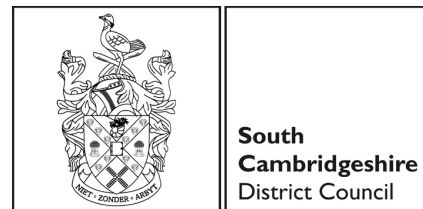


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Wednesday 10 January 2007

To: Chairman – Councillor MP Howell  
Vice-Chairman – Councillor R Hall  
Members of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee – Councillors RE Barrett,  
RF Bryant, Mrs SM Ellington, Mrs EM Heazell, SGM Kindersley, MJ Mason,  
DC McCraith, DH Morgan, Mrs CAED Murfitt, CR Nightingale, AG Orgee,  
Mrs HM Smith, RT Summerfield and Dr SEK van de Ven

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**, which will be held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, FIRST FLOOR** at South Cambridgeshire Hall on **THURSDAY, 18 JANUARY 2007 at 2.00 p.m.**

Yours faithfully  
**GJ HARLOCK**  
Chief Executive

Requests for a large print agenda must be received at least 48 hours before the meeting.

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<b>AGENDA</b>		<b>PAGES</b>
<b>PROCEDURAL ITEMS</b>		
<b>1. Apologies</b>		
<b>2. Minutes of Previous Meeting</b>		<b>1 - 6</b>
To authorise the Chairman to sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 December 2006 as a correct record.		
<b>3. Declarations of Interest</b>		
<i>Please note that when considering the review of any decision in respect of which a member of the Committee is subject to a party whip, the member must declare the existence of the whip. Any Councillor who is a member of an Advisory Group which has discussed an item that is now being scrutinised cannot participate in that debate.</i>		
<b>4. Public Questions</b>		
<b>5. Draft Agenda Programme</b>		<b>7 - 10</b>
<b>PRIORITIES AND MAJOR ISSUES</b>		
<b>6. Reports From Monitors</b>		
No portfolio holder meetings have been held since the last meeting of the Committee.		

7. **Post Office Closures** 11 - 22
8. **Local Government White Paper** 23 - 36

9. **Future reporting arrangements for the Audit Panel**

CIPFA best practice states in its "Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities" (2005):

*Ideally, audit committees should be separate from executive and scrutiny arrangements, and chaired independently from both these functions.*

It is expected that the Constitution Review Working Party, which meets on 12 January 2007, will have made a recommendation to Council by the time of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee meeting. The Committee is invited to discuss this matter before Council determines the issue.

10. **Scrutiny Training at York**

The Committee are invited to authorise the use of the Scrutiny contingency budget to allow the Vice-Chairman to attend a scrutiny training course at York. Full details to be confirmed at the meeting.

**STANDING ITEMS**

11. **To Note the Dates of Future Meetings**

**2007:** 15 February, 15 March, 19 April & 17 May  
All meetings will begin at 2.00pm.

## **GUIDANCE NOTES FOR VISITORS TO SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE HALL**

Whilst the District Council endeavours to ensure that you come to no harm when visiting South Cambridgeshire Hall you also have a responsibility to ensure that you do not risk your own or others' safety.

### **Security**

Visitors should report to the main reception desk where they will be asked to sign a register. Visitors will be given a visitor's pass that must be worn at all times whilst in the building. Please remember to sign out and return your pass before you leave. The visitors' book is used as a register in cases of emergency and building evacuation.

### **Emergency and Evacuation**

In the event of a fire you will hear a continuous alarm. Evacuate the building using the nearest escape route; from the Council Chamber or Mezzanine viewing gallery this would be via the staircase just outside the door. Go to the assembly point at the far side of the staff car park.

Do not use the lifts to exit the building. If you are unable to negotiate stairs by yourself, the emergency staircase landings are provided with fire refuge areas, which afford protection for a minimum of 1.5 hours. Press the alarm button and wait for assistance from the Council fire wardens or the fire brigade.

**Do not** re-enter the building until the officer in charge or the fire brigade confirms that it is safe to do so.

### **First Aid**

If someone feels unwell or needs first aid, please alert a member of staff.

### **Access for People with Disabilities**

All meeting rooms are accessible to wheelchair users. There are disabled toilet facilities on each floor of the building. Hearing loops and earphones are available from reception and can be used in all meeting rooms.

### **Toilets**

Public toilets are available on each floor of the building next to the lift.

### **Recording of Business**

Unless specifically authorised by resolution, no audio and / or visual or photographic recording in any format is allowed at any meeting of the Council, the executive (Cabinet), or any committee or sub-committee of the Council or the executive.

### **Banners / Placards / Etc.**

No member of the public shall be allowed to bring into or display at any Council meeting any banner, placard, poster or other similar item. The Chairman may require any such item to be removed.

### **Disturbance by Public**

If a member of the public interrupts proceedings, the Chairman will warn the person concerned. If they continue to interrupt, the Chairman will order their removal from the meeting room. If there is a general disturbance in any part of the meeting room open to the public, the Chairman may call for that part to be cleared.

### **Smoking**

The Council operates a NO SMOKING policy.

### **Food and Drink**

Vending machines and a water dispenser are available on the ground floor near the lifts. There shall be no food and drink in the Council Chamber.

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Report Items

Item no.	Report Item	Why Did this Report Go to the Committee?	Who Requested This Report?
7	Post Office Closures	Post offices provide a vital service to many of the District's most vulnerable residents. The Government is consulting on this issue and the Council is expected to respond.	Committee in December
8	Implications of the Government's White Paper on the Scrutiny Function	The recent Government White Paper specifically mentions the need to empower the scrutiny function and enhance partnership working. The Cabinet discussed this matter on 14 <sup>th</sup> December 2006.	The Scrutiny Sub-Group. Deferred from December's Committee meeting
9	Future Reporting arrangements for the Audit Panel	Currently the Audit Panel is a sub-Group of the Committee but the Constitution Working party are discussing a recommendation on 12 January that the Panel should come under the auspices of full Council. The Committee has the opportunity to discuss this matter before full Council makes its decision.	The Vice-Chairman

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# KEY QUESTIONS FOR SCRUTINY & OVERVIEW

Members are encouraged to make use of the following questions when discussing this month's agenda items.

1. Is it clear what this project/service is trying to achieve? How does this relate to Council priorities?
2. Who are our 'customers' here and what do they need / expect? How do we know that the project is meeting their key needs/wishes? Where are the research / consultation results?
3. Are the targets and milestones **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime-related? (If there aren't clear targets and milestones, why not?)
4. In the context of the Gershon requirements, how can this project be made more efficient and effective? (ie, rationalising corporate services; streamlining processes via ICT; more effective procurement to get a better deal; and increasing productivity).
5. What are the resource implications of this project/service? Have we got sufficient capacity to do this? If this is a new initiative, what are we going to do less of in order to be able to do more of this?
6. How well are we doing? – both compared to what we planned to do (in relevant strategies or service plans) and how well others are doing.
7. What are the reasons for this level of performance?
8. What management action are we taking to rectify performance problems / remove obstacles? Is this enough?
9. Are we focussing on what matters most to our customers and on what is most in need of improvement?
10. **WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THIS MAKE TO THE LIVES OF LOCAL RESIDENTS AND OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES?**

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**SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on  
Thursday, 21 December 2006

PRESENT: Councillor R Hall – Chairman  
Councillor RF Bryant – Vice-Chairman

Councillors:	Mrs EM Heazell	SGM Kindersley
	MJ Mason	DC McCraith
	Mrs CAED Murfitt	CR Nightingale
	Mrs HM Smith	RT Summerfield

Councillors Dr DR Bard, SM Edwards, Mrs DP Roberts and Mrs DSK Spink MBE were in attendance, by invitation.

Officers:	Patrick Adams	Senior Democratic Services Officer
	Greg Harlock	Chief Executive
	Simon McIntosh	Corporate Manager for Policy, Performance and Partnerships
	Tim Wetherfield	Head of Policy and Communication

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Mrs SM Ellington, MP Howell, DH Morgan, AG Orgee and Dr SEK van de Ven.

In the absence of the Chairman, Councillor R Hall became acting Chairman and the Committee agreed that Councillor RF Bryant should be Vice-Chairman for this meeting.

**2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2006 were accepted as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

- In the third paragraph in minute 7, the words “advisory group” were substituted with the word “meeting”.
- The first sentence under the heading “Risk: Local Government Pension Scheme” be amended to read “Councillor Edwards explained the changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme.”
- In the last sentence under the heading “Saving: interest from capital reserves” the figure of 3.5% be amended to 2.5%.
- The word Traveller or Travellers be capitalised throughout the minutes.
- The words “was so” be removed from the second paragraph under the heading “Approach to Government”.

**Strategic Management Board**

Councillor Mrs DP Roberts responded to the recommendation made by the Committee that the two monitors of the Housing portfolio holder attend meetings of the Strategic Management Board by stating that this was a small quarterly meeting, which she

attended with officers and a tenant representative to check that agreed procedures were being implemented at the DLO. The Board reported to the Housing portfolio holder meetings so the monitors would be kept informed of any developments. For these reasons Councillor Mrs Roberts was declining the Committee's request that the two monitors attend meetings of this Board.

### 3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors SGM Kindersley and DC McCraith declared personal interests as County Councillors.

### 4. **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

None.

### 5. **DRAFT AGENDA PROGRAMME AND PROGRAMME OF KEY DECISIONS**

Councillor Hall introduced this item on the Committee's agenda programme and invited suggestions for items to be discussed at next month's meeting.

#### **Post Office closures**

After a brief discussion the Committee agreed that the organisation Postwatch be invited to report to January's meeting on the number of post offices in the District that were likely to be closed.

#### **Stock Condition Survey**

Councillor Mrs Roberts suggested that the Committee should focus on the implications that the Stock Condition Survey would have on the Housing Revenue Account. The Survey was due to be completed in March 2007 and so the Committee agreed to put this matter on the agenda programme, provisionally for April's meeting.

#### **Corporate Government Inspection (CGI) Report**

It was agreed that the Committee should examine the CGI report but recognised that it would not be available before January's meeting. This item was put on the agenda programme, to be discussed once the CGI report had been published.

#### **Lettings Policy Advisory Group**

It was noted that this Advisory Group had held its first meeting and that the agenda programme needed to be amended to reflect this.

#### **Cambridgeshire Horizons**

Councillor MJ Mason expressed concern about a policy statement that had been made by the Council on its relationship with Cambridgeshire Horizons without any input from non-executive Members. He acknowledged that, on the request of the Planning and Economic Development portfolio holder, the Planning Policy Manager had spoken to him on this matter for approximately two hours, but he remained convinced that the Committee should examine this issue.

#### **Partnership with County Council**

Councillor CR Nightingale asserted that a Task and Finish Group needed to be set up to examine the Council's partnership with the County Council, especially in light of the positioning of a relief road to Addenbrookes. At the request of Councillor Nightingale, the Head of Policy and Communication spoke on this issue. He suggested that the Committee should focus on service issues which are the District Council's responsibility and that a scrutiny of matters which this authority undertakes together with others should

focus on this Council's contribution to the partnership. The Chief Executive added that a protocol existed between this authority and the County Council, which encouraged executive Members and senior officers to attend other Council's Scrutiny Committees on specific issues of common interest in the spirit of joint working. He requested that any scrutinising of the partnership arrangements with the County Council operate within this protocol.

The Committee agreed that a Task and Finish Group be set up to examine partnership working with the County Council.

### **Programme of key decisions**

It was noted that the version of the Forward Programme attached to the agenda had been superseded by January's Forward Programme, which had been published in the last few days.

## **6. REPORTS FROM MONITORS**

### **Community Development**

This Group met on 23 November 2006 and had been attended by Councillors DC McCraith and Mrs HM Smith. It was reported that it had been a productive meeting with a number of small grants awarded to deserving local bodies. However, although Milton Country Park had been discussed no mention had been made of the proposal, which was agreed by Cabinet on 14 December, to consider the closure of the park if a management transfer agreement with an external organisation could be reached by 31 August 2007. It was noted that this proposal had not been included in the recommendations in the Cabinet report. A member of the Committee made the following points:

- This issue had drifted for 6 months.
- Discussion had taken place at Cabinet that should not have occurred in public session.
- Cabinet's decision had been *ad hoc*.
- It was understood that staff had been notified of Cabinet's decision via the media.

Councillor Mrs Spink stated that the decision had been properly considered and had not been *ad hoc*. Councillor SM Edwards asserted that it was inappropriate to discuss this matter in depth in the absence of the Community Development portfolio holder.

The Head of Community Services explained that staff at the park had been notified of both the decision to make one of the part-time rangers redundant by 31 March 2007 and the need to pass the management of the park to an external organisation by 31 August 2007 if it were to remain open. The media had emphasised the negative aspects of this decision and this had possibly caused the confusion that had been alluded to by a member of the Committee. In response to questioning, the Head of Community Services explained that three staff were required to continue to deliver the service as it is currently delivered. However, these tasks had been carried out by staff based in Cambourne to cover staff sickness and it was envisaged that volunteer staff could be used from 1 April 2007.

It was noted that the park was always accessible on foot, although the facilities of the park were only open in daylight hours.

In response to suggestions that Cabinet's decision should be called-in, Councillor Summerfield explained that both local members had rejected this action, as they both

thought it more important to explore ways in which the park could remain open.

### **Planning and Economic Development**

It was reported that neither Scrutiny Monitor had been able to attend this meeting on 15 December, although the opposition monitor, Councillor JF Williams, had been in attendance.

### **Resources, Staffing, Information and Customer Services**

This Group had met on 21 November and 19 December since the last meeting. Councillor Summerfield reported that the latest performance figures for staff sickness and staff turnover indicated that the Council would meet its annual targets for these two performance indicators. It was noted that the contract for the distribution of South Cambs magazine had been put out to tender. In addition the Council was withholding the final payment to the contractors for the building of the Council Office, as a number of items on the snagging list had not yet been completed.

### **Protocol for monitors**

Councillor Mrs DP Roberts asserted that a protocol should be drawn-up detailing the responsibilities of the Monitors, as it was unclear to her what their responsibilities were and, in particular, whether they should be participating in the portfolio holders' meetings or only attending as observers.

Members of the Committee made the following comments:

- The monitoring process empowered non-executive Members and a protocol, which restricted their right to participate, would be detrimental to the democratic process.
- The portfolio holder chaired their meetings and could determine whether monitors participated or just observed.
- This was a new initiative and so the Committee should wait a few months, review the process, and then decide whether a protocol was necessary.

The Committee decided not to take this matter any further.

## **7. DEPARTMENTAL AND CENTRAL OVERHEAD ACCOUNTS**

The Chairman invited questions from the Committee.

In response to questioning Councillor Edwards explained that there could be a one-off saving of £300,000, as the Council's bill for energy consumption had not been great as had been anticipated.

It was understood that the quote by a Member at the last Council meeting, which had put the estimated value of the Council's Cambourne offices at the £10.7 million, had been based on insurance value only and had not taken account of the value of the land.

It was noted that this report had already been agreed by Cabinet and that further discussion by the Committee would be of limited use.

## **8. THE FUTURE OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **8 (a) Implications of the Government's White Paper on Local Government**

In view of the fact that the Members had only received the Vice-Chairman's report by

e-mail two days before the meeting, the Committee agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

#### **8 (b) Feedback From Scrutiny Training at Newmarket on 20 November 2006**

The Chairman invited comments on the training course attended by 10 Committee members in Newmarket in November. The following comments were made:

- It was disappointing that the course did not cover practical techniques on how to scrutinise issues.
- A course which focussed on the challenges facing district councils might have been more useful.
- The course implied that this authority's scrutiny function required more officer time.

In response to questioning the Senior Democratic Services Officer explained that minutes were expected to include a summary of the topic under discussion, details of the debate, including any alternative recommendations proposed and finally the conclusion made by the Committee. He concluded that reducing the Committee's minutes to a summary or action list would be of limited benefit as an officer would still have to attend the Committee and the production of action points still required officer time.

#### **9. TO NOTE THE DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The Committee **NOTED** the following future meeting dates:

**2007:** 18 January, 15 February, 15 March, 19 April & 17 May.

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**The Meeting ended at 3.40 p.m.**

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**Draft Scrutiny Agenda Programme for 2006/07**

The Committee is required to

- **Examine the agenda programme and confirm the items it wishes to scrutinise the following month**
- **Identify the purpose of the scrutiny and the desired outcomes**
- **Advise what information should be included in the report**
- **Decide which Councillors, officers and external representatives should be present at the meeting**

The Committee is in the process of considering ways to strengthen its approach to scrutiny and overview. As a consequence, substantial revisions to the programme of meetings and planned agenda items are possible.

Any queries regarding specific services should be referred to the Senior Democratic Services Officer who will endeavour to ascertain the relevant information. All correspondence should be copied to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

Date	Agenda Item	Why Is The Committee Discussing This?	How Will The Discussion Benefit The District's Residents
Jan '07	Member/Officer Contract	The Committee added this to the agenda programme at its meeting in October.	To ensure that the contract harmonises the relationship between officers and Members and assists the smooth running of the Council.
Feb '07	Draft yearly Report (Nov 05 – Apr 06)		
Mar '07	Final yearly Report (Nov 05 – Apr 06)		
Mar	Assessing Homelessness	The Committee decided to add this to the	The Committee wishes to ascertain who is

'07		agenda programme in September, with the agreement of the housing portfolio holder.	best placed to resolve whether a tenant is intentionally or unintentionally homeless. Under the old political structures it was a panel of members, under the new political structures it became the portfolio holder's decision and this year it became an officer decision.
Apr '07	Stock Condition Survey	The Committee added this item to its agenda programme in December 2006.	The Stock Condition Survey will indicate how much work is required on the Housing Stock and the implications this will have for the Housing Revenue Account.
Spring '07	Scrutiny of the Council's lettings policy	The Committee decided to add this item to its agenda programme in May 2005. A Lettings Policy Advisory Group is likely to conclude in the Spring of 2007.	The lettings policy determines which residents become tenants.
Not Set	East of England Plan Panel Report	The Committee decided to add this to the agenda programme in July and then resolved to wait until the Government's published its proposed modifications to the report in November.	The plan mentions the possibility of further expansion at Cambourne and Northstowe, the creation of a new settlement south of Cambridge and the disposal of waste from London, all of which we be a great concern to the District's residents.
Not Set	Partnership Working with the County Council	The Committee decided to add this to the agenda programme in November 2006 following the Government's White Paper and concern regarding the need to improve	Partnership working is one of the Council's Corporate Objectives.



		partnership working with the County Council	
Not Set	Land Drainage Issue in South-West of the District	The Committee decided to add this to its agenda programme in November 2006, following consultation with the Chairman of the Land Drainage Advisory Group.	Land drainage is an issue of great concern to the District's residents.
Not Set	Corporate Government Inspection (CGI) Report	The Committee decided to add this to its agenda programme in December 2006	The report is likely to refer to the Council's Scrutiny function and the performance of the authority as a whole.

## Possible agenda Items suggested by Members:

	<b>Item</b>		<b>Extra Information</b>
	Cambridgeshire Horizons		Suggested at November 2006's meeting. Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Councillor SGM Kindersley to determine when this matter should be scrutinised.
	Strategic Risk Register		Suggested at November 2006's Meeting. Chairman, Councillor Edwards, Councillor Mrs EM Hezell and Councillor Dr SEK van de Ven would ascertain the most effective way this issue could be scrutinised.
	Energy Efficiency		Suggested at April 2006's Meeting.

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**SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**REPORT TO:** Scrutiny and Overview Committee 18 January 2006  
**AUTHOR/S:** Chief Executive / Senior Democratic Services Officer

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**POST OFFICE CLOSURES****Purpose**

1. To inform the Committee of the Government's consultation process on the future funding, size and structure of the rural post office network and encourage members of the Committee to participate in that process.

**Background**

2. The Government has begun a consultation on the future funding, structure and size of the rural and urban deprived post office networks. The deadline for responses is 8 March 2007. The Government lists the following reasons for this review:

**Cost**

- The network's losses rose to almost £4 million a week in 2006, compared to £2 million a week in 2005.
- 90 percent of rural post offices fail to make a profit.

**A decline in the use of post offices**

- More customers choosing to use post offices closer to where they work and shop.
- A decline in government business: revenue from government transactions fell by £168 million in 2005/6 and Post Office Ltd estimates that government transactions will have fallen to 10 percent of total transactions by 2010, from approximately 40 percent in 2002.
- Changing technology means fewer people need to visit their local post office, for example 75% of all benefit recipients now choose to have their payments made into bank accounts and nationally 8.7 million out of a total of 11.2 million pensioners now get their pensions paid into a bank account.
- One in five rural post offices have less than 40 visits a week.

**Government's Proposals**

3. The aim of the Government is for the post office network to be on a more sustainable footing by 2011. To achieve this the Government has proposed:
  - A maximum of 2,500 closures across the whole network, to be implemented over 18 months from the summer of 2007.
  - Putting in place access criteria for the network based on distance and with recognition of some topographical factors.
  - That the current duty placed on Post Office Ltd to prevent all avoidable rural closures will be replaced with a duty to maintain coverage level based on the criteria shown in paragraph 5.
  - A greater number of outreach services, such as mobile, partner, hosted and home delivery will be put in place to cover gaps in service.

- That the £150 million annual Social Network Payment will continue over the next five years to 2011.

**Considerations**

4. According to the Department of Trade & Industry (DTI), historically branches have been located where the subpostmaster chose to set up in business rather than on a strategic decision on the part of Post Office Ltd. Over time this has left an oversized network not always best placed to serve its customers or to exploit available commercial opportunities. To address this, the current policy of preventing the avoidable closure of post offices in rural areas will be replaced by a new policy of maintaining the coverage levels set out below in paragraph 5.
5. The DTI proposes the following access criteria in its consultation document published on 16 December 2006 (document is entitled: The Post Office Network – a consultation document).
  - Nationally, 99% within 3 miles of a post office and 90% of the population to be within 1 mile.
  - In rural areas, 95% of the total rural population within 3 miles.
  - In remote areas, 95% of the population in postcode districts within 6 miles.
6. The DTI expects that rationalisation will principally affect a combination of least used branches and non-commercial branches in areas of over-provision where people can find alternative branches nearby. **Appendix a** shows that all the post offices in South Cambridgeshire have at least one other post office within 3 miles, so the access criteria described above is likely to result in the closure of several post offices in the District.
7. It is not clear from the consultation document whether the importance of post offices to local businesses has been taken into account.

**Outreach services**

8. A significant number (about 500) of new Outreach services will be put in place helping to mitigate the consequences of the managed rural closure programme following consultation with subpostmasters and local communities.
9. There are four types of outreach service:
  - Hosted, offering a service from a village hall, church or shop.
  - Partner, offering a service alongside another business, such as a pub or petrol station.
  - Home service, offering to deliver a service to a person’s home, which can be ordered via telephone or the internet.
  - Mobile, offering a service from a mobile post office which visits locations at a set time.
10. The DTI expect Post Office Ltd to consult MPs, local councils, subpostmasters and Postwatch in areas where it is proposed that post offices should be closed. This consultation process would be expected to last six weeks and outreach services should form part of the discussions.

**Implications**

11.	Financial	The proposed post office reorganisation has no direct risk
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Legal	implications for the Council
Staffing	
Risk Management	
Equal Opportunities	

### Effect on Annual Priorities and Corporate Objectives

12.	Affordable Homes	None
	Customer Service	None as it is not the Council's service
	Northstowe and other growth areas	None
	Quality, Accessible Services	None, as it is not the Council's service
	Village Life	Post offices play an important social and economic role in village life
	Sustainability	The provision of services locally is more sustainable than forcing residents to travel outside their villages.
	Partnership	The Council is keen to work in partnership to ensure that its residents continue to have access to post office services.

### Recommendations

13. The Committee are recommended to examine the post office consultation form, which is attached at **appendix b** and discuss what criteria should be used to review the post offices in the District and to pass on these views to the Postwatch representatives who then advise the Government.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

The Post Office Network – a consultation document from the DTI. This document is accessible on the DTI website: <http://www.dti.gov.uk/files/file36025.pdf>

**Contact Officer:** Patrick Adams – Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Telephone: (01954) 713408

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## Post Offices in the District

Location of Post Office	No. of Post Offices within a 3 mile radius	Names of post offices within a 3 mile radius
Abington	2	Linton (2.3) & Sawston (2.9)
Arrington	3	Orwell (2.1), Whaddon (2.6) & Hatley (2.9)
Balsham	4	West Wickham (1.9), Linton (2.6), Horseheath (2.6) & Weston Colville (2.7)
Bar Hill	4	Oakington (1.8), Longstanton (2.1), Girton (2.5) & Hardwick (2.6)
Barrington	7	Shepreth (1.3), Foxton (1.4), Haslinfield (1.9), Harston (2.1), Orwell (2.1), Meldreth (2.6) & Fowlmere (2.8)
Barton	8	Comberton (1.4), Granchester (1.6), Haslingfield (1.9), Coton (2.0) Newnham (2.5), Trumpington (2.7), Toft (2.8) & Hardwick (2.9)
Bassingbourn	5	Litlington (1.6), Whaddon (1.8), Royston (2.1 & 2.5) & Meldreth (2.9)
Bourn	2	Longstowe (1.4) & Toft (2.2)
Comberton	5	Barton (1.4), Toft (1.4), Hardwick (2.0), Coton (2.5) & Haslingfield (2.5)
Coton	10	Barton (2.0), Cambridge - <i>Histon Rd, Trinity St &amp; St Andrews St</i> (2.1, 2.3 & 2.5), <i>Newnham</i> (2.2), <i>Hardwick</i> (2.3), <i>Girton</i> (2.3), <i>Cambridge - Trinity St</i> (2.3), <i>Granchester</i> (2.4), <i>Comberton</i> (2.5)
Cottenham	1	Histon (2.5)
Duxford	5	Whittlesford (1.5), Ickleton (1.6), Sawston (2.3), Great Chesterford (2.5) & Thriplow (2.6)
Elsworth	2	Papworth Everard (2.1) & Hilton (2.4)
Fen Drayton	5	<i>Fenstanton</i> (1.5), <i>Swavesey</i> (1.5), <i>St Ives</i> (2.3), <i>Needlingworth</i> (2.4) & <i>Over</i> (2.7)
Fowlmere	6	Thriplow (1.3), Foxton (1.6), Shepreth, (2.1), Melbourn (2.5), Meldreth (2.6) & Barrington (2.8)
Foxton	7	Shepreth (1.4), Barrington (1.4), Fowlmere (1.6), Harston (1.8), Thriplow (2.1), Meldreth (2.6) & Haslingfield (2.8)
Fulbourn	3	<i>Cherry Hinton</i> (2.1), <i>Great Wilbrham</i> (2.3) & <i>Stow cum Quy</i> (2.9)
Gamlingay	1	<i>Potton</i> (2.2)
Girton	9	Oakington (1.3), Histon (1.3), Impington (1.3), Cambridge - <i>Histon Rd, Arbury Rd &amp; King Hedges</i> (2.1, 2.5 & 2.9), <i>Coton</i> (2.3), <i>Bar Hill</i> (2.5) & <i>Longstanton</i> (2.8)
Grantchester	13	<i>Trumpington</i> (1.1), <i>Newnham</i> (1.3), <i>Barton</i> (1.6), <i>Cambridge - Trumington St, Hills Road, Regent St, St Johns, St Andrews St &amp; Trinity St</i> (1.8, 2.0, 2.0, 2.0, 2.1 & 2.2) <i>Coton</i> (2.4), <i>Haslingfield</i> (2.5), <i>Gt Shelford</i> (2.8) & <i>Harston</i> (2.9)
Hardwick	5	Comberton (2.0), Coton (2.3), Toft (2.3), Bar Hill (2.6) & Barton (2.9)
Harston	8	Haslingfield (1.8), Foxton (1.8), Barrington (2.1), Great Shelford (2.5), Trumpington (2.8), Thriplow (2.9), Granchester (2.9) & Shepreth (2.9)
Haslingfield	6	Harston (1.8), Barton (1.9), Barrington (1.9), Granchester (2.5), Comberton (2.5) & Foxton (2.8)
Hatley	2	Arrington (2.9) & Longstowe (2.9)
Histon	9	Impington (0.5), Girton (1.3), Oakington (1.9), Cambridge - <i>Arbury Rd, Kings Hedges</i> (2.1, 2.2 & 2.2), <i>Milton</i> (2.5), <i>Cottenham</i> (2.5) & <i>Chesterton</i> (2.8)
Horseheath	3	West Wickham (1.2), Balsham (2.6) & Linton (2.9)

Ickleton	2	<i>Great Chesterford (1.0), Duxford (1.6)</i>
Impington		Histon (0.5), Girton (1.3), Cambridge - Arbury Ct, Histon Rd, King Hedges & Trinity (1.6, 1.7, 1.8 & 2.6) Oakington (2.2), Milton & Chesterton (2.3)
Linton	3	Abington (2.3), Balsham (2.6) & Horseheath (2.9)
Litlington	3	Bassingbourn (1.6), Steeple Morden (1.6) & Royston - Queens Rd (2.8)
Longstanton	6	Oakington (1.6), Bar Hill (2.1), Willingham (2.3), Swavesey (2.6), Girton (2.8) & Over (2.9)
Longstowe	3	Bourn (1.4), Great Gransden (2.5) & Hatley (2.9)
Melbourn	6	Meldreth (1.0), Shepreth (2.1), Whaddon (2.4), Fowlmere (2.5), Royston - Queens Road (2.6) & Royston (2.8)
Meldreth	8 (2.9)	Melbourn (1.0), Shepreth (1.4), Whaddon (1.8), Fowlmere (2.6), Barrington (2.6), Foxton (2.6), Orwell (2.8) & Bassingbourn (2.9)
Milton	8	<i>Cambridge - Kings Hedges, Arbury Ct, Chesterton, Newmarket Rd, Histon Rd &amp; Grafton (1.2, 1.9, 2.0, 2.5 &amp; 2.7), Waterbeach (2.1), Impington (2.2) &amp; Histon (2.5)</i>
Oakington	5	Girton (1.3), Longstanton (1.6), Bar Hill (1.8), Histon (1.9) & Impington (2.2)
Orwell	5	Arrington (2.1), Barrington (2.1), Shepreth (2.4), Whaddon (2.5) & Meldreth (2.8)
Over	6	Swavesey (1.3), Willingham (1.8), Needingworth (2.2), Fen Drayton (2.7), Earith (2.7) & Longstanton (2.9)
Papworth Everard	2	<i>Hilton (2.0) &amp; Elsworth (2.1)</i>
Sawston	4	Whittlesford (1.2), Duxford (2.3), Great Shelford (2.4) & Abington (2.9)
Great Shelford	8	<i>Trumpington (1.8), Sawston (2.4), Harston (2.5), Cambridge - Cherry Hinton Rd, St Johns, Cherry Hinton (2.6, 2.6 &amp; 2.8), Whittlesford (2.7) &amp; Grantchester (2.8)</i>
Shepreth	8	Barrington (1.3), Foxton (1.4), Meldreth (1.4), Fowlmere, (2.1), Melbourn (2.1), Orwell (2.4), Whaddon (2.7) & Harston (2.9)
Steeple Morden	2	Litlington (1.6) & Ashwell (2.0)
Stow Cum Quy	5	<i>Bottisham (1.3), Lode (1.5), Swaffham Bulbeck (2.5), Great Wilbraham (2.5) &amp; Fulbourn (2.9)</i>
Swavesey	5	Over (1.3), Fen Drayton (1.5), Needingworth (2.4), Willingham (2.6) & Longstanton (2.6)
Thriplow	5	Fowlmere (1.3), Foxton (2.1), Whittlesford (2.4), Duxford (2.6) & Harston (2.9)
Toft	4	Comberton (1.4), Bourn (2.2), Hardwick (2.3) & Barton (2.8)
Waterbeach	2	Milton (2.1) & Lode (2.9)
West Wickham	3	Horseheath (1.2), Balsham (1.9), Weston Colville (1.9)
Weston Colville	3	West Wickham (1.9), Burrough Green (2.4) & Balsham (2.7)
Whaddon	6	Meldreth (1.8), Bassingbourn (1.8), Melbourn (2.4), Orwell (2.5), Arrington (2.6) & Shepreth (2.7)
Whittlesford	4	Sawston (1.2), Duxford (1.5), Thriplow (2.4), Great Shelford (2.7)
Great Wilbraham	4	<i>Six Mile Bottom (1.7), Bottisham (1.9), Fulbourn (2.3) &amp; Stow-cum-Quy (2.5)</i>
Willingham	3	Over (1.8), Longstanton (2.3) & Swavesey (2.6)



# The Post Office Network

## Consultation Response Form

**The closing date for this consultation is 8 March 2007**

You may find it helpful to set out your responses to the consultation using this response form.

Name:

Organisation's name and remit (if applicable):

Address:

Email:

Return completed forms (preferably by e-mail) to:

Postal Office Network Consultation  
Department of Trade and Industry  
Response Centre  
1 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0ET

Fax: 00 44 (0) 20 7215 5329

E-mail: [dti.enquiries@dti.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:dti.enquiries@dti.gsi.gov.uk)

Please cross one box from the following list of options that best describes you.

- Individual
- Individual - Subpostmaster
- Small to Medium Enterprise
- Trade Union
- Interest Group
- Regional Organisation
- Devolved Administration
- Local Government
- Central Government
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Please feel free to answer as many or as few questions as you wish. It is helpful if you can explain your views as fully as possible in the comments boxes, especially where you disagree with the proposals set out in the consultation paper.

**Question 1.**

Do you think the Government's forward strategy for the post office network addresses all the key issues and challenges the network faces?

Yes       No       No view

**Comments**

**Question 2.**

Are there other significant factors affecting the future of the post office network which appear to have been overlooked in the Government's proposed approach?

Yes No No view **Comments****Question 3.**

Do you have comments on the national access criteria proposed?

Yes No No view **Comments****Question 4.**

Do you have comments on the access criteria proposed for deprived urban and rural areas?

Yes No No view **Comments**

**Question 5.**

Do you have any suggestions as to how services might be better delivered through the post office network?

Yes No No view **Comments****Question 6.**

Do you have any comments on Outreach arrangements as a means of maintaining service to small and remote communities?

Yes No No view **Comments****Question 7.**

Do you have comments on the practicality of community ownership of parts of the post office network, which might involve the transfer of assets to community organisations and/or the establishment of local mutual or co-operative organisations to own and run local services?

Yes No No view **Comments**

**Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views.**

We do not intend to acknowledge receipt of individual responses unless you tick the box below.



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**SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Scrutiny Sub-Group/ Scrutiny and Overview Committee	22 November 2006
<b>AUTHOR/S:</b>	Chief Executive / Senior Democratic Services Officer / <i>with additions by Cllr Hall in red italics</i>	

**IMPLICATIONS OF GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER FOR THE SCRUTINY FUNCTION**

**Purpose**

1. To inform the Committee of the implications of the Government's White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities" for the scrutiny function.

**Background**

2. On 26 October 2006 the Government published a White Paper for local government entitled "Strong and Prosperous Communities", which contained plans for a strengthening of the scrutiny function to counter the enhancement of the powers of the executive.
3. *The Bill will be published before the end of 2006, with 'guidance' published in draft by the summer of 2007 (with stakeholders having been fully involved in this!) and Royal Assent in November 2007 and implementation in early 2008.*
4. *The Bill is seen as a follow up to the 2001 Local Government Act which set up the Scrutiny function. So far, scrutiny has been seen as 'good at reviewing service outcomes and involving external stakeholders, but weak at reconciling community opinion or providing a forum for community debate'*

*'O&S can be drawn into service detail – the need to prioritise and focus on the outcomes is what really matters.'*
5. *I was left with the impression that the 'strengthening of the scrutiny function to counter the enhancement of the powers of the executive' was constantly reiterated.*

**Considerations**

6. Proposals in White Papers are subject to amendments before they become law. The Committee has two matters to consider
  - a) How to prepare for the likely implication of the imminent Local Government Act.
  - b) To consider lobbying the Government on what aspects of the White Paper should be included in the Act.
7. It should be noted that the 2000 Local Government Act was the product of over 1,000 amendments, many of them introduced by the Government itself. So what is seen in the White Paper is not necessarily what we'll get.
8. After the Act is passed it is likely that much of the important information (from the perspective of anyone actually trying to put the "vision" into effect) will be in the Regulations and Statutory Guidance which will appear some time later.

### **Working in partnership with other authorities**

9. The White Paper recommends that committees will be able to consider specific matters regarding the action of local public service providers and the actions of key public bodies operating in a local authority area. According to section 3.35 of volume 1 of the White Paper, representatives from other authorities can be required either to appear before the committee or provide information to the committee within 20 working days (corresponding to the Freedom of Information Act deadline), insofar as their actions relate to functions or service delivery connected with the authority. The word “connected” may be open to different interpretations.
10. *This means that the County Council cannot prevent their officers or members accepting an ‘invitation’ to appear before a Scrutiny and Overview Committee.*
11. *Some of the most effective Scrutiny reviews have been on ‘external’ factors over which the Council has no direct control, such as, in the case of District Councils, bus services, water, sewerage, rural post offices, and so on.*
12. *The White Paper also envisages designated Scrutiny Officers. These can be ‘part time’ (as we have at the moment) or shared with other authorities.*

### **Scrutinising partnership bodies**

13. It should be noted that the Police and Justice Bill provides overview and scrutiny committees with the power to hold local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships to account and respond to “community calls for action”.
14. Volume 1, Chapter 5 of the White Paper states that the future role of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) needs to be responsive to the needs of local citizens and communities and therefore Government will ensure that they are accountable to local people by strengthening the involvement of elected members in both executive and scrutiny roles.
15. *‘Community Call for Action’ is nothing new. When a ‘community’ or Parish Council ‘calls for action’, the ward councillor can either attend to it or pass it on, if necessary to the Executive. The Executive can then pass it on to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee. Although S&OC are not decision-making bodies, they will have to investigate the issue, respond and pass on any recommendations, publicising them if necessary. The buck stops with Scrutiny!*

### **Area Scrutiny Committees**

16. The White Paper recommends that Councils be encouraged to set up “area” overview and scrutiny committees, comprising local councillors and other members of the community by making use of the existing powers to co-opt non-councillors onto committees. Such committees would be able to review the impact of actions of the council and other bodies on the immediate area.
17. *Effectively, this is a function which Parish Councils carry out.*
18. The White Paper also recommends that Committees maintain a strategic focus and there is a danger that the setting up of Area Scrutiny Committees could detract from this. The Committee would also have to ensure that Area Scrutiny Committees did not encroach on the reserves of the parish councils.



**Strategic focus**

- 19. The White Paper recommends that Committees focus on strategic issues such as the priorities agreed as part of the Sustainable Community Strategies on Local Area Agreements and other strategic plans.
- 20. The White Paper also recommends that overview and scrutiny committees have a stronger role in policy development, allowing local councillors to advise the executive and ensuring local perspectives influence decisions.

**Resources**

- 21. The White Paper recommends that all councils will be encouraged to dedicate appropriate resources to scrutiny, as best practice suggests that the key to successful overview and scrutiny is adequate resourcing and support. The word ‘appropriate’ is open to different interpretations.

**The Executive**

- 22. The White Paper recommends that Council Leaders be elected for 4 years and all executive powers will be vested in the leader who will have responsibility for deciding how these powers should be discharged. This will indirectly impact on the Scrutiny Committee’s task of holding the leader to account. It will also make the election of leader a far more important event. The Government may need to clarify if this rule change will apply to Councils which are either No Overall Control or elect their Members by thirds.

*23. Although this was not specifically spelt out, it may mean that the chairman of Scrutiny is elected for four years.*

**Implications**

24.	Financial	If, as the White Paper recommends, more resources are allocated to the Scrutiny function, this will have financial implications for the Committee
	Legal	The Council will have to comply with the terms of the new Act.
	Staffing	Depends on how the Council decides to strengthen the scrutiny function.
	Risk Management	
	Equal Opportunities	

**Consultations**

- 25. None yet. The Council could consult its residents and parish councils on the proposed changes.

**Effect on Annual Priorities and Corporate Objectives**

26.	Affordable Homes	The white paper will have an effect on all of the Council’s corporate objectives and annual priorities and will influence its delivery and achievement of them. The white paper also has a significant impact in terms of the various partnerships with which the Council is involved.
	Customer Service	
	Northstowe and other growth areas	
	Quality, Accessible Services	

Village Life	
Sustainability	
Partnership	

**Conclusions/Summary**

27. The White Paper is a consultation exercise being carried out by the Government on what should be included in the forthcoming Local Government Act. The Cabinet considered this issue on 14 December, their report is attached as **appendix a** and the resulting minute is attached as **appendix b**.

**Recommendations**

28. That the Committee evaluates the White Paper and considers making the Government aware of its views.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Government White Paper: "Strong and Prosperous Communities"

**Contact Officer:** Patrick Adams – Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Telephone: (01954) 713408

**11. LOCAL GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER**

The government had issued a white paper on local government, "Strong and Prosperous Communities", a summary of which was presented to Cabinet to inform members of matters arising from the paper. The paper was a statement of intent, not a consultation document.

The Leader reminded members of the previous local government re-organisation exercise from 1992-5, during which arguments were made against a merger with Cambridge City Council, and supported the recommendations that the Council not apply for unitary status for the same reasons as in 1995. He also noted that surveys conducted prior to the introduction of new political structures in 2001 had demonstrated that the majority of residents related more to their local parish councils than to the district council, making it very difficult to justify having a directly elected mayor. Although there could be benefits for applying to become a partner pathfinder authority pioneering an enhanced two-tier local government model, current resources were insufficient to pursue this option. There was surprise expressed at the reference to re-warding an area to have single member wards, following the Electoral Commission's creation of multi-member wards during the last Periodic Electoral Review, and members noted that representatives of single-member wards could be excluded from debates due to personal and prejudicial interests, leaving their residents without local representation.

There was support for strengthening the overview and scrutiny role, especially provisions for requiring public service partners to appear before or provide information to the Council's Scrutiny and Overview Committee. Councillor R Hall, Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, welcomed the proposals and stated that the body's enhanced role and powers should not be underestimated.

Councillor SGM Kindersley expressed concern that Cabinet was being asked to agree recommendations not to pursue unitary status, as there had not been much recent debate about the proposals, and he felt that the government eventually would not allow the current two-tier system to continue. In response to requests to refer the issue to full Council, the Leader explained that the short timescale given to debate the issue precluded its reference to full Council and that Cabinet had to make a decision now to inform officers and partners of the way the authority wished to proceed.

The Chief Executive, responding to queries from Councillor Mrs EM Heazell, explained that he had received a letter from the Cambridge City Council Chief Executive asking if the two authorities, along with Cambridgeshire County Council, wanted to submit a joint response, but that all three Chief Executives acknowledged that the government's timescale made it impossible to schedule special meetings of their authorities. Having conducted an informal consultation with members of the Cabinet and with the leader of the Liberal Democrat group, the Chief Executive responded that there was no support to seek unitary status at this time; his letter made clear that this was a conclusion reached on informal discussions with members and did not commit the Council to any course of action.

**Cabinet AGREED**

- (a) Not to apply for unitary status at this time, nor to become a partner pathfinder authority pioneering an enhanced two-tier local government model at this time; and
- (b) To wait until the enabling legislation, regulations and guidance were published before requesting appropriate bodies and / or lead officers to consider the principles the authority wishes to adopt and the practical implications of implementing the legislative, etc., requirements.



### The Future of Scrutiny: an Action Plan

I have been asked to make these proposals in the expectation that the Corporate Governance inspection will be critical of the scrutiny function of this Council. The proposals are intended to prove that the Council is taking measures remedy this deficiency.

Members will have to consider this report in the light of the current government White Paper and that aspects of it on Scrutiny and Overview may well be enacted into legislation by the end of 2007.

In making these proposals, I have referred to the following

- Article 6 of the Council's constitution
- The Council's *Scrutiny and Overview Committee Handbook* dated March 2004.
- The Council's website
- The 2006 Performance Plan
- The 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Scrutiny Report 2005/06
- The seminar at Newmarket November 2006
- The parts referring to Scrutiny and Overview in the Government's White Paper
- Comparison with parliamentary Select Committees

#### The Constitution

In general (according to article 6.2 of the constitution) the Scrutiny and Overview Committee *may*:

- Review or scrutinise decisions made by the executive/committees/council officers in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's functions
- Consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants
- Exercise the right to call in, for reconsideration, decisions made by but not yet implemented by the executive

In detail, according to Article 6.03 of the constitution, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee *may*

- Review and scrutinise decisions made by and performance of the executive and council officers in relation to individual decisions and 'over time'
- Review and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to policy objectives, performance targets and particular service areas.
- Question members of the executive and officers about their decisions and performance
- Make reports/recommendations to the executive and/or appropriate committee and/or Council arising from the outcome of a scrutiny process
- Review and scrutinise the performance of other bodies having public functions in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the committee
- Question and gather evidence from any person with his or her consent.

In particular, the Scrutiny and overview Committee shall

- appoint members of the Audit Panel (the wording here in the constitutions needs changing)
- Produce, once a year, a report at the April meeting of the Council on its current programme and the performance of the executive based against the Performance Plan (PP) or other objective criteria

- The committee shall establish and manage Best Value Reviews set out in the Performance Plan appointing members of Best Value review teams and report recent outcomes to the executive  
(All the above have been slightly abbreviated.)

**The 2005/06 Annual Report** lists ten areas which had been scrutinised and recommendations made to Portfolio Holders and the Cabinet. On reflection, it is possible that some of these may have been undertaken by sub-Groups (described at the Newmarket seminar as *Task and Finish Groups*, a term I will use in this document). Notable omissions from the Annual Report have been in the 'Overview' part of the function:

- 1) The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
- 2) Overheads and Accounts
- 3) General and Revenue Accounts
- 4) Performance Plan

Observations and recommendations regarding 1-3 have to be made within a difficult time-scale. For example, this year, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee should have reported to the Cabinet before its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> October (and next year the Cabinet will have to look at the MTFS in September, which narrows the time-scale even more), At the recent Council meeting, it was decided that the MTFS will be reviewed twice a year, A report from the Committee should be available before the Cabinet considers these and other accounts

### Reviews by the full Committee

These should be limited to the following:

- Performance Plan based on Best Value Reviews by Task and Finish Groups
- Medium Term Financial Strategy (twice a year)
- Overheads and Accounts
- General and Revenue Accounts (Budget).
- Items tied in with the Forward Plan on which the participation of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee should be noted. Detailed analysis of some of the following, for example
  - *Procedure for Local Standards Hearings*
  - *Choice-based lettings scheme*
  - *Affordable Housing delivery*
  - *Housing Stock Options Appraisal*
  - *Nottingham Declaration 2*
  - *Move to four-yearly elections*

should be or should have been conducted by Task and Finish Groups and approved by the full Committee. These groups should not duplicate officers' reports (see the Tameside example). There are major issues which should come before the full committee. Some of these would come under the heading of external scrutiny. The purpose of these, however, would not be to elicit minutiae of information but to concentrate on strategy and future direction and how the policies of these external bodies affects the Council, financial and otherwise.

### Task and Finish Groups

A point repeated several times at the Newmarket seminar was the important role of Task and Finish Groups. These should:

- Comprise of small groups working throughout the municipal year continually reviewing items such as the Performance Plan (Best Value teams) and the MTFS, reporting to the Committee who would then make recommendations (if any) to the Cabinet at certain points. It is likely that, in future, such a group

will have to keep by-laws under review as, in the White Papers, Councils will no longer have to have by-laws ratified by the DCLG.

- The groups should be set up and work to certain criteria:
  - *Why* is this investigation needed
  - *What* are their priorities
  - *How* to get information
  - *When* should it report
- Consist of a small number of members (or an individual) working together on specified issues in limited time-scales. One of the purposes of all groups would be to identify areas where the Council can save money, in other words, that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee justifies its position financially. Reports and recommendations, having been approved by the full Committee, would be forwarded to Cabinet/Council and form part of the Annual Report. The sub-group on bus transport should be re-designated as a Task and Finish group. Cllr. Van de Ven's report on Land Drainage is an example of a Task and Finish issue conducted by an individual. Considering the fact that South Cambridgeshire has more committees and advisory groups than most other councils, I propose that a Task and Finish group be set up to ***investigate the committee structure of the Council*** and report to the Committee and Cabinet in April
  - ***All reports should be appended to the Annual Report and submitted to the Council in April***

### External Reviews

The role of members in scrutinising partnerships is referred to below under Monitoring. Again, under the White Paper, Scrutiny and Overview Committees will have 'more powers to scrutinise other public bodies and require them to attend or provide information within 20 days and respond to recommendations. The following points, however, ought to be kept in mind:

- External scrutiny is hard to do well
- It rarely changes something if this is against the will of the external body
- There will probably be no sanctions against those who refuse to appear.
- However (as in the review of local bus services), a report, while having no mandatory effect, may influence future practice and expose weaknesses. It may also raise the status of the Committee and the Council if the reports are posted on the website – in other words, to develop 'democratic legitimacy'.

These will be essentially Task and Finish reviews, operating to the same criteria and should be appended to the Annual Report and submitted to the Council in April.

### Monitoring

According to Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), Scrutiny Committees are 'good at reviewing service outcomes and involving external stakeholders but weak at recording community opinion or providing a forum for community debate'. Through its excellent links with Parish Councils, South Cambridgeshire is good at recording community opinion. Behind this statement, however, is the implication that Scrutiny Committees should spend less time in formal meetings and allocate specific tasks to members, whether in groups or individual.

The system of appointing two monitors to each portfolio was initially misunderstood; the purpose was that monitors should report on the performance of each portfolio at Committee meetings. I propose that we take this one step further:

- ***That a brief 'Annual Report' on each portfolio should be presented as part of the Committee's own Annual Report, which would include the identification of financial savings.***

The present system of Portfolio Holders addressing and then answering questions put to them by members of the Committee at the beginning of each municipal year (in fact, going a considerable way into it) is not time-efficient. I propose:

- ***That each Portfolio Holder presents a written report on the major issues involving the portfolio at the beginning of each year, answers questions on it for about ten minutes, which is then taken into consideration by monitors at the end of the year.***

A requirement of the White Paper is that the role of Scrutiny should be extended to covering the partnerships in which the Council is involved. If this becomes legislation, the details of this requirement will be important in that South Cambridgeshire is involved in at least thirty partnerships. This is a major departure where Scrutiny is concerned, and I propose that

- ***A small number of partnerships should be identified and two or three monitors attend their meetings as observers***

That a full list of the partnerships to be scrutinised should be decided before next May

### **Lessons to be learnt with reference to parliamentary Select Committees**

The local government Cabinet system and its Scrutiny and Overview Committees were designed along the lines of the parliamentary system. At the Newmarket seminar, the Member of Parliament for North Norfolk pointed out the weaknesses of the Select Committee system (in contrast to American committees which have far greater powers)

- Too many members are anxious to avoid 'challenging' relationships with political colleagues (it is important that Task and Finish groups, apart from individual-member, should not be of one political persuasion)
- When ex-ministers were elected to select committees, they lacked independence. There was a hint that there should be a time lapse (of one year) between Cabinet members relinquishing office and being elected to Scrutiny and Overview Committees.
- Pro-rata representation was sometimes a hindrance
- They had weak powers to demand the production of government documents.

### **White Paper**

Comments of the Sub-group (Task and Finish group) on the White Paper are included separately. However, note should be taken of the following which may have far-reaching consequences. *Community Call for Action* has already been included in the 'Police and Justice Act'. Its breakdown is as follows:

A *Community* (which may be a Parish Council, a group of residents or an individual) can refer

an issue it cannot resolve to the

*Ward Councillor* who can then refer it to the

*Council Executive* who can then refer it to the

*Scrutiny and Overview Committee*, which, not being a decision-making body, would make

recommendations or proposals within a specific time-scale before returning the issue to the Executive who would then have to make a decision. The 'community' and ward Councillor will be made aware of these. The 'buck' will therefore stop at Scrutiny and Overview Committees.

Already, on the website, residents have been asked to 'suggest' an item for the Committee to investigate. However wonderful this sounds to Ruth Kelly and her



denizens at the DC&LG, there is a danger that this could become a persistent troublemaker's charter.

### Separation of Scrutiny and Overview

Many councils have found it expedient to do this, and developments in future may make it necessary. *Scrutiny* among these councils deals with best value and performance and *Overview* with policy issues. It is, perhaps, too early for South Cambridgeshire to contemplate going along this path at the moment.

### Roger Hall

	January	February	March	April
<b>Full Scrutiny and Overview Committee</b>	<p>Review General and Revenue Accounts</p> <p>Member/Officer Contact</p> <p>To decide on T&amp;FG on Council committees</p> <p>To decide on Standing T&amp;F Best Value Groups on Performance plan</p> <p>Receive Cllr. Van de Ven's report on Land Drainage.</p>	<p>Draft Annual Report to be approved</p> <p>Cambridgeshire Horizons. <i>This is the earliest time this can be scrutinised. It is important that not only the Leader but also a representative of Cambridge Horizons is able to attend. If not, then this should be postponed until the summer.</i></p>	<p>Quarterly review of Performance Plan</p> <p>Final Annual Report to be approved</p> <p>Assessing homelessness Investigation of this could be allocated to a T&amp;FG to report to Committee in April.</p>	<p>To receive Task and Finish reports and monitors' reports and append them to Annual Report</p>
<b>Task and Finish Groups (T&amp;FG)</b>	<p>T&amp;FG to begin work on report on Council committees</p> <p>Standing T&amp;F Best Value Groups to start work on Performance Plan</p> <p>T&amp;FG on Public Transport to meet and</p>	<p>If circumstances permit, a T&amp;FG could be appointed to scrutinise the East of England Plan Panel Report. This should report in early summer.</p>		<p>T&amp;FG report on Council committees to submit report then to Cabinet/Council</p> <p>Report on Performance plan to Committee and Cabinet</p>

	<p>report to Cabinet</p> <p>A T&amp;FG (comprising the Vice-chairman and Cllrs. Edwards, Heazell and van de Ven) should commence work scrutinising the Strategic Work Register.</p>			
<b>Monitoring</b>	<p>Begin consultations with Cabinet and officers on monitoring partnerships, especially with County Council.</p>			<p>Monitors' Reports to be presented to Committee and appended to Annual Report</p>

	<b>June</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>August</b>	
<b>Full Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	<p>Decide on Scrutiny programme for 2007/08</p>	<p>Scrutiny of East of England Panel Report to be submitted to the Committee</p>	<p>Scrutinise draft of the MTFS beginning November 2007</p>	
<b>Task and Finish Groups</b>	<p>Council lettings policy. The findings of the Lettings Policy Advisory Group will be submitting its findings to the Committee 'in the Spring'.</p>			
<b>Monitoring</b>	<p>Appoint monitors for 2007/08 in view of possible changes to Cabinet</p>			

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