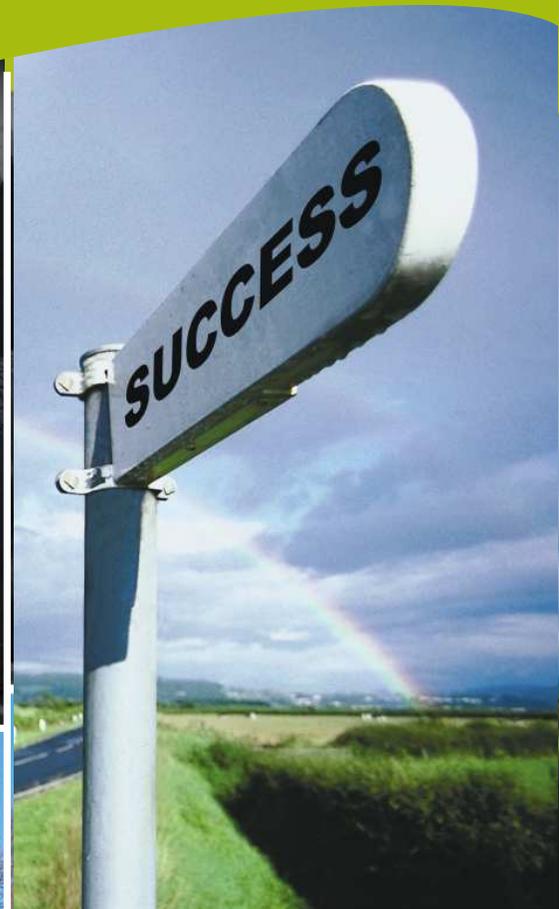


Overview and Scrutiny in 2012-13



Welcome

Welcome to the 2012-13 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for Lincolnshire County Council. This report provides the opportunity to review last year's activity within overview and scrutiny and to highlight some of the key developments.

The last year has seen a continuation of recent challenges for local government in dealing with reductions in funding, the impact of new legislation and the changing shape of partner organisations such as the health service and the police. Scrutiny councillors at the County Council have monitored these developments closely and have continued to carry out effective scrutiny in this changing landscape.

Scrutiny continues to develop both in terms of its approach to monitoring the Council's performance but also in the way it approaches different types of investigation and there will be reference to these two areas later on in this report.

If you would like to know more about the work of scrutiny at the County Council then please get in touch. Contact details for the Scrutiny Team can be found on page four and you can find out lots more by visiting the scrutiny section of the Council's website at www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/scrutiny.

David Hair
Team Leader, Scrutiny & Member Support

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

All non-Executive councillors are eligible to participate in the work of scrutiny and to review, support and improve Council services and to consider wider issues affecting the people of Lincolnshire. Joining them to scrutinise particular issues are parent governors, church representatives, councillors from the district councils and representatives from other local organisations.

The Council has ten overview and scrutiny committees that consider new policies that are being developed, existing policies to see how well they are working and performance information to check that the Council is meeting the standards that have been set.

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.

An emerging trend over the last year has been the establishment of more working groups of scrutiny councillors which tend to work in a less formal and more collaborative way. These working groups have responded to national consultations, reviewed existing policies and looked to develop new policies in conjunction with officers. Going forward, working groups will also be able to play a useful role in addressing cross-cutting issues which may impact more than one scrutiny committee.

Scrutiny activity during the year

Performance Scrutiny

Scrutiny of performance is a key aspect of the work of scrutiny at the County Council and is an area that has continued to develop over the last year. In 2012 the Council identified a number of Council Priority Activities. These are the key projects and programmes that will deliver the most significant changes and new commitments over the next 3 years. As an addition to the quarterly performance report, each scrutiny committee now receives an overview of the progress of the activities within their remit with the opportunity to delve more deeply into a particular initiative when this is required.

Monitoring quarterly performance indicators, customer satisfaction and priority activities ensures that scrutiny has a comprehensive and consistent approach to monitoring the performance of Council services. Analysis of customer satisfaction data remains an essential element of this process as this gives councillors a view from outside the organisation and a way of hearing the views of communities across the County.

Task and Finish Group Reviews

Task and Finish Group reviews have continued to play an important part in the work of scrutiny over the last 12 months. At the start of 2012 members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee agreed to scrutinise policies and procedures relating to **School Admissions and Exclusions in Lincolnshire** with the aim of ensuring that no children or young people are disadvantaged in the way that they are admitted to or excluded from a school. All 13 recommendations in the final report were accepted by the Council's Executive. The final report was submitted to the Children's Commissioner for inclusion in the call for evidence for the Year 2 School Exclusions Inquiry looking at inequalities and unofficial exclusions. In her response, the Children's Commissioner provided positive feedback on the report.

The last year has also seen the completion of a review looking at how best to tackle **fuel poverty** in Lincolnshire. With more than 25% of households in Lincolnshire suffering from fuel poverty, this is an issue that affects a significant number of the county's residents. Consulting with key partners, including district councils and community groups encouraged closer partnership working across the county. Gaining a significant amount of press coverage, the work of the Task and Finish Group successfully raised awareness of the issue, signposting residents to the help and support that is available.

When reviews are completed it is important for scrutiny committees to monitor the progress of the recommendations made by the Task and Finish Groups. Highlighted below are some key outcomes which are now making a real difference to local residents, following the completion of a number of reviews in 2011.

As a direct result of the recommendations of a Task and Finish Group which examined the best ways of **supporting local businesses**, the Council has created the www.businesslincolnshire.com website. This is seen by many local businesses as the primary source of information regarding schemes and services that can help start or grow a business.

A review of **Personal Budgets for Unpaid Carers** included a recommendation to extend carers' personal budgets to those carers who care for children under 18 years. This recommendation was adopted and implemented during 2012/13. The provision of these budgets acknowledges the devotion of all carers to their nearest and dearest.

Other Committee Activity

The Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire has continued to closely monitor health provision across the County during 2012-13 and responded to plans from the **East Midlands Ambulance Service** for the closure and reconfiguration of ambulance stations in Lincolnshire, by referring the matter to the Secretary of State for Health. The Committee also made a referral to the Secretary of State in relation to the proposals for the reconfiguration of **Children's Congenital Heart Surgery**.

During 2012-13, the Health Scrutiny Committee also participated in an initiative led by the **Centre for Public Scrutiny**, which involved developmental events and will lead to the publication of a good practice guide to assist committees across the country in scrutinising health services in the future.

A working group of the Economic Scrutiny Committee has been considering the **economic opportunities relating to an ageing population**. The working group has focused on two particular areas, which were those companies who already worked with older people and how they could diversify, and how older people could be encouraged to be more active and engage with the local community. A number of issues have been highlighted by the working group for additional investigation which will be explored further after the elections.

Looking Ahead

Proposals to refine the existing scrutiny structure are currently under consideration. These proposals look to position scrutiny so that it can successfully respond to new responsibilities within the remit of the Council such as the delivery of Public Health services and changes to partner organisations.

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.

David Hair – Team Leader – Scrutiny
& Member Support
01522 552080
davidr.hair@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Tracy Johnson – Scrutiny Officer
01522 552164
tracy.johnson@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Simon Evans – Scrutiny Officer
01522 553607
simon.evans@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Liz Jones – Scrutiny Officer
01522 552102
liz.jones@lincolnshire.gov.uk

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