

RYEDALE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

2007/08

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Introduction by the Chairman, Councillor Mrs Elizabeth Shields

Welcome to the third annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. But with what, you may ask, is this Committee concerned? The role of overview and scrutiny is to look at the services and issues that affect the lives of people in Ryedale. It is also about listening to the concerns of local people, to check how the council and other organisations are performing and where necessary to seek improvement in those services.

The Committee acts as both the Audit Committee and Scrutiny Committee of the Council and as such has a broad and challenging responsibility. This year in response to the views of residents the Committee has examined our complaints system and our waste management service. Work on the waste management review will be completed later in the year. Within this report you find more detail on these reviews and the other work of the Committee.

I hope you will voice your views to the Committee, particularly over the issues you feel are important for improving the well-being of the people of Ryedale. By doing so, you will help the Committee to make a positive impact on improving the lives of the people who live, work and enjoy their leisure here.

May I take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to the work of the Committee over this last year, particularly those who have helped complete the review of the complaints system.

I commend this report to you.

Councillor Mrs Elizabeth Shields

The Work of the Committee

The overview and scrutiny function is still relatively new within local government and very different in its role and function to past council committees. Fundamentally, it may not take or implement decisions but can make recommendations to the Council.

Overview and scrutiny committees were introduced under the Local Government Act 2000. Under the Act Overview and Scrutiny must:

- be given the power to review or scrutinise decisions or actions taken in respect of any function of the Council, apart from Planning and Licensing decisions,
- be given the power to make reports or recommendations to the Authority in respect of any functions of the Council,
- be given the power to make reports or recommendations to the Authority in respect of matters which affect the Local Authority's area or its inhabitants,
- meet in public except where legislation allows the press and public to be excluded,
- ensure that any Member of an Overview or Scrutiny Committee can place a matter relevant to the remit of the Committee on the agenda, and have the matter discussed at a meeting of the Committee.

The Committee is not an alternative to normal appeals procedures, in particular in respect of planning and development control, licensing, registration, consents and other permissions, and should therefore not become involved in reviewing decisions on individual applications. Neither is it a means of making a complaint against the Council. The Council has a complaints procedure for this. The Committee instead looks at the 'bigger picture' identifying, for example, where there maybe continuing issues of service failure, investigating that failure and making recommendations to improve the position for all customers and for the community.

The Committee also acts as the audit committee of the council. Effective audit committees bring many benefits to an organisation. They can:

- increase public confidence in the objectivity and fairness of financial and other reporting;
- reduce the risk of illegal or improper acts;
- reinforce the importance and independence of internal and external audit and any other review processes that report to the Committee;
- provide a sharper focus on financial reporting both during the year and at year-end, leading to increased confidence in the objectivity and fairness of financial reporting;
- assist the co-ordination of sources of assurance and, in so doing, make management more accountable;
- provide additional assurance through a process of independent and objective review;
- raise awareness of the need for internal control and the implementation of audit recommendations.

The Committee, therefore, has two distinct but complimentary roles at Ryedale, being both the scrutiny committee and the audit committee for the Council. The Committee undertakes its work by:

- Scrutinising the decisions made by other committees and using the ability to 'call-in' a decision of a committee of the Council and refer it back if necessary for re-consideration;
- Scrutinising the performance and effect of council services and policies by receiving internal and external audit reports, reports on the Council's counter fraud work, monitoring and reviewing the statement on internal control, examining our approach to the minimization and control of risk, and examining progress on our improvement plans;
- Undertaking and instigating reviews of existing policy and the development of new policy;
- Monitoring service performance, through the performance management framework and customer complaints, and considering the outcomes of Best Value and other reviews.

Together this enables the Committee to focus on the improvement of services: considering in-depth major issues, examining other areas of the work of the Council or of other local and national agencies, highlighting when things are going wrong and seeking action to address this in the most effective way.

Work Undertaken in 2007/08 as the Scrutiny Committee

Call-in

During the year Members attended the two policy committee meetings to observe but no call-ins were made during the year. However, a request was received from Councillor Andrews for the Committee to review the report on the Wentworth Street trial considered by the Community Services and Licensing Committee at its meeting on the 31 January 2008, together with all reports referred to including the Lockwood Report, the Yorkshire Forward Renaissance Report and the representations of the Car Park Fees Action Group. Councillor Andrews also requested that the examination of the report included other car parks, the merits of charging low fees in terms of getting income for the Council and the benefits for local businesses. The Committee agreed not to undertake such a review due to existing commitments but to re-consider the request at a later time.

Scrutiny Reviews

Reviews form a key element in the work of the Committee to improve the performance of the Council or its partners in delivering services to the wider community. The Committee has agreed to undertake two reviews: a short review of the Complaints System and wider review of Waste Management. Detail of these reviews is presented below.

The Committee will monitor progress on the recommendations contained within review reports at regular six monthly intervals. The Committee may request the Chairman of the relevant policy committee(s) and/or senior officers to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should sufficient progress on the recommendations not be achieved.

Review of Complaints System

In July 2007 the Committee agreed to examine and review the complaints system, all relevant information available to the public and service users and the method of reporting formal complaints to Members and to others.

The Committee approached the review by reviewing the existing documentation and information available on the Council's website, examining the detailed results arising from the 2006 Satisfaction Survey and best practice at other authorities. The Committee also considered the recommendations of the Local Government Ombudsman. A sample of people who had made a formal complaint to the Council over the past year were surveyed and all staff and service unit managers given the opportunity to comment on and make suggestions for improvement in the complaints system.

A new two-tier complaints system has been recommended with a new Comments, Compliments and Complaints Form and a revised complaints procedure providing more information to any complainant. A guide for staff has also been produced. A new format for the reporting of formal complaints to Members and to the wider public has been developed in order to provide more information whilst maintaining confidentiality. The main purpose of the reporting change is to identify and encourage opportunities for learning across the council as a whole.

Review of Waste Management – Interim report

The Committee to date has:

- examined the current operation of the waste collection service through discussion with the Commercial Services Manager and other officers;
- considered the waste management strategy and its implications for the waste collection service in Ryedale and for customers of that service;
- visited a producer to discuss issues of packaging and had discussions with a large retailer;
- identified the following areas of interest for further consideration:
 - packaging;
 - the likely future impact of the landfill allowance trading scheme on the Council and its finances and ultimately the impact for the council tax payer;
 - the state of the market for recycled material and its implications for the Council and its costs;
 - the opportunities for waste minimisation;
 - the results of the plastics and cardboard recycling trails;
 - what is the likely future for the disposal of waste and what implications might this have for residents and the Council;
 - how trade waste is dealt with in the district, with particular regard to re-use and recycling, including the results of the recycling trial in Malton and Norton;
 - how to maintain and increase recycling rates in the district without adding to costs;
 - should the council continue its current strategy of householders sorting waste or should some of it be sorted after collection;
 - the potential for joint waste authorities and the costs and benefits this may bring;

It is anticipated that the Committee will report its findings in October 2008.

Progress on Previous Scrutiny Reviews

Over the year the Committee have looked at how their accepted recommendations from previous reviews and other work have been implemented. Overall, recommendations from the following have been accepted and implemented:

- Review of the Rural Transport Partnership;

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- Review of Polling Stations;
- Decision making;
- Budget Prioritisation Process;
- Allocation of social housing;
- Future activities and priorities of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- Capital Project Management.

There are some issues relating to the Review of Leisure Services that should be taken forward:

- Appointing a Member Champion for Sport at this May Full Council;
- Lady Lumley's School be requested to convene the NRLS Strategic Facilities Management Committee at the earliest opportunity;
- An interim review of the two-year agreement with Community Leisure Ltd to be undertaken by the Community Leisure Working Party on behalf of the Community Services and Licensing Committee.

The Land drainage liaison group set up as a result of the Review of Agricultural Land Drainage continues to meet. The long awaited River Derwent Catchment Flood Management Plan was presented and commented upon. The Council has funded the scoping of a potential Channel Management Study of the Vale of Pickering and awaits the results of this with interest. The Group also commented on the Interim Report of the Pitt Review.

Some good progress has also been made on the reviews completed last year but further work is needed to fully complete the recommendations.

Other review areas

The Committee has looked over the year at one-off areas where they have had concerns over issues relating to services delivered by the Council or by outside bodies. These issues are set out below.

Council Improvement Plan

Following the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) inspection of this authority by the Audit Commission in 2004 an improvement plan was produced to address the issues identified - the CPA Improvement Plan. Over time the Committee has monitored a number of other action plans (risk management, the Statement of Internal Control, actions arising from the Annual Audit Letter and other audit and inspection reports) and in order to bring all these together a single improvement plan was developed and agreed in July 2006, based on the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance.

As a result of monitoring over the past year the Committee has raised concerns and action has been taken as follows:

- governance issues require a wider review rather than focusing solely on a review of the Local Code of Corporate Governance. As such a comprehensive review of the Council Constitution has been commissioned which will pick up some of the detail included in the improvement plan;
- Members request for a user friendly summary of the Constitution must await the outcome of the review of the Constitution;

- progress has been made on the VFM strategy and this has been acknowledged in discussion with the Audit Commission for the Council's VFM assessment. An initial draft has been prepared that needs further updating in the light of recent requirements arising from the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review 2007;
- a decision is required on the need to refresh the Citizens Panel. A report will be brought to a future Policy and Resources Committee when an analysis of the full impact of recent Government announcements on the duty to involve communities has been made;
- The Council is undertaking a programme of change, including a management re-structure. Additional resources have been made available to the HR Manager to assist with this. In particular the issues which will need addressing over the coming months include:
 - (a) a new approach to staff development review;
 - (b) the production of the new Health and Safety Policy;
 - (c) any required response to the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007;
 An interim Health and Safety Officer has now been appointed and will be dealing with the last two issues. An additional resource has been brought in to assist the change management process;
- the Council's Business Continuity Plan has now been completed to the point it can be tested;
- following the re-structure of the Corporate Management Team, the responsibility for progressing the Risk Management Strategy has been assigned to a member of the internal audit team. The Risk Management Strategy and Corporate Risk Register was updated in February;

The Committee acknowledged that in other areas progress continued to be achieved.

Customer complaints – monitoring has been undertaken quarterly during the year. A new format for the report was introduced in December as part of the review of the complaints system. It was noted that the number of complaints received throughout the year remained low.

The Committee has also monitored the 'points of view' cards received by our leisure management operator, Community Leisure Ltd. They have also reviewed the way in which customer feedback is recorded and reported. Notices are now displayed in each facility containing all the comments that have been received, including the relevant reply/action taken. The Committee acknowledges the many positive comments received from customers using our services.

Council Performance – The Council's performance management framework of indicators assists policy and decision-making within the Council and thereby helps to deliver (and demonstrate the delivery of) improvement for individual services and the Council as a whole. Over the year the Committee has noted the good performance in removing abandoned vehicles, in the time taken to process planning applications, disabled facilities grants, new housing and council tax benefit applications and changes in circumstances, and in the collection of council tax and in dealing with environmental health complaints.

The Committee has raised a number of concerns over the past year:

- funding for improvements to baby-changing facilities in public conveniences has referred to and been considered by Community Services and Licensing Committee;
- the recovery of outstanding debt. Reminders have been made to staff to ensure that debt action occurs before they are passed to Legal Services for formal recovery action;
- acknowledged weaknesses around indicators measuring equality and diversity in the workforce when compared to the population as a whole and to other councils. Positive efforts are made to recruit staff from all sections of the community;
- the number of days lost to sickness absence – a revised approach has been implemented that has resulted in some improvement;
- the poor performance of managers in undertaking staff appraisals. The current process has been simplified pending a full review.

In terms of the implementation of the Council's Corporate Plan 2006-09 the Committee noted good progress across a range of the Council's objectives. The Council needs to improve delivery on the following objectives in this final year:

Objective 1 - Affordable housing

Whilst all the actions in the Corporate Plan have been completed the delivery of affordable homes is currently short of the annual target and remains a concern. Significant opportunities for new affordable housing exist with a number of schemes in progress and new funding bids have been made but the number of completions each year remains below target. A number of initiatives to improve the delivery of housing and the number of new affordable units in Ryedale continue to be examined.

Objective 13 - Reduce HGVs - Malton & Norton

Progress on this objective will not be achieved until all the junctions on the A64 Malton bypass are upgraded and town centre traffic management measures introduced. Developer contributions towards the junction upgrades are now being collected.

Objective 14 - Accessible new developments

Measuring performance in this area has proved problematic in gathering all the required data and this currently prevents accurate assessment of progress made here.

Delivery against the Corporate Plan is particularly strong in the areas of: Objective 6 Community Grants; Objective 7 Reducing violence; Objective 8 Anti-social behaviour & nuisance; Objective 9 Young People; Objective 10 Household Waste Recycling; Objective 11 CO2 Emissions; Objective 12 Clean Environment; Objective 15 Community Transport; Objective 17 Electronic channels; Objective 20 Efficiency gains.

Risk Management – the identification and management of risk is integral to securing the achievement of the Council's corporate and service objectives. The Risk Management Strategy and the Corporate Risk Register were both revised and updated in February 2008. The Committee have noted through the reports received during the year that action is still required to:

- fully manage the risks associated with strategic partnerships, through implementation of the agreed revised approach;
- complete the emergency and disaster recovery planning work and test the business continuity plan.

Members of the Committee have received training in the identification and management of risk but this needs to be made available to all Members.

Work Undertaken in 2007/08 as the Audit Committee

Audit reports from the Audit Commission

Annual Governance Report 2006/07

The Audit Commission's report was presented in October. No matters of consequence had arisen and an unqualified opinion on the accounts was issued. The statement of accounts fairly presented the financial position of the Council.

Annual Audit Letter

The Annual Audit and Inspection Letter was presented to the Committee in April 2008 covering the year 2006/07. Our performance, as measured by the Audit Commission basket of performance indicators, has shown a significant drop between 2005/06 and 2006/07 in contrast to the previous year.

The main messages for the Council contained in the report are:

- our rate of improvement slipped in 2006/07; only 48 per cent of our BVPIs improved, compared with a national average of 57 per cent and our own rate of 67 per cent in 2005/06. Our performance within our priority services was variable; we maintained our strong performance in council tax collection and housing benefit administration but the amount of waste collected and our staff sickness levels deteriorated;
- effective partnership working has allowed us to achieve wider community outcomes such as expanding community transport scheme. We are also improving access to services and engagement with 'hard to reach' people, including young people and homeless people;
- a conclusion has been issued on our value for money arrangements to say that we had proper arrangements in place in 2006/07;
- there are opportunities to improve our use of resources assessment. As a relatively small council, the capacity to make sustained improvements remains a key challenge;
- an unqualified opinion has been given on our accounts;
- our overall management arrangements regarding data quality are adequate, although areas for improvement both at a strategic and departmental level have been identified.

The key actions needed by the Council identified in the letter are to:

- examine ways of moving our costs for the levels of services provided to below average costs for District Councils;
- monitor the implementation of the agreed action plan to strengthen arrangements in relation to data quality; and
- explore opportunities to accelerate our rate of improvement across all service areas – especially those service areas that contribute to our key priorities. In particular, focus on those priority areas, such as absence management, where performance deteriorated during 2006/07 and which will have an ongoing impact on our capacity to deliver, until satisfactorily addressed.

The Full Annual Audit Letter 2006/07 will be published with the Council's Annual Report at the end of June 2008.

Use of Resources Assessment

The annual Use of Resources assessment evaluates how well councils manage and use their financial resources. The assessment focuses on the importance of having sound and strategic financial management to ensure that resources are available to support the Council's priorities and improve services. The assessment covers five themes: financial reporting; financial management; financial standing; internal control; and value for money. The Commission identified that there were opportunities to improve. More detail is contained in the report

Data Quality Audit

The Audit reported that the Council had improved the way in which it provided data but there had been some isolated failures with recording the evidence and the manner in which some PIs had been calculated. The Council's Data Quality Strategy set out how the Council could improve and fully embed data quality across the whole council. Progress reports would be submitted to the Committee at six monthly intervals

Audit reports from the Audit Partnership (Internal Audit)

Annual Internal Audit Report 2006/07 and Audit Plan 2007/08

Members considered in July 2007 the report of the Audit Manager on the work undertaken in 2006/07. It was reported that all the main systems audited were operating robustly and securely. The Council needed to continue its commitment and effort into risk management, especially embedding it into everyday operations. However, some concerns had been raised on the handling of housing benefit fraud where some changes were considered to be required. The Council has since formed an arrangement with Scarborough Borough Council that is working well. The Committee also approved the Internal Audit Plan for 2007/2008 and subsequent years and considered it provided a sufficient level of assurance for the Statement of Internal Control and for the Council's external auditors.

Interim Internal Audit Reports 2007/08

The Audit Manager provided interim reports in October 2007 and February 2008 on the work undertaken in 2007/08. Few material weaknesses had been found and where this was the case management action has been taken. In both reports the Audit Partnership provided the Committee with a clear Statement of Internal Control Assurance for the Council as a whole, as all the main systems were operating robustly and securely.

Statement of Internal Control

Audited bodies are required to conduct a review at least once a year on the effectiveness of its system of internal control and publish a Statement of Internal Control with the Statement of Accounts. This includes not just financial controls but all corporate controls including risk management. An Action Plan has been developed and monitored by the Committee during the year. Members considered the report in detail and put forward suggestions with regard to the content and format. The Committee recommended the Statement for approval to the Policy and Resources Committee in June 2007. The Committee monitored progress on the action plan in February 2008 and also noted that the SIC will alter this year to become the Annual Governance Statement.

Corporate Assurance Framework

In response to the comments arising from the Use of Resources Audit, a Corporate Assurance Framework has been adopted to ensure that the Council has in place arrangements to maintain a sound system of internal control.

The Framework helps Members to:

- Take a view on how well this Council managed its business and other risks;
- Advise the Council as a whole on this;
- Identify any further action needed to improve the assurance framework;
- Monitor that identified actions have been completed.

Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy

Benefit payments in gross cash terms are the biggest area of service expenditure and also the area where there was more fraudulent activity. Several high profile court actions have been successfully taken over the last year. Members have been previously updated on performance statistics and counter fraud initiatives. Arrangements exist to prevent, detect, investigate and, where, appropriate prosecute all those perpetrating fraud.

Best Practice

The Committee wishes to improve its overall effectiveness by drawing on experience and best practice. In order to emphasise the Audit and Scrutiny roles of the Committee it was agreed in October to split meeting agendas into these respective parts.

The Future

The Committee aims to consult widely with stakeholders and the community in deciding its future work plan. Whether a resident, business operator, volunteer, stakeholder or Member of the Council, you can contribute to the work plan by completing and returning the tear off slip on the following page.

Comments on the 2007/08 Work Plan

The Committee has been mindful over the last year of the comments made by the outgoing committee in last years Annual Report, especially as many new members joined the committee following the elections in May 2007. In particular,

- the Committee has focused on a main review of waste management in order to examine issues in more depth rather than embark on a series of reviews;
- the Value for Money Strategy has been delayed so the Committee has been unable to provide the focus and leadership to understand and address the relationship of performance, costs and outcomes delivered by the services provided by this Council. This remains a challenge for the forthcoming year;
- the Committee has noted the recommendations from the Audit Commission as contained in the Annual Audit Letter 2006-07 and brings them to the attention of all Members;
- the committee has examined the way in which this Council's performance is assessed annually by the Audit Commission and has sought to ensure that it improves its overall score so that it is ranked amongst the best districts within its audit nearest neighbours group and within the North Yorkshire districts. In order to engage the policy committees in monitoring the performance of the council it is proposed that performance reports will in future be made in the first instance to the Community Services and Licensing Committee and the Policy and Resources Committee for their respective responsibilities. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may then choose whether to comment or not following their consideration by the policy committees.

A draft work plan for 2008/09 is included below. A policy mechanism to guide the selection of future work areas and scrutiny review topics is in place.

Draft O&S Committee Workplan 2008/09

Date	Scrutiny	Audit
Special Meeting w/c 23 June 2008		
Draft Work plan 2008/09		Critically review the Accounts and the Annual Governance Statement to give the Council assurance that management controls are working effectively
3 July 2008		
Draft Work plan 2008/09 Call-in of decisions arising from preceding policy committee meetings	Monitoring the implementation of Council Improvement Plan Progress report on previous Scrutiny Review recommendations	2007/08 Year end report from Audit Partnership (Internal Audit)
7 August 2008		
Call-in of decisions arising from the preceding policy committee meetings	Agree Scrutiny review programme for 2008/09 Review Performance reports to June 2008 made to CS&L/P&R Committees Report on Local Government Ombudsman Investigation results for 2007/08 Customer complaints to June 2008	Internal Audit – first quarterly report from Audit Partnership
9 October 2008		
Call-in of decisions arising from the preceding policy committee meetings	Progress on Scrutiny review Completion of Waste Management Review Half year Risk Management Actions Monitoring report	Internal Audit - Half year report from Audit Partnership Update on External Audit reviews and recommendations from the Audit Commission

11 December 2008		
Call-in of decisions arising from the preceding policy committee meetings	<p>Progress on Scrutiny review</p> <p>Half year review of Council's performance against corporate plan</p> <p>Monitoring of the implementation of Council Improvement Plan</p> <p>Review Performance report to Sept 2008 made to CS&L/P&R Committees</p> <p>Customer complaints to Sept 2008</p>	
19 February 2009		
Call-in of decisions arising from the preceding policy committee meetings	<p>Progress on Scrutiny review</p> <p>Performance report to Dec 2008</p> <p>Customer complaints to Dec 2008</p> <p>Comparative performance report for 2007/08</p> <p>Progress report on previous Scrutiny Review recommendations</p>	<p>Internal audit - third quarter report from Audit Partnership</p> <p>Final Internal Audit Plan for 2009/10 for information</p> <p>Monitoring of Statement of Internal Control</p>
9 April 2009		
Call-in of decisions arising from the preceding policy committee meetings	<p>Progress on Scrutiny review</p> <p>Half year Risk Management Actions Monitoring</p>	<p>Consider CFO report on compliance with legislation and internal codes of practice</p> <p>Update on External Audit reviews and recommendations from the Audit Commission/external auditors</p>
Agree Annual Report 2008/09		

Note: this is a guide to the reporting timetable. Those reports highlighted in bold have greater significance for the Committees work. However, the main focus of the Committee will be on addressing those issues of concern to Members in improving the delivery of outcomes for the people of Ryedale.

Principles of a policy mechanism to guide the selection of future work areas and scrutiny review topics

In considering areas for future review the Committee has agreed the following principles to guide the selection of future work areas and scrutiny review topics. The Committee should:

- 1) Consult widely on it's Scrutiny work programme by seeking proposals for reviews through Committees and by inviting the Chairmen of such committees to attend and discuss these with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 2) Take full account of any consultation with the public that highlights areas of real concern to local people. For example, consider the results of satisfaction and other surveys; coverage in the local media; comments received through the Council website; and complaints received from the public;
- 3) In selecting areas for review, Members of the Committee will give due weight to:
 - ❑ Whether the topic addresses the Council's agreed priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan.
 - ❑ Will it -
 - ? review the effectiveness of council policy?
 - ? shape and develop policy through influencing discussion?
 - ❑ It fulfils a performance management function. Will it -
 - ? Review performance of significant parts of a service
 - ? Address a poor performing service?
 - ? Address a high level of user dissatisfaction with a service?
 - ? Address a pattern of budgetary overspends?
 - ? Address matters raised by external auditors and inspectors?
 - ? Address an issue of high public interest?
 - ? Review a Major decision?
 - ? Review a series of decisions that have a significant impact?
 - ? look at innovative change
 - ❑ Has it been requested by Full Council or a policy committee of the Council

Any suggestions for reviews that are received will be considered against the above framework but the Committee does not wish to fetter itself in investigating any area of activity or service where there is good cause to do so. (Note: activity or service in this context includes services both internal and external to the Council).

Have your say in the Committees work?

You have just read what we have done in the past, perhaps you can influence what the panels do in the future by suggesting projects that would be suitable for Scrutiny.

Please bear in mind that Scrutiny is not a complaints system, but can undertake in-depth reviews and report to the Council.

All reports are published in hard copy and also appear on the Council's website www.ryedale.gov.uk

If you want to suggest a suitable topic for Scrutiny please complete the following, tear off slip and return to the following address:

Performance Manager.
Ryedale District Council
Ryedale House
Malton
North Yorkshire
YO17 7HH

or email your suggestions to scrutiny@ryedale.gov.uk

.....
Name
Address
.....
Tel: email.....

Suggestion for Overview and Scrutiny:
.....
.....
.....
.....

Membership of the Committee

During 2007/08 the Members of the committee were:

Councillor Mrs Elizabeth Shields (Chairman)
Councillor David Cussons (Vice Chairman)
Councillor George Hawkins
Councillor David Jackson
Councillor John Raper
Councillor Mrs Natalie Warriner
Councillor Mrs Jane Wilford
Councillor John Windress

The Liberal Group chose not to fill their allocated place on the Committee.

Support

The following officers provided the main support to the Committee:

John Barnett, Group Auditor, Audit Partnership
Victoria Ellis, Performance Management Assistant
Cheryl Gaynor, Trainee Committee Administrator
Phil Hancock, Performance Manager
James Ingham, Audit Manager, Audit Partnership
Jacqui Leach, Performance Management Officer (job share)
Jane Robinson, Performance Management Officer (job share)

RYEDALE DISTRICT COUNCIL

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR ATTENDING SCRUTINY MEETINGS

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to be a witness at one of our Scrutiny meetings. The following guidance has been prepared to explain how scrutiny works in Ryedale and to provide you with information about what to expect at the meeting.

What is Scrutiny?

As part of the Local Government Act 2000 local authorities were required to implement new political arrangements. Scrutiny is an important part of this and in 2001 we introduced an Overview and Scrutiny Committee (that now has nine members) to monitor and improve the services that we provide for our customers. The role of this Committee is to look at the services and issues that affect the lives of people in Ryedale. It is about listening to the concerns of local people, to check how the council and other organisations are performing and where necessary seek improvement.

What should I expect?

We would like you to feel completely at ease. You have been invited to attend a scrutiny meeting because we are interested in hearing your views or expert opinion on a certain subject area. You are not obliged to attend the meeting. Members will ask you questions but they will not interrogate you or put you under any pressure to answer the questions. We hope that your experiences or expertise will help us to improve the services we provide. A note of the meeting will be taken purely as a record.

Who will be in attendance?

Members of the Committee will be present although it is unlikely that all nine members will attend. The Performance Manager that you have had contact with will also be present and will assist you throughout the process.

Other Officers responsible for the respective service area being reviewed or with an interest in the scrutiny topic may also be present.

Scrutiny meetings are open to the public and it is possible that members of the public may attend.

When and where meetings will be held?

When you are invited to attend a meeting, you will be advised by the Performance Manager exactly when and where the meeting will be held and what arrangements have been made to meet you. Meetings will normally take place in the evenings starting at 6.30pm but other arrangements may be made if this is not convenient for you. The venue will normally be at Ryedale House, Malton but the Committee will try and arrange other venues as appropriate. You will be able to claim reasonable 'out of pocket' expenses in attending the meeting to ensure that you are not disadvantaged, unless some other agreement has been made with you.

Supply of written information

If you have written information, which is to be presented it would be helpful if this could be delivered to the Performance Manager (contact details below) prior to the date of the meeting.

Ideally the information should show the author of the report, the subject and summary.

If you require any equipment, please advise the Performance Manager in advance to ensure it is made available.

Interviews or Presentations

If you have prepared a presentation, arrangements will have been agreed with you in advance of the meeting with regard to the length of the presentation and any equipment required. At the start of your interview or presentation, the Chair will introduce you and the Service, Organisation etc; you are representing, if any.

Always remember:

- Take your time and speak slowly and clearly
- Ask for questions to be repeated if you do not understand or cannot hear
- If you are unable to answer a question on the day then please say so and you will be able to provide the information at a later date

When you have finished, questions may be asked for clarification purposes.

You will be sent a copy of the notes taken of your discussion with the Committee for correction but you will be asked to return these comments within 15 working days. If no corrections are received the notes will then form part of the Draft report circulated to all contributors to the review once the review is completed.

Claiming Expenses

If as a result of you being asked to attend a Scrutiny meeting you have incurred expenditure then you may claim reasonable 'out of pocket' expenses. You should wherever possible obtain receipts of any expenditure. If you wish to claim expenses, please contact the Performance Manager prior to the meeting and you will be provided with a form for you to make a claim.

Ryedale District Council **does not** reimburse the expenses of witnesses it employs.

Witness Feedback

As part of the Council's monitoring process, we would like feedback on how effective the scrutiny arrangements have been. You will be invited to complete a 'Witness Feedback Form' for return to the Performance Manager. These will be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee such that you would not be identified from your comments unless you indicated that you wished to be identified.

Scrutiny Support

Performance Manager

Phil Hancock

Tel: 01653 600666 x296

phil.hancock@ryedale.gov.uk

Performance Management Officer

Jane Robinson

Tel: 01653 600666 x297

jane.robinson@ryedale.gov.uk

RYEDALE DISTRICT COUNCIL

WITNESS CHARTER

Attending a Scrutiny Review meeting as a witness is often a new experience for people and the Council has to recognise the support that needs to be given. The Council will therefore need to keep witnesses informed during the process to try and ensure that the experience is as stress free as possible.

The Council will:-

- Inform the witness of the time, date and place of the scrutiny meeting at which their evidence (oral or written) is to be presented.
- Inform the witness of the matters about which the scrutiny body wish to ask them, advising of any documents that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee wish to have produced for them.
- Provide reasonable notice of all requirements of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to enable the witness to respond in full at the earliest opportunity.
- Provide copies of all relevant reports, papers and background information.
- Arrange for the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to introduce her/himself to the witness prior to the proceedings.
- Ensure that all witnesses are treated with courtesy and respect and that all questions to witnesses are made in an orderly manner as directed by the Chairman of the meeting.
- Ensure where appropriate that the witness is provided with information about claiming expenses.
- Invite the witness to complete a 'Witness Feedback Form'
- Where appropriate inform them of the outcome.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact Phil Hancock, Performance Manager, at Ryedale House, Malton YO17 9JU
Tel. 01653 600666 x296 or e-mail phil.hancock@ryedale.gov.uk