

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL  
(SOCIAL WELL-BEING)**

**6TH JULY 2010**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL  
(ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING)**

**13TH JULY 2010**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL  
(ECONOMIC WELL-BEING)**

**15TH JULY 2010**

**JOINT SCRUTINY  
(Report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 This report discusses recent developments intended to introduce greater joint scrutiny between Cambridgeshire Councils.

**2. JOINT ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE**

2.1 The Cambridgeshire Joint Accountability Committee (JAC) is responsible for scrutinising the work of the Cambridgeshire Together Board. The way this work is carried out has been the subject of discussion for some time. It was originally intended that the JAC would meet twice a year; however, it has not met since November 2009 and the last three meetings have been cancelled owing to lack of business. The Cambridgeshire Together Board has now formally proposed to the JAC that the JAC should consider the benefits that could be realised by joint scrutiny.

2.2 Current financial challenges have created pressures for public bodies to work more closely together. It is held that collaboration will be required to drive costs down and focus resources on service delivery. Building on that principle, opportunities for sharing services and joint working are being examined.

2.3 The view is further expressed that there are benefits to be derived if scrutiny focuses on both geographic issues tying scrutiny to leadership of place, and on the key outcomes that matter most to local communities. Joint scrutiny might build on similar work that is already taking place and share capacity to use scrutiny to improve services and outcomes.

2.4 Joint scrutiny could, for example, focus on issues in a specific local area, focusing geographically on a local neighbourhood, parish or District involving Scrutiny Members from the relevant Councils involved in that area. Furthermore, outcome based scrutiny could bring Scrutiny Members together from all Councils to focus on a particular issue such as climate change or tackling crime across the whole county.

2.5 This approach may have advantages. It would be necessary to explore in detail its risks and benefits to establish whether it really would strengthen democratic accountability, have clearly demonstrable savings for each organisation and improve outcomes for communities.

2.6 On a practical note, this approach, if adopted, would need to be carefully co-ordinated. Efforts have always been made to ensure there is no duplication between Cambridgeshire Council's in their scrutiny study work, which has

resulted in few problems occurring to date. This issue based way of organising joint scrutiny would appear to be a preferable model to closer structural integration as it avoids the additional costs of the latter. Experience through previous study work suggests that there could be benefits to having a representative of, for example, the County Council present during investigations, as it could make jointly provided services more open to scrutiny.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 Like all Council services, scrutiny has to look at opportunities for different ways of working where they can be demonstrated to reduce costs and produce better outcomes. The Panel is invited to consider the principles involved to guide future negotiations on this subject.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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