

Transformation Process: Democratic Work-stream, Session One

Effective Scrutiny Workshop, 16th May 2012 Notes

In attendance:

Councillors: Mrs. Ackerley, Bannister, Beaty, Beesley-Reynolds, Birch, Dr. Bremner, Brodrick, Mrs. Burrell, Dann, Dewes, Evans, Everett, Graves, Hall, Hallam, Holyoak, King, Liquorish, McHugo, Pain, Mrs. Robinson, Rook, Spendlove-Mason, Tomlin and Mrs. Wood.

Officers: A. Graves, B. Murgatroyd, E. O'Neill and V. Wenham

D. McGrath (external facilitator)

At this Workshop the following points were discussed as potential, future appropriate devices for the operation of Scrutiny at Harborough District Council. The majority of Members indicated their support for these principles:

1. more effective use should be made of the Council's Commissioning Aid when determining the Scrutiny Work-plan (this is available on the Council's website via [this link](#) and is appended to these notes at Appendix A).
2. all Members need to agree to the role of Scrutiny at the Council in order that disputes about the appropriateness of commissioning of particular items can be avoided.
3. the Council should look to its Portfolio Holders, as the experts in particular areas, to help identify key issues that will require Scrutiny both in the short-term and long-term (perhaps following the setting of the Council's priorities for each municipal year).
4. all Members, including Executive Members and non-Scrutiny Members, should have a role in the commissioning of the Council's Scrutiny Work-plan.
5. Executive Members and Officers, when attending Scrutiny Meetings, should not be made to feel like they are on trial.
6. Scrutiny is most effectively used when it is involved prior to decisions being made, rather than reacting post decision.
7. greater effort could be made to seek sources of external funding to undertake Scrutiny Review.
8. greater use could be made of volunteers from the community, who have experience in particular fields, to contribute to Scrutiny reviews.
9. greater emphasis could be given to community-based externally-provided services when setting the Scrutiny Work-plan.

Appendix B

10. Scrutiny should continue to seek the views and contributions to debate of the Council's partners (for example, Disabled groups, Housing Associations and the voluntary sector).
11. the Council has set the Scrutiny structure (on 14th May 2012 at the Meeting of Annual Council), as comprising a Scrutiny Commission and three Panels. However, this structure could be altered, via a recommendation to Council. An alternative to this could be a structure based on a Scrutiny Commission plus a number of 'task-and-finish' panels.
12. before embarking on a specific Scrutiny review, an analysis of Members' skills and interests could be undertaken to identify the most effective group for the task required.
13. the Council could identify long-term goals, say over a four-year period, and use Scrutiny to examine and influence the means by which this is pursued.
14. by being bold in the setting of the Council's aspirations standards of service provision may rise as a consequence (this was mentioned in the 'setting-a-high-bar' part of the work-shop).
15. a Transformational approach to change is different from an incremental approach to change.
16. due to the Council's limited resources, an appropriate approach to Scrutiny may be to focus on a small number of in-depth reviews on key areas rather than cursory, 'light-touch' reviews over a large number of issues.
17. a external facilitator could be used to help the Council in the setting of its Scrutiny Work-plan.

Members may also find the Council's Scrutiny 'A Guide to Scrutiny' document useful (available on the Council's website via [this link](#) and appended to these Notes)