



# Scrutiny Annual Report

2007 - 2008



Telford & Wrekin  
COUNCIL

# What is scrutiny?

There are 54 elected members on Telford & Wrekin Council. Just 7 of these make up the Cabinet which is the main decision-making body of the Council. The Cabinet Members are all from the controlling group of the Council. This places a lot of responsibility with a small number of members.

Scrutiny is a way for other members of the Council who are not Cabinet Members to monitor, review and, where necessary, challenge the decisions, policies and services of the Cabinet to make sure that people in Telford & Wrekin are getting the best services possible within the resources available to the Council.

Councillors from all of the political parties represented on the Council take part in scrutiny. We have 8 Councillors on each Scrutiny Commission. We also have some members of the public co-opted onto each Scrutiny Commission, as they bring a different perspective which helps our work.

Scrutiny can look at any Council service, and can also look at services provided by organisations other than the Council, where they impact on local people.

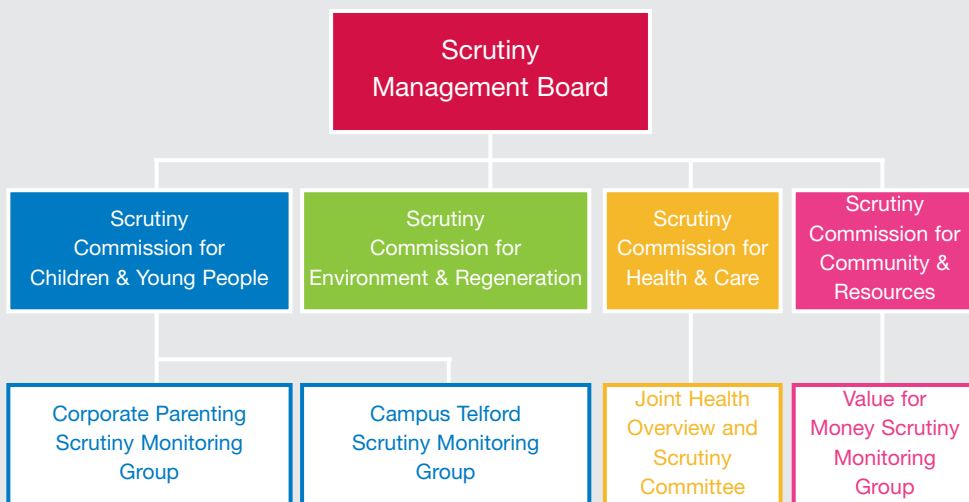
There are two main ways that we carry out scrutiny.

1. **“One-off question and answer sessions” at formal meetings.**  
These are used for issues which can be covered in depth by one session. However, if needed, we may follow up with a further meeting. We will ask questions of the relevant Council officer, or Cabinet Member.
2. **“In-depth reviews” over a number of months.** These are used for more complex issues where we might have to talk to a wide range of people and do other research such as finding out what other Councils do, or surveying the public. In-depth reviews take a lot of time, so we can only undertake a small number in any one year.

*"The Scrutiny Review process stretches your thinking and helps you to see all points of view. It is interesting, challenging and ultimately very rewarding".*

Co-opted Scrutiny Member

## Scrutiny structure



# Scrutiny Management Board

The Scrutiny Management Board is made up of the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of each of the Scrutiny Commissions, who are from across all of the political parties represented on the Council. The overall Chairman of scrutiny is currently appointed from an opposition group.

The Scrutiny Management Board has a number of key roles:

- Scrutiny of cross-cutting issues that don't fall within the remit of one of the Scrutiny Commissions
- Reviewing and improving the way that scrutiny works
- Hearing call-ins (see below)

The issues that we covered in our meetings during 2007/08 were:

- Transforming Telford Ltd.
- City Region
- Review of Scrutiny Action Plan
- Review of co-opted members on scrutiny
- Budget Strategy
- Car Parking at Council buildings
- Local Area Agreement
- Review of the Council's Constitution

We also held a "Question Time" meeting which was an opportunity for all scrutiny members to ask questions of the Council Leader and Chief Executive.



Councillor  
Derek White  
**Chairman of Scrutiny Management Board**

### **Call-in**

Call-in is a way for members of the Council to suspend a key decision, made by the Cabinet or by senior officers under delegated powers, until it has been considered by the Scrutiny Management Board. Once a decision has been published, members have 3 working days to submit a call-in form. This must be signed by at least 5 members of the Council. The Scrutiny Management Board then meets to hear both sides of the debate and decide whether the original decision should stand, or whether to refer the matter back to the decision taker with a recommendation to change the decision.

During 2007/08 we had one call-in. This related to the Footpath Gating Strategy. The Scrutiny Management Board upheld the decision, but wanted scrutiny to undertake some further work. The Scrutiny Commission for Community & Resources will be reviewing the pilot of this strategy starting in September.

*"When I joined Scrutiny I had no idea what to expect, and wasn't sure how much of a contribution I could make. It soon became clear that I could make a real difference".*

Co-opted Scrutiny Member

# Scrutiny Commission for Children & Young People

The issues that we looked at in our meetings over the past year were:

- Campus Telford & Wrekin
- OfSTED Inspection Reports
- Joint Area Review
- Youth Offending Service
- Jigsaw
- Young Carers Service
- Integrated Service for Disabled Children
- Integration of Youth Development Service and Connexions
- Overview of performance 2007/08 and key targets for 2008/09

## In-depth Reviews

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### **School Travel Review**

We have focussed on one in-depth review, looking at 3 main areas:

1. How the Council and schools encourage pupils to travel actively to school, to reduce reliance on cars
2. Whether there is potential to implement a Yellow School Bus scheme in Telford & Wrekin
3. The Education Transport Policy.

As part of the review, we asked for the views of schools and visited a couple of those that replied. We also looked at what other Councils do and made a visit to Staffordshire County Council to see their yellow bus service. We will be submitting our report to the Cabinet in the Autumn with our recommendations for improvement.



Councillor  
Joy Francis  
**Chairman**



Councillor  
Gill Green  
**Vice Chairman**

This Scrutiny Commission has two sub-groups which look at key areas of children's services.

### **Corporate Parenting Scrutiny Monitoring Group**

This group looks at issues related to children who are in care. Children come into care for many different reasons, and the Council and Councillors then become their “corporate” parent. This group monitors the services these children receive, with one underlying question in mind....**“Would this be good enough for my child?”**

We have meetings with Council officers to hear about the work they are doing, for example, to increase the educational attainment of children in care, or to improve their access to leisure opportunities. We also meet 4 times a year with children and young people in the care system so that we can hear about the services directly from the people that use them.

### **Campus Telford & Wrekin Scrutiny Monitoring Group**

This group monitors the Campus Telford & Wrekin project which will see significant amounts invested into modernising schools across the borough. We meet as needed to discuss key milestones in the project and to make comments and recommendations back to the project board, based on our observations.

# Scrutiny Commission for Environment & Regeneration

The issues that we looked at in our formal Commission meetings were:

- Waste Disposal Procurement Project
- Traffic Management & Road Speeds
- Waste issues - Reduce & Re-use
- Climate Change
- Rights of Way update
- Overview of performance 2007/08 and key targets for 2008/09

## In-depth Reviews

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### **Biodiversity**

This review looked at how the Council manages land to protect and encourage biodiversity (a wide variety of plants and animals). There is a lot of work being done across the borough by the Council and local organisations and groups to make sure that land is managed properly for the wildlife present. However, we felt that this wasn't always co-ordinated, and that the Council should take the lead role in bringing it together, and in promoting the importance of biodiversity.

We presented our report to the Cabinet in May with a number of recommendations that we felt would give an overall strategy to the work being done, and co-ordinate the work to achieve the greatest outcome. We were pleased that all of the 18 recommendations that we made in this report were accepted.



Councillor  
Miles Hosken  
**Chairman**



Councillor  
Alan Mackenzie  
**Vice Chairman**

### **Sale of Assets**

In February 2008, the Council sold off a number of assets (land and property) in order to reinvest this money in better performing assets. Some Councillors had concerns about the process followed. This review has looked into the process, particularly the consultation undertaken, with a view to identifying improvements for the way future sales are handled. We will present our report to the Cabinet in the Autumn.

### **Traffic Management in Conservation Areas**

This review started with a case study of the Local Safety Scheme that was installed in Newport High Street in 2006. We widened the scope of the review to look at the consultation and design process for putting traffic management schemes in conservation areas in the borough, considering how the design of a traffic scheme can be made to fit with the appearance of the area, and how local residents can be valuable in designing traffic systems that will work. We will present our report to the Cabinet in the Autumn.

# Scrutiny Commission for Health & Care

As well as scrutinising Council services, we have a specific role in scrutiny of the NHS and they consult us when they are proposing big changes to the services they provide. The issues that we covered in our Commission meetings during 2007/08 were:

- West Midlands Strategic Health Authority - Proposed Strategic Framework “Investing for Health”
- West Midlands Ambulance Service - Consultation on proposed reconfiguration of emergency operations centres
- PCT Procurement of new Health Centre and GP Practice
- Dementia - diagnosis, treatment and care
- Healthcare Commission Annual Health Check 2007/08
- Emergency Planning
- PCT Performance update
- Consultation on Foundation Status for Shrewsbury & Telford Hospital NHS Trust
- Overview of performance 2007/08 and key targets for 2008/09

"The approach of Scrutiny ... has been testing but wholly constructive. Commission members demonstrate a clear understanding of what it means to be a 'critical friend'. This has generated real value for the citizens of Telford & Wrekin, whom we are all here to serve."

Simon Connolly, Chief Executive, Telford Primary Care Trust



Councillor  
Derek White  
**Chairman**



Councillor  
Helen Williams  
**Vice Chairman**

## In-depth Reviews

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### **Housing and Homelessness**

We have focussed our time on a large review of Housing and Homelessness. A number of Councillors have had residents raise issues about the availability of social and affordable housing, and also of homelessness. The particular areas that we are looking at are:

1. The Choose Your Home choice based lettings scheme
2. Assessing the extent of housing needs and homelessness
3. Investigating the barriers and opportunities in the supply of housing, and considering solutions to this
4. The eligibility criteria for accessing housing support for different groups within the community.

### **Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Where there are health issues or consultations that cut across Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire, we work together with scrutiny members from Shropshire County Council on this joint committee. There are 6 members from each Council on the Committee, and each Council takes turns hosting the meetings.

Currently this joint committee is scrutinising the proposals being developed for changes to hospital services at the Princess Royal and Royal Shrewsbury hospitals.

# Scrutiny Commission for Community & Resources

The issues that we considered during 2007/08 were:

- Sports Facility Strategy Framework
- Safer & Stronger Communities Partnership
- Update on Scrutiny review of Taxi Services
- Beyond Excellence Through People
- Neighbourhood Working
- Libraries Service
- Overview of performance 2007/08 and key targets for 2008/09

## In-depth Reviews

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### **Section 106 agreements**

When the Council grants planning permission for new developments, the Council can negotiate funding from developers under Section 106 agreements. This funding is agreed for specific work that results from the development e.g. a play area for the housing estate, or maintenance of the highway around the development. Our aim in carrying out this review was to evaluate how effectively the resources secured through Section 106 agreements are secured, managed and utilised. We will be reporting our findings to the Cabinet in the Autumn.

### **Capacity building in rural communities**

In this review we have been looking at how the capacity of rural communities to determine and deliver services could be developed, and the support the Council would have to provide to make this happen. As part of the review, we have researched how other Councils work with their rural parishes and have visited some of the best examples.



Councillor  
Karen Tomlinson  
**Chairman**



Councillor  
Roger Aveley  
**Vice Chairman**

This Scrutiny Commission has one sub-group.

### **Value for Money Scrutiny Monitoring Group**

The Scrutiny Commission for Community & Resources has responsibility for scrutiny of the Council budget. The Value for Money Scrutiny Monitoring Group is a sub-group of the main Commission and carries out this role. The group looks at financial information and feeds into the Council's budget consultation. We also look at performance information to identify whether services are performing adequately and providing value for money.

The topics considered during 2007/08 were:

- Horsehay Golf Centre
- Value for Money Assessment
- Service and Financial Planning 2008/09 - 2010/11
- Overview of service and financial performance outturns
- Budget strategy
- Environmental Maintenance Services contract
- Telford & Wrekin Services
- Financial monitoring

The Value for Money Scrutiny Monitoring Group spent a lot of time scrutinising the proposed Council budget for 2008/09. They discussed the proposals with finance officers, the Cabinet Member for Resources and Corporate Directors for Resources and Adult & Consumer Care.

To find out more about scrutiny, take a look at our web pages:  
**[www.telford.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.telford.gov.uk/scrutiny)**

You can find meeting dates and agendas for scrutiny meetings on the Council website under Council and Democracy. Or you can call 01952 383211.

If you would like to contact a member of the Scrutiny team, our contact details and areas of responsibility are below:

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- Scrutiny Commission for Environment & Regeneration
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# Your ideas for scrutiny

We will be deciding our work programme for the next 2 years in December 2008. If you have any ideas of areas of Council service or other issues that we could look at, please let us know. Maybe you think a Council service is not providing you and your friends and neighbours with the service you require, or perhaps you have had recurring problems with one of the services. You might think that there is a gap in the services the Council is providing, and want scrutiny to look at what could be done to fill the gap.

You can let us know by filling in the section below, detach it and post to the FREEPOST address below.

Please bear in mind that scrutiny doesn't deal with individual requests for service or complaints. You can contact the Council for these on 01952 380000.

The issue I think scrutiny should look at is:

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I think the problems with this service are:

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