

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 May 2008. 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 Seminars 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} dated 10th March 2009

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.