COVER REPORT:

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

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Summary: To consider the attached which makes recommendations following a consensus reached on structure by Members attending the Overview and Scrutiny Forum on 26 March 2010. Also to consider suggested protocols considered at previous meetings.

TITLE   **CHOOSING TO CHANGE PROGRAMME**

                                      GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

                                      OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY REVIEW

                                      <u>**REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITEE**</u>

Summary: **This report advises the Council on the recent review of Overview and Scrutiny arrangements, and makes recommendations following a consensus reached on structure by Members attending the Overview and Scrutiny Forum on 26th March 2010, together with suggested protocols considered at previous meetings.**

Recommendations:	1.That Council agrees the overview and scrutiny protocols set out at Appendix A, and to their consequent inclusion in the Council's Constitution by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services; 2. That Council agrees that any changes to the protocols be delegated to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, to be reported to the next Council for information. 3.That Council agrees to reduce the number of overview and scrutiny committees from four to two,

4.That Council agrees that nine members should be on each committee,

6.That Council agrees that members be selected to the Committees following a process involving a skills audit and expressions of interest,

7.That Council agrees that the current terms of reference of Overview and Scrutiny be deleted,

8. That Council agrees that new terms of reference of each Committee be developed, together with an examination of whether there is a need for an informal co-ordinating group of chairs and vice chairs, to be agreed by full Council following the Annual Meeting on 11th May 2010.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Over the last four months the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Members have been reviewing their structure, governance and operational guidelines.

1.2 The review is well documented and set out in the background documents to this report .

1.3 A number of workshops were held, with regular updates to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee over the period identified, as well as consultation with the Executive on 9th March, an Overview and Scrutiny Forum to which all members were invited on 26th March 2010, and a report to the Choosing to Change Board on 30th March 2010.

1.4 Members first began to consider the need for change in 2008, and officers worked with the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to produce a structure which would address some of the barriers to more effective scrutiny

1.5 In November 2009 the Committee agreed the need to carry out a more fundamental review of the way in which overview and scrutiny was operating, and embarked on a

series of workshops designed to include the wider membership in considering the best way forward.

1.6   Various options were examined, along with best practice around the country, and ultimately the need for change was realised.

1.7   The workshop on 26th February 2010, to which all non-Executive Members were invited, came to a consensus on a one committee structure, which was taken forward for consultation with the Executive on 9th March 2010. The Executive expressed a preference for the two committee option with one overview and on scrutiny committee, and when Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 15th March 2010 debated the outcome of the review to date they reached a consensus that this option was also the one they wanted to take forward.

1.8   Given that there were members of Overview and Scrutiny who attended the workshop on 26th February 2010 who were not on Management Committee it was agreed that a final Forum would be held, to which all members would be invited, to consider the two options set out at 1.7 above together with their proposed terms of reference

1.9   At the Forum on 26th March 2010 a consensus was reached on the number of overview and scrutiny committees the Council should have as two, with nine members on each, appointed following a process involving a skills audit and expressions of preference, with perhaps an informal co-ordinating group of chairs and vice-chairs. However a consensus could not be reached on the terms of reference for each of those committees. It was therefore agreed that these recommendations could be taken forward to Council on 13th April 2010, with a commitment that terms of reference be then developed to be agreed by Council at its first ordinary meeting after the Annual Meeting on 11th May 2010.

1.10   For the reasons set out above the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to Council are as drafted.

2.   CONCLUSION

2.1   Change is needed in order for Overview and Scrutiny to function better and with a more focused and professional approach to policy and performance in a modern environment, and should be made as soon as possible in order for Members to best assist the Council in the new municipal year.

2,2   Not to change would be detrimental to the development of overview and scrutiny within the Council.

List of Consultees:

All Members of the Council;

The Choosing to Change Board

The Public will be consulted on items
for the new Work Programme

Background Papers:

Programmes and supporting documentation to workshops on 14th December 2009, 11th and 20thJanuary 2010, 26th February 2010.

Interim Report to all Members 11 February 2010

Consultation Report to Executive on 9th March and OSC (Management) on 15th March 2010 and their minutes

Programme and supporting documentation to Forum on 26th March 2010

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW   **APPENDIX A**

DRAFT

PROTOCOLS AND GUIDANCE FOR THE GOVERNANCE OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

1. Overarching Protocol for Overview and Scrutiny

2. Work Programme and Prioritisation Protocol

3. Protocol for the Inclusion of non-executive councillors in the overview and scrutiny process.

4. Overview and Scrutiny Councillors Conduct Protocol

5. Witness Protocol – a)   Guidance for Members

                          b)   Guidance for Witnesses

                          c)   Guidelines on Questioning Witnesses

                          d)   Attendance at meetings Evaluation Form

6.   Overview and Scrutiny Improvement Group Protocol

7.   Employee Guide to Overview and Scrutiny

8.   Overview and Scrutiny Media Protocol

9.   Overview and Scrutiny Report Protocol

10.   Guidelines on Financial Scrutiny

11.   Councillor Call for Action – Guidance for Members of the Council

1. COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL'S OVERARCHING PROTOCOL FOR OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

This Protocol should be read in conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Terms of Reference, Article 6, Procedure Rules and associated Protocols set out in the Council's Constitution. Where there is any conflict between the Rules and the Protocol, the Rules shall prevail.

Any changes to the Protocol may be made by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services in Consultation with Overview and Scrutiny.

INTRODUCTION

1. The purposes of this protocol is to put further flesh on the bones of the Constitution and to provide more detailed guidance for members on the operation of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

2. The Council has established the following under its Constitution:

[INSERT STRUCTURE]

3. Generally references will be to the Overview & Scrutiny Rules in Part E of the Council's Constitution.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

4. The guiding principle for the work of Overview and Scrutiny is that it should involve constructive criticism with the aim of improving decision-making. Whilst it is accepted that some work (particularly call-in) could be potentially adversarial in a political environment, the emphasis of the work of Overview and Scrutiny should be on making a positive contribution to the development of policy and performance.

5. While Overview and Scrutiny will review Executive decisions through the ''call-in'' mechanism, importantly, they will also assist in the development of Council policy by looking at existing policies and the

effectiveness of their delivery, including reviewing whether new policies or changes to existing policies are needed.

OFFICER SUPPORT

6. Officers of the Council owe a duty to support and advise all members, irrespective of the political party to which members belong or whether they carry out Executive or non-Executive roles.

7. In practice most of the day to day work of Corporate Team will be advising members of the Executive. This will include:

   ▪ Producing or co-ordinating advice to help Executive Members make decisions;

   ▪ Subsequently appearing at Overview and Scrutiny with the relevant Executive Member if those proposals are called in, to advise Overview and Scrutiny and to explain their previous advice to Executive Members.

8. Corporate Team's work for the Executive does not reduce the importance of their work for Overview and Scrutiny or compromise the independence of thought of Overview and Scrutiny. Subject to the Chief Executive's role as principal policy adviser to the Council on all issues, each member of Corporate Team is the principal adviser to the Council (and therefore to Overview and Scrutiny) on his or her area of responsibility. This means in practice that:

   ♦ There is a presumption that members of Corporate Team who have been asked to prepare papers for Scrutiny should brief the Chair on their content before the meeting either personally or through their representative; the only occasion when they should not personally brief the Chair is when he or she is to be questioned on their advice on a matter which has been called in; and

➕ Work on issues referred to Overview and Scrutiny by the Executive should be supported by the relevant Member of the Corporate Team either personally or through their nominee.

9. An officer nominated by each member of Corporate Team will be available to support the overview and scrutiny role from a service perspective, on terms that reflect the needs of the overview and scrutiny process.

10. There is no requirement for anyone other than the Scrutiny Support Officer and a Committee Services Officer to attend formal meetings, unless specifically invited or required to do so for a particular item, but they may do so if they wish.

11. Overview and Scrutiny should not be 'managed' by officers, but they should ensure they make the best use of officer advice on the practical, financial and political implications of proposals so that their recommendations are well formed and credible.

12. Papers should be produced to the direction of Overview and Scrutiny, whether prepared by a member of Corporate Team or the Scrutiny Support Officer, with the early involvement of Chair and vice Chair.

13. Against the background of above, the particular role of the Scrutiny Support Officer is to facilitate the ability of Overview and Scrutiny to ask pertinent questions, and to consider the advice of members of the Corporate Team in the light of the views of others, and of other issues. The Scrutiny Support Officer may support Overview and Scrutiny by introducing new perspectives, but the Officer is not to be regarded as an alternative source of professional or policy advice on issues which are properly the responsibility of members of the Corporate Team. The Scrutiny Support Officer may also provide critical commentaries on reports provided by Service Divisions. The Scrutiny Support Officer also acts as the principal adviser to the Chair at Overview and Scrutiny Meetings.

14. The Scrutiny Support Officer also has an important role in helping Scrutiny to scrutinise individual proposals to the Executive before they are finalised ('call-in')

15. The Scrutiny Support Officer will support the approved work programme for Overview and Scrutiny, in addition to support from members of the Corporate Team and their representatives.   Legal advice will be provided by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, and administrative and logistical support will be provided by Committee Services.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MEETINGS

16. Committee meetings are constituted and as such are bound by normal committee rules of procedure. However, they require a different mode of operation from traditional committee meetings. Different venues, approaches to agenda setting, and different modes of chairing meetings are all acceptable. The style of operation should be appropriate to the key tasks of overview and scrutiny.

17. Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 places a duty on members of the Executive and Officers of the Council to attend meetings to answer questions if required to do so.   Executive members should not attend meetings as a matter of course, but may request the Chair to allow them to attend and speak on a particular item; the final decision rests with the chair.

18. Informal private meetings of members may take place, particularly to scope improvement group investigations, or prepare for the questioning of witnesses (internal or external) in relation to those investigations.

RIGHTS OF MEMBERS TO ASK FOR MATTERS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE AGENDA (SECTION 21 (8) OF THE LOCAL GVOERNMENT ACT 2000)

19. Any member of Overview and Scrutiny, or any three members of the Council who are not, have a right to ensure that any item relevant to the committee's remit is placed on the agenda and discussed. This right should be used constructively and not to subvert a decision properly taken (for example to repeat a debate carried out a previous meeting over the last 6 months) or as means for a member to obtain information for which other rights and procedures exist at law and under the Constitution.

20. Notice should be given at least 10 working days before to the Scrutiny Support Officer, who will contact the Chair, before the scheduled meeting, and specify the key issues for consideration in line with the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and Prioritisation Protocol, and should not be deferred for more than one meeting. Officers will not be required to prepare reports in these instances until the Committee have properly considered the item. This does not affect a member's right to documents under the Access to Information Rules

21. If an item is rejected by the Chair as not being within the remit of the Committee this shall be reported to the next meeting.

INTERESTS

22. A member who is involved in the consideration of a matter at a meeting of overview and scrutiny must regard themselves as having a personal and prejudicial interest if that consideration relates to a decision made, or action taken, by another committee, or the Executive of which he/she is or was a member. In certain circumstances this may also extend to working groups and similar bodies. A member with such a personal and prejudicial interest must withdraw from the room where the meeting is being held while the matter is being considered. A member may

however attend for the purposes of answering questions or otherwise giving evidence relating to that decision or action.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

23. Proposals on policy developments relating to Overview and Scrutiny's terms of reference, not forming part of the Budget and Policy framework, should be raised with the Executive in the first instance to avoid unnecessary duplication of staffing and other resources. Comments from the Executive must be taken into consideration but the final decision as to whether to proceed rests with the Commitee.

2. COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL'S WORK PROGRAMME & PRIORITISATION PROTOCOL

A. GENERAL

1. It is the responsibility of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (the Committee) to select topics for overview and scrutiny and to set it an annual work programme for itself at the beginning of each municipal year.

2. The work programme will comprise priority issues, so as to allow for the inclusion of ad hoc and urgent items during the year.

3. The Committee will consider other issues in addition to its work programme by agreement. In the first instance an approach should be made to the Chair and Deputy.

4. It is important for the Committee to report its workings and recommendations for future work programmes to full Council at least once a year.

B. SELECTION OF TOPICS

1. This is one of the most critical aspects of the overview and scrutiny process to ensure the objectives set by the Council are achieved.

2. Overview and scrutiny must add value to the work of the Council and produce worthwhile outcomes for local people.

3. A key practical consideration is capacity. Members and officers have a finite amount of time to invest in overview and scrutiny, but the number of topics is potentially very large, far exceeding the Council's capacity to deal with them in a thorough and effective way. Overview and scrutiny must therefore be fully focused on the things that matter most and on outcomes that make a real difference.

C. STRUCTURED APPROACH

1. A structured approach to topic selection is essential. Individual whims, the unimportant, the inappropriate and non-priorities can be filtered out in a consistent, open and transparent way.

2. THREE STAGE SELECTION PROCESS

Stage 1   - Use to assess reason for topic selection

Stage 2   - Use to confirm there is a reason to reject

Stage 3   - Use to look at rationale and desired outcomes

Stage 1   Good reasons to select

1. Improvements to local people are the likely result

2. Coporate priority for the Council

3. This is a key issue for the public with high levels of dissatisfaction.

4. A poor performing service

5. Barriers exist creating inequality in service provision

Stage 2 – Reasons to reject

1. Already addressed/being addressed appropriately

2. Part of a legal process

3. Falls within the Council's complaints procedure

4. Subject to disciplinary/grievance procedure

5. Unlikely to result in real or tangible improvements for local people

Stage 3 – Questions to ask

1. Why would we do this?

2. How does it link to the Council's Corporate Strategy?

3. What tangible benefits could result for our community or customers?

4. What evidence is there to support the need for a review?

5. What would we wish to achieve and why?

IF TOPICS ARE COMPETING CONSIDER:

1. Their importance in terms of the Council's aims and priorities

2. The likely benefit ot the widest possible sections of the community

D. THE ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

1. Main Considerations

Ensure that: (a)   all key overview and scrutiny roles are included

(b)   all the topics to be considered are priorities, will help achieve the objectives of the overview and scrutiny functions

(c)   there is a balanced workload which does not exceed the capacity to do a thorough job.

2.   Types of tasks

Matters included may be regular, ongoing tasks such as scrutiny of Executive business, improvement plans, the annual budget, or alternatively specific one off issues.

3   Framework for the development of the work plan

Process: (1) identify potential topics/issues

(2) select topics

(3) allocate work

(4)Timetable work

(5) check resources

(6)Finalise for approval by Committee

(7) Review and update

(1)   Identify potential topics/issues

(a)   Review forward plan, Executive agendas/minutes (leave capacity in programme to pick up in year issues.

(b)   Consider issues for potential policy review or development (eg what's not working well, where are the gaps in policy, input on major policy developments)

(c)   Consider issues for potential indepth review/inquiry (eg significant community concerns, major problem areas, poorly performing services, inequality in service provision, consistent areas of over/under spending)

(d)   Identify 'standard' items for scrutiny and programme in at the outset(eg annual budget, annual corporate planning process).

(e)   consider areas for external scrutiny where significant community concerns and/or statutory duties exist (agency/partner plans, multi-agency plans)

(f)   Invite suggestions from Members of the Council, the Executive, Officers, the Public, and partners.

(2)   Select Topics

Once identified, filter and prioritise each potential topic for review or policy development through the topic selection process set out at B and C in this protocol.

(3)   Allocate work and check for balance

(a)   Timetable the workload

(b)   Are all the scrutiny functions include?

(4)   Timetable

Timetable the draft work programme having regard to the Council's schedule of meetings and other relevant factors (eg holidays, significant other work commitments)

(5)   Check resources

Consider the resources needed to carry out draft work programme as allocated (include member time, officer capacity, budget requirements)

(6)   Finalise for approval

Finalise draft work programme for formal approval by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

(7)   Review and update

Keep work programme under constant review (each committee meeting), adjust as work through, update as new topics/suggestions are received and prioritised), maintain an audit trail of record of progress, achievements, outcomes.[end]

3. COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL'S

PROTOCOL FOR THE INCLUSION OF NON EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS IN THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCESS

1.1   The job of Overview and Scrutiny is set out in its terms of reference and in particular to:

   ➢ Receive Call-ins of Executive decisions
   ➢ Establish a yearly Work programme
   ➢ Set up Improvement Groups to carry out more detailed reviews of policy development and service delivery of the Council and its partners.
   ➢ Monitor the outcomes of scrutiny reviews
   ➢ Deal with Councillor calls for action

1.2   Improvement Groups play a critical role in informing future policy development in the Council as well as scrutinising current policies and services both inside and outside the Council.

1.3   It is important therefore that all non executive councillors have the opportunity to be involved in the work of the Improvement Groups as it will:

   ➢ Give a wider democratic representation to inform the groups work
   ➢ Widen the knowledge and skills resource base of councillors involved in overview and scrutiny
   ➢ Give them a 'hands on' opportunity to make a difference in areas of work that they have a specific interest in

1.4   It is hoped that non-executive councillors will elect to work on at least one Improvement Group a year. The following will be put into place to help councillors to be involved:

   ➢ The draft Work Programme will be circulated to all non executive councillors, asking if they have a specific interest in any of the investigations scheduled in the forthcoming year.
   ➢ Improvement Groups will comprise a minimum of one Overview and Scrutiny Councillor and one non-executive Councillor. It is envisaged that an Overview and Scrutiny Councillor would chair the Improvement Group

1.5   In this protocol the term "non-executive Councillor" refers to all Councillors other than the Leader and members of the Executive. However those members of Audit Committee who are not on the Executive, although not prohibited from taking part in the Overview and Scrutiny process, will not be expected to serve on Improvement Groups

4.   COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL'S
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COUNCILLORS CONDUCT PROTOCOL
(to work alongside the Member Code of Conduct)

Effective Overview and Scrutiny of the Council's policies, decision making and delivery of services is a legal requirement of non-executive councillors.

This protocol seeks to clarify the standards of conduct expected of those councillors involved in the Overview and Scrutiny and Improvement Group's processes and give guidance to those councillors who are involved in this work.

Compliance with the following standards is required of all Overview and Scrutiny councillors and any breach of the standards will be referred in the first instance to the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny and if unresolved, may be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Local Assessment Procedure in relation to Standards and the Ethical Framework for Members.

1   The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Improvement Groups will conduct their business in a friendly and orderly way in order to maximise the participation of all Councillors and facilitate constructive criticism of other councillors and officers, whatever their position in the Council.

2   Attendance by all councillors is important to ensure the democratic processes are achieved, all points of view are given and full discussion takes place with continuity of discussion and debate. Those councillors appointed to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Improvement Groups will therefore be expected to give priority to attending scheduled meetings.

3   Individual councillors will uphold the highest standards of probity and integrity as laid down in the Councillor's Code of Conduct and set out in the Council's Constitution. They will use their powers of scrutiny in a manner worthy of the trust placed in them by the local people.

4   Scrutiny councillors will be expected to engage in all scrutiny learning and development opportunities provided by the Council in order to carry out their roles as effective scrutineers, and in any event required to comply with Rule 6 of the Council's Council Procedure Rules.

5   The Chair and Deputies of Overview and Scrutiny ensure effective working relationships with Party Whips.

6   The Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report and Improvement Group reports will document Councillor attendance to ensure the highest standard of Councillor commitment.

5.COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL'S WITNESS PROTOCOL

a) GUIDANCE FOR COUNCILLORS REGARDING WITNESS EVIDENCE

Witnesses are an essential ingredient when undertaking an overview and scrutiny review and their evidence is an invaluable source of information. Attending an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Improvement Group will often be a new experience for people. It should be remembered that external witnesses are present on a voluntary basis.

The following guidance is written to ensure the experiences for witnesses when giving evidence are positive and stress free.

The Council will:

1   Give witnesses as much notice as possible of the time, date and place of the meeting at which their evidence will be taken.

2   Inform the witness of the purpose of the review and the areas on which the overview and scrutiny body will want to question them.

3   Whenever possible give the witness a list of questions, or the line of questioning, in advance, explaining that this will not be a restrictive list.

4   Provide witnesses with copies of reports, paper and background information where appropriate.

5   Indicate whether any written documents are required in support of the witness's oral evidence. Requests for presentations will be made a minimum of one week prior to the meeting.

6   Invite witnesses to submit written evidence, if appropriate, and where this is provided it should be circulated to the committee/group in advance of the meeting at which the evidence will be taken.

7   Inform witnesses that the Overview and Scrutiny meeting is held in public, is open to the press and that all reports are public documents unless they contain exempt or confidential information.

8   Inform witnesses that the Improvement Groups are not public meetings, but the evidence submitted to them are submitted for public viewing.

9   Respect the right of external witnesses to decline to attend council meetings, but submit written evidence instead

10 Arrange for witnesses to be introduced to the Chair of the meeting prior to the start of the meeting.

11 Introduce witnesses to the committee/group.

12 Ensure all witnesses are treated with courtesy and respect.

13 Ensure all questions to witnesses are made in an orderly manner under the direction of the Chair and that councillors ask questions relevant to the objectives of the review.

14 Ensure all witnesses can check their evidence prior to it being published.

15 Provide the Review findings to all witnesses who request them.

5. COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL'S WITNESS PROTOCOL (CONTINUED)

b) GUIDANCE FOR WITNESSES AT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES OR IMPROVEMENT GROUP MEETINGS

The following list provides some useful guidelines in giving evidence for a review being undertaken by an Overview and Scrutiny body of Copeland Borough Council. It is intended for use by internal and external witnesses and should be read together with the Council's Guidance for Witness Evidence:

1   **Contacts**

    Every review will be co-ordinated by the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer. Please use them as your point of contact.

2   **Topic**

    Make sure you are clear of the topic and areas that the committee/panel would like you to address. If you are not sure ask the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer.

3   **Discussion**

    Discuss your review with the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer, especially if this is the first time you have given evidence to an overview and scrutiny body.

4   **Contribution**

    Be prepared to be asked for your opinions and views as well as to give factual information. If you are asked to provide written evidence, make this as simple and concise as possible – if you are a Council officer remember that you are not presenting a committee report but providing information to help the councillors conducting the review.

5   **Presentations**

    If you have been asked, or have offered to give a presentation in relation to your evidence to the committee/group, let the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer know what equipment you will need. Please provide copies of your presentation for Members of the Panel – whenever possible, in advance of the meeting.

6   **The meeting**

    Members of the committee/group want to make sure participants feel free and able to attend so they will ensure that meetings are as informal as possible and that you are able to contribute fully to the topic under review.

5. COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL'S WITNESS PROTOCOL (continued)

c) QUESTIONING TO GAIN THE MOST FROM WITNESSES

The evidence of witnesses to a review may often be the most valuable source of information. However, if the questions are not the right ones they may not be effective in soliciting the best information. Asking questions is not about profiling yourself, making a personal speech or arguing with witnesses. This can put them off giving evidence.

Considering what questions to ask and the type of question to use to gain focused information often means preparation beforehand. Below are examples that can be considered.

Question types

Most people will be familiar with the two basic question types 'open' and 'closed'. These can be described as follows:

Closed:

These are used when you require a brief factual answer. They close down discussion. For example;

"What is your name?"

"Do you work in other organisations?"

Open:

These are used to gain more than a 'yes' or 'no' answer as they stimulate further discussion on an issue. For example;

"Please give us an example of how your service has improved?"

"Tell us about how your service is organised"

But there are also some questioning styles which can elicit different types of responses and different outcomes.

In preparing for questioning witnesses, it might be helpful to think about the way in which questions can be asked to get the outcome that you are looking for.

Probing:

Seek verifiable data and usually start with the words who, what, why, where, when or how. They are used to gather information about a situation. For example;

"How much have we spent on this service this year?"

"Who was consulted before the changes were implemented?"

Opinion finding:

Ask for subjective information that gets at opinions, values or beliefs. They will help you understand views. For example;

"Do you think people understand the services available?"

"How do you feel the consultation went?"

Getting the detail:

This can help find out more specific detail from the witnesses. For example;

"You mentioned costs a moment ago – can you be more specific?"

"Explain that in more detail for us please."

Best/least questions:

They are similar to opinion finding questions as they help test the limits of participant's needs and wants. For example;

"What is the best thing about the service we offer?"

"What is the worst thing about the way we publicise our services?"

Third party questions:

These can help people express sensitive information and help uncover thoughts in an indirect manner. But be careful that they do not become leading questions. For example;

"Some people say it takes too long to get a response from our services. How does that sound to you?"

Crystal ball or hypothetical questions:

These can help to explore questions. For example;

"If time and money was no object, what sort of computer system would you design for the department?"

Dos and Don'ts

To make the best use of the time available for a witness, it is important to think about not only the type of question but also the way in which it is asked. The following suggests some things to think about:

DO:
- Ask clear concise questions covering a single issue
- Ask challenging questions that will stimulate thought
- Ask reasonable questions based on what witnesses will know about
- Ask honest and relevant questions
- Ask a question
- Allow time for thoughtful responses

DON'T
- Ask rambling, ambiguous questions that cover a number of issues
- Ask questions that don't provide opportunity for thought
- Ask questions about issues not in the witness's knowledge
- Ask "trick" questions designed to confuse witnesses
- Make a personal statement or speech
- Let witnesses cross examine each other
- Talk or leave the room when people are giving evidence

5. d) COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL – Witness protocol

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY EVALUATION FORM

ARE YOU A VISITOR TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE?

Thank you for attending the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting today.

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcome any comments regarding the meeting and your experience of Overview and Scrutiny and how this might be improved. We would appreciate it if you could complete the attached questionnaire and return it to the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer at the address below.

Team:

Organisation:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee attended:

Were you clear on what was required from you by the Overview and Scrutiny meeting?

Yes [ ]   No [ ]

Any comments

Was there reasonable notice given for you to respond to the request of information at the earliest opportunity?

Yes   No

Any comments

Did you receive clear notice of the date, time and place of the Overview and Scrutiny meeting?

Yes

Any comments

Were you treated with courtesy and respect?

Yes   No

Any comments

Were all questions asked in an orderly fashion?

Yes   No

Any comments

Was there anything the Chair could have done better?

Yes   No

Any comments

Was there anything the Overview and Scrutiny Officer could have done better?

Yes   No

Any comments

Any other comments you would like to add?

Thank you.

Please return to: Scrutiny Support Officer (tel no/email/address)

6. COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL'S

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY IMPROVEMENT GROUP PROTOCOL

GUIDELINES FOR THE OPERATION OF IMPROVEMENT GROUPS

Improvement Groups need to operate on a relatively informal basis in the sense that are a forum for information gathering and discussion between group members and employees rather than a formal decision making body. They have no delegated powers.

Information about each new Improvement Group will be included on the Council's intranet site.

At the start of the project and where required during, the Improvement Group should identify details of any co-optees or contributors required to further the gathering of evidence and enhance the process or provide specific knowledge.

Meetings will take place as often as needed until the task is complete, which should in general take no longer that 6 months. Following the scoping (planning) meeting the Group should aim to hold the necessary meetings within as short a timescale as possible to ensure momentum, and that findings do not become out of date during the review.

Visits can also be very useful in helping to get to grips with issues, and should be arranged for the Group or representatives nominated by it, as needed.

Meetings of the Improvement Groups will be less formal than Committee meetings. They require an approach that allows all members of the Group to participate fully, and incorporates questioning and discussion with contributors. Informal ways of working are to be encouraged. There will be considerable discussion between members of the group and people asked to give information, in accordance with the Council's Witness Protocol.

In the event that the task requires research, the Group must always find out whether such research has already been undertaken elsewhere, for example, by overview and scrutiny itself, by a Council department, or by an outside body/partner organisation.

The Chair of the Improvement Group has a role to ensure that all Councillors have the opportunity to know about the Group's activities. Members of the parent Committee will be kept informed regarding progress of tasks through progress reports. All Councillors can obtain information at any time during a review via the Council's website or the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer.

In discussing issues to reach conclusions and make recommendations it is hoped that the Group will be able to reach agreement by consensus. If following discussion an agreement cannot be reached, a minority view on a particular issue will be included in any report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members of the Group should operate within the agreed plan for the task and must not disclose or use any information/knowledge obtained through involvement in the Group for any other purpose. This also applies to Councillors not on the Group who have requested information about the work being undertaken.

Councillors should not do anything to pre-empt or undermine the outcome of an Improvement Group's recommendations.

The Chair of the Improvement Group has a joint responsibility with the Chair of the Committee for issuing a media briefing in relation to a completed review and any subsequent media interaction needed.   The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer will assist with this role in liaison with the Corporate Communications Team.

The review process

Planning and scoping

Councillors need to be thoroughly involved in the planning of a review. Having been given an indication of what the scope should be by the parent Committee, the Improvement Group should consider the specific issues it will cover and agree a plan for the task. They should be assisted in this way by advice from employees.

The plan should set out:

1. A clear statement of the scrutiny topic
2. The aim (or purpose) of the project
3. The scope of the project - what will be included/excluded
4. Any specific questions to be answered
5. Specific concerns or issues which should be addressed
6. How it will contribute to achieving Corporate Priorities
7. Initial list of key stakeholders, partners or other agencies to involve
8. Initial list of witnesses, both internal and external, to involve
9. Timescale for completion of the task.

Within the agreed scope, Members of the Improvement Group decide what information it needs and what questions to ask and if external advice should be involved. Where needs are identified consideration should be given as to why that information/contact etc is needed. This may include which people or organisations should be consulted and at what stage further consultation may be appropriate. In addition the group should consult appropriate contacts on their views at the planning stage - this should include the equalities and communications teams.

Gathering information

Once the planning is finished, the Group will actively gather its evidence. Some of this will be written information, such as council documents, national guidance or information from organisations providing a similar service. Information can also be collected by asking people questions. Evidence to Improvement Groups from employees should be fact based and not contain recommendations unless presented in the form of options. Questioning should be aimed at trying to understand and explore issues rather than at catching the witness out, which is not a productive way of finding out information. Members of the Group should avoid making statements rather than asking questions. Information might also be gathered user groups, the public other interested parties or partners. Sometimes the Group may think their enquiries will benefit from a site visit or activities such as by directly trying the service.

Site visits can be an extremely valuable part of the process and could inform the Councillors' questioning of subsequent contributors.

If the group wants to hold a public meeting to seek views on an issue, they can, bearing in mind public meetings are not always a productive way of engaging with the public. Members of the Group should be engaging with other organisations, including partners, user groups, other Councils, and talking to people who are affected by the issue being considered to make sure they are gathering information.

Rather than minutes of the meeting, notes are taken/or the meeting is recorded to record evidence given at meetings of the Groups.   The notes allow people who have contributed information to check if it has been understood properly.

Reflect, learn and draw conclusions

When the Group has gathered all the evidence it needs they will assess it and reflect on what they have learned. A draft report is written to help them with the process. This helps the Group to draw conclusions from what they have learned. The report of the Group's recommendations must be an expression of the views of the Group rather than a report to the

Group written by Officers. This means that it is important for Members of the Group to express their views at drafting stage.

Report findings and recommendations

At the end of each review reports need to be produced that are written in clear English. The reports must outline the information gathered and information be presented in a variety of ways so that they are interesting and easy to read.

The final report will be based on facts collected and give a full picture of the issues under scrutiny. It will reflect the range of views presented to the Group. The report will contain key findings (conclusions) and clear recommendations.

Generally when the report is endorsed it will be by consensus among all members of the Group. However, occasionally agreement cannot be reached, so the views of all members will then be reflected in the report.

Producing the report

Having considered all the evidence the Group will reach conclusions and make recommendations that will be made public in a report. However, organisations and witnesses will be sent a draft copy or part of a copy relevant to them before this happens. This will enable them to comment on the factual accuracy of the evidence relating to their organisation and inform the group of implications of the recommendations that may not have been considered.

When the Group has finished its report, the members of that Group will present their work to the Parent Committee. As part of the process, the group will explain the work it has done and ask the Committee to support its recommendations. The Committee could also comment on the report or ask for further work to be done. Only once the Committee endorses the report and its findings will it be submitted to the Executive, Senior Officer, Council or external organisation.   If it is the latter the Council will be informed, and it should only be sent after advice from the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and section 151 Officer.

If the recommendations are accepted the Parent Committee will monitor the implementation of the recommendations around six months after the decision to do so.

There is an expectation that once sent the recommendations will be considered within 2 months, and this should be set out in the report.

7.   COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL'S

EMPLOYEE GUIDE TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

YOUR ROLE IN OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY: WHAT IS EXPECTED OF YOU?

(Cross reference with Overview and Scrutiny Witness Guide)

Overview and scrutiny is the main way in which the Executive is held to account in public. As well as scrutinising individual decisions overview and scrutiny has an important role in reviewing Council policies and making recommendations to the Executive or full Council on future policy options.   It can also review the discharge of non Executive functions and reports on matters of more general concern. Its remit includes scrutiny of the health service, largely carried out by the County's Health and Well-being Committee, on which two of Copeland's Councillors sit, and of the activities of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, which it has been required to do since June 2009. This summary guide provides you with a snapshot of the various ways in which you might get involved with overview and scrutiny

These are:

- Overview and scrutiny
- Call-in
- Preparation information for overview and scrutiny members such as preparing a briefing note or committee report.
- Getting involved in a detailed review/investigation.
-

Copeland Borough Council's overview and scrutiny structure is:

- TO BE INSERTED
- The committees set up time limited Improvement Groups to carry out strategic and operational reviews.
- All non-Executive Councillors are given the opportunity to be involved in the overview and scrutiny process by putting themselves forward to join the Improvement Groups through out the year to review issues of interest and importance and to inform critical policy development.

Call-in

When a decision is made by the Executive collectively, or an officer with delegated authority to make key decisions, Councillors may 'call-in' that decision within 5 working days of the date the decision was made, in order for the overview and scrutiny committee to consider/ review/scrutinise it with a view to having it reconsidered by the decision-taker with alternative recommendations for its implementation.

The decision MUST NOT be implemented by officers until this period has elapsed.   Employees should therefore build an implementation buffer into their project plan just in case the decision they are involved in progressing is called in.

Call in is subject to the 'urgency' provisions and the general rules around call in set out in the Council's Constitution.

Preparing information for Overview and Scrutiny Councillors

Employees may be asked to attend an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting to ensure that the Councillors have an understanding of the issue of service area to be scrutinised including: aims and objectives, how they might be developed, the practicalities of service delivery and issues and problems facing the Council.

This may involve preparing a report and/or providing information and advice on:

- existing policies and practices
- recent committee reports/decisions
- legislative requirements upon the Council
- demand v supply/recovery plan/corporate plan targets/
- limiting factors on performance
-

Getting involved in a detailed review (Improvement Groups)

For more detailed investigations Overview and Scrutiny Improvement Groups are established to consider specific topics in detail over a specified period of time. The Groups are made up of a small number of Councillors, not necessarily all from an overview and scrutiny committee, with perhaps co-opted non councillors who have an expertise in the area under review. They will then analyse and assess a specified Council or other organisation's activities and processes with a view to making improvements.

This type of work can be sensitive and searching. It is important for employees to understand that it is not about undertaking a witch hunt or seeking to apportion blame. Overview and scrutiny is about working with the Executive and employees to improve Council services. Overview and Scrutiny Members will adopt a non adversarial but inquisitorial approach which is about fact finding and understanding the true position in order to work with employees to

identify real and achievable improvements which can then be reported to the Executive, Council, Chief Officers or the external body under scrutiny, for consideration.

When both an Executive Member and senior officers are summoned together to appear before an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, each shall contribute within the scope of the normal boundaries of the Member/Officer roles, at the direction of the Chair.

The length of time taken by Improvement Groups may vary with the complexity of the subject under investigation. However, they are time limited and should be completed within six months. Frequency of meetings will vary, but Employees assisting such meetings should ensure the appropriate employee is assigned to ensure the advice given to the Groups is timely, accurate and informative, and does not contribute to any delay in completing the work of a Group within a specified time.   Where appropriate site visits will be carried out, and off-site venues used for meetings where doing so will give Members greater awareness/engagement with local communities.

It is worth noting here that Councillors are entitled to information in accordance with their rights as a Councillor, as set out under the Access to Information Rules in the Council's Constitution. Employees have a duty to provide information in accordance with this, to all Councillors irrespective of their status and political party. Requests for information that do not meet the criteria set out in these Rules should be referred to the Employee's Line Manager, and where the matter cannot be resolved, or needs further clarification, to the Council's Monitoring Officer. Under no circumstances should such requests be ignored.

Further Information

This summary guide provides a brief introduction which is hopefully useful for you.   Please do not hesitate to contact the Scrutiny Support Officer Jessica Hall for further assistance who will be happy to help, on 01946598496 at the Copeland Centre, or by email at Jessica.hall@copeland.gov.uk.

8.   COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL'S

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MEDIA PROTOCOL

This Protocol governs Copeland Borough Council's approach to communications for its Overview and Scrutiny function when dealing with the Media. It is to be used in conjunction with any other Copeland Council media policy, rather than as a replacement.

It applies to the publication of Overview and Scrutiny review reports and reactively dealing with any resulting enquiries from the Media. It identifies key spokespeople, guides how press releases are issued and media enquiries are responded to, and explains the role of the Communications Office in this process.

Background

The media has an important role to play in providing information to the public about Copeland Borough Council and its policies, decisions, services and activities.

The Overview and Scrutiny process will inevitably generate media interest as it is vital to the effective running of the Council, monitoring the decision-making process and making recommendations to the Executive and the Authority as a whole. Media interest will also be sought to help encourage participation by the public in appropriate scrutiny activity.

Key Spokespeople

The key media spokesperson on any issue directly related to overview and scrutiny will be the Chair of the Committee involved or Improvement Group. As key spokesperson the Chair may be consulted about any media interest in relation to issues within their specific areas of responsibility and reporters may be directed to them for comment. They may also be quoted or featured in publicity such as press releases and photo calls. The key spokes person will represent the views of the Committee or Improvement Group and not their own personal or party political views.

On issues which relate more generally to the work of the Council as a whole and its services and which are not specifically related to the Overview and Scrutiny function the key spokespeople are the Leader or relevant Executive Member within a portfolio area. However it may be

appropriate on some occasions for these media issues to be referred to an overview and scrutiny spokesperson.

Press releases and statements -

publicising the work of Overview and Scrutiny

The Communications Office's role in publicising the Council's services, policies, and plans includes issuing press releases and statements on issues relating to overview and scrutiny. It is crucial that issues are identified that may provide an opportunity for positive publicity or which may be contentious and plan for them as early as possible. The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer will liaise with the Communications Office to identify such issues in advance.

Where a press release or statement is needed to publicise the work of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee to respond to media interest, the Communications Office will liaise with the relevant key spokesperson on content and a suitable quote and also with relevant officers for factual information. At the commencement of a review, consideration will be given by the Chair, and other Members as appropriate, of the reviewing body the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer and the Communications Office to the issuing of a press release. Further press releases will be considered as the review progresses, culminating with publicity when the final report is published and any follow up.

Publication of a Review

On publication of a review the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer will complete an Overview and Scrutiny Review Information Sheet, as attached at Appendix A. The Council's Communications Office will post the information on the Council's website and email it to local media contacts. The information sheet will include a Chair's statement representing the outcomes of the Improvement Group following final endorsement by the parent Overview and Scrutiny Committee and contact details for the Chair of both the Committee and the Improvement Group.

Media enquiries

All enquiries from the media relating to overview and scrutiny issues will either be referred directly to the relevant key spokesperson or discussed with them and relevant officers prior to an appropriate response being given by the Communications Office.

Individual Members

It is the prerogative of the individual Councillors on the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to make their own statements relating to their involvement. However they are advised to liaise with appropriate spokespersons and officers on media issues simply to ensure a consistent, professional and co-ordinated approach.

Party politics

Nothing in this protocol precludes any political group from issuing its own media information. However this should not be done through the Council's Communications Office and it must be made clear that the information has not come from the Council. The work of the Communications Office including the issuing of press releases, is carried out on behalf of the corporate Council and should not be party political, as specified in the Government's Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

APPENDIX A.1

COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW TEMPLATE

Review Title

Date:………………………………………………………...

Chair of Improvement Group:………………………….........

Chair of Committee:…………………………………………..

Members of Improvement Group:…………………………….

Purpose of the Review:…………………………..................

Summary:………………………………………………………

Findings:………………………………………………………

Recommendations:…………………………….................

Chair of Improvement Group's Statement………………….

………………………………………………………………......

A copy of the full Report is available from the Scrutiny Support Officer and will be published on the Council's website at

www.copeland.gov.uk/scrutiny

9. COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORT PROTOCOL

COMMITTEE PROGRESS REPORTS, ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL AND OTHER OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORTS

1. The Chair and Deputy of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are responsible for the production of progress reports to full Council on the activities of Overview and Scrutiny during and at the end of each year. In doing so they should ensure they consult with their overview and scrutiny colleagues where necessary and as they consider appropriate.

2. These reports should be outcome based, focused on key issues, the improvements generated and value added by overview and scrutiny.

3. As with the production of any report to be published in the Council's name, In drafting such reports they should take advice as appropriate from the relevant chief officer or their delegated nominee, as well as their Scrutiny Support Officer. Any advice sought needs to be timely to enable informed advice to be provided.

4. Any report to full Council must comply with the Council's procedure, which includes receiving advice/comments from the Council's Corporate Team.

5. In providing this advice, officers should, as with all their work, ensure the report is balanced, whilst not interfering with the integrity or independence of the Committee.

6. Where reports have been finalised by the Chair and Deputy they should not be changed without the express consent of either the Chair or Deputy.

7. If the matter relates to a legal or financial issue or in the case of a dispute the advice of the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer or section 151 Officer should be sought prior to publication and in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct. Any advice sought needs to be timely to enable informed advice to be provided. In any

event the Head of Legal and Democratic Services should ensure that any report is published in accordance with the Council's Constitution, including adherence to the Overview and Scrutiny protocols.

8. This protocol applies to any report for publication which is produced by overview and scrutiny members in relation to their work, and should be read in conjunction with other overview and scrutiny protocols, including the Media and Improvement Group Protocols.

10. COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL'S GUIDELINES ON FINANCIAL SCRUTINY

Overview and scrutiny can have an important role to play in the scrutiny of financial planning, the budget setting process, reviewing budget performance and business plans.

1. <u>Some key roles</u>   (a) Reality checking

    (b) promoting the integration between budgets and business plans

    (c) performance and budget monitoring

Financial scrutiny is about influence and adding value, looking at the bigger picture rather than the detail, focusing on outcomes.

2. <u>Questions to consider about financial planning</u>

    Has the Council got a Medium term financial plan(MTFP)/how well is it integrated into the Corporate Plan/How does the MTFP contribute to resource allocation to priority services and issues/how is the MFTP used in the annual budget planning process/how is the MTFP monitored.

3. <u>Questions to consider about budget setting</u>

    Do the proposed spending plans fit with the Council's overall aims, objectives and priorities/is it clear how the outcome/output will be measured/have opportunites been taken to generate income/have acceptable targets been established/has the budget been reviewed or rolled over/how well does the budget work with expected service demand

4. <u>Questions to ask about budget performance</u>

    Did expenditure meet the objectives set/what are the reasons for under/overspends/what is their impact on Council plans and policies/was this taking into account future budget years/have income targets been set/what are the risks if they haven't

11. COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL'S

GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL ON COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION

Introduction

Under section 119 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 you now have the ability to call for debate and discussion at the appropriate overview and scrutiny committee about a topic of neighbourhood concern.

These powers are known as the Councillor Call for Action. (CCfA.

The topic is not limited to services provided by the Council, but includes issues relating to the Council's partners, in line with the area focus of the Comprehensive Area Assessment. You have similar powers under the Police and Justice Act 2006.

The commencement date for the CCfA was 1st April 2009.

The Councillor Call for Action is essentially about empowering the ward councillor to resolve local issues. However, for the issue to come before the overview and scrutiny committee you are expected to have exhausted all other avenues first. This is why the CCfA is about much more than scrutiny. It is rather about clarifying for the benefit of the Councillor, the different ways in which you can resolve an issue which affects your ward.

Initial questions to consider

1.   **Are the concerns individual complaints?**

If it is a complaint about Council services then refer to the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure on the Council's website. However, if a series of your constituents' complaints demonstrate a systemic failure in a particular service area in your ward, then this may be appropriate for a CCfA.

2.   **Do the complaints relate to individual 'quasi-judicial' decisions (eg planning and licensing) or to Council Tax or non-domestic rates?**

These kinds of concerns are subject to their own statutory appeals process. However, patterns of issues may be appropriate for a CCfA eg Community concerns about the proliferation of licensed premises in a local neighbourhood.

3.   Is the issue a genuine local concern?

The legislation excludes matters which are 'vexatious, discriminatory or not reasonable'. Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 the key question around vexatious is 'whether the request is likely to cause distress, disruption, or irritation without any proper or justified cause'.

More generally, you will want to be sure that the concern is not just an individual 'hobby horse'. Finding out the views of other community members including ward councillors will help to clarify this.

Trying to resolve a concern before bringing it to overview & scrutiny

The CCfA should come to overview and scrutiny as a last resort. There may well be quicker more direct ways to resolve an issue affecting your ward. Here are some options to consider first.

1.   Discuss the issue with the relevant Head of Service, Service Manager or another agency, for example Cumbria Police or the Primary Care Trust's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).

   Some community concerns can be satisfied by public explanation, an assurance that a problem will not be repeated and an apology.

2.   Discuss the issue with the relevant Executive Portfolio Holder.

3.   If it is a crime and disorder matter, then you can raise the issue with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

4.   If it is an issue which cuts across different agencies responsibilities or which could benefit from the input of different agencies then you can raise it with the Local Strategic Partnership for the Borough, or at the relevant Neighbourhood Forum.

When is it time to refer your local issue to overview and scrutiny?

When you feel you have done everything in your power to remedy a community concern, you have exhausted all mechanisms and have tried to resolve the problem(s) with the aid of other agencies and partnerships, then you may wish to refer your issue to overview and scrutiny. You may feel that there is a more complex /strategic issue at the heart of the problem that could not be resolved at the lower level. Scrutiny itself is not a means to achieve quick resolutions but, as a last resort, it can facilitate high profile debate about a ward issue which may engender further dialogue or action.

Next steps

1. Ask the Scrutiny Support Officer to convene an informal meeting with yourself, the Committee Chair, Head of Service/Service Manager, and relevant partner representatives to discuss the CCfA informally. This meeting will seek to establish what actions you have taken to resolve the issue. (make sure you have your evidence/case file to hand), what resolution you hope to achieve through scrutiny, and whether, depending on the issue, it is appropriate to convene a joint overview and scrutiny meeting with the County Council. Alternatively, is a matter for one of the County's Joint Scrutiny Committees rather than being dealt with at a local scrutiny level.

2. If after this discussion the Chair agrees that scrutiny can contribute to the resolution of the problem, then the issue will be placed on the agenda of the next available meeting, or a specially convened meeting, if there are strong reasons for doing so.

At the meeting

1. The Ward Councillor presents the case for the CCfA.

2. The Community Representatives then put their case.

3. The Head of Service/Service Manager/Partnership Representatives respond.

4. The Committee questions the Ward Councillor and other witnesses and debates the issue.

Possible outcomes

1. The Committee determines not to make a report (perhaps because after discussion it is clear that the issue can go no further).

2. Based on their deliberations, the Committee drafts a public report on the CCfA with recommendations to the relevant agencies.

3. The Committee determines that it is a complex issue that requires further investigation and sets up an Improvement Group to undertake an in-depth review. (end)