

## **Benchmarking the Overview and Scrutiny function in Brighton & Hove City Council**

Comparative benchmarking of Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) within Brighton & Hove, with the results of the 2009 survey of O&S in local government carried out by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CFPS). 75% of local authorities responded to the survey.

### **Committees and Structure**

Brighton & Hove has multiple overview and scrutiny committees which is the same as 69% (from 59% in 2005) of the councils. Brighton & Hove City Council has 6 O&S committees compared to an average of 4 per authority.

### **Number of Scrutiny Reviews**

Nine scrutiny reviews were undertaken in Brighton & Hove in 2009/10 which compares very favourably to the average of 5 in 2009. The survey found that only 14% of authorities had completed 10 or more scrutiny reviews and there is a clear cluster between 2-6 reviews being undertaken by most authorities.

### **Non-statutory co-opted members**

According to the CFPS survey, the average number of non-statutory co-opted members is 2. In Brighton & Hove there are currently 7 non-statutory co-opted members (4 on CYPOSC, 2 on HOSC, and 1 on ASCHOSC). Like 74% of authorities, our non-statutory co-opted members are not given full voting rights.

### **Public Engagement**

The CFPS survey found that the average number of suggestions for scrutiny reviews from the public was 4, with *'45% of authorities reported having received 0 suggestions for scrutiny'*. During the public consultation held earlier in the year 69 suggestions for scrutiny were received with approximately a third of these from members of the public.

### **External witnesses**

According to the CFPS survey only 7% of authorities had over 60 external witnesses who had attended their meetings in 2009. They calculated that the median number of external witnesses was 15 per authority.

Over the last two years scrutiny panels in Brighton & Hove have had over 150 external witnesses attend panel meetings; this does not include written submissions provided. This represents a significant 'free' consultancy service available to the council.

### **Support type**

In Brighton & Hove, like 55% of authorities (and 61% of unitary authorities) scrutiny is facilitated through a specialist model where support is provided by a scrutiny support unit with dedicated officers, who only work to the overview and scrutiny function.

The CFPS survey found that in 2009 there had been a rise in the '*prevalence of the specialist model for scrutiny*'.

### **Scrutiny Teams and FTE officers**

According to the CFPS survey, the average number of FTE scrutiny officers is 4 (per authorities who have a dedicated officer – excluding districts and counties). The survey also found that unitary authorities with 'no overall control' had on average 5 FTE scrutiny officers. Here in Brighton & Hove there are 5.5 FTE scrutiny officers.

### **Roles for OSCs and members**

The scrutiny team in Brighton & Hove City Council have in the past year carried out the 8 of the 9 key roles identified by the CFPS survey:

- Performance monitoring
- Holding the executive to account
- Policy review
- Scrutiny of partnerships
- Policy development
- Pre-decision scrutiny
- External scrutiny (not health)
- Health scrutiny

### **Call-ins**

In 2009/10 there were 4 call-in requests in Brighton & Hove, compared to the average number of 2.5.

### **Evaluating scrutiny**

In Brighton & Hove it is standard practice that members receive a six monthly update on the progress in recommendations. This is usually provided by those responsible for the implementation (as is the case with 67% of authorities surveyed).

Like 80% of authorities we produce an annual report on overview and scrutiny. The annual report for 2009/10 was warmly welcomed by Council and can be found at: <http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=22065>