
Scrutiny Management Committee

6th December 2010

Report of the Assistant Director – Legal, Governance & ITT

Regional Scrutiny Network

Summary

1. This report updates Members on recent meetings of and developments with the Member Regional Scrutiny Network.

Background

2. Recent meetings of the network have taken place in York over September and October and were chaired by the Chair of Scrutiny Management Committee. The Chair has attended this Member network to help promote the benefits of scrutiny in general and raise the profile of scrutiny in York regionally.
3. Minutes of the last meeting of the network held on 18 October 2010 are attached for information (Annex A). These meetings are attended by scrutiny councillors and chairs from across the Yorkshire and Humber region and are supported/administered by officers from Rotherham Council.
4. The network meets to discuss issues important to the future of scrutiny in general and the impact of matters potentially affecting scrutiny across the region. Recent examples of this would be the scrutiny of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) throughout the region and the impact on scrutiny potentially, arising from the forthcoming Localism Bill. In regard to these issues but particularly to take soundings regarding the potential for scrutinising LEPs, a delegation of Members from the Regional Scrutiny Network recently met with Members on the Local Government & Humber Executive.

Working Protocol

5. The Network have agreed a working protocol and terms of reference for its future operation, bearing in mind the varying representation of Councils from across the region, attending the Network. This protocol is attached at Annex B, for information.

Local Government Yorkshire & Humber Executive – 21 October 2010

6. The Chair of SMC led a delegation to the LGYH Executive of 4 Members from across varying regional local authorities to seek backing to setting up a scrutiny structure to scrutinise the work and policies of the new Local Enterprise

Partnerships being set up under the new Localism Bill. The delegation also put forward proposals to scrutinise common services on a regional basis, in so far as they affected the whole Yorkshire & Humber area.

7. The Chair of this Committee reports back on the outcome of the meeting as follows:

“Whilst our request for backing was appreciated by members of the Leader's Executive, we were requested that we return when we have more information as to how, what, when, who, and how often, in other words much more detail as to our collective aspirations, detail we couldn't give as we await the publication of the Localism Bill and other policies from the Government.”

He adds *“one of the major issues was how such a Scrutiny Structure would work across different LEP's and how business leaders would react to scrutiny”*.

8. Members of Council will receive more information about the contents of the awaited Localism Bill as it emerges, but it is understood, at this stage, that the Bill will address the issue of LEPs and give Councils an option to revert to a 'Committee system' thereby potentially removing the scrutiny function. Clearly, Members of this Committee will wish to comment upon this latter option when the contents of the Bill are released for consultation.

Consultation

9. The Chair has indicated that the delegation to the Yorkshire & Humber Executive will continue to work up proposals for scrutinising LEPs and continue to press the LGYH Executive for a response.

This Committee may wish to respond formally to the consultation process arising from the publication of the Localism Bill, particularly should it give local authorities the option, as anticipated, to revert to former 'committee style' structures.

Options

10. There are no specific options for SMC to consider on this occasion. The report is intended to inform Members of York's involvement in initiatives at a regional level.

Corporate Priorities

11. The participation of York and, in particular the Chair of this Committee, in regional scrutiny activities can contribute to the Council's overall aim of being an effective organisation, 'a modern Council, with high standards in all we do'. Such networking aims to help participating authorities learn and share best practice.

Implications

12. There are no financial, human resources, legal or other implications associated with the contents of this report, at this stage. The legal implications arising from a Localism Bill, will, of course, be addressed in any future report to this Committee, should there be implications for the future of scrutiny.

Risk Management

13. There is a potentially a significant risk to the future of scrutiny within City of York Council if it does not take steps to raise its profile regionally and make efforts to learn best practice from other scrutiny authorities.

Recommendations

14. Members are asked to note the involvement of the Chair and the Scrutiny Team at a regional level and to note, in particular the delegation formed to represent regional scrutiny to the LGYH Executive.

REASON: To participate in and enhance regional scrutiny.

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Report Approved

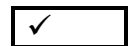


Date 25.11.2010

Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes (online only)

- Annex A** Minutes of Regional Scrutiny Network – 18 October 2010
Annex B Working Protocol of Regional Network.