

		AGENDA ITEM
		SSC /10/10
Committee:		
Date:	2010	
<u>Scrutiny Towards Excellence – Action Plan</u>		
Enquiries to:	David Moses, Head of Member Support & Governance 01245 432138 david.moses@essex.gov.uk	

In July 2009, the Scrutiny Board considered a paper entitled “Scrutiny Towards Excellence”. Many of the issues identified in that report have already been addressed by most of the Policy & Scrutiny Committees and Area Forums.

The attached action plan has been agreed by the Scrutiny Board as part of the preparatory work for the refreshed audit of the authority’s scrutiny arrangements. The Committee is asked to note the contents of the action plan.

REPORT SSC/10/10

EssexWorks.
For a better quality of life

Scrutiny
Improving Public Services

Towards Excellence

Action plan

March 2010



Essex County Council

Scrutiny towards Excellence - Action Plan

No	Issue/Action	Owner(s)	Date
CfPS Objective - Critical Friend to the Executive			
1	Produce a revised scrutiny guide to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • incorporate an explanation of call-in procedures • make risk assessment a more integral part of the scoping process • prompt Committees to consider the scrutiny of Essex Works pledges and promises when developing their Forward Look to ensure there is a balance between undertaking reviews that aid and hold the executive to account for the delivery of the Essex Works corporate plan, and emerging issues or concerns that lie outside this plan. 	Governance Team Manager	April 2010 (draft is currently with Members of the Scrutiny Board for comment)
2	The Scrutiny Board, in accordance with its responsibility to optimise use of scrutiny resources, should play a more active role in overseeing / challenging work programmes to ensure the Executive is challenged appropriately. This can be achieved through a review of the Annual Report which details the activities of each P&SC over the last year (see 14 below).	Scrutiny Board	June 2010
CfPS Objective - Independence from the Executive			
3	To make full use of Governance & Committee Officers to research issues, identify witnesses, suggest lines of investigation and commission papers for scrutiny reviews	Committee Chairmen	Ongoing but reviewed by the Board on a six monthly basis
4	Ensure evidence is taken from members of the public and service users, as well as ECC officers and service providers	Committee Chairmen/Governance Officers	Six monthly review by the Board
5	Taking evidence from the Executive Member towards the end of the process	Committee Chairmen	Six monthly review by the Board
6	Ensuring agendas for the next meeting are agreed as part of the Forward Look or at an agenda planning meeting involving the Chairman and Vice-chairmen; including an	Committee Chairmen	Six monthly review by the Board

	adequate scoping of scrutiny reviews that encompasses a risk assessment		
7	Encourage engagement by all Members of the Committee in developing the Forward Look	Committee Chairmen	Six monthly review by the Board
CfPS Objective - Reflecting the voice of the public			
8	Identifying a stakeholder group for each review and invite them to submit evidence.	Governance Officers, in consultation with Chairmen & Vice-Chairmen	Six monthly review by the Board
9	Develop a strategy for giving wider publicity to the scrutiny function, e.g. through the website and use of press releases	Scrutiny Board Chairman, Head of Member Support & Governance, Head of Communications	July 2010
10	Establish protocols for issuing press releases during each scrutiny review	Head of Member Support and Head of Communications	April 2010
11	Develop and agree with the Scrutiny Board proposals for a scrutiny portal on the Essexworks web site as part of the project to replace the current Comad system.	Head of Member Support & Governance	September 2010
12	Maximise the potential use of the web hosting and broadcasting facilities by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broadcasting suitable meetings/items Video recording of witness interviews or site visits etc 	Governance Officers, in consultation with Chairmen & Vice-chairmen	Six monthly review by the Board
13	Ensuring witnesses are adequately briefed through the use of the scrutiny witness Guide NB this action can be monitored through the proposed evaluation reports - see 16 below	Governance Officers	Six monthly review by the Scrutiny Board
CfPS Objective - Drive improvements to public services			
14	Produce an Annual report for full Council on the achievements of the scrutiny function	Scrutiny Board	June 2010
	Draft individual annual P&SC and Area Forum reports	Governance Officers/Chairmen	April 2010
	Collate report for consideration by Scrutiny Board	Governance Team Manager	May 2010
15	Complete work on scrutiny recommendations database in order to	Head of Member Support & Governance	

	introduce regular recommendation monitoring reports as part of Committee Forward Looks	Governance Officers	April 2010
16	Seek witness evaluation of their attendance at scrutiny meetings	Governance Officers	February 2010
	Submit collated evaluation responses to Scrutiny Board	Governance Team Manager	Six monthly
17	Develop more formal joint scrutiny arrangements in accordance with the review of Area Forums	Scrutiny Board	September 2010
Meeting new legislative requirements*			
18	Finalise scheme for handling petitions at P&SCs and Area Forums	Scrutiny Board	June 2010
	Review scrutiny element of draft corporate petition scheme	Scrutiny Board	April 2010
19	Essex Member Scrutiny Network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold joint training event • Maintain network • Seek opportunities for joint scrutiny reviews with district councils 	Scrutiny Board Chairman Committee & Forum Chairmen	September 2010 Six monthly review by Board

*the following new or pending legislation will impact on the Scrutiny function:

- The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009
- The Local Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny) Bill
- The Flood and Water Management Bill