

**POLICY & COORDINATION REVIEW
COMMITTEE**

22 January 2009

SCRUTINY REVIEW

REPORT OF THE CITY SOLICITOR

1. Why has this report come to the Committee?

- 1.1 To report to the Review Committee on the outcomes of a review of scrutiny.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Conference held on 20th May 2008 highlighted Members' wishes to see scrutiny in Sunderland reviewed. The need identified by Members of this Committee for an 'ethos of scrutiny' to ensure influential scrutiny, and for this to fully engage with Cabinet and with Directorates, was at the forefront of the discussion.
- 2.2 Members also identified a need to consider scrutiny in its full context within the Council, including whether it is structured appropriately and adequately resourced, and proposed a 'root and branch' review of the structure and support for scrutiny in Sunderland. Members stated very clearly that they would wish to see such a review undertaken without delay.

3. Working Group

- 3.1 A Working Group was established by the Policy & Co-ordination Review Committee at its meeting on 19 June 2008. The review aimed to respond to the evaluation of scrutiny in the Council's 2007 Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) and to identify the action required to meet the challenges and opportunities offered by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- 3.2 The review was undertaken by a cross-party Working Group with additional support and challenge provided by the Audit Commission. Membership was agreed as Councillors Tate, Mordey, John Scott, Arnott and G Hall.
- 3.3 The Working Group met seven times and was supported by the Audit Commission, City Solicitors, Chief Executive, Personnel Department, and IDeA.
- 3.4 Each meeting covered a block of work as follows: Staffing & Support; Structure & Processes; Role of Members; Role & Function of Scrutiny.

The Group also considered comparative information from other authorities.

4. Findings

- 4.1 The report attached summarises the findings and recommendations from the review. This report is endorsed by three members of the Working Group.
- 4.2 It should be noted, that at the final meeting of the Working Group held on 8 January, two members of the Group (Councillors Arnott and Hall) withdrew from membership of the Group and the report attached is presented from the three remaining members of the Group, Councillors Tate, Mordey and Scott.
- 4.3 The unresolved issues arising from discussions in the Working Group were as follows:
1. The option of a second Vice Chairman attached to each Review Committee drawn from the minority parties. This would be ranked after the Chairman and Vice-Chairman who continue to be drawn from the majority party. The position would be unpaid.
 2. The option of a Lead Opposition Member for each Review Committee. This role would include attendance at agenda meetings, briefing meetings and other informal meetings outside of Review Committee.
- 4.4 These options were discussed at length in the Working Group and as unanimity was not achieved the options are presented here to the Review Committee.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The Review Committee is asked to consider the attached report for endorsement prior to submission to Cabinet and then Council.

6. Background Papers

Audit Commission Discussion Paper: Developing Scrutiny with Impact
Gateshead Review of Scrutiny
Durham Review of Scrutiny
Newcastle Review of Scrutiny
P&C Scrutiny Conference Report 19 June 2008

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