

## Institute of Local Government Studies

### **Scrutiny and the Executive – Holding to Account and Working Together: Lessons of Good Practice and Experience**

8 April 2008

Venue: Birmingham

Speakers: Michael Keating, Kathy Eastwood, Mike Thomas, Andrew Coulson

Scrutiny committees, like the Parliamentary Select Committees on which they are loosely modelled, are expected both to work with their Executives to review and develop policy and, at the same time, to hold them to account. This they can do through effective questioning of cabinet members and senior officers, through analysis of council performance, by bringing to scrutiny issues raised in their local communities, and through call-in (although the possibility of a Call-in is sometimes as effective in changing policy as a call-in itself). The new Councillor Call for Action, which is a kind of appeal, to be used when other avenues of community influence have not worked, is another form of holding to account.

This workshop draws on Andrew Coulson's experience of scrutiny in many different councils, and case studies from three contrasting local authorities where the management of performance and policy is closely linked to the scrutiny function.

Those who come will develop their understanding of the opportunities for scrutiny, knowing that, at the same time as they are holding to account, they also need to maintain a long-term constructive relationship with their Executive – in other words operating as a critical friend.

#### **Who should come?**

The Workshop is intended for senior scrutiny officers, officers responsible for performance, and officers responsible for corporate strategy. It will also be of great value to councillors who chair scrutiny committees which deal with call-ins and/or with performance.