

MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

ENHANCING LOCAL DEMOCRACY CONFERENCE FEEDBACK

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

16TH JULY 2009

1. Purpose of Report

For the Committee to receive feedback from the Enhancing Local Democracy Conference.

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). 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 The delegation to this year's conference included the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Management Scrutiny Committee who will provide oral feedback to the meeting.

3. Conference Details & Purpose

3.1 Title: Enhancing Local Democracy
Theme: Communities in Control
Date: Tuesday 7 July 2009
Venue: Local Government House, London

3.2 The overarching theme of the conference will be Communities in Control. Discussion was around the proposals contained in last year's White Paper and how this will impact on local authorities and partners, as the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill becomes an Act.

3.3 Speakers and workshop facilitators examined the new duties for local authorities, implications for partnership working, the enhanced role of scrutiny and the empowerment of local communities. The conference also addressed the impact of the Comprehensive Area Assessment as the new regime starts.

4. Conference Programme

4.1 .Speakers were:

- David Aaronovitch, Writer, Broadcaster and Commentator – Communities in Control
- Gerry Stoker, Professor of Politics and Government, Southampton University Community Empowerment – the Role of the Local Authority

4.2 Workshop sessions

- Building the Virtual Town Hall: Useful Things to Do with the Web
- Scrutiny – what does this look like now?
- Democratic Services – new roles, new responsibilities
- Partnership working - case study of two local authorities
- Approaches to Participation

4.3 Delegates attended 3 of the workshops including the scrutiny group which focused on the role of overview and scrutiny in the leadership of place with the emphasis on working beyond the local authority boundaries and being externally focused.

4.4 The workshop also referred to Draft Regulations which support the overview and scrutiny provisions in the 2007 Local Government Act which are currently available for consultation. A framework underpinning the regulations, and best practice guidance to support the new powers is currently being drafted and will be available later in the year.

4.5 The Conference also included the announcement of the proposed launch of a new Association of Democratic Services Officers in October.

5. **Recommendation & Conclusion**

The Committee is asked to receive feedback from the conference delegates.

6. **Background Papers**

Conference Programme
Leadership Centre for Local Government – Leadership of Place

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