

**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

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

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report provides the Panel with an opportunity to consider how it will scrutinise the partnerships in which the Council is involved.

2. SCRUTINY OF PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- 2.1 The Council has a statutory duty under the Police and Criminal Justice Act 2006 to scrutinise the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (known in Huntingdonshire as the Inclusive, Safe and Cohesive Communities Thematic Group). This work has already commenced when the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) reviewed the Huntingdonshire Community Safety Plan 2010-11 and progress against the associated Action Plan at its meeting in April 2010. Further work has not been undertaken pending training on the scrutiny of partnership working. This training took place on 3rd June 2010.
- 2.2 In addition to the Police and Criminal Justice Act 2006, there is a requirement under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 for the Council to scrutinise the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) in this work is to scrutinise the Economic Prosperity & Skills thematic Group of the LSP. No work has yet been undertaken in this direction, though a protocol has been produced to guide this process (see Appendix).
- 2.3 The Panel's remit also includes scrutiny of the Economic Prosperity and the Equality and Inclusion priorities of the Countywide Sustainable Community Strategy (Cambridgeshire's Vision).

3. TRAINING ON SCRUTINY OF PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- 3.1 As has been said, Members received training on the scrutiny of partnership working on 3rd June 2010. During the training it was pointed out that partnerships are responsible for significant levels of funding but that nationally scrutiny is viewed as "the lion that hasn't roared". This is probably a fair description of partnership scrutiny in Huntingdonshire though, to an extent, this has been deliberate as training on this subject was planned.
- 3.2 During the training it was indicated that Scrutiny's role should be to:
- support the development and examination of indicators that truly reflect the "place" agenda;
 - bring issues to the table;
 - contribute actively to partnership working;

- adding value to partners' information gathering
- use the LSP's information gathering to add value to scrutiny work, and
- highlight success and failure and then, critically, make recommendations for improvements.

More specifically, the trainer made suggestions for key areas of questioning. These included:

- Why is performance at the current level?
- What difference does a partnership make to the people we represent?
- What is missing from the information we have been given?
- Is the experience of the service-user heard?
- What are the priorities for improvement?
- What will happen as a result of our review?
- How will we follow-up?

4. ACCOUNTABILITY WORKS

4.1 *Accountability Works* was published by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CFPS) in April 2010. This document neatly encapsulates some of the reasons why scrutiny of partnerships is important. It provides challenge to decision-makers directly as part of the democratic decision-making process and represents a means to bring together discussions about matters of public concern as part of debate about past and future delivery of public services. It also means there is an obligation on the part of decision-makers to respond to and act upon the concerns and insights of those holding them to account. Finally, it is a route for decision-makers to improve the services they deliver, ensuring responsiveness alongside quality and value for money.

4.2 *Accountability Works* goes on to state that it is desirable to build a culture of accountability as it lends partnerships credibility and legitimacy. Through scrutiny, partnerships can demonstrate openness and transparency and their effectiveness. Other potential benefits include the fact that assurances might be provided that defined results are delivered, a contribution is made to democratic engagement and relationships with other sectors can be strengthened.

4.3 The CFPS provides evidence to support their findings. Given this, it can be seen that there are potentially considerable benefits to be derived from effective scrutiny of the Council's partnerships.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The Panel is invited to consider how it will scrutinise the Council's partnership.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Partnership scrutiny training materials.

Centre for Public Scrutiny (2010) - *Accountability Works*.

Previous reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels on partnership scrutiny.

Contact Officer: A Roberts (01480) 388015

APPENDIX

HUNTINGDONSHIRE SCRUTINY / STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP PROTOCOL

Introduction

The Police and Justice Act 2006 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 require local authorities to scrutinise the strategic partnerships in their areas and make reports and recommendations to the local authorities and the Partnerships.

This Protocol has been produced between Huntingdonshire District Council, Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership and the respective partners to the Strategic Partnership. Regulations, Guidance and good working practice have shaped this Protocol, which may be revised by agreement between all the parties in order continually to improve the scrutiny process.

References in the following paragraphs to the Strategic Partnership include the Board, Executive and its Thematic Groups.

Principles of Scrutiny Operation

Scrutiny in Huntingdonshire is positive, objective and constructive. It acknowledges good practice and recommends improvements where it feels these would be of benefit. Scrutiny concentrates on service outcomes and seeks to add value to each service that it considers.

The Protocol also encompasses the following Principles of Effective Scrutiny, as advocated by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, which state that scrutiny should:

- provide 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers;
- enable the voice and concerns of the public and its communities to be heard;
- be carried out by 'independent minded governors' who lead and own the scrutiny process, and
- drive improvement in public services.

Scrutiny of the Strategic Partnership will only be successful if key organisations work and co-operate together in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust with an understanding and commitment to its aims. Shared responsibility for creating and sustaining this relationship is acknowledged and will feature in scrutiny reviews.

The key organisations involved in scrutiny will be willing to share information, knowledge and reports which relate to the delivery and success of services in Huntingdonshire and to carry out duties that would be reasonably expected of them to enable scrutiny to be successfully undertaken.

At all times officers and members of the organisations involved in scrutiny, representatives and members of the public will be treated with respect and courtesy. Matters of confidentiality will be treated with respect.

Scrutiny will be open and transparent. Any person involved in scrutiny will always declare any personal or other pecuniary interest that they have either in a scrutiny activity or during a meeting of a Scrutiny Panel in accordance with the Code of Conduct relating to standards of conduct and ethics.

The Overview and Scrutiny Panels, whilst working in partnership, are independent of the respective partners comprising the Strategic Partnership.

The Overview and Scrutiny Panels will try to maximise the involvement of the community and will work with other agencies representing the public.

Scrutiny will be focused on improving services and service provision for the people of Huntingdonshire and will concentrate on outputs that are intended to help improve their well-being.

A separate protocol and procedure exists for references to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels from the elected members via the Councillor Call for Action.

Huntingdonshire Overview and Scrutiny Panels

All dates and times of meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels, agendas, minutes and reports will be circulated to Members, to the Chairmen of the Strategic Partnership Board, Executive and Thematic Groups (as appropriate) and to any other representatives on request.

The Strategic Partnership will be consulted on the Overview and Scrutiny Panels' work programmes and informed in advance of scrutiny activities that the Overview and Scrutiny Panels are intending to undertake. It will also be informed of the scope of all scrutiny activities and will be given adequate notice of invitations to attend meetings of Scrutiny Panels and any required information (see below).

The Strategic Partnership will be consulted on any draft reports before they are published to ensure that recommendations are realistic and deliverable. Final reports will be presented as appropriate to the District Council's Executive, the Strategic Partnership, Cambridgeshire County Council and be published on the Council's website and circulated in accordance with other requirements for the distribution of scrutiny reports.

The Overview and Scrutiny Panels are not to be used as a complaints procedure. Case studies may however be used as part of supporting information for scrutiny activities.

The Strategic Partnership will be informed of any press releases relating to scrutiny of it; though Scrutiny Officers may speak to the press in advance of meetings to brief them about forthcoming Scrutiny Panel meetings.

Overview and Scrutiny Panels will at all times comply with the Council's Constitution.

Overview and Scrutiny Panels will endeavour to use the following method to prioritise topics for inclusion on committee work programmes:

Criteria for selecting topics:

- does the issue have a potential impact for significant section(s) of the population?
- is it a matter of general public concern?
- is the issue to be reviewed a key deliverable of a partnership plan/strategy?

- is it a key performance improvement area?
- is there a legislative requirement to undertake the review?

Criteria for rejecting topics:

- the issue is being examined elsewhere;
- the issue was dealt with less than 2 years ago;
- new legislation or guidance is expected within the year, and
- there is no scope for Overview and Scrutiny to add value / make a difference.

The Overview and Scrutiny Panels will contact the Chairman (or other nominated representative) of the relevant Strategic Partnership Thematic Groups on scrutiny work and maintain regular contact as necessary.

The Strategic Partnership

The Strategic Partnership will work in partnership with the Overview and Scrutiny Panels to provide objective and effective scrutiny of its work.

The Strategic Partnership will provide information relating to its activities and strategies that is required by the Scrutiny Panel so that the Panel can undertake its scrutiny work. This will not include confidential information, unless the subject of it gives consent for such information to be released. The Strategic Partnership will provide the Scrutiny Panel with information within 15 working days of the receipt of the request.

The Strategic Partnership will have regard and respond to Scrutiny reports within 28 days from the date of its next meeting. A copy of a Scrutiny report will also be sent to District Council's Executive, individuals who have contributed to reviews, local Members of Parliament, appropriate voluntary organisations, libraries and the Council's customer service centre.

The Strategic Partnership will ensure that officers attending Overview and Scrutiny Panel meetings are able to answer questions openly and are given appropriate support by their line managers.

Strategic Partnership will monitor, as appropriate, progress to deliver any recommendations made.

Notice of required attendance at scrutiny meetings

Overview and Scrutiny Panels will give at least six weeks notice to the Strategic Partnership requesting their attendance at an Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting. Attendance requests will clearly outline:

- the subject of the matter for scrutiny;
- the key lines of enquiry, and
- arrangements for the meeting.

The Strategic Partnership will advise the Overview and Scrutiny Panel as to who is best placed to attend on their behalf in view of the issue to be scrutinised.

Notice of information required for scrutiny

Overview and Scrutiny Panels will give at least six weeks notice to the Strategic Partnership requesting information to facilitate the scrutiny process. Requests for information will clearly outline:

- the subject of the information required;
- the key lines of enquiry, and
- the format in which the information is required.

The provision of information to Overview and Scrutiny Panels will be governed by relevant legislation and established protocols for the sharing of information.

Requests should avoid duplication with requests made within the previous 12 months.

Scrutiny Reports and Recommendations

Reports where recommendations are made should include an implementation plan, prepared by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels and the Strategic Partnership, outlining the actions required to implement those recommendations. Lead officers should also be identified. This will assist both the Overview and Scrutiny Panels and the Strategic Partnership to monitor the progress and outcomes achieved as a result of the Scrutiny review.

Reviewing the protocol

This protocol will be reviewed on an annual basis.