



AGENDA ITEM: 6

SUMMARY

Report for:	All Overview & Scrutiny Committees
Date of meeting:	October 2013
PART:	1

Title of report:	Overview & Scrutiny Vision
Contact:	Councillor Janice Marshall, Chair Housing & Community OSC Councillor Alan Anderson, Chair Strategic Planning & Environment OSC Councillor Bert Chapman, Chair Finance & Resources OSC
Purpose of report:	To collectively set a vision for Overview & Scrutiny
Recommendations	1. That the Committee note the report 2. That members contribute suggestions via the appropriate Chairman as to the content of the Overview & Scrutiny vision.
Corporate objectives:	Dacorum Delivers: to improve our efficiency and effectiveness and involving all our stakeholders in making changes and improvements.
Implications:	<u>Financial:</u> None <u>Value for Money:</u> None <u>Legal:</u> None
Risk Implications	None
Equalities Implications	None
Health And Safety Implications	None
Consultees:	Overview & Scrutiny Chairs & Vice Chairs Group Group Manager, Democratic Services Scrutiny Officers
Background papers:	Review of Scrutiny and Challenge, 15 March 2013

Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	None
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1. Background

A review of Overview & Scrutiny was carried out as part of the Democratic Services Service Plan 2012/2013. The review was conducted by an external consultant who observed each Overview & Scrutiny meeting and in addition analysed key documents, such as agendas and minutes, and conducted workshops with both Councillors and officers. Following this several key recommendations for improvement were proposed.

Following these recommendations, the Overview & Scrutiny Chairs/Vice Chairs group met and highlighted three key areas for improvement (outlined in Appendix A):

- Monitoring of Outcomes
- Overview & Scrutiny Committee Reports
- Scrutiny Aim

In order to provide more clarity around the vision of Overview & Scrutiny, the Overview & Scrutiny Chairs/Vice Chairs group suggested that members could create a vision that summarises and sets out the role and aim of Overview & Scrutiny.

2. Actions

The Overview & Scrutiny Chairs/Vice Chairs group will be meeting to put together a vision. Prior to this the group would like all members involved in Overview & Scrutiny committees to contribute ideas for the content of the vision.

In order to provide members with some ideas the following appendices have been provided:

- Appendix B shows various examples taken from other council's scrutiny webpages.
- Appendix C shows some draft statements for consideration.
- Appendix D shows a table outlining the 'Four Principles of Good Public Scrutiny' taken from the Centre for Public Scrutiny's (CfPS) 'Guide to Good Scrutiny' 2nd edition.

3. Next Steps

The Overview & Scrutiny Chairs & Vice-Chairs group request all members to relay suggestions they have for the vision, to the appropriate Chairman.

At the forthcoming Overview & Scrutiny Chairs & Vice Chairs group meeting the vision will be developed from these suggestions. In addition the group will discuss how to best 'launch' the new scrutiny vision with a view to promoting and highlighting the role of Overview & Scrutiny to both members and the residents of Dacorum.

Overview & Scrutiny Improvement Plan – 2013

Suggested Improvement	What will this involve?	Lead Officer/Member	Completion date
<p><u>Scrutiny Aim</u></p> <p>Be clear about the vision and ambitions for effective scrutiny.</p>	<p>OSC Chairs/Vice Chairs to discuss and set a Scrutiny 'statement'.</p>	<p>Overview & Scrutiny Chair/Vice-Chair Group</p>	<p><i>Sept 2013 - On-going – examples of other authorities currently being collated.</i></p>
<p><u>Monitor Outcomes</u></p> <p>Ensure outcomes are regularly reviewed and Members monitor progress of reports considered</p>	<p>Follow up reports on committee work programme to monitor success. Additional column on the work programme to show the outcome of the items discussion.</p>	<p>Committee Clerk/Relevant Chairman</p>	<p><i>August 2013 – Additional column added to the work programmes to show outcomes of previous discussions.</i></p> <p><i>Members to request follow up report when required.</i></p>
<p><u>OSC Reports</u></p> <p>Members to have a historical context of each report</p>	<p>Additional box to be included on the committee report summary sheet, to enable the report author to briefly outline historical background to the report.</p>	<p>Committee Clerk/Report Authors</p>	<p><i>August 2013 - Report template amended to use for future OSC reports.</i></p>

Examples of Scrutiny Vision

Wigan

<http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Council/Councillors-and-Committees/Scrutiny.aspx>

Here at Wigan, the Scrutiny Committees aim to add value to the council services that you use by:-

- supporting the Council in achieving its vision for the borough and its strategic aims and priorities
- promoting open and transparent decision-making, democratic accountability and to hold the Executive to account for its actions
- promoting continuous improvement, best practice and innovation with the services, functions and policies which the Council has responsibilities for or influence over
- taking a lead role in reviewing policy and influencing matters of strategic direction
- monitoring performance of the directorates and key performance indicators

Lancaster

<http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/meetings-and-minutes/overview-scrutiny-lancaster-city-council/>

The ultimate aim of Overview and Scrutiny is to assist the council in realising its district-wide aim:

‘Promoting city, coast and countryside, we will achieve lasting opportunities for all in a safe and healthy district that’s proud of its natural and cultural assets.’

Crawley

http://www.crawley.gov.uk/pw/Council_Services_and_Democracy/Council_Meetings/Committees/Scrutiny/index.htm

‘Scrutiny is about assessing the situation and trying to make things better’

Harrow

<http://harrow.gov.uk/scrutiny>

Scrutiny is an independent, Councillor-led function that works with local people to improve services.

Central Bedfordshire

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/committees-and-decision-making/overview-and-scrutiny.aspx>

"Challenging, influencing, making a difference"

Central Bedfordshire Council is not only committed to making best use of its resources to meet local needs and priorities, but it is also committed to making sure the decisions made by the Council are the right decisions for Central Bedfordshire and that the process for doing is seen as an open one.

The Council is also keen to provide the opportunity for local people to contribute and give views on service provision and policies and to be able to challenge decisions made by the Executive.

When working well, Overview & Scrutiny can add value to the work of the Council by playing an important role in:-

- Supporting policy development;
- Raising the quality of debate;
- Improving decisions;
- Teasing out complex issues;
- Engaging the local community and key stakeholders;
- Strengthening accountability;
- Developing new ideas; and
- Monitoring and improving performance.

APPENDIX C

Draft 'mission' statements for DBC's Overview & Scrutiny Function

“Overview & Scrutiny is an independent member-led function that seeks to strategically analyse and positively influence the provision of Dacorum Borough Councils services”

“Dacorum Borough Council's Overview & Scrutiny function seeks to provide clarity around decision making and policy development whilst engaging the local community and key stakeholders”

“Overview & Scrutiny seeks to ensure that the Council is committed to improving and upholding the quality of the services provided to the Dacorum Community”

“Overview & Scrutiny is an independent member-led function that aims to provide clarity around decision making, policy development and service improvement, whilst engaging with the local community and key stakeholders”

The Four Principles of Good Public Scrutiny

1: good public scrutiny...

provides ‘critical friend’ challenge

to executive policy-makers and decision-makers

- Clarity of purpose
- Constructive, robust and purposeful challenge
- Respect for the scrutiny role as a legitimate check on executives
- A constructive working relationship with executive colleagues including external bodies

- Clear rules of engagement
- Work programmes that fit with existing corporate processes
- Non-aggressive environment behaviours to create optimum conditions for investigative evidence-based process

- Objective questioning
- Inclusive, focused chairing
- Access to information and expert advice

2: good public scrutiny...enables the

voice and concerns of the public

and its communities

- ensuring an on-going dialogue with the public
- to create and an ‘accountability relationship’
- representing and engaging diverse communities

- open and transparent processes with public access to information
- meeting conducted in public which invite public participation and ‘active citizenship’

- active listening and sympathetic questioning
- adequate resourcing for public dialogue

3: good public scrutiny...is carried out by

‘independent minded governors’

- independent and impartial ‘non executives’ appointed or elected to ensure the public interest is served
- champions of the value and potential of good scrutiny
- active engagement on the board or in the committee

- active engagement of members in a scrutiny role
- ensure adequate public accountability and community leadership
- create conditions for deliberation and consensus

- deliberative skills and consensus building
- reflect on the process, learn from the experience and innovate
- acknowledges professional support for ‘lay’ members

4: good public scrutiny...

drives improvement

in public services

- promote community well-being and improve the quality of life
- strategic quality assurance
- strategic review of corporate policies , plans and budgets
- co-ordinate reviews of policy and service performance in line with strategic objectives

- access to timely and accurate performance information
- analysis and interpretation of performance data
- resources and professional support for the collection and presentation of performance information

Understanding the scrutiny role.....

Creating an enabling environment for good public scrutiny.....

Supporting Public Scrutiny...