



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

## SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION 29 SEPTEMBER 2008

Report of the Director of Corporate and Adult Services

### Improving Local Accountability Consultation

#### RECOMMENDATION

1. Members are asked to consider and respond to the Improving Local Accountability consultation published by Communities and Local Government.

#### SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 The *Improving local accountability Consultation* is one of a series of consultation papers accompanying the Communities in Control White Paper as well as work from the *Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007*. This particular consultation paper focuses on three key areas: developing and strengthening overview and scrutiny; increasing the visibility and accountability of local public officers; and facilitating the work of councillors.
- 2.2 The Government seeks to build on the 2008 White Paper's commitment to raising the visibility of the scrutiny function and making it more effective. This consultation paper sets out an approach to implementing provisions for the overview and scrutiny of Local Area Agreement partners and their delivery of LAA targets specifically in regards to overview and scrutiny committees' requiring information of partner authorities, publication of scrutiny reports, recommendations and responses. It also considers the establishment of joint county and district overview and scrutiny committees and scrutiny in small district councils operating a streamlined committee system.
- 2.3 The document considers three key areas in terms for increasing visibility and accountability of local public officers: holding local public officers to account; attendance at regular public hearings; and petitions to hold public officers to account.
- 2.4 The Governments wants local authorities to take petitions seriously and seeks to introduce a statutory duty for local authorities to respond to

petitions. This paper proposes that if petitioners are not satisfied with the response they can appeal to the overview and scrutiny committee.

- 2.5 The accountability of officers towards the public is to be substantially increased by introducing a duty for senior officers to face public scrutiny and questioning from local communities. The Government suggests including this duty in future job descriptions. A new right for local people to petition in order to hold officers to account is also to be introduced.
- 2.6 Proposals are put forward for the increasing elected member involvement in council meetings by their modifying attendance and voting procedures. The department suggest allowing authorities to introduce remote voting and reduce the minimum number of members physically required attendants to only one member.
- 2.7 This public consultation seeks responses to 13 questions and is open to anyone to respond by 30 October. It particularly seeks responses from overview and scrutiny members and officers. A draft response is being prepared and will be available for members to consider for the meeting.

<b>For more information contact:</b>	Mahroof Hussain 01332 255597 e-mail mahroof.hussain@derby.gov.uk
<b>Background papers:</b>	CLG consultation document -Improving local accountability
<b>List of appendices:</b>	Appendix 1 – Implications

<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>
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**Financial**

1. None arising from this report.

**Legal**

2. None arising from this report.

**Personnel**

3. None arising from this report.

**Equalities impact**

4. Effective budget scrutiny will be of benefit to all Derby people.

**Corporate Objectives**

5. This report has the potential to link with all the Council's Corporate Objectives,