

**Committee:** Scrutiny Committee 1  
**Date:** 22 June 2005  
**Agenda Item No:** 4  
**Title:** SCRUTINY 1 WORK PROGRAMME 2005/06  
**Author:** Tracy Turner (01799) 510402

### **Summary**

- 1 The paper sets out some suggested topic areas to be considered for investigation by the Committee during 2005/06 within the context of guidance for fourth option councils produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

### **Background**

- 2 Local Government Act 2000 Guidance sets out the role of overview and scrutiny committees in fourth option councils (ie those retaining a committee system) as:
  - Reviewing policy and assisting in policy development
  - Scrutinising decisions and decision-making for any council function except regulatory functions such as planning and licensing
  - Investigating other matters of local concern
  - Ensuring councils fulfil their duties relating to Best Value
  - Ensuring procedures are in place for councillors to feed in community views to policy development and decision making
- 3 Research for the ODPM suggests that there is a correlation between excellent authorities and strong leadership and scrutiny functions.
- 4 The Centre for Public Scrutiny report *Overview and Scrutiny – guidance for fourth option councils* highlights the following as particular problems for fourth option councils:
  - Finding a distinct role and agenda, gaining credibility and the respect of the rest of the council
  - Explaining the role of scrutiny and developing a scrutiny culture
  - Holding decision makers to account, and call-in
  - Lack of resources

## **Moving Forwards**

- 5 The CfPS report cites policy review and development as the most impressive aspect of overview and scrutiny. The key factors in this success are:
- Selecting significant review topics where scrutiny can add value
  - Rigorous project planning with careful scoping of terms of reference, etc
  - Range of investigative methods adopted, ensuring that a range of experiences and views are represented including focus groups, site visits, mystery shopping, 'select committee' approach, etc
  - Well presented final reports
  - Follow up of recommendations

## **Scrutiny Work Programme 2005/06**

- 6 A critical factor in making the scrutiny process successful is establishing a manageable and targeted work programme for the year and progressing these work topics through task and finish work groups with carefully scoped terms of reference.
- 7 Successful scrutiny committees have also adopted their own format of reports and established less formal meeting arrangements that encourage participation. There is also a body of good practice where scrutiny goes out into the community to bring discussion and debate more directly to the public.
- 8 Attached at Appendix A is a list of possible work topics for the two Uttlesford Scrutiny Committees to consider. Both lists reflect a mixture of helpful policy development and external scrutiny items.

RECOMMENDED that the Committee:

- a) consider and select two or three topics for in-depth consideration during 2005/06, and an outline timetable for the work
- b) identify lead members for each topic
- c) agree to bring scoping reports back to future meetings.

## APPENDIX A

### **SUGGESTED FUTURE WORK AREAS FOR SCRUTINY 1 (HEALTH & HOUSING) & SCRUTINY 2 (RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT)**

#### **Scrutiny 1 Health & Housing**

Area Governance  
Anti-Social Behaviour  
Alcohol & Drug Strategies  
Community Consultation  
Community Safety & Enforcement Functions  
Community Leadership  
Economic Development (growth issues) SME, skills etc  
Representation on Outside Bodies  
Affordable Housing for Key Workers  
School Dinners  
Child Obesity

#### **Scrutiny 2 Resources & Environment**

Procurement  
Equality & Diversity  
Service & Financial Planning  
Asset Management  
Grants  
Fees & Charges  
Climate Change  
Phone Masts  
Recruitment & Retention

**Committee:** Scrutiny Committee 1  
**Date:** 22 June 2005  
**Agenda Item No:** 5  
**Title:** ROLE OF MEMBERS ON OUTSIDE BODIES  
**Author:** Catharine Roberts (01799) 510434

### **Summary**

- 1 Attached are three further annual reports kindly provided by Members on their respective Outside Bodies.

**MARK GAYLER**

**REPRESENTING UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL ON THE ESSEX  
CYCLING FORUM**

**Essex Cycling Forum**

As far as I am aware no meetings have been held for several years. Certainly I have not been made aware of any. However, I think it is useful to have a representative should any initiatives around cycling require someone to represent the Council.

Mark Gayler  
May 2005

**CHRISTINA CANT**

**REPRESENTING UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL ON DUNMOW DAY CENTRE**

**THE YEAR TO 31 MARCH 2005**

These meetings involve the day to day running and performance of the day centre.

During the last year, I have worked with a group to completely redraft the contracts and terms and conditions of employment for the day centre staff. I also spent an afternoon repairing curtains.

We have also, along with other day centres, worked on redrafting our constitution. It is a much more practical committee than others I represent the Council on and once a year I help to cook the volunteers' lunch to thank all our volunteers for their help during the year.

Dunmow Day Centre employs its own staff directly to cook meals and has a wide range of volunteers who assist with this.

It provides an excellent service to the local community and one which I would hope to continue to be able to make a contribution.

Up until recently the day centres constitution allowed groups over the age of sixty to use the hall without cost, since a large amount of local money was raised and contributed towards the cost of building the day centre. We are now in a position of having to charge these groups and then encourage them to seek grants to cover the cost. A great deal of time was spent discussing this issue, and trying to justify the council's need to try to recover some of the costs of running the day centres from increasing rental income.

Licensing is the next big issue, which will take up a tremendous amount of time to decide what is best for us to do.

## **CHRISTINA CANT**

### **REPRESENTING UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL ON UTTLESFORD PRIMARY CARE TRUST**

I became representative on the above two years ago when the Community Health Council was abolished by the Government, and Councillor Jan Menell became a non-executive Director of the PCT. I had for the previous three years represented the Community Health Council on Uttlesford PCT.

Most of my family are employed by the NHS and so I have always been interested in the way health is managed.

Membership of the above allows us to comment on matters affecting our residents from our experience of dealing with the North West Essex Community. Many PCT's do not allow observing members to speak, but UPCT have always welcomed my contributions and regard me as a member of the board. One is of course not allowed to vote.

I have gained a great deal of knowledge over time in the way the health service operates. I have become particularly interested in Public Health and the differences quite simply but tested interventions are having on for instance falls involving the elderly.

Hull Council is conducting a trial giving free school meals (breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea) for all primary school children. The results so far are astounding. Truancy has dropped, concentration has increased, mothers are being encouraged by their children to purchase at home the healthy food and fruit they receive at school. Children are being taught to use knives and forks (many children survey on finger food) and equally importantly taught to eat at the table in a social and discursive environment rather than in front of the TV. Many single parents have returned to work since they can so between 8-4.30 knowing their children are well fed and safe and because meals are free their efforts are not penalised by withdrawal of benefits. Malnourished children concentrate better and are look better fed and healthier. Universities are studying the effects. The cost to Hull is in excess of £3m per year paid for largely from the interested on the £33m they receive from selling their airport. If only we could do the same.

I think our voice is important at the local level. The PCT is operating on a very tight budget and because in our area we are served by three general hospitals we need to make sure that there is equity for patients in all parts of our district. Before the development of the Dunmow Clinic we argued strongly for equitable services for the south of the district. This will always tend to be a somewhat thorny problems since the community hospital is in the very north of our district.

In the context above it is useful to remind the PCT of the extra distance people may have to travel when not feeling well by measures designed to

reduce costs. Much more thought needs to be given to provision in rural and remote areas.

We also kept up the pressure via the PCT to ambulance response times.

Our special relationship with so many sectors of the community puts us in an excellent position to work alongside the PCT since increasingly as a result of interventions like the ones mentioned above and the second Wanless Report much more emphasis is being put upon achieving and maintaining health.