiny training and has provided training for LGG and also INLOGOV. From time to time he has also contributed at various scrutiny networks.

### **Documentary Evidence for Desktop Review**

The following evidence is requested to be submitted electronically where possible:

- Annual Reports for last 3 years
- 6 months of minutes for all Overview and Scrutiny Committees convened under LGA 1972.
- Agendas (including reports for last two meetings of all Overview and Scrutiny Committees convened under LGA 1972.
- Democratic structure diagram showing committees.
- Officer structure diagram showing lines of reporting for officers supporting Overview and Scrutiny.
- Overview and Scrutiny guidelines or handbook for members.
- New Overview and Scrutiny member induction training material.
- Overview and Scrutiny work programme.
- Details of Overview and Scrutiny Officer support structure and budgets.
- Details of any Call-ins held (if any)
- Extract of constitution in relation to Overview and Scrutiny (Articles, Functions and Procedure Rules)
- Most recent CPA report South Derbyshire District Council and annual management letter indicating direction of travel.

### **Initial Lines of Enquiry**

In addition to the above, it would be appreciated if a brief submission could be prepared in response to the following lines of enquiry:

#### Performance

What is the role of Scrutiny with regard to performance management?

#### Finance

What is the role of Scrutiny with regard to finance monitoring and the budget process?

#### Partnerships

How has Scrutiny considered key partnerships?

#### External Scrutiny

What areas of external scrutiny have been undertaken?

#### Public Involvement

How are the public engaged with scrutiny and the scrutiny work programme?

How are the public and other stakeholders involved in creating the scrutiny work programme?

#### Councillor Involvement

To what degree is the scrutiny work programme member led?

### Overview and Scrutiny

What is the profile of Overview and Scrutiny within the authority amongst officers and members?

Is there parity of esteem between scrutiny and the decision making committees?

### Media Relations

How is scrutiny covered in the local media, what strategies are in place to achieve media coverage?

I would also be grateful to receive any other information which would help to give me an impression of scrutiny at South Derbyshire District Council.

### **Discussions**

I would be grateful if brief discussions could be arranged with the following key stakeholders on 19 March 2009:

- Lead Officer Overview and Scutiny
- Other officers supporting Overview and Scrutiny
- Service Head/ Corporate Management Team member responsible for Overview and Scrutiny
- Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- An officer from a service that has been the subject of scrutiny
- Two members who have been involved with Overview and Scrutiny (majority party and opposition – if available depending on political composition of the Council).

I am also happy to meet any other stakeholder who would help to give me an impression of scrutiny at South Derbyshire District Council.