

## East Midlands Scrutiny Network

22 June 2018

### Attendees

Bassetlaw District Council	Liz Whittles, Vanessa Cookson
Blaby District Council	Cllr Les Philmore, Linda McBean
Bolsover District Council	Cllr Karl Reid, Dan Swaine, Sarah Sternberg, Cllr Sandra Peake, Cllr Rose Bowler, Joanne Wilson
Charnwood District Council	Cllr Geoff Parsons
Chesterfield Borough Council	Cllr Kate Sarvent, Cllr Peter Innes, Rachel Appleyard, Charlotte Kearsy
Derbyshire County Council	Roz Savage, Jackie Wardle
East Midlands Councils	Kirsty Lowe
East Midlands Clinical Senate	Emma Orrock
Erewash Borough Council	Angelika Kaufhold, Angela Taylor
Gedling Borough Council	Helen Lee, Alec Dubberley
Kettering Borough Council	Cllr Mick Scrimshaw
Lincolnshire County Council	Nigel West
North Kesteven District Council	Cllr Catherine Mills, Emily Wilcox
Northampton Borough Council	Tracy Tiff
Rutland County Council	Cllr Lucy Stephenson, Phil Horsfield
Rushcliffe Borough Council	Mark Elliott

### Apologies

Charnwood Borough Council	Michael Hopkins
City of Lincoln Council	Cllr Jackie Kirk
North East Derbyshire District Council	Sue Veerman, Cllr Reader
North Kesteven District Council	Duncan James
Rutland County Council	Natasha Taylor

### Notes

#### Welcome

Dan Swaine, Chief Executive of Bolsover District Council and North East Derbyshire District Council welcomed network members to Bolsover District Council.

Cllr Karl Reid, Bolsover District Council informed the network members that he had been invited to chair the network for this meeting.

#### Notes of the last meeting were agreed

#### Communities and Local Government Select Committee Inquiry - Effectiveness of Local authority scrutiny committees

#### Overview presentation on the inquiry finding, recommendations and Government response

Joanne Wilson, Bolsover District Council provided an overview presentation of the inquiry. The presentation covered;

#### Committee findings

- The Inquiry was initially launched in January 2017 and relaunched in September 2017 following the General Election.
- A total of 21 conclusions and recommendations.

- Proposed that new Government Guidance be issued addressing the following 5 proposals:
  - Proposal 1: That overview and scrutiny committees should report to an authority's Full Council meeting rather than to the executive, mirroring the relationship between Select Committees and Parliament.
  - Proposal 2: That scrutiny committees and the executive must be distinct and that executive councillors should not participate in scrutiny other than as witnesses, even if external partners are being scrutinised.
  - Proposal 3: That councillors working on scrutiny committees should have access to financial and performance data held by an authority, and that this access should not be restricted for reasons of commercial sensitivity.
  - Proposal 4: That scrutiny committees should be supported by officers that are able to operate with independence and offer impartial advice to committees. There should be a greater parity of esteem between scrutiny and the executive, and committees should have the same access to the expertise and time of senior officers and the chief executive as their cabinet counterparts.
  - Proposal 5: That members of the public and service users have a fundamental role in the scrutiny process and that their participation should be encouraged and facilitated by councils.

Other findings focussed on the following:

- Use of external expert advice.
- Independent Chairs
- The role of Statutory Scrutiny Officer
- Scrutinise all services to residents including those provided by public bodies and commercial organisations.
- Assessment of Training provision
- LEP Scrutiny
- Scrutiny of Combined Authorities

Government Response

- Locally agreed solutions and structures.
- New guidance to be issued.
- Existing resources and role of officer is adequate.
- Combined Authorities should consider use of capacity building funding to support scrutiny.

A discussion followed on the concept of no political bias as described in the report. Joanne provided thoughts on the type of person that could be, including outside of the authority, within the voluntary or wider private sector.

- Outside of party of majority, use of independent
- Locally appointed, position that could be applied
- Separation from the Executive

The discussion followed on comparison to Independent remuneration panel.

Cllr Reid provided details of his experience of chairing the Sheffield City region Audit Committee, where Bolsover District Council is a non-constituent member and has been appointed as chair.

A discussion followed on the Government guidance. Jackie Wardle provided an updated from the National Scrutiny Network meeting, which suggested that the guidance would be available late in 2018. She informed the network that the LGA and CfPS feeding into guidance.

#### Bolsover District Council response

Jo provided details of Bolsover District Councils response, where they are looking at it through the budget scrutiny committee, which combines all scrutiny committees. It was agreed in May that it would look to review term of reference and procedure rules. Awaiting the new guidance, she confirmed that currently scrutiny reports only to council by exception. Executive only attend if invited. Members do have access to all papers. Officer attendance and access to expertise is reasonable but can be impacted due to the number of shared posts as a result of the Strategic Alliance with NEDDC and the impact on time and response.

#### Derbyshire County Council

Jackie Wardle provided details of Derbyshire County Council's response to date. She informed the network that Derbyshire County Council produced a report to their committees, and that the biggest change would be if report to full council.

Jackie provided feedback from the National Overview and Scrutiny Network, where the number of authorities present felt that it would slow up the process, although they felt that reporting to full council could raise the profile of scrutiny.

#### North Kesteven District Council

Emily Wilcox provided details of Scrutiny at North Kesteven District Council, and how its sits within Strategy and Transformation. She provided details of the response from North Kesteven and support for Councillors. She informed network members that a cross party task and finish group had been set up to look at the response, considering;

- Where the authority is against each area, where they wanted to be and how to get there.
- Need around member training and skills
- Progress of task and finish groups - wider input into the operation of scrutiny
- Research other authorities
- Report back in the autumn, recommendation to full council after that.
- Member survey - issues that members feel that they don't have the skills, knowledge of cllrs, appropriateness of the panels

A question was asked of the member survey mentioned in the presentation and the response. Emily informed the network that the questionnaire would be sent out later in the June.

Cllr Reid invited the network to break into small groups for discussion of two points, thoughts on;

- Reporting to full council
- Role of the Scrutiny officer

#### Group 1

- Would cause a delay, open the debate, where lead party it would be a fait accompli
- Importance of government to give - guidance
- Task and finish group - want to get a head of the game, reasonably clear that it will go back to local level decision

## Group 2

- Experience of Blaby where have dedicated scrutiny officer, responsibility of a member to understand their role
- Training session last week, Chief Executive and Head of Corporate Service in attendance. Important that members and officers see that leadership are committed to scrutiny.

## Group 3

- Full Council - works well with going to the executive, there are some times where it would work to go to full council. Need for more member training?
- Scrutiny support - almost 2 full time posts, how it works, where scrutiny is about % of the post

## Group 4

- Increase resources, training for cllrs, and concept of independent chair discussion
- Raise the profile of scrutiny
- Mix bag of resources in terms of support

## East Midlands Clinical Senate

Cllr Reid welcomed Emma Orrock, Head of the East Midlands Clinical Senate. Emma introduced herself and provided an introduction to the East Midlands Clinical Senate and its work. The presentation covered;

- What the Clinical Senate is; Clinical Senate - non-statutory advisory bodies, independent clinical advice to support, hosted by NHS England
- East Midlands 1 of 12 Clinical Senates
- East Midlands covers 5 STPs:
  - Nottinghamshire
  - Derbyshire
  - Lincolnshire
  - Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland
  - Northamptonshire
- Range and scope
- of work and support
- Clinical Senate's
- independent advice

A brief discussion followed the presentation, network members confirmed that they would like to receive updates on the Clinical Senate through Kirsty Lowe.

**Action** - Presentation to be circulated by Kirsty

## Scrutiny Updates from around the region

**Rushcliffe Borough Council** - reminder about information request on reviewing scrutiny

**Bassetlaw District Council** - Availability of affordable housing, NPPF out

**Derbyshire County Council** -

- Joint health scrutiny committee with Sheffield City Region - currently scrutinising hyper acute stroke services, Childrens anaesthesia -
- Permanent exclusion - reviewing, changes to schools accountability framework. It's going through the approval process, going to committee 4<sup>th</sup> July

- Pressure put on schools to meet mental health needs of pupils
- Emergency planning arrangements - in response to Grenfell, what might happen in Derbyshire.

#### **Blaby District Council -**

- Stephanie Snape delivered a recent development sessions
- work programme under development; income generation, commercialisation strategy, housing delivery, GP Provision, Planning performance, staffing resources, shared services, sustainability and affordability
- Finance - section 151 holds a scene setting session, before looking at budgets, discussion of the benefits of this.

**Chesterfield Borough Council** - work programme approved last month, looks skills, skills action plan, apprenticeships particularly

- Council owned community rooms, disparity on terms

#### **Expressions of interest of Chair**

Kirsty Lowe provided a brief overview of the role of the Chair of the East Midlands Scrutiny Network. She invited expressions of interest for Chair. Cllr Karl Reid, Bolsover District Council was proposed as chair of the network and seconded. Cllr Lucy Stephenson, Rutland County Council expressed interested in being part of the network leadership. Kirsty suggested that an additional Vice Chair could be incorporated to provide additional capacity to the network.

The network confirmed the appointment of Cllr Karl Reid, Bolsover District Council as Chair and Cllr Lucy Stephenson, Rutland County Council as an additional Vice Chair.

#### **Any other business, future work programme and dates for future meeting**

28 September 2018 - Blaby District Council

14 December 2018 - Rutland County Council volunteered to host the December network meeting.