

## **Quarterly Report from Overview and Scrutiny**

**FULL120906  
Item 5**

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### **Introduction**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees have until now reported back to Full Council on an annual basis. Emerging from an IDEA Leadership course, which several of us attended, was the suggestion to report back on a more frequent basis. This report, therefore, represents the first of more regular scrutiny news updates.

### **June-August 2006**

1. Our first task of the new civic year has been to draw up work plans for each of the committees. Among the topics destined for overview and scrutiny this year are the enforcement team, urgent actions, the restructure, the West Cumbria master plan, transport and concessionary fares, education standards and energy.  
  
It is an ambitious plan which will evolve throughout the year and all Members, as ever, are welcome to contribute to the debate (where appropriate). In a welcome move, Members from other Committees have already volunteered to participate in areas in which they have a particular interest.
2. The Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Committees continue to meet as regularly as the Executive, going through all of the Executive reports to ensure that there are no grounds for call-in, nor items of interest to scrutiny, which might be overlooked.
3. It is, not however, all work. The need for a play strategy has become apparent with lottery funding for Cumbria to enhance play. Members have started work on this area of policy development, building on an interest in the links between health and play (for all ages).

4. Members have noted the progress in performance which has been made by the Revenue and Benefits section and supported the bid to the Executive to increase staff and help reduce the backlog. Several Members spent some time with the section, looking at the detail required in processing applications and the challenges they face. Members noted the 'pilot' move of the Revenue and Benefits Services Section to the atrium and agreed to look at this in the review of the restructure.
5. The Chairs and Vice Chairs have met to discuss the review of the restructure which will be carried out by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Performance and Resources. They will gather evidence through surveys and questionnaires on specific topics which the restructure set out to address to see what improvements have taken place and establish lessons learned for the future. This will be a time-consuming review, from which it is hoped that several positive recommendations will emerge.
6. Ever vigilant on the cleaner, greener front, Members have noted the good work of the clean and green team, who have made noticeable improvements to several 'grot spots' in coalfield areas. They want to see this service continued and will be presenting a report, together with their views on the enforcement team, later in the year. This work is driven by Members' views that a good quality of environment is a major factor to successful regeneration.
7. Education standards are continuing to be monitored with the co-operation of the County's local school improvement team. New statistics are expected shortly and will be compared with last year's statistics to ensure the impact of the now locally-based team is having the desired effect.
8. Members have been playing a full part, and in some cases a leading role, in joint-scrutiny – with Allerdale on the West Cumbria Strategic Partnership and with the County and other districts on the development of the Local Area Agreement and waste management. Work on all of these areas is/will be fed back to the 'parent scrutiny committee' of this Council. Copeland's contribution to the waste management work has been well-received – the other two areas of joint work are at an earlier stage.

Further details of the scrutiny of the West Cumbria Strategic Partnership are appended to this report and further details on any of the other topics mentioned above are available from the Chairs, Vice Chairs or Scrutiny Support.