



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

## SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION 12 SEPTEMBER 2006

Report of the Director of Corporate and Adult Social Services

### Outcome of the Publicnet Briefing Trial

#### RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Commission note the outcome of the Publicnet Briefing trial conducted by the Co-ordination Team and agree not to subscribe to the Publicnet Briefing service.

#### SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 At its meeting on 11 July 2006, the Scrutiny Management Commission agreed that the Co-ordination Officers should carry out a trial of the 'Publicnet Briefing' system that had been offered to Commission members and that the outcomes of the trial should be reported to a subsequent meeting of the Commission.
- 2.2 The daily briefing e-mails provided by Publicnet for the period July to August 2006 were examined by the Co-ordination Team and their assessment of the service is set out in Appendix 2. This shows only a limited amount of the material provided by Publicnet during the trial period was of relevance to Overview and Scrutiny. It is also of note that a similar service is provided free by the info4local.gov.uk website.
- 2.3 On the basis of the trial conducted by the Co-ordination Team it is considered that the Overview and Scrutiny Commissions would probably find the Publicnet briefing service to be of limited value.

**For more information contact:** David Romaine 01332 255598 e-mail david.romaine@derby.gov.uk  
**Background papers:** Appendix 1 – Implications  
**List of appendices:** Appendix 2 – Outcome of the Publicnet Briefing trial

<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. None arising from this report

**Corporate Objectives, Values and Priorities**

5. This report has the potential to link with all the following Corporate Objectives,
  - Improve the quality of life in Derby's neighbourhoods
  - Encourage lifelong learning and achievement
  - Build healthy and independent communities
  - Deliver excellent services, performance and value for money

## Appendix 2

The Publicnet Briefing service comprises a daily e-mail containing a small number of summary articles on topical issues details of conferences and public sector employment vacancies. The briefing also occasionally includes abstracts and book reviews.

The content of a typical briefing e-mail is shown below:

Tuesday, 18 July 2006

News: MOST COMPLAINTS ON STANDARDS NOW DEALT WITH AT LOCAL LEVEL

News: CONSULTATION BEGINS ON SMOKE-FREE PUBLIC SPACES

Book News: COURAGE: THE BACKBONE OF LEADERSHIP

News

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MOST COMPLAINTS ON STANDARDS NOW DEALT WITH AT LOCAL LEVEL

The majority of complaints about breaches of standards in public life are now being dealt with at a local level, according to the annual report of the Standards Board for England. The devolution of responsibility for the ethical agenda and increased local ownership are the key themes in the review.

It says most cases are now being dealt with locally and there are plans for the introduction of a system of local assessment of complaints by 2008. The Standards Board says it is committed to increasing the number of investigations at a local level and providing training, support and guidance to local authorities to help make this possible.

The review looks at the change in the Board's work as it becomes a strategic regulator of the ethical framework and encourages growing responsibility at local level. It also looks at the Board's achievements in the last 12 months, which it lists as a successful consultation and review of the Code of Conduct, which is now awaiting implementation by government; the initial assessment time for complaints being reduced to nine working days and effective partnership working with other local government organisations, developing an ethical governance toolkit for authorities.

Sir Anthony Holland, the chair of the Standards Board, said the year had been one of continuing change and devolution for both the Board and local government. "We support the move for greater local ownership of the system, which will ensure that local communities receive the accountability that they expect and deserve," he said.

The Board would continue to switch the focus of its work from the investigation of cases towards the provision and maintenance of a national framework of support to help local authorities to ensure high standards locally.

CONSULTATION BEGINS ON SMOKE-FREE PUBLIC SPACES

The Government is beginning consultations on draft regulations to create smoke-free buildings and vehicles. Legislation which is due to be introduced in England next summer will see almost all enclosed public places and workplaces becoming smoke-free.

Public Health Minister Caroline Flint, who announced the consultation, said the regulations would protect people from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke at work or during their leisure time, as well as providing smokers with an environment that would make it easier for them to give up the habit. The consultation is wide-ranging and covers the details of how the legislation will be implemented and enforced. Views are being sought on issues such as possible exemptions and what signs will be required in smoke-free establishments.

Caroline Flint said, "We have worked closely with stakeholders in drafting these regulations and continue to listen to the opinions of the public, stakeholders and the commercial sector in the countdown to going smoke-free next summer."

The consultation seeks comments on the content of the regulations and their implementation and will run for 12 weeks, until October 9th. Views can be submitted online at <http://www.dh.gov.uk/consultations/liveconsultations> or by email to [smokefreeregulations@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:smokefreeregulations@dh.gsi.gov.uk)

Caroline Flint said medical and scientific evidence on the risks from exposure to second hand smoke was well established. A recent survey had shown that the majority of people supported restrictions on smoking and data from Scotland showed how popular smoke-free public places and workplaces were in practice.

The Minister added, "A key aspect of the Government's strategy as set out in the White Paper 'Choosing Health: making healthy choices easier', is to shift the balance significantly in the favour of smoke-free enclosed public places and workplaces through legislation in order to reduce levels of exposure to secondhand smoke."

#### Book News

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COURAGE: THE BACKBONE OF LEADERSHIP

By Gus Lee and Diane Elliott-Lee

This book captures the essential component of leadership in measurable behaviours. Using actual stories from WorldCom and other organizations, Lee shows how highly successful executives face and overcome their fears to develop moral intelligence. These real-world examples offer practical lessons for rooting out unethical practices and behaviors by assessing them for rightness and integrity, addressing moral failures and following through with dialogue and direct action.

Published by Josey-Bass. ISBN: 0-7879-8137-0      27.95 US dollars.

#### Conferences

For information on key public sector issues under discussion and opportunities for networking click here:

<http://www.publicnet.co.uk/publicnet/fevents.htm>

#### Jobs

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Publicnet in association with jobsgopublic carries vacancies within Local Government, Central Government, Health, Social Housing, Police and Fire services, Regional Development Agencies, and the Charity and Voluntary sectors.

The Overview and Scrutiny team looked at the briefing e-mails that were received between 13 July and 3 August and categorised them as either 'Relevant to Scrutiny', 'useful for Scrutiny members' or of 'general interest'.

During the period in question five articles were thought to be of relevance to Scrutiny. These were:

- 'OFSTED wants inclusion debate to focus on scrutiny'
- 'Commissioning guidance means more power for parents'
- 'Consultation begins on smoke free public places'
- 'Survey Highlights Regional concerns over Digital Divide in NHS'
- 'Call for reform comes as Commission urges changes in NHS finances'

It was considered that a further six articles would be useful for scrutiny members and there were 15 that were considered to be of general interest.

On the basis of this trial it was considered that the Overview and Scrutiny Commissions would probably find the Publicnet briefing service to be of limited value. Consequently it is recommended that the Commissions should not to subscribe to the Publicnet Briefing service.

DRR 21 August 2006.