

Council

22 January 2009

Report of Chair of Scrutiny Management Committee

Update on Scrutiny Work since November Council Meeting and progress made with the Scrutiny Review.

1. This report is submitted by the Chair of Scrutiny Management Committee, in accordance with the constitutional requirements set out in Standing Order 4.3(l) to update Council on scrutiny work during the period of activity since the last Council meeting and to set out any recommendations such as may be made to Council in relation to that work.

Update on Scrutiny Work

SMC

2. There has been one meeting of SMC since the last update to Council, at which we considered a report detailing budget expenditure for supporting scrutiny reviews in 2008/9 and the available budget for 2009/10. We agreed to increase the sum allocated to each review to £500 for the remainder of the current financial year, to enable each scrutiny committee to draw on external expertise, hold events at outside venues and to effectively take on the expanding scrutiny role in relation to partnership organisations. To ensure a robust support budget is set for the 2009/10 financial year, we agreed to reconsider the amount to be allocated to each review once the forthcoming changes to the scrutiny structure have been finalised.
3. We also received a final report from Health Scrutiny Committee on their review of Dementia and agreed that the report and its associated annexes be noted, accepted and forwarded to the Executive. Scrutiny Management Committee recommended that after submission to the Executive copies of the report be sent to all interested parties, including service providers, consultees, the Secretary of State and the Chief Executive of the NHS and a press release be issued publicising the work. The Committee thanked all those involved for the work that they had done.

Health Scrutiny Committee

4. Since last Council Health Scrutiny Committee have considered a feasibility report in relation to 'Access to Outreach Workers'. The topic had been registered by Councillor Alexander who had suggested scrutinizing the availability, funding and uniform distribution of access to outreach workers. The Committee decided not to proceed with the review at the current time but to

ask the Director of Housing and Adult Social Services to provide an update report later in the year, detailing the outcome of discussions with stakeholders, representative agencies and providers about the commissioning of services and partnership working to provide those services. The possibility of a review on this topic would then be looked at again.

5. The Committee have also begun work on the Annual Health Check, which is the system that the Healthcare Commission uses to assess the performance of all NHS Trusts and a few other types of organisation in the NHS in England. The Health Scrutiny Committee will work with North Yorkshire and York Primary Care Trust (NYYPCT), York Hospital Foundation Trust and Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) to produce submissions to the Healthcare Commission by the end of April 2009
6. The Committee continues its work on understanding its relationship with Local Involvement Networks (LINKs), and in defining its relationship with the network. It continues to show a keen interest in dental provision within the York area and recently had discussions with the Primary Care Trust about the way in which the PCT reported back on developments in dental care to the Committee. Reports regarding the dental service are received on a quarterly basis from NYYPCT. It also recently concluded its review on dementia and presented its final report to SMC.

Education Scrutiny Committee

7. Education Scrutiny is currently carrying out a review of the Extended Schools Agenda. They have issued a survey to the parents of all six-year olds in the city to gather their views on the out of school activities available at their schools and after school clubs etc. They have also carried out a number of visits to After School Clubs.
8. On 24 February 2009 the Committee will be holding an event in the Mansion House to which they have invited parents, Headteachers of primary schools and external service providers. Eddie Needham from ContinYou (Government Advisors on Extended Services) will give a presentation comparing extended school provision in York to the national picture and the Committee will highlight their findings from the review and gather the views of those present.

Cultural Quarter Ad-hoc Scrutiny Sub-Committee

9. The work of this Sub-Committee continues in relation to achieving a long term direction for the area between the National Railway Museum (NRM), York Railway Station and the Minster. There has been one further meeting of this Committee since November Council where further discussions were had regarding transport and highways issues within the proposed boundaries of the Cultural Quarter. The role of the City Council in relation to the Cultural Quarter was also discussed along with naming and branding, use of the St Leonard's Hospital Site and the land behind the Art Gallery and how the Quarter would fit with the already established Minster Quarter. The Committee is planning to have one more meeting in late January to gather some final evidence and it is

then hoped that it will be a position to formulate some draft recommendations for inclusion in a draft final report.

Hungate Ad-Hoc Scrutiny Committee

10. This review is ongoing. Its purpose is to clarify whether the correct strategy for the accommodation project was set and adhered to and to ensure future similar projects are delivered on time and within budget.
11. The Committee has carried out two informal information gathering sessions and are awaiting information from English Heritage, which is subject to a Freedom of Information request. The Committee is scheduled to meet at the end of January 2009 to consider this information and feed it into their final report.

Planning Enforcement Scrutiny Ad-hoc Sub-Committee

12. This Ad-hoc Scrutiny Sub-Committee has met twice since last Council. The first meeting was an informal evidence gathering session where information was gathered from Legal Services, Planning Enforcement Officers and various Members of the Planning Department. The second meeting presented the findings by way of an interim report and Members agreed on the outstanding evidence that was still required. The Committee is due to meet again in early February to receive the final pieces of evidence. It is then hoped that they will be in a position to formulate some draft recommendations for inclusion in a draft final report.

Review of Scrutiny Structure

13. At the last meeting of Council it was agreed that a restructure of the scrutiny function in York was required. Members agreed to the removal of EMAPs from the decision making structure and the formation of a number of standing scrutiny committees.
14. A Working Group set up to advise on the implementation of the restructure and the constitutional changes required, has subsequently met to consider the options. They have considered what would be a suitable role for SMC and some common functions and terms of reference for standing Scrutiny Committees – see Annex A.
15. The Working Group also considered a number of options for the standing scrutiny committees and agreed that cross-cutting scrutiny committees would be more progressive than directorate-based committees. Two models for cross-cutting committees were considered, one based on the example in the report presented at the last Council meeting and one matching the themes of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) – see Annex B. Having recognised that both models had some merits, the Working Group were unable to reach a unanimous agreement and therefore wish to present both to Council for their consideration, with a view to Council selecting the appropriate model.

16. The Working Group plan to meet again to identify any changes to the decision making structure required as a result of the changes to the scrutiny function i.e. the most practical and transparent method for making Executive Member decisions and any necessary changes to the delegation scheme for Audit & Governance Committee etc. Any recommendations arising from this work will be presented at Council in April 2009.
17. Therefore, in relation to the work completed to date, I would like to move the following recommendation to Council to enable the process to move forward:

'That the role of SMC and functions common to all standing scrutiny committees as set out in Annex A, be approved. And, that Council consider which model (A or B) it wishes to adopt as the basis for the standing scrutiny committees in line with the previously agreed changes to the scrutiny structure.'

Annex A – Suggested role of SMC and common functions for standing scrutiny committees

Annex B – Two alternative models for cross-cutting scrutiny committees

Councillor John Galvin
Chair of Scrutiny Management Committee