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Welcome to the Council’s third Annual Scrutiny report which details the work, achievements and progress of the Overview and Scrutiny function at Chesterfield over the past year. As before we have included 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 through:

- ensuring accountability through challenge of decisions and actions;
- influencing policy development and delivery;
- challenge of providers of public services external to the Council;
- ensuring best value through good performance and finance management.

Council elections this year introduced the appointment of many new Members to Scrutiny together with a new Scrutiny Board Chair. Hence this year was very much an intense learning experience for many, some who had not only become Scrutineers for the first time but also elected representatives for the first time. We therefore dedicated more time to our learning and development this year than we have in more recent years and to some extent the need to learn and develop shortened our stride a little meaning we had not quite achieved all we had hoped for in our ambitious plans.

Nevertheless, over the year we have developed some keen and very able Scrutineers making us fit for purpose for future years and despite coping with change we still made a number of new achievements and saw the results of some of our previous work come to fruition.

For the first time we have included in this report a section called ‘Impact on Service Delivery’. Primarily the work of Scrutiny is to respond to a need to improve and provide better public services, and detailed in this particular section are the changes now taking place as a result of our work.

Our work involves many people and our thanks and gratitude must go to all those who may be involved with and/or influenced by our Scrutiny work at any time. We fully appreciate your patience, understanding, co-operation and energy, and hope to work with you again to help add value to public service delivery in Chesterfield.
It is evident from this Annual Report that the Council has in place an effective Scrutiny function to ensure constructive challenge and to enhance the Council's overall performance. This is the criteria the Council is assessed against for Scrutiny for the annual “Use of Resources” rating and in my view the report demonstrates that the criteria are fully met.

Although there were many new members of Scrutiny following the 2007 elections and a new Chair of the Board, the substantial pieces of work that have been completed in 2007/08 are proof that Scrutiny is maturing and developing into a well respected and indispensable function of the Council.

It is good that the majority of the work carried out last year has involved front line services directly impacting on the public rather than internal Council processes. In particular the review of sheltered housing examined how changes in society affected the future of elderly people’s homes and was dealt with in a very sensitive and caring way.

The Efficiency and Best Value Panel focused on the effects of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 and how to deliver efficiencies and ensure value for money is consistently achieved. The fact that the 2007/08 efficiency target will be exceeded and helped to balance the budget for 2008/09 demonstrates the wisdom of having a panel concentrating on delivering efficiencies across the Council. The ongoing work on the Best Value Review of energy efficiency is also very timely and I am sure will deliver good results.

The proposals for the Scrutiny Board Work Programme and Plans for 2008/09 look challenging and exciting and I believe they will make a real difference to the quality of life for the 100,000 residents we all serve.

I commend this annual report to the Council and send my thanks and best wishes for the future to all the Scrutiny Members and the officers involved with them.

April 2008
Scrutiny ● Annual Report 2007/08

3 Scrutiny Board’s work and achievements

Review of Sheltered Housing

Councillor Helen Walsh
- Review Panel Chair

After considering a report regarding the potential closure of two sheltered housing schemes in the Borough, the Council’s Cabinet requested Scrutiny assistance in undertaking further investigation of the proposals. The Scrutiny Board appointed the Housing Services Scrutiny Panel to undertake the review and consider any possible alternative action that could be taken to avoid recommended closure of the schemes. The tenants living in the schemes were consulted on the proposals, given the opportunity to ask questions and raise any concerns. In the interests of the health and wellbeing of those elderly tenants wider public consultation and involvement was not pursued. The aims of the review were to:

- Investigate the reasons for the proposals to close the Brockwell and Foolow Court Sheltered Housing schemes and sell the land;
- Consider other options which may be possible to avoid closure of the two schemes;
- Consider the impact of proposals on provision of the sheltered housing service, and housing service, as a whole.

The Scrutiny review concluded:

1. Demand for Sheltered Housing accommodation at Brockwell and Foolow Courts, and particularly bedsits, appeared to be a problem. To some extent the Panel felt that this could be down to unsatisfactory marketing of the difficult to let premises. However, waiting list numbers for Sheltered Housing generally were also very low and this coupled with the fact that over the years schemes (or part of schemes) had been closed before, without subsequent difficulties in meeting demand, is a strong indication that demand for Sheltered Housing in general is decreasing. The District Audit report of 1998 also indicated that Chesterfield had over capacity compared nationally. Supply appeared greater than demand and there was no sign at the present time that this trend would change. The Panel concluded that the evidence pointed towards an over provision of Sheltered Housing accommodation in the Borough.

2. There were tenants’ health, safety and wellbeing issues to be considered. These related to what Members felt were substandard showering facilities, restricted living space in the bedsits and the isolation of tenants living in near empty properties.

3. In addition to the primary reason of lack of demand, Scrutiny considered underlying financial reasons which limited the Council’s options and supported closure of the schemes, though these reasons did not influence recommendations for closure. Without income from closure of the schemes and sale of the land improvement of other sheltered housing schemes appeared unlikely and the Decent Homes Standard may not be achieved by the Government’s target date. The financial situation would also bring forward the need to transfer the Council housing stock.
4. One of the reasons for decreased demand for Sheltered Housing was that some properties were difficult to let. The Panel found that the Council should have an agreed strategy in place for the future which sets out the actions to be taken to overcome and better manage the problem of difficult to let properties.

**Achievements:**

On the basis of the evidence gathered, the Scrutiny Panel made the following recommendations to Cabinet which were all accepted/approved:-

1. That the recommendations in the initial executive report to Cabinet be supported, ie - that the two schemes be closed, the properties demolished and the land sold;

2. That the implementation of proposals and consultations with tenants be handled in a most sensitive but expedient way, appropriate to the situation, and that the tenants to be re-homed be offered suitable accommodation to meet their needs and as far as possible their preferences;

3. That the proceeds from sale of the land be reinvested in the remaining housing stock;

4. That the Council adopt a Difficult to Let Strategy setting out options for action to be considered for the future, should further difficulties arise.

**Customer Services Centre - ‘Rapporteur’ Preliminary Inquiry**

The Scrutiny Board appointed a single Member ‘rapporteur’ Councillor Alan Craw to undertake some preliminary scrutiny of the Customer Service Centre. The Customer Service Centre is a Call Centre service jointly delivered by Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire Councils to the people of those areas. There were some initial concerns regarding the need for future capital investment and also regarding performance monitoring of the service.

As the service was still relatively new and very much in developing stages, preliminary inquiry identified there was a need to enable the service to settle down before any formal scrutiny review of the service was considered. Board Members agreed to revisit the possibility of more performance monitoring or in depth scrutiny of the service in the future.

Later in the year the Efficiency & Best Value Panel did commence some further performance monitoring work.
Review of Proposals by Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust to Review Community Midwifery Services in North Derbyshire

Last year 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. As detailed in last year’s report the Scrutiny Board considered information and evidence from a number of parties including 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 initial response is detailed in last year’s Annual Scrutiny Report.

Initial consultation undertaken was followed by a further, follow-on consultation. The Council’s further response is outlined below:

- Board Members still had reservations about the consultation process itself, lack of information and options provided, together with reasons for the review. It was considered many of the comments made in the Council’s original letter under the ‘Consultation Process and Information Provision’ and ‘Reasons for Review’ sections still applied.

Accordingly, the Scrutiny Board and Chesterfield Borough Council can not fully support the proposals at this time but support further, ongoing consultation.

Overview and Accountability Issues:-

The Scrutiny ‘Call-in’ Power

Scrutiny legislation allows for an Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) to investigate, make reports and recommendations on Cabinet decisions that have been made but not yet actioned. Legislation allows for action on these decisions to be suspended pending such a Scrutiny inquiry. This mechanism is referred to as ‘Call-in’.

The Council’s Constitution allows for Scrutiny Councillors to make a ‘Call-in’ request to the Scrutiny Board. The Scrutiny Board will then consider the Call-in request and decide whether to accept or refuse the request. If a Call-in request is accepted by the Scrutiny Board, the Board will then require the Cabinet to reconsider its decision on the basis of reasons given by the Scrutiny Board. If a Call-in request is not accepted by the Scrutiny Board, the Cabinet may continue to action the decision originally made. This year the Scrutiny Board received and considered two requests for Call-in :-

"The Board was pleased to see that it was no longer proposed to permanently close the Darley Maternity Unit. However, the Board also felt that there were still a number of issues which remained unclarified as raised in its initial consultation response letter dated 4 April 2007 - these are as follows:

- There is still no indication as to how many and where GP surgeries might be located, that will continue to provide antenatal services though the intention to involve the PCT and Patient and Public Involvement Forum in planning this is welcomed. However until this information is available the comments in our original letter under the ‘Accessibility and Quality of Service’, and ‘Confidentiality, Privacy and Security’ sections still apply.”
Call-In re: Grants to Advice Agencies -

In November 2007 the Council’s Cabinet made the following decisions regarding grant funding to Community and Voluntary organisations and in particular, advice agencies:

● that the grant budget of £437,000 be reduced by £44,000 in 2008/09;
● that any agreed budget reductions be borne principally by the advice agencies;
● that a ring-fenced amount of funding be made available for advice provision with negotiation to take place between the three advice agencies and the Council to determine the services to be delivered.

The three advice agencies referred to above are the Chesterfield Law Centre, the Citizens’ Advice Bureau and the Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centres. A Call-in request was received giving the following reason for Calling-in the Cabinet decision:

“It is clear that the advice agencies, the main casualties of the above resolutions, cannot maintain the current level of service provision with reduced funding and, as a consequence, the most vulnerable members of our society will suffer. The Scrutiny Board should examine in detail the level of funding required by the voluntary sector, especially the advice agencies to, at least, maintain the status quo in terms of service delivery. As part of this process, serious consideration should be given to the positive impact that the work of those agencies has on Chesterfield’s economy and also on the level of voluntary work done by individuals trained by the advice sector. The report presented to Cabinet appears to have largely ignored these hidden but extremely important factors, concentrating solely on budget savings rather than how cost effective any funding cuts might be for Chesterfield Borough Council in the long term”.

The Scrutiny Board considered the matter on three occasions and received information and evidence from Call-in Councillors. The Board also received submissions, questions and responses from the Council’s Lead Member for Community Safety and Community Issues, Council Officers including the Chief Executive and representatives from each of the three advice centres subject of the decision.

Members of the Scrutiny Board involved in the consideration found this issue to be particularly sensitive and a decision difficult to make, as representation of public need such as this very matter is at the heart of the Scrutiny role. However, after much consideration the Board finally concluded to support the Cabinet decision and reject the Call-in request. It was also stressed that it is only the constant financial pressure being placed on the Council that has brought about the necessity for funding reductions to be made at all. On this basis the Board had further concerns, as detailed below, which it agreed to bring to the attention of Cabinet regarding the Cabinet decision:

● The Scrutiny Board, whilst supporting Cabinet’s decision, would urge Cabinet to consider awarding funding to advice agencies for three years, rather than on a year to year basis, to enable stability of core funding which was vital to the organisations;

● That in the event that Cabinet proposes funding cuts to an organisation of over £10,000 or 10% of total budget, whichever is the smaller, basic economic impact assessments be provided;

● That the Scrutiny Board be kept informed of progress on consultation to be carried out with the advice agencies on budget proposals and to be given an explanation as to how any final allocation is arrived at;

● The Council is now in receipt of new government funding to address ‘worklessness’. If at all possible, Members would like to see some of this funding allocated to helping the delivery of services such as those provided by the advice agencies.
Call-In re: Closure of Bacons Lane Cash Office -

In June 2007 the Council’s Cabinet made the following decisions relating to the closure of the Bacons Lane Cash Office:-

● That the cashier facility at the Bacons Lane office be withdrawn;

● To investigate returning the three houses occupied by the office, to the housing stock.

A Call-in request was received giving the following reason for Calling-in the Cabinet decision:

“We believe that this goes against the Council’s strategy on inclusiveness, that this will most strongly impact on those without access to transport and with limited mobility, and is against the Council’s intention towards hard to reach groups. There is also concern about the likely impact on rent arrears. It will also negatively impact on the Communities that Work programme and plans for the Credit Union”.

Scrutiny Board Members visited the premises and considered the matter on two occasions receiving information and evidence from Call-in Councillors, the Lead Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods and Council Officers.

The Scrutiny Board agreed that the request for Call-in of the Cabinet decision be rejected on the grounds that:

● Adequate alternative facilities for payments, including directly to a Rent Collector, were available;

● The decision would allow greater flexibility for future use of the property;

● The decision would not impact on the Communities that Work programme operating from the premises.

Performance and Finance/Budget Scrutiny -

This year the Scrutiny Board evolved its former Lead Member Question Time meetings into more focussed challenge of service performance and service financing against our agreed Council and community priorities. Throughout the year Lead Members have been challenged in turn on the performance of their service areas and the budgets they are responsible for and questioned on how they contribute to priorities. Performance targets challenged included those of Crime and Disorder, Markets, Housing Rent Collection and Council Tax Collection. The Scrutiny Board continues to receive and consider the quarterly budget and performance reports to Cabinet to inform its work.

Scrutiny also continued to monitor the difficult financial position the Council was in, highlighted by Scrutiny last year. At the time of writing this report the Council’s financial situation had greatly improved and at its budget scrutiny meeting on 11 January, attended by the Leader, Deputy Leader, Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Finance to answer questions, the Scrutiny Board acknowledged the success that had been achieved so far in improving the Council’s financial position.
4 Impact on service delivery

Last year Scrutiny introduced a mechanism to monitor progress of the implementation of all scrutiny recommendations approved by Cabinet. This follow up procedure is essential to ensure that ultimately the work of Scrutiny impacts on service delivery and that the benefits of our work are received by people in our community. Progress with implementation and action taken to date is detailed below:

**Action on Recommendations from Scrutiny Review into Partnership Working (Phase I):**

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 commenced following an identified need to better manage the Councils’ resources that were invested in or involved with partnerships. This review established the need for a way to assess our resource commitments to partnership working, and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the partnerships with which the Councils were involved. The scrutiny work led to the production of a Partnership Development and Evaluation Handbook and Toolkit. Use of the Toolkit to undertake such evaluations will help provide important evidence for Audit Commission inspection under Comprehensive Area Assessment.

To date the following progress has been made with implementation of the Scrutiny recommendations approved by Cabinet. Details of the recommendations can be found in last year’s Annual Scrutiny Report:

- The definition of Partnerships and the Framework for Partnership Working, and the requirement for annual reporting on the effectiveness of Partnership Working, have been adopted by both Councils.

- Training and development for Members involved in Partnership Working forms part of a development programme to be delivered through the North Derbyshire Improvement Programme during the course of 2008. (see page 12)

- The Toolkit has been used, initially to evaluate CHART (the Local Strategic Partnership for Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire) and Bolsover Local Strategic Partnership. The evaluation identified the following areas for attention with regard to CHART:

  - A lack of formal Performance Management of CHART;
  - Private sector involvement could be improved;
  - Partners need to strengthen their contributions both in terms of contribution, commitment and ownership as well as resources;
  - The Partnership Office was not well resourced;
  - Sustainability of the partnership needs to be promoted;
  - A skills audit of partners needs to be undertaken;
  - Partners who are under-performing need to be challenged much more.
A list of further Partnerships to be evaluated during the course of the 2008/09 municipal year has been agreed to include:

- Chesterfield Community Safety Partnership;
- Chesterfield Canal Partnership;
- Home Improvement Agency;
- Sheffield City Region;
- Three Valleys;
- Trans Pennine Trail;
- Chesterfield Schools Sports Partnership;
- North Derbyshire Regional Housing Strategy Group;

We hope to report on progress with implementing Phase II recommendations in our next annual report.

**Action on recommendations from the review of the Housing Tenancy Agreement and Tenants Handbook**

Last year the Scrutiny Panel on Housing Services undertook a review of housing tenancy agreements and the tenants’ handbook. 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 not helped by 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 tenancy ‘sign-up’ procedures, to maximise tenants’ understanding of their rights and obligations, before signing the Tenancy Agreement document.

The Scrutiny Review Panel reported 10 key recommendations to Cabinet which were all approved. Details of the recommendations can be found in the Annual Scrutiny Report 06/07.

To date the following progress has been made with implementation of the Scrutiny
recommendations approved by Cabinet: -

● Revision of the Tenant’s Handbook is close to completion;

● Revision of the Tenancy Agreement is close to completion;

● Review of tenancy ‘sign-up’ procedures has been completed.

Eligibility of parents with access to / shared responsibility for children has been considered and the Policy reviewed;

● The Allocations Policy document has been reviewed to improve readability and clarity of content;

Action on recommendations from the review of the Housing Allocations and Transfer Policy

Last year the Housing Tenancy Scrutiny Panel 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 tax payers 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;

The Scrutiny Review Panel made 10 recommendations to Cabinet - not all the recommendations were accepted. Details of the recommendations can be found in the Annual Scrutiny Report 06/07.

To date the following progress has been made with implementation of those Scrutiny recommendations which were approved by Cabinet: -

● Decision making procedures for deciding allocations are now more transparent;
5 Efficiency and Best Value Scrutiny Panel’s work and achievements

In 2007/8 the focus of the Efficiency and Best Value Scrutiny Panel moved towards the requirements of Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 (CSR 07) and the preparations required to strengthen the Council’s value for money regime.

Arrangements put in place for CSR 2007

- Establishing an efficiency group to consider and monitor projects that should secure efficiencies and reporting these to the Panel.
- A programme of Business Process Improvement work has been agreed.
- Option appraisal exercises are undertaken e.g. Security Services.
- Shared services opportunities continue to be explored.
- The review of the Council’s administration arrangements.
- Cutting edge project management tools are being piloted e.g. the MIE tool (a computerised project aid developed by the East Midlands Improvement Partnership).

2007/8 is the final year for the Annual Efficiency Statement (AES) in its current form and the Panel continued to monitor progress on a selection of projects included in the AES as part of its scrutiny role. These included:

- Shared services projects such as Procurement and Building Control.
- SpirePride Improvement Plan.
- The merit of employee efficiency suggestions and prioritising ones for further consideration.
- The creation of a single support services function for the Council which secured financial savings and identified further efficiencies.

Achievements

Early indications are that:-

- The 2007/8 AES target is likely to be exceeded.
- The annual audit letter complimented the Council on its robust option appraisal exercises.
- The efficiency work has helped balance the budget for 08/09.

Energy Efficiency Best Value Review

The Panel has commissioned a Best Value Review of energy efficiency which is due to report back in Summer 2008.

The review is examining the ways in which the Council manages its Energy use with a view to making improvements and securing efficiencies. Comparison work is being undertaken with beacon authorities and consultation with a range of stakeholders.

Performance Monitoring

The Panel plays an important role in monitoring performance and has considered reports in 07/08 on:-

- The Customer Services Centre.
- The Shared Procurement Unit.
- The new car parking arrangements on Soresby Street.

Supported Businesses

The Efficiency and Best Value Panel were commissioned by Cabinet to consider the recommendation to award one contract per year to a ‘supported business’. The Panel approved the idea and a contract for the provision of a creche at the new Healthy Living Centre has subsequently been awarded to a community sector organisation.
6 Scrutiny developments

Councillor Learning and Development

Last year we made a commitment to providing more opportunities for Councillor learning and development in Overview and Scrutiny. A number of training sessions and events have and are being delivered both internally by the Council’s Officers and also by external training providers:-

● The Council’s Scrutiny Officer provided Member training on:

- Scrutiny Basics and Project Management, and
- Scrutiny Call-In Powers;

● The Council’s Equalities Officer provided Member training on Equalities and Scrutiny;

● The Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Scrutiny Officers’ Network organised and delivered, through RADA (the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art), provided Councillor training on effective communication, questioning and behaviour through ‘theatre style’ learning;

● The North Derbyshire Improvement Programme (supported by Chesterfield, Bolsover, North East Derbyshire and Derbyshire County Councils, with the Fire and Rescue Service) is a comprehensive programme of learning and development for Councillors including skills required by Councillors involved in Scrutiny. The programme is being delivered in partnership with the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and Local Government East Midlands (LGEM) from February 2008 throughout the year;

● Arrangements are in place for INLOGOV to deliver Questioning Skills training in June.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, and requirements of the Police and Justice Act 2006 both have implications for the Overview and Scrutiny role. At the time of writing this report we are still awaiting commencement orders which will bring the relevant sections of the legislation into force together with any further regulations and guidance.

Both pieces of legislation will introduce new duties and requirements for Scrutiny including the new duty of ‘Councillor Call for Action’ which strengthens the Ward Councillor’s role in bringing forward issues on behalf of their communities.

Both pieces of legislation will also provide more general powers to challenge other agencies delivering public services, in particular those involved with the Local Strategic Partnerships and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships.

This year the Government undertook consultation on the new powers asking Councils and others for their views. The Scrutiny Board considered the impact of the new duties for Scrutiny and its response can be found on the Council’s website under Committee Meetings and Agendas for the Scrutiny Board held 20 March 2008.

Development of Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Chesterfield, Bolsover and North East Derbyshire

To ensure tax payer’s money is put to best use Council’s are under constant pressure to use their resources more efficiently. To support more efficient working Chesterfield Borough Council has already entered into agreements to deliver a small number of services jointly with North East Derbyshire and Bolsover District Councils. The three Councils have already formed a Joint Executive, called the ‘Joint Board’, to make decisions regarding the joint delivery of services and other partnership initiatives between the three authorities.

To ensure good governance we are now in the process of introducing a joint scrutiny body to monitor delivery of the shared services and to make any recommendations for improvements. We are still in the early stages of formalising these scrutiny arrangements and hope to report further progress made and work completed by the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee in our next annual report.
7 Scrutiny Board work programme and plans for 2008/09

The Scrutiny Board Work Programme of planned items can be divided into two areas - those including the chosen topics or Scrutiny Review Panels for the year, and those ongoing priorities such as performance and finance scrutiny.

Scrutiny always aims for its work to have a community focus and involve citizens where possible and from consultation with the Public, Partners, Councillors and Officers undertaken, the Board has chosen to look at the following areas and issues for review during the 2008/09 municipal year.

- Alcohol and Young People
- Plastic Carrier Bags and Impact of Plastic on the Environment
- Litter dropping and nuisance
- Flooding
- Policing
- Dentistry
- Housing Services
- Translation Services

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. Development work undertaken in 2007/08 is detailed in the previous section on ‘Scrutiny Developments’ and in the later section on ‘Raising Awareness, Involving Stakeholders and Building Relationships’. Plans for 2008/09 include the following aspects of Scrutiny development:

Scrutiny Evaluation

We agreed this year to undertake some evaluation of the current operation of Scrutiny at Chesterfield. We commenced some initial evaluation work before deciding to defer further work pending the arrival of a new Chief Executive in post in May 2008. Having received some leadership and direction from our newly appointed Chief Executive, we hope to resume our evaluation work after that time.

Introduction of Scrutiny Guidance

We intended this year to produce more detailed guidance information to help those people who may be involved in our Scrutiny work and, in particular those who are expected, or have an obligation, to be involved. The guidance should go some way to help individuals better understand Scrutiny and make a more informed contribution. Originally intended to be introduced this year, development of the guidance will now be included in next year’s plans.
8 Raising awareness, involving stakeholders and building relationships

We continue to explore different ways to involve stakeholders in what we do and to raise awareness and understanding of the Overview and Scrutiny role. Detailed below are some of the achievements and developments this year.

Consultation on Scrutiny Work Programme

Our consultation this year in preparation for next year’s work was perhaps the most comprehensive and proactive approach we have undertaken to date. We consulted, and included issues raised from, the Public (through Community Forums and the Citizens Panel), Partners (through CHART our Local Strategic Partnership), and our Councillors and Officers. We then aligned the issues brought forward against priorities to help us focus our efforts on those more important areas. This process and the documents used and produced also provide good evidence to support Scrutiny working effectively as there will be an expectation under the new Comprehensive Area Assessment inspection framework, when introduced in 2009, to show more effective operation of Scrutiny in Councils.

Building Relationships with Key Partners

This year CHART have offered to report to Scrutiny twice yearly on the progress of its work and future plans. We hope this will help Scrutiny build a better relationship with this important local body. Similarly we hope to receive progress reports from the Chesterfield Community Safety Partnership also.

Press Releases

During the year we commenced the issue press releases on a more regular basis, usually following our Scrutiny Board meetings. So far this year we have issued four press releases and the Scrutiny Board Chair has also undertaken radio interviews on Scrutiny matters. This has helped us raise our profile and build a better relationship with our local media.

Corporate Communications Agenda Item

Alongside our informal communication arrangements, we have introduced a standing Corporate Communications item on the Scrutiny Board meeting agenda. This agenda item provides the facility for regular, more formal communications between Scrutiny and the Cabinet and Corporate Management Team.

Internal Communications with Councillors and Officers

Alongside our ongoing learning and development plans to help raise the profile and understanding of Scrutiny by our Councillors and Officers, we will be circulating more regular information about the Overview and Scrutiny Role.

Website

Last year we undertook extensive work to develop the Scrutiny web pages of our website and have begun to monitor interest in our Scrutiny work through website use. Since then our Scrutiny web pages were viewed 476 times.
What our Stakeholders Think? ... ‘impressive and thorough scrutiny’ ...
Publicity by ‘Links’ - (the Chesterfield and North East Derbyshire Council for Voluntary Service and Action Limited)

In connection with the ‘call-in’ regarding grant funding cuts to advice agencies (detailed earlier in this report), ‘Linksline’ the regular newsletter for Links, stated:-

“Following the report in the last issue of ‘Linksline’ the issue of the cuts to the advice agencies was ‘called in for Scrutiny’ ... The Scrutiny Committee met several times to look at all the papers, discuss background with the local government officers who had carried out the survey, talk to Cabinet members and hear submissions from the three advice agencies...

... Links attended the final meeting in the public gallery and was very impressed by the Scrutiny Committee’s thoroughness in addressing all the aspects of the decision. The advice agencies had all been asked for very detailed information on their operation, the benefit for Chesterfield residents of the services, and the implications of the proposed cuts”.

These genuine comments help highlight the importance we put on our Scrutiny work at Chesterfield. This particular Scrutiny work focussed on community need and involved community representatives, whilst also allowing Scrutiny to showcase its ability to investigate matters in great detail, and in an independent and impartial way.

Those driving Scrutiny believe we are taking some important steps towards raising stakeholder awareness and involving the public, and we will continue to build on this important area of work for the future - public representation and improvement of public services being our purpose.
How Scrutiny works at Chesterfield and Scrutiny Membership

Structure of the Council

COUNCIL
48 Members

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

8 Community Forums

CABINET
Leader & Deputy
(Lead Members)

Standards Committee

Scrutiny Board & Efficiency and Best Value Scrutiny Panel
Scrutiny Members

**Scrutiny Board: Councillors**

Denise Hawksworth - Chair

Toby Perkins - Vice Chair

John Bradbury

Jane Collins

Alan Craw

Bridget Dunks

Keith Falconer

Vicki Lang

Adrian Mather

Nicki Qazi

Nicholas Redihough

Helen Walsh

**Efficiency and Best Value Scrutiny Panel: Councillors**

Nicky Qazi - Chair

Bridget Dunks - Vice Chair

Margaret Arnold

Keith Falconer

Eleanor Holmes

Chris Ludlow

Roy Pastoll

Toby Perkins

**Contact for further information:**

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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 -
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