

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Resources and Performance Scrutiny and Performance Panel
DATE: 12 December, 2005

RE: Scrutiny Service Performance Review

Purpose

In May 2005 EMT nominated the scrutiny service to undergo a performance review, the aim of which is to identify what is working well and produce an improvement plan to address areas that needed strengthening. This proposal was approved and agreed as part of the sign off of the Performance Plan by Council in June 2005.

Scrutiny Fitness Check

The Corporate Performance Management Service (CPMS), of which scrutiny is a part, is working in partnership with the IDeA to complete this review. The IDeA will conduct a 'Scrutiny Fitness Check' on the service. The Fitness Check methodology has been developed around the Centre for Public Scrutiny's (CfPS) four principles of good public scrutiny. It will use the principles and the supporting characteristics as a benchmark against which current scrutiny activity will be reviewed, and suggestions will be made for the future development of the councils' scrutiny function.

The Fitness Check will not be an inspection. It will offer a supportive approach, undertaken by "critical friends" and its intention is to help the service identify its current strengths as much as its weaknesses. It is the beginning of an ongoing change process, which will be taken forward by the service to address the areas where the Fitness Check recommends action.

An IDeA consultant and elected member peer, with experience of scrutiny, will carry out the Fitness Check, the majority of which will be undertaken on site at the council offices, helping to ensure that the needs of the council remain paramount throughout the process. A variety of activities will be used to gather information and evidence, including a document review, meeting observations and focus groups. Interviews will be undertaken with a range of stakeholders, including both executive and non-executive members, officers and partner organisations. The key findings and recommendations for action will be included in a report presented to the Resources and Performance Scrutiny and Performance Panel at the end of the process. The CfPS will also have an involvement in the Fitness Check process, challenging the draft report to ensure that recommendations are made in the context of achieving the four principles, and in light of emerging good practice and thinking nationally.

It is aimed to complete the review by the end of February 2006 in order that the Resources and Performance Scrutiny and Performance Panel may view and approve the subsequent improvement plan before the end of year review event.

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