

REPORT FROM THE OUTGOING CHAIRMAN OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION

As I will not be standing in the District elections on 5th May 2011, and will not be present at the Annual Council Meeting on 19th May 2011, this will be my last report to this Council.

My role as Scrutiny Commissioner for the 2010/11 period has been busy and we have covered many areas through our work. The work of the Scrutiny Panels has included many lively and thorough debates as well as the run-of-the-mill statutory functions and performance management reports. I am pleased to say that despite some very tight deadlines all of our statutory functions were discharged on time.

The Business Planning process at the beginning of this year was a particularly challenging time for Scrutiny given the difficult budget proposals and the necessity to make decisions in time for the budget-setting process. In order to make meaningful contributions to this process, within the necessary timescale, the Panels worked hard to agree recommendations for presentation to the Executive.

One important item that was commissioned on 25th November 2010, was a review of the Council's public toilet provision. Whilst the report, which was due to come before the Scrutiny Panel for Places on 17th March 2011, was available, events overtook the scope as proposed. Work now needs to be done to cover the areas and options that have changed. I would ask that whoever takes over my present role takes up the matter with some priority.

Having had a year to reflect on the Scrutiny function at Harborough District Council I make the following recommendations for the future:

Whilst there is a need for some programmed Scrutiny meetings, the number required could effectively be reduced if task-and-finish panels are introduced. The membership of these can be drawn from those interested or concerned in the particular subject matter and the time and location of the meetings could be at the discretion of the panels.

In the future, the Council may wish to consider the need for detailed minutes being brought to Council. This is both costly and time-consuming. There remains a need for decisions from the Executive, and recommendations from Scrutiny to be visible to the public and Members, this is catered for by electronic means. This could be supplemented by a list of decisions and recommendations made since the previous meeting being brought to Council. The Council's Constitution allows for matters which Members wish to discuss to be raised at meetings of Council.

I thank all of those who have cooperated with me in my various roles over the last 12 years and I wish you all the best in what I am sure will continue to be challenging times.

Councillor Hart
Chair of Scrutiny Commission