



This is an open report

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee
Cabinet
Council

Date: 16 August 2010
26 August 2010
8 September 2010

Subject: Scrutiny – Annual Report

Report of: Service Director – Borough Solicitor

Contact officer: Gary Finch – 01942 827163 (2163)

Cabinet Portfolio Holder: N/A

Purpose / summary: The purpose of this annual report is to highlight the main issues of scrutiny activity undertaken by the Council's five Scrutiny Committees and two Select Committees during 2009/2010.

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: None considered.

Recommendation / decision:

1. Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee is asked to comment on the report and recommend it to Council.
2. That Cabinet endorses the Annual Report
3. That Council adopts the Annual Report

Key Decision: This report does not involve a key decision. The decision made as a result of this report will be published within **48 hours** and cannot be actioned until **seven working days** have elapsed, i.e. before 7 September 2010

Risks / Implications:

Financial:	None
Staffing:	None
Policy:	None
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?	A diversity impact assessment is not necessary at this stage, however, equality and diversity implications have been considered.
Wards affected:	All – The work undertaken has wide ranging implications.

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution?	Yes
Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget?	N/A
Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?	No

* delete which applicable

For Cabinet reports only :

Categorisation of the report:	x		x
Key Decision		Corporate Issues	
Non-key Decision		Performance Monitoring	x

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Committee	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
	18 August 2010	26 August 2010	8 September 2010

1. Background:

- 1.1 In May 2009 the Council introduced a new Scrutiny Committee structure which moved away from one Overview and Scrutiny Committee, two Select Committees and a number of themed Panels to the introduction of five themed Scrutiny Committees and two Select Committees.
- 1.2 This Annual Report highlights the key activity of all the Scrutiny Committees relating to work plans, call-in, Select Committee work and the end of year scrutiny evaluation.

2. The work of the Scrutiny Committees.

- 2.1 Scrutiny Committees are able to add most value when focusing upon policy development and review, performance management and the work of the Executive. To facilitate this it is important that all scrutiny members have the opportunity to influence and subsequently lead and own the work of their respective Committees. To support this, a work programme planning workshop was held in June 2009 to develop Committee work plans.

A brief commentary will now follow on the work and achievements of each of the Scrutiny Committees.

(i) Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

The primary role of this Committee is to oversee the work of Business Support Services and Chief Executive's Services, which include, the Council's finance, legal and property functions, revenues and benefits, human resources, procurement, customer services, media and communications and ICT Services. The Committee is also charged with investigating issues, which directly affect the overall performance of the Council and its services.

During 2009/10 the Committee has been involved in:

- Monitoring the quarterly performance of Business Support Services and Chief Executive's Services.
- Monitoring progress against the Corporate Strategy.
- Monitoring a number of financial issues, including the collection of Council Tax and Business rates and the medium term financial strategy and financial outlook for the authority.
- Reviewing progress of the Organisational Development Strategy and Customer Transformation Programme.
- Government consultation on 'Strengthening Local Democracy' and 'Listening to Communities' and at a more local level City Region Governance,
- Developing policy and procedures in relation to Councillor Call for Action and Petitions.

(ii) Building Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee

This Committee is concerned with monitoring the work of services and partners concerned with making neighbourhoods safer and cleaner.

During 2009/2010 the Committee has been involved in:

- Monitoring performance in relation to crime statistics and quarterly performance of Environmental Services.
- Developing policy and procedures in relation to:
 - Anti-Social Behaviour
 - Police and Communities Together (PACT) Funding
 - Alleygating
 - Violent Crime
 - Abandoned Vehicles
 - Designated Public Places
 - Domestic Abuse

The Committee also investigated concerns that had been raised about the lack of guidance available when dealing with stray dogs, which had been raised following a Township incident. The outcome being that a policy on organisational roles and responsibilities in dealing with stray dogs will be produced in the new municipal year.

(iii) Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Committee

This Committee is concerned with monitoring the work of the Children and Young People's Service and associated partners.

Performance monitoring included:

- Quarterly updates of local and national indicators
- Equality and cohesion figures
- OfSTED outcomes
- Teenage Pregnancy updates

During 2009/2010 the Committee has been involved in monitoring the progress and engaged in the policy development of a number of high profile projects within the Borough, namely:

- Building Schools for the Future
- The closure of Montrose High School

- Youth Facilities

Other policy issues involved in include:

- Wigan Safeguarding Children's Board Business Plan
- School competition criteria
- Locality working
- Additional school places provision
- Children's Trust arrangements
- Data Loss
- Women and children's health care services
- Locality working

(iv) Adult Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

This Committee is concerned with monitoring the work of services involved in health and wellbeing including the work of our health partners.

Performance monitoring included:

- Quarterly updates of local and national indicators
- Budget updates
- Social Care Transformation Plan
- Care Quality Commission – Annual Performance Assessment and Annual Health Check Rating

The Committee has also scrutinised the Annual Reports of 5 Boroughs Partnership and Wroughtington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust and supported Ashton, Leigh and Wigan Community Healthcare Foundation Trust bid.

During 2009/2010 the Committee has also been engaged in developing policy in relation to:

- Adult Safeguarding
- Health Inequalities
- Adult Services Charging Policy

- Resource Allocation for Personal Budgets
- Sport, Health and Physical Education Strategy

The Committee has also engaged with a number of representatives to 'build up a picture' of service provision from a service users perspective. These include:

- The Carers Forum
- Cancer Patients and Carers Partnership Group
- Wigan Borough Local Improvement Network

In addition the Committee also investigated concerns that had been raised about the Hospital Standardised Mortality Ratio (HSMR) at Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust. The outcome being that figures for HSMR will be monitored on a regular basis by the committee.

(v) Economy, Environment, Culture and Housing Scrutiny Committee

This committee has responsibility for overseeing a wide range of issues in relation to economic development and regeneration, the built environment, transport, waste management and the work of Wigan and Leigh Culture Trust and Wigan and Leigh Housing.

Performance monitoring included

- Quarterly monitoring of local and national indicators in relation to Environmental Services
- Regular monitoring of performance in relation to Wigan and Leigh Housing and Wigan and Leigh Culture Trust. The Committee also scrutinised the annual reports of these organisations.

During 2009/10 the Committee has also been engaged in developing policies and strategies in relation to:

- Worklessness
- Housing Assistance
- Land availability
- Heritage Capital
- Cycling
- The Local Development Framework

- Housing
- Network Management
- Environmental Education
- Highways
- Homelessness
- Housing Allocation
- Flood and Risk Management
- Section 106 monies
- Conservation
- Energy Efficiency

3. Executive Decisions, Decisions Called-In and Councillor Call for Action

3.1 The most direct way in which Members of the Council hold the executive decision makers to account is through the call-in process.

3.2 In 2009/2010 a total of 172 executive decisions were made of which 45 were on the Forward Plan of Key Decisions, of which two were called-in.

Called in items were:

Proposed Closure of Montrose High School	Youth Facilities
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3.3 After consideration of the reasons put forward for call-in Cabinet upheld their original decisions in respect of the above.

3.4 The call-in process does not apply where the executive decision is urgent, insofar as any delay caused by the call-in process could seriously prejudice the Council's or public's interest. In these circumstances the Mayor must agree that the decision proposed is reasonable and should be dealt with urgently.

3.5 In 2009/2010 three issues were designated as exempt from call-in.

Issue	Reason for exemption
Youth Facilities (2 nd Call-in request)	No decision made
Statutory proposals to discontinue Lowton and Golborne High Schools and establish a new	Time constraints

secondary school	
Proposals to enlarge Lowton Junior and Infants School	Time constraints

3.6 No issues were formally raised as Councillor Calls for Action (CCfA).

4 Select Committees

4.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee is responsible for overseeing the work of the Select Committees. During 2009/2010 two Select Committees were established to look at the following issues:

Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) Select Committee

This study concentrated on examining how the issue of NEET is managed by the Authority and its partners and identify methods that could be adopted to reduce NEET levels within the Borough.

Alcohol and Substance Misuse Select Committee

This review focused on the incidence of alcohol and substance misuse by young people and how it is managed by the Authority and its partner agencies with the aim of identifying methods that could be adopted to reduce alcohol misuse and associated crime within the Borough.

4.2 Reports and recommendations of the two Select Committees will be presented to their parent committees during the autumn cycle of Scrutiny Committees.

4.3 The parent Committees responsible for Select Committee work during 2008/2009 – Procurement, Recycling and Police and Communities Together (PACT) have received 6 monthly updates demonstrating progress against the recommendations.

5 Scrutiny Evaluation

5.1 Following the completion of the first year of the new scrutiny function an evaluation was undertaken. A range of stakeholders were engaged with which resulted in a number of common issues being identified which formed the basis of the recommendations.

5.2 These recommendations were concerned with:

- Raising Scrutiny Members' understanding and awareness of their scrutiny role
- Reinforcing the focus of scrutiny
- Ensuring greater consistency around key decisions

5.3 It is also anticipated that the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee will be re-named with the Committee's remit being amended accordingly. Work is still ongoing on this issue and will be reported via the relevant channels as soon as possible.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 The issues identified for inclusion in 2009/2010 work plans demonstrate the important role Scrutiny Committee Members can play in influencing policy, monitoring performance and at times challenging the decisions of the Executive. Given the fact that 2009/2010 was the first year under the new scrutiny structure, which for many represented a new way of working, Scrutiny Committee Members seem to have settled into their new role reasonably well. Having said this, it was important to undertake an evaluation of the first year encouraging as many stakeholders as possible to contribute.
- 6.2 Issues identified from this evaluation, which have been briefly referred to earlier in this report, and lessons learned over the year will certainly assist in taking the scrutiny function forward. For example, at last year's work programme planning workshop, 103 issues were initially identified for work plans across the five scrutiny committees. By the end of the 2010 Municipal Year, over 200 issues had been presented to Scrutiny Committees. If effective scrutiny is to take place then it is crucial that a more robust approach is taken when determining work plan issues.
- 6.3 It is well documented that the Council faces many challenges over the coming months as a result of the Government's intention to reduce public spending. Scrutiny Committees can play an important role by casting an independent eye over the proposals being put forward to meet these challenges and being satisfied that any changes to service provision will continue to provide the residents of the Borough with value for money services. 2010/2011 will certainly be an interesting and challenging time for all the Council's Scrutiny Committees.

