

Scrutiny Improvement Plan 2006

Abbreviations:

CSMC – Chair, Strategic Monitoring Committee

TB – Tim Brown

RB – Robert Blower

AM – Alan McLaughlin

TG - Tony Geeson

SR – Sonia Rees

MH -Martin Heuter

CD – Christine Dyer

SH – Scrutiny Handbook

	Action to be taken	Lead	By When (end of month)	Outcome/Success Criteria	Progress to date
1	Providing Critical Friend Challenge – to improve: effectiveness of challenge to the Executive; impact on the work of the Executive; challenge to corporate strategy and budget; involvement of external partners in scrutiny; effectiveness of relationship with the Executive and senior management.				
1.1	Cabinet Members to make annual presentation to relevant Scrutiny or Strategic Monitoring Committee presenting future plans, identifying key issues, reviewing past performance, highlighting areas of good practice/success, and summary of scrutiny impact.	CSMC/TB	June 06	Presentations made.	Achieved for 2006 with Cabinet Member (Rural Regeneration and Strategy) reporting in October.
1.2	Hold informal meetings of SMC and Cabinet to provide focus for development of effective relationship	CSMC/TB	End September/early October 06 March 07 (post budget being set)	Six monthly joint meetings at critical stages in work planning. Clear communication links; identification of key issues where engagement will be advantageous.	Ongoing
1.3	Informal meetings of SMC to provide focus for development of the role of Scrutiny.	CSMC/AM	May 06	Six monthly meetings scheduled. (September/March)	Ongoing

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1.4	Review use of the Forward Plan in identification of issues and revise guidelines in SH accordingly.	AM	July 06	Guidelines updated. Consideration by Constitution Review Working Group (September)	Ongoing
1.5	Prepare guidelines for inclusion in SH on powers to scrutinise external bodies.	TB	July 06	Prepared for inclusion in revised handbook in September – see 3.1)	Ongoing
1.6	Publish procedure note on arrangement/remit of Officer Briefings. Include in SH.	TB	July 06	Procedure note included in SH.	Ongoing
1.7	Establish schedule of Integrated Performance Reports for consideration by SMC and referral to each Scrutiny Committee as required.	TG/TB	June 06	Integrated Performance report on each SMC agenda (including progress in relation to Council's overall Improvement Plan.) Evidence of referral of relevant individual items to individual Scrutiny Committees.	Ongoing
1.8	Establish process and timetable for challenging the budget.	SR/TB	July 06	Process established	Ongoing
1.9	Provide progress reports on the Overall Improvement Plan to each SMC meeting.	TG/TB	June 06	See 1.7 above	Ongoing
1.10	Provide progress reports on detailed improvement plans for individual service areas (eg JAR etc which should go regularly to each meeting of the relevant Scrutiny Committee. Directorate Plans to be presented in March 2007, with additional reports on	TG/TB	ongoing	Reports made	Ongoing

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	selected service plans throughout the year at the relevant Scrutiny Committee's discretion.				
1.11	Document process for scoping of reviews in SH.	TB	July 06	Process recorded	Ongoing
1.12	Hold seminar(s) for Scrutiny Members on the newly developed network of Policy & Performance officers able to provide information/research to support scrutiny activity, and how this is accessed. Include workshop on Communication as well.	TG/RB/TB	Sept 06 See 1.13 below	Seminar held	Ongoing
1.13	Hold workshop(s) for Scrutiny Members on how Scrutiny can interact with Corporate & Financial Planning and Integrated Performance Report processes and consistently and effectively scrutinise them.	TG/SR	Link to 1.13 above	Seminar held	Ongoing
1.14	Implement an annual review of compliance and effectiveness of the revised performance management framework.	TG	Internal audit to provide baseline by June 06	Report to Audit Committee/SMC in September/October Recommendations made as a result	Ongoing
1.15	SMC to oversee all Scrutiny Committee work plans to monitor levels of consideration being given to corporate priorities and major risks. Annual Review and update to take place. Updates in-year to be reported to SMC as they occur. Include in update of handbook.	CSMC/TB	Ongoing	Standing item to SMC	Ongoing

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2.	Reflecting the voice and concerns of the public and its communities – to improve: how the work of scrutiny is informed by the public; how scrutiny makes itself accessible to the public; how scrutiny communicates internally and externally;				
2.1	Through the Community Involvement Strategy to clarify the role of scrutiny in public consultations.	MHR/RB	June 06	RB to put programme together with a timetable.	Ongoing
2.2	Develop and publicise the link between Scrutiny and Community Forums. Information on what scrutiny can do and is doing should be presented to the Forums. Matters raised by Forums to be considered by Scrutiny as appropriate.	RB/CD	September 06	Agenda item for Forums and issues picked up by Scrutiny from the Forums.	Ongoing
2.3	Develop protocols and guidelines to ensure a consistent approach in publicising the activities and outcomes of Scrutiny. (Include in handbook)	RB	September 06	Protocols in place.	Ongoing
2.4	Following 2.3, conduct a communications workshop for Scrutiny Members and officers to promote use of the protocols etc	RB	September 06 (see 1.12 above)	Workshop held	ongoing
2.5	To establish a Scrutiny Web presence.	TB/RB	Dependent on resources available.	Presence established	Ongoing
3.	Take the lead and own the scrutiny process – to improve: the political impartiality of scrutiny; scrutiny ownership of its own work programme; scrutiny members' views that they have a worthwhile and fulfilling role; the development of a constructive working partnership with officers including support arrangements for scrutiny				
3.1	Produce revised SH with clear guidelines and protocols on the scrutiny processes and relationships with the Executive and officers.	CSMC/AM	September 06	Handbook produced	Ongoing

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3.2	Develop a programme of enquiry visits for scrutiny members to authorities successfully using scrutiny to drive performance improvement combined with invitations to representatives of other authorities to come to Herefordshire to explain their approach/provide critical friend advice and adopt any best practice points.	AM/TG/TB	September 06 (see 4.2)	Visits held and invitations accepted.	<i>(Visit to London Borough of Camden proposed but not to proceed following change of Structure.)</i> Wiltshire CC to be approached.
3.3	Explore the development of 'critical friend' role for scrutiny members in relation to specific services as part of the new performance improvement cycle.	TG	May 07	Identify successful use of critical friend approach from the programme of visits. Identify Member interests at seminar (see 1.12).	Ongoing
3.4	Undertake annual survey of Scrutiny Members to establish satisfaction with the scrutiny process to date, and to establish Member enthusiasms/ideas for future work programmes. Develop robust monitoring systems for the scrutiny process to inform an agreed set of performance indicators	TG/TB TG/TB	Feb 07	Survey Undertaken Performance Indicators agreed, monitoring system in place and report made back to SMC.	Ongoing Ongoing
3.5	SMC to co-ordinate annual work programmes of all scrutiny committees, and review quarterly. (See 1.15 above)	TB	June 06	Standing item on SMC agenda.	Ongoing
3.6	Revise Member Development Programme in response to changes in scrutiny focus.	CD	July 06	Revised programme in place	Ongoing

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4.	Make an impact on service delivery – to improve: how the scrutiny workload is co-ordinated and integrated in to corporate processes; the evidence available to show that scrutiny has contributed to improvement; how well information required by scrutiny is managed.				
4.1	Scrutiny Chairs to agree a work programme focussing on priority areas for improvement taking account of views of other Scrutiny Committee Members Cabinet Members and Directors.	CSMC/TB	June 06	Programme agreed	Ongoing
4.2	Following 4.1 – identify and visit authorities with upper quartile performance in these priority areas	TG	September 06 (see 3.2 above)	Visits agreed	Ongoing
4.3	Implement standardised reporting procedure setting out recommendations made and executive action/response. Explore the development of scrutiny member ‘rapporteurs’ to monitor and report on progress following a scrutiny review. Include in SH.	TB	September 06	Procedure implemented.	Ongoing