

Training and Self Evaluation

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Recommendation: that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and the Executive consider the changes recommended for the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees detailed in the Action Plan and confirm which actions should be pursued.

1. Background

The Committee will recall that it had joint training with the Executive and Corporate Team on 1 November 2007. There was also a special meeting of all four Overview and Scrutiny Committees to consider the Scrutiny Self Evaluation Framework.

Some of the key points from this training are highlighted below. From these points a number of ideas for improving the process were made and an action plan has been developed on how we could develop Overview and Scrutiny at Copeland.

2. Areas that we do well

- Scrutiny can challenge and has called in Executive decisions where needed.
- The Task and Finish Groups are working well and add value and challenge through their evidence based nature. It allows for issues to be looked at in more detail than the Executive can allow.
- Overview and Scrutiny is seen as being non political and takes a constructive approach.
- Overview and Scrutiny Chairs presenting reports to Executive allows for a chance for the reasons for the recommendations to be put across.
- The Overview and Scrutiny report to Council provides useful information on the work of the committees.
- Overview and Scrutiny Committees are open to the public to attend.
- Some challenge is provided to external partners particularly through joint scrutiny.

3. Areas that could be improved

- Communication – there was a feeling in all the sessions that whilst there was some communication it needed to be improved between Overview and Scrutiny, The Executive and Corporate Team. Overview and Scrutiny was there to provide a constructive dialogue.
- Being joined up – there is a need to more clearly establishing priorities and objectives.
- There was also a need to better understand the roles of Overview and Scrutiny and the Executive.
- Greater commitment of senior officers to the Overview and Scrutiny process was needed.
- There was a need for better time management with meetings.
- More Overview work needs to be done as well as scrutiny.
- More members need to be engaged in the process.
- More work on financial issues.
- Need to more clearly reflect the voice and concerns of the public and its communities.
- Wish to question external partners and organisations more often.

4. CORPORATE PLAN

Action	Outcomes (measurable)	Target date
Ensure that the way the Council manages its Scrutiny function is at least equal to the national standard developed by the Centre for Public Scrutiny by completing the Centre's self evaluation framework and developing an action plan arising from the self evaluation.	Self evaluation framework completed and an action plan implemented. Measurable proof that the Council's Scrutiny function meets the national standard.	2008 with annual review

5. CONCLUSION

The Committee is invited to consider the action plan detailed in Appendix "A" which sets out some proposed changes to Overview and Scrutiny to address some of the concerns raised through the three training sessions.

List of Appendices

Appendix "A" – Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan.

List of Background Documents:

None