

Item No.

25

Classification:

Open Date:

9/12/2002 MEETING NAME
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report title:

SCRUTINY DEVELOPMENT

Ward(s) or groups affected:

All

From:

Head of Corporate Strategy

RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 1) That Overview and Scrutiny Committee asks officers to commission scrutiny training for Members.
- 2) That Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the potential areas of focus for an evaluation of the scrutiny structure and its processes.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3) Overview and Scrutiny discussed the broad set of issues around scrutiny development at its meeting on 13th November and one of the recommendations was that officers should prepare a proposal on Member development and on evaluating Southwark's scrutiny arrangements.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4) The Member induction programme included a well attended session on scrutiny, which was facilitated by Paul Wheeler of IdeA. Members were asked to think about the skills and competences required to practise scrutiny effectively, as well as the support requirements. The themes that emerged fell mainly into the area of soft skills: communication, chairing skills, negotiation, team work, creativity. At that time of course, the scrutiny committees had not been established.
- 5) All the Sub-Committee have completed at least one review now, and gained some practical experience. It is therefore timely to reconsider the skills issue for Members, and to plan an evaluation of the overall scrutiny structure and its processes so that any recommendations for constitutional change can be brought forward for Constitutional Council in May 2003. Constitutional issues will also be considered in the context of Community Councils, and a report will be brought to Overview and Scrutiny early in the new year.

Training and Development

- 6) Attached at Appendix B are summaries from two leading training providers, the Institute of Local Government Studies at the University of Birmingham (Inlogov)

and IdeA, of their scrutiny training modules. In both cases, courses can be provided in-house, and customised to reflect the individual authority's situation.

- 7) Members are asked to consider whether these courses are of interest and what the likely take-up might be. Is there sufficient interest to commission a session chairing scrutiny as well as on general scrutiny skills?

Evaluating the scrutiny structure and processes

- 8) There has been some discussion at Overview and Scrutiny about commissioning an independent evaluation of scrutiny. This clearly needs to link to the proposal for member development, and to the Best Value review of support for Councillors, which will be considered by members in December and January. The core issue is to ensure that the scrutiny process continues to develop and improve, and that it does not become a bureaucratic process. Members are asked to consider what the focus of such an evaluation might be. Some possible topics are:
 - a) Community engagement – how should the council be communicating and engaging communities on its scrutiny work
 - b) Work programmes – is the balance of work about right? Should there be more emphasis on the forward plan, more attempt to look out of the Town Hall?
 - c) Methods of scrutiny – is the mix of approaches to topics right?
 - d) Community councils – does the role of scrutiny shift with the introduction of community councils?
 - e) Process – are the processes working? Is scrutiny calling the executive to account effectively?

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 9) Any expenditure on training and evaluation of Southwark's scrutiny would have to be contained within the existing scrutiny budget.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10) There are no specific legal implications raised by this report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
<i>Overview & Scrutiny Committee: Agenda, Background Papers and Minutes</i>		
		<i>Constitutional Support Unit,</i>
<i>3rd Floor, Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB</i>		<i>Lucas Lundgren</i>
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APPENDIX A

Audit Trail

Lead Officer Ian Hughes, Head of Corporate Strategy
Report Author Shelley Burke, Constitutional Support Unit – Scrutiny Manager
Version Friday 29/11/02
Dated As above
Key Decision? Not applicable

CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER

Officer Title included	Comments Sought	Comments
Borough Solicitor & Secretary	No	No
Chief Finance Officer	No	No
Executive Member	Not applicable	Not applicable
Date final report sent to Constitutional Support Services		29/11/02