

## **Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Planning Afternoon: Suggestions for developing relations between the Overview and Scrutiny and Executive Committees**

During the course of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme Planning Afternoon Members considered relations between Overview and Scrutiny and the Executive. In groups, the Councillors discussed current circumstances and proposed arrangements which could be introduced to develop relations further. The Councillors framed their discussion around two questions. The questions and answers are set out in the report below followed by some general points that were raised by all Councillors during the afternoon.

### **1) What does Overview and Scrutiny want from the Executive?**

- respect and a fair hearing from the Executive;
- for the Executive to undertake a thorough consideration of scrutiny recommendations;
- specific meetings of the Executive Committee to be organised for the consideration of scrutiny recommendations;
- full and considered responses from the Executive, preferably in writing, to any scrutiny recommendations;
- Overview and Scrutiny Members would like to be considered as equal partners of the Executive Members, both by Councillors and Officers;
- adequate advance notice of forthcoming decisions that may be taken by the Executive which would be appropriate for pre-scrutiny (this would involve appropriate notice being given by both Councillors and Officers);
- adequate resources to enable Overview and Scrutiny Members to undertake effective scrutiny; and
- for the Executive Committee (Officers, and other stakeholders) to recognise that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can refuse to accept work which has been referred for consideration.

### **2) What does the Executive want from Overview and Scrutiny?**

- timely reporting of Overview and Scrutiny recommendations;
- more pre-scrutiny work;
- better time management of Task and Finish reviews (a number of Councillors suggested that improved time management for scrutiny reviews might obviate the need for Executive Advisory Panels in future);
- a limit to the number of recommendations produced during any one review;
- to provide funding solutions and reasonable plans that would demonstrate how the Council could implement any recommended action;
- but at the same time not to let financial considerations constrain ambitious recommendations;

- creativity, both in review work and with final recommendations;
- to initiate a dialogue with Executive Members before launching a scrutiny exercise to determine the feasibility of pursuing costly recommendations;
- tough recommendations;
- to not be afraid of referring both majority and minority reports to the Executive Committee for consideration;
- clear recommendations;
- scrutiny exercises based on adequate research;
- relevant reviews;
- reviews that will make a difference;
- when undertaking scrutiny work, to check whether any other local authorities have undertaken similar reviews;
- reviews that will be of interest to the public;
- engagement with the public during review work; and
- an understanding of the Council's priorities.

### **General Points:**

- Members noted that effective scrutiny work requires good chairing skills;
- Members also noted that effective scrutiny requires good organisation skills;
- Members requested electronic diaries for all Councillors;
- Members noted that it would be useful for Members to bring their diaries to the first meeting of every Task and Finish review to enable groups to plan in advance how they can complete reviews according to deadline; and
- Members requested more shared visioning and briefing events and scrutiny seminars for short sharp reviews of general interest which would be open to all Councillors to attend.