

Northampton Borough Council



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Overview and Scrutiny

Improvement Action Plan

Issue	Action	Lead	Timescale
<p>1. Work Programming</p> <p>(a) Need for more effective policy review and policy development.</p> <p>(b) Pre decision scrutiny.</p> <p>(c) Scrutiny work to be more relevant to Council priorities.</p>	<p>(a) Hold an annual “event” with partners, portfolio holders, Council Leader, senior officers, voluntary organisations – invite or brief the press. Short presentations from executive members supported by officers on priorities and challenges. Also consider targets to and inspection reports to identify areas of weakness.</p> <p>(b) Link to Forward Plan to be emailed to all scrutiny members to enable early identification key decisions. Also covered by pre decision scrutiny protocol – protocol to be circulated to scrutiny members and executive.</p> <p>(c) Scrutiny Members to have early presentations from the Council Leader and portfolio holders to inform them of council priorities and discuss how scrutiny can best link into them, prior to the Work Programming event.</p>	<p>(a)Scrutiny Chairs</p> <p>(b)Scrutiny Officer</p> <p>(c)Scrutiny Chairs</p>	<p>January/February 2010 – work programme 2010/2011 Annually from thereon. A `trial` workshop event to be held in 2009 inviting all Councillors, Directors and Heads of Service</p> <p>September 2009</p> <p>September/October 2009 round of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings. Thereafter</p>

Issue	Action	Lead	Timescale
<p>(d) Greater Involvement from portfolio holders.</p> <p>(e) Improved monitoring of Overview and Scrutiny Recommendations – Implementation.</p>	<p>(d) Portfolio holders to be involved as outlined in (a) and (c). Early identification of policy priorities any legislative changes that will affect the services provided by the Council will enable early policy development.</p> <p>(e) Return of Scrutiny Officer has revitalised monitoring of recommendations. Consider circulating the post cabinet response form with the an additional update column with the scrutiny committee agenda, when and use as framework for monitoring outcomes.</p>	<p>(d)Scrutiny Chairs</p> <p>(e)Scrutiny Officer</p>	<p>first meetings of Municipal Year</p> <p>September/October 2009 round of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings. Thereafter first meetings of Municipal Year.</p> <p>Form can be amended from September 2009</p>
<p>2. Understanding Scrutiny</p>			
<p>(a) Need to raise the profile of scrutiny, both in and outside the Guildhall. Officers and public need a greater understanding of scrutiny.</p>	<p>(a) (i) Implement the new “Media Protocol” for overview and scrutiny. The overview and scrutiny newsletters and the annual report can be given a wider circulation including doctors’ surgeries, dentists, customer services offices, etc.</p> <p>(ii) Re-title the Overview and Scrutiny Committees from numbers to names that tell people what they cover.</p> <p>(iii) Add overview and scrutiny to the web site A-Z under both O and S.</p> <p>(iv) Endeavour to hold some meetings out in the community, dependent upon the issue being reviewed.</p> <p>(v) Have a progress in place inviting members of the public to submit items for scrutiny</p> <p>(vi) Overview and Scrutiny Councillors to promote the work of scrutiny at regular intervals, for example Residents Associations and Neighbourhood</p>	<p>(a) (i) Scrutiny Officer)</p> <p>(a) (ii) Scrutiny Chairs</p> <p>(a) (iii) Scrutiny Officer</p> <p>(a)(iv)Scrutiny Officer/Chairs</p> <p>(a)(v)Scrutiny Officer/Chairs</p> <p>(a)(vi) Scrutiny Councillors</p>	<p>After publication of new Review (September 2009) and scoping of second Review (October 2009)</p> <p>After Structures workshop 3/08/09</p> <p>August 2009</p> <p>Following Structures Workshop 3/8/09</p> <p>January 2010</p> <p>Commencing autumn Round of Neighbourhood Partnership meetings</p>

Issue	Action	Lead	Timescale
<p>(b) Need to engage media.</p> <p>(c) Need to understand how scrutiny can improve council working - add value.</p> <p>(d) Term "scrutiny" seen as negative.</p> <p>(e) Terminology difficult to understand.</p> <p>(f) Members inputting into Officer training and vice</p>	<p>Partnership meetings</p> <p>(b) See (a) above re media protocol also consider press release at the start of a policy review and try to maintain press interest.</p> <p>(c) (i) This will really only come with experience. (ii) Highlight successful outcomes from scrutiny in Northampton. (iii) Highlight successes as a result of good scrutiny in other authorities as examples of what can be achieved. (iv) Ensure that continue to produce quality reports with viable and imaginative recommendations as a result of well researched and evidenced reviews</p> <p>(d) (i) The more that members and officers are encouraged to attend scrutiny meetings the more they will understand the positive nature of scrutiny. (ii) The term "SCRUTINY" is currently in great use nationally and carries with it certain connotations, however, in the context of an individual service it can be promoted as positive through the newsletter, annual report, press releases.</p> <p>(e) A glossary of terms has been produced and can be more widely circulated and certain key terms picked out and high lighted in the news letter.</p> <p>(f) Members to attend Officer training (members</p>	<p>(b) Scrutiny Chairs</p> <p>(c) Scrutiny Chairs</p> <p>(d) (i) Scrutiny Chairs (d) (ii) Scrutiny Officer</p> <p>(e) Scrutiny Officer</p>	<p>After scoping of next Review – October 2009</p> <p>(ii) July 2009 (contained in Annual Report 08/09) (iii)</p> <p>(iv) Ongoing</p> <p>(i) Officer training organised for September 2009.</p> <p>(d)(ii) Promote further in next newsletter due Autumn 2009 Annual Report – July 2009 Press Releases – Autumn 2009</p> <p>(e) Simplified glossary included in Annual Report 08/09 (July 2009) Extract glossary to website (August 2009)</p>

Issue	Action	Lead	Timescale
<p>versa</p> <p>3. Undertaking and Supporting Scrutiny</p> <p>(a) The need to maximise scrutiny resources – both in terms of elected members and officer support whilst providing the most effective scrutiny.</p> <p>(b) Scrutiny members have expressed the wish to undertake more direct scrutiny work – research and consultations themselves in support of reviews e.g., Customer Services Review.</p> <p>(c) Most effective use of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agendas and time.</p>	<p>perspective) and Officer to attend Member training</p> <p>(a) (i) The work of the Task and Finish Groups has provided the most effective outcomes and engaged elected members.</p> <p>(ii) Task and Finish Groups providing in depth policy review are also seen as being the most effective use of officer time and energy.</p> <p>(iii) A maximum of three Task and Finish Groups are considered to be the optimum use of resources.</p> <p>(iv) To make them more effective the existing arrangements for incorporating experts or other elected members with a knowledge or expertise relevant to the subject of the review be used more widely.</p> <p>(v) In support of this, a survey be undertaken to ascertain elected members special interests or expertise other than obvious Council activities.</p> <p>(b) Scrutiny members should be encouraged and offered training to undertake more direct scrutiny activity, within realistic boundaries bearing in mind the other demands on their time.</p> <p>(c) The Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Scrutiny Officer give objective consideration to the typical items of committee agendas to determine whether the items that are for information or for noting could be presented to elected members in a way that makes greater use of committee time. For example the links to government regulations or information items being emailed to elected members outside the meetings.</p>	<p>(f) scrutiny officer and Senior Training Officer</p> <p>(a) (i) ii, iii, iv Scrutiny Chairs/Scrutiny Officer</p> <p>(a) (v) Scrutiny Officer.</p> <p>(b) Scrutiny Officer</p> <p>(c) Scrutiny Chairs and Scrutiny Officer</p>	<p>January 2010</p> <p>(v) To be added to dedicated O&S training – March 2010</p> <p>(c) September/October 2009</p>

Issue	Action	Lead	Timescale
<p>(d) Build on the good practice already in existence in Northampton.</p> <p>(e) Effective questioning</p>	<p>(d) All members of Overview and Scrutiny Committees should make regular use of the scrutiny web pages on the Council's web site which high light much of the good practice in existence in Northampton.</p> <p>(e) Build upon the Task and Finish Group questioning practice to add structure to the questioning process</p>	<p>(d) All Scrutiny Councillors</p> <p>(e) Scrutiny Officer</p>	<p>(d) Scrutiny Officer to remind Scrutiny Councillors of the dedicated O&S webpages – email the link – August 2009</p> <p>December 2009</p>