

# MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

## REQUEST TO ATTEND SEMINAR – CENTRE FOR PUBLIC SCRUTINY 9<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

14 APRIL 2011

### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 For the Committee to consider nominating delegates to the Centre for Public Scrutiny's 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference and Exhibition to be held on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2011.

### 2. Background

- 2.1 The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Handbook contains a protocol for use of the Scrutiny Committees budget by members to attend training and conferences relevant to the remit of the Committee.

### 3. Conference Details

- 3.1 An invitation has been received from the Centre of Public Scrutiny with regard to it's 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference and Exhibition to be held **2 June 2011, at Novotel London West.**
- 3.2 The theme for this years conference will be how effective accountability can lead to improved service delivery and drive efficiency savings across public services. Appendix 1 of this report provides a detailed breakdown of the conference content.
- 3.3 Running alongside the conference are two other well established events. Our 'Scrutiny Exchange Live' exhibition brings together commercial partners, local government, public, private, voluntary and community sector scrutineers, enabling delegates to share ideas and learn lessons from each others experiences. Now in their 4th year, our Good Scrutiny Awards celebrate accountability and transparency in public services, the work of non-executives in the public sector and also public sector organisations that respect the work of non-executives.
- 3.4 The Council is eligible for an early bird rate of £249 + VAT per delegate.
- 3.5 It is suggested that the Committee agree in principal to the nomination of Members from the Management Scrutiny Committee to attend the Conference.

### 4. Recommendation

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to consider the attendance of Members to the above conference to be funded from the budget of the Scrutiny Committee.

5. **Background Papers**

None

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### CfPS Annual Conference 2011 - Programme

The 2011 programme will be made up of table discussions that will help you tease out the key issues and share challenges and opportunities in small groups with your peers, enabling everyone to share their point of view and get their questions answered. We will be looking for you to feed into these interactive sessions by telling us your top priorities and challenges over the coming months through our [online community](#). Table top discussions based around our themes of transparency, involvement and accountability will be introduced by experts and proactively facilitated using cutting edge interactive technology that will capture key points and build on discussions throughout the day.

We'll be posing a number of questions to help shape these table discussions. Below, we've provided some first questions to get you thinking. We welcome your thoughts and comments on these right up until the day of the conference - they aren't set in stone and are likely to change as the policy landscape develops over the next six months. We believe that taking this flexible approach will enable us to ensure that the content of the conference stays right up to date and relevant, despite the fast-changing nature of the current policy landscape.

#### **Session 1: Transparency**

The Government has focused on transparency as a key means to ensuring the accountability of public services, envisaging that an "army of armchair auditors" will use data published by service providers to hold decision-makers to account. To help this happen, from January 2011, councils will be required to publish details of all items of expenditure over £500, and it is likely that other organisations delivering public services will be expected to conform to these higher standards of transparency too.

Some questions might include:

- How can we ensure that commissioning arrangements are transparent, when pressures around commercial confidentiality in such arrangements could encourage less openness?
- What information needs to be provided by commissioners and providers to allow the public, and non-executives, to use it effectively and efficiently to 'hold to account'?
- How will the new transparency regime affect existing commissioning and accountability arrangements?

Over to you: what are the big challenges around transparency that you envisage you and your organisation will need help to address? Contribute your views in our [online community](#).

## Session 2: Involvement

The 'Big Society' offers more than simply better engagement with the public about service delivery - it implies active involvement, and opportunities for civil society to run services. New technologies are envisaged as an enabling tool to facilitate more proactive involvement and real-time dialogue between service-providers and service-users. It is an exciting agenda but:

- Might new commissioning arrangements serve to “cut out” involvement by treating service provision as the subject only of contract negotiations between provider and customer, rather than an ongoing and flexible dialogue with local people?
- What is the potential for new on-line media to enable more involvement and are there pitfalls to be aware of?
- Should there be a link between the community-based work carried out by locally elected representatives (ie ward councillors) and the non-executive activity those representatives carry out?

Over to you: what are the big challenges around involvement that you envisage you and your organisation will need help to address? Contribute your views in our [online community](#).

## Session 3: Accountability

Transparency, involvement and accountability are three pillars of a strong democracy. CfPS's model of accountability is that of a web - a network of formal and informal measures involving a wide range of people and organisations providing 'checks and balances' on executive power. Strengthening this web is, we think, the best way to cope with the increasing level of complexity in decision-making today.

- How can non-executives with specific roles in both commissioning and providing organisations (for example, Boards and other non-executive structures) work together to hold service commissioners and providers to account effectively?
- How can non-executives play a meaningful role in contract monitoring?
- How will non-executive activity in this new landscape be supported? Should formal provision be built into contracts/commissioning agreements?

Over to you: what are the big challenges around accountability that you envisage you and your organisation will need help to address? Contribute your views in our [online community](#).