

Overview and Scrutiny in 2011-12



Welcome

I'm delighted to introduce the 2011-12 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for Lincolnshire County Council. The last year has seen significant change within local government with a reduction in the amount of funding we receive and the introduction of a whole host of new legislation that will impact on our work. These changes have only increased the significance of the role of scrutiny as we seek to ensure that the Council is well-placed to respond to new and changing responsibilities and able to continue to provide quality services to the people of Lincolnshire.

Over the next few pages I want to highlight some of the key activities that have taken place in scrutiny during the year but if you would like to know anything more then we would be delighted to talk to you. Contact details for the Scrutiny Team can be found on page four and you can find out lots more about our work by visiting our website at www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/scrutiny.



Councillor Howard Johnson
Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

All of Lincolnshire's **77 county councillors** are committed to improving the well-being of the people of Lincolnshire. Nine of these councillors work in the Executive. The other 68 councillors are non-executive councillors. They investigate important issues that affect the people of Lincolnshire through the overview and scrutiny process. Joining them to scrutinise particular issues are parent governors, church representatives, councillors from the district councils and representatives from NHS Lincolnshire, Lincolnshire Police Authority and the Local Involvement Network. Issues under review can be to do with Council services or wider matters affecting the community as a whole. Whatever the issue, councillors make sure they speak to the people that matter, the people providing the services and, most importantly, the people of Lincolnshire who use our services.

How Does Overview and Scrutiny Work?

The Council's **nine overview and scrutiny committees** are made up of non-executive councillors who consider services provided by the council and, in some cases, services provided by partner organisations. These committees consider new policies that are being developed, existing policies to see how well they are working and performance information to check that we are meeting the standards we have set ourselves.

Each of these committees is also able to establish time-limited **Task and Finish Group reviews** that focus on a particular issue and consider it in greater detail than is possible at Committee. These reviews will typically last around six months and will include a mixture of interviews with relevant council officers, research of best practice elsewhere, meetings with service users and community groups and consultation with wider parts of the community.

Scrutiny activity during the year

Customer Satisfaction

Scrutiny committees already monitor the performance of the service areas they oversee and during the last year these committees have also taken on the role of monitoring customer satisfaction. Knowing how local people feel about County Council services is extremely important and scrutiny now has a regular insight into the complaints, compliments and comments that the Council receives. This insight will be of great help to us as we identify key issues to scrutinise in more detail and areas where we need to ask senior officers and the Council's Executive to review the services we provide.

Task and Finish Group Reviews

Task and Finish Group Review work remains a key area of scrutiny activity where councillors can really get to understand an issue in detail and provide recommendations for improvement. The last year has seen the completion of a review looking at the barriers that young people encounter when **accessing post-16 learning provision in Lincolnshire**. Detailed investigation including extensive consultation through interviews with vulnerable young people and an on-line survey highlighted that the major barriers for young people are around transport, finances and careers guidance. It also highlighted that there is a mismatch between the skills required by businesses and the local economy, and the courses that young people are studying. An action plan has been drawn up between key local bodies to address a number of issues that were raised in the review.

In 2011 it was estimated that 75,000 people, of all ages, were acting as carers in Lincolnshire. These carers are effectively "unpaid" as the financial support they receive is minimal in proportion to the time they give in devoted care. A group of councillors has reviewed the **Personal Budgets for Unpaid Carers**. The councillors involved were very impressed with the commitment of the carers they spoke to and the work of the Lincolnshire Carers Partnership. The review put forward eight recommendations on how services and opportunities for carers could be improved.

The final part of any review process is to track the outcomes of our previous work. For example, we previously looked at **how local businesses were supported** in Lincolnshire and scrutiny recommendations have led to the new Business Lincolnshire website, managed by the County Council. The site provides advice to start or grow a business, providing links to in-depth information on a range of issues.

In 2010, a scrutiny review on the **Commissioning Arrangements for Emergency Ambulance Services** asked NHS managers to look at alternatives to sending an ambulance in instances where a patient does not really need transport to hospital. The local NHS is now looking at expanding the number of emergency care practitioners, who are able to "see and treat" patients in their own home rather than the patients having to be taken into hospital. This allows ambulances to focus on emergencies.

Details of the councillors who participated in this year's Task and Finish Groups can be found on page six of this report and details of the Council's scrutiny committees can be found on page five.

Raising the profile of scrutiny

We are always seeking ways to promote the positive work of scrutiny both inside and outside the Council. The scrutiny newsletter serves as an excellent way to highlight key activities and is published on a periodic basis for both internal and external audiences. During the last year we held a “mock” meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee which was attended by a variety of young people including members of the Youth Cabinet, young carers and ‘A’ Level students. Feedback from this session was very positive and hopefully we will be able to do this again in the future. We have also held mock meetings of the Health Scrutiny Committee and the Executive to help introduce our new colleagues in Public Health to scrutiny and decision-making at the Council.

Looking Ahead

We are already looking ahead to next year and the work programmes for the scrutiny committees are already taking shape. In terms of review activity, a Task and Finish Group looking at the important subject of **fuel poverty** has just completed its final report and this will be submitted to the Council’s Executive in June. More than 25% of households in Lincolnshire suffer from fuel poverty and this review has consulted with key partners including district councils and community groups to understand the issues and find ways of reducing the number of people affected. A new review looking at **School Admissions and Exclusions** has just begun. This review will look at ways to reduce the number of exclusions from schools and to establish that all children have fair access to schools in their local area. This review is due to report its findings in the autumn.

I’m pleased to report that the Council has recently been awarded Health Scrutiny Development Area status by the Centre for Public Scrutiny. This is clear recognition of the excellent work of the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire and also the County Council and its health partners in becoming one of the first areas to create a shadow Health and Well-Being Board. The Council will benefit from the advice of an expert advisor and I am sure that we will also have the opportunity to share our good practice.

Contact Us

If you want to know more about our plans or about the work we have done then please contact the Scrutiny Team using the details below.

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Or write to us at The Scrutiny Team, Lincolnshire County Council, Room 15, County Offices, Lincoln, LN1 1YL

Scrutiny Committees

The Council has nine scrutiny committees and these are listed below along with the number of members on each committee and the names of the chairman and vice-chairman.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee – 21 members

Chairman – Councillor Howard Johnson

Vice-Chairman – Councillor Chris Underwood-Frost

Adults Scrutiny Committee – 11 members

Chairman – Councillor Amanda Puttick

Vice-Chairman – Councillor Paul Carpenter

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 21 members

Chairman – Councillor Steve Williams

Vice-Chairman – Councillor John Hough

Communities Scrutiny Committee – 11 members

(this Committee also sits as the Council's Crime & Disorder Committee)

Chairman – Councillor Chris Brewis

Vice-Chairman – Councillor Ray Phillips

Economic Scrutiny Committee – 11 members

Chairman – Councillor Pat O'Connor

Vice-Chairman – Councillor Graham Gooding

Environmental Scrutiny Committee -11 members

(this Committee also sits as the Council's Flood & Drainage Management Scrutiny Committee with seven additional district council members)

Chairman - Councillor Colin Davie

Vice-Chairman - Councillor David Dickinson

Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire – 16 members

Chairman - Councillor Mrs Christine Talbot

Vice-Chairman - Councillor Chris Brewis

Highways, Transport and Technology Scrutiny Committee – 11 members

Chairman - Councillor Richard Davies

Vice-Chairman - Councillor Mick Tinker

Value for Money Scrutiny Committee – 11 members

Chairman - Councillor Robert Parker

Vice-Chairman - Councillor Eddie Strengiel

Task and Finish Groups

The Task and Finish Groups undertaken during the year are listed below along with the membership of each group.

Improving Access to Post-16 Learning Provision in Lincolnshire

Councillor John Hough – Chairman
Councillor Paul Carpenter
Councillor John Hicks
Mr Steve Rudman – Church representative
Councillor Reg Shore
Councillor Nick Worth

Personal Budgets for Unpaid Carers

Councillor John Marriott - Chairman
Councillor Paul Carpenter
Councillor Mrs Charlotte Farquharson
Councillor Hugo Marfleet

School Admissions and Exclusions in Lincolnshire

Councillor Steve Williams - Chairman
Councillor Colin Davie
Councillor Mike Exton
Councillor Andrew Hagues
Councillor John Hicks
Councillor John Hough
Mr Steve Rudman – Church representative
Councillor Reg Shore
Mrs Gill Wright – Church representative

Tackling Fuel Poverty in Lincolnshire

Councillor Colin Davie - Chairman
Councillor Chris Brewis
Councillor Mike Exton
Councillor Graham Gooding
Councillor Nev Jackson
Councillor John Marriott
Councillor Paul Skinner