

Scrutiny Management Committee

18 May 2009

Report of the Democratic Services Manager

Councillor Call for Action (CCfA)

Summary

1. This report presents best practice advice on how officers within the Council could support Members dealing with potential CCfAs.

Background to Report

2. At the meeting of Scrutiny Management Committee in March 2009, Members received a report on the new requirements of the Local Government & Public Involvement In Health Act 2007 and specifically about the Council's readiness for the introduction of Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) in April 2009.
3. At that time it was recognised that Councillors would need some support in dealing with potential CCfAs and the Committee therefore requested that a report be presented to a future meeting of SMC on possible structures and procedures which would support Members and officers through the CCfA process.

Background to the Introduction of a CCfA Process

4. A number of Councils took part in a two year pilot scheme run by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), in order to identify a best practice model for CCfA. The Councils that took part were:
 - Kirklees
 - Maidstone / Tunbridge Wells
5. Birmingham also chose to undertake significant work in preparation for the introduction of CCfA and their findings were also used to inform the pilot scheme. All three Councils chose to support the CCfA process through their Scrutiny Teams and produced written guidance on CCfA for their Members.
6. During the two year pilot scheme both pilot Councils dealt with a number of potential CCfAs, some of which were formally referred to their Scrutiny Management Committees, and some went on to be the subject of a CCfA scrutiny review.

7. All three of the Councils identified above, recognised that potential CCfAs needed to be filtered to ensure that they were specific to a particular locality, that carrying out a CCfA scrutiny review on the issue would add value, and that all other avenues for resolving the issue had been exhausted first.
8. As a result, they chose to produce detailed checklists which were designed to provide guidance and reassurance to Councillors at each stage of the process. This approach was successful and is now considered to be best practice by CfPS.

Consultation

9. Members of York's Scrutiny Team attended a consultation event run by CfPS on 'Communities in Control & Local Accountability' which looked in detail at the findings from the pilot councils and the resulting best practice guidance produced by CfPS. The checklists produced by those Councils was also looked at in detail, in order to produce some written guidance for York's Councillors – see Annex A.

Options

10. Having considered the information in this report and in Annex A, Members may chose to:
 - Adopt the process for dealing with CCfA outlined in the draft guidance shown at Annex A
 - Revise the guidance and adopt the amended process

Analysis

11. Officers are confident that the process outlined in Annex A will fully support Members with dealing with potential CCfAs. In order to provide the level of support required, Scrutiny Services will require the currently frozen post of Scrutiny Assistant to be released. The addition of this post to the Scrutiny Team, will not only ensure the Team is able to provide the level of service required to support the introduction of CCfA, it will also support the forthcoming restructure of the Overview & Scrutiny function in York.

Corporate Strategy

12. The introduction of a successful process for dealing with potential CCfAs is in line with the Council's Direction Statement - 'We will listen to communities and ensure that people have a greater say in deciding local priorities'. It will also support the Council's Value of 'Delivering what our customers want'.

Implications

13. **HR** - The release of the frozen Scrutiny Assistant post is essential to Scrutiny Services successfully supporting the CCfA process. Work is currently

underway to seek approval to advertise the post, in accordance with Chief Officer delegated powers.

14. **Financial** – The budget for funding the Scrutiny Assistant post is already available, therefore there is no financial implications associated with the release of the post, subject to the outcome of any re-evaluation of the job description for the post which is currently under assessment through the job evaluation process.
15. There are no Equalities, Legal, Crime and Disorder, ITT, Property or Other implications associated with the recommendation in this report.

Risk Management

16. Without the introduction of a corporately recognised process for dealing with potential CCfAs, the Council would be unable to successfully support Councillors in fulfilling their new powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

Recommendations

17. Members are recommended to approve and adopt the process outlined in Annex A.

Reason: To ensure a suitable mechanism for supporting Members dealing with potential CCfAs, is introduced

Contact Details

Author:

Melanie Carr
Scrutiny officer
Scrutiny Services
Tel No.01904 552063

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Dawn Steel
Democratic Services Manager

Report Approved



Date

6 May 2009

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

CfPS Councillor Call for Action Best Practice Guidance
Councillor Checklists from Pilot Councils

Annexes

Annex A – CCfA Draft Guidance for Councillors