Cheshire East
Council

Scrutiny Committee

Agenda

Date:	**Thursday, 19th March, 2009**
Time:	**2.00 pm**
Venue:	**Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ**

The agenda is divided into 2 parts. Part 1 is taken in the presence of the public and press. Part 2 items will be considered in the absence of the public and press for the reasons indicated on the agenda and at the foot of each report.

PART 1 – MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT

1. **Apologies for Absence**

2. **Declarations of Interest**

   To provide an opportunity for Members and Officers to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interests in any item on the agenda

3. **Public Speaking Time/Open Session**

   In accordance with Procedure Rules Nos.11 and 35 a total period of 10 minutes is allocated for members of the public to address the Committee on any matter relevant to the work of the Committee.

   Individual members of the public may speak for up to 5 minutes but the Chairman will decide how the period of time allocated for public speaking will be apportioned where there are a number of speakers.

   Note: In order for officers to undertake any background research it would be helpful if questions were submitted at least one working day before the meeting.

4. **Minutes of Previous meeting** (Pages 1 - 6)

   To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2009.

Please contact	Denise French on 01270 529643 or 01270 529736
E-Mail:	denise.french@cheshireeast.gov.uk with any apologies or requests for further information or to give notice of a question to be asked by a member of the public

5. **Action taken by the Chairman**

6. **Forward Plan** (Pages 7 - 12)

    A copy of the Forward Plan 1 March – 30 June 2009 is attached for information.

7. **Annual Work Programme** (Pages 13 - 60)

    To consider further the Scrutiny Work Programme.

8. **Annual Scrutiny Report 08/09** (Pages 61 - 66)

    To consider the Annual Report of the Chairman.

9. **Young Entrepreneurs Scrutiny Pilot - Final Report**

    The Chairman to provide an update on the Young Entrepreneurs Pilot Scrutiny Review final report.

10. **Scrutiny Developments and Training Issues**

    To note that the Overview and Scrutiny Structure has now been approved.

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee**
held on Wednesday, 18th February, 2009 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor A Thwaite (Chairman)
Councillor A Richardson (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors A Barratt, G Baxendale, S Conquest, M Davies, P Edwards,
Miss S Furlong, Ms O Hunter, R Menlove, Mrs L Smetham, J Wray and
Mrs S Jones

Apologies

Councillors S Broadhurst

47 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors S Broadhurst and
Councillor Mrs B Howell (Councillor Mrs S Jones substituted for Councillor Mrs B
Howell)

48 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A number of Councillors who were existing County and Borough Councillors
declared a general personal interest in the business of the meeting.

49 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no Members of the Public present who wished to address the
Committee.

50 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21
January be approved as a correct record.

51 ACTION TAKEN BY THE CHAIRMAN

None

52 OUTCOMES FROM THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNANCE AND
CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE HELD ON 9 FEBRUARY 2009

Members were advised that the Governance and Constitution Committee at its
meeting held on 9 February had considered a number of Scrutiny issues as
follows:

- Public Speaking Time/Open Session - The Scrutiny Committee and the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee had both requested that Procedure Rules Nos 11 and 35 be disapplied on the grounds that Scrutiny was not a decision making body. The Governance and Constitution Committee had resolved to defer the request to await a report of the Borough Solicitor on various procedural matters including emerging Government guidance relating to Councillor Call for Action and Petitions under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007;
- Overview and Scrutiny Structure - the Committee noted that the proposed scrutiny structure had been approved by Governance and Constitution Committee for recommendation to Council which listed 5 Scrutiny Committees:
    - Children and Families Scrutiny Committee;
    - Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee;
    - Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee;
    - Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee;
    - Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

Matters to be considered further included whether it was appropriate to allow substitutions on Scrutiny Committees.

RESOLVED: That the outcomes from the meeting of the Governance and Constitution Committee held on 9 February be noted.

53 **ADDRESS BY PORTFOLIO HOLDER**

Councillor Keegan, Portfolio Holder for Resources, briefed the Committee on the Council's budget. He explained that the budget had been discussed at Cabinet on 17 February and would be submitted to full Council for approval on 24 February.

The budget book was not detailed this year but would contain a greater level of detail in future years with budget proposals issued at an earlier stage to enable consultation to take place.

The budget at this stage maintained current grant levels and budget allocations. The budget was balanced with some pump priming from reserves with no income generation schemes included. For the future the budget would be based on a lean systems approach enabling greater efficiencies and would include income generation targets set in the region of £30 million by the end of 2011.

Councillor Keegan outlined a number of future initiatives that may be of interest to the Scrutiny Committee:

Domiciliary Day Care;
Health and Well –Being- how and where services were provided;
Transport – across Cheshire East.

There would also be a number of pilot projects involving Town and Parish Councils relating to devolved service delivery and local leadership.

Members of the Committee were then given the opportunity to ask questions or raise issues as follows:

- The possibility of commenting more fully on the budget in future years when detailed proposals would be available;
- The division of assets between Cheshire East Council and Cheshire West and Chester Council, including the situation regarding Tatton Park;
- It was noted that the budget would not be at risk if future income generation targets were not met;
- The potential impact on Town and Parish Councils in future years if budget allocations changed as they often provided match funding;
- The future role of voluntary organisations which would be reviewed by Scrutiny.

RESOLVED: that the presentation on the budget be noted.

54 ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered developing its Work Programme taking into account a Schedule of Reviews undertaken by the four constituent Authorities and a request from the Portfolio Holder for Performance and Capacity to include the Citizens' Advice Bureau.

RESOLVED: That the following list of items be included in the Work Programme for further consideration at the next meeting as detailed below:

ITEM	ACTION
Transport Co-ordination's Service Level Agreements with Social Services and Education	Review at next meeting – copy of Scrutiny Review to be included on Agenda
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	Review – copy of Scrutiny Review to be included on Agenda and Scoping Report to be done for a review of the role, performance and funding for voluntary organisations.
Risk Management	Defer for 12 months
Support for Older People	Review of Action Plan to next meeting
County Record Office	Defer
Libraries Provision	Defer
Climate Change	Defer
Support to Members	Scoping Report to next meeting
Demographic Change	Defer

Tackling Obesity in Cheshire	Refer to Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee
Diabetes	Refer to Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee
Community Support Centres	Refer to Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee
Transforming Learning Communities	Defer
Community First Responders	Refer to Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee
Youth Sports Provisions in Macclesfield Borough	Include as part of ongoing Pilot Project of Review of Facilities for Young People
Misuse of Alcohol	Consider at next meeting after receiving presentation
Wheels to Work project	Set up Task/Finish Panel to progress
Website Development for Parking fines	Defer
Clinical Waste Collection	Review
Future of Crewe and Nantwich markets	Review
Waste Management Task Group	Defer for 12 months
Car parking Task Group	Review
Crewe Town Centre Task Group	Review
Queens Park Restoration	Monitor outcomes – report to future meeting
Migrant Workers	Set up Task/Finish Panel to progress
Parking at Railway Stations	Review
Air Quality	Defer for 6 months
Gypsy sites	Review
Housing Registered Social Landlords	Defer
Motorbikes	Review
Recycling	Defer
Development of Crewe Railway Station	Progress report to next meeting
Future of leisure facilities	Review

55 **ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT FOR 2008/09**

The Chairman reported orally that he had produced a first draft of the Annual Scrutiny Report which he would circulate for further consideration at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Scrutiny Report for 2008/09 be considered at the next meeting.

56 **FACILITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE - PILOT PROJECT**

The Committee was informed that a meeting of the Panel looking at facilities for young people had received presentations on various initiatives including those run by Connexions, the Princes Trust and the Youth Opportunity Fund.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

57 **UPDATE: CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON IMPROVEMENT PARTNERSHIP MEMBER DEVELOPMENT - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROGRAMME**

The Committee noted that Module 4 of the Member Development – Overview and Scrutiny Programme had taken place on 13 February and the Chairman would complete the feedback questionnaire.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

58 **SCRUTINY DEVELOPMENTS AND TRAINING ISSUES**

The Committee noted that there were no specific Scrutiny developments or training to discuss other than those already raised at the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

59 **PROGRESS ON GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE**

The Committee was advised that Government Guidance in relation to Scrutiny was still awaited and would be reported to the next meeting if available.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.30 pm

Councillor A Thwaite (Chairman)

Forward Plan 1 March 2009 to 30 June 2009

Key Decision	Decisions to be Taken	Decision Maker	Expected Date of Decision	Proposed Consultation	How to make representation to the decision made
CE29 Harmonisation Strategy		Cabinet	24 Mar 2009	Via Trade Unions	Trish Barnett, Lead Officer Cheshire East Transition HR Project
CE35 Shared Services	Approval in principal of list of shared services, governance arrangements and staffing matters.	Cabinet	3 Mar 2009	Via Trade Unions	Lisa Quinn, Borough Treasurer and Head of Assets (Section 151 Officer)
CE45 Revenue Budget 2009/10	Adoption of Revenue Budget 2009/10. Adoption of Band D Council tax 2009/10 Adoption of Reserves Policy and Strategy Adoption of Prudential Indicators	Cabinet, Council	24 Feb 2009	Formal Stakeholder consultation in January 2009.	Lisa Quinn, Borough Treasurer and Head of Assets (Section 151 Officer)
CE46 Capital Programme 2009/10 - 2011/12	Adoption of the Capital Programme	Cabinet, Council	24 Feb 2009	Formal Stakeholder consultation in January 2009.	Lisa Quinn, Borough Treasurer and Head of Assets (Section 151 Officer)

Key Decision	Decisions to be Taken	Decision Maker	Expected Date of Decision	Proposed Consultation	How to make representation to the decision made
CE48 Transitional Costs Update	To receive latest position on cost of implementing local government reorganisation in Cheshire East	Cabinet	17 Feb 2009	Through publication of Cabinet agenda,	Lisa Quinn, Borough Treasurer and Head of Assets (Section 151 Officer)
CE49 Corporate Plan	Adoption of Corporate Plan as part of the Council's Policy Framework	Council, Cabinet	Before 24 Feb 2009	Through publication of Cabinet agenda	Cedric Knipe
CE53 Choice Based Lettings Common Allocations Policy	To determine the basis upon which public sector housing is allocated	Cabinet	24 Mar 2009	Through publication of Cabinet agenda.	Chris McCarthy, Interim Strategic Director Places
CE54 Critical Day 1 HR Policies	To approve key Cheshire East HR Policies which need to be in place for day one.	Cabinet	24 Mar 2009	Via trade unions consultation.	Trish Barnett, Lead Officer Cheshire East Transition HR Project
CE55 Pensions Discretions	Approve the use of pension discretions for the new Council.	Cabinet	24 Mar 2009	Via trade unions consultation.	Trish Barnett, Lead Officer Cheshire East Transition HR Project
CE57 School Admissions Report		Cabinet	24 Mar 2009	To consult Schools and neighbouring authorities.	John Weeks, Strategic Director People

Key Decision	Decisions to be Taken	Decision Maker	Expected Date of Decision	Proposed Consultation	How to make representation to the decision made
CE58 Local Strategic Partnership Formation		Council	24 Feb 2009	Through publication of Council agenda.	Ian Simpson, Performance and Capacity Block Lead Officer
CE59 Local Area Working		Council	24 Feb 2009	Through publication of Council agenda.	Ian Simpson, Performance and Capacity Block Lead Officer
CE60 Sub Regional Housing Strategy		Cabinet	24 Mar 2009	Through publication of Council agenda. Consultation with partner organisations have been carried out.	Chris McCarthy, Interim Strategic Director Places
CE61 Waste Treatment PFI Contract		Cabinet	17 Feb 2009	Consideration by Joint Waste Board and Advisory Panel and through publication of Cabinet agenda.	Chris McCarthy, Interim Strategic Director Places
CE62 Student Finance Discretionary Awards		Cabinet	3 Mar 2009	Through publication of Cabinet agenda.	John Weeks, Strategic Director People

Key Decision	Decisions to be Taken	Decision Maker	Expected Date of Decision	Proposed Consultation	How to make representation to the decision made
CE64 Mobile and Home Working Policy	To approve as part of the flexible and mobile working framework.	Cabinet	24 Mar 2009	Via trade unions consultation.	Trish Barnett, Lead Officer Cheshire East Transition HR Project
CE65 Joint Consultation and Negotiation Panel (JCNP) Arrangements	To approve trade union consultation and negotiation arrangements.	Cabinet	24 Mar 2009	Via trade unions consultation.	Trish Barnett, Lead Officer Cheshire East Transition HR Project
CE66 Capital Strategy 2009/10	Adoption of Capital Strategy for 2009/10.	Cabinet, Council	6 Apr 2009	Through publication of Cabinet and Council agenda.	Lisa Quinn, Borough Treasurer and Head of Assets (Section 151 Officer)
CE67 Asset Management Plan 2009/10	Adoption of Asset Management Plan for 2009/10.	Cabinet, Council	6 Apr 2009	Through publication of Cabinet and Council agenda.	Lisa Quinn, Borough Treasurer and Head of Assets (Section 151 Officer)
CE68 Waste Treatment PFI Contract	To consider the contractual arrangements.	Cabinet	24 Mar 2009	Consideration by Joint Waste Board and Advisory Panel and through publication of Cabinet agenda.	Chris McCarthy, Interim Strategic Director Places

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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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Date of meeting: 19 March 2009
Report of: Governance Lead Officer
Title: Annual Work Programme

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1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To give further consideration to the Scrutiny Work Programme.

2.0 Decision Required

2.1 The Committee is invited to consider items previously identified for inclusion in the Scrutiny Work Programme and agree how and when to take the items forward.

3.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs

3.1 There are no implications for transition costs, except the funding of appropriate Member development in view of the new roles and responsibilities involved.

4.0 Financial Implications 2009/10 and beyond

4.1 To be considered as part of the overall support to be provided to the Scrutiny function.

5.0 Information

5.1 Scrutiny Committees are expected to prepare an annual work Programme and to account for progress on that Programme at year-end.

5.2 At the previous meeting Members considered items from the four Constituent Authorities and decided that the following items should be carried forward onto the Scrutiny Work Programme:

ITEM	ACTION
Transport Co-ordination's Service Level Agreements with Social Services and Education	Review at next meeting – copy of Scrutiny Review to be included on Agenda

Grants to Voluntary Organisations	Review – copy of Scrutiny Review to be included on Agenda and Scoping Report to be done for a review of the role, performance and funding for voluntary organisations.
Risk Management	Defer for 12 months
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Migrant Workers	Set up Task/Finish Panel to progress
Parking at Railway Stations	Review
Air Quality	Defer for 6 months
Gypsy sites	Review
Housing Registered Social Landlords	Defer
Motorbikes	Review
Recycling	Defer
Development of Crewe Railway Station	Progress report to next meeting
Future of leisure facilities	Review

5.3   Attached to this report are the Action Plans from the County Council Scrutiny Reviews of Grants to Voluntary Organisations and the Scrutiny Review of Support to Members which the Committee identified as needing Scoping Reports to be prepared. The Committee is asked to consider whether it wants to progress these areas of work as a priority and if so whether the Committee would like to consider them further at a Mid Point meeting (comprising Chairman, Vice Chairman and Group Spokespersons) or set up a Task/Finish Panel to progress.

For further information:

Officer: Denise French, Democratic Services Team
Tel No: 01270 529643
Email: denise.french@congleton.gov.uk

11

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF GRANTS TO COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

REMIT

1   The Scrutiny Review Panel for grants to community and voluntary organisations was set up in October 2003 with the following terms of reference:-

> To review the County Council's policies on grants to community and voluntary organisations, in particular the operation of the single grant administration model and monitoring arrangements approved by Policy Committee in June 1999, and to identify areas for improvement.

2   The membership of the Panel comprised Councillors David Newton (Chairman), David Andrews, David Brickhill, Chris Claxton, Bert Grange, Peter Nurse and Sue Proctor. Officer support was provided by Berni Moore, Acting Principal Youth Officer who was appointed as the Programme Officer for the Review, Robin Roberts, Members Services Policy Manager and Dave Hagan, Management Trainee.

3   The Panel met 8 times between 30 October 2003 and 25 March 2004, as detailed below

> 30 October 2003 – initial scoping meeting
> 17 December – progress report
> 27 January 2004 – meeting with community / voluntary organisations
> 10 February – meeting with Officers
> 12 February – meeting with Members and community / voluntary
> 　　　　　　　organisations
> 26 February – meeting with Executive Members
> 11 March – review session
> 25 March – review of final report

4   Following the initial scoping exercise of the Panel it was decided to look into all the funding from the County Council to the community and voluntary sector, regardless of whether it is classified as a grant, contract, service level agreement or other funding arrangement. This was due to varying practice across the Services, lack of a consistent interpretation of what is grant and what contract funding, and the perceived intent behind the establishment of the single grant Policy in 1999.

FORM OF INVESTIGATION

5   The Panel's work began with desk top research to ascertain the current situation. The Panel gathered information from each Department concerning all the funding for the voluntary and community sector which they either

provide (from core budgets) or administer (for external agencies). Information requested included funding criteria, level of funding, number of organisations in receipt of funds, purpose of that funding, monitoring practice, duration of agreement and which geographical areas of the county are served.

6   The collection of this data took three months. The information has been inputted into the most comprehensive database of County Council funding yet compiled.

7   On the basis of information gathered during the desk top research stage, witnesses were selected and invited to appear before the Panel during the course of 4 meetings in January / February 2004. Witnesses included representatives of community and voluntary organisations, Officers, Members and Executive Members (see Appendix 5 for a full list of people interviewed by the Panel).

8   The Panel is grateful to all witnesses who attended its meetings, and whose valuable opinions and ideas are reflected in this report. The Panel wishes particularly to extend its thanks to those representatives of community and voluntary organisations who gave up their time to make important and constructive contributions to this review of the County Council's funding processes.

9   This report explains how the issue of funding for community and voluntary organisations came before a Scrutiny Review Panel, and presents the Panel's initial findings along with the results of its research on certain key topics, namely, definitional problems, publicity of funding, application forms and information, Member involvement, monitoring, Compacts, partnership involvement, and internal financial and ICT systems.

THE STORY SO FAR (1999 – 2003)

10   In 1999 Policy Committee created a new corporate grants process for the County Council (this paper is attached as Appendix 6). The aims of this policy were

1   To be able to identify the level of spend from the County Council to the community and voluntary sector
2   To be able to ascertain that there was not any double funding of groups by different Services or Departments
3   To ensure that there was an agreed purpose for all the funding (criteria)
4   To ensure that a common process (corporate) was applied by all services
5   To ensure that all grants were publicised to offer all organisations equal access to the application process
6   To ensure that all grants were monitored to ensure that the Council received value for money.

11   In order to achieve aims one and two, Members approved the creation of a corporate grants database, which was to be maintained by the Community, Youth and Lifelong Learning Service. The application of the new

corporate funding to the community and voluntary sector process, accompanied by common application forms, agreements, monitoring and reporting arrangements, was intended to ensure that aims three to six were achieved.

12   However, in reality, the process was not applied corporately, nor was the database maintained.

13   Initially two new posts were created in Community, Youth and Lifelong Learning, Grants Officer and Grants Assistant, and some progress was made during the year 2000 towards the establishment of the database. This work was hindered from the outset, however, by continued confusion within services as to what constituted a grant, a contract or a Service Level Agreement (SLA). These ongoing definitional problems led to uncertainty amongst Services as to what information they should provide for the database.

14   These initial problems were compounded by staffing difficulties, in December 2000 both the Grants Officer and the Grants Assistant left. The process of establishing the database ceased. Although the Grants Officer post was filled in March 2001 the Assistant post remained vacant until January 2004, due to budgetary pressures within Community, Youth and Lifelong Learning. After March 2001 the Service decided to concentrate its efforts on ensuring that its own grants were correctly administered. Furthermore, the Service decided to await the result of an internal audit of the grants system, in December 2001, before taking any further action with regard to the database.

15   The audit report identified a failure to implement the recommendations of the 1999 Paper, and highlighted various control weaknesses. A draft response to the audit was undertaken, but it was considered that further research and recommendations were required before any final decision could be taken about how to deal with the issues; hence the Members' Scrutiny Review Panel was established.

INITIAL FINDINGS

16   The Panel has been able, despite considerable difficulties, to gather information from each Department to compile the most comprehensive database of information on funding for the community and voluntary sector ever created by the County Council. However, there is no mechanism to capture continually all this information within the Council in order to report an up to date position. The information collated for the Review is just a snapshot for 2003/04. It is essential that mechanisms are put in place within each funding Department to feed this information into the central database, maintained by the Community, Youth and Lifelong Learning Service. It is also necessary for a named individual in each relevant Department to assume responsibility for gathering and passing on the data about all of their funding for the community and voluntary sector.

17   The available resource for allocation in 2003-04 was £7m, with £4.6m from core budgets and £2.4m administered by the County Council on behalf of outside agencies (Appendix 2 shows the budgets for all the funding streams

that each Service either sets aside within its own budgets, or administers on behalf of another agency.) The actual amount of money allocated by the County Council in 2003-04 was £5.7m, with £4.3m from core budgets (Appendix 3 lists each recipient organisation and shows how much they receive). The Panel have increasingly become aware that this funding adds value and attracts additional funding into the community and voluntary sector from other sources as leverage, and can be a very cost effective method for delivering some specific services. The National Council for Voluntary Services' "Hidden Power Report – Highlighting the Hidden Power of the Cheshire Voluntary Sector" (2001) concludes that for every £1 of grant income received the voluntary sector spends £4.20 – meaning that the County Council's £5.7m allocation would actually equate to a value of £24m.

18   The level of detail provided during the Panel's research has not allowed a definitive conclusion to be drawn on levels of spend per district. Although the Panel has ascertained which organisations serve which district, they have only been able to apply the rather crude calculation of dividing each funding award that an organisation receives from the County Council by the number of districts it serves with that funding, to reach a total spend on each district. This is unsatisfactory because whilst an organisation may serve more than one district, it does not necessarily divide the funding it receives equally between these districts. Further, more detailed, research is required, delving into exactly where organisations are spending their funding, before a conclusion can be reached about levels of County Council funding to community and voluntary organisations in each district. Only when these accurate statistics have been gathered can the level of spend be evaluated relative to population and need in each district. With this caveat in mind, Appendix 4 shows indicative figures for the County Council's total funding in each district.

19   The compilation of the funding database has revealed instances of the same organisation receiving multiple funding awards from the County Council, sometimes several from within the same Service. Although it appeared theoretically possible that an organisation could be receiving double funding from the County Council for the delivery of one service, an analysis of the database shows that this is not happening in reality. However, it appears that, inter-Departmentally, Officers do not normally liaise or consult with each other with regard to funding issues. Greater co-ordination between Services and Officers would lead to added value, shared and common monitoring and a consequent reduction in administration. Increased co-ordination would also add clarity for the recipient organisation.

20   The Panel's research has shown that the practice of awarding funding for 'historical' reasons is still commonplace. The particular problem associated with such funding is that it may have continued despite changes to the County Council's priorities or, indeed, changes to the nature of the recipient organisation and the services it delivers.

21   One grant fund (£63,000) set up under Local Management of Schools (LMS), to 'compensate' schools for continued free use of their premises by community and voluntary organisations, in particular scouts and guides, is an indication of such historical funding practice. The Panel is of the view that this

should not be a grant fund and that the resource, though limited, should be used in an alternative way.

22   The Panel's research also suggests that there is a general trend within the County Council towards the use of funding to commission specific services, rather than distributing grants to support organisations' general activities and core costs. The Panel inclines to the view that the County Council should strike an appropriate balance between commissioning and grants awards. Community and voluntary organisations often find it difficult to access core funding from elsewhere, as many benefactors only wish to pay for project work. Furthermore, inviting general applications for funding can encourage organisations to propose innovative solutions, which might not necessarily have been considered if the County Council was exclusively commissioning services.

23   In general the implementation of common standards for funding to the community and voluntary sector has not been a priority area for the County Council, either corporately or within individual Departments, despite the policy approved by Members in 1999. This would seem to be part of the reason why the recommendations for improvement made in the 2001 Internal Audit report have not been implemented.

24   Organisations are often dependent on County Council funding, and they, in turn, play a crucial role in the delivery of its services. The Panel's interviews with both County Council Officers and representatives of community and voluntary organisations revealed a considerable degree of mutual appreciation for the value of each others' work and contribution. Officers praised the richness and diversity of the Cheshire community and voluntary sector.

25   Although the value of the relationship between the County Council and the community and voluntary organisations that it funds is widely recognised privately, it seems that more could be done to publicly articulate and celebrate this partnership. The County Council could give better recognition of the community and voluntary sector's contribution, with positive publicity which may, in itself, help certain organisations to access further funds. In turn, community and voluntary organisations, which often do no more than refer to County Council funding in passing in their annual reports and accounts, should be encouraged to promote the Authority with more prominent acknowledgement of the importance of its funding and partnership arrangements. It needs to be acknowledged that in limited cases such publicity may conflict with the need for that organisation to be seen by the public as independent from the Authority. For some organisations this would be a major issue.

DEFINITIONAL PROBLEMS

26   Throughout the review witnesses have been asked to provide their definitions of key terms, and each has varied. County Council funding to the community and voluntary sector is variously defined as grants, contracts and service level agreements (SLAs). Although these terms are widely used, there is no clear, commonly shared definition of them understood across the

Authority. Audit confirmed that this is a longstanding problem, and that it was a key cause of the difficulties Officers had experienced when trying to gather information for the funding to the community and voluntary sector database from each Department. Without establishing clear definitions the database will continue to be inconsistent and inaccurate in the future. Appendix 4 shows what percentage of funding awards from each Service fall into each category (grant, contract or SLA), this information cannot be considered entirely accurate, as it is based upon Services own differing definitions of each of these terms.

27 The 1999 Paper was preceded by a paper that went to Community Development Panel in 1998, and which proposed four different categories of funding support for the community and voluntary sector and defined each of them

> (1) **Contracts and contractual arrangements:** payments to community and voluntary organisations for specified direct services (the nature of the relationship is the same as that with a private sector provider)
> (2) **Service agreements:** payments to community and voluntary organisations for a specified level of service or support which furthers the County Council's objectives
> (3) **Grant aid:** payments to community and voluntary organisations whose activities further the County Council's aims and objectives
> (4) **One-off projects and "seedcorn":** usually one-off grants to community and voluntary organisations which apply against a set of agreed criteria

28 The Panel decided that these were clear, adequate and provide the definition that is required for this purpose.

29 Contracts and grant aid are subject to different levels of reporting to, and decision making by, Members. This difference is endorsed within the Code of Practice for Financial Management. If this reporting and recording were to remain different, it would be difficult for the Council to ascertain clearly the level of financial support it provides to the community and voluntary sector, and subsequently difficult to calculate the level of added value or best value, and to guarantee that no organisations slip through the net and that all potential double funding is picked up. Therefore it is necessary that all funding to the community and voluntary sector be reported and entered onto the database.

PUBLICITY OF FUNDING

30 One of the principles behind the 1999 Policy Committee Paper approved by Members was that funding to the community and voluntary sector should be well publicised.

31 The Scrutiny Review Panel's research has shown that funding for the community and voluntary sector is not consistently well publicised across the Authority. Representatives of community and voluntary organisations who are

in receipt of County Council funding argued that they are often only aware of funding opportunities because they are already "in the loop." While some funding streams are extensively publicised and open, others are relatively unknown except to those organisations already receiving them. Even some of the organisations who have longstanding relations with the County Council are not aware of the full range of funding streams to which they can apply. A possible solution to this problem is to produce a summary document showing all funding streams, in addition this information could be included in the Yellow Book.

32   From an Officer perspective, the variety in publicity of funding streams partly reflected a limited capacity to deal with the number of applications that could result if the availability of County Council funding was further publicised. One Department stated that they did not wish to give the false impression that they had substantial financial support available for open distribution, when in fact the vast majority of their funding had to be aimed at organisations and projects that would contribute to the fulfilment of their statutory responsibilities and the achievement of Government targets.

33   In some instances organisations are commissioned to provide services, without being subject to a competitive tendering process. From an Officer perspective this approach is justified if the service in question is so specialised that only one organisation has the capacity to deliver it locally.

APPLICATION FORMS AND INFORMATION

34   One of the principles of the 1999 Paper was that there should be a standardised application form and process for grants.

35   The Panel's research shows that some Services are not using application forms, and instead entering into discussions and partnership arrangements with community and voluntary organisations, who subsequently invoice them for their funding. In those instances were application forms are used as part of the process, it appears that the corporate form is being used, sometimes with minor alterations to capture the information that particular Services require.

36   Community and voluntary organisations generally found the County Council's application forms relevant and easy to complete. Some suggestions were made regarding possible alterations and improvements, to allow organisations more space to include information which they feel is important and to explain what they could achieve with more funding. In addition to this, organisations felt the inclusion of more detailed guidance notes would be advantageous, especially as different sectors do not necessarily share the same terminology.

37   The 1999 Policy Paper proposed that in addition to the application form a set of criteria would be sent to applicants. This would outline the basis for, and promote transparency in, decision making. The criteria should be publicised so that external organisations would be able to judge to which fund they should apply. The 1999 Paper also set out the related principle that decision making on grants should be defined and transparent.

38   The Panel's research again suggests that these requirements have not been implemented corporately. Many organisations are not aware of the criteria which determine the success or failure of their applications. Furthermore, some organisations suspect that a failure to publicise criteria meant that, in the event of there being too many applications, they could be unfairly altered to exclude some applicants.

39   Setting out clearer criteria as a matter of course would also benefit the Authority. If such criteria were to set out plainly what would and would not be funded by particular streams, and the length of time such funding would last, then community and voluntary organisations would have a clearer understanding of both what is available and the nature of their relationship with the County Council as a funding body. Organisations would be made to recognise that the County Council is not obliged to fund their activities for an unspecified duration. Such clarity may also serve to discourage some of the unsuitable applications which might be expected if the principle of greater publicising of the availability of funding is acted upon. Finally, informing organisations that the criteria for funding are time limited, and subject to change, would allow organisations to recognise that their proposed application may become suitable at a later date.

MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

40   One of the principles of the 1999 Paper was that regular reports on funding to the community and voluntary sector and monitoring data should be presented to the relevant County Council Committees.

41   Member involvement in the funding for the community and voluntary sector process is irregular throughout the Authority. Members could, and should, play a greater role in various aspects of the process, both from Executive decisions to local Member contact with organisations in their own community.

42   Executive involvement in the process is set out in Financial Regulation 12.1, which states, 'The Executive will on an annual basis, agree a policy setting down the approach to be taken to the allocation of grants, donations and other contributions to outside bodies. This should specify the scale, nature and terms of such support, criteria for prioritisation and the process for allocation'.

43   Executive Members have confirmed that this process does not currently take place. However a regular paper does, in most cases, go to Members in the March cycle of meetings outlining certain funding streams, stating criteria, which organisations were supported during the past year, and, in some cases, proposals for the coming year. The advantages of the Executive, or Executive member for each Department, setting an overall policy, with clear criteria for prioritisation, would be twofold. Firstly it would help to reduce the level of inconsistency amongst Departments and Services. Secondly it would clear up uncertainty in the community and voluntary sector regarding the County Council's funding criteria and related aims.

44   Executive Members were generally not aware that there is a corporate community and voluntary sector funding process. Prior to the Scrutiny Review process they did not know how much money their Department was allocating. Although they were consulted with regard to decision making on the allocation of some of this funding, they were unaware of other funding streams from their Department.

45   Some Members are not aware of which organisations within their division are funded by the County Council, although Members generally agreed that such knowledge is important. Some organisations enjoy regular contact with local Members, whilst others have limited or no contact with Members.

46   The Panel believes that there is great scope for an extended Member role in various aspects of the funding process. Members should be provided with more basic information about community and voluntary organisations operating in their area. This information can be taken from the new funding database, and could be supplemented by additional details supplied by the Lead Officers for individual funding awards.

47   Increased Member involvement in the process is desirable for various reasons. In terms of the Executive's role it is essential in order to fulfil the financial regulations of the County Council, and to provide a coherent corporate policy each year. In terms of the local Member role increased involvement could help to redress some of the problems within the current system, including the lack of feedback to organisations and the need for more rigorous monitoring. It would also help to foster stronger links between the County Council and its community and voluntary sector partners.

48   Processes for increasing local Member involvement will need to be carefully considered and managed. This is necessary to ensure that there is an appropriate division between the role of the Member and the Officer, and that there are suitable channels for the outcomes of Member visits to be fed into the monitoring process. It has also been suggested that County Forums could play a role here, as the bodies to which further information about local recipient community and voluntary organisations is provided. Further developments of the County Forums' role would need to be carefully considered, along with that of the Local Strategic Partnerships, in order to clarify where Members are involved.

MONITORING

49   One of the principles of the 1999 paper was that funding to the community and voluntary sector should be monitored quarterly and payments made only on receipt of monitoring information.

50   The Panel's research has discovered a wide variety of monitoring arrangements across the Authority.

51   Monitoring arrangements include formal meetings, reports from community and voluntary organisations (self monitoring), visits from Officers, or any combination of the above approaches. The frequency of such

monitoring contact also varies, ranging from monthly to annual. In the case of some small grants, monitoring information is not gathered until the funding comes to an end. Levels of monitoring differ not only across Departments and Services, but also across the different localities within the same Service. Organisations are generally only required to provide quantitative data in their self monitoring reports, which they feel does not reflect on the quality of the services they provide.

52   To some extent varieties in the rigour with which funding awards are monitored are justifiable. Factors which can justify variance include the amount of funding being awarded, obviously it does not make sense to request the same monitoring information for a grant to fund a small one off event, as one would require for a major service delivery contract.

53   Most large community and voluntary organisations would be happy to accept more stringent monitoring and provide further information, as they are already required to do so in their reports to other agencies. The potential problems of requesting further information are that this could undermine the capacity of small organisations, or that the County Council could spend a disproportionate amount of money and time on monitoring, relative to the size of the funding awards being examined.

54   Organisations would also welcome more visits from both Officers and Members as part of the monitoring process. The County Council need to develop guidelines to ensure that information from such visits to community and voluntary organisations is fed into the monitoring process. Organisations would also welcome more comments on the monitoring information that they provide. Some organisations receive no comments whatsoever. Even those who do tend to receive them orally, rather than in writing.

55   In the case of some of the historical grants, for example LMS funding to schools to remain open to provide community services, self-monitoring, unsubstantiated by any further checks, is all that is necessary for the funding to be released.

56   In some cases targets are built into the funding agreement. Sometimes targets come from the Authority, in other cases they come from the recipient organisation. It is the view of this Panel that targets, or intended outcomes that can be achieved with the funding, must be clearly agreed between both parties at the outset, monitored and reported on. It is also necessary that baseline figures are included with targets to enable organisations' progress and achievements to be measured.

57   Failure to meet targets, or to provide sufficient evidence of achievements in the monitoring process, can be dealt with in a variety of ways. Most commonly, funding is withheld until monitoring data is provided. In the event of failure to achieve the objectives of the funding, Officers' stated approach would be to attempt to assist the organisation to fulfil its role. In the event of ongoing, persistent poor performance funding would be withdrawn. However, examples of this actually occurring are extremely rare.

COMPACTS

58   The Panel's research has revealed a general lack of knowledge of Compact development, and its implications, across the Authority.

59   In 1998 the national "Compact on Relations between the Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector" was published. It provides a framework to enable better relations to be developed and improved partnership working based on shared values and mutual respect. The national Compact was underpinned by the philosophy that voluntary and community activity is fundamental to the development of a democratic and inclusive society, and that the voluntary and community sector brings distinctive value to society.

60   Guidelines for developing Compacts locally between public authorities and the community and voluntary sector were published in 2000. The Government expects all local statutory sector organisations to be making progress towards involvement in Compacts by 2004. The development of local Compacts is a key target within the Cheshire Community Strategy. The County Council has already signed up to a local Compact in Vale Royal, and has agreed to support Compact development in the 5 other districts.

61   The development of local Compacts should impact upon many aspects of the funding for the community and voluntary sector process as described in this paper. As well as requiring consistency in funding arrangements across the local public sector, Compacts may also require fairer access to funding, clear criteria, increased clarity about monitoring and evaluation, early notification of decisions to organisations, and increased sustainability and long term planning.

62   Despite the significance of Compact development, the Panel's research shows that both Officers and Members of the County Council are generally unaware of the concept and its implications. Even those who recognised the term felt that they still needed further information.

63   Some of the community and voluntary sector organisations interviewed were equally unacquainted with the concept. Those organisations who did understand it expressed mixed opinions, ranging from enthusiasm to concern about attempts to apply a "one size fits all" solution to a highly diverse sector.

64   There is a general desire amongst recipient organisations, and many Officers, for greater use of 3 year funding agreements. Some of the benefits of these are that medium term planning is improved as it is underpinned by the required funding. One year funding does present difficulties where staff contracts are involved.

65   Compact compliance will affect all aspects of the relationship, including funding, between the County Council and the community and voluntary sector. The implementation of the action plan recommended by the Panel would move the County Council towards Compact compliance, but a more considered review of the full implications of Compacts needs to go hand in hand with their ongoing development at local level.

PARTNERSHIP INVOLVEMENT

66   The development of closer links between the different public sector agencies that fund the community and voluntary sector is an essential part of Compacts. This is also an issue that was highlighted by some community and voluntary organisations, who wanted to see greater co-ordination of processes, to simplify matters, and of decision making, to remove uncertainty over whether each part of their funding would continue.

67   Agencies with which such links should be developed include the District Councils, the Primary Care Trusts, the National Lottery and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). The LSPs are particularly significant as a forum for creating links and sharing information with other funders and interested parties. The County Council should also give due regard to the LSPs' priorities when making decisions about its own allocation priorities.

INTERNAL FINANCIAL AND ICT SYSTEMS

68   The financial systems within the Council, with the introduction of Integrated Business Systems (IBS), will record and report all financial activity that has occurred. Within IBS this will only show its full benefit if clearer guidelines and the subsequent use of the coding structure are applied and adhered to.

69   Current systems do not appear to have the capability to assist in areas that are essential in meeting the requirements about double funding, except showing where one organisation may receive multiple payments from the Authority. Such multiple payments are not evidence of double funding, but upon further investigation utilising this information such occurrences could be identified after the funding has occurred.

70   An investigation to identify an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) package or solution in order to capture comprehensive data to assist a Council approach needs to be a priority. Such a package would need to offer an interrogation aspect, in order to address issues of multiple or double funding prior to it occurring, and assist in the administrative process of application, monitoring and payment, therefore it will need to interface with IBS systems.

71   The clarity offered within the Financial Guidelines is, at times, ambiguous and not always helpful. The Guidelines do not adequately separate inward grants to the County Council and outward grants from the County Council. In addition some further synergies between contracts, service level agreements or grants for the procurement of services require further investigation, in particular with regard to reporting to Members and their involvement.

CONCLUSION

72   Some considerable progress has been made to respond to the 1999 Decision Paper, but not enough. The identification within this referring to just grants is insufficient, as it does not wholly meet the intentions behind it. It

must include all funding to the community and voluntary sector regardless of the contractual arrangement.

73	Earlier attempts to create a database of all County Council funding to the community and voluntary sector failed. As a result of the Scrutiny process a comprehensive database has been established for the first time. It is essential that this database is maintained in the future. In order to do this systems and communication between Services and Departments need to be improved. It is essential that named individuals in each Department assume responsibility for gathering and passing on information for the database.

74	A Council approach is required, but this does not necessitate a centralisation of the processes or staff, as the direct personal contact and understanding between lead Officers, administrators and recipient organisations is essential to maintain the good relationships between the Authority and the community and voluntary sector.

75	The involvement of Members does need some further clarity to reflect the changes in political management and the changing roles of elected Members in relation to County Forums, and the development of Local Strategic Partnerships.

76	The concept of, and the subsequent action by the Authority on, Compact Development requires an improved level of understanding. The leadership within the organisation and with other public bodies on this matter appears to be spasmodic and at best not co-ordinated.

77	The contribution made by the community and voluntary sector in improving the quality of life for Cheshire residents is often insufficiently recognised.

78	It has proved difficult for the Panel to be precise about the resource implications of its recommendations and action plan. The Panel recognise that the actions recommended will result in extra costs in some cases but this is difficult to quantify at this stage as further work needs to be undertaken. However, it is clear that whilst few extra resources may be required for each individual action, cumulatively these actions would probably imply a considerable resource allocation.

A GENERAL NOTE ON THE SCRUTINY REVIEW PROCESS

79	The Panel have found this Scrutiny Review Process challenging but immensely rewarding. This work has the potential to bring substantial benefits to the Authority as a whole and to its partners. This Scrutiny Review has required intensive work both by the Members and the Officers providing support, in order to complete within the timescale. The quality of the reporting which has been attained is due to the willingness of Officers and Members to give time, commitment and energy to the completion of the process, which in some cases can impinge heavily on their normal work. The Panel wishes to state that, in the interests of ensuring that future Reviews are always carried out as thoroughly as possible, the amount of Officer and Member time required for such scrutiny be noted, and that further resources, where appropriate, be dedicated to supporting the process.

RECOMMENDED: That

(1)   The Action Plan produced by the Scrutiny Review Panel be endorsed and implemented, acknowledging that any staff and budgetary requirements need to be assessed as part of subsequent years' MTS processes;

(2)   People and Communities Scrutiny Sub-Committee be the body responsible for monitoring County Council funding for the community and voluntary sector, and for the implementation of this report's action plan on an annual basis; and

(3)   Performance and Overview Committee considers what advice it wishes to offer to the Executive concerning the allocation of additional resources to support the Scrutiny Review process.

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF GRANTS TO COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

ACTION PLAN

Recommended that

1. The terms grant, contract and service level agreement, as defined in the 1999 Policy paper, be endorsed, and that these definitions be applied consistently across all Departments. These definitions to be supplemented by clear guidelines on the criteria for using each type of funding

Action	Resource implication	Responsibility	Timescale
1.1 The definition as stated in the Policy Paper on what qualifies for grants, contract and SLA's to be affirmed	None	Performance & Overview	April 2004
1.2 Each Department / Service to review all payments to the voluntary and community sector, to assess to what extent they are in accordance with the definition above, and report results to Service Boards	It is anticipated that this could be undertaken within existing staffing levels	County Managers	Sept 2004
1.3 All agreements to be within the correct procedure for Grants or Contracts	None	County Managers	April 2005
1.4 The processes for monitoring as approved in the 1999 Paper to be reaffirmed and applied by all Departments (see also action 5.4)	This would probably require some additional resource	County Managers	April 2004

2. All funding awards be linked more closely to the County Council's priorities and values statement, and should be widely published as such

Action	Resource implication	Responsibility	Timescale
2.1 In approving funding criteria and awarding grants and contracts, Members and Officers to identify clearly the contribution that the funding will make to the achievement of the Council's priorities	None	County Managers and Executive Members	Sept 2004

3. The relevant sections of the Financial Regulations, and the Code of Practice on Financial Management, be applied on all funding allocations to the voluntary sector

Action	Resource implication	Responsibility	Timescale
3.1 Financial Regulation 12.1 to be applied	None	Executive	April 2004
3.2 All payments for the year 2004/5 to be in accordance with the Code of Practice on Financial Management, Grants Section 14 Contracts Section 8	None	County Managers	Sept 2004
3.3 The current review of the Code of Practice on Financial Management to take full account of the recommendations of this Scrutiny Panel	None	Director of Policy and Performance	Completion of the review

4. All funding awarded on a historical basis be reviewed as a matter of urgency, with particularly consideration given to the ongoing validity of these awards in the light of changes to both the County Council's priorities, and the nature of the recipient organisation and the services it delivers

Action	Resource implication	Responsibility	Timescale
4.1 All grants or contracts that have been reported as 'historical' to be reviewed. The outcome of the review reported to Service Boards	This would probably require some additional resource	County Managers	Sept 2004
4.2 The LMS Grants within Community Youth & Lifelong Learning to be reviewed, with a view to a deletion within MTS 2005/6, with a compensatory establishment of an LMS Extended Schools Budget	It is anticipated that this could be undertaken within existing staffing levels	Director Education & Community	Oct 2004

2

5. A County Co-ordinating Group be established to gather data, ensure that processes are adhered to and review processes to explore possibilities for further improvement

Action	Resource implication	Responsibility	Timescale
5.1 A designated named Officer, probably appropriately located in Policy and Performance, to be identified as County Co-ordinator – Community and Voluntary Sector, to monitor the co-ordination, collation and reporting to the Grants Officer of all funding to the community and voluntary sector, this includes both grants and contracts. (see also action 8.3) This Officer will, with Departmental Co-ordinators, establish a **County Co-ordinating Group**	This would probably require some additional resource	Director of Policy and Performance	May 2004
5.2 A designated named Officer to be identified in each Department to co-ordinate, collate and report on all funding to the voluntary and community sector from his / her Department (This includes both grants and contracts).	This would probably require some additional resource	Departmental Management Teams	May 2004
5.3 The County Co-ordinating Group to review and recommend any changes required to the Council's grants application processes and forms, including providing clearer guidelines and detailed criteria to applicants	This would probably require some additional resource	County Co-ordinating group	Sept 2004
5.4 County Co-ordinating Group to investigate changes to the County Council's systems and timescales relating to the issuing of grants and contracts (including adequate monitoring and feedback to recipient organisations) and to recommend changes necessary to become Compact compliant (see also action 8.4)	This would probably require some additional resource	County Co-ordinator	Sept 2004
5.5 The County Co-ordinating Group to investigate with the County ICT Manager any additional ICT systems that will assist in the administration of funding to the voluntary and community sector. Any new requirements to be costed and submitted within MTS 2005/06	If additional ICT systems required - £20k - £80k	County Co-ordinating group	Review to be completed by Sept 2004. (Implementation in 2005/06)
5.6 The County Co-ordinating Group to commission further research into different levels of spend across the districts and to	This would probably require some additional	County Co-ordinating group	Sept 2004

develop methods to compare spending against population and need	resource		

6. Each Department supplies the relevant information for the maintenance of a consistent and complete Funding to Community and Voluntary Organisations database

Action	Resource implication	Responsibility	Timescale
6.1 An up to date database recording all funding arrangements between the County Council and the voluntary and community sector to be established and maintained from 2004/5. Grants and Contracts to be reported separately within the database	It is anticipated that this could be undertaken within existing staffing levels	Grants Officer, Community Youth & Lifelong Learning (CYLL)	April 2004
6.2 Departmental and County Co-ordinators to ensure all relevant activity is reported to the Grants Officer (see also actions 5.1 and 5.2), on agreed pro forma returns, when agreements are signed and prior to any payments being made	It is anticipated that this could be undertaken within existing staffing levels	Grants Officer CY&LL and County Co-ordinator – Voluntary Sector	May 2004
6.3 Prior to any agreement Officers to access the database to ensure that no double funding for the same activity occurs	None	Lead Officers	April 2004

7. Cheshire Local Strategic Partnership be identified as the appropriate body to take the lead in developing a local Compact between public bodies and the voluntary sector

Action	Resource implication	Responsibility	Timescale
7.1 Cheshire LSP to be supported in taking the lead to develop a Compact between the Public bodies in Cheshire and the voluntary and community sector, so that a Compact may be established by April 2005 (see also action 5.4)	This would probably require some additional resource	Director Policy and Performance	April 2004 – April 2005

4

8. Further information be provided to Area Forums concerning funding to local voluntary organisations, and that the role of the local Member in linking with the allocation of resources and monitoring these organisations be further investigated and developed			
Action	**Resource implication**	**Responsibility**	**Timescale**
8.1 Strategic Partnership Unit to consider reporting the funding activity of the Council within each district to the appropriate County Forum	None	County Manager - Communications and Research	Sept 2004
8.2 Management Board to consider and report to the Executive the possible benefits of allowing individual local Members or County Forums to allocate small delegated grant funds	Implementation of review outcomes may require extra resources	Management Board	Jan 2005
8.3 People and Communities Scrutiny Sub-Committee to receive annual reports on funding for the community and voluntary sector and to make any appropriate recommendations	None	County Co-ordinator	Autumn 2004
8.4 County Co-ordinating group to consider other ways of developing Member involvement in the funding process (see also action 5.4)	None	County Co-ordinator	Jan 2005

9. The County Council should provide better publicity on the availability of funding for the community and voluntary sector, and recipient organisations should be encouraged to publicise the financial support they receive from Cheshire County Council.			
Action	**Resource implication**	**Responsibility**	**Timescale**
9.1 A page on the Council inter and intra nets be established that identifies all the County Council funding streams that fund grants and contracts to the community and voluntary sector, application and tendering processes and the lead Officer for contact purposes.	It is anticipated that this could be undertaken within existing staffing levels	County Manager – Communications and Research	July 2004
9.2 The County Council to produce a statement that outlines the financial and other contributions from the County Council to the community and voluntary sector for 2003/4. This statement to include recognition of the role the organisations play in improving the quality of life for residents of Cheshire.	None	County Manager – Communications and Research	May 2004
9.3 All recipient organisations to be encouraged to give adequate	None	Lead Officers &	May 2004

publicity to the financial support they receive from CCC		County Co-ordinating group	

Note on resource implications

The Panel recognise that the actions recommended will result in extra costs in some cases but this is difficult to quantify at this stage as further work needs to be undertaken. However, it is clear that whilst few extra resources may be required for each individual action, cumulatively these actions would probably imply a considerable resource allocation.

6

11 | **AGENDA ITEM 7**

MEETING : **COUNCIL**
DATE : **20 MAY 2004**

REPORT OF : PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
Contact : Councillor David Newton, Chairman of Scrutiny Review Panel

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SCRUTINY REVIEW OF GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

1 In accordance with the Council's Annual Scrutiny Plan for 2003/04, a Scrutiny Review Panel, chaired by Councillor David Newton, has been reviewing the operation of the Council Council's Policy on Grants to Voluntary Organisations.

2 The Panel's Report and Action Plan are attached for the Council's consideration.

3 Performance and Overview Committee considered this matter at its meeting on 15 April and has advised the Council to approve the Report and Action Plan which are attached as Appendix 1

RECOMMENDED:

That the Council approve the Report and Action Plan.

Local Member	*N/A*

Background Documents	N/A

Available for Inspection at	N/A

Report of Scrutiny Review Panel on Support to Members

June 2007

Contents

1. **Introduction**

1.1 Elected Members give Local Government its essential legitimacy, accountability, strategic direction, and community focus. Members should therefore be supported appropriately to carry out their roles.

1.2 The Drivers for Improved Support Arrangements:

(i) **The role of a Member is a demanding one**: As more duties and responsibilities have been placed on local authorities, Members have seen workload increase significantly. In-house surveys suggest that Members spend on average 29 hours per week on Council business. This includes County meetings, civic activity, elector issues, officer meetings, outside bodies, preparing for meetings, party activity etc. In many respects the role is becoming a full time job and it is a challenge to balance it with outside work commitments. The call on time is even greater for office holders. It is also important to note that Cheshire County Council has the fourth highest number of constituents per Member (1:10,500) out of England's 21 County Councils.

(ii) **The role of the Member is also one undergoing considerable change:** The 2006 Local Government White Paper – *Strong and Prosperous Communities* – places great emphasis on the "place shaping" and "community leadership" role of the elected Member rather than the traditional role of an elected representative.

(iii) **Delivering the Transforming Cheshire vision**: Transforming Cheshire, a County-wide programme of fundamental change and improvement, is also a key driver for ensuring that both Members and Officers are able to use their time in the most efficient and effective way. "Improving the Community Focus For Elected Members" is one of the ten key pledges of Transforming Cheshire. In addition, a specific project - PP6 - will address the issue of Member Support, by developing and delivering the recommendations that result from this Scrutiny Review.

1.3 Initiating the Review

(i) At the County Council meeting held on 13 July 2006, a Notice of Motion: Getting the Best out of Councillors, was moved by Councillor S R Proctor and seconded by Councillor D T Bateman calling for an informed debate on the provision of Research Assistants for Elected Members.

(ii) The Motion was referred to Performance and Overview Committee on the 4 September who resolved:

"That in considering the Notice of Motion, the Council be advised to recognise the serious financial constraints which currently apply to the Authority, and they be taken into account fully when the issues raised by the Notice of Motion are discussed, including the need for compensatory savings to finance any additional support."

(iii) The Executive considered the Motion on 20 September. The Motion was not adopted due to *"the serious financial constraints which currently apply to the Authority"*.

(iv) Organisation Committee on 27 September, however, advised that a comprehensive scrutiny review of the current level of support to Members, the resources available and the scope for improvement be commissioned urgently through the Corporate Services Scrutiny Select Committee.

(v) On 21 November the Corporate Services Scrutiny Select Committee approved a Scoping Report and Membership for a Scrutiny Review on Support to Members.

1.3 <u>Scoping</u>

(i) The terms of reference for the Review were as follows:

"To review the nature and resourcing of the support facilities currently provided to Members, and to identify and make recommendations on ways in which Councillors can be better enabled to carry out their developing roles, including under the Transforming Cheshire Programme. The review is to take account of the issues raised in the "Getting the best out of Councillors" Notice of Motion, and the approach taken in other appropriate Councils."

(ii) The Members of the Review Panel were:

- Councillor E Moore Dutton (Chair)
- Councillor S Wilkinson
- Councillor B Wolstencroft
- Councillor M Byram
- Councillor D Bateman
- Councillor P Byrne
- Councillor S Proctor

1.4 <u>Approach</u>

(i) The Panel met on nine occasions. At the first meeting the Panel agreed to structure its work by seeking to respond to the following questions:

1. How are Members currently supported by the County Council?

2. What support arrangements would be appropriate to enable Members to carry out their developing roles?

3. How can any gap between current Member support and requirements be bridged?

(ii) The Panel was aware of the initial comments of the Executive on the cost implications of providing additional direct support to Members. In addition to

4

being briefed on the Transforming Cheshire Programme by representatives of Pricewaterhouse Coopers, the Panel at an early meeting was reminded by Mike Flynn (County Secretary) of the direct support arrangements currently in place for Members, noting in particular expenditure in 2006/07 on Secretarial Support (£70,775), Member Learning and Development (£7,968), Members IT (£14,865 on hardware/toners/mobile phone and Blackberry phone calls and line rental), Members Allowances (£904,729). It was noted that there was no dedicated budget for Member's ICT support which the Panel Members considered to be an obstacle in the light of the panel's Terms of Reference requiring it to "*review the nature and resourcing of the support facilities currently provided to Members*".

(iii) Against this background the Panel's focus has been on the following areas:

- Local Working
- Casework
- Council Papers
- Technology
- Member's Secretaries
- Research and Communications
- Learning and Development
- Corporate Ownership

(iv) A schedule of meetings and witnesses interviewed is in Appendix 1. The Panel also considered the results of a questionnaire which provided the opportunity for all Members of the County Council to comment on existing support arrangement and to suggest potential improvements. The Panel also received evidence of best practice from other Authorities.

1.5 The Panel is grateful to those who have contributed to the Review and particularly those witnesses who agreed to provide evidence.

Councillor Eveleigh Moore Dutton

Chairman of the Support to Members Scrutiny Panel.

2. Executive Recommendations

1. *The County Council acknowledge that the role of the Local Member is changing in the context of increased local expectations and the Local Government White Paper.*

2. *To enable the role of the Local Member to be developed, early attention be directed to the provision of resources, including those under PP4.*

3. *Members be encouraged to use the Customer Access Centre (CAC) as the preferred method of processing routine casework.*

4. *Further work be undertaken urgently to commission a stand-alone casework tracking system for Members.*

5. *A new report template be introduced forthwith that captures the essential information that Members require for effective understanding and decision making.*

6. *Corporate guidance be issued on effective report writing as soon as possible and a re-shaped training course be put in place.*

7. *There be a presumption that communications with Members should primarily be through electronic means*

8. *Further work be undertaken to establish which additional technologies would benefit Members.*

9. *PIN should be replaced as a matter of urgency as part of the Transforming Cheshire project PP6, to meet the needs of all users.*

10. *Procedures be put in place to enable individual Members to be notified of changes to and the content of their Web Pages.*

11. *The role of the Members Secretaries be restated and promulgated, and be subject to regular review.*

12. *The Members Secretaries be involved in the planning of and support for Members IT developments.*

13. *The Groups ensure that the most efficient use is made of the Members Accommodation Suite– to meet such needs as "Quiet Areas", Document Libraries, Work Stations.*

14. *A Members page on the intranet be developed as a matter of urgency; the page to be a gateway for Members to access sources of research, briefing papers, e-training, and any other relevant sources of information.*

15. *Electronic briefing notes be made available to Members to keep them informed about issues of general and specific interest.*

16. *Paper copies of the internal telephone directory and the A to Z of services be made available in the Members Rooms.*

17. More innovative learning approaches be introduced for Members including workshops, action learning sets and distance learning.

18 Greater access to the Corporate Training Programme by Members be encouraged.

19. More 1-2-1 IT training from non-specialist IT trainers be made available to Members

20. More focus be given to community leadership training for Members to support them in their changing roles.

21. The Management Board reaffirm its commitment to supporting all Members to carry out their challenging roles, and Protocols be developed within each Department to ensure that this is embedded in the organisation

22. Clear accountability should be set down for corporate performance on Support to Members and the implementation of the Action Plan.

3. Local Working

3.1 Elected Members have a duty to represent and actively engage with their local communities. While this has always been the case, this aspect of a Member's role appears to be increasing in importance and the support requirements need to be considered.

3.2 The Panel heard from Alison Armstrong, the County Council's Strategic Partnerships Manager, on the changing role of Members in the context of the localism agenda

3.3 Current Support: Members currently engage with their local communities in a variety of ways. Surgeries, local meetings, and correspondence are all important in this context. The County Council, via the Strategic Partnerships Unit, supports Members at the local level to work through Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Locality Boards, bringing together local partners, officers and Members. Whilst not formal decision making bodies with significant financial resources, Locality Boards play a vital role in assessing local needs and ensuring these are fed into the development of policy. They are supported by two dedicated Locality Business Managers who support Members both individually and collectively at the local level. Parish Councils are also a key mechanism for Members to engage with local communities. Liaison takes a variety of forms – e.g. Parish Cluster Meetings – with support from the Strategic Partnerships Unit. Similar support is available for local working within unparished settings. However, what is currently in place would be insufficient to support the growing localism and community leadership agenda..

3.4 In addition to the work of the Strategic Partnerships Unit, Members are supported at the local level by access to comprehensive local statistics provided by Research and Intelligence.

3.5 Requirements: Much progress has been made by the County Council in supporting Members at the local level. However, the agenda is increasing in importance and the nature and scale of support will need to change. The 2006 Local Government White Paper –*Strong and Prosperous Communities* – places great emphasis on the importance of the "front-line Councillor"*,* on "place shaping" and on -"community engagement". The new Community Call for Action, strengthened LSPs and the Local Area Agreement will demand more focus, effort and activity at the local level for both Members and Officers. The Panel has noted that a potential outcome of the current Local Government Review debate could be in total fewer councillors across Cheshire, but with a greater range of matters to cover. Whatever the outcome of that debate, there will be a major emphasis in future on effective local working by Members. Inevitably, the opportunity to work in this way will be time-consuming. Clarity is needed on the new demands which local working will place on Members and Officers and the resources required to support each and every Member in this new role.

3.6 Bridging the Gap: A key pledge of the Transforming Cheshire Programme is to ensure a greater community focus for elected Members. A specific project has been commissioned – PP4 – which seeks to deliver this pledge through individual Member budgets along with additional officer support and coordination at the local level. Members' budgets should allow local representatives to deal with local problems efficiently and effectively. Additional, local officer support will assist Members in dealing with local issues, administering local budgets, improving partnership working and engaging local communities.

3.7 As part of the Transforming Cheshire Outline Business Case, this specific project has been allocated £304,000 of annual investment from 2008/09. The project, however, is currently under review by the Executive to ensure that the full implications of the White Paper and the challenges of the local community leadership agenda are taken into account.

RECOMMENDED:

The County Council acknowledge that the role of the local Member is changing in the context of increased local expectations and the Local Government White Paper.

To enable the role of the Local Member to be developed, early attention be directed to the provision of resources, including those under PP4.

4. Casework

4.1 Dealing with enquiries from constituents and organisations is a key part of the Member's democratic role. Indeed, the Questionnaire to Councillors revealed that a large part of Members' time is spent responding to enquiries from the public, with 70% of Members rating their casework load as heavy but manageable

4.2 **Current Support**: The Questionnaire revealed that Members use a variety of different sources of support to determine how individual enquiries should be pursued. There is mixed use of Member Secretaries, while County Managers were heavily involved in the process of passing on the enquiry to the relevant officer.

4.3 The bigger challenge appears to be in tracking the process of casework where there seemed to be no consistent approach. In some cases the Members Secretaries performed this role. In other cases phone calls and e-mail reminders to the County Manager were relied upon.

4.4 **Requirements**: There is room for improvement in handling casework. In order to satisfy the principle that Members are a conduit to enable local people to raise concerns and grievances, any new approach needs to be cost effective, transparent and citizen focused.

4.5 **Bridging the Gap:** The Panel heard from Lisa Green, Head of Customer and Local Relations, and Cara Williams, Customer Services Manager, how casework could be processed and managed through the County Council's developing Customer Access Centre. Rather than automatically passing the enquiry to the County Manager, the Member could e-mail or phone the Customer Access Centre who would have the necessary knowledge and expertise to log, direct, and track the enquiry. The Panel acknowledges that the Customer Access Centre can be a powerful tool and would be both a cost effective and customer-focused method for processing Members' routine casework. However it could not provide a complete answer and further work is required urgently to commission a stand-alone casework tracking system for Members.

RECOMMENDED:

Members be encouraged to use the Customer Access Centre (CAC) as the preferred method of processing routine casework. Further work be undertaken urgently to commission a stand-alone casework tracking system for Members.

5. Council Papers

5.1 The length and style of County Council reports, particularly decision papers, create an unacceptable call on Members time, diverting them from making the most effective use of their time. The universal perception is that many reports are too long; poorly structured; with excessive jargon; and are not conducive to the transparent and efficient decision making required in a large organisation.

5.2 **Current Support**: The County Council currently provides a standard report template, brief guidance on writing Council Papers and the "Clearly Cheshire" guide. Nevertheless, most effort is invested into the checks and balances for reports - i.e. ensuring that necessary legal, financial and HR consultation takes place – rather than ensuring the style and length of the paper is of a reasonable standard.

5.3 **Requirements**: Council Papers should be clear, concise and accessible. Bearing in mind the volume of decisions that the County Council is required to make and the need to ensure that all Members are kept informed, a better approach to presenting essential information should be introduced.

5.4 **Bridging the Gap**: A number of proposals that could improve reports for Members were discussed. They included the following:

(a) The introduction a new report template: The Panel agreed that a new report template which captured the essential information Members required should be introduced. This would be confined if possible to one side of A4, would include the Recommendations at the outset and the "Decision Route" and would provide hyperlinks to the sources of additional information. To this

<u>could</u> be added a summary of the content and the implications of the decision for the Authority in terms of policy, legal, finance, HR etc. It would also identify which Corporate Priorities the issue covered.

(b) <u>Corporate guidance and training on report writing:</u> At present corporate guidance on report writing in terms of style and format is not readily available. A report writing guide, accessible through the Intranet, was seen as a necessity. In addition, a re-shaped training course, for both officers and Members, which takes into account a new report template, should be commissioned.

(c) <u>The strategic decision making approach:</u> This refers to the method of decision-making often used by consultants and in the private sector. A particular decision is summarised on a single power point slide by outlining various options and their pros and cons. This is the only piece of information that decision makers have access to prior to the meeting. It is intended that a 'knowledgeable expert' talks through the slide during a meeting and that the decision is driven by discussion and dialogue rather than paperwork. The Panel felt that this would be a particularly effective way of presenting strategic information to pre-decision bodies such as Policy Development Panels.

RECOMMENDED:

A new report template be introduced forthwith that captures the essential information that Members require for effective understanding and decision making.

Corporate guidance be issued on effective report writing as soon as possible and a re-shaped training course be put in place.

6. Technology

6.1 There is enormous potential for Information Technology to support elected Members in their developing roles. While not a panacea, IT has the potential to:

- support mobile working
- improve access to information
- improve the management of information;
- enhance communication with the public, colleagues and officers

6.2 Steve Hopson, County Information Services Officer, reminded the Panel of current IT support for Members and potential options for improvement. The Panel also took account of the Questionnaire responses from Councillors.

6.3 **Current Support**: The basic package of current support includes

- A desktop or a laptop Personal Computer (PC), available to every Member, to use at home for the conduct of County Council business. This may be supplemented with a directly attached printer and an optional fax machine.
- A single PC in also available in each Group Room
- High speed broadband connection enabling access to the intra and internet
- Helpdesk support
- Access to the Political Information Network (PIN), providing access to the Council's key decision making processes and associated documentation. The system, however, has been subject to much criticism by Members.
- A "walled garden" on the intranet for Party Groups although the evidence suggests this is not fully utilised
- Video Conferencing although indications are that this is under-used by both Members and officers.
- In addition to the basic support package, certain Members have a Blackberry and multi-function output device.
- Members' Websites.

6.4 The Questionnaire revealed that Members are increasingly realising the benefits of IT. For example, the intra and internet were joint fourth as source of research information and e mail was joint first as the most common communication method.

6.5 **Requirements**: The current basic package of support is generally about right but additional technologies and appropriate training e.g. using the Internet could meet Members' individual requirements. The PIN system does however need to be re-developed to improve the search facility and make it more user-friendly. The Members individual Web Pages are an important source of information to local residents and Members should be notified individually when any changes are made to the information thereon.

6.6 **Bridging the gap**:

RECOMMENDED:

There be a presumption that communications with Members should primarily be through electronic means

Further work be undertaken to establish which additional technologies would benefit Members.

PIN be replaced as a matter of urgency as part of the Transforming Cheshire project PP6, to meet the needs of all users.

Procedures be put in place to enable individual Members to be notified of changes to and the content of their Web Pages.

7. Members' Secretaries

7.1   Members' Secretaries are often the most visible source of support for Members.   The Panel heard from Christine Darlington, until recently the Members' Secretary Team Leader, about how the role has evolved over recent years.

7.2   **Current Support:** Each Party Group has a Members' Secretary available to support them. The three Secretaries are accommodated together in the Members' Suite thus providing an element of cover. The main duties of the Secretaries as set down in Job Descriptions are listed below (acknowledging that this is not an exclusive list and that work done for and the relationship with individual Members will vary) :-

- providing personal and secretarial services for Group Leaders, Lead Members, other Members of the Council, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council
- screening visitors, telephone calls and correspondence as the first point of Member contact
- undertaking research of a non-political nature
- managing/coordinating Group Leaders' and Lead Members' commitments
- arranging transport and accommodation as required
- supporting Member learning and development, particularly on ICT

It is custom/practice for Group Leaders and Lead Members to have priority (and recognising the size of budgets for which these individuals have responsibility, the Panel has no difficulty with this), but the Panel heard that, generally, this was not to the detriment of support to other Members.   The Questionnaire revealed that there is mixed use of Members Secretaries to support casework. It is important to note that the Secretaries are expected to understand and implement Political Conventions/Protocols to ensure that Party Group confidentiality is not breached.

7.3   The Secretaries are expected to service the Group Rooms.   These Rooms serve as a combination of meeting/work/reading area. Two of the Group Leaders have their own equipped Offices from which to work.

7.4   **Requirements:**   It is self-evident that no County Councillor could work effectively and efficiently without the support of the Members' Secretaries. The amount of use made depends on whether a Member is an Office-holder, but also reflects personal choice. Usage is also occasionally a product of perception of capacity. Recent evidence from other Shire Counties suggests that Cheshire is probably in the lowest quartile of expenditure on this type of support; however, the Panel has not been able to find evidence of a direct link between level of expenditure and Corporate Performance

Assessment (CPA) outcomes. Bearing in mind the changing role of Members and expectations/responsibilities placed upon them, it seems right for the support which the Members' Secretaries can/should provide be kept under regular review to ensure that it is keeping pace with the developing role of Members.

7.5 **Bridging the Gap:**

RECOMMENDED:

The role of the Members Secretaries should be restated and promulgated, and be subject to regular review.

The Members Secretaries should be involved in the planning of and support for Members IT developments.

The Groups should ensure that the most efficient use is made of the Members Accommodation Suite– to meet such needs as "Quiet Areas", Document Libraries, Work Stations.

8. Research and Communications

8.1　Lisa Green, County Manager Customer and Local Relations (CLR), briefed the Panel on current research and communications support. The Panel also considered the Members' Questionnaire and the results of a Questionnaire completed by other Authorities regarding Research Support. As in Section 7 strict comparisons with other Authorities are difficult because of definitions; but again there is no discernible link between expenditure and CPA performance.

8.2　**Current Support:**　The CLR service currently provides the following:

- Press Releases
- Newsletters – eg Cheshire Matters
- Local Statistics and Research

8.3　In terms of research, the Questionnaire revealed that the majority of Members actively seek out information themselves through their own resources - often out of preference. Executive Members are more likely to seek out information from Officers or from formal Briefings.

8.4　**Requirements:**　More could be done to inform Members of critical issues within their local area. Electronic briefing sheets received by Members of Chester City Council were referred to in this context. Members have their own individual needs, style and approach to research, and there are differing views on how appropriate it is to cater for each Member's individual needs from the scarce resources of the County Council. It is difficult to see for example how the appointment of Research Assistants could be funded by the

Council at this time. There was a lack of consensus on the justification for such posts and disagreement within the Panel as to whether the Scrutiny Review was the appropriate mechanism to consider ways in which volunteers or posts funded by the Party Groups could offer a solution. The Panel did agree that, in any event, more could be done to improve access to information to enable Members to support themselves either in the Group Rooms or at home.

8.5 **Bridging the Gap:**

RECOMMENDED

A Members page on the intranet be developed as a matter of urgency; the page to be a gateway for Members to access sources of research, briefing papers, e-training, and any other relevant sources of information.

Electronic briefing notes be made available to Members to keep them informed about issues of general and specific interest.

Paper copies of the internal telephone directory and the A to Z of services be made available in the Members Rooms.

9. Learning and Development

9.1 Ensuring that Members receive the appropriate training to enable them to perform their changing roles is of critical importance. The County Council has of course been awarded the Charter for Member Learning and Development by the North West Employers Organisation. The Panel considered the results of the Members Questionnaire and interviewed Councillor David Newton, Chair of the Member Learning and Development Forum.

9.2 **Current Support:** A full programme of events is drawn up by the Forum to enable all Members to receive topical Briefings and to develop skills appropriate to their roles. Attendance though can be sporadic.

9.3 **Requirements:** Member Learning and Development within the County Council has a strong profile and has received national recognition. Nevertheless, there appears to be room to build on this success through innovation, recognition of differing learning styles and by taking account of the developing local roles of Members.

9.4 **Bridging the Gap:**

RECOMMENDED

More innovative learning approaches be introduced for Members including workshops, action learning sets and distance learning.

Greater access to the Corporate Training Programme by Members be encouraged.

More 1-2-1 IT training from non-specialist IT trainers be made available to Members.

More focus be given to community leadership training for Members to support them in their changing roles.

10. Organisational Culture

10.1 Ensuring that support to Members is of the highest quality and permeates throughout the whole organisation is as much about culture as it is about processes, structures and resources. Transforming Cheshire provides the opportunity to do this.

10.2 **Current Support:** The Members' Questionnaire revealed that, on the whole, Members rated the level of support they received as very good. It appears, however, that this relates mostly to Member Services and that further improvements are required in other Services and Departments to ensure that Members feel informed, involved and empowered to carry out their roles.

10.3 **Requirements:** The County Council needs to ensure that a culture of supporting and empowering Members is developed and owned. It matters not that Members Services lies within Policy and Resources Department and not for example within People and Partnerships or Community Services or elsewhere. It is not one Department's responsibility but all Departments'. The culture needs to be fostered throughout the management structure. Both Executive Members and front-line Councillors must feel that they are working within a supporting culture.

10. 4 **Bridging the Gap:**

RECOMMENDED

The Management Board reaffirm its commitment to supporting all Members to carry out their challenging roles and Protocols be developed within each Department to ensure that this is embedded in the organisation

Clear accountability should be set down for monitoring corporate performance on Support to Members and the implementation of the Action Plan.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND WITNESSES INTERVIEWED

27 November 2006	Carlos Lopez and Scott Bailey, PwC
2 December 2006	Mike Flynn, County Secretary Steve Hopson, County Information Services Officer
6 February 2007	Christine Darlington, retired Member Secretary Lisa Green, County Communications & Research Manager Cara Williams, Customer Services Manager
5 March 2007	Paul Heath, Director of Policy and Resources Alison Armstrong, Strategic Partnership Manager
16 March 2007	Laurence Ainsworth, Corporate Services Project Adviser
10 April 2007	Councillor David Newton, Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Select Committee and the Member Learning and Development Forum
27 April 2007	Councillor Mrs Gretta Cousin, Executive Member for Finance and ICT
18 May 2007	Draft Panel Report
1 June 2007	Finalisation of Panel Report

Action Plan

	Recommendation	Responsibility for Action	Timescale
1.	The County Council acknowledge that the role of the Local Member is changing in the context of increased local expectations and the Local Government White Paper	Executive to give early attention to the potential implications of the changing role of the Local Member and to give an opportunity for all Members to be involved in the discussions.	
2.	To enable the role of the Local Member to be developed, early attention be directed to the provision of resources, including those under PP4.	County Manager, Customer and Local Relations/ County Policy Officer to log issues for Budget-making process.	
3.	Members be encouraged to use the Customer Access Centre (CAC) as the preferred method for processing routine casework.	County Manager, Customer and Local Relations to draw up and implement a strategy to encourage Members to direct casework through the CAC.	
4.	Further work be undertaken urgently to commission a stand-alone casework tracking system for Members.	County Information Systems Officer to report to Organisation Committee.	
5.	A new report template be introduced forthwith that captures the essential information that Members require for effective understanding and decision making.	County Secretary to develop and implement a new report template.	

6.	Corporate guidance be issued on effective report writing as soon as possible and a re-shaped training course be put in place.	<u>County Secretary/County Manager HR</u> to issue guidance and arrange relevant training for Staff and Members.	
7.	There be a presumption that communications with Members should primarily be through electronic means.	<u>County Secretary</u> to include in induction Material for Candidates and New Members.	
8.	Further work be undertaken to establish which additional technologies would benefit Members.	<u>County Information Systems Officer</u> in liaison with the County Secretary to establish a Members Reference Group.	
9.	PIN be replaced as a matter of urgency as part of the Transforming Cheshire project PP6, to meet the needs of users.	<u>County Secretary</u> to commission necessary work in line with Members' requirements.	
10.	Procedures be put in place to enable individual Members to be notified of changes to, and the content of, their Web Pages.	<u>County Information Systems Officer</u> to report on control mechanisms.	
11.	The role of Members Secretaries be restated and promulgated, and be subject to regular review.	<u>County Secretary</u> to keep under regular review with Group Leaders/Whips.	
12.	The Members Secretaries be involved in the planning of and support for Members IT developments.	<u>County Information Systems Officer</u> to liaise on the practicalities with County Secretary.	

13.	The Groups ensure that the most efficient use is made of the Members Accommodation Suite – to meet such needs as "Quiet Areas", Document Libraries, Work Stations.	Group Whips to initiate discussion on requirements within each Group.	
14.	A Members page on the intranet be developed as a matter of urgency; the page to be a gateway for Members to access sources of research, briefing papers, e-training, and any other relevant sources of information.	County Information Systems Officer, liaising as appropriate, to develop and provide a Members Intranet page.	
15.	Electronic briefing notes be made available to Members to keep them informed about issues of general and specific interest.	Head of Communications, liaising with Extended Management Board, to develop template.	
16.	Paper copies of the internal telephone directory and the A to Z of services be made available in the Members Rooms.	County Information Systems Officer to provide and keep up-to-date.	
17.	More innovative learning approaches be introduced for Members including workshops, action learning sets and distance learning.	Member Learning and Development Forum to consider most appropriate method of delivery of Training for Members.	
18.	Greater access to the Corporate Training Programme by Members be encouraged.	County Manager HR to share Corporate Training Programme with Member Learning and Development Forum.	

19.	More 1-2-1 IT training from non-specialist IT trainers be made available to Members.	<u>County Information Systems Officer</u> to make provision for non-specialist IT trainers to be available to Members.	
20.	More focus be given to community leadership training for Members to support them in their changing roles.	<u>Director of People and Partnerships</u> to bring forward proposals to Member Learning and Development Forum.	
21.	The Management Board reaffirm its commitment to supporting all Members to carry out their challenging roles, and Protocols be developed within each Department to ensure that this is embedded in the organisation.	<u>Chief Executive's Office</u> to ensure Protocols are in place.	
22.	Clear accountability be set down for monitoring corporate performance on Support to Members, and the implementation of the Action Plan.	<u>Organisation Committee</u> to clarify at the appropriate time.	

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DRAFT
CHESHIRE EAST SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT v.7
dated 10th March 2009

CHESHIRE EAST (SHADOW) COUNCIL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT

Introduction

The Cheshire East (Shadow) Council initially set up one Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee of fourteen members. The Committee met for the first time on the 3rd July 2008.

At the first meeting of the O&S Committee Cllr Andrew Thwaite was elected Chairman and Cllr Allan Richardson Vice Chairman.

At this initial meeting it was proposed, in view of the importance and magnitude of the subject, that a separate Health & Adult Social Care O&S Committee be set up. This was approved in October 2008 and at its initial meeting Cllr Allan Richardson was elected Chairman and Cllr Gordon Baxendale Vice Chairman.

Since many of the Committee members had no previous experience of Scrutiny and with differing Scrutiny procedures existing between the three boroughs councils and the County Council making up Cheshire East, it was agreed that a comprehensive training programme be undertaken.

In parallel with the Training Programme the O&S Chairman and Vice Chairman considered the organization that would be required after vesting date to provide a strong performance, overview and scrutiny ethos in the new authority.

Urgency Decisions

In the process of setting up a new authority a number of Urgency Decisions were required, including two requests for waver of call in and these were forwarded to the OS Chairman for comment. There were also a number of notifications of exception in respect of key decisions to be made by the cabinet which were not included in the Forward Plan. The Vice Chairman

DRAFT
CHESHIRE EAST SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT v.7
dated 10th March 2009

was consulted prior to any response and the committee was advised of the action at the next O&S Committee meeting where the Chairman's actions were retrospectively approved. A policy of all members receiving copies of all urgency decisions at the same time as it was posted for public view was instigated.

There has been no Call Ins initiated during the period.

Induction and Training

A joint Cheshire East and West induction meeting took place in May2008. One of the topics covered in the workshop was New Roles for Scrutiny presented by Jessica Crowe, the Executive Director for the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

Two significant items coming out of the workshop was the need for Scrutiny Committee members to have thorough training and for their support by trained and experienced dedicated scrutiny officers.

The Cheshire East Lead Training Officer was requested to propose a best practice scrutiny training programme.

Leading on from this induction meeting, following nomination of members for the O&S committee, two excellent training sessions were laid on through the North West Employers Organization (NWEO).

In addition to the committee training programme the O&S Chairman took part in Scrutiny Seminaries at Birmingham University and CLGA, London as well as attending the NWEO meeting of O&S Chairmen.

The O & S Chairman's attendance at these external seminars emphasized the wide variation in how Scrutiny was organized and performed by various authorities. This led to the Cheshire East Scrutiny Committee adopting a scrutiny framework starting from the basic principles.

Following an assessment of training needs a series of four full day training sessions facilitated by the IDeA was set up jointly with Cheshire West and

DRAFT
CHESHIRE EAST SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT v.7
dated 10th March 2009

Chester, Warrington, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, and Cheshire East Scrutiny Committees.

To consolidate the training a short task and finish pilot scrutiny task and finish study was set up by the Cheshire East Scrutiny Committee. This was based around a presentation by a group of young entrepreneurs to Congleton Borough Council on the needs of young people. The study dealt with the three key areas of employment, accommodation and leisure. It was limited to Congleton Borough to permit ready access to the evidence base.

It had a real aim to provide Cheshire East Council with a sound base upon which it could decide whether to extend the project on a Cheshire East wide basis with the aim of influencing and shaping future relevant corporate objectives, strategies and development plans.

This study was highly successful and a summary of the resultant report is attached at Annex A.

Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules

The O&S Committee agreed the model procedure rules and they were passed via the Governance and Constitution Committee to Council for approval.

Scrutiny Organization

Several members of the O&S committee are members of the County Council Health and Adult Social Care (H&ACS) Committee and in view of the work load on this committee they drew attention to the need to form a separate CE Scrutiny Committee. This was proposed at the first O&S committee and following agreement by the Governance and Constitution Committee was approved by the Cabinet and Council on the 20th October 2008

Care was taken in selecting the members of the H&ASC committee to ensure that all Cheshire East members of the existing County Council

DRAFT
CHESHIRE EAST SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT v.7

dated 10th March 2009

Health Scrutiny committee were included. Care was also taken to ensure that there was a good geographical spread of committee members. Several O&S members elected to serve on both the H&ASC and O&S committees.

As an interim position the O&S was split into three panels, People; Places and Performance and a panel leader appointed to each.

The O&S Chairman and Vice Chairman made presentations on the organization of O&S to the Council CEO and Leader. This presentation was then given to the whole cabinet.

Three Advisory panels had been set up separately outside of O&S to consider and advise the Portfolio members on necessary policies and procedures prior to vesting date. The Leader then requested the Chairman of O&S to carry out a study on the role of these Advisory Panels after vesting day.

Leading on from this study the Lead Officer presented a paper proposing that there be a total of five O&S committees made up of 14 or 15 members, namely:

       Health & Adult Social Care

       Children & Families

       Environment & Prosperity

       Sustainable Communities

       Corporate Scrutiny

The first four roughly corresponding to the portfolios with Corporate O&S covering Resources, Procurement and Performance portfolios. This proposal was approved at Council on the 24th February 2009.

An informal panel of the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen will oversee and coordinate all of the Scrutiny activities , managing resources and bringing forward and reviewing the Annual Work Programme. This panel will be lead

DRAFT
CHESHIRE EAST SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT v.7

by the Chairman of Corporate Scrutiny with the Chairman of Health & Adult Social Care scrutiny as his deputy.

The existing O&S members will be spread among the new O&S committees. The balance of these committees will include members who have been sitting on the three Advisory Panels.

Heath and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The H&ASC committee has carried out two Induction sessions and has met three times. Thanks to the incorporation of existing County Council members in the committee it is already fully functional and making important decisions on the future in this critical area. It has recommended the establishment of a Joint Scrutiny Committee in relation to the Cheshire and Wirral Partnership Foundation NHS Trust.

Cheshire East Health O&S Members were encouraged to sit in on Cheshire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee meetings and several members have availed themselves of the opportunity.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The existing O&S committee made important decisions on the co-opting of two Parent Governor Representatives and two Diocesan Representative members to the committee their with voting rights limited to educational matters. These will sit on the Children & Families O&S Committee.

It was decided at this time not to invite any other co-optees into the O&S committees. This decision would be reviewed towards the end of the first year of the Cheshire East Unitary Council. Co-optees could, however, be invited to participate in Task and Finish Groups.

Induction of New Members

With the increased number of O&S committees, as soon as the members have been selected, there will be a requirement for them to complete Scrutiny Induction and Training.

Based on experience this will be carried out in house with assistance likely

DRAFT
CHESHIRE EAST SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT v.7
dated 10th March 2009

from the NWEO.

Work Programme

The County Council, Macclesfield, Congleton and Crewe & Nantwich Councils have forwarded details of their recent overview and scrutiny studies. These with any recommendations for ongoing studies, deferment or new studies, to be carried out by Cheshire East, have been collated and considered by the O&S committee and are shown at Annex B (to follow)

Care will need to be taken to ensure that the workload is limited to that which is achievable. It may well be that each committee will only be able to run two large overview and scrutiny tasks at any time. This will be considerably less than the three boroughs' and the County Council had the capacity to do. It may well be that there will need to be a number of short task and finish tasks running in parallel and that co-optees will be needed to meet with the workload.

Officer Staffing
As was established at the initial Induction meeting the support by dedicated, trained and experienced officers is crucial to the success of Overview and Scrutiny.