

Item No. 1	Classification: Open	Date: 15/09/03	Meeting Name: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Report title:		Developing Scrutiny	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Head of Overview and Scrutiny	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee [OSC] considers the development programme set out in this report for taking forward the actions agreed at the Charter School away day on the Office for Public Management evaluation.
2. That Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the progress on specific reviews, and the general comments at paragraphs 12-14 on how the process can be tightened.
3. That Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the specific proposals for cross cutting scrutinies.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. There were two key areas of change in Southwark's approach to scrutiny when the constitution was adopted in 2002. These were the move to standing committees rather than the task and finish panels that operated under the previous Scrutiny Administration Committee, and adopting a planned approach to work programming. All scrutiny committees now spend time scoping their terms of reference at the beginning of each scrutiny review, and build up work programmes based on performance issues, pre-scrutiny and post-implementation monitoring of key strategic decisions, community concerns, items drawn from the best value review programme etc. As well as the planned reviews, each scrutiny body receives quarterly performance reports and undertakes interviews with the relevant executive member(s) about matters concerning their portfolio at least once during the year.
5. OSC commissioned an independent evaluation of scrutiny led by the Office for Public Management (OPM) in April 2003.
6. OSC asked for a progress report on last year's scrutiny reviews. The request arose from members' discussion of the Office for Public Management evaluation, which recommended that we needed to find ways to "close the loop" between scrutiny recommendations and eventual outcomes. The appendix sets out a summary of the recommendations made by OSC and the sub-committees on each of their reviews, and a note of outcomes/progress on each.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

7. Taking OPM forward

The Office for Public Management (OPM) carried out an evaluation of Southwark's scrutiny arrangements in April 2003 and Overview and Scrutiny Committee members subsequently spent a morning working through the recommendations and planning how to take them forward. This report sets out the agreed actions in the form of a scrutiny development plan. It is suggested that OSC spend time reviewing one of the themes that make up the plan at each meeting, and consider whether it would be helpful to hold a further away day session in January/February 2004 to review progress and draw out chairs' experience of the work.

8. Scrutiny Development Plan

8.1 September O&SC

8.1.1. OPM theme – process

- Improving work programming – actively seeking opportunities for cross cutting work, looking at how reviews can inform one another
- Planning ahead
- Tracking scrutiny's recommendations – assessing impact

8.1.2 Approach

Three proposals for cross-cutting work have started to be developed with chairs and are discussed at paragraph 15 of this report. An improved project brief pro-forma (Appendix B to this report) which focuses on forward planning and community engagement has been developed by the scrutiny officer team and tested by Environment & Community Support. It is not intended to be set in stone but to serve as a template to assist committees at the outset of reviews. In terms of tracking, this report summarises last year's scrutiny recommendations and sets out some process improvement issues.

8.2 October O&SC

8.2.1 OPM theme - Improving communication

- Raising public awareness of scrutiny
- Community engagement
- Seeking press coverage

8.2.2 Approach

Development of scrutiny pages on web site – general information about scrutiny and the work programmes and online form for raising issues. Development of print literature to provide to groups/individuals – needs to be produced in parallel with web pages. Several of the committees are currently developing reviews with particular approaches to community engagement, which will be reported to October's OSC meeting. These plans can be used to

look at how we maintain our focus on community engagement, i.e. how it is mainstreamed into our processes, and where the opportunities lie for proactive press work.

8.3 **November/December O&SC**

8.3.1 **OPM theme - Member development**

- An increased focus on member training in order to strengthen the scrutiny function

8.3.2 **Approach**

A framework for member development was adopted by Standards Committee on 2nd September. As discussed at the Charter away-day, it includes a proposal for training needs assessments for chairs. The Head of Member and Constitutional Services is leading the training needs assessment and anticipates its being complete by the end of October, subject to member availability. At a general level, the programme will be taken forward with the member champions to be identified by each group. but it seems appropriate for the scrutiny stream to be managed discretely (within the overall framework) by Overview and Scrutiny. Finance and Economic Development undertook budget training on 19th July, and Councillor Yates will be making use of an IDeA accredited member peer for some external mentoring. This latter exercise is also serving as a pilot for broader use of external mentoring.

8.4 **January/February 2004**

8.4.1 **OPM theme - Keeping scrutiny under review**

- Planning ongoing review and evaluation of our approach to individual reviews and the overall scrutiny function

8.4.2 **Approach**

As outlined above, it is suggested that OSC devotes some time to thematic review during the upcoming meetings. It is also assumed that chairs will continue to feed back from their sub-committees on progress, difficulties they may encounter and good practice they are developing. However, in practical terms the time available can be constrained by the OSC agenda. It may therefore be useful to programme another away day session to pick up issues that need more time. This could be a half day session as on the two previous occasions, or possibly a full day with a training session built in. One idea might be to see if Paul Wheeler were able to come back, since he facilitated the scrutiny session in the member induction programme, and the OSC session in February 2003, and is a board member of the Centre for Public Scrutiny and is very much at the heart of the scrutiny development agenda nationally. In addition, Shelley Burke will be participating in some co-ordinated work with Centre for Public Scrutiny on methods for evaluating scrutiny. There is an emerging national debate about how to monitor the effectiveness of scrutiny, e.g. performance indicators, external accreditation, crystal marking literature and Southwark could agree to act as a pilot. This work is due to start in September 2003.

9. **Other housekeeping**

10. The scrutiny team is also seeking ways of modernising our approach within the constitutional arrangements. The process of developing the format and presentation of Agendas to make them more user-friendly is underway, and Member feedback is invited on the initial changes made. We are also exploring the use of IT in this regard – development of better web pages and reliable agenda publishing on the web, and we are exploring the possibility of using IT to better support recording the proceedings of meetings.

11. **Tracking recommendations – assessing impact**

12. Appendix A to this report gives a progress report on last year's reviews. Members are asked to look at the individual reviews and consider follow up action required. This might include: seeking more detailed responses on specific points from executive members and/or officers; building follow up sessions into current work programmes; or by raising issues with executive members as part of their scrutiny interviews.
13. One overriding point to make is that there is a distinction between the immediate outcome and the eventual impact of a scrutiny review. We need to consider how to do both. OSC has already selected a number of issues for ongoing scrutiny – for example the development of the Customer Service Centres and the impact of the Best Value Review of Early Years. Are there more areas where OSC or its sub-committees wish to track an issue more closely or bring the executive member/chief officer back say a year later ?
14. In terms of the scrutiny process itself the key lessons are:
 - a) Building follow up action into reviews. Committees should consider if and how they wish to follow up their recommendations prior to concluding a review – e.g. do they want the scrutiny officer to track and report back informally? Do they want a letter from or meeting with the executive member/chief officer? In the case of bigger reviews, do they want to receive back a detailed response and corresponding action plan on the recommendations?
 - b) The constitution formally requires the executive to report back to scrutiny within 8 weeks, but responses are coming via a combination of methods – letter, executive minutes, follow up reports from officers. Does Overview & Scrutiny want to formalise the report back arrangements or is it satisfied with existing methods?
 - c) On a similar note it may be helpful to tighten the wording of recommendations in order to elicit a measurable response.
 - d) Building follow up action back into scrutiny work programmes. Making links within the work programmes - as the committees gather experience and knowledge, it should become possible to programme specific reviews that will inform later reviews within their own work programme or cross-cutting reviews more broadly within the structure. For example, Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee's current review of Southwark's secure tenancy agreement will feed

into the scrutiny of the council's work on anti social behaviour later in the municipal year.

15. Cross-cutting work

Three reviews have been developed in each case that cut across the terms of reference of two committees. This report briefly outlines the proposals (principally in process terms) and asks OSC to approve them so that the project briefs can be formally developed. We are suggesting that a different approach is taken on each, for chairs to review at the end of the year. The approach is based on committees' respective work programmes, and the timescale for the reviews.

15.1 Teen pregnancy (Sept-October)

This review is to focus on the prevention of teenage pregnancy and is currently being scoped by the Health & Social Care Scrutiny Sub-Committee. OSC have already asked Health & Social Care to initiate joint working on this review and it is therefore suggested that this body leads the review with Education, Youth & Leisure Scrutiny Sub-Committee being invited to contribute. The Chairs have not yet discussed mechanisms for joint working, but Health & Social Care will shortly be inviting the Education, Youth & Leisure Scrutiny Sub-Committee to meetings and site visits at which the issue will be considered.

15.2 Community Councils (November-March)

OSC previously agreed that this would be considered by both the Environment & Community Support and Finance & Economic Development Scrutiny Sub-Committees. Officers have met with both chairs and the proposal is that review is carried out in two consecutive stages, the first being 'retrospective' evaluation by the Environment & Community Support Scrutiny Sub-Committee, and the second stage being the Finance & Economic Development scrutiny sub-committee delivering recommendations for the future. Both stages would draw on the necessary preparatory research – undertaken initially in-house –including amongst other factors: members/officers roles; partner agency contributions and relationships with the authority; the relationship between neighbourhood policies/programmes; and communications.

15.3 Anti Social behaviour (January-February)

This is clearly of major interest to both Environment and Community Support and Housing. Officers have met with both chairs and the proposal is that the two committees join up to produce this work. Environment and Community Support have already agreed to scope their element of this scrutiny by November. It is therefore suggested that the chair of Environment & Community Support Scrutiny Sub-Committee attends Housing's December meeting to discuss the two committee's range of interests, after which a formal project brief can be produced.

16. **Resource Implications**

There are no specific resource implications raised by this report.

17. **Legal Implications**

There are no specific legal implications raised by this report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Documents	Held At	Contact
Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agendas and minutes	<i>Scrutiny Team 3rd Floor, Southwark Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB</i>	Lucas Lundgren T: 0207 525 7224
Scrutiny Sub-Committee Agendas and minutes	<i>Scrutiny Team 3rd Floor, Southwark Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB</i>	Fitzroy Williams T: 0207 525 7238

Audit Trail

Lead Officer/Report Author	<i>Shelley Burke, Head of Overview and Scrutiny</i>	
Version	<i>Final</i>	
Dated	<i>Friday 5th September 2003</i>	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Borough Solicitor & Secretary	No	No
Chief Finance Officer	No	No