

CABINET MEETING – 20th JUNE 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report: Management Scrutiny Committee: Demonstrating Local Accountability – Policy Review Final Report									
Author(s): Management Scrutiny Committee and Chief Executive									
Purpose of Report: To set out the recommendations of the Management Scrutiny Committee following the Committee's review of local accountability and self regulation.									
Description of Decision: The Cabinet is requested to consider the Management Scrutiny Committee's Policy Review Final Report and endorse the recommendations contained within the report (attached as Appendix A). To assist the Cabinet in its consideration of the draft recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee, attached as Appendix B is the proposed Action Plan for the implementation of these recommendations which has been prepared in consultation with the appropriate Portfolio Holder.									
Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework? *Yes/No									
If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework									
Suggested reason(s) for Decision: The Committee has conducted a number of interactive workshops exploring some of the key themes and components of the self regulation agenda. The recommendations aim to develop and support self regulation and local accountability in the council.									
Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected: The Scrutiny Committee has gathered detailed evidence and arrived at conclusions and recommendations which are intended to enhance and strengthen the self regulation role in the council. There are no alternatives to be considered.									
Impact analysed: <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="border: none;">Equality</td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; text-align: center;">N/A</td> <td style="border: none;">Privacy</td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; text-align: center;">N/A</td> <td style="border: none;">Sustainability</td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; text-align: center;">N/A</td> <td style="border: none;">Crime & Disorder</td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; text-align: center;">N/A</td> </tr> </table>		Equality	N/A	Privacy	N/A	Sustainability	N/A	Crime & Disorder	N/A
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Is this a “Key Decision” as defined in the Constitution? Yes/No Is it included in the Forward Plan? Yes/No	Scrutiny Committee:								

REPORT OF THE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: DEMONSTRATING LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY – POLICY REVIEW FINAL REPORT

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To set out the recommendations of the Management Scrutiny Committee following the Committee's review of self regulation and local accountability.

2. Description of Decision (Recommendations)

- 2.1 The Cabinet is requested to consider the Management Scrutiny Committee's Policy Review Final Report and endorse the recommendations contained within the report (attached as Appendix A). Where there are any recommendations which have financial implications, these will be outlined in the Service Directorate's response.
- 2.2 To assist the Cabinet in its consideration of the draft recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee, attached as Appendix B is the proposed Action Plan for the implementation of these recommendations which has been prepared in consultation with the appropriate Portfolio Holder.

3. Background

- 3.1 At the meeting of Management Scrutiny Committee held on 16th June 2011, following discussions regarding the Work Programme, the Committee agreed to focus on the development of the Council's approach to self regulation and the role of the council's scrutiny function in supporting self regulation and improvement.
- 3.2 The Coalition Government has indicated a commitment to scale back the requirements on local government for upward reporting data to government departments alongside the intention to significantly reduce national inspection and assessment, and this approach has been largely welcomed by Local Government. In place of centrally driven national frameworks the Local Government Association has proposed that the sector is best placed to provide the necessary assurance and transparency of the performance of local government to local people and the government. Consultation undertaken by the LGA in October 2010 led to the publication in February 2011 of 'Taking the Lead' which sets out the LG Group's approach to how self regulation and improvement could work in practice. In doing so, the LG Group stresses that it is not setting out a prescribed system to be adopted by all local authorities recognising that it does not want to replace one burdensome national framework with another. However there are expectations for individual councils to take steps to enhance the way they are held accountable locally for improving outcomes in their areas and to continue to support each other.

4. Key Points Arising from the Review

- 4.1 There is a greater focus for local authorities taking responsibility for improving outcomes and monitoring and reviewing their own performance and ensuring transparency and local accountability. Whilst the overall approach is very much a new and emerging agenda some of the tools are already being deployed by successful councils. The approach will require local authorities to develop their own specific approaches that are fit for purpose, as well as looking to the sector as a collective for support and additional resources. Members noted that the Council was well placed to take on board self regulation based on its high level of self awareness and previous high performance in both corporate and service based inspections and its existing use and effective deployment of tools and techniques identified by the LGA to support local accountability and service improvement.
- 4.2 The publication of 'Taking the Lead' by the Local Government Association highlights the responsibility on councils to ensure they are held locally accountable, and continuing to support each other through the self regulation approach. Unlike inspection this is not a mandatory system for adoption and throughout this review Members have stressed the importance of developing and using tools and support which best reflect the priorities of this council. The approach identifies a range of tools and techniques which have and continue to be developed, which provide a useful source of support, particularly in these times of limited resources.
- 4.3 Inspections and assessments will still continue in certain sectors particularly for vulnerable groups and members noted the emergence of sector led approaches to self regulation, in particular for Adult Social Care and Children's services. A revised Peer Challenge process is seen by the LGA as a key tool within his new approach with the LGA offering a free corporate peer challenge to all councils as part of a national programme. In addition The Knowledge Hub and LG Inform are offered as new resources for local authorities. These will provide opportunities for networking, sharing best practice and case studies. The LG Inform resource is offered as the opportunity to provide a holistic benchmarking resource for the sector. Members noted however, their value may be limited by the non-mandatory nature of these resources. It will be very much up to individual organisations on how they use this resource and there are potential limitations that in the early days data could be patchy, inaccurate or incompatible. Each local authority must decide how to take this forward as part of its own performance management arrangements. Members noted the opportunity to engage in dialogue at both a regional and national level to ensure that this resource provides a useful tool to local decision makers across the region and country.
- 4.4 Scrutiny is well placed to be a key piece of the self regulation framework. The majority of the principles outlined for effective internal review and challenge are already imbedded into the way scrutiny operates within the local authority. As new governance arrangements are imbedded, including a refined scrutiny structure, it will be important that the organisation looks to ensure scrutiny continues to provide elected members with a key role in challenging and hold the organisation to account.

5. Response from the Directorate

- 5.1 The decision of the Scrutiny Committee to focus its policy review on the emerging Self Regulation agenda was welcomed. The review findings and the recommendations provide a basis for informing the further development of self regulation in the council supporting enhanced accountability and transparency regarding the delivery of improved outcomes. This is an emerging and developing agenda under which the review was undertaken and due to the nature of the recommendations, timescales and responsible officers will be allocated to the actions following submission to Cabinet.

6. Reasons for the Decision

- 6.1 The recommendations are intended to support and assist in the development of self regulation within the local authority.

7. Alternative Options

- 7.1 There are no alternative options recommended.

8. Impact Analysis

8.1 Equalities

The proposals are designed to support improved service delivery for the residents of Sunderland. Equality issues were addressed during the evidence gathering process and this is reflected in the focused recommendations.

8.2 Privacy Impact Assessment

The proposals have no immediate additional implications for the protection of privacy of the public. Any privacy issues which arise will be addressed through the delivery of the action planning process.

8.3 Sustainability

The proposals have no immediate implications for sustainability. Sustainability issues will be considered and addressed as part of the delivery of the action plan by Members and officers.

8.4 Reduction of Crime & Disorder – Community Cohesion / Social Inclusion

The proposals have no immediate implications for crime and disorder. Any crime and disorder issues will be addressed as part of the delivery of the action plan by Members and officers.

9. Relevant Considerations / Consultations

- 9.1 The findings in the report are the result of consultation and evidence gathering by the Scrutiny Committee. The Committee held a series of interactive workshops which looked to explore some of the key issues around self regulation and the emerging agenda. The workshops allowed members to look at individual aspects of self regulation in some detail, which provided evidence for the final report.

10. List of Appendices

Appendix A – Policy Review Final Report

Appendix B – Action Plan

11. Background Papers

Management Scrutiny Committee Agenda Papers 2011/12