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This Annual Report is a credit to the work of Scrutiny members and the Scrutiny Officer during 2006/07. It shows both the breadth and depth of issues which Scrutiny has been involved in and the scope for making a difference and adding value to the work of the Council overall.

It is clear from the report that the new Scrutiny structure of a Scrutiny Board with task based Review Panels has now become embedded and is enabling Members to use their expertise and time in the most productive way. It is also good that a number of investigations and reviews have involved external agencies and have had a community focus, because it is important that internal processes of the Council are not the dominant feature of scrutiny work.

I particularly thought that the speedy response to the Chesterfield Royal Hospital review of community midwifery services in North Derbyshire was an excellent example of involvement in a wider community issue which produced a very measured contribution to the local debate.

The work programme for 2007/08 also specifically aims to have a community focus and to involve citizens where possible. I am sure this will prove to be a valuable contribution to the work of the Council during this year.

The section on the Efficiency and Best Value Panel demonstrates the benefits of having a panel dedicated to meeting the Council’s annual efficiency target and monitoring the Annual Efficiency Statement. The panel also continues to pursue best value reviews, achieving a remarkable total now of 36 completed reviews since their inception.

I commend this annual report to the Council and should like to record my thanks for the achievements in 2006/07 to all the Members of the Scrutiny Board and Panels and to Anita Cunningham, the Scrutiny Officer.

[Signature]
Chief Executive
Welcome to the Council’s second Annual Scrutiny report which details the work, achievements and progress of the Overview and Scrutiny function at Chesterfield over the past year. As last year we have also included in this report some of our hopes and aspirations for the forthcoming year to continue to build on the good work being undertaken and to continue to strengthen our role in local governance and local democracy.

To a large extent 2005/06 can be seen as a consolidation period for Overview and Scrutiny at Chesterfield. The firm embedding of the new Scrutiny structure now allows a much greater flexibility of approach to Scrutiny work and the opportunity for greater inclusiveness of all Members particularly through involvement with task and finish Scrutiny Review Panels. A special responsibility allowance for Scrutiny Review Panel Chairs has also added value to this role and further encourages Member involvement. Overall, the structure has worked well to date and to ensure continued improvement in its operation, next steps will be to review how it works to identify where further improvements can be made.

In 2005/06 Scrutiny at Chesterfield had a strong focus on Service Improvement (mainly through Scrutiny Reviews), ensuring Accountability within the Council (through the Call-in mechanism and Scrutiny Reviews), Policy Development work, and the monitoring of Best Value Reviews and Efficiency measures. Some work on scrutinising
External public service providers had been undertaken through the Joint Scrutiny Review into Partnership Working and examination of proposals to review local Midwifery Services. However there is scope for more scrutiny of external providers to be carried out and it is hoped pending legislation from the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill will bring about greater powers to enable more effective scrutiny of other public service providers in the Chesterfield community.

The one key area of responsibility for Scrutiny not fully developed is that of ensuring good finance (budget) and performance management. Last year therefore saw the introduction of some initial budget scrutiny and the commitment to a continued and regular focus on finance and performance scrutiny. For the future Scrutiny intends to take two approaches to finance and performance scrutiny: firstly by way of light-touch quarterly scrutiny and monitoring of targeted areas of performance and financial management, and secondly through ongoing service and use of resources reviews. The embedding of finance and performance scrutiny in the Scrutiny work programme now provides a comprehensive approach to our Scrutiny work.

Other work undertaken during the year includes the continuation of excellent work commenced 2004 leading to the completion of Phase II of the Joint Review into Partnership Working with neighbouring North East Derbyshire District Council. Details of Phase II of the review are included later and Phase I is also well documented in last year’s report. Also there were a number of outstanding matters from 2005/06 that needed to be finalised to enable a fresh and clear start to the 2007/08 work programme.

We now have in place a sound foundation for Overview and Scrutiny which enables attention to be given to all its key areas of responsibility as provided by Government guidance, ie:

- to ensure accountability;
- to be involved in developing policy;
- to scrutinise providers of public services external to the Council;
- to ensure best value through good finance and performance management.

We are confident that the consolidation of a sound framework achieved over the past year will now enable a comprehensive approach to all areas of Scrutiny responsibility and help us ensure more effective and meaningful scrutiny work.

Again our thanks and gratitude go to those Members of our statutory scrutiny committees and all others who may have been involved with and who have contributed to Overview and Scrutiny work over the past year. Overview and Scrutiny plays an important strategic role in local government but is still under recognised and under resourced. Our thanks go therefore to all those involved in this important area of work who have worked extremely hard against the odds to make Scrutiny work. We look forward to working with you again in the year to come. Our thanks also go to those Councillors who are no longer Members of this Council and who made a valuable contribution last year.
In January 2006 Chesterfield Borough Council and North East Derbyshire District Council’s Joint Scrutiny Panel completed Phase I of its Review into Partnership Working. The review initially commenced following an identified need to better manage the Councils’ resources that were invested in or involved with Partnerships. This review established the requirement for a method of assessment of the current commitments to partnership working, and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the partnerships with which the Councils were involved. The work from Phase 1 led to the production of a Partnership Development and Evaluation Handbook and Toolkit. The Joint Panel is proud to say that, at the time of writing this report, a copy of the Handbook and Toolkit is now owned by 80 plus Local Authorities and it continues to be of interest to a variety of public sector organisations. The Scrutiny Review has since been included on the Government’s Cabinet Office Charter Mark website as a best practice example case study.

Phase I concluded with a number of recommendations - one of those recommendations was to continue the good review work covering a number of other areas through Phase II. The second Phase, which commenced in July 2006, had a focus on the Council’s involvement in Outside Bodies (as opposed to Partnerships specifically), and the role of, and training for, Members and Officers involved in Partnerships and representing the Councils on various other external agencies.

The Phase II objectives were to undertake further work on;

- Providing a clear definition for both Councils of the role of Members, Officers and Partners in partnership working;
- The Councils’ role in Outside Bodies and a simplified version of the Phase I Evaluation Toolkit to enable Outside Bodies to be assessed and the Council’s contributions and involvement in them evaluated;
- The development of a vehicle for delivery of a training package for Members and Officers and external Partners involved in partnership working;
- Appropriate reporting processes;
- The impact of Local Area Agreements on the Councils’ arrangements for partnership working.

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- Chesterfield Borough Council, Chair of Joint Scrutiny Panel

Councillor Nick Foster
- North East Derbyshire District Council, Vice Chair of Joint Scrutiny Panel

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working, including their monitoring and evaluation systems and the Partnership Development and Evaluation Handbook and Toolkit.

Achievements:

The Joint Scrutiny Panel submitted a number of recommendations to both Councils in April 2007. The following key actions and issues were subsequently approved with further discussions to be held relating to resourcing and the involvement of Parish Councils.

- Adoption of Guidance on the following, formulated by the Joint Panel, for Members and Officers involved in Partnerships and other External Organisations, all to be accompanied by the appropriate briefing and advice:
  - the roles and responsibilities of Council representatives;
  - principles of conduct;
  - conflicts of interest;
  - general skills, qualities and attributes for Council representatives;
  - making appointments; and,
  - liabilities and indemnities;

- Continued exploration, by a Steering Group of the Joint Panel, of the potential for delivery of a training package via the Councils ICT systems, the necessary funding needed, and its marketing;

- The adoption of systems for appropriate levels of reporting back to the Council and the adoption and use of the reporting form formulated by the Joint Panel;

- Annual submission to Council of a report detailing the implications, benefits or otherwise of the Council’s involvement with Partnerships and other External Organisations;

- Annual review of representation and appointments of Members and Officers to all external organisations to be maintained in a register;

- Choice by local Borough/District Councillor(s) whether to be involved with an external organisation (Outside Body) specific to their particular Ward or locality, in line with a Councillors general community leadership role, as opposed to being appointed by Council. Also that such outside bodies / organisations be removed from the Councils’ annual list of appointments;

- Introduce a Skills and Special Interests Register which details the special interests, skills, knowledge and professional/other experience of Councillors to enable more appropriate and effective appointments to Partnerships and other External Organisations to be made;

- Appointments of Councillor representatives, to Partnerships and other External Organisations, to be made from
current elected Councillors of the Council only;

- The adoption and use over a realistic timescale of the ‘Phase II Questionnaire and Evaluation Tool for External Organisations’ as formulated by the Joint Panel, and to use the outcomes gained to inform future appointments to and involvement with External Organisations (other than Partnerships);

- The continued implementation of the Phase I recommendations including: application of the ‘Phase I Partnership Development and Evaluation Toolkit’; development of a comprehensive profile and database of Partnerships with which the Councils are involved; and the development of a Joint Model Partnership Agreement.

- Consideration of ways to enable a greater understanding of, and involvement in, the Local Area Agreement at Borough/District level and consideration of how the Derbyshire LAA could be most appropriately scrutinised;

- Ensure the County Council Partnership Evaluation Toolkit, intended to be used for County level partnerships, will meet the needs of the Borough/District Councils.
Scrutiny Members first became interested in the Council’s Housing Tenancy Agreement when a decision refusing tenancy was made by the Cabinet and Scrutiny challenge was given to the decision not to grant an application for housing tenancy. The reason that brought about the review was that there appeared to be some misunderstanding or lack of understanding, of tenancy rights and obligations by a tenant. The Panel felt this was a result of the lack of clarity and readability of the Tenancy Legal Agreement itself. It highlighted the need to ensure that tenants have a full understanding of their tenancy rights and obligations and that the Council has a duty to convey such information in an accessible way. It became apparent that the Tenancy Agreement was to be read together with the Tenant’s Handbook and the review evolved to consider both documents in conjunction with each other. Overall the review highlighted the need to simplify and modernise the two documents where possible, to make them more useful, easy reference documents for tenants.

The Scrutiny review focussed on ensuring the clear communication to tenants, and understanding by tenants, of their tenancy rights and obligations.

The review terms of reference were to:

- Review the readability and clarity of the written content of the Tenant’s Handbook and Tenancy Agreement to help maximise tenants’ understanding of their tenancy rights and obligations, as detailed in those documents;

- Review the visual appearance, layout, design and format of the Tenant’s Handbook and Tenancy Agreement for easier and more reliable conveyance of information to tenants;

- Review existing ‘sign-up’ procedures, to maximise tenants’ understanding of their rights and obligations, before signing the Tenancy Agreement document.

Achievements:

The Scrutiny Review Panel reported a number of recommendations to Cabinet which resulted in the following actions being agreed:

- Regarding the Housing Tenants’ Handbook:

  (a) The Scrutiny Panel and Officers continue to work together to agree any revisions to the Tenants’ Handbook currently being undertaken, before any final consultation with tenants that may be necessary;
(b) In undertaking the current review of the Tenants’ Handbook, and future revisions of the Handbook, that the issues identified relating to writing style and readability, visual presentation and equalities be taken into consideration;

(c) A further, comprehensive, review of the Tenants’ Handbook be undertaken on a regular basis.

Regarding the Housing Tenancy Agreement:

(a) The Housing Tenancy Agreement document be updated in the near future, giving attention to simplifying, as far as legally possible and at minimal cost, the clarity of that document;

(b) At such a time when any major and costly changes to the Housing Tenancy Agreement become necessary, best practice be sought at that time to undertake a further review of the document, in conjunction with the Tenants’ Handbook;

(c) In undertaking any review of the Housing Tenancy Agreement issues identified in the report relating to writing style and readability, visual presentation and equalities be taken into consideration.

At times of review of the Tenants Handbook and Tenancy Agreement, the Council’s ‘Plain English’ Working Group and Equalities Officer be consulted for latest advice and guidance.

Regarding Tenancy Agreement ‘Sign-up’ Procedures:

(a) The current ‘sign-up’ procedures for tenancy agreements be reviewed, in consultation with the Scrutiny Panel, to help maximise tenants understanding of their tenancy rights and obligations, to be completed within a 6 month period;

(b) Procedures introduced under (a) above, allow at least 48 hours before the signing of the agreement for a prospective tenant to receive and read information detailing the key aspects of tenancy rights and obligations.
Review of the Housing Tenancy Scrutiny Panel on the Housing Allocation and Transfer Policy

Councillor Jean Barr
- Review Panel Chair

The work of the Housing Tenancy Scrutiny Panel had a further focus on examining whether the proposed changes to the current Housing Allocations and Transfer Policy were in the best interests of housing applicants, existing tenants and neighbourhoods, and taxpayers in general. The aims of this Scrutiny review were to:

- Consider the proposed changes to the Housing Allocations Policy and consultation responses, and make appropriate recommendations to Cabinet and Council;

- Review the readability and clarity of the written content of the Housing Allocations Policy;

Achievements:

The following Scrutiny recommendations to Cabinet were considered and accepted:

- When considering the allocation of a flat to applicants with young children, consideration be given to offering ground floor or first floor accommodation where possible;

- Following the receipt of notice to terminate tenancy from ‘one joint tenant’, the Council ensures that a reminder (or second) notice is sent to the remaining tenant before any formal action to take possession is taken by the Council;

- The Council must satisfy itself that an agreed and satisfactory procedure is in place for instances when officer discretion in decision making is exercised and the Scrutiny Panel is provided with some evidence of this;

- The policy be strengthened where possible to include information as to which officer(s) will be responsible for decision making and when elected Members would be involved;

- The policy include greater detail as to the agreed allocation protocol between the Council and Social Services in relation to housing 16 and 17 year olds, and the policy be strengthened by amending it to read “The Tenant Support Officer will ensure adequate referral and support arrangements are in place prior to a tenancy being agreed”;

- The Policy be subject to monitoring with review of the effects of the changes in 1 years time;

- Make amendments to the clarity and readability of the policy document as identified and detailed in the Scrutiny report.
Review of Proposals by Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust to Review Community Midwifery Services in North Derbyshire

The Council’s Scrutiny Board considered and responded to the Chesterfield Royal Hospital consultation document “Best for You - Best for your Baby?” which set out proposals for a review of Midwifery Services across North Derbyshire. The hospital had a duty to consult the relevant Health Authority Scrutiny Committee, in this case Derbyshire County Council Scrutiny Committee, who had in turn invited Chesterfield Borough Council to submit its comments. Chesterfield Borough Council’s Scrutiny Board completed complementary scrutiny to establish the potential impact of the proposals on the service users of Chesterfield specifically. The findings of the Scrutiny Board were provided to the County Council to form part of its submission in response to the consultation, and also formed Chesterfield Borough Council’s Corporate response as a stakeholder itself with an interest in the proposals.

The Scrutiny Board considered a variety of information and evidence from a number of affected and involved parties which included those of the Chesterfield National Childcare Trust; the Chesterfield Cherubs Group; The Royal College of Midwives and Unison; Darley Dale Town Council; information from the County Council Scrutiny process; and responses from the Chesterfield Royal Hospital to initial questions.

The Scrutiny Board’s findings and response to the Trust is below:

Accessibility and Quality of Service Issues

Council Members were concerned about the removal of services from local GP surgeries in the Chesterfield area, as the Hospital Trust has indicated that potentially 9 GP Surgeries may be affected. The Scrutiny Board had a number of concerns as to the adverse impact on service users in Chesterfield:-

- Taking the service away from local community GP Surgeries and relocating it to only 4 strategic points across North Derbyshire will cause accessibility problems in terms of the need for extra travelling time, extra travelling cost and
extra travelling difficulty for mothers and their children.

- Under the current system mothers with children can attend their local GP Service and access a wide variety of services, care and attention for the whole family - at the same place and at the same time. The Hospital’s proposals if implemented would mean separate appointments and journeys, and inconvenience to service users.

- As the local GP Service allows access to a wide variety of services, care and attention in one place, it also enables the provision of a continuity of care and the development of closer relationships between care recipients and those providing the services. It also allows for a good knowledge base of a patient’s health care history to be established by care providers. It was considered that this was an important aspect of our health care service, and such a holistic approach could only be maintained by keeping the services together and local to communities. It is felt proposals to take midwifery services out of GP Surgeries would therefore affect the quality of the service to mothers and families.

Confidentiality, Privacy and Security Issues

- The current system of local GP Services provides access to a wide variety of services, care and attention for all members of the community. This system discreetly ensures an individual’s privacy in terms of the reason why an individual has visited the GP Surgery. Only an individual and the service provider will know the reason for attendance. To take the midwifery service out of GP Surgeries and place it in a service specific building could deny visiting individuals of their privacy and therefore be discriminatory towards them.

- Members also had concerns about access to health care records of individuals where the relocation of midwifery services out of GP Surgeries may mean records are not constantly held in a central and / or secure location. This may lead to the confidentiality and security of patient records being at risk.

Consultation Process and Information Provision Issues

- The consultation commenced just before the Government document ‘Making it Better for Mother and Baby’ was published which means the process had not allowed the Foundation Trust Hospital to take the Government’s expectations and vision for the future delivery of midwifery services, fully into consideration in determining its proposals.

The particular aspect that appears not to have been considered is the option for birth at a local designated maternity unit. The Hospital has indicated that it has since reviewed this position and explains that “in terms of local facilities we are intending to carry out improvements to establish better facilities to support a more home
like environment”. However, due to the timing of the consultation these details are not formally included in the consultation document and proposals.

It was further noted that there were other consultation issues in question, ie, that consultation did not fully meet the requirements of legislation and government guidance in terms of how public consultation should take place:- it was considered the proposals put forward offered no real choice and no options for service users; the document provided little detail to support why the proposal put forward was the only viable option; there was little in terms of statistics to show why change was actually needed. Also it appeared some stakeholders were not formally consulted as they should have been, including GP Surgeries, and this Council only became formally aware of the consultation approximately 1 month after it had commenced.

Reasons for the Review

The consultation document does not make clear the reasons for the review and does not state that the review was brought about by good reasons to support the need for service improvement. Information provided by other stakeholders indicates that the review appears to be a money saving exercise. The Scrutiny Board believes that the reasons and evidence to support the need for the review should have been clearly documented.

Final Comments

The role of this Council and Scrutiny Board is to ensure as far as possible the provision of good value, quality services to its communities. The Consultation process, document and information provided falls short of convincing the Scrutiny Board that the proposals will bring about an improved public service. The Scrutiny Board wishes to add that it was disappointed that a representative from the Hospital Trust was not available to attend its meeting to provide more detailed, in depth information in support of its proposals. On the basis of the above it is difficult for the Scrutiny Board to support them.

For the reasons given the Scrutiny Board and Chesterfield Borough Council can not support the proposals as contained within the consultation document.

The Council does request however that the Hospital Trust gives consideration to clearly identifying the reasons for the review, and to then review its proposals in line with Government guidance and undertake a full re-consultation on revised proposals. “
The Scrutiny Board had undertaken some questioning of the Lead Member for Customer and Corporate Services on the number of employees leaving the authority and why they were leaving. It became apparent from this questioning that there was a lack of information available as to why employees were leaving the authority and the Lead Member could not confirm whether there was any formal Exit Interview procedure in place or provide any further information on the matter.

The Scrutiny Board considered that Exit Interview information was particularly important in human resource management to help improve service performance through better recruitment, selection and retention, and improvement to the working environment and the quality of the organisation. It was agreed that the Authority should have some system in place and that the matter warranted further investigation, hence the Recruitment and Retention Scrutiny Panel was subsequently appointed. The initial work of the Scrutiny Panel was to establish if there was a formal Exit Interview procedure in place and, if there was, to review its operation and identify any problems with its implementation. The Review Panel then continued to research and compare example procedures from other organisations with a view to recommending improvements to the current practice.

The aim of the review was to ensure the Corporate implementation of an Exit Interview Procedure and establish how the information gathered through that procedure was put to use in recruiting / selecting and retaining employees. The objectives of the investigation were to:

- Establish whether the Council had a formal, adopted Exit Interview procedure in place;
- Investigate to what extent the Council’s Exit Interview procedure reflects ‘in practice’ the requirements of the current Recruitment and Selection Policy;
- Identify improvements to the existing Exit Interview procedure to better inform employee recruitment / selection and retention;
- Establish whether any training was needed for Managers undertaking Exit Interviews;
- Establish what guidance information on the Exit procedure was required for Managers and Leavers.

The following recommendations were submitted to Cabinet where they were approved:

- A formal Exit Interview procedure, as detailed in the report be approved and
implemented on a Corporate basis for an initial trial period of 8 months to enable the monitoring of workloads and implementation of the procedure;

- A suitable Exit Interview Questionnaire and Written Procedure be drawn up in consultation with the Recruitment and Retention Scrutiny Panel within a 3 month period of being approved;

- Results of the monitoring of feedback from the process are reported at a Corporate level to Members and Officers on a six monthly basis;

- Managers are made fully aware of the process and the Human Resource Section ensure that any relevant training to Managers, who may be undertaking Exit Interview’s, is provided where needed;

- Upon adoption of the revised Exit Interview procedure the relevant information is made easily accessible to all employees.

The Panel also recommends that the Recruitment and Retention Scrutiny Panel be consulted on the proposed review of the Council’s current Recruitment and Selection Policy shortly to take place.

Overview and Accountability:-

Grass Cutting Service -

The Scrutiny Board has been overviewing the Council’s grass cutting service since July 2005 in response to a number of problems and issues raised by the public and Members regarding the service. The Scrutiny Board discussed the matter at meetings held in July 2005, October 2005, May 2006 and May 2007, and questioned those responsible for service delivery. At the time of Scrutiny’s initial involvement the Lead Member for Sustainability and Environmental Services reported that a plan of action to address concerns about the service was already proposed to include:-

- A first cut and weed spraying to be undertaken, and more staff deployed, earlier in the year, when required;

- Ongoing review of routes and cutting schedules for improved effectiveness and efficiency;

- A commitment to ongoing training and multi-skilling of employees who deliver the service;

- Expedition of the equipment purchasing programme and retention of some mowing equipment for standby in case of breakdown.
In May 2007 the Lead Member for Sustainability and Environmental Services reported a marked reduction in complaints received from 153 in 2005 to 47 in 2007.

**Budget Scrutiny -**

This year the Scrutiny Board initiated its intentions for future, ongoing budget and finance Scrutiny. The Board held a special meeting in January 2007 to question responsible individuals on the Council’s financial situation and future budget proposals. The meeting highlighted the difficult financial position the Council was facing and the need for some difficult decisions to be made in the near future to balance the budget over the next few years. To achieve this the Cabinet had looked at the possibility of using Council reserve funds, alternative methods of service delivery, joint working initiatives and increases to Council Tax to help address the current financial situation. The Scrutiny Board acknowledged the situation and recommended:

- The Council investigate ways in which there could be more in depth involvement of the public with the Council’s priority setting process to strengthen direct public influence on spending and service delivery priorities;

- More pro-active and timely involvement of Scrutiny in the future.

**Lead Member Question Time -**

Throughout 2005/06 the Scrutiny Board required the attendance of the Council’s Lead Members to its Board meetings, each on an individual basis, to provide answers to questions raised by Scrutiny Members. Each Lead Member was questioned regarding matters concerning their Portfolio of service responsibility, which allowed Scrutiny Members to receive answers and information in relation to any issues they wished to raise. At the same time this ‘accountability’ exercise allowed Scrutiny Members to gain a better understanding of the Lead Members role and areas of responsibility, together with their plans and aspirations for future service delivery. The Scrutiny Board intends to continue its Lead Member Questioning sessions, however in the future the Scrutiny Board intends to have a more focussed approach and will be questioning Lead Members on a quarterly basis as necessary on specific areas of performance and financial management of their areas of service responsibility.
4. Round up of the Efficiency and Best Value Scrutiny Panel’s Year

In 2006/7 the Efficiency and Best Value Scrutiny Panel continued its focus on the Gershon Agenda and monitoring the Annual Efficiency Statement (AES). As part of the Gershon Agenda the Council is required to produce an AES, setting out the efficiency gains it has made each year, and the gains it proposes to make in the next year. The Panel received reports on a selection of the projects included in the AES as part of its scrutiny role. Reporting progress against the A.E.S to a Member level body is recognised as good practice by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Panel continues to provide a robust forum for this function.

Achievements:-

- The 2006/7 target of £656,000 has been met and verified.
- The Council was complimented in the annual Auditors’ Management Letter for its AES processes.

Advice Services Best Value Review

In September 2006 the Panel approved an improvement plan for the review. The plan includes proposed improvements to:-

- Signage – A survey has been commissioned of the quantity and quality of the signage in the Borough.
- Council reception areas – suggested improvements include displaying appropriate museum artefacts.
- Equality of provision of advice to:-
  - older people
  - disabled
  - black and ethnic minorities

An annual satisfaction survey will be undertaken on the above.

- Council newspapers/A – Z of services – Planned improvements include better use of local newspapers for promoting Council Services.

The implementation of these improvements will be monitored in 07/08 by the Panel.

Monitoring Completed Best Value Reviews

The Council has now completed thirty-six best value reviews. The Panel continued to monitor the progress made on the Action Plans of completed Best Value Reviews. In the past year these have included:

- Community Safety.
- Forward Planning.
Achievements:-

- Renewed emphasis was put on reviewing and improving waste collection from Council owned flats/and other properties.

- Ensuring that Housing Services take reasonable steps to check that gas supplies are ‘live’ when new tenants move to a property.

- Working with the Head of Revenues to ensure that collecting water rates, on behalf of Severn Trent, was still profitable for the Council.

- Encourage the Council’s bereavement Services team to foster links with the Muslim and Jewish Communities within the Borough.

It is proposed that in 2007/08 the monitoring focuses on the significant reviews and those limited to Council priorities.

Joint Working

The Panel continued to receive progress reports on the Council’s Joint Working Initiative. Consideration and opinion of the progress made was useful to the project teams and provided welcome encouragement and input.

During 06/07 Chesterfield Borough Council, Bolsover District Council and North East Derbyshire District Council established joint units for:-
5. Scrutiny Developments

- Internal Audit.
- Building Control.
- Procurement.

A Business Case is now being developed for Corporate Services and the outcome of this will be reported to the Panel later this year.

Special Allowance Payments for Scrutiny Review Panel Chairs

The Council’s new structure allows for the Scrutiny Board to appoint Scrutiny Review Panels to undertake investigations into specific issues on a ‘task and finish’ basis. This structure replaced the former structure which originally comprised four separate statutory scrutiny committees. The Council’s Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) noted the new structural arrangements for Overview and Scrutiny and the Scrutiny representations that had been made in relation to that. The IRP recognised that the new arrangements placed an enhanced set of responsibilities upon the Scrutiny Board, and recognised the likelihood of an increased degree of responsibility associated with the role of Chair of this body, as compared with the four committees which existed previously. It also acknowledged the important role that would be played by the Chairs of the new ‘task and finish’ Scrutiny Review Panels which the IRP stated was an innovation widely regarded as good practice within the operation of the Overview and Scrutiny function. The Independent Remuneration Panel therefore recommended that allowance to the Scrutiny Board Chair be increased to reflect this, and also that a set amount, to be agreed each year, be awarded to those Scrutiny Review Panel Chairs who lead a review and who submit a report to the Board. The Council subsequently approved and adopted the recommendations of the IRP which now further encourages and rewards Members for their involvement and work in Scrutiny.

Scrutiny and Policy Development

During 2006 Scrutiny Members became aware of the absence of a formal procedure which allowed opportunity for Scrutiny to be involved with the development of policy. Scrutiny wished to have a system in place which would enable early notice to Scrutiny of any planned policy work to allow Scrutiny Members to decide whether they wished to be proactively involved. There appeared to be no system in place for this since the loss of the previous Policy Scrutiny Committee following the Council’s restructure of Scrutiny. A subsequent report to Cabinet agreed that each year officers would be consulted on their forthcoming plans for policy development, a list of which would be compiled by the Corporate Management Team and provided to the Scrutiny Board. The Board would then notify the Corporate Management Team
of any intended involvement. In February 2007 a list of areas for policy development was provided to Scrutiny for consideration as agreed and the information used to inform the Scrutiny Board’s Work Programme for 2007/2008.

Introduction of Monitoring Mechanism for Approved Scrutiny Recommendations

The Scrutiny Board recognised and acknowledged the need to be able to monitor the action or inaction in implementing scrutiny recommendations that had been agreed by Cabinet. It was acknowledged that it was not sufficient to simply rely on individuals to recall all recommendations agreed by Cabinet and that there needed to be a formal tracking procedure in place. The use of a tracking system would remind Scrutiny Members when they need to be asking Lead Members and Chief Officers about progress on the implementation of decisions, to ensure that scrutiny recommendations that are agreed by Cabinet are implemented, and in a reasonable time frame. A monitoring form has been adopted that could be updated each time Cabinet agreed Scrutiny recommendations and would be submitted to the Scrutiny Board on a regular basis for information and necessary action. The monitoring form, as it developed, would also provide a summarised record of scrutiny activity for easy reference and could be provided to Lead Members and Senior Officers as a reminder of any Scrutiny matters outstanding.


Consideration was given to proposals in the White Paper “Strong and Prosperous Communities” and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, together with requirements of the Police and Justice Act 2006, that will impact on the Overview and Scrutiny role when legislation is formally introduced in 2008.

Both pieces of legislation would introduce new duties and requirements for Scrutiny including the new function of ‘Community Call for Action’ which would empower citizens to bring forward issues to the Council and ‘require’ action.

Both pieces of legislation also provide more general powers to Scrutinise other agencies delivering public services, in particular those involved with the Local Strategic Partnerships and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships. Legislation will provide Scrutiny with power to require information from other public service providers and will require them to have regard to Scrutiny recommendations.
The Scrutiny Board Work Programme of planned items can be divided into two separate areas - those including the chosen topics or Scrutiny Review Panels for the year, and those ongoing general priorities such as budget and finance scrutiny, and partnership working and scrutiny.

From the consultation with the public, partners, Councillors and Officers undertaken, the Board has chosen to look at the following areas and issues during the 2007/08 municipal year. Scrutiny aims for its work to have a community focus and involve citizens where possible.

- Issues relating to Children and Young People / Youth Initiatives;
- Customer Service Centre;
- Sheltered Housing;
- ICT Services (continued from last year);
- Budget and finance scrutiny and related services such as options for Leisure Services;
- Scrutiny of Partnership Working;

The Overview and Scrutiny function is a continuous developing and evolving role. As part of our programme of work there will always be aspects of improvement and development of the role. Much of this type of work undertaken in 2006/07 is detailed in the previous section on ‘Scrutiny Developments’ and in the last section on ‘Involving Stakeholders and Raising the Scrutiny Profile’. Plans for 2007/08 include the following aspects of Scrutiny development:

**Member Learning and Development** – The elections of May 2007 introduced 12 new Members to the Council and, although Scrutiny development is always ongoing, we hope to place a greater emphasis on Member Learning and Development this year. In addition to this, new legislation already referred to will bring about a number of new powers and duties for Scrutiny although these are not formally to be introduced until 2008. However some preparation and understanding by Members of the new requirements and expectations will be necessary.

**Scrutiny Guidance** – The Council currently has little detailed guidance about Scrutiny, its role and purpose and how people both inside and outside the Council can be involved. We
intend to produce more detailed guidance material during the forthcoming year to help people who may be involved in Scrutiny work and in particular those who are expected to, or have an obligation to, be involved. We hope this will go some way to helping those people better understand the Scrutiny operation to make a better contribution.

**Scrutiny Evaluation** – This year we also hope to undertake some evaluation of the current operation of Scrutiny at Chesterfield. Overview and Scrutiny has been in Local Government for seven years now. Over that time it has been a difficult process to incorporate into the Council what was seen as an alien role compared with traditional, longstanding Council services and functions. Against all odds Scrutiny has managed to survive and even impress in some cases, and is now acknowledged by Government as being an essential part of Local Governance which needs to be resourced. However, like those other functions and services Scrutiny too needs to monitor and review itself to learn where it can improve, and some evaluation of the Scrutiny operation will help us do this.
7. Involving Stakeholders and raising the Scrutiny Profile

Involving stakeholders in Scrutiny work and raising its profile is one of the harder challenges we face. Last year we recognised there was much to be achieved in this area of scrutiny development and that interest and involvement would not materialise overnight. It would be a matter of time before we have comprehensive procedures in place to help raise awareness, and encourage and enable public involvement. The key purpose of the Overview and Scrutiny function is that of public representation which can be achieved in a variety of different ways – the obvious way through ensuring accountability for actions and decisions on behalf of our citizens, but also through ensuring service improvements in response to the needs of our citizens. In undertaking this role there is an expectation to involve and include citizens in what we do to achieve this, and we believe that last year we made some good progress in this area:-

**Scrutiny Work Programme** – Each year the Scrutiny Board now agrees a programme of work for the year. Its programme of work in many respects will be flexible to accommodate spontaneous items coming onto the agenda which can not be planned for. However, other than these items the Board will agree a number of particular issues or service areas for Scrutiny to investigate over the year. For the first time last year the Board undertook comprehensive consultation with the Public, Partners, Councillors and Officers to communicate and engage with them about Scrutiny and then to use the feedback received to help focus our work on the areas of concern they raised. In consulting the public through the Council’s Citizen’s Panel we also took the opportunity not only to ask them to tell us what they think we should look at, but also to ask if they would like to be involved with our work. We then aligned the information received with our Council priorities to agree items / issues to be included in the Scrutiny Work Programme.

**Links with Community Forums** – Recent Government thinking on the future of Overview and Scrutiny includes an intention for Scrutiny work to be more focussed on resolving issues and addressing concerns in ‘areas’ or ‘localities’, rather than to focus on issues relating to individual services. For example problems that exist in a community may involve or impact upon a number of different services. In working towards raising awareness and developing a relationship between Community Forums and Scrutiny,
last year the Scrutiny Board also consulted with the Community Forums through the Community Forum Liaison Group. It was agreed that Scrutiny would be included on Community Forum agendas to give the opportunity for Communities to raise issues they think Scrutiny could look into and bring them to our attention.

Website – Information and Communications Technology is a powerful tool which enables us to reach out to many people. Last year we spent time developing our website to make Scrutiny more prominent and to provide more detailed information about the Overview and Scrutiny role, what it means, what it does and how it works. The new Scrutiny web page allows access to much of the Scrutiny work undertaken, particularly the work of the task and finish Scrutiny Review Panels. Made accessible from the site are the Councils Annual Scrutiny Reports and a newly compiled FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions) and answers about Scrutiny at Chesterfield. Also, the Scrutiny web-page now provides for interested members of the public to put forward issues which Scrutiny could look into, and also for them to request involvement with our work.

As already stated above there is still much more to be achieved in raising the profile of Scrutiny and gaining people’s interest and involvement. We believe we have now taken a number of important steps towards this goal. Next year we will continue to build on our work so far and continue to focus on how we can empower our citizens, through Scrutiny, to help make Chesterfield a better place to live.
8. Scrutiny at Chesterfield and Scrutiny Membership

STRUCTURE OF THE COUNCIL

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

COUNCIL
48 Members

8 Community Forums

CABINET
Leader & Deputy
(Lead Members)

Scrutiny Board & Efficiency and Best Value Scrutiny Panel
Scrutiny Board:  
**Councillors** -  

Alexis Diouf (Chair)  
Bill Flanagan (Vice Chair)  
Jean Barr  
John Bradbury  
Bridget Dunks  
Glenys Falconer  
Raelene Holmes  
Denise Hawksworth  
*Acting Chair*  
Keith Falconer  
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

Anita Cunningham  
Scrutiny Officer  
Tel: 01246 345273  
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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