

# **Annual Scrutiny** **Report**

**May 2007**  
**– May 2008**

September  
2008

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## **Annual Report – Foreword**



Foreword by Councillor Mike Edwards,  
Wrexham County Borough Council,  
Scrutiny Champion May 2007 - May 2008

This Annual Scrutiny Report covers the year up to May 2008. I hope that it will allow Council to reflect on the work of the Scrutiny Committees over this period and view some of the plans for the year ahead.

The report highlights the wide range of issues considered in the past year, in terms of not just Council policies and services but also issues relating to external agencies and areas of public concern.

In addition to the work undertaken by each scrutiny committee a further major piece of work was undertaken during the year in the form of a fundamental review of the Council's scrutiny arrangements. This has identified a number of areas for improvement and some key issues which will need further debate and consideration in the coming months. In addition we also await with interest a Welsh Assembly Government consultation document "Scrutiny, Political Structures, Councillors and the Community" expected in the autumn which it is anticipated may further influence the future role of scrutiny.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank both Members and Officers for supporting me in my role and for their hard work in further developing the scrutiny process in Wrexham.

*Councillor Mike Edwards*

**Scrutiny Champion (May 2007 – May 2008)**  
**Wrexham County Borough Council**

## **Annual Report – Foreword**



Foreword by Isobel Garner, Chief Executive,  
Wrexham County Borough Council

I am delighted to have been asked to contribute to this report.

Scrutiny continues to be an important element of the Authority's political management arrangements. Scrutiny has been effective in both supporting and, where appropriate, challenging the Authority's decision-making process.

There have been excellent examples of how scrutiny can assist in bringing about improvements to Council services, as demonstrated, for example, by the work of the Environment & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee in relation to Streetscene and by the work the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee in developing a much more effective performance monitoring role. In addition scrutiny has also played a vital role in both shaping and delivering the Council's corporate priorities, with many of the priorities being given prominence in each committee's work programmes.

New challenges lie ahead for the scrutiny function. Whilst scrutiny will need to continue to deliver its vitally important role in relation to Council services there will be new pressures ahead with issues such as further development of Local Service Boards and the collaboration and efficiency agendas.

**Isobel Garner**

**Chief Executive, Wrexham County Borough Council**

# Annual Scrutiny Report

## May 2007 to May 2008

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Council's current democratic structure was established in response to the requirements of the Local Government Act 2000. Part II of the Local Government Act 2000 introduced a new decision making framework for Local Authorities in which there is a separation of the decision making process and the scrutiny process.
- 1.2 The Council's current political management arrangements were agreed by Council in May 2002 and amended in September 2003. These arrangements include a Leader, a Deputy Leader, an Executive Board and five Scrutiny Committees with Co-Chairs appointed for each Committee, which at that time were :
- Corporate Issues
  - Children & Young People
  - Environment & Regeneration
  - Financial
  - Social Affairs, Health & Housing
- 1.3 Membership of the Scrutiny Committees is on a politically balanced basis. Members cannot serve on both the Executive Board and a Scrutiny Committee. In addition full Council is made of all 52 Members and determines key policies and strategies including the budget.
- 1.4 These arrangements have largely remained largely unchanged since this time, other than at Annual Council in May 2005 when it was agreed that :
- The terms of reference / title of the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee be amended to become Corporate Governance & Policy; similarly the remit of the Financial Scrutiny Committee was expanded to incorporate Performance
  - Executive Members be given a Lead Member responsibility.
- 1.5 The Scrutiny Committees' main roles and functions are detailed below :
- Assisting in the development and review of Council policies
  - Monitoring and challenging the performance of Council services
  - Undertaking reviews and investigations
  - Scrutinising the actions and/or performance of external organisations and bodies
  - Championing public concerns and opinions
  - Scrutinising the actions and decisions of the Executive Board and Officers

## **Scrutiny Co-Chairs Co-ordinating Group**

- 1.6 The ten Scrutiny Co-Chairs meet on a monthly basis to :
- Act as a Steering Group for the Council's scrutiny function
  - To allocate responsibility for issues which do not fall clearly within the remit of a single committee
  - To share best practice and consider a methodology for the development of the scrutiny process
  - In addition, on an annual basis, the Group appoints one of its Members as the Council's Scrutiny Champion
- 1.7 The Group has considered a wide range of issues during the year including :
- Developing and enhancing the role of scrutiny in the budget setting / service planning process
  - Challenging performance indicators / targets as part of the corporate planning / priority setting process
  - Identifying areas of concern for inclusion in scrutiny work programmes (from information supplied by the Finance & Performance Task & Finish Group)
  - Monitoring of scrutiny Member attendance at meetings
  - Development of guidelines / recommendations to ensure that equality impact assessments are undertaken prior to plans and policies being recommended for approval by the Executive Board
- 1.8 Perhaps the most crucial element of the work of this Group has been their involvement in a fundamental review of the Authority's scrutiny process. In particular the Group have recommended changes to strengthen the Authority's call in procedures and to consider options in relation to the restructure of the scrutiny committees in order to create greater capacity.
- 1.9 The review is outlined in more detail in the next section.

## **Scrutiny Support**

- 1.10 The Scrutiny Team is now fully established as an independent resource supporting the scrutiny function and its Members. The Team's main responsibility is to ensure that the scrutiny process is effective. Other responsibilities include :
- Advising on the strategic direction and development of the scrutiny function
  - Co-ordinating the work programmes for the five Scrutiny Committees
  - Advising, supporting and assisting in the development of Scrutiny Members

- Undertaking research and information analysis to help inform reviews
- Producing reports and presentations on behalf of Members
- Offering independent advice and guidance and in relation to policy development and performance management
- Acting as a key contact point to Members, Officers, external organisations and the public in relation to Scrutiny matters.

## **2. Review of the Authority's Scrutiny Arrangements**

### **Background**

- 2.1 As part of modernisation of local government, the Local Government Act 2000 placed a duty on local authorities to "include provision for the appointment by the authority of one or more committees of the authority (referred to in this Part as overview and scrutiny committees)". Wrexham County Borough Council's Improvement Plan for 2003/2004 included a commitment to improve its scrutiny arrangements, based on 8 improvement areas.
- 2.2 The expectations being placed on local government and individual Members are increasing. A number of Welsh Assembly consultation and guidance documents published in the last year or so suggest that there will be particular expectations and pressures placed upon the scrutiny function in dealing with issues such as the Collaboration agenda, an enhanced role in scrutinising external organisations, Local Service Boards etc. In addition, as public services move towards greater partnership, so the role of scrutiny is expected to take on a multi-agency dimension.

### **Scope**

- 2.3 In view of the above a review has been undertaken of the Authority's current scrutiny arrangements. This review focussed upon two main elements:
- How effective are the scrutiny arrangements and processes and what can be done to bring about improvement?
  - How effective and appropriate are the arrangements and structures to support Members in undertaking their scrutiny responsibilities?
- 2.4 This report deals with the first of these elements. The second element has already been addressed, resulting in a restructuring of the Scrutiny Team.

### **Methodology**

- 2.5 The Review is based on research and evidence gathered from a wide variety of sources. In addition both the current and potential performance of Wrexham's scrutiny arrangements have been measured against the "Four Principles of Good Scrutiny", developed by the Centre for Public Scrutiny and described in the WAG Report "Review of the Role and Functions of Elected Members", published in March 2007, namely:
- Good Scrutiny provides "critical friend" challenge to executive policy-makers and decision makers
  - Enables the voice and concerns of the public and its communities to be heard

- Carried out by “independent minded governors” who lead and own the scrutiny role
- Drives improvement in public services

## **Main Findings**

2.6 The main findings can be summarised as follows :

- Much of Scrutiny’s work is centred around pre-decision scrutiny
- This has resulted in Scrutiny and Executive tending to work in partnership as a opposed to scrutiny being a challenge to the Executive
- Feedback from both Members and Officers indicates that scrutiny is perceived as less important than the Executive
- Work programmes are unwieldy and imbalanced with too many information items
- There is a need to strengthen the links between the differing roles of Members both as ward representatives and strategic policy makers
- Members are reluctant to request local / parochial issues being included in work programmes
- Scrutiny does not provide a platform to reflect issues of public concern
- The current structure does not have the capacity to cope with the increasing scrutiny workload, particularly in terms of external scrutiny
- There are currently constitutional and statutory barriers to wider external representation on scrutiny committees
- Enhanced scrutiny support arrangements should result in Scrutiny Members having increased access to independent advice
- Scrutiny is not formally involved in strategic planning, target setting and setting corporate priorities
- There is no formal audit trail to measure whether scrutiny recommendations are implemented or whether they lead to service improvement

## **Recommendations**

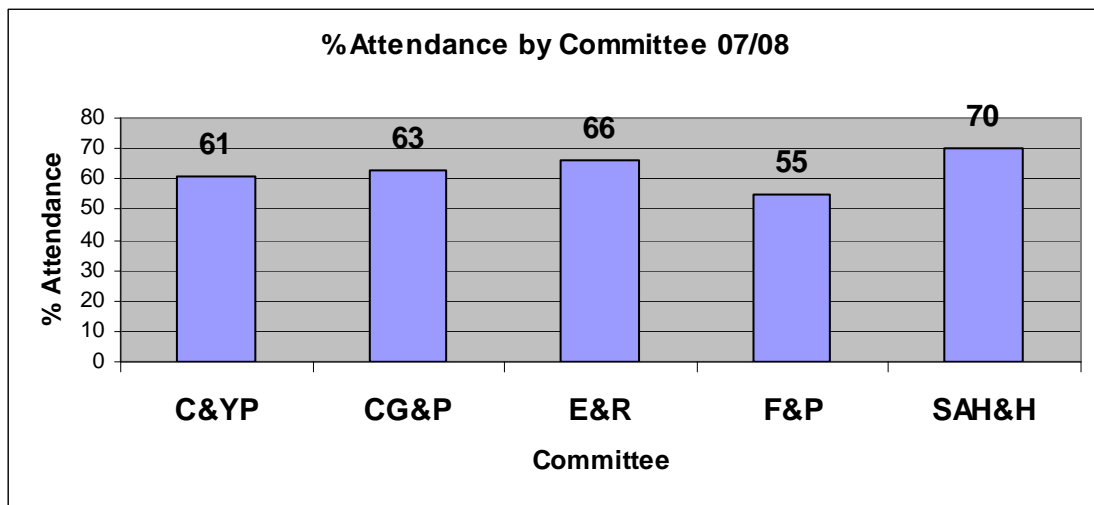
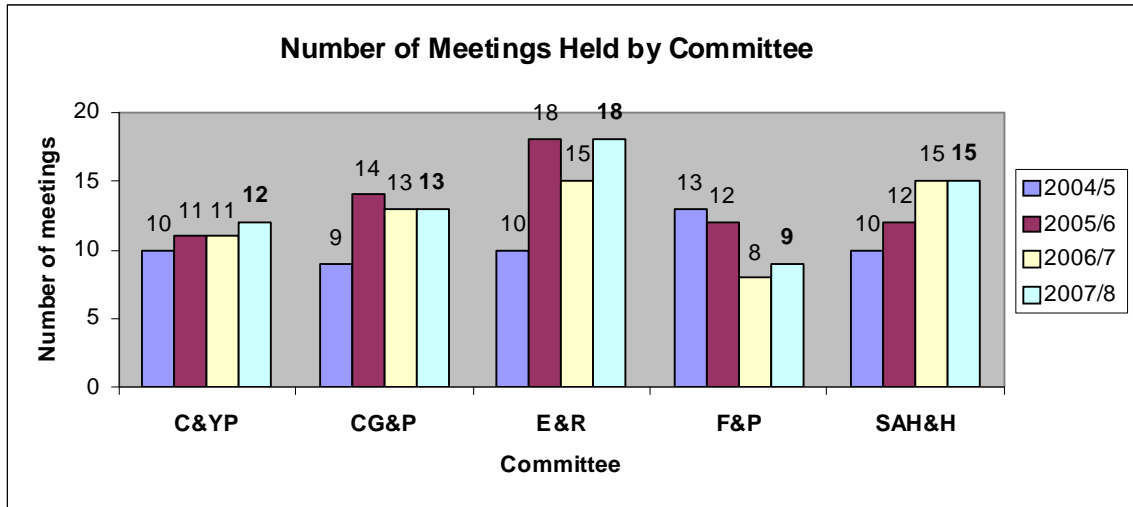
2.7 A number of recommendations, together with an Action Plan have been developed to assist in meeting future challenges:

- (i) Review and raise awareness of the Authority’s call in arrangements
- (ii) Promote equity between the Executive and Scrutiny functions
- (iii) To improve training and support for Members
- (iv) To improve Officer awareness and understanding of the scrutiny function

- (v) To review the arrangements and procedures in place in relation to callover, briefings and the meeting itself
- (vi) To define and enhance the role of scrutiny in setting, challenging, monitoring and reviewing Council priorities
- (vii) To enhance the role of scrutiny in setting, challenging, monitoring and reviewing performance targets
- (viii) Greater involvement of scrutiny in policy review and development at an earlier stage
- (ix) To ensure that work programmes achieve a better balance between strategic issues, external scrutiny and issues of local concern
- (x) Review and develop new arrangements to actively promote public involvement in scrutiny
- (xi) Review committee models and structures to assess the impact on both current pressures and proposed changes

2.8 An Action Plan to deliver the necessary improvements has been agreed, and is monitored by the Scrutiny Co-Chairs Co-ordinating Group. A copy of either an Executive Summary or the full report is available on the Council's Intranet or upon request from the Scrutiny Team.

## SUMMARY STATISTICS



## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### MEMBERSHIP 2007/2008

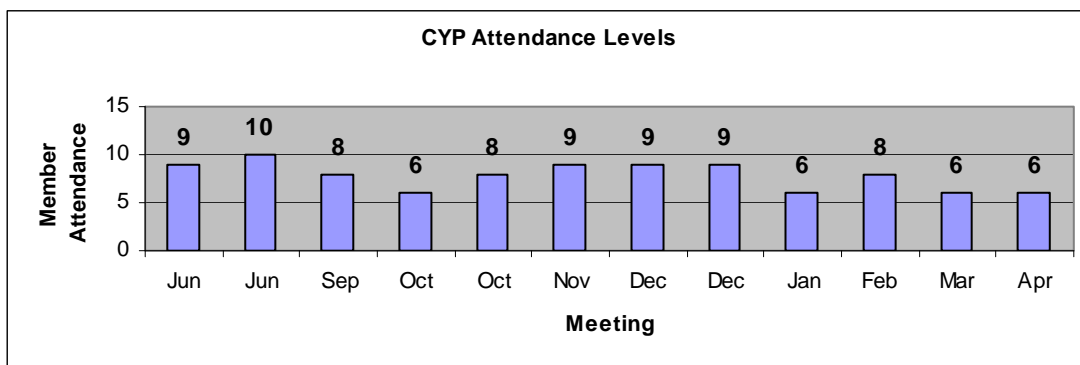
<b>Co-Chairs (2):</b>	Jim Kelly	Michael Williams
<b>Councillors:</b>		
<b>Members</b>	<b>(11):</b> Paul Blackwell	Colin Powell
<b>Councillors:</b>	D. Broderick, MBE Ron Davies G.W. Griffiths George D. James	I. Roberts P.M. Shone Christopher M. Stubbs Mrs. S. Wilkinson, OBE
	M.G. Morris	
<b>Church/Parent Governor</b>		
<b>Representatives (4):</b>	Mrs. Rita Price Mrs. A. Suter (until Oct. 07) Mrs Karen Ann Lee (from Nov. 07)	Mr Dyfed Thomas Reverend Canon Mary Stallard (from Nov. 07)
<b>Co-opted member (1):</b>	Mr Brent Evans (from July 07)	
<b>Scrutiny Facilitator</b>	Tracy Davies (from September 2007)	

### REMIT

- **Safeguarding & Support** inc. Child protection; children in need; children's health; children with disabilities; child and adolescent mental health; looked after children; fostering & adoption, young carers.
- **Learning and Achievement** inc. Early years provision; primary, secondary & post 16 education; school transport, school library service, school meals, school buildings/equipment, school admissions and student awards.
- **Prevention and Inclusion** inc. Youth Service, Youth Offending Service, special educational needs support, play development, pupil referral units.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

1. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee comprised of 13 Members (including Co-Chairs), plus 4 Church/Parent Governor Representatives and one co-opted member.
2. The Committee met 12 times during the 12 months (May 07 – May 08).



3. In addition a total of 2 task and finish group meetings were held and one visit to the Safeguarding Team on Grosvenor Road to raise their awareness of Safeguarding services provided for children and young people in Wrexham.
  
4. The main focus of the Scrutiny Committee's work over the previous two years has been on Education related matters. This is understandable due to the fact that educational attainment, particularly at Key Stage 4, has been one of the Council's main priorities. However, over the past year, the Committee has been focusing more on inclusion and prevention initiatives for children and young people and safeguarding issues, e.g., Team Around the Child pilot based at Ysgol Rhiwabon, INFO Outreach Centre at Darland High School, Young Carers. A list of the topics considered by the Committee over the past year is outlined below.

### **Topics considered by the Committee 2007/08**

- Young Carers
- Review of Pupil Referral Unit Service
- Primary School Review
- Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales Inspection of Children's Social Care Services
- Estyn Inspection findings regarding Ysgol Clywedog and Darland High School
- Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 Teacher Assessments
- GCSE and A Level Results
- Action Plan following Head teacher debates
- Draft Strategy to Transform Achievement in the Secondary Sector in Wrexham – Phase 2
- Scope for Review of Youth and Community Provision
- Monitoring report of Service Activity in Safeguarding and Support
- Budget issues for Safeguarding and Support Services
- Children & Young People Services – replacement options following the retirement of the Chief Safeguarding and Support Officer (part II item)

- 14 – 19 Curriculum Links between Secondary Schools and Further Education Institutes in Wrexham
- The International Dimension in Wrexham Schools
- Challenge of Targets set in the Children & Young People Departmental Service Plans for 2008/09
- Standard School Year
- The initial impact of the Council's restructured Children and Young People's Services
- Review of Looked After Children Placement Strategy
- Evaluation of the Info Outreach Centre at Darland High School
- Team Around the Child

In addition to the above, the following issues have been considered by Task and Finish Groups during the year. Work is still ongoing and the findings will be reported to Committee, hopefully, sometime during the next municipal year.

- Review of School Transport Policy
- Review of Externally Commissioned Children & Young People (Discretionary) Services

### **Measurable Outcomes**

The following are a couple of the main scrutiny topics which have resulted in clear outcomes for the service areas under review.

#### **Young Carers**

In June 2007, the Committee received a report highlighting current issues with regard to services for young carers. This included a detailed presentation from National Children's Homes (NCH), and an address by two young carers on their experiences, how their caring role had affected their day to day lives, and the support and respite provided to them by NCH.

During discussions, it was noted that they had problems in completing homework on time and that teachers weren't as understanding as they would have liked. As a result, a working group was established and a presentation has since been given to head teachers of all primary and secondary schools to raise awareness and ensure early identification of young carers in order to foster a greater understanding of their needs within schools.

#### **GCSE Results**

The Committee had formally carried out a review of secondary education in Wrexham in view of the comparatively low educational standards, particularly at Key Stage 4. The head teachers and/or a representative of the Governing Body of each of the 9 secondary schools attended meetings to give a presentation on what they felt were the key challenges/barriers to achieving good performance. The findings of an Estyn inspection of Wrexham Local Education Authority in October 2007 highlighted this as good practice and

praised the challenge provided by the scrutiny committee as being 'sharp and focused' (paragraph 59, page 12 of Estyn Inspection of Wrexham Local Education Authority, October 2007).

Officers then produced an action plan to address the common areas identified at each of the meetings, and this was submitted to a workshop meeting held on 2 October 2007. In December 2007, the Committee considered the GCSE results for pupils in Wrexham schools, together with comparative Wales data. Members were pleased to note that there had been an improvement on 2006 results, although the percentage of pupils achieving 5A\* to C GCSE's was below the challenging target set by the LEA and was below the Welsh average. The Committee will continue to monitor school performance.

## CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND POLICY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### MEMBERSHIP 2007/2008

#### **Co-Chairs (2)**

M.J.Edwards

Mrs June Fearnall

#### **Members (11):**

Paul Blackwell  
D. Broderick, MBE  
Judith Connolly  
R. Mark Davies  
Christopher M  
Stubbs  
M.C. King

M.G.Morris  
Howard Moysen  
Colin Powell  
I. Roberts  
Mrs Shan Wilkinson,  
OBE

#### **Scrutiny Facilitator:**

Suzanne Chaloner (from September 2007)

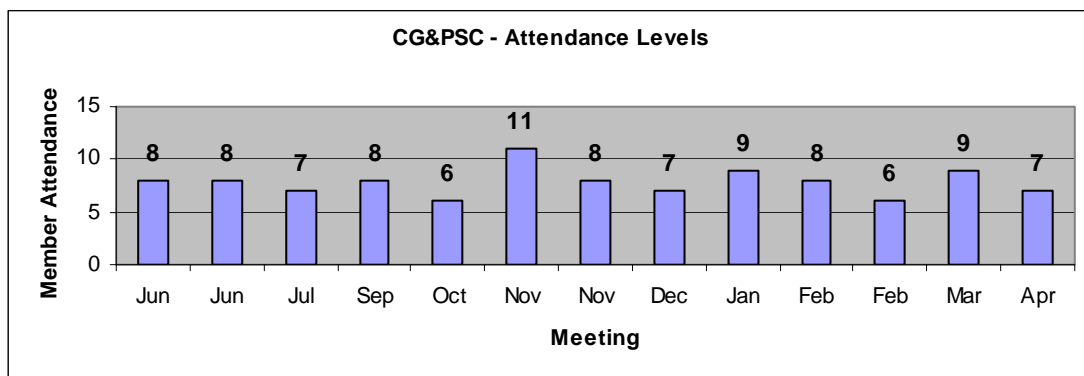
### REMIT

- **Corporate Strategies and Policies, i.e.**, those which impact on all or most Council service areas and which do not specifically fall under the remit of the other Scrutiny Committees
- **Local Service Board** – Governance arrangements
- **Human Resources** inc. equal opportunities; staffing issues; health & safety.
- **Information Systems & Telecommunications**
- **Legal** inc. legal issues; member training & development; committee & mayoral services; registration & coroner's services

### FURTHER INFORMATION

1. The Committee met 13 times during the 12 months (May 07 – May 08).

#### **Member Attendance**



2. This Scrutiny Committee has a wide remit, dealing with many of the overall policies affecting the Authority and also picking up items that do not appear to fit neatly within the remit of other Scrutiny Committees. The Committee has continued to work closely with a number of external organisations particularly in the areas of crime, community safety and community cohesion and representation has included North Wales Police, the Caia Park Partnership, the Wrexham Refugee and Asylum Seeker Support Group (WRASSG), the Ramblers Association County Committee for Wrexham and the Wrexham Local Access Forum. Topics scrutinised this year have included:

- Human Resources monitoring (quarterly)
- Sustainable Procurement
- Assessment, Selection and Approval Criteria for Suppliers/Contractors
- Statement on Internal Control
- Police Community Support Officers – Quarterly Performance Monitoring
- Equality Standards
- Equality Impact Assessment programme
- Safe Recruitment Policy
- Corporate One Stop Shop
- Customer Care Standards
- Extended Opening Hours
- Improving the Council's Image and Communications
- Customer Focus Strategy
- Sickness Absence Strategy
- Community Cohesion Strategy
- Anti-hate crime projects
- Preparing Community Strategies Consultation
- Local Service Board
- Alcohol Control Zones
- Policy and Procedures for the Management and Control of Legionella Risks
- Challenge of corporate targets (Reduce anti-social behaviour; Reduce crime and fear of crime)
- Gating Orders

In addition, a Task and Finish Group was established to look at the availability of statistical data regarding migrant workers with a view to informing the Council's budgets and service provision.

### **Measurable Outcomes**

The Committee has been involved in the development of several policies concerning the prevention of anti-social behaviour this year that have gone on to be endorsed by the Executive Board.

## Alcohol Control Zones

In November the Committee considered the Local Government Alcohol Consumption in Designated Public Places regulations and considered a number of options on how this could be progressed in the County Borough. In considering the options, the positive impact of the two control zones already established in Wrexham (Llwyn Isaf and Wrexham Town Centre) and the views of the police, the Community Safety Partnership and the Community Councils were recognised. Members paid close attention to the risk of displacement of anti-social behaviour should Designated Public Place Orders (DPPO) not be extended to each Community Council. Detailed consideration was also given to the processes and procedures (including for those persons who may object) for establishing a DPPO and satisfied itself that safeguards were in place to prevent infringements on law-abiding citizens' civil liberties.

## Gating Orders

The Committee considered development of a Gating Policy for the Council together with the requisite application procedures in order for the Council to proceed with the making of Gating Orders under Section 2 of the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005 as a means of tackling crime and anti-social behaviour. The Committee considered a number of options put forward by Officers, which ranged from taking no action (Option 1) to a policy which would invite applications for Gating Orders with the Council providing the capital costs of the gates, together with costs of installation, maintenance and removal if necessary. In considering these options (which included details of the funding and resource levels required for all parties including the Council) the Committee considered the experience of other Authorities, the views of the local police, local Members and representatives from the Local Access Forum. Having recommended an option for Officers to develop, the Committee then considered the criteria and application process to ensure that firm evidence in respect of crime and anti-social behaviour was a requirement of proceeding with an application. The policy and procedures were accepted by the Executive Board.

## ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### MEMBERSHIP 2007/2008

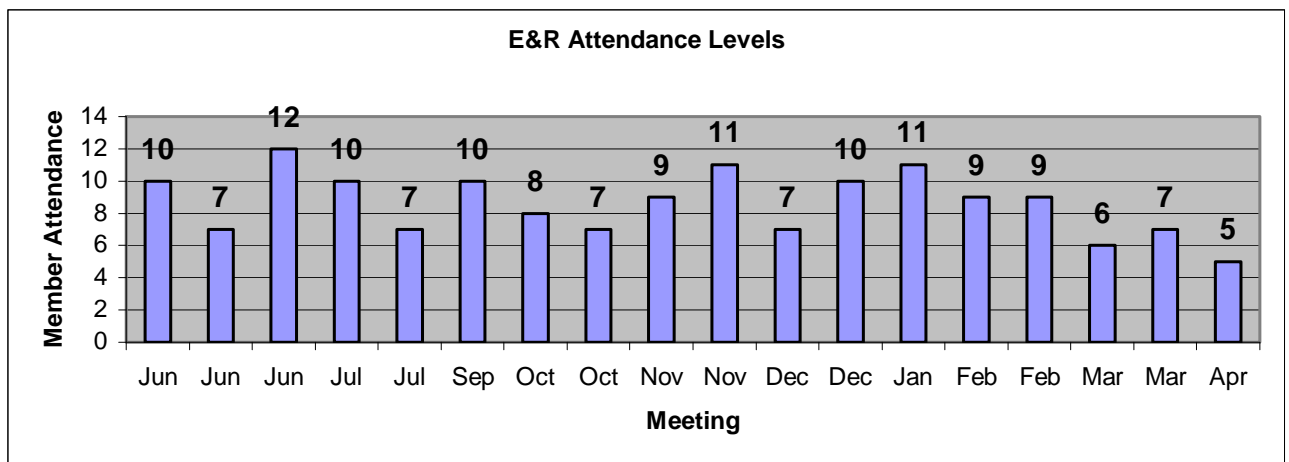
<b>Co-Chairs (2) :</b>	<b>Councillor:</b>	Ron Davies	Malcolm Williams
<b>Members (11)</b>	<b>Councillors</b>	A.C. Bailey Judith C Connolly T Alan Edwards Terry Evans K H Hett Lloyd Kenyon	Geoff Lowe Paul H Pemberton R D Prince David Rogers Michael Williams
<b>Scrutiny Facilitator</b>		Keith Lea	

### REMIT

- **Planning** inc. local, regional & structural planning issues; building control; conservation.
- **Waste Management** inc. refuse collection; street cleaning; waste disposal; recycling.
- **Transport** inc. highway and footpath maintenance & improvements; street lighting; road safety; public transport; car parks
- **Public Protection** inc. health promotion; food safety; trading standards; animal warden service.
- **Economic Development** inc. rural & urban development & regeneration; tourism; business support.
- **Leisure, Libraries & Culture** inc. leisure for all ages, leisure centres and sporting facilities; arts and entertainment; museums; sports development, libraries, community centres.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

1. The Committee met 18 times during the 12 months (May 07 – May 08).



## **Topics considered by the Committee 2007/08**

- School Library Service
- Llwyneinion Acid Tar Lagoon / Monsanto Chemical Sites
- Provision of Additional Bins for Large Household
- Civil Parking Enforcement
- Refuse Collection / Recycling
- Vehicle Overloading
- Public Protection Enforcement
- Depot Rationalisation - Salt Storage
- Developing a Community Regeneration Strategy for Wrexham County Borough
- Leisure Review
- Museum Project - Progress Report
- Wrexham Arts Centre - Options for Future Development
- Smoking Policy / Legislation
- Rights of Way Improvement Plan
- Contaminated Landfill Sites
- Streetscene
- Draft Allotment Strategy
- Wrexham Industrial Estate Access Road
- Wrexham Industrial Estate Shuttle Service
- Countryside Park Ranger Service
- Commercial Waste Service
- PFI Waste Management Project
- Waterworld
- Owain Glyndwr Awards 2007
- Road Safety
- Draft Wrexham Tree Strategy
- Wrexham's Food Hygiene Star Rating System
- Animal Health and Welfare Enforcement
- Decriminalised Parking Enforcement
- Public Protection Service Charter Mark
- Out of Hours - Stray Dogs
- Community Centres - Final Report of Task and Finish Group
- Scrutiny Challenge of Targets 2008/09 - Waste Collection / Recycling
- Developing a Community Regeneration Strategy for the Areas of the County Borough that Feature Amongst the 30% Most Deprived in Wales
- Communities Next Consultation
- Joint Review of Public Transport Arrangements
- Update on Streetscene Progress
- Public Library Standards 2008-2011
- Update on Civil Parking Enforcement
- Leisure Review - Year 1 Implementation
- Draft Wrexham Tree Strategy and Guidance
- Owain Glyndwr Fields

This Committee has probably the widest remit of any scrutiny committee, demonstrated by the number of additional meetings held, with further capacity being created by the use of Task & Finish Groups.

In addition to the above, the following issues have been considered by Task and Finish Groups during the year :

- Streetscene (met 6 times during the year)
- Non-Statutory Subsidised Public Transport (met 4 times)
- Community Centres (met 5 times)

A Task & Finish Group has also been set up to undertake a Joint Review with Flintshire County Council of Arriva Bus and Train Services and the Wrexham and Deeside Industrial Estate Shuttle Services, but did not meet during this period.

### **Measurable Outcomes**

The following are a couple of the main scrutiny topics, which have resulted in clear outcomes for the service areas under review.

#### **Streetscene**

The Committee, through a Task & Finish Group have been instrumental in moving forward the Streetscene project. The Committee has continued to monitor, and in some cases challenged or given a political steer in relation the introduction of the scheme.

In particular the Committee undertook a “challenge” of the proposed Streetscene standards recommended by Officers and in a number of areas this resulted in improved service to the public by a reduction in response times. The Committee has since undertaken a further review of the standards based on the first six months of operation and some service standards have been further improved.

The Committee also played a lead role in ensuring the successful public launch of the project by recommending which services were to be included in the initial launch and, in conjunction with Officers, developing a strategy and cost implications of a successful publicity campaign.

#### **Community Centres**

Issues relating to the financing and maintenance of community centres had been a long standing problem for the Authority. Closure of centres had previously been put forward as an option in terms of balancing the community centre budget and Brymbo Community Centre had been closed as part of this process. However a Task & Finish Group was set up to try to develop an alternative to this approach and to ensure the longer term viability of Community Centres. The Task & Finish Group worked closely with Northern Marches and AVOW to identify alternative service delivery and

funding options. The Group's work has resulted in significant funding contributions from community council's to supplement the Council's own budget.

## FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### MEMBERSHIP 2007/2008

**Co-Chairs** (2): J.J. Colbert J.M. Humberstone  
**Councillors:**

**Members** (11): D. Broderick, MBE Mike Edwards  
**Councillors**  
Nick S. Colbourne (until Nov. 07) P Jeffares (from Nov.07)  
J.W. Coleman, OBE G.W. Griffiths  
Judith C. Connolly Lloyd Kenyon  
Gerry M. Craddock P.M. Shone  
Michael Williams

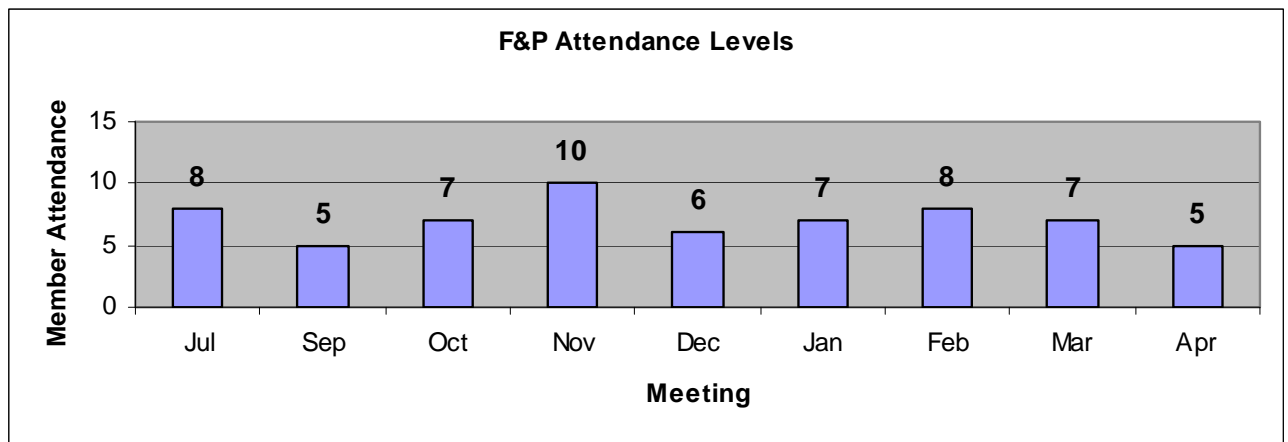
**Scrutiny Facilitator:** Tracy Davies (from September 2007)

### REMIT

- **Finance.** The financial aspects relating to any service, project, function, or assets; the Council's general financial standing and resources; the financial affairs of any joint ventures, partnership arrangements or companies in which the Council has an interest.
- **Performance Management.** Quarterly performance monitoring and the general performance of the Council's Services

### FURTHER INFORMATION

1. The Committee met 9 times during the 12 months (May 07 – May 08). In addition, the Performance Monitoring Task and Finish Group met 4 times to consider the quarterly performance monitoring information.



2. Much of the work of this committee revolves around the internal financial controls and information, essential in ensuring that Members fulfil their responsibilities in ensuring that the Authority complies with financial legislation and regulation. The main focus of the Committee's work over the past year, however, has been on performance monitoring. A list of the topics considered by the Committee is outlined below.

### **Topics considered by the Committee 2007/08**

- Project Management Code of Practice Action Plan – Progress Report
- Treasury Management Report for 2006/07
- Private Finance Initiative (PFI) – Waste Management Contract:
- Project Management Action Plan Progress Reports
- Comparative Report on Homelessness Statistics
- Late Payment of Invoices – Performance Indicators
- Revision of Financial Regulations
- Current Rent Arrears Performance of Housing Services
- 2008/2009 Performance Management Framework Consultation Document
- Collection Target for Debtors – Finance and Performance Service Plan
- Provisional Local Government Revenue and Capital Settlements 2008/09
- Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy for 2008/2009
- Scrutiny Challenge of Targets 2008/09
- Reporting of Variation to Contract Sum Exceeding 10% (Financial Regulation No. 10.79) (Part II item)
- Review of the 2007/08 Budget Process
- Update – North Wales Shared Revenues and Benefit Service
- Quarterly Monitoring reports from the Performance Monitoring Task and Finish Group

In addition to the above, the Performance Monitoring Task and Finish Group has flagged up a number of areas of off track performance arising from their quarterly monitoring of performance information relating to all council services. Some of these have been referred to the relevant Scrutiny Committees for further investigation. The process for tracking such performance issues has been improved over the past year to enable the Task and Finish Group and the Finance & Performance Committee to maintain an overview and monitor such off track performance issues more effectively. Some examples are outlined below.

### **Measurable Outcomes**

The following are examples of performance monitoring carried out by the Committee which have resulted in improvements in performance.

## Rent Arrears Performance of Housing Services

This is a performance issue which has been closely monitored by the Committee over a number of years. In 2003/04 the rent arrears in respect of Council housing amounted to £781,000. The last time this was reported to Committee in November 2007, the amount had reduced significantly for the year 2006/07 to £478,000. This reflected the preventative approach the Authority had used in combating rent arrears and enhanced recovery procedures being introduced, including a tracing agency being employed to collect former tenant arrears together with the implementation of a monthly write off programme.

In addition, the performance relating to void properties had improved considerably over recent years and this had placed the Council in the second lowest quartile (best performing) against other Welsh Local Authorities for the second quarter of the 2007/08 financial year.

Members welcomed the report and the improvements made by the Housing Department in the collection of current and long-term rent arrears and in the letting of void properties.

## Equalities Impact Assessments

This issue arose out of the Committee's consideration of the year's Quarter 2 performance monitoring information. Under the Race Equality Duty as set out in the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 the authority is required to carry out Equality Impact Assessments on all new policies, plans and strategies. The annual target was to have completed all 274 of the programmed impact assessments by 31 March 2008, however, as at Quarter 2, only 70 had been completed and it was highly unlikely that the target would be achieved. As a result, this was subsequently referred to Corporate Governance & Policy Scrutiny Committee and considered at a meeting of that Committee on 5 March 2008 as part of the report on the Corporate Equalities – Impact Assessment Programme.

Members acknowledged that although considerable progress had been made during the period 2005-08, in that approximately half of the 261 policies and procedures identified within the Impact Assessment Programme would be complete by 31 March 2008, further work was required to strengthen corporate equalities performance. One of the recommendations was that the timescale issue in respect of undertaking an impact assessment on a draft Council policy before submission to Scrutiny Committees be considered at a future meeting of the Co-Chairs Co-ordinating Group. The Group subsequently agreed that all Scrutiny Committees be requested to refuse to recommend a policy, plan or strategy to the Executive Board unless an Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and considered by the Committee as part of the consideration of the policy, plan or strategy.

## SOCIAL AFFAIRS, HEALTH AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### MEMBERSHIP 2007/2008

**Co-Chairs (2)** J.W.Coleman A.G.Jones  
(from 12/07)  
Gerry M Craddock

**Members (11)** A.C.Bailey K.H.Hett  
J.J.Colbert George D James  
Mrs J M Lowe T Alan Edwards  
Terry Evans D.J.Griffiths  
Robert Shepherd Malcolm Williams  
Pat Jeffares

**Co-opted Member** Dr Gwyn Roberts

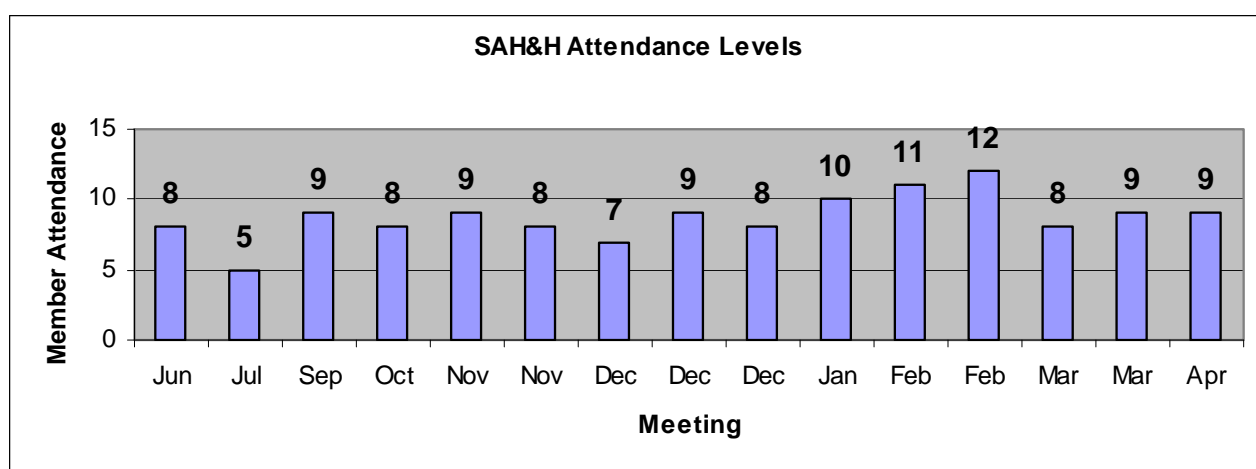
**Scrutiny Facilitator:** Suzanne Chaloner (from September 2007)

### REMIT

- **Adult Social Care** inc. assessment; home, residential & day care; adults with learning and/or physical difficulties; mental health; drug/alcohol abuse; welfare rights; meals on wheels; occupational therapy
- **Housing** inc. allocations; rent collection; arrears; voids; repairs & improvements; homelessness; sheltered accommodation; travellers' sites; sheltered accommodation; care call, affordable housing
- **Health** inc. health promotion; NHS/Local Health Board issues

### FURTHER INFORMATION

1. The committee met 15 times during the 12 months (May 07 – May 08)



2. The Committee has two large main issues that fall within its remit – Housing (private sector and the Council's own stock) and Adult Social Care. As a consequence it has an extremely busy workload and considers many direct service provision issues. Some of the topics considered by the Committee during the year have included :-

#### Housing:

- Local Housing Strategy Review
- Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy Review
- Private Sector Empty Property Strategy
- Local Lettings for Allocation to Older persons
- Housing, Private Sector Housing and Public Protection – review of performance
- Quarterly updates of 2006 Pennington Consulting's Review of the Housing & Property Repairs Service
- Pennington Consulting's 2007 Review of the Property & Repairs Service
- Housing Capital Programme
- Assisted Gardening Scheme Review
- Review of Properties to Let to other Organisations
- Age Discrimination Review
- Challenge of corporate targets – 'Improve Standards in Private Sector Housing' and 'Achieve more good quality affordable housing'

#### Adult Social Care and Health

- Social Housing Grant 2006/78 Outturn, 2008/9 Announcement and 2009/10 Programme
- Occupational Therapy Update
- Emergency Duty Team
- Health Social Care & Wellbeing Strategy
- Day Service Developments
- In Control - Self Directed Support
- Eligibility Criteria & Charging for Blue Badges (as part of budget scrutiny)
- Development of Advocacy
- Future service delivery of Telecare / CareCall
- Reablement Service
- Choice Protocol
- Challenge of corporate targets – Range and quality of adult social care services
- ASC Business Plan 08/09 & Monitoring and Review of 07/08 performance
- Independent Sector Care Home Fees 08/09
- Protection of Vulnerable Adults from Abuse annual Report
- Intermediate Care Strategy
- Review and Configuration of Older People's Mental Health Services
- Supporting People Operational Plan 08/09

- Commissioning Plan for Learning Disability Accommodation and Support Services
3. In 2006, the Council agreed to the Committee's request that a representative of the Local Health Board (LHB) should be invited to be a Co-opted Member of the Committee as a means of improving communication on health related issues. Since 2006, this position has been filled by Dr Gwyn Roberts, the Chair of the LHB, and this year the arrangement has continued to add value to the quality of information and debate at meetings.

### **Measurable Outcomes**

The following are examples of performance monitoring carried out by the Committee that have resulted in improvements in service provision or performance.

- In June and December 2007, the Committee considered reports on the use of 38 of the Council's HRA residential properties currently let to various statutory and voluntary organisations. There were concerns that there have been no formal arrangements for reviewing charges annually, with the consequence being that many organisations are not paying the appropriate rent and are in effect being subsidised by the HRA. This resulted in recommendations accepted by the Executive to review, and where appropriate, increase rents to reflect market conditions. The Committee were concerned about the impact on those organisations currently in receipt of properties 'rent free' and agreed that they should be given notice that they should make provision for rent being charged from April 2009. A future report on the likely impact on these organisations has been requested for early 2009.
- In September 2007 the Committee considered a report that reviewed age discrimination in policy and practice in Housing and Adult Social Care. As a direct result of comments made by Members, a review of the Assisted Gardening Scheme in November resulted in the eligibility criteria for this service amended to remove the requirement for applicants to be at least 65 years old. This important change means that younger disabled people are no longer excluded from the scheme.