

**Children & Young People  
Select Committee  
12 June 2013**

## **Role of Scrutiny at the County Council**

### **Background to Scrutiny**

- Formal scrutiny introduced as part of the move to Executive Arrangements following the Local Government Act 2000
- Authorities operating Executive Arrangements must have at least one Scrutiny Committee

## **Role and purpose of Scrutiny**

- To assist the Executive and the County Council in the development of the Budget and Policy Framework
- To conduct research and analysis of policy issues and possible options
- To hold the Executive and the Council to account
- To make recommendations to the Executive or to the County Council arising from the scrutiny process

## **Policy Development**

Key work stream is to review and make recommendations either to the Executive or to the Full Council to assist in the development of future policies and strategies

# Policy Review/Development

## Policy Development

- Contribute to development of new or improved council policies and strategies (possibly using in-depth reviews)
- Proactive where there may be gaps

## Policy/Strategy Review

- Reviewing existing policy, to consider:
  - Do we have a clear and up to date approach?
  - Is it the right approach?
  - Are policies coherent and joined up?
  - Are the policies effective when put into action - is it working? Are they delivering what was intended?

# Holding the Executive and the Council to Account

- Scrutinising decisions which the Executive is planning to take (Pre-scrutiny)
- Scrutinising Executive decisions that have been taken before they are implemented (Call-in)
- Scrutinising Executive decisions after they have been implemented, whether shortly afterwards or as part of a wider review of policy to measure their effect

## Scrutiny of Decisions

- Issues to consider when scrutinising decisions:
  - Are decisions evidence based?
  - Has appropriate consultation been undertaken?
  - Do decisions reflect the County Council's priorities?
  - Have alternative options been considered?

## Call-in

- Only applies where a decision has been made but not yet implemented
- Can only be done within 5 working days of the date members have been notified of the decision
- A quorum of members can call a meeting of a select committee to consider an executive decision. The Committee must meet within 14 days of the of meeting being called

## Call in options

The Committee must decide whether or not to recommend

- That the decision be reconsidered by the relevant decision maker
- Where the decision is not in line with the Policy or Budget Framework that the County Council should take that decision

## Effect of call-in

- Any decision which is not in line with the Policy or Budget Framework cannot be implemented until the call in has been disposed of
- Urgent Key Decisions cannot be called in although they can still be scrutinised by the committee

## Items for the Agenda

- Any member of the Committee can put an item on the agenda of the next meeting of the committee
- Any member of the County Council can refer a matter to a committee provided it is relevant to the function of that committee
- The Executive or the County Council may request that a committee considers a matter referred by them

## Topic Suggestions

- Suggestions welcome at any time to the Chairman or Scrutiny Officer
- Make clear the reason for the request – is there evidence this is an area of concern? (e.g. performance data, frequently raised by constituents) – is it a County wide rather than local issue? Etc (see 'whether to scrutinise' handout)
- Note: Member Briefing Programme takes place monthly – for information items

## In-depth Reviews

- Review group established to investigate an issue outside of the formal committee meetings
- Topic scoped to identify key lines of enquiry, relevant stakeholders, timetable for undertaking etc
- Terms of Reference to Policy & Resources Select Committee for approval
- Review group considers written and oral evidence, analyses, culminates in a written report presenting the evidence and recommendations e.g: Therapy Services for Children with Special Educational Needs (joint with HOSC in 2010)

## Light Touch Reviews/Working Groups

- Topics that do not require the full 'in-depth' treatment
- Group of Members identified to meet outside of the formal committee meetings
- Aims and timescale scoped, meetings held with relevant officers to discuss, culminates in summary of findings and recommendations where relevant

## **Terms of Reference**

### **Children & Young People**

#### **Select Committee**

- Key Executive Members – Lead Executive Member for Children’s Services and Executive Member for Education
- Key Department – Children’s Services
  - however remit is not limited to these
- Includes: Universal, targeted and specialist services for children & young people; prevention and management of risk; social care; children and young peoples well being; Education – supporting and enabling learning for all children and young people; internal and external partnership working; supporting parents and families

## **What will success look like?**

- Scrutiny function is Member led
- Work programme is realistic, flexible and focused
- Topics are prioritised appropriately
- Reviews well scoped and project managed to ensure they are timely and improvement focused
- Time and resources directed where it can add most value
- Constructive and evidence based

## Conclusion

- Role of scrutiny is wider than simply holding the Executive to account
- There needs to be an effective dialogue between scrutiny committees and the Executive to ensure that the work of committees has maximum impact on policy

## Role of Scrutiny

Any Questions?