

Observations of the Overview & Scrutiny Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee made a general observation on the draft guidance relating to Overview & Scrutiny and several observations on individual paragraphs. The general observation was that the guidance should be less detailed allowing individual authorities to be creative in putting in place local arrangements to suit their local circumstances. The following specific points were made by the Committee:-

1. In relation to paragraphs 5.8 to 5.26 of the draft guidance concerning raising public awareness about Overview & Scrutiny, it is believed this can be achieved without the need for four separate protocols as indicated in paragraph 5.26.
2. In relation to paragraphs 5.27 to 5.34 dealing with the publication of Overview & Scrutiny forward work programmes, these frequently change to reflect changing local priorities and rather than circulating to a large number of bodies as indicated in paragraph 5.33, it is believed it would be more effective to use Council websites to publish and update forward work programmes which is what Flintshire currently does.
3. The Council welcomes the reference in paragraph 6.5 that a Councillor call for action should be a last resort after other avenues have been explored. Flintshire already has a number of mechanisms to support Members in resolving problems within their electoral divisions which are lower profile and potentially less confrontational than calls for action.
4. Chapter 7 of the draft guidance relating to the appointment of Overview & Scrutiny chairs takes no account of those Members who are not in any political group.
5. Chapter 8 of the draft guidance dealing with co-opted Members of Overview & Scrutiny is believed to be too detailed and more flexibility should be given to enable the easy cooption of Members.
6. Chapter 9 concerning audit committees, in paragraph 9.19 states that reports from all regulators and inspectors should go to audit committee and it is believed that this is unduly prescriptive and it should be left to the local choice of each Council to decide if such reports are more appropriately considered by Overview & Scrutiny. There is also a concern about the suggested budget monitoring role for audit committees. Audit committees should ensure that a budget monitoring process which is robust and reliable is in place and that scrutiny committees, within that process, should exercise the monitoring function.