

# Warwick District Council

## Member workshop



# The Role of Scrutiny

## Agenda

- Local Government Act 2000
- Scrutiny objectives
- Discussion
- How should we meet these objectives?
- Roles
- Skills



# Local Government Act 2000

- **Distinction between Executive and Scrutiny roles**
- **New powers to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas**
- **Introduction of Standards Committee**



# **“The old culture and framework”**

- **Interests of the public a poor second best**
- **More spending seen as simple solution**
- **Inward looking**
- **Local people indifferent about local democracy**
- **Endless Committees**
- **Too many meetings**
- **Real decisions taken behind closed doors**
- **Councillors feel they cannot influence policy**
- **Reduces capacity of Councils to lead their communities**



# The change agenda

## Aims of the LG Act 2000

- reinvigorate local democracy
- strengthen the links between councils and local people
- deliver high standards for local people
- enhance accountability
- tackle serious failure

## Role of Members

- greater role in the review of policy and the formulation of future policy
- A duty to question and evaluate decisions
- community leadership
- driving performance improvement
- community engagement



# How the Local Government Act 2000 is working?

*Report of the Select Committee on Transport, Local Government and the Regions*

- Councils not using the well-being powers
- Objectives of the Act frustrated by complexity of the regulatory framework
- Too much prescription from central Government hinders local freedom
- Concerns about democratic legitimacy of local partnerships
- Insufficient pre decision scrutiny
- Scrutiny roles not yet fully developed
- Still too much time spent in Committees
- Apparent lack of public interest in new structures



# Scrutiny Objectives

Policies

Performance

External bodies

Reviewing decisions

Advice

Best Value

Research

Consultation



# What should scrutiny be about ?

- Break up into groups of 6-7
- Discuss what you think scrutiny should be about
- Decide the top three
- Be ready to feedback in 15 minutes





# Scrutiny Roles

- **Policy**
  - Develop Budget and Policy framework
  - Research
  - Encourage stakeholder participation
  
- **Performance**
  - Policy, performance targets
  - External reports
  - Best Value
  - Members
  
- **Scrutiny**
  - Question members, officers and partners
  - Decisions



# Meeting scrutiny objectives

- What do we need to know?
- How should we go about it?
- What skills do we need ?



# Policies

## What do we need to know?

- What are our current policies ?
- What is their purpose?
- Which are the most significant in relation to our objectives?
- How are they developed and maintained?
- How do we judge their effectiveness?
- How effective are our policies?

## How should we go about it?

- Establish list of key policies, purpose and frequency of review.
- Develop a framework for policy review involving stakeholders, officers and members
- Approve draft policies within an agreed framework
- Research topics for policy formulation in line with an agreed work programme



# Performance

## What do we need to know?

- What standards are we aiming for?
- How do we think we are performing?
- Which other bodies examine our performance?
- How do others rate our performance?
- What are the factors which influence our performance?
- What can we do if performance is below target?

## How should we go about it?

- Help establish performance targets
- Determine performance priorities
- Consider performance reports through discussions with performance managers
- Monitor performance of key stakeholders
- Canvass stakeholder opinion on performance
- Receive reports from review bodies.



# Decisions

## What do we need to know?

- What decisions are being taken?
- Which decisions should we be looking at?
- Why should we be looking at decisions?
- How should we look at them?
- What do we do with our conclusions?

## How should we go about it?

- Understand the programme of decisions
- Questioning the basis of decisions i.e. is the decision based on adequate consultation, consistent with budget and policy framework



## Example of a Scrutiny Programme

	DESCRIPTION	NOTES	DATE ENTERED INTO WORK PROGRAMME
Meeting date: 7 <sup>th</sup> April 2003 – The deadline for reports for this meeting is 10.00am 17 <sup>th</sup> March			
Internal Audit	To receive a paper on the role and powers of Internal Audit	This paper was requested following discussions around the Millennium Stage Inquiry undertaken by Scrutiny Board (Leisure & Enterprise)	6/01/2003
Request For Scrutiny	To consider a request for Scrutiny from Scrutiny Board (Development & Sustainability)	To consider a request to undertake Scrutiny of the Council's strategy to contain insurance costs.	17/03/03
Procurement/ delegated decisions	To receive a paper on the current arrangements for the waiver of contract standing orders	This paper was requested following discussions around the Millennium Stage Inquiry undertaken by Scrutiny Board (Leisure & Enterprise)	6/01/2003
Performance Assessment	To agree the Board's final report	An interim report was agreed at the 10 <sup>th</sup> March Board meeting and subsequently sent to other Scrutiny Boards for consideration. This Board to consider any comments prior to agreeing the final report and submitting to Executive Board.	10/02/03
BVPP	In line with the Council's Constitution to receive and consider the BVPP		
Declaration of Interests	To receive a paper on the arrangements for the declaration of Officer Interests		6/01/2003
Annual Report	To receive and consider the Board's contribution to the Annual Report		20/05/2002



## Case Study

**A housing refurbishment project was scrutinised following a significant increase in the costs of the project. The relevant Scrutiny Board made 15 recommendations for improved project management of contracts in the future, including the appointment of project managers for complex schemes. The recommendations were all taken on board by the council's Construction Working Group.**



# Skills

- Investigative
- Exploratory
- Inquisitorial
- Deliberative
  - needs questioning, probing, listening and analysis

