

Training and Self Evaluation

LEAD MEMBER: Cllr P Connolly, Chair Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
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Recommendation: that 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 Executive will recall that it had joint training with the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 1 November 2007. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee also had training with Corporate Team on that date and 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.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee considered this report at its meeting on 18 January 2008 and agreed the proposed action plan.

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

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan

Exe 120208
Item Appendix A

Issue	Suggested Improvement	How
COMMUNICATION	Quarterly meeting between Executive and Scrutiny	Formal meetings between Management Committee and the Executive to be added into Council diary from April 2008
	Portfolio Holder and Chair and Vice Chair of relevant Scrutiny Committee to hold regular meetings	Informal meeting to be arranged for February 2008
	Regular meetings between Corporate Team and the Management Committee	To be arranged as needed but at least for each Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting
		Arrange quarterly meetings between Management Committee and Corporate Team
BEING JOINED UP	Have shared set of common objectives between Executive and Scrutiny	Establish protocol between Executive and Scrutiny
	Involve G3 more	Arrange informal meetings between Chair and Vice Chair of Management Committee and G3
	Have more joint training and development on overview and scrutiny	Arrange specific training in 2008
BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLES OF OVERVIEW AND THE EXECUTIVE	Work towards having a better understanding of the roles of Overview and Scrutiny and The Executive	Establish protocol between Executive and Scrutiny
	Find out the reasons why when the Executive do not agree or implement the findings from Overview and Scrutiny	Institute a reporting back mechanism from the Executive
	Gain a better understanding of the evidence based nature of Overview and Scrutiny	Invite Portfolio Holders to sit in on Task and Finish Groups

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan

Exe 120208

Item	Appendix A
COMMITMENT OF OFFICERS	<p>Regular meetings between Corporate Team and the Management Committee</p> <p>Head of Department or Corporate Team member to be part of the meeting between the Portfolio Holder and Chair and Vice Chair of relevant Scrutiny Committee referred to under Communication</p>
TIME MANAGEMENT	<p>Look to have more meetings back to back</p> <p>Reduce number of information reports at Committee</p>
OVERVIEW AS WELL AS SCRUTINY	<p>Look to continue and expand the work of the Task and Finish Groups</p> <p>Look to consider more long term planning work</p>
ENGAGE ALL MEMBERS	<p>Chairs and Vice Chairs to persuade members to go along and more flexible forms of training</p> <p>Look to use all members on task and finish groups</p> <p>Develop training on Overview and Scrutiny</p>
MORE WORK ON FINANCE	<p>Improve training for members on finance</p> <p>Need to link activity to spend/finances</p> <p>Ensure more financial information is available to Overview and Scrutiny Committees</p>
	<p>Arrange quarterly meetings between Management Committee and Corporate Team</p> <p>As under Communication</p>
	<p>Member Services to consider when arranging meetings</p> <p>Chief Executive will be looking at this in 2008</p>
	<p>Continue to set up Task and Finish Groups as appropriate</p> <p>More reports to committee on national and regional issues</p> <p>Management Committee to do more work on the council objectives and strategic aims</p>
	<p>Ask Political groups to implement</p>
	<p>Develop register of members expertise</p> <p>Arrange training on Overview and Scrutiny</p>
	<p>Arrange training of financial issues</p>
	<p>Provide more and frequent budgetary information to Management Committee</p> <p>Monthly High level budget and risk monitoring reports be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Management</p>

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan

Exe 120208
Item Appendix A

	Committee
REFLECT THE VOICE AND CONCERNS OF THE PUBLIC AND ITS COMMUNITIES	<p>Invite the public and community groups to input issues into the work plans</p> <p>Have more flexible times and venues for meetings</p> <p>Have community issues dealt with by task and finish groups</p>
WISH TO QUESTION EXTERNAL PARTNERS AND ORGANISATIONS MORE OFTEN	<p>Continue to Call in organizations as appropriate</p> <p>Take a more proactive stance on those organisations delivering economic development objectives</p>