



Staffordshire

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Making a Difference: Scrutiny at Staffordshire County Council 2005/06

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Statement - Deputy Corporate Director (Policy and Performance)

Welcome to the Staffordshire County Council Scrutiny Annual Review of the work undertaken by our Scrutiny and Performance Panels/Committees during 2005/06. This has been a year of great challenge, change and progress for the Scrutiny function. At the start of the year the arrangements for Scrutiny were realigned to put the function at the heart of the County Council's performance management arrangements. We also introduced the pioneering process we call 'triangulation' which ensures that Scrutiny Work Programmes are focused on the Council's corporate priorities and key issues. This process involves regular business planning meetings between Scrutiny Chairmen and their Vice Chairman together with the relevant Cabinet Member and Corporate Director.

Towards the end of 2005 the County Council's performance was externally assessed by the Audit Commission and the inspectors' report included encouraging comments stating that "Scrutiny is good and particularly effective at supporting decision-making and has dedicated officer support. It has been used as an exemplar by the West Midlands LGA and nationally by the Centre for Public Scrutiny". Throughout the year we have continued to support the development of Local Government Scrutiny nationally and this has included delivering training to and receiving visits from other Local Authorities.

The Scrutiny team was established in 2001 but mid way through the year two of the original team of four Scrutiny Managers left and so the third quarter of the year was extremely busy and demanding. A new Scrutiny Manager joined the team towards the end of 2005. Despite the challenges and pace of change Scrutiny has continued to deliver significant outcomes in support of the attainment of the County Council's aspirations. We recognise that Scrutiny is still a relatively new function and that we still need to improve the way we do things and so for 2006/07 we will set ourselves even higher standards and challenging targets.



Helen Riley
Deputy Corporate Director (Policy and Performance)



Scrutiny Annual Work Programme 2005/06

Scrutiny at Staffordshire County Council has continued to evolve during 2005/06 with the County Council's Scrutiny arrangements re-aligned to include new performance management responsibilities and to facilitate Scrutiny of the Council's partnership activity. The following Scrutiny and Performance Panels and Committees are now in place:

- Corporate Policy Scrutiny Committee
- Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee
- Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny and Performance Panel
- Development Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel
- Partnerships Scrutiny and Performance Panel
- Resources Scrutiny and Performance Panel
- Social Care Scrutiny and Performance Panel

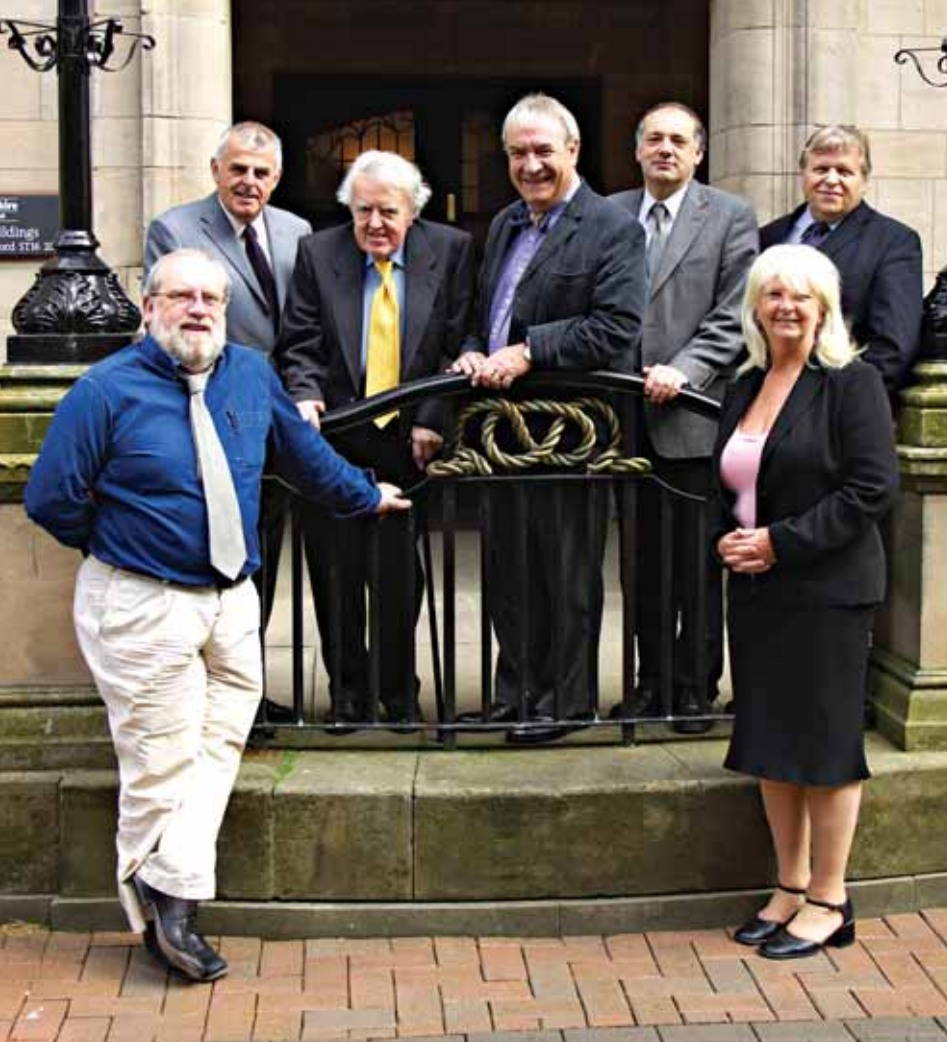
The Scrutiny and Performance Panels and Committees agreed that their Work Programmes for 2005/06 would focus on the County Council's corporate priorities, Directorate Improvement Plans and the Corporate Performance Management Framework. Work Programmes were developed in consultation with Cabinet and Scrutiny Members, the Corporate Management Team, partners and stakeholders and were influenced by the Performance Management Framework, the Forward Plan and Corporate Strategy priorities.

The delivery of Work Programmes takes place in formal meetings of the Scrutiny and Performance Panels and Committees and in a wide range of Working Group activity.

Triangulation Meetings were introduced during 2005/06 providing a forum for discussion between the Scrutiny Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen, Cabinet Members and Corporate Directors to discuss the forthcoming agenda and resolve any associated issues, to evaluate the Scrutiny and Performance Panels and Committees' Work Programmes and to discuss potential items for inclusion.

A formal Scrutiny and Performance meeting Agenda includes the following elements:

- Cabinet Members' Progress Report
- Performance Management
- Scrutiny Reviews and Policy Development



The Scrutiny Chairs for 2005/06 Councillors Muir, Beresford, Roberts, Poulter, Gorton, Norman and Lovatt.

Cabinet Members' Progress Report

At each meeting the relevant Cabinet Member presents a Progress Report. These reports provide a summary of decisions that have been taken at Cabinet and issues pertinent to the delivery of their portfolios, together with a summary of areas that the Cabinet will consider in the near future.

Performance Management

Scrutiny is integral to the delivery of the County Council's Performance Management Framework. By considering quarterly Performance Reports, conducting Scrutiny Reviews, tracking the progress of action plans and scrutinising the Council's budget, the Scrutiny and Performance Panels and Committees are able to help ensure that good performance is recognised and poor performance is addressed in a timely and effective manner.

Scrutiny Reviews

Scrutiny Reviews are undertaken in order to support the delivery of corporate priorities and to support policy development and review through the production of information to the Cabinet or Council.

Scrutiny Outcomes 2005/06

The outcomes of the work undertaken by the Scrutiny and Performance Panels and Committees during 2005/06 are detailed below, demonstrating how Scrutiny has contributed to the realisation of the Authority's corporate priorities.

To improve health and social care

Scrutiny Review - Review of NHS Dentistry in Staffordshire

The Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee's review of NHS dentistry in Staffordshire was initiated in response to concerns raised by a number of Local Authorities in the County. The review focused on what contribution Local Authorities could make to alleviate the national problem of a shortage of NHS dentists.

Outcomes: Local Authorities were asked to give priority to planning applications from dentists wishing to set up practice in Staffordshire. Other recommendations included promoting Staffordshire as 'a great place to live, work, visit and invest' to dental students.

Scrutiny Review - Mental Health of People held in Custody

In September 2005, Cllr Woodward, as a Member of the Police Authority, identified an issue about the large number of complaints received relating to the mental health of people held in custody. A multi-agency seminar was chaired by the Independent Police Complaints Commissioner and the National Institute of Mental Health in England at Staffordshire Police Headquarters. Participants discussed several case studies and considered if similar cases could arise in Staffordshire and, if so, how they could be mitigated.

Outcomes: Various proposals were made including proposals to change police guidelines and training in respect of people held in custody, issues relating to the role of the medical examiner and developing alternative facilities for 'places of safety'. The case study approach proved useful and will be used, as appropriate, for future Scrutiny Reviews.

Scrutiny Review - Long waits for community-based Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CaMHS) in Staffordshire

This matter was referred to Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee by the former Education and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee. A Working Group was established and discussions took place with representatives of North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare Trust, South Staffordshire Healthcare Trust and officers from Staffordshire County Council. Differential waiting lists and times were identified, with those in the south of the County being longer.

Outcomes: A member of Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee has joined the Performance Management sub-group of the CaMHS Inter-agency Steering Group to drive forward improvements. An interim report has been presented to the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny and Performance Panel and a further progress report will be presented at a future meeting.

'Improving take up of school meals'



Scrutiny Review - Take up of School Meals in Primary Schools in Staffordshire

The issue of school meals was raised by Members of Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee as a possible Scrutiny Review topic. Following discussions with the School Meals Service, it was proposed that a joint review on the take up of school meals in Staffordshire be undertaken with Members of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

Outcomes: A joint review Working Group has been established and is ongoing.

Scrutiny Review - Consultation on Developing Medium Secure Mental Health Services for Men in the West Midlands: Local Solutions for Complex Needs

Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee were asked for their views on developing the above services. The Committee received a presentation from the West Midlands Specialised Services Agency who are responsible for commissioning the services on behalf of Staffordshire Primary Care Trusts (PCTs). The views of local mental health trusts were also sought and Members found that Staffordshire patients are generally treated at the Hatherton Centre in Stafford but could be referred to the West Midlands unit if the Hatherton Centre is full.

Outcomes: Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee recommended that the Council support this development.

Scrutiny Review - Consultations on Foundation Hospital Trust (FHT) applications by North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare and South Staffordshire Healthcare NHS Trusts

Both mental health trusts began the process of preparing applications for FHT status during 2005. Trusts involved Members and officers of the Authority in their stakeholder events and in the preparation of their Service Development strategies. Formal presentations were made to Members of the Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee by Trust representatives.

Outcomes: The views of Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee were taken into account in the Council's responses to the consultations. The responses supported the application and suggested that District/Borough Councils be represented on the Councils of Governors.

Scrutiny Review - Response to consultation on Choosing Health, the Health Improvement and Protection Bill and Staffordshire County Council's Health Strategy

Members have contributed to the County Council's responses to these consultation documents and have participated in a health symposium and seminar hosted by Staffordshire County Council to develop their own Health Strategy.

Outcomes: Staffordshire County Council have made formal responses to these consultation documents and have developed a Health Strategy.

Scrutiny Review - Our Health, Our Care, Our Say: a new direction for community services

Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee discussed the Government White Paper 'Our Health, Our Care, Our Say: a new direction for community services' which sets out a vision for the provision of good quality social care and NHS services to people in the communities where they live. The Paper contained proposals which are intended to change the way in which services are provided by placing greater choice and control in the hands of the people that use them.

Outcome: As a key aspect of the Paper is better co-ordination between local Councils and the NHS, the Committee will consider the Authority's service changes to be made in response to the proposals contained in the Paper as part of their 2006/07 work programme.

Performance Management - Performance Indicator for Looked-after Children

The Social Care Scrutiny and Performance Panel explored the possibility of developing a shared performance indicator for looked-after children, in response to concerns about performance against the indicator C19 – "Health of Looked-after Children" which had fallen over the three month period October – December 2004 and stood at 17.1% lower than the target of 80%.

The target measured the number of looked-after children who had visited a dentist in the previous 12 months that had also received a health assessment during the same period. Members heard that one of the reasons for this fall in performance was that the health reviews were not being given sufficient priority.

Outcomes: Following this in depth investigation to understand the main causes for under performance, significant improvements have been achieved and the 80% target for uptake of medical and dental assessments was met by March 2006. This matter was referred to Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee for them to investigate the reasons for variation in take up between Primary Care Trusts as part of their 2006/07 Work Programme.

Scrutiny Review - Learning Disability Services

A Working Group was formed by the Social Care Scrutiny and Performance Panel in response to a request from the Cabinet Member, Portfolio Holder for Social Care, to review services for people with learning disabilities. An investigation was conducted into the services and actions undertaken by the Council's Social Care and Health Directorate to address recruitment and retention problems in the long term, in comparison with other Local Authorities. The Working Group also considered services purchased from the independent sector, together with details of the Implementation Strategy and proposed changes in Learning Disability Services.

Outcomes: The Social Care Scrutiny and Performance Panel, having considered the findings of the Working Group, agreed to continue to monitor progress against the targets set out in the Social Care and Health Directorate's Action Plan during 2006/07.

Scrutiny Review – Consultations in respect of the reconfiguration of health services in Staffordshire.

Members of the Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee were consulted on three documents in respect of the reconfiguration of health services in Staffordshire. These related to the future of Strategic Health Authorities, Ambulance Services and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs).

The Committee recommended that there be one strategic Health Authority for the West Midlands, were strongly against the merger of Staffordshire Ambulance Service Trust and were in favour of the option for two PCTs for the County. Their views were taken into account by Cabinet however, the decision was taken by Cabinet to support the option for one PCT for the County.

The Cabinet's decisions on Commissioning a Patient Led NHS were called in and considered by the Corporate Policy Scrutiny Committee who referred the decision back with a request that the Cabinet seek further information from Shropshire and Staffordshire Health Authority on the business and financial case for the reconfiguration options.

Outcomes: The Cabinet considered the additional information provided and confirmed in the response to the consultation the preference for one PCT. However, the Department of Health finally decided that there would be two PCTs for the County.

Performance Management- Fire Mitigation

The Fire Mitigation Working Group was established by the Social Care Scrutiny and Performance Panel in response to concerns expressed by the Interim Corporate Director (Social Care and Health) on the fire mitigation measures in residential care homes in the county. This mainly related to fire compartmentalisation in both vertical and horizontal voids in buildings.

Outcomes: Members found that excellent progress had been made against the Social Care and Health Directorates' Action Plan. Further progress will be monitored by the Panel at future meetings, reviewing the evacuation process, fire detection improvements, building surveys and fire compartmentalisation building works.

Scrutiny Review – Health Services in Staffordshire Mid Staffordshire General Hospitals NHS Trust

This year Members of the Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee expressed concern about proposed ward closures and service changes at Mid Staffordshire General Hospitals NHS Trust and the lack of consultation about such matters. The League of Friends of Cannock Chase Hospital also raised their concerns with Members regarding the future of Cannock Chase Hospital. A special meeting was held with the newly appointed Chief Executive of the Trust to discuss these matters and the Chair of Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee chaired meetings between the Trust and the League of Friends.

Outcomes: The Trust gave a firm commitment to constructive engagement with partners and to sharing the Trust's forward plan to enable the effective planning of Scrutiny activity. The Trust developed a Patient and Public Involvement Strategy and made a commitment to the future viability of Cannock Chase Hospital.

Scrutiny Review - Nurses Uniforms as possible source of infection

This matter was raised by a Member of Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee who observed nurses wearing their uniforms outside hospitals and asked the Committee to investigate if there was any possibility that this may lead to infections being transmitted to the hospital environment. Enquiries were made of acute hospital trusts in Staffordshire and a detailed literature search was undertaken. Members also met with representatives of the Health Protection Agency to discuss this matter further.

Outcomes: Mid Staffordshire General Hospitals proposed the establishment of a Working Group to define a set of common principles in respect of wearing uniforms.

Scrutiny Review - Information Desk for the Blind and Partially Sighted at Stafford District General Hospital

In July 2005, Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee were informed that South Western Staffordshire PCT (SWSPCT) were withdrawing their contribution to the funding of the information desk at Stafford District General Hospital which is staffed by Staffordshire Blind. Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee held meetings with the Chief Executive of SWSPCT to discuss possible future funding arrangements.

Outcomes: Temporary funding was made available by the Social Care and Health Directorate to enable the desk to continue to operate whilst negotiations took place. SWSPCT have funded the information desk for 2006/07 from their Community Chest budget.

Scrutiny Review - Draft Directorate Commissioning Strategy for Carers 2005/08

The Social Care Scrutiny and Performance Panel considered the draft Social Care and Health Commissioning Strategy for Carers 2005/08 which underlines the Social Care and Health Directorate's key role in undertaking formal assessment of carers' needs and the provision and commissioning of carers' services, including those that provide much needed breaks to carers. One of the Directorate's key priorities is to improve performance regarding the level of provision of carers' services as an outcome of carers' assessment. In addition, the Directorate has an important role in encouraging the planning and development of services aimed at improving carers' health, employment, leisure and learning opportunities, through partnership with other agencies.

Outcomes: Members of the Panel commended the Directorate on their proposals and endorsed the draft Social Care and Health Commissioning Strategy for Carers 2005/08.

‘Improving care in the community’



Performance Management - Healthier Communities

The Staffordshire Health and Social Care Board's Strategic Plan for 2005/08 focuses on seven key areas and highlights the importance of strategic working. The Council works collaboratively with key partners in the NHS, the voluntary sector and District/Borough Councils to raise the standard of health of Staffordshire people.

Outcomes: Members felt that the County Council has an important role to play in liaising with District/Borough Councils to promote healthier communities and sharing facilities with the community as part of the roll out of the 'extended schools programme', which is dependent upon the goodwill and co operation of Headteachers and governors. Members of the Partnerships Scrutiny and Performance Panel have monitored the progress of the Plan during 2005/06.

Scrutiny Review - Annual Health Checks

The Annual Performance Assessment of NHS trusts was revised by the Healthcare Commission in 2005 to request the inclusion of comments from Health Scrutiny Committees. This new system replaced 'star ratings' and required health trusts to make a self-declaration regarding their own performance against a number of standards and Health Scrutiny Committees to develop an understanding of these standards and to make evidence-based comments on their own experience of working with the trusts. The documentation was complex and deadlines for completion were tight as health trusts attempted to complete the documentation in time for consideration by Health Scrutiny Committees.

In February 2006 a seminar, facilitated by an Implementation Team Advisor, reviewed Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committees' contributions at draft stage and how this process could be improved for the final declaration. Over forty representatives from health trusts in Staffordshire, the Healthcare Commission and Patient and Public Involvement Forum Support Organisation contributed to this event.

Outcomes: Health Scrutiny Committees, or their equivalent, and Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee commented on the draft declaration documents of NHS trusts in Staffordshire and on the final statements in May 2006. The Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee will continue to review and improve this process for future years by working closely with our partners.

To develop a learning County

Scrutiny Review - Library Provision in Great Wyrley and Cheslyn Hay

Libraries in Great Wyrley and Cheslyn Hay were poorly used in comparison with similar facilities elsewhere in the County, with as few as 20% of the catchment population visiting Cheslyn Hay Library, and 13% visiting Great Wyrley Library. Both buildings were also identified as being in a particularly poor condition and approaching the end of their life.

A Scrutiny Review was undertaken by the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny and Performance Panel, in light of these issues, to determine the most effective option(s) to maintain and improve upon the library provision in the area to encourage increased membership and use of the service. The Panel's Working Group undertook site visits in both parishes and held several public meetings to find out the views of the communities involved about the possible relocation of the library services.

Members also met with a range of stakeholders including Parish and District Councillors, the Police Service and South Staffordshire Housing Association, as well as officers from the County Council, including the Youth Service.

Outcomes: Following public consultation, Members explored the services further and recommended that the Great Wyrley Library be sold and that the receipts from the sale be used to fund the cost of renovating rented shop unit(s) in the area to offer a more flexible approach to the development of the library service in this parish. In addition, the Panel proposed that negotiations into the potential development of a multi agency one stop shop in Cheslyn Hay got under way to begin to develop a business case with partners.

Scrutiny Review - The Meadows School

A Member Working Group of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny and Performance Panel considered the location of the new school building for The Meadows School. It had been approximately twelve months since the school fire when this issue was considered and The Meadows had been temporarily housed at Knutton on the site of the old St. Mary's Primary School.

The Working Group undertook visits to all proposed sites and met with the Headteachers of The Meadows and their feeder school, Springfield Special School. The group also met parents, governors and staff representatives from both schools and heard the views of local Members from the Moorlands.

Outcomes: The Panel's recommendations were approved by Cabinet, The Meadows Special School, it was agreed, would be in co-location with Leek High School. Steps were taken to create and develop a separate identity for the secondary special school. Discussions were also held about joint partnerships or federated arrangements for the Governing body or bodies. Potential shared facilities were identified and transition policies between the special and high schools were developed.



‘Sharing best practice’

Scrutiny Review - Physical Education in Secondary Schools

Members of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny and Performance Panel raised concerns over the slow progress of the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) projects, and specifically the project planned for Painsley High School in Cheadle. Members were advised that Staffordshire had been allocated £5.8m of NOF funding for a variety of projects. The projects had been prioritised and each project had to be completed before the next began to avoid overspend. The NOF programme is complex and the “sign off” arrangements extremely stringent, which has often resulted in delays.

Outcomes: Members were reassured that funding for the Painsley project was available and that the Cabinet Member, Portfolio Holder for Children and Lifelong Learning, would continue to monitor this issue.

Scrutiny Outcomes 2005/06

To create a safe and attractive environment

Scrutiny Review - Road Safety

Following previous work carried out in this area, the Development Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel received a presentation on reducing accidents in Staffordshire. Concern was expressed in relation to the number of people killed or seriously injured on roads around the County, especially among the 16-25 year age range, and a Member Working Group was appointed to investigate this issue.

The Working Group considered the current activity being undertaken by the Council in this area and the proposals to submit a bid for the Crash Course Scheme. Members felt that this would ensure projects were linked together as part of the County casualty programme for young people and that road safety education would be delivered.

Outcomes: Members supported the submission of the Crash Course bid to Cabinet and their recommendations will be explored further at a future meeting in which other traffic calming and road safety measures available could be determined.

Holding Cabinet to Account - Call in: Portfolio Holder Delegated Decision No.34

Members of the Corporate Policy Scrutiny Committee considered the call in of the delegated decision of the Cabinet Member, Portfolio Holder for Development, that the alternative protected Route C of Stafford Eastern Bypass between the currently safeguarded line of Route G east of Baswich Lane and the A513 Milford Road be abandoned.

In accordance with Section 17 of Appendix 4 to the Constitution, the relevant Members (including the Chairman of the Development Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel and the Cabinet Member, Portfolio Holder for Development) and officers spoke and were asked questions in the course of considering the subject.

Members considered consultation processes, in particular with Stafford Borough Council, the implications of there being no prospect of a Stafford bypass or Eastern Distributor Road in the near future and the planning, economic development and regeneration, traffic management, and finance and risk management implications of the decision.

Outcomes: Members of the Corporate Policy Scrutiny Committee were satisfied with the additional information and explanations provided to address the questions raised in respect of the call in and, therefore, it was agreed that, in accordance with paragraph 17.8 of Appendix 4 to the Constitution, the decision be implemented.

‘Keeping Staffordshire’s roads safe’



Scrutiny Review - Traffic Management Act: Decriminalised Parking Enforcement in Staffordshire

The Traffic Management Act: Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) 2004 placed a network management duty on all Local Authorities to secure the expeditious movement of traffic. A specific aspect of fulfilling these new duties was the management of parking, particularly in town centres. (Local Authorities could take over the enforcement of parking restrictions by seeking DPE powers from the Department of Transport). The adoption of DPE powers was essential if the County Council was to fulfill, and be seen to be fulfilling, the new duties to manage the movement of traffic.

The intention was to enter into partnership agreements with District/Borough Councils, under which, each District/Borough Council would employ and manage parking attendants to patrol the streets and issue parking charge notices. The details of the agreements are to be negotiated in due course.

Outcomes: Following this Review, Members of the Development Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel were informed that negotiations were under way and that the concern expressed by District/Borough Councils about financial implications would be rectified by employing a consistent approach across all Districts/Boroughs.

To promote economic success



Performance Management - Comprehensive Performance Assessment of Economic Regeneration

Members of the Development Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel considered the outcome of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment of Economic Regeneration in the County, undertaken in January/February 2005, together with the Action Plan arising from this assessment. The service was assessed as “good” with promising prospects for improvement and was awarded a two star rating. However, Members expressed concern at the view that “scrutiny did not effectively support the work the Council had done on focusing its vision for economic regeneration”.

Outcomes: Members received update on progress against the Action Plan and also considered and made recommendations to the draft Economic Development Strategy prior to its adoption by the Council.

Scrutiny Outcomes 2005/06

Focusing on people and communities

Scrutiny Review - Staffordshire Moorlands District Review of School Places

Members of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny and Performance Panel established three Member Working Groups to look in more detail at the Staffordshire Moorlands District Review of School Places proposals. Members focused their review upon responses to the first consultation period to ensure that Members were satisfied with the process and the response from the Directorate; upon the development of a greater understanding of federated schools and upon the assessment of the viability of the proposals and resource implications. Members supported the proposals made by Cabinet.

However, there was a call in of the Cabinet decision that Public Notices under Sections 28(1) and 29(1) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 be issued to cease to maintain Marsh Primary School, Blythe Bridge and Draycott Manor Primary School from August 2006 and that a new primary school for 210 places be established on the Marsh site from September 2006. This was considered by the Corporate Policy Scrutiny Committee.

Members heard from the relevant officers, the Chairman of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny and Performance Panel and the Cabinet Member, Portfolio Holder for Children and Lifelong Learning, in response to this call in and discussed the desired outcome that schools are strong and viable, both educationally and financially; the basis and timing for the decision and the soundness of the methods used to obtain the information upon which it was based; the consultation process; the fit of the decision with corporate priorities; area border issues; pupil numbers; catchment areas and attendance patterns; school journeys and traffic management; and the implications of the decision for local communities (their environment, learning and other facilities and the extended school concept).

Outcomes: The Corporate Policy Scrutiny Committee were satisfied with the additional information and explanations provided to address the questions raised in respect of the call in and, therefore, it was agreed that, in accordance with paragraph 17.8 of Appendix 4 to the Constitution, that the decision of the Cabinet be implemented.

Scrutiny Review - Climate Change

A cross cutting Working Group was established to prepare for the debate on climate change that took place at the Council meeting on 28 July 2005. The Working Group was then continued to oversee the development of the Council's response to climate change. A Hard Rain: Staffordshire County Council's Climate Change Action Plan was developed with Members of the Working Group and adopted as the County Council's Strategy by Cabinet.

This review will be ongoing throughout 2006/07 and Members have agreed to oversee the various actions required to support the strategy. Members will seek information about a variety of renewable energy developments to understand the role that they may play in a mixed energy economy in the County and to inform the development of the response to climate change.



‘Scrutinising policy, practice and performance for a better Staffordshire’

Scrutiny Review - Fair Trade and Procurement

A cross cutting Working Group was established to prepare for the debate on Fair Trade and Procurement that took place at the Council meeting on 8 October 2005. Members were invited to sample Fair Trade tea and coffee alongside non Fair Trade products and to view a message board of responses to a request placed on the Council’s website for the public to have their say. Having considered the report of the Committee and debated the subject of Fair Trade and Procurement, the Council resolved that the principle of Fair Trade be supported and that a policy statement on this subject, for submission to the Cabinet, be developed.

Outcomes: The Working Group has since reconvened to commence this work and is part way through a plan of work with three elements: the County Council as a purchaser of Fair Trade Products, the County Council’s possible influence regarding Fair Trade products and the County Council trading fairly and ethically, to progress their work to its conclusion during 2006/07.

Scrutiny Review - Waste Management Services

In April 2003, the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Waste Management Board published a draft Integrated Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. The Government have since published a draft review of ‘Waste Strategy 2000’, the national waste strategy, and changes were proposed to the draft document to reflect the greater emphasis on waste minimisation, the need to look at municipal, commercial and industrial waste arisings as complementary and to consider the ways in which joint facilities might serve the communities’ need to manage arisings from both waste streams, which are promoted in the review.

Outcomes: Members were supportive of the overarching strategy, subject to various changes suggested.

Scrutiny Outcomes 2005/06

Being a well-managed and inclusive Council

The key role that Scrutiny plays in performance management has contributed to Staffordshire County Council being a well managed and inclusive Council in several ways.

Members of the Scrutiny and Performance Panels and Committees have scrutinised the Authority's Directorate Improvement Plans, and monitored progress made against them in the form of quarterly Performance Reports. Members have also considered the 2004/05 Directorate Improvement Plan Outturn Reports.

The following Work Programme outcomes illustrate the ways in which Scrutiny Members manage performance and ensure that the Council is well managed and inclusive.

Performance Management - Corporate Improvement Plan

Members received updates on the progress of the Corporate Improvement Plan and were pleased to note that the majority of the 2004/05 plan was project based and the planned actions had been achieved.

The Corporate Policy Scrutiny Committee acknowledged that the County Council was moving in the right direction and at the right pace regarding corporate improvement, with particular emphasis upon a more co-ordinated and dynamic approach to partnership working.

Members were also pleased to find that work was being undertaken to ensure that information on the positive impact and outcomes of improvement activity, including for Staffordshire communities, was captured properly to inform the way ahead.

Outcomes: Members questioned the relationship between the Corporate Strategy, the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and the Community Strategy for the delivery of the LAA. Members were pleased to note that the 2007/08 edition of the Corporate Strategy and supporting improvement plans would be co-ordinated with the blocks of the LAA and local service delivery and taken forward as part of the Customer First initiative. The comments, questions and views of the Corporate Policy Scrutiny Committee were taken into account by the Cabinet when they considered the Corporate Improvement Plan.

Performance Management - The Authority's Budget

Members considered the Authority's Budget proposals ahead of 2006/07.

Outcomes: Each Scrutiny and Performance Panel and Committee agreed to monitor the revenue and capital budgets relevant to their remit. It was also agreed that the Corporate Policy Scrutiny Committee would monitor the revenue and capital budgets as a whole from a corporate perspective, supported by the work of the Budget Working Group.

‘Experiencing problems first hand to make informed recommendations’



Performance Management - Partnerships Scrutiny and Performance Panel

The Partnerships Scrutiny and Performance Panel was formed in response to the findings of the Corporate Performance Assessment 2005 and subsequently allotted the following areas to scrutinise: social inclusion; community relations and strategies; public and external relations; strategic partnerships; and community safety.

Performance Management - Partnerships Database

This year the Panel undertook the task of identifying the number and range of partnerships in which the County Council was engaged in in order to establish and evaluate the 12 ‘high risk’ partnerships (category 1 & 2) in terms of costs, risks and benefits. The Panel has made progress in compiling the Partnerships Database and has categorised each Partnership as possessing a particular risk, as outlined within the Authority’s Financial Control and Administration Policy (FCAP).

Outcomes: This database is updated and maintained on a regular basis with input from the Authority’s Risk Management Group and reported to every Panel meeting to enable the Panel to identify any new partnerships and amend the list accordingly.

Performance Management - Partnership Evaluation and Approval Form

The Panel has developed an Assessment Framework within which to assess partnership working and subsequently developed a Partnerships Evaluation and Approval Form during 2005/06. The form is used to collate detailed evidence relating to individual partnerships and is used as a basis for Scrutiny and Performance monitoring by Members.

Outcomes: The Partnership Evaluation and Approval Form enables the Panel to produce a thematic report detailing each partnership's compliance with corporate objectives, governance arrangements, budgetary and accounting arrangements, risk and programme management; and performance management outcomes.

Performance Management - Partnerships Review

The partnerships reviewed during 2005/06 by the Partnerships Scrutiny and Performance Panel were prioritised with the assistance of the Deputy Corporate Director (Policy and Performance) according to their direct contribution to the Council's corporate priorities, and specifically to the Local Area Agreement.

The Panel has reviewed the Staffordshire Business and Environment Network, Staffordshire Casualty Reduction Partnership, Staffordshire Youth Offending Service and the European Development Fund by adopting a Select Committee style meeting in which Members have received evidence from the Authority's Lead Officer for the specific partnership under Scrutiny.

Outcomes: The partnership reviews undertaken during this period identified a lack of Member involvement in the Authority's partnerships. Members have therefore, proposed that this issue be given further consideration in the coming year to establish whether there should be Member involvement and, if so, what training Members would need to receive. In addition, Members highlighted the absence of any risk register or risk management element of these partnerships and have agreed to address this issue with a Risk Management Awareness Seminar to be held in October 2006 for Members and officers.

Performance Management - Consultation

Members of the Partnerships Scrutiny and Performance Panel have commented upon the Authority's Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Public Service Agreement/Local Area Agreement (LAA) this year. During 2006/07 the Panel will receive regular updates and undertake a performance management role in monitoring the Countywide LAA on a quarterly basis.

Achievements 2005/06

During 2005/06 dedicated officer support, coupled with the effectiveness with which Members have supported the decision making process, has resulted in another successful year for Scrutiny at Staffordshire County Council. The following section reflects upon the ways in which Scrutiny has delivered upon its key priorities during this period.

Development of the Scrutiny Function

Scrutiny Arrangements 2005/06

Staffordshire County Council's Scrutiny arrangements were re-aligned in May 2005 to incorporate new performance management responsibilities and to accommodate Scrutiny of the council's partnership activity which resulted in the new Scrutiny and Performance Panels and Committee structure.

Responding to External Challenge - Corporate Performance Assessment 2005

Staffordshire County Council underwent its second Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) during 2005. The following comments were made about the Scrutiny function and will provide a base from which officers and Members will develop the function during 2006/07:

The CPA highlighted the improvements made in the development, prioritising and Scrutiny of aims and policies since 2002 when political structures changed to put Councillors more firmly in control.

The Authority was praised for its active and original Member-led approach to Scrutiny which was cited as good and particularly effective at supporting decision making. Scrutiny was also recognised for its dedicated officer support and for having been used as an exemplar by the West Midlands Local Government Association and nationally by the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

In terms of Scrutiny training, the programme at Staffordshire County Council was acknowledged as impressive with an assessment of individual development needs and tailored support.

The Authority's partnership activity and the role of Scrutiny were also considered within the Corporate Performance Assessment. It was noted that the Council had a lot of partnerships with the public and voluntary sector but not all have clear objectives or protocols for holding partners accountable for delivering their contributions. The Partnerships Scrutiny and Performance Panel was formed in response to this issue and have begun to scrutinise the range of partnerships in which the Authority is involved to prepare the ground for a Partnerships Strategy.

Health Scrutiny

Staffordshire is participating in evaluative research on Health Scrutiny undertaken by Manchester University on behalf of the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

English Regions Network Conference

Rodger Mann, Scrutiny and Performance Manager, presented a workshop entitled 'Giving Scrutiny a Good Name' at the English Regions Network Annual Conference on 22 November 2005.

Institute of Local Government Studies (University of Birmingham)

During the year, the Scrutiny and Performance team have continued to support the Overview and Scrutiny Seminar Programme delivered by the Institute of Local Government Studies at the University of Birmingham and have made the following case study presentations:

- Effective Overview and Scrutiny
- Scrutinising Finance
- Scrutinising Performance
- Scrutiny for Officers

Scrutiny Chairs' Forum

During 2005, meetings of the Scrutiny Chairmen were held. The purpose of these meetings is to develop Scrutiny processes and procedure.

Scrutiny Reports

This year new ways of reporting have been piloted to ensure a consistent and thorough approach to the reporting of items to Scrutiny.

Improving understanding of the Scrutiny Function

Member Training

The Scrutiny and Performance Managers delivered an induction session for Members following the County Council elections in May 2005. The induction training event on Scrutiny was provided for all Members but was aimed specifically at the 20 Councillors who were new to the Authority. All Members training events were evaluated for their effectiveness and feedback showed a high level of satisfaction. Further guidance and support has been provided for Members during the year in regard to specific Scrutiny work, for example, explanation of quarterly performance reports, including the provision of a Members' guide to Performance Management, and the Health Scrutiny Manager held a Member development session on scoping a Scrutiny Review in July 2005.

Health Scrutiny

The Constitution has been revised to enable Members of Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee to represent the Council on Joint Scrutiny Reviews that affect more than one Local Authority area or on consultations that likewise affect more than one Local Authority area.

As part of its support to Health Scrutiny Committees, the Centre for Public Scrutiny allocated five days of support from a Member of the Implementation Advisory Team. Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee have used this allocation to support the development of terms of reference for a Joint Health Scrutiny Committee, to review their Work Programme and to review their contribution to the draft Annual Health Checks assessment process.

Scrutiny Handbook

'A Practical Guide to Scrutiny' was revised and re-published by the Scrutiny and Performance Managers during 2005/06 in order to reflect the structural and procedural changes that have been introduced including the focus on performance management and the emphasis on achieving Scrutiny outcomes.

Promoting the Scrutiny Function

Centre for Public Scrutiny

During the year, the Scrutiny and Performance Managers have continued to support the Centre for Public Scrutiny and the development of Overview and Scrutiny. At the start of the year, Rodger Mann, Scrutiny and Performance Manager, co-authored the Centre for Public Scrutiny Self Evaluation Framework. The Framework has been well received and completed by many Local Authorities. We intend to use the Self Evaluation Framework in 2006/07.

The Scrutiny and Performance Managers and Members also attended the Centre for Public Scrutiny Annual Conference 2005 and the officer development event. Rodger Mann, Scrutiny and Performance Manager, ran a workshop on the officer development day on Communicating Scrutiny. In addition, Rodger Mann was invited to be the Centre's first Associate and has helped to develop and facilitate an officer development programme.

Health Scrutiny – Health Network Meetings

Health Scrutiny Committees in Staffordshire, Stoke on Trent, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin have continued to meet regularly throughout 2005/06 to discuss issues of concern across the Shropshire and Staffordshire Strategic Health Authority boundary. These meetings will continue to be held whilst discussions take place about widening the remit to the West Midlands area. Scrutiny and Performance Manager Tina Randall was also appointed as an Associate of the Democratic Health Network.

West Midlands Local Government Association (WMLGA)

Members and officers have played an active role in the West Midlands Local Government Association Scrutiny Group. A Steering Group has also been set up to aid Members and officers to focus their Scrutiny work. Cllr Steven Norman (Chair of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny and Performance Panel) chaired this Steering Group during 2005/06 and continues to do so. The Scrutiny and Performance Managers also co-developed and facilitated an event with Birmingham City Council with the theme, 'Monitoring and Tracking Recommendations'.

Scrutiny News

During 2005/06 the Scrutiny and Performance Team have produced one edition of the Newsletter, 'Scrutiny News', detailing the work of the Scrutiny and Performance Panels and Committees. Scrutiny News is accessed by Members of the County Council, all co-opted members of the County Council, the Authority's Directors, District and Borough Council Chief Executives and Members, Staffordshire's MPs, Primary Care Trusts and Local Councils.

Engaging Members' Interest

Accountability

Covering the period May 2005 to February 2006, figures indicated that the attendance of Members at Scrutiny meetings continues to be maintained at a high rate. The comments and observations of the Scrutiny and Performance Panels and Committees are forwarded to the Leaders of the three political groups annually and monitored by the Corporate Policy Scrutiny Committee.

Develop Scrutiny in Partnership

Sharing Good Practice

Requests were made by several Local Authorities for Staffordshire County Council to assist in the development of their Scrutiny arrangements and to this end the County Council have engaged with:

Stratford on Avon District Council
North Yorkshire County Council
Salford Metropolitan Borough Council
Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Warrington Borough Council
Norfolk County Council
Gwynedd County Council
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

In November 2005, Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee members received a presentation from Cannock Chase Council on their successful achievement of beacon status for Healthier Communities.

The Way Forward - Developing Scrutiny and the challenges ahead for 2006/07

The Council is committed to the evolving Scrutiny function and acknowledges its importance as an integral part of its improvement activity. This Annual Review provides an opportunity to outline our proposals for the development of the Scrutiny function during 2006/07 and how such changes will allow us to contribute to the achievement of the Council's vision and corporate priorities.

Implementing Scrutiny Annual Work Programmes 2006/07

In the coming year, our Scrutiny Members aspire to assist in the delivery of the County Council's Corporate Objectives by carrying out targeted work and reviews. The Scrutiny and Performance Panels and Committees will implement Scrutiny Work Programmes for 2006/07 with an emphasis upon delivering outcomes that add value to, and support, the County Council's improvement programme.

Development of the Scrutiny Function

In order to continue to develop the Scrutiny function during 2006/07 we will seek to undertake a self review using the Centre for Public Scrutiny Self Evaluation Framework, work towards the Charter Mark quality standard Application and consider how the outcomes of Members' Personal Development Reviews will inform developments/changes to be made.

We have also invited Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council to Staffordshire County Council, to seek their advice and experience of successfully applying for the Charter Mark quality standard.

Scrutiny Outcomes

The Scrutiny and Performance Team will continue to develop the provision for recording and monitoring outcomes arising from Scrutiny activity and will continue to use and develop Scrutiny reports to County Council and Cabinet as the main vehicle for linking Scrutiny outcomes to the County Council's corporate priorities. The Scrutiny and Performance Team will use established processes to ensure that outputs arising from Scrutiny are recorded and monitored.

Working with District and Borough Councils

Membership of the Partnerships Scrutiny and Performance Panel will be extended during 2006/07 to include the eight Borough and District Councils in Staffordshire (using the Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee as a model) with co-option of other representatives, following the agreement of this proposal by the Regulatory Committee and full Council on 27 July 2006.

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Staffordshire a
great place’**



Improve understanding of the Scrutiny function

We will continue to welcome approaches from other Local Authorities to assist in the development of their Scrutiny function. We will also seek to learn about best practice through our involvement with the Centre for Public Scrutiny, Democratic Health Network, Inlogov and the West Midlands Local Government Association.

Communicating Scrutiny

We will continually improve and update information relating to Scrutiny at Staffordshire County Council on the Council’s website, its intranet and the Members’ intranet to enable a greater understanding of the role and work of Scrutiny.

Involvement in the Scrutiny Process

We will work with the County Council’s Communications Team and the local media to maximise publicity for the work undertaken by Scrutiny and Performance Panels and Committees by considering the opportunities for publicity and community engagement.

Engaging with the Public

We will seek more imaginative, inclusive methods by which to engage the residents of Staffordshire in Scrutiny to affect decisions that affect the quality of services that they receive.

Feedback

This Annual Review has reflected upon the achievements and development of the Scrutiny function at Staffordshire County Council during 2005/06 and accounted for Work Programme outcomes, performance and progression during this period.

In addition, the Review proposes the way forward for Scrutiny at Staffordshire County Council during 2006/07.

With this in mind, we do hope that this Annual Review has been a useful tool and welcome any feedback and suggestions that you may have looking toward developing further the role of Scrutiny at this Authority.

The Scrutiny and Performance Team will also welcome two new Scrutiny and Performance Support Officers to the Team in 2006.

The Scrutiny and Performance Team are located in The Chief Executive's Office, 12 Martin Street and can be contacted as follows:



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