

LGC THE FUTURE OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY CONFERENCE - FEEDBACK

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with verbal feedback from the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) conference that was held on 8 November 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 (Protocol 5 refers). This allows Members to gain specialist knowledge and expertise within a particular area of scrutiny and is in addition to the list of standing conferences and corporate development programme.
- 2.2 In September 2011, it was agreed to send delegates from the Management Scrutiny Committee to the LGC conference on Tuesday 8th November 2011 at Greater London House, London. The Conference was attended by Councillor David Tate, Chair of the Management Scrutiny Committee, and Charlotte Burnham, Head of Scrutiny & Area Arrangements who will provide verbal feedback at this meeting.

3. Conference Programme

- 3.1 The title for the annual conference was The Future of Overview and Scrutiny. With all local government authorities facing the need to find efficiency savings and cut services, the role of overview and scrutiny in local authorities takes on an even more important role to ensure that officials and members are making the correct decisions.
- 3.2 Some of the key speakers at this event included **Ed Hammond**, Centre for Public Scrutiny, **Ed Moses**, Department of Health, **Jane Belman**, Cambridgeshire County Council, **Helen Kenny**, West Sussex County Council and **Andrew Coulson**, University of Birmingham.
- 3.4 Overview and scrutiny is a crucial tool for improving the efficiency and quality of services in communities. In recent years the roles and responsibilities of scrutiny officers have drastically altered and expanded. New legislation from central government will require more transparency from scrutiny functions. With shrinking resources and demands for budget cuts as well as an increased demand for more public engagement with the introduction of 'armchair auditors', this means overview and scrutiny committee members

and officers face many changes and challenges that are important to understand and overcome.

3.5 Discussions throughout the day focused on;

- Increasing the value of overview and scrutiny to guarantee the correct savings are made in the right areas;
- Understanding the impact of major legislation on overview and scrutiny;
- Improving self regulation and understanding the affects of the end of the Audit Commission on local authorities;
- How to develop joint scrutiny of services across multiple authorities; and
- A look at new strategies for engaging local communities in overview and scrutiny.

4. Recommendation

4.1 The Committee is requested to receive verbal feedback from the conference delegates.

5. Background Papers

Conference Programme

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