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I have no doubt that overview and scrutiny is a vital part of the constitutional structure that the Council introduced on an experimental basis in 1999 before confirming it in 2002 when the new legislation was in place. That structure has four distinctive but interrelated parts - the Executive (Cabinet), Scrutiny, Community Forums and regulatory functions.

The first three required councillors and staff to develop new skills and this was particularly true of the scrutiny function. Much was learnt from the original system of four panels, not least that improvements were identified which could make the process of scrutiny more effective. After lengthy consultation and debate, three of the panels were replaced with a Scrutiny Board and task based Scrutiny Review Panels. The Best Value Panel remained and was retitled the Efficiency and Best Value Scrutiny Panel to reflect the “Gershon” efficiency agenda.

A key reason for the new structure is greater empowerment of elected members which I believe is an important part of revitalising democracy and improving public engagement with local governance.

I am very heartened by the results during the past year, which are well documented in this annual report. I hope all non executive councillors will be encouraged by what they read here to play as full a part in scrutiny as they can.

Although by its very nature overview and scrutiny will provide some hard challenges to the Executive and Council Services, it is also important that it adds value to and helps to deliver the Council’s priorities and Best Value Performance and Corporate Plan – all four parts of the structure link together as the corporate whole.

My thanks and congratulations for the achievements in 2005/06 go to all the members of the Scrutiny Board and Panels and to the Scrutiny Officer (Emily McGuinness and then Anita Cunningham).

David Shaw
Welcome to our very first Annual Report which sets out the work and achievements of Chesterfield Borough Council’s Overview and Scrutiny function for 2005/06 and also includes some information regarding work to be undertaken during the forthcoming year. We believe the production of this first annual report is an indication in itself of the progress being made in this important area of work.

The last year has seen a number of changes made to the way the Overview and Scrutiny function works at Chesterfield Borough Council to improve its operation.

The Council’s vision is for an Overview and Scrutiny function for the future which will raise accountability, ensure an inclusive and transparent local democracy, and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery to the Chesterfield community. It is considered the changes that have taken place will put Scrutiny in a better position to deliver just this.

Chesterfield currently benefits from a ‘Good’ Comprehensive Performance Assessment rating by Government inspectors, but our intentions are to improve on this to achieve the delivery of services to an excellent standard.

Though inspection did not raise specific issues in relation to the overview and scrutiny function as such, it is believed the restructuring will place Scrutiny in a better position to help address those areas that were highlighted in the CPA as needing attention such as driving performance improvement.
Changes to the overview and scrutiny function has enabled greater flexibility of operation and greater empowerment and involvement of Members, thereby allowing a much less restrictive approach where issues and services can be more easily and effectively scrutinised. Changes to overview and scrutiny also include the realignment of Scrutiny work to the authority’s priorities, its Corporate Plan and the Community Strategy. The adoption of a scoring system to prioritise issues for selection in line with these key documents which set out Chesterfield Borough Council’s focus for service delivery, will enable us to target our work more towards addressing those issues and concerns of the people we represent.

In addition to work undertaken by the Scrutiny Board, including two Scrutiny Review Panels, three ‘call-ins’, and important monitoring work of the Efficiency and Best Value Scrutiny Panel, much time and effort throughout the year was devoted to a scrutiny review of partnership working with North East Derbyshire District Council our neighbouring Local Authority.

The Partnership Working Scrutiny Review resulted in the production of a comprehensive system to aid the management of our partnerships and our involvement in them.

The Partnership Development and Evaluation Handbook and Toolkit will prove to be useful to other authorities and agencies each having the need to better manage their partner relations. The Handbook / Toolkit, of which this authority and scrutiny should be very proud, provides us with a better system of measuring the performance and effectiveness of our partnerships and will help us decide (i) how we can make them work better, (ii) whether we need be involved with them, (iii) whether they are needed at all and (iv) how to set up new ones.

The work undertaken is receiving national interest and is supported by key agencies such as the Centre for Public Scrutiny and the Audit Commission.

The outcome of the partnerships review is seen to be a huge success for Scrutiny, and has helped raise the profile, importance and value of the overview and scrutiny function here at Chesterfield together with the profile of the Council itself.

We feel we have made great strides in 2005/06 and are looking forward to facing other challenges to come, which we are sure will be many, and we hope that inquiries into Local Government currently taking place go some way to supporting and strengthening our role for the future.

We would like to give thanks to all our Overview and Scrutiny Members, those on the Scrutiny Board and Efficiency and Best Value Scrutiny Panel together with our other non-executive Scrutineers.

We would also wish to thank all those who have been involved with and have supported our work in some way, be they members of the public, partner representatives or representatives of other agencies and organisations including of course our very own officers.

Our thanks must go to Anita Cunningham, our Scrutiny Officer who came on board towards the end of the year, for the work she has contributed and look forward to her steering us through what could be another busy, progressive and exciting year ahead.
Round up of Scrutiny Board’s Year

Partnership Working

Councillor Alexis Diouf (Chair)
- Chesterfield Borough Council

Councillor Nick Foster (Vice Chair)
- North East Derbyshire District Council

Working in partnership has become a core approach to service delivery for all local authorities in recent years and it is acknowledged that the creation of new partnerships with Local Authorities continues to increase. However, there has to date been little opportunity to evaluate existing partnerships to establish whether they are working efficiently and effectively or whether they are still required.

The review of Partnership Working by a Joint Scrutiny Panel of Chesterfield Borough Council and North East Derbyshire District Council was set up to help address these issues. Many hours of hard work by Members and Officers resulted in the production of a Partnership Toolkit, which can be used for the assessment of partnerships by local authorities or for self-assessment by the partnerships themselves. The Toolkit is contained within a Handbook that also provides guidance to enable Partnerships at all levels and at all stages to develop and improve. The Partnership Development and Evaluation Handbook provides a mechanism for comprehensive, systematic monitoring and evaluation.

The review began with the desire to scrutinise individual partnerships but grew in scope when it was recognised that no guidelines for such a scrutiny review could be found. The need for a joint review of the partnership arrangements at both authorities also emerged quickly when it was discovered that they were often members of the same partnerships. It seemed appropriate to review our partnerships in partnership. Initial input, offering an understanding of partnerships was provided by the Institute for Local Government at Birmingham university (INLOGOV), a process which also aided the development of effective working by a scrutiny panel comprising members from both authorities. The Scrutiny work undertaken led to the creation and production of the Partnership Development and Evaluation Handbook / Toolkit which was shared with partners and other organisations at a formal launch in May 2006 supported by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, the Audit Commission, the Improvement and Development Agency and the Institute for Local Government Studies (INLOGOV).

The Joint Panel’s objectives were;

- To develop a definition of partnerships acceptable to both Councils.
- To ensure that the Councils have complete and up to date central inventories of all current and planned partnership working.
To consider the possibility of rationalising partnership working in each Council.

To develop an assessment tool kit to enable the effectiveness of partnerships to be evaluated.

To conduct a partnership health check, as a trial of the assessment tool kit, on several partnerships.

To develop effective performance monitoring systems for partnerships.

To clearly define the role of elected Members in partnership working.

To develop a joint corporate approach to initiating new partnerships.

Achievements:

Besides the development and introduction of the Handbook and Toolkit itself, the work of the Joint Scrutiny Panel led to a number of in depth recommendations (summarised below), which were each adopted by both authorities and are now at the implementation stage:

- The adoption of a definition of true partnerships - "A group of two or more bodies, which agrees common aims and objectives for the purpose of the partnership, operating in a non-contractual, action focused manner, to achieve stated outcomes with demonstrable benefits for the residents of Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire"

- That a systematic inventory be compiled on proposed or existing activities of groups and organisations with which the Councils plan to become involved, or are engaged in partnership arrangements with, and that a comprehensive profile be compiled, maintained, updated and made electronically available.

- The development of a database mapping out the partnerships with which the Councils are involved and to explore potential for extending the database throughout Derbyshire and wider.

- A thorough evaluation be undertaken of the partnerships with which the Councils are involved, to ensure efficiency, effectiveness, appropriateness, added value and accountability on behalf of and for the benefit of their residents.

- The Partnership Development and Evaluation Handbook and Toolkit be made available to all those at both Councils involved in Partnership Working and externally to Partners and others.
The development of a Joint Model Partnership Agreement to establish a consistent and robust approach to initiating new partnerships and harmonising existing ones.

The submission of reports to the Annual Council meeting at both Councils and also on an ‘as and when’ basis for urgency, highlighting any partnerships which, for whatever reason, had not reached an acceptable level of effectiveness.

Appropriate Officers and Members from both Councils form a Joint Partnership Group to lead and drive forward effective partnership arrangements, mechanisms and activity and the possibility of the establishment of a Joint Partnership Team be explored.

The adoption of a Framework for Partnership Working by both Councils to be:

“To work together in partnership for the benefit of the residents of Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire, provided that the Partnership’s aims and objectives accord with those of the Council(s) by: -

Developing strong, sustainable, productive and effective partnerships;
Ensuring that all partnerships, with which the Councils are involved, operate in a climate of openness and transparency and represent best value;

Monitoring the performance of partnership working, using the Partnership Development and Evaluation Toolkit, to ensure that public funds and resources are used to best effect;
Evaluating the effectiveness of all partnerships, with which the Councils are involved, on a regular basis;
Empowering and encouraging local communities to develop new partnerships to maximise their potential for improvement and change, whether or not the Councils are involved as partners;
Enabling and encouraging partnerships to develop and improve, by providing advice and assistance, where the Councils decide not to remain or become involved;
Maintaining a database of all partnerships with which the Council(s) are involved to avoid duplication of effort, to ensure resources are used to best effect and to provide opportunities to learn and share;
Reporting annually upon the effectiveness of Partnership Working”.

A number of areas were also highlighted for further scrutiny under Phase II of the review to include in the main issues regarding, involvement in Outside Bodies and the training and role of those involved in partnership working.
In view of recent research, national statistics on obesity and a general decline in healthy eating habits, particularly in children, the Scrutiny Board supported the need to undertake a review into this issue to assist encouragement of healthier eating within the Chesterfield community. In support of the Council’s vision and priorities to provide a healthier community, research into healthier alternatives to the menus provided within Chesterfield’s own Council facilities, sports facilities in particular, was undertaken with a view to providing a menu that included attractive, healthy options.

The panel looked at:

- The current provision of food in Council premises to establish how this provision accords with the Council’s Healthy Communities strategy;

- The existing procurement procedures to ensure they support Healthy Eating initiatives;

- The likelihood of being able to provide support for catering establishments that provides a largely healthy menu and environment.

The review has raised the profile of a need for healthier eating in our community and has resulted in the raising of awareness of this issue that has since been given greater priority within the Council. Healthier eating has since been encouraged in the Council’s sports and leisure centres and in addition a ‘Healthy Eating Week’ campaign will now take place each year to help raise profile and awareness even further. Review outcomes also led to requirements under the tendering process for relevant tenderers to show a specific commitment to Healthy Eating.

We believe the scrutiny work undertaken will leave this Council with a lasting legacy that will benefit the future generations of children within the Borough and will also greatly strengthen the knowledge base held within the Council. It will also show a lasting commitment to this issue by this Council.
Achievements:

As a result of the Healthy Eating Scrutiny Review the Council is to introduce a Healthy Eating Policy to be implemented by the end of 2006/07 which, it is agreed, should:

- influence the Council’s implementation of procurement, tendering and training policies;
- have regard to the Council’s Fair-trade initiative;
- ensure that where the Council provides catering either directly or through contracted third parties, a range of healthy and nutritionally balanced options will always be available;
- provide guidelines of nutritional standards to be adhered to by all catering suppliers in Council venues;
- leave a lasting legacy of nutritional awareness amongst relevant Council employees, achieved both through reference to an expert nutritionist and training of internal Council staff;

Cabinet also agreed that:

- The Council implements a proactive pricing policy that makes healthy options more easily affordable.
- The Council implements a replacement for the now defunct Heartbeat Award for catering establishments. This award should support establishments that place a greater emphasis on providing attractive healthy options and environment.
- The Healthy Eating Policy is developed by the Council’s Health Development Officer, in consultation with the Lead Member for Healthy Communities and Leisure.
- The Health Development Officer reports regularly to the Healthy Eating Scrutiny Review Panel as Phase 2 of its Review.
- The Health Development Officer and the Review Panel present the final draft of the Healthy Eating Policy to the Cabinet via the Scrutiny Board, for approval.
- Staffing and financial implications be examined as part of the development of the Policy, including opportunities for external funding.
Community Forum Budgets

Councillor Jean Barr
- Review Panel Chair

The Cabinet decision to reduce Community Forum budgets by half for the financial year 2005/06 following the on-going base budget review without consideration of individual Forum needs, was brought to the attention of Scrutiny.

The Scrutiny Review Panel on Community Forum Budgets was established to review consultation mechanisms in place to be used where proposed changes would affect Community Forums. The need for a review arose after funding changes agreed by the Cabinet had led to some confusion over the newly agreed funding arrangements. Under previous arrangements all Community Forum members were generally offered an opportunity to contribute to the budget process through the public, annual Council tax consultation meetings held in December and January/February each year. In addition, the Community Forum Liaison Group, comprised of representatives of Chesterfield’s 8 Community Forums, normally acted as a communication and consultation channel with Forums on budget issues.

The review panel looked at:

- The need for consultation directly with Community Forums, or a cross-Forum Member working party on proposed funding changes in the future;

- The need for more information to be made available as to other sources of funding which can be accessed by Forums and the criteria for bidding into these other funds;

- A need to bring budget consultations forward so that there is plenty of time for discussion and the sharing of ideas with Forum members.

Achievements:
Scrutiny’s work resulted in an agreed need for the adoption of better communication with Community Forums on proposed changes that affect them and more considerate, timely and pro-active consultation:

- The existing channels of consultation with Community Forums on budget issues are maintained and Forums be encouraged to use these more proactively.

- The accountable Lead Member for Community Development to attend all Forums to explain the outcome of this year’s budget process and the preparations for consultation on next year’s budget.

- That more information be made available to Forums on other sources of funding available, both within the Council and from outside bodies, and the criteria for bidding in to these other funds.
Lyons Inquiry into Local Government

The Lyons Inquiry originally commissioned in July 2004 by the Deputy Prime Minister and the Chancellor to make recommendations on how to reform the Local Government funding system, was extended to also allow the consideration of issues concerning the role and function of Local Government.

Local Authorities were encouraged to consult and engage with their communities to assist in providing information on issues central to the Inquiry such as the strategic role of Local Government, devolution and decentralisation and of course funding.

As part of its community representational role Scrutiny were involved in considering how to encourage public involvement and enable a community led response to the issues being raised under the Lyons Inquiry. Scrutiny took the lead in deciding how best to involve the community in such an important issue which will directly affect the delivery of public services them.

Using the questions originally provided by Sir Michael Lyons as a framework, Scrutiny were also proactive in deciding the type of questions that should be asked and how they should be phrased to generate the most meaningful public response about the area in which we live.

Following completion of community consultation Scrutiny Members then played a key role in finalising and agreeing the Local Authority’s and Community’s formal comments first to be approved by Cabinet before submission to the Inquiry.

Responses from the public consultation identified the following:

- A Strong support for more local decision making and more local choice, where services should be provided at District level and people should be more involved in decision making;

- Key issues of local concern to be community safety and policing, anti social behaviour, young people and facilities for them, public transport and highways issues, street scene and cleanliness, and training and skills to improve employment;

- A strong sense of community in Chesterfield which has a sense of history and civic pride;

- The best things about Chesterfield to be access to the countryside, its people and community, and its shopping facilities and restaurants;
A role for the Council in promoting economic development and improving the environment;

- The need for continued investment in local Councillors to enable a good standard of community representation and their ability to address local issues and needs;

- The need for Central Government regulation and inspection to be reduced to allow greater flexibility to focus on local priorities;

- A need for the re-empowerment of Local Government and its elected representatives, as opposed to appointed agencies to decide on spending and funding for its area.

Raising Accountability

An important part of the Scrutiny function is to help clarify the reasons for decisions made and analyse the facts, information and judgements which led to those decisions being made and actions taken. Chesterfield’s Overview and Scrutiny function has a good focus not only on the important area of policy development and service improvement through service reviews, but also on raising accountability and during the last year there were three Cabinet decisions challenged for further in depth consideration by Scrutiny. It is also worth recognising that the party political dynamic which still exists within new decision making structures has helped generate a stronger challenge to decision makers in holding them to account.

Cabinet Decision to Refuse Tenancy

Scrutiny challenge was given to a Cabinet decision not to grant an application for housing tenancy. Scrutiny was concerned regarding this particular case for a variety of reasons that raised issues in relation to the Council’s housing management policies and procedures on housing tenancy. Scrutiny considered there were exceptional circumstances in this case, namely relating to:-

- the sole, current occupier’s age at the date of the termination of the joint tenancy;

- the length of time during which the current sole occupier had been a secure tenant living alone, and for some time with children, at the property;

- the wording in the Council’s Tenancy Agreement as to the requirement to notify the Council that the other joint tenant had left the property years ago;

- the sole current occupier had complied with the requirement to notify the Council that the other joint tenant had left the property years ago;

Scrutiny requested the Cabinet to reconsider its decision in this case as an exception to the Council’s Housing Allocation Policy, suggesting that a secure tenancy to the sole occupier of the Council house be
granted, which should be back-dated to the
date of the ending of the joint secure tenancy.
Cabinet subsequently reconsidered and
changed its decision to accord with the
recommendation from Scrutiny. This also
led to planned, future scrutiny review work to
improve procedures in relation to housing
management, policy
and procedure.

Cabinet Decision on Middlecroft Leisure Centre

The decision to close the Middlecroft Leisure Centre was made by Cabinet for reasons relating to structural problems and other safety issues.

However Scrutiny identified that proposals for replacement leisure facilities had not undergone comprehensive consultation with local people and leisure centre users. Scrutiny consultation with the public held at the leisure centre itself highlighted public preference for a swimming pool which had not been included in design proposals for the new replacement centre and a need to keep existing facilities open and available until the new centre had been built.

Having scrutinised the reasons for the decisions it was agreed to uphold the Cabinet's original decision to close the centre.

However, the Cabinet did change its decision at a later date to include a swimming pool in the design of the new leisure centre.

Cabinet Decision on Grant for May Day Event

Scrutiny was given to the Cabinet decision to reduce the grant that had previously been given in support of the holding of a Gala in the town centre. The reasons for the decision were that the grant amount agreed reflected the Council’s desire to support the Gala whilst recognising the Council’s challenging financial circumstances and that the decision took account of the amount of balances already held by the Gala Committee.

The decision was challenged by a number of Members who believed that the decision was inconsistent with the Council’s existing policies to promote the town centre. Scrutiny challenge of the decision found that the decision was not inconsistent with the Council’s policy to promote the Town Centre and was consistent with its policy on strict budgetary control. Scrutiny also found that the reduction in grant would not prevent the Gala from taking place and that according to submitted accounts, the Gala organisers had some reserves which could be used. The Cabinet decision was upheld.
Round up of Efficiency and Best Value Scrutiny Panel’s Year

Councillor Nicky Qazi - Chair

The Chair would like to acknowledge the support given by Mick Pidcock, Head of Best Value, Quality & Improvement, and his team and thank them for their hard work.

The Gershon Efficiency Agenda

The role of this panel has changed during the last 12 months to explicitly include efficiency considerations. The Council is now required (since April 2005) to produce an Annual Efficiency Statement (AES) setting out the efficiency gains it has made each year and the gains it proposes to make in the next year. The government set Chesterfield Borough Council an efficiency target of £510,000 in 2005/06 and £656,000 in 2006/07, half of which must be in the form of cashable gains.

All the projects, identified in the AES as contributing to this target, are now monitored by the Efficiency and Best Value Scrutiny Panel and the name of the panel was changed to include the word ‘Efficiency’ in the title. The monitoring role is considered to be a significant element of the Council’s whole efficiency related agenda and the latest guidance from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister states that scrutiny of the AES by members is considered to be best practice.

Achievements
- Subject to verification, these targets have been met.
- A robust member led monitoring process of the Council’s AES is now in place.

Engaging our Customers Best Value Review

This Best Value Review comprised of three themes:-

Marketing & Publicity
Chaired by Councillor K Falconer

Complaints Management
Chaired by Councillor A Diouf

Advice Services
Chaired by Councillor B Dunks

Marketing & Publicity

In March 2006 the panel approved an Improvement Plan for the Marketing & Publicity theme. This plan aimed to create capacity within financial limitations, to broaden the Council’s marketing and publicity work and create a focus on developing the council brand, ensuring equalities considerations are integrated into the process, and developing specific marketing requirement within Leisure Services.

Achievement
- A Virtual Marketing & Publicity Team has been established, within the council, which draws together the disparate resource currently available.
Complaints Management

In May 2006 the panel approved an Improvement Plan for the Complaints Management theme. This plan approved the adoption and implementation of a new corporate complaints system based on the technology of the Customer Services Centre.

Achievements

- The adoption of this system will enable the Council to have one corporate system in place (instead of a number of different systems as is currently the case).

- The system will enable reports to be produced, providing management data, on number, type and nature of the complaints. Analysis will be possible by ward and this can be made available to the appropriate members.

- The data produced will help shape policy in an informed manner.

Advice Service

This theme is nearing completion and is examining the following elements of how the Council provides advice:

- The website
- Signage
- Council reception areas
- Council newspapers
- One-stop shops / Walk-in centre
- Equality of provision of advice to:
  - Older people
  - Disabled
  - Black & ethnic minorities

This review will be complete by July 2006.

Monitoring Completed Best Value Reviews

The panel continues to monitor the progress made on the Action Plans of completed Best Value Reviews. In the past year these have included:

- Culture & Leisure
- Operational Services
- Rents
- Community Development
- Home Improvement Agency
- Procurement

Achievements

The monitoring by the panel has resulted in a continuing focus on ensuring improvements take place.

- Renewed emphasis was put on getting the payment kiosk at the Council’s Revenues Hall functional.

- Establishment of the Home Improvement Agency and the transfer of the post of the Council’s Energy Adviser to the Home Improvement Agency was facilitated by the panel.

- Greater emphasis on the development and use of Project CHRIS (an electronic work planning/issuing system for housing repair and maintenance), particularly for ‘out of hours’ working.
Chesterfield decided it was time to review its overview and scrutiny structure initially in 2004.

The original structure was designed from little or no guidance from central government, guidance which eventually began to feed through to local authorities sometime after the initial legislation was introduced.

Having been provided with a better idea of the role and purpose of the overview and scrutiny function, it was decided that maybe it was time to give some thought to change, to enable scrutiny to move away from perhaps what were seen to be more traditional ways of working.

As with many other authorities, the original structure comprised of four committees the remits of which were rigid and therefore limited member interest and involvement in various issues. The four committees also provided for the continuity of the traditional and ingrained Member role in local government, ie revolving around meeting attendance.

The traditional and formal meeting environment also lent itself conveniently to the party political stage, which is not conducive to effective scrutiny work as it encourages opposition, not cohesion and emphasises party political priorities and not those of ‘people’.

Neither did the structure allow for direct public influence and involvement - the structure had a number of shortfalls. After lengthy research Chesterfield adopted a new structure, the finer details of which are given later in the report in the section on ‘How Scrutiny Works at Chesterfield’.

Ultimately the new structure, comprising in the main a statutory Scrutiny Board and the Efficiency and Best Value Scrutiny Panel have replaced the former four scrutiny panels.

The former Best Value Scrutiny Panel has been renamed and its mainly monitoring remit broadened to encompass efficiency monitoring.

The remits of the other three former panels have been integrated to create a single Scrutiny Board which allows the ad-hoc appointment of specific Review Panels that has helped break down some of the barriers to effective scrutiny that previously existed. The ad-hoc panels have unlimited flexibility in terms of which non-executive Members may be represented on them, and in terms of the issues they may wish to look at.

As the panels are not statutory they do not operate in traditional committee style allowing the freedom of unrestricted informality and choice in their operation.

Members of a Panel may not physically need to meet but may communicate and co-ordinate their work in other ways enabling scrutiny to take place outside the meeting room.

The Chairs of any Review Panels can be majority or minority group Members, but will be Members of the statutory Scrutiny Board and will report back to the Scrutiny Board. The new structure is still very much in its infancy.
but we believe has potential for more influential and effective scrutiny.

Since the introduction of the scrutiny role in local government it has been widely recognised that the independence and autonomy of scrutiny has led to some difficulty in enabling the function to sit comfortably within the corporate sphere.

Up until recently Overview and Scrutiny has been very much self-guiding, deciding its own work programme and direction, pretty much in isolation of other influences. It has taken some time for those involved in scrutiny to understand its purpose and ‘how’ to deliver scrutiny, let alone make it happen, and perhaps the focus on the very reasons for its inception has sometimes been forgotten while we have concentrated on the need to learn and develop. That is to say that the role of overview and scrutiny is very much a representational role - it is not simply a job for non-executive Councillors to fill their time, it is a very important aspect of community representation. What scrutiny does, it does for its community, or at least that’s what it should be doing.

Chesterfield can confidently accept that its scrutiny function is ambitious to improve to become ever more effective in its work. We have reached a stage now where we hope our new structure will enable a more flexible approach to our work, taking the emphasis away from the meeting room environment, making our work more interesting, allowing it to be innovative and in-depth. Having reached a stage where we can build on our skills and knowledge, we now accept a need to step up another level and enable scrutiny to become a more meaningful and purposeful part of the Corporate identity of the Council. There is much to do in achieving this and scrutiny has begun by introducing procedures which we can use to establish the level of importance of an issue against Council and Community priorities, as adopted in the Council Corporate Plan and Community Strategy. This will allow us to easily identify which issues are important to pursue by how they are aligned with the Council’s Corporate and Community aims and objectives. In doing this we hope to be working more harmoniously with our colleagues and acquaintances in achieving the same, shared corporate and community goals.

Consulting with stakeholders to establish what issues they feel scrutiny should be looking at is also a fairly new approach for us. Community concerns have been taken on board via Citizen Panel responses and Community Forum strategies and priorities, and have been taken into consideration when establishing and agreeing the Scrutiny Work Programme for the forthcoming year. For the future we hope to continue to strengthen the community influence of our scrutiny agenda by raising greater public awareness and building on our methods of consultation.
The Scrutiny Board Work Programme for 2006/07 reflects a more structured approach to deciding and organising the work of the Scrutiny Board particularly in relation to the choice of scrutiny reviews.

The introduction and use of a Priority and Selection scoring procedure has helped us to identify issues that are important to our Council and Community and to give them some order of importance in deciding our work.

The procedure has helped us achieve a better balance to our work programme to address a variety of issues of concern with different levels of importance to different stakeholders. This is a new approach for the Board which it intends to learn from and build upon.

Public influence of the scrutiny agenda for next year was mainly achieved through the consideration of Community Forum agreed Strategies and Priorities and from Citizens Panel feedback.

Partners, Members and key Officers were also given the opportunity to enable a broader influence of the work programme. From this the Board has identified two key Corporate and Community issues for attention that have been included in the work programme - these are street scene and cleanliness issues, (specifically that of grass cutting) and concerns regarding facilities for young people.

As part of next year’s programme the Board also intends to give regular and more specific attention to Budget and Performance scrutiny.

The Board intends to undertake regular scrutiny of the budget including the process and financial monitoring throughout the year to develop a more pro-active approach to budget scrutiny as an on-going necessity. We also intend to achieve a more systematic approach to scrutinising service performance specifically where it is needed, with the aid of performance indicators, and to ensure greater accountability in these areas.

We acknowledge our Work Programme must also allow for those items that can not be scheduled, such as items called-in, items referred from Cabinet, together with new policies for consideration and brand new issues on the horizon which will impact on Scrutiny greatly such as proposals under the Police and Justice Bill.

Our work programme also includes some of those service delivery areas, such as Information Technology Services, that may never be seen as a priority for scrutiny but do need attention at some time or other or they may never be subject to in depth review and improvement.
# SCRUTINY BOARD PROGRAMME

**Civic Year 2006/07**

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<th>Function</th>
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How Scrutiny Works in Chesterfield

**Scrutiny Board**

Under the new structure the Council has one Scrutiny Board which has 12 non-executive members representing the political balance of the Council.

The Scrutiny Board meets every month and is responsible for managing the Scrutiny Work Programme. All proposals for Scrutiny reviews are considered and approved by the Scrutiny Board. Any non-executive member can propose an issue for a Scrutiny Review along with officers, Community Forum members and members of the public.

Once a topic for a Scrutiny review has been agreed, the Scrutiny Board will establish a Scrutiny Review Panel. These are often chaired by a member of the Scrutiny Board but can include any non-executive member who has an interest or expertise in a particular area. The Scrutiny Review panels are largely member led and the Scrutiny Officer provides as much support as possible in terms of research, report writing and helping with project management, but the emphasis is on developing the skills of members so they can work independently. The Scrutiny Board receives updates from the Scrutiny Review Panel Chairs on progress with reviews against the work programme.

Other key matters which the Scrutiny Board itself considers include;

- Annual Budget scrutiny
- Performance and Service Delivery scrutiny

The Scrutiny Board will scrutinise the annual budget and monitor the financial circumstances of the Council. The Board will also monitor service performance and delivery and question those accountable to ensure continued awareness and emphasis on improvement where needed.

As with many authorities, Scrutiny at Chesterfield has evolved over its few years of existence becoming more effective and its work more meaningful all the time. As part of a strong ambition to develop and improve there has been significant, recent changes made to the Scrutiny structure itself which we will now build upon to continue to develop an innovative and influential Scrutiny Function.
STRUCTURE OF THE COUNCIL

- **Planning Committee**
- **Licensing Committee**
- **Appeals and Regulatory Committee**
- **Employment and General Committee**

**COUNCIL**
48 Members

**CABINET**
Leader & Deputy (Lead Members)

8 Community Forums

**Standards Committee**

**Scrutiny Board & Efficiency and Best Value Scrutiny Panel**
Efficiency and Best Value Scrutiny Panel

The Efficiency and Best Value Scrutiny Panel comprises 8 non-executive Members representing the political balance of the Council.

The Panel meets 7 times each year and is responsible for approving Best Value Reviews, monitoring the progress of completed Best Value Reviews and also monitoring the Gershon/Efficiency Agenda.

The Panel is supported by the Best Value, Quality and Improvement Unit and the agenda items usually comprise detailed progress/monitoring reports.

The Panel has scrutinised and approved 36 completed Best Value Reviews over the last five years and it is usually the Lead Officer from the Service Area that presents completed Reviews or monitoring reports to the Panel.

The current challenge for the Panel is to drive forward the Efficiency Agenda and scrutinise the progress made by the Council in achieving its annual Efficiency targets.
Scrutiny Membership

Scrutiny Board:
Councillors -

Alexis Diouf (Chair)
Bill Flanagan (Vice Chair)
Jean Barr
John Bradbury
Bridget Dunks
Glenys Falconer
Nigel Clarke
Denise Hawksworth
Trudi Mulcaster
Vicki Lang
Toby Perkins
Nicky Qazi

Efficiency and Best Value Scrutiny Panel:
Councillors -

Nicky Qazi (Chair)
Bridget Dunks (Vice Chair)
Peter Barr
Keith Falconer
Raelene Holmes
Mick Leverton
Chris Ludlow
Roy Pastoll
Involving Stakeholders and Raising the Scrutiny Profile

An important part of the Overview and Scrutiny role is that of public representation.

Overview and Scrutiny Members in undertaking their role do so on behalf of their electorate and the community as a whole. It is therefore of key importance that the views and concerns of the public are gathered and taken into consideration when Members decide their Overview and Scrutiny work.

We acknowledge however that there are barriers to public involvement and engagement in scrutiny which need to be overcome. Those barriers still include a general lack of awareness of the role of overview and scrutiny and what its purpose is.

People generally are not aware of and do not understand this important Council function and Community role, and this makes it extremely difficult to reach out and involve them as we must first introduce ourselves and explain what we do and why, before we ask them to participate.

Next year we hope to put greater concentration on reaching out to and involving all our stakeholders. This will mean an ongoing campaign to publicise and raise the profile of overview and scrutiny and tell the community what we can do to help them address concerns regarding the services they receive. We hope this will include new ways to encourage engagement and the direct influence of our work through involvement in the Scrutiny Reviews we undertake, ie through participation at meetings, as witnesses, in gathering information and involvement in identifying Scrutiny Review aims and objectives.

There are a number of areas we wish to explore and develop further to help raise the profile and awareness of scrutiny including the creation of a dedicated section of our Council web site where we can place information about us, about the work we have done and intend to do, and how people can get involved. We will liaise with our Community Forums, use Council publications to help get our message across and make better use of the local media.

Good communication with all stakeholders is paramount and we intend to strengthen external communications with the Public and Partners as well as internal communications. Internally we intend to develop better communication with our Executive Members and Officers to strengthen understanding and relationships in working together to achieve our Corporate goals.

Our overall aim is to create ‘successful’ Scrutiny through which we can empower our community to influence better local governance and better services for Chesterfield.

Contact: Anita Cunningham
Scrutiny Officer
Tel: 01246 345273
anita.cunningham@chesterfield.gov.uk
CHESTERFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
ARE WE ACCESSIBLE TO YOU?
IF NOT ASK US!

● We want everyone to be able to understand us
● We want everyone to be able to read our written material
● We aim to provide what you require to enable you to read, talk and write to us

On request we will provide FREE -
✓ language interpreters, including for sign language
✓ Translations of written materials into other languages
✓ Materials in braille, large print and on tape

Please contact us -
General enquiries 01246 345345
Mobile text phone 07609 10264
Fax 01246 345252

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