

Bolton Council

+Report to: EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 8TH NOVEMBER, 2007

Report of: DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Report No:

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Report Title: LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN
HEALTH BILL – COMMUNITY CALL FOR ACTION

Purpose:

This report outlines the position of the Community Call for Action as contained in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill.

Decision:

The Scrutiny Committee is requested to note and comment on the report.

Background Doc(s):

Summary:

The Government has agreed to align the current two versions of the Call for Action policies following the third reading of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill in the House of Lords.

In effect, the Government has removed Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 to take out the "Community Call for Action" and replace it with the more straightforward "Councillor Call for Action" as proposed in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill.

In practice this will mean that Members of the public will not be able to raise Community Calls for Action on crime and disorder matters (and thus elected members will not be under a duty to respond to them on a CCA issue). There will be no right of appeal via the Council's executive if community dissatisfied.

The Councillor Call for Action encompasses any local government matter relating to any function of the authority and affecting the councillor's ward or constituents.

Council Scrutiny Committees will also maintain their role in relation to Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships.

It is suggested that a report be submitted to a future meeting on the mechanisms to be put in place to effect the Councillor Call for Action.

Introduction

At its informal meeting on 7th June, 2007, the Committee agreed that reports should be presented to it on a regular basis on the progress of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill as it related to scrutiny. This is the first of such reports and draws on a briefing note for Councillors published by the LGIU on how the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill is focussing on how the role of overview and scrutiny can be developed now, as a focus for community involvement and neighbourhood work, as well as preparing for new responsibilities. This report gives a synopsis of the briefing.

Neighbourhood Scrutiny

The White Paper encourages councils to consider area and neighbourhood scrutiny which is something that councils can begin to consider in advance of the Bill becoming law. This type of scrutiny could consider the overall quality of life in a neighbourhood, investigate public opinion and review the work of public service providers in addition to council services. Neighbourhood scrutiny could provide a model for development and/or review of the Sustainable Community Strategy at a very local level.

Scrutiny and Community Engagement

This issue looks to take further the involvement of the public and specific service users in scrutiny enquiries. Comprehensive consultation and engagement strategies could be championed by scrutiny committees.

Scrutiny of the Local Area Agreement

Councils are responsible for leading implementation of Local Area Agreements and scrutiny could play a role in examining how well the LAA develops the ambition of the Sustainable Community Strategy and whether targets are being met. Scrutiny of external partners would be done on a voluntary basis until the new Local Government Bill becomes law. This type of scrutiny could have the benefit of building an understanding of the role of scrutiny among other public services.

Community Call for Action

It is suggested that any detailed preparations for implementing Community Call for Action is best left until guidance under the Police and Justice Act is published and more detail is available of the Local Government Bill. However, it is suggested that Councils can consider now how the concerns of the public and of ward councillors can translate into issues which scrutiny should investigate.

Sustainable Community Strategies

It is suggested that heightened concern about climate change is one of the issues which may encourage councils to ask about the sustainability of their Community Strategy. Taking up the policy development role of overview and scrutiny could lead to a sustainability appraisal of the strategy and evidence hearings from experts and local campaigners.

It should be noted that the Council established a Sustainable Development Scrutiny Panel in August, 2006, one of whose recommendations was that sustainable development should be progressed further via a Policy Development Group which would allow for specific visits to take place to locations acknowledged for their sustainability agenda.

Recommendation

The Committee is requested

- (i) to comment on the contents of the report; and
- (ii) to advise of possible further areas for report.

Relevant Executive Member/Executive Decisions

Detailed below are reports which are on the Council's Forward Plan to appear before the Executive or relevant Executive Members over the coming months. Please note that this does not mean that each of these items will definitely be submitted to the Executive Member or Executive, only that they are currently scheduled to appear. Confirmation of their consideration at the relevant meeting is only available once the agenda for that particular meeting has been despatched. Therefore, the list below is intended only as a guide to future items for possible consideration.

Report Title	Month
Executive Member for Children's Services Executive Member for Schools	August 2006
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capital Update ▪ Children's Services Big Issues 2007/2008 ▪ Bolton Muslim Girls School ▪ Foster Care Inspection ▪ Little Lever Ground Survey ▪ Funding for Adoption Support ▪ Children's Services Budget – Month 3 ▪ Revenue and Capital Monitor ▪ Withins Academy and Campus ▪ Christ Church CE School ▪ Review of Services ▪ Capital Allocations ▪ Supply of Secondary School Improvement Services ▪ Early Start Restructuring Programme 	
Executive Member for Children's Services Executive Member for Schools	September 2006
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capital Update 	