cfps the centre for public scrutiny

better scrutiny for better government

CfPS / PMPA / SOLACE Foundation Imprint Roundtable:

'The Future of Local Government Scrutiny',

Tuesday 28th March 2006

This roundtable gives us the opportunity, six years after the Local Government Act 2000, to discuss the local authority scrutiny function in terms of practical challenges in ensuring robust public accountability and its role in the wider local scrutiny landscape.

Under Chatham House rules, participants will to take a brief look back at the evolution of scrutiny so far before looking forward to the new local services environment and asking: what is the appropriate role for local authority scrutiny and what we can feasibly ask it to deliver? Discussion will focus around the following **five key roles for scrutiny**, how they have been balanced in the past and how this should develop in the future:

Accountability and improvement: Scrutiny has two-fold potential, as both a general oversight vehicle for improved answerability and a mechanism for improving specific public services.

Challenge and collaboration: The scrutiny function provides opportunities for both collaborative or more challenging approaches. Collaborative approaches entail working with council executives and external agencies, taking a system-wide approach to ensure the best outcomes for the public. More challenging approaches involve more robustly holding decision-makers to account.

Proactive and post-hoc: The scrutiny function should focus on proactive policy development and review, to provide an evidence base for political decision making as well as retrospective scrutiny and review of decisions made.

Democratic legitimacy and consensus: Can a democratically legitimate scrutiny function be considered as 'first among equals' in exercising local public accountability or is a party political environment a barrier to consensus building and independent challenge?

A distinctive role within a local system: Local authority scrutiny should play a unique role alongside other internal and external review mechanisms such as internal auditors, inspectors, regulators and other scrutiny bodies in the local system and not become just another scrutiny voice in an already crowded landscape.

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'The Future of Local Government Scrutiny', 28th March 2006
Attendees

Name	Title	Organisation
Ian Hickman	Director of Local Government Performance & Improvement	Audit Commission
Dr Jane Martin	Executive Director	Centre for Public Scrutiny
Steve Freer	Chief Executive	CIPFA
Roger Hughes	Head of Corporate Policy	Coventry City Council
Clare Allcock	Patient & Public Involvement Team	Department of Health
Nigel Rudd	Chief Executive	East Midlands Regional Assembly
Nick Raynsford MP (CHAIR)	Former Local Government Minister	House of Commons
Alison Seabeck MP	Chair, All Party Parliamentary Group For Local Government	House of Commons
Andrew Kennon	Principal Clerk	House of Commons
Cllr Nick Chard	Vice-Chairman	IDeA
Irene Payne	Strategic Adviser	IDeA
Clodagh Memery	Corporate/Best Value Manager	Improvement Service for Local Government in Scotland
Sunita Sharma	Head of Scrutiny & Performance	London Borough of Hounslow
Matthew Warburton	Head of Strategy	Local Government Association (LGA)
Cllr Christine Channon	Deputy Chair	LGA Scrutiny Panel
Dennis Reed	Chief Executive	LGiU
Shelley Adams	Head of Strategy & Development	London Borough of Ealing
Anna Randle	Senior Policy Advisor	Lyons Inquiry
Dianne Bevan	Deputy Clerk	National Assembly for Wales
Dick Sorabji	Head of Policy	New Local Government Network
Sue Younger-Ross	Local Government Gateway, Local and Regional Governance Group	ODPM
David Walker (SCRIBE)	Editor	Public
Cllr Roger Turner	Chair - Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Cllr Robin Stonebridge	CfPS Advisory Board Member	Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
Jacquie Roberts	Chief Executive	Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care
Dr Clive Grace	Chair, Editorial Board	Solace Foundation Imprint & PMPA
Anna Coote	Head of Patient & Public Engagement	The Healthcare Commission
Janie Barrett	Chief Executive	Warwick District Council

OBSERVERS
Alex Hardy (CfPS), Janet Grauberg (PMPA), Paul Lucas (Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council), Pippa Hague (Department of Health), Gareth Wall (CfPS), Micky Lavender (PMPA)