

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18th JULY 2007

SCRUTINY BOARD

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

The Scrutiny Board is due to meet on 12th July 2007 so this report is being written ahead of that meeting.

Business and Environmental Services

The Board will be welcoming County Councillors Clare Wood and John Fort, and Gordon Gresty, Corporate Director to discuss the key strategic issues facing the directorate over the next 12 months and where scrutiny can add value.

Centre for Public Scrutiny Annual Conference

In June I attended the Centre for Public Scrutiny's (CfPS's) fifth Annual Conference.

The Conference reflected the positive way in which scrutiny has developed over the past five years and also highlighted the challenges ahead.

Jessica Crowe, Executive Director of the CfPS, made a number of key points:

- The Local Government White Paper puts the front-line Councillor at the heart of what is happening in local communities.
- However, the Local Government Bill provides a more tightly defined framework:
 - Wider scrutiny powers will be limited to include only those organisations under a duty to agree targets for the Local Area Agreement (LAA).
 - Power will be to request information, not attendance, and only in relation to an LAA target.
 - Shire District councils are excluded from the wider scrutiny powers.
- The challenge of partnerships – as more resources move into the LAA pooled budget, more scrutiny of partnerships is needed to provide accountability. This year £1.8 billion is in the LAA grant streams – and this may rise to £5 billion of 'area based grant' over the next three years.

- We need to think how local scrutineers might sometimes work together across partnerships.

I attended a workshop on Community Calls for Action (CCfA) at which Kirklees Council presented their early work on this. I'm not convinced that the Kirklees model is the one to follow, although to be fair it is just in the developmental stage. So it is right that we do our own thinking about this, as we are doing through the Scrutiny Board working group and the Scrutiny Forum in September, to come up with the right model for North Yorkshire.

Working group on the role of scrutiny following the White Paper

The working group, which consists of all members of the Scrutiny Board, has continued to examine the implications of the emerging Local Government Bill for scrutiny at the County Council.

We have largely completed redrafting our scrutiny guidance to reflect best practice and we are now focusing on scrutiny of partnerships and Community Calls for Action.

Next Scrutiny Forum

Planning is proceeding apace for an innovative and exciting exploration of the implications of Community Calls for Action for all Members at the next Scrutiny Forum on Wednesday, 19th September. We have secured the services of Gareth Wall from the Centre of Public Scrutiny and we are in discussion with colleagues with expertise in role play.

I am very grateful to the Members who have volunteered to take an active part on the day, and we are still open to further offers. Please can you let Ray Busby, Scrutiny Support Officer know if you are interested on extension 2655 or via email.

I look forward to seeing you all there!

County Councillor John Blackie
Chairman of the Scrutiny Board
9 July 2007