

Overview and Scrutiny Newsletter

Issue 5 March 2006

Scrutiny under Scrutiny!

Over 40 representatives – including voluntary and community sector organisations, partner organisations, elected members and council officers – attended an Overview and Scrutiny self evaluation event at Swinton Park Golf Club in February.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), which has been created to promote the value of scrutiny in modern and effective government, has developed a self evaluation toolkit, based on the four principles of good scrutiny:

- Provide a “critical friend” challenge
- Reflect the public voice
- Take the lead and own the scrutiny process
- Make an impact on service delivery

Gareth Wall, the Research and Information Adviser from CfPS, attended the event to present the framework and also the results of the annual survey of overview and scrutiny which they conduct across local authorities in England and Wales.

The Leader and Chief Executive also attended to give their views on the value and progress of scrutiny within the city council.

Those attending then had the opportunity to comment on how scrutiny in the city council measured up against these principles.

Councillor James Dawson, who chaired the event, said “it was very pleasing to see so many people supporting the event, particularly from the voluntary and community sector. Using the self evaluation framework has helped us identify things we do well, where we need to improve and any barriers or opportunities for improvement. This will enable us to develop an improvement plan which builds on our existing strengths and focuses on the things we can do to improve the impact of scrutiny in the city council, making it more effective.”

Initial analysis of the findings of the discussion groups has been carried out and this will be used to produce an action plan. Further information will be available in our next newsletter (Summer 2006).

Scrutiny of MRSA and Infection Control

Members of the Community, Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee spent the morning at Hope Hospital prior to their March meeting.

As part of their ongoing commitment to ensuring that Salford Royal Hospitals Trust are doing all they can to combat MRSA and other hospital acquired infections, members paid their second visit in less than a year, to monitor the implementation and impact of practical measures. Councillor Joe Kean, chair of the committee, commented, “ We have received a number of reports over the past couple of years about these issues, but as members we feel it is always useful to check that the policies and procedures in place are being followed and to speak directly to staff involved.”

The visit also allowed members to satisfy themselves that the Trust were meeting the required standards in this area, for their declaration of the Annual Health Check to the Healthcare Commission in April 2006

Audit Committee

A constitutional change has led to the establishment of an Audit Committee from April 2006.

The role of this new committee is very much a development of the Budget & Audit Scrutiny's Audit Sub

Committee and builds on the work done in recent years.

The new committee will oversee the Risk Management Framework and associated control environment. It will ensure the independent review of the city council's financial and non-financial performance and it will ensure that issues arising from the preparation, auditing and certification of the council's financial

reports and accounts are properly dealt with.

The committee will be chaired by a member of the opposition party and will be supported by the Scrutiny Support Team.

If you would like further information please contact Peter Kidd on 0161 793 3322 or by email peter.kidd@salford.gov.uk

Scrutiny Commission on Corporate Parenting

The Corporate Parenting Commission have now produced a report on the work they have been undertaking since January 2005 which contains 23 recommendations which centre around 6 key themes:-

- Placement Stability
- Education and Employment Opportunities
- Employment and training opportunities
- Pre and post care issues
- Health and well-being
- Structural issues

A child friendly version of the report was produced and has been sent out to all looked after children in Salford and members of the commission recently met with young people from the Voice Group to report back on what is happening as a result of the commission's work.

Cabinet are currently looking at the report to see which of the recommendations can be undertaken in the short term, medium term and long term and are expected to report back their findings during April 2006.

A sub-group has been established to monitor the implementation of the recommendations and to ensure that they are acted upon.

The sub-group will also be undertaking further work in relation to after care provision for children looked after and out of borough placements.

For a copy of the report or for further information please contact Amanda Carbery on 0161-793 3316.

Recycling, Waste Management and Green Procurement

The Recycling Commission has been working with representatives from WRAP (Waste Resource and Action Programme) to look at the paper contract for the authority. A supplier has now been identified who can supply 100% recycled paper, 30% of which is from household waste. It also looks possible that there will be some financial savings within this contract along with the positive environmental impact.

Recycling of waste is being promoted within the Civic Centre complex and Unity House by placing green recycling bins within kitchen areas. It is hoped that this scheme will be rolled out over all authority sites in the next few months.

In the recycling stakes the UK lags behind the rest of Europe, with our recycling rate being only 13% of our total waste. Traditionally the UK has been heavily reliant on landfills. Approximately 85% of UK household waste is land filled - this is too high. Salford currently has a target to recycle 18% of its total waste, for 2009 this has been increased to 25%. This is why it is important that we all do our bit in terms of recycling!

The commission have also been working with Envirowise - a government agency who works with companies to look at the environmental impact of their business. A Fast Track visit was recently undertaken at the Civic Centre, outlining possible savings. We may hold a future event for suppliers, in conjunction with Envirowise, to assess the environmental impact of their business.

If you would like to be involved in this work or would like further information please contact Linda Sharples on 0161 793 3324

Attendance Management

Sickness absence presents a major challenge for the organisation and there have been a number of articles in the local and national press which identify absences, particularly in the public sector, as a major issue of concern.

Whilst Salford compares favourably with some of the other councils in Greater Manchester and improvements are being made, we are not meeting our performance indicator targets.

The Customer & Support Services Scrutiny Committee has decided to look into the matter in detail. Each of the council's strategic directors and their lead member have been invited to discuss with the committee how they currently implement the attendance management policy, how they use available information to manage and improve attendance, and whether they have identified any particular problems in service areas that can be addressed or improved by taking specific action of some kind.

As well as raising the profile of sickness absence as an issue, the committee hopes to identify and share all examples of good practice, and ensure that the policy is applied consistently right across the city council and that staff are treated fairly and with dignity.

For further information please contact Peter Kidd 0161 793 3322 or by email peter.kidd@salford.gov.uk

Crime and Disorder Sub Group

Achieving a reduction in crime is one of the biggest challenges facing Salford. It is recognised that crime and disorder and the fear of crime have a significant and damaging impact on our city and its various communities.

The sub group, chaired by Councillor David Lewis, has just completed its second piece of work which looked at how we educate young people on what behaviour is acceptable and taking responsibility for one's own actions. A copy of the report will be available in April 2006.

At the next meeting in March 2006 members of the sub group will agree the next topic to be considered.

If you are interested in becoming involved in this sub group or would like further details please contact Karen Lucas on 0161 793 3318 or by email karen.lucas@salford.gov.uk

Budget Consultation

The Budget & Audit Scrutiny Committee has once again monitored the public consultation exercise on the city council's recently finalised revenue and capital budgets for 2006/2007.

The committee is keen to ensure that members of the public understand that:

- Although the lion's share of the budget is required by statute and is not discretionary, they can influence the way in which the council spends its money
- They have a number of options in how they express their views
- They understand how opinions are gathered and shaped into priorities for the council
- They can see how the priorities identified have shaped the way the money is to be spent

The committee will shortly undertake a thorough review of the exercise, building on the most effective communication methods and will help develop and improve the exercise further for next years budget (07/08)

If you would like further information contact Peter Kidd on 0161 793 3322 or by emailing peter.kidd@salford.gov.uk

Alcohol Commission

A scrutiny commission to investigate alcohol related issues was launched on the 7th December 2005. The commission is being chaired by Councillor Ian Macdonald.

It was agreed that the main theme of the commission would be:

The extent and nature of alcohol related problems in the city and the measures in place to deter and prevent anti social behaviour resulting from them with regards to young people.

The aim of the commission is to raise awareness of and reduce the harm caused by alcohol misuse. We will be considering present strategies and policies, the work undertaken by the city council and partners as well as taking on board the comments of members of the community and voluntary organisations with regards to young people and alcohol.

During the consultation exercise undertaken by scrutiny last summer, the public raised various concerns regarding alcohol; for example young people drinking on the streets, shops selling to under age youths, alcohol fuelled behaviour and concerns about the extended licensing laws. Also of concern is the potential adverse impact on health.

We are interested in hearing the views of local people about this issue.

If you would like any further information please contact Karen Lucas on 0161 793 3318 or by email karen.lucas@salford.gov.uk

Community Facilities work

The Swinton Community Committee have requested that the Scrutiny Support Team produce a booklet listing all the community groups in the Swinton area. The booklet will include details of who each community group is open to, when each group meets and relevant contact details.

The purpose of the booklet is to help inform people in Swinton about what is available locally and to give them the opportunity to join a community group if they wish to do so.

If you would like further information or would like your community group adding in the booklet please contact Jenna Lancaster on 0161 793 3538 or by email jenna.lancaster@salford.gov.uk

Public Transport Issues

Work is underway to organise a stakeholder event to gather baseline information on current work on public transport to identify scope for a scrutiny commission.

If you would like to be involved with this work or would like further information please contact Amanda Carbery on 0161 793 3316

Making it Better, Making it Real

NHS Consultation on Children's, Neonatal and Maternity Services

Over recent months proposals have been developed for improving healthcare services for children, young people, parents and babies across Greater Manchester, East Cheshire and High Peak, affecting some 3.1million people.

The Making it Better Consultation is the public consultation on changes to healthcare services for children, young people, parents and babies in greater Manchester, East Cheshire, High Peak and Rossendale. A copy of the consultation document is available from www.bestforhealth.co.uk.

The Children's Services and Community, Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committees agreed that they need to look at the proposals objectively and determine what option is best for the children and families of Salford, in order to submit an evidence based response to the Making it Better Joint Health Scrutiny Committee, the statutory consultee, of which Councillor Joe Kean is the city council representative.

Over recent months a series of meetings have been held, chaired by Councillor Bernard Pennington, where the scrutiny committees have gathered evidence from a wide range of people/ organisations, including the respective Chief Executives from Salford PCT, Salford Royal Hospitals Trust and Royal Bolton Hospital Trust. The scrutiny committees are currently in the process of determining their response to the statutory joint health scrutiny committee. The consultation period has now been extended to Friday 12 May 2006.

For further information please contact Amanda Carbery 0161 793 3316 or Karen Dainty 0161 793 2513.

Lift/Shift Sub Group

(Local Improvement Finance Trust/Salford Health Investment for Tomorrow)

The Lift/Shift Sub Group meets on a quarterly basis. The next meeting has been organised for Wednesday 10 May 2006, 10am in a committee room at the Civic Centre.

Members of the sub group will be considering various issues including transport, workforce planning, I.T. and development services/planning. The group, which is chaired by Councillor Val Burgoyne, consists of councillors, officers from the city council, Salford Primary Care Trust, Salford Royal Hospitals Trust and a representative from the Claremont Waste Community Committee.

If you are interested in becoming involved in this sub group or would like further details please contact Karen Lucas on 0161 793 3318 or by email karen.lucas@salford.gov.uk

Public Question time

All the regular monthly meetings of the 6 scrutiny committees are held in public and you are welcome to attend as an observer.

We have recently introduced and are piloting 'Public Question Time'.

At the start of each meeting, there will be a 15 minute public question time, where you are able to ask a question of the committee. It is helpful if possible to have advance notice of the questions.

Alternately, if you are unable to attend the meeting, you can still submit a question and the chair will raise it on your behalf.

Scrutiny can't consider

- Individual complaints
- Individual issues about members of staff
- Planning or licensing matters

For further information or assistance, please contact Jenna Lancaster by telephoning 0161 793 3538 or emailing jenna.lancaster@salford.gov.uk

Overview and Scrutiny

The role of Overview and Scrutiny is to look at the services and issues that effect the lives of people in Salford.

It's about listening to the concerns of local people and checking how the council and other organisations are performing and where necessary seeking improvement.

General enquiries can be e-mailed to:

scrutiny.support@salford.gov.uk.

Or write to Overview and Scrutiny Support,

Salford Civic Centre, Chorley Road, Swinton, Salford M27 5BN.

Jenna Lancaster 0161 793 3538 jenna.lancaster@salford.gov.uk

or Janet Taylor 0161 793 3515 janet.taylor@salford.gov.uk

Fax: 0161 794 2027

Alternatively, if you wish to raise a specific matter with a particular scrutiny committee, the individual committee contacts are:

Budget and Audit

Monitoring the council's budgetary processes

peter.kidd@salford.gov.uk, 0161-793 3322

Strategy and Regeneration

Working to make Salford a safer and more prosperous place to live and work

karen.lucas@salford.gov.uk, 0161-793 3318

Children's Services

Aiming for every child to get the best possible start in life, as well as supporting young people, they work closely with the Children's Services Directorate to oversee service delivery

amanda.carbery@salford.gov.uk, 0161-793 3316

Customer and Support Services

Working with council directorates to measure efficiency and statutory compliance, making sure that public money is spent effectively by providing value for money services

peter.kidd@salford.gov.uk, 0161-793 3322

Community, Health and Social Care

Working with the Community, Health and Social Care Directorate and NHS organisations to help make Salford a healthier city in which to live

karen.dainty@salford.gov.uk, 0161-793 2513

Environment, Housing and Planning

Works with the Environment Directorate and Housing & Planning Directorate to ensure that Salford is a clean city and that every person has a quality home. They also ensure that city planning is carried out effectively

linda.sharples@salford.gov.uk, 0161-793 3324

www.salford.gov.uk/scrutiny

Salford City Council