

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT

1. Meeting:	Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee
2. Date:	25 March 2011
3. Title:	The role and function of overview and scrutiny in Rotherham: future arrangements
4. Directorate:	Chief Executive's All wards

5. Summary

The report sets out the findings and recommendations of the scrutiny review into the role and function of overview and scrutiny in Rotherham and its future arrangements. The full draft report will be considered at this meeting.

6. Recommendations

- a. That PSOC endorse the report's findings and recommendations.**
- b. That PSOC forward the report to Cabinet for its consideration.**

7. Proposals and Details

7.1 As part of its 2010/11 work programme, Performance and Scrutiny Overview Committee set up a review group to examine the role and function of scrutiny in Rotherham in light of the changing local government landscape.

7.2 PSOC received a presentation at its meeting of 11 March 2011. The presentation outlined:

- Why the review was undertaken
- Process
- Emerging issues
- Recommendations
- Options for future arrangements

7.2.1 PSOC Members endorsed the findings and emerging recommendations from the review. With respect to future arrangements, PSOC supported Option 2.

7.2.2 The supporting evidence was gathered through a comprehensive exercise which included

- Desktop review to explore best practice models
- Questionnaires circulated to **all** Members and key officers
- Focus groups with PSOC Members, O&S members, co-optees and partners
- Structured interviews with Cabinet Members and Strategic Directors conducted by Professor Heather Campbell and Dr Matthew Gebhardt, University of Sheffield
- Presentation and evidence from Jessica Crowe, Executive Director, Centre for Public Scrutiny

7.3 Issues emerging from the review

7.3.1 With very few exceptions, Overview and Scrutiny is seen to be a valuable part of the governance arrangements of the Council and has widespread support from both Members (Executive and non-Executive) and officers. However, there was a strong view that scrutiny needs to be different both in approach and its arrangements.

7.3.2 PSOC agreed in principle that this should be achieved through:

- Council agreeing a shared understanding of the role and function of Overview and Scrutiny in Rotherham;
- A greater focus on those areas where scrutiny can make the greatest impact;
- A greater emphasis on advance planning of scrutiny's work programme to enable scrutiny to look at borough-wide priorities and examine key issues, with clear links to corporate processes and decision-making cycles;

- An improved dialogue between Scrutiny, the Cabinet and Strategic Leadership Team about respective roles and responsibilities;
- Ensuring that scrutiny can respond to major service and structural changes e.g. NHS reforms, Localism Bill and the emerging transparency/self-regulation agendas, focusing outwardly and not just on the Council;
- Building on what works- scrutiny reviews are widely recognised as having impact and adding organisational value but future work should be more focussed and timely;
- Responding to financial, staffing and other resource constraints; leaner structures, with fewer panel meetings;
- Ensuring that scrutiny reflects and articulates the public voice;
- Supporting members to undertake this 'new' scrutiny confidently and effectively through the Member Development Programme

8. Finance

Should the recommendations be accepted, the changes to scrutiny structures arising from this paper will make savings. These have yet to be costed but are likely to mean greater efficiencies in the use of officer resources, fewer formal meetings and a reduction in the associated production and distributions costs for agendas. Should Option 2 be implemented, direct officer support to the Scrutiny Members can be met through existing staffing resources located in Scrutiny Services.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

9.1 Given that the review recommends a new approach to overview and scrutiny, it is suggested that the effectiveness of these arrangements are reviewed in 12 months to judge if they are fit for purpose.

9.2 The Local Government landscape has changed beyond recognition since 2010. Like other areas of the Council, scrutiny needs to demonstrate relevance and impact but in the context of fewer resources. If scrutiny does not respond to this agenda and change its approach and arrangements, it will undermine its capacity to provide value for money and undertake effective scrutiny both within the Council and externally.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

See full report

11. Background Papers and Consultation

All members were invited to contribute through questionnaire, focus groups and interviews

Focus groups were held with partners and co-optees

Key officers' views sought through interview and questionnaire

Contact Name:

Caroline Webb, Senior Scrutiny Adviser, 01709 (8)22765

caroline.webb@rotherham.gov.uk