

MEETING:	COUNCIL
DATE:	25 MAY 2012
TITLE OF REPORT:	ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEMBERSHIP	A Seldon (Chairman), AM Atkinson, PL Bettington, WLS Bowen, MJK Cooper, PGH Cutter, EPJ Harvey, MAF Hubbard, RC Hunt, TM James, Brig P Jones CBE, JLV Kenyon, JW Millar, R Preece, SJ Robertson, P Rone and P Watts. Statutory Co-optees: Mr P Burbidge, Miss E Lowenstein, Mr T Plumer and Mr P Sell.

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To inform Council of the work undertaken by the Scrutiny function from May 2011 to April 2012.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. This report summarises the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from May 2011 to April 2012.
2. In May the Council approved a revised scrutiny structure. This consisted of one politically proportionate Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the power to set up task and finish groups, with six vice-Chairmen each responsible for a particular themed area. This replaced a structure based on an Overview and Scrutiny Committee supported by a number of themed Scrutiny Committees.
3. As the change followed the May 2011 elections two Overview and Scrutiny training sessions were held as part of the general Member induction programme. This meant that the Committee was not able to set a work programme until July. Because of Members' holiday commitments work did not commence in earnest on topics selected for scrutiny until September. A change to the Chairmanship of the Committee was approved by Council on 18 November 2011.
4. A number of discussions have taken place with the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen about revisions to processes in the light of experience in operating the new model. Members have made a number of comments about its operation. These are to be considered as part of the agreed review of the model after one year of its establishment. A report will be made to Council in July.

5 A summary of the work undertaken by the scrutiny function is set out below.

SUMMARY OF WORK UNDERTAKEN BY THE SCRUTINY FUNCTION IN 2011-12

Scrutiny Reviews

6 The following in-depth scrutiny reviews have been completed this year by Task and Finish Groups:

- Council Procurement Policy and Local Business and Local Employment
- Income and Charging
- Planning System Review – Development Control and the operation of the Constitution
- Safeguarding Adults
- Tourist and Temporary Event Signage

7 Four of these Reviews were submitted to the Executive in March and one in April. The Executive is required to respond within two months. Responses are awaited and will be reported to the first available meeting of the Committee for consideration.

8 The whole Committee conducted a half day review of the Local Development Framework Consultation Process. This resulted in a number of recommendations highlighting several basic principles that should be applied to the Council's general consultation processes.

9 A half day review of aspects of the West Midlands Ambulance Service's work has also been completed.

Scrutiny Reviews in Progress

10 A review of Safeguarding Children is underway and is due to be completed soon.

Pre-Decision Scrutiny

11 Members were particularly interested in developing this aspect of the scrutiny role. The new Herefordshire Public Services Rolling Programme has provided the Committee with a much greater ability to plan its work and consider which items it might want to consider before an Executive decision is made.

12 Members have discussed how they might improve their impact in this area. It is proposed to request informal briefings on specific topics in advance of formal consideration by the Committee to equip the Committee with the knowledge to undertake its scrutiny role more effectively.

13 The following matters were subject to pre-decision scrutiny:

- Budget and Policy Framework items: The Youth Justice Plan, Budget 2012/13 and Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- The Accommodation Programme
- Youth Service Review
- Management Options For Cultural Services

Health Scrutiny

- 14 The Committee has received performance reports from the following Health bodies:
- Hereford Clinical Commissioning Consortium
 - West Mercia NHS Cluster
 - West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust
 - Wye Valley NHS Trust
- 15 The Committee has questioned representatives of the Trusts and highlighted a number of issues. The Committee has scheduled quarterly updates and agreed to pursue any specific points identified for examination through one-off Task and Finish Group meetings.
- 16 The Committee has also responded to a number of statutory consultations:
- Safe and Sustainable Heart Surgery in England:
 - Reconfiguration of Trauma Services in the West Midlands.

Scrutiny of Partners

- 17 The Committee has scrutinised the work of the following partners:
- Amey Wye Valley: The Committee has examined the contractual relationship between the Council, Amey and Amey Wye Valley Limited, the funding arrangements, performance and compliance with the Amey contract. Negotiations are currently taking place on the Amey Contract and the Committee has requested that pre-decision takes place of any proposals to Cabinet.
 - Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership: The Committee has a statutory role in scrutinising this partnership. The Committee has considered current issues and priorities for the partnership and the refreshed Community Safety Strategy 2011-2014.

Call-ins

- 18 The Committee called in the following decisions:
- The Herefordshire Music Service
 - Procurement of services to support the delivery of Herefordshire's yes we can plan for children and young people.
 - The supplementary agreement and deed of variation to the retail quarter (old livestock Market) development agreement.
- 19 In the first two cases the Committee broadly accepted the Executive's decision. In the case of the retail quarter development agreement the Committee recommended Cabinet undertook further work on various aspects of the Agreement. Cabinet did not accept the Committee's recommendations in full. It did, however, acknowledge the need for continuing and appropriate review of risks, requiring continued diligence on equalities issues, value for money and risk assessments and mitigation.

Public Participation

- 20 The Committee has received a number of suggestions for scrutiny from the public. Many questions have also been submitted for consideration at meetings. A number of members of the public have also been invited to address the Committee during discussion of particular items.

Background Papers

Agenda papers and Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee July 2011-April 2012