



Overview & Scrutiny Committee

7 October 2008

Report from the Director of Policy & Regeneration

For Action

Wards Affected:
ALL

Feedback from the Scrutiny Chairs' Meeting

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report provides feedback from a recent meeting of Overview & Scrutiny Chairs.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are invited to comment on the proposed Councillor Call for Action protocol.

2.2 To note the report

3.0 Detail

3.1 An Overview & Scrutiny training event held on July 21st 2008. The aim of the session was to develop scrutiny in Brent. The session was delivered by Tim Young an associate of the Centre for Public Scrutiny and covered the new legislative context for scrutiny and the four principles of effective scrutiny developed by the Centre for Public Scrutiny. The four principles are:

1. Good scrutiny should provide '**critical friend**' **challenge** to executive policy-makers and decision-makers.
2. It should **enable the voice and concerns of the public** and its communities.

3. It should be carried out by '**independent minded governors**' who lead and own the scrutiny process.

4. Scrutiny should **drive improvement** in public services.

3.2 Within this context members were able to reflect on current practice and identify barriers to success and actions which will assist improvement in practice.

3.3 One of the main outcomes of the event was an agreement that a meeting of all overview & scrutiny chairs be set up. The meeting was held on the 11th September and the following was discussed:

- Key aspects of the work programme for each committee (work programmes will be circulated prior to the meeting)
- Developing a protocol between the Executive and O & S
- Developing a Communications Strategy for O & S
- Further development opportunities for O & S members & Chairs
- Ideas for engaging / involving the public in O & S
- Developing a protocol for Councillor Call for Action

3.4 The Chairs agreed the need to develop a protocol to enhance the relationship between O & S and the Executive in order to:

- To facilitate and open exchange between the Executive and Overview & Scrutiny
- To ensure that reports and recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny to the Executive are considered and are responded to

They discussed points for inclusion in the protocol which is currently being developed and will be brought to this committee at a later date.

3.5 The Chairs discussed proposals for a protocol for Councillor Call for Action. It is envisaged that regulations for this part of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 will be issued by the end of the year. In preparation for that a draft protocol has been developed and is attached for comment.

3.6 It was also agreed that further training and development opportunities would be offered to members and would include:

- Overview & Scrutiny Chairs' training - which will be open to all members particularly those who would like to chair task groups
- Questioning Skills – which will include an opportunity to role play a committee

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 None

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 None

6.0 Diversity Implications

6.1 None

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

7.1 None

Background Papers

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