



Scrutiny in North West Leicestershire

Annual Report

2009/10

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Background

1. Scrutiny's 2009/10 Annual Report provides a summary of work undertaken over the year, together with its key outcomes and achievements.
2. The Council had five Scrutiny Committees. Four of these Committees are aligned closely to the Cabinet portfolios on a theme basis and the fifth, the Corporate Governance Scrutiny Committee, includes the Audit Committee function and the membership is drawn from the membership of the other Scrutiny Committees. The committees are as follows:-
 - 🔍 Environment Scrutiny Committee
 - 🔍 Communities Scrutiny Committee
 - 🔍 Health Scrutiny Committee
 - 🔍 Corporate Scrutiny Committee
 - 🔍 Corporate Governance Committee
3. The Scrutiny Committees meet six times a year with provision for extraordinary meetings from time to time and when appropriate.
4. In order to co-ordinate the work of the five Scrutiny Committees and ensure that they are operating effectively, the Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of the four "themed" Scrutiny Committees meet periodically as a Scrutiny Commission to secure the co-ordination of the work programmes of the Scrutiny Committees, to determine responsibility for any matters which fall within the terms of reference of more than one Scrutiny Committee, and to consider how to allocate any referrals from Community Forums. The Chairman of the Corporate Governance Committee also attends the Commission.

Scrutiny Commission

5. The Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees meet periodically, on an informal basis, to secure the co-ordination of the work programmes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, to determine responsibility for any matters that fall within the terms of reference of more than one Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to consider how to allocate any referrals from Community Forums.
6. These meetings of the Chairmen form the "Scrutiny Commission" and operate as a Working Group.

Scrutiny Support

7. The Senior Scrutiny Officer provides support to the scrutiny function together with support from Member Services.

Task and Finish Groups

8. The Committees can set up special Working Parties referred to as Task and Finish Groups when they need to undertake a detailed, in depth examination of

a particular issue. The work is undertaken by a small group of councillors appointed by the membership of the respective Scrutiny Committee.

9. A Task and Finish Group is given a specific remit and timescale within which to undertake its research, gather evidence and produce recommendations, which it then brings back to the Committee for consideration.

Work Programmes

10. The Committees decide in advance the issues they wish to look at and compile a work programme. This enables the Committees to plan their workloads for the year. A meeting of the Joint Scrutiny Committee, consisting of all scrutiny members, considers items for the work plan in conjunction with the Council's Delivery Plan.

11. The criteria that need to be considered for an item to be placed on the work programme are as follows:-

- 🔍 An area of Corporate priority
- 🔍 An issue of importance to the public
- 🔍 An issue of importance to councillors
- 🔍 A service that has been identified as having unsatisfactory performance
- 🔍 A service that has recorded high levels of dissatisfaction from customers
- 🔍 An issue that the Council has spent a significant proportion of its budget on
- 🔍 There was a consistent pattern of not reaching budget targets with regard to a service
- 🔍 New Government guidance or legislation had been introduced which would affect delivery or policy in a service area.
- 🔍 A major matter of local concern that may not be the responsibility or sole responsibility of the Council

12. An examination would not be set up if any of the following factors applied to the topic being suggested:

- 🔍 It is already being addressed in the Council
- 🔍 It could be dealt with more effectively in another way
- 🔍 The matter is considered to be sub-judice or prejudicial to Council's interests
- 🔍 The case fell within the complaints procedure and processes
- 🔍 It is an individual disciplinary or grievance matter
- 🔍 It is unlikely to result in improvements for local people.

13. Non-executive elected members and executive members have made suggestions for future topics of examinations in addition to the 'standard' monitoring reports. We are making efforts to involve the public in the scrutiny process, including suggesting topics for examination.
14. In May 2010, Council reviewed the structure of the scrutiny function. In future, there will be three scrutiny committees of ten non-executive members.
 - 🔍 Corporate Scrutiny Committee
 - 🔍 Communities Scrutiny Committee
 - 🔍 Environment Scrutiny Committee

Call-in

15. Members use the Call-in facility sparingly in North West Leicestershire. As the council's constitution notes, 'Call-in should only be used in exceptional circumstances'.
16. No requests for call-in were received during 2009/10

Examinations during 2009-10

17. The Scrutiny Committees carried out a number of examinations during 2009/10. Details of the progress of current examinations are available on the Council's Website¹ or on request. We publish all our reports on the Centre for Public Scrutiny library website.² The reports are also available on the Council's website³ or on request.

ICT Working Party 'E-Support for Members - Meeting Expectations'

18. The Corporate Scrutiny Committee examined the ICT support offered and used by elected members.

Refreshments for Members Working Party 'A Refreshing Response - Refreshments for Members'

19. The Corporate Scrutiny Committee examined the provision of refreshments for members. The recommendations were fully endorsed and implemented.

¹ Details at <http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/scrutiny/DisplayArticle.asp?ID=9248> 'What is Scrutiny Doing?' or on request.

² At <http://www.cfps.org.uk/scrutiny-exchange/library/>.

³ Details at <http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/scrutiny/DisplayArticle.asp?ID=9035> 'Scrutiny Reports' or on request.

Fire Service Consultation Working Party 'On Call - A Timely response'

20. The Communities Scrutiny Committee examined issues arising from consultation on the Fire Services' plans for future provision of the service. The proposals included the closure of Moira Fire Station.
21. The working party held this examination in Moira village hall.
22. The Communities Scrutiny Committee forwarded the final report with recommendations, including the retention of Moira Fire Station, to the Cabinet. Cabinet endorsed the report as the Council's response to the Fire Service's consultation.

Hood Park Open-Air Pool Working Party 'Out in the Open - Making a Splash'

23. The Health Scrutiny Committee examined issues relating to the opening period of the open-air pool at Hood Park in Ashby de la Zouch.
24. The working party visited the pool and met, at Hood Park Leisure Centre and at the offices of Ashby de la Zouch Town Council.
25. During the examination, officers and the working party identified revised operational procedures that offered increased flexibility for the opening of the pool.
26. The working party will hold a review meeting after the opening of the pool in 2010 to assess the new operational procedure.

Planning Improvements Working Party 'Planning for Improvement'

27. The Environment Scrutiny Committee examined the implementation of the Council's Fundamental Improvement Plan for the Planning Service.
28. The working party met with elected members, developers and planning agents, parish councils and members of the public

River Mease, Impact on Development

29. The Environment Scrutiny Committee examined the circumstances surrounding difficulties for development in the River Mease catchment area resulting in delays to the Local Development Framework
30. The working party received evidence from the main agencies, our planning service, Natural England, Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water as well as parish councils and local people and groups.
31. The working party is developing its final report and the chairman will present this to the Environment Scrutiny Committee.

Summary of the Work of the Scrutiny Commission

32. The Scrutiny Commission meets every two months to discuss scrutiny related issues and matters arising from the scrutiny committees.

33. Issues discussed include;

- 🔍 Work plans
- 🔍 Greater involvement in scrutiny
- 🔍 Future structure of scrutiny

Future Examinations

34. The scrutiny commission has identified and prioritised topics suggested by members for future examinations including;

- 🔍 The Benefits of Joining the Transition Town Movement (referred by Council)
- 🔍 Housing Repairs
- 🔍 Member Development (referred by the Member Development Working Party)
- 🔍 Street Enforcement
- 🔍 The Local Development Framework Process
- 🔍 Empty Private Housing
- 🔍 Anti-social Behaviour
- 🔍 Coalville is Changing
- 🔍 Private Sector Grants
- 🔍 Young People
- 🔍 Litter (possibly included in Street enforcement above)
- 🔍 Working with other levels of government
- 🔍 Members' ICT provision
- 🔍 Council Transportation

Finally

35. The scrutiny function has further developed during the year, producing some well-researched reports and evidence based recommendations.

36. The revised scrutiny structure agreed and implemented in May 2010 will provide greater possibility for timely in-depth examinations combined with scheduling of reports at earlier stages of development will give scrutiny the opportunity to have a greater impact in the evolution of policies and direction.

37. We now publish the progress, ('What is Scrutiny Doing?'),⁴ and final reports⁵ of Scrutiny Examinations on the Council's scrutiny website and on the Centre for Public Scrutiny library website⁶.

⁴ At <http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/scrutiny/DisplayArticle.asp?ID=9248> 'What is Scrutiny Doing?' or on request

38. We also publish a monthly update for members with details of working party meetings to enable greater participation.
39. We shall give greater publicity to forthcoming examinations as well as reports and outcomes so that elected members and members of the public are aware that they can suggest topics for examination, contribute to examinations and of the impact that their contribution has within the Council's work.
40. The Council has streamlined the scrutiny function for the future to three scrutiny committees with the dissolution of the Health Scrutiny Committee and the conversion of the Corporate Governance Scrutiny Committee to an audit and governance committee. Other changes to the Council's constitution, allowing a maximum of six task and finish groups, enable greater flexibility in the use of 'task and finish' groups. The terms of reference of the Communities Scrutiny Committee have been amended to incorporate those of the Health Scrutiny Committee.
41. In future, a petition containing over 1,000 signatures will enable an officer to be 'held to account' at a scrutiny committee. Arrangements are being developed to enable this to proceed smoothly.

⁵ At <http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/scrutiny/DisplayArticle.asp?ID=9035> 'Scrutiny Reports' or on request

⁶ At <http://www.cfps.org.uk/scrutiny-exchange/library/>

Terms of reference 2009/10

Environment - Prosperity and sustainable environment

(8 members)

Terms of Reference:

- 🔍 Planning policy
- 🔍 Development control
- 🔍 Employment/economy/regeneration/enterprise (LAA)
- 🔍 Environment
- 🔍 Street management
- 🔍 Environmental health
- 🔍 Rural agenda

Communities - Strong and safer communities

(8 members)

Terms of Reference:

- 🔍 Neighbourhoods and communities
- 🔍 Community safety (LAA)
- 🔍 Children and young people (LAA)
- 🔍 LSP
- 🔍 Voluntary sector
- 🔍 Community cohesion (social inclusion, diversity and equalities)
- 🔍 Housing

Health - Healthy fulfilled population

(8 members)

Terms of Reference:

- 🔍 Health (LAA)
- 🔍 Arts and cultural services
- 🔍 Tourism
- 🔍 Sport and leisure
- 🔍 Adults/older/vulnerable people (LAA)

Corporate - Quality, good value accessible services

(8 members)

Terms of Reference:

- 🔍 Budget and Policy Framework
- 🔍 Finance
- 🔍 People management
- 🔍 Asset management
- 🔍 Customer services
- 🔍 Policy and performance
- 🔍 ICT
- 🔍 Revenues and benefits
- 🔍 Transforming services
- 🔍 Procurement

Two of the above four Overview and Scrutiny Committees shall be chaired by a member of the largest Opposition Group. The remaining two Chairmen and the Deputy Chairmen shall be members of the Majority Group.

Corporate Governance

(8 members comprising 2 members from each of the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees)

Terms of Reference:

To act as the Authority's Audit Committee, to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment, independent scrutiny of the Authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the Authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment, and to oversee the financial reporting process. In particular:

- 🔍 Consider the effectiveness of the Authority's risk management arrangements, the control environment, and anti fraud and corruption arrangements
- 🔍 Seek assurances that action is being taken on risk-related issues identified by auditors and inspectors
- 🔍 Be satisfied that the Authority's assurance statements properly reflect the risk environment and any actions required to improve it
- 🔍 Approve (but not direct) Internal Audit's strategy and plans and monitor performance
- 🔍 Review summary Internal Audit reports and the main issues arising, and seek assurance that action has been taken where necessary

- 🔍 Receive the annual report of Internal Audit
- 🔍 Consider plans of External Audit and inspection agencies
- 🔍 Monitoring of relevant reports and action plans
- 🔍 Ensure there are effective relationships between Internal and External Audit, inspection agencies and other relevant bodies, and that the value of the audit process is actively promoted
- 🔍 Approve the Council's statement of accounts, income and expenditure and balance sheet and receive the External Auditor's opinion and reports to members, and monitor management action in response to the issues raised by External Audit
- 🔍 Audit - internal and external, and
- 🔍 Related matters in relation to Legal and Democratic Services
- 🔍 To deal with the Annual Audit and Inspection letter and in particular to:
 - consider matters raised in the annual governance report
 - agree, if necessary, to adjust the financial statements
 - approve the representation letter on behalf of the Council
 - agree any actions proposed in the annual governance report and statement
 - To have delegated authority to deal with all matters relating to the Council's final accounts subject to approval by Council

Membership of Scrutiny Committees 2009/10

	Communities Scrutiny Committee	Corporate Scrutiny Committee	Corporate Governance Scrutiny Committee	Environment Scrutiny Committee	Health Scrutiny Committee	Scrutiny Commission
Councillor	Bowley	Allman *	Gillard *	Bowley	Brigden **	Allman
Councillor	A Bridges	Dalby	P Holland	Dalby	A Bridges	Brigden
Councillor	J Bridges	P Holland	Hoult	Everitt	Fenning *	Coxon
Councillor	Coxon **	Partner	Meller	Meynell **	Jones	Fenning *
Councillor	Gillard	P Purver **	Richichi	Richichi	Meller	Gillard
Councillor	Hoult	N Smith	Stevenson	Saffell *	E Purver	Howe
Councillor	Howe *	Stevenson	Timmis	Webster	Saffell	Meynell
Councillor	Wyatt	Timmis	Webster **	Wyatt	Stevenson	P Purver
Tenant Rep	Mr R Dawe					Saffell **
						Webster

* Chairman

** Deputy Chairman