

**Report To:** Democratic Services Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 15 February 2013

**Lead Member / Officer:** Head of Legal and Democratic Services

**Report Author:** Democratic Services Manager

**Title:** Comparison of Resources for Scrutiny

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### **1. What is the report about?**

This report provides a brief overview of the resources each of the six north Wales local authorities provides to support their scrutiny committee functions.

### **2. What is the reason for making this report?**

At the committee's last meeting members asked for a report back comparing resources for the scrutiny committees across north Wales. The committee's remit includes making recommendations on the resources required for scrutiny support.

### **3. What are the Recommendations?**

That the Democratic Services Committee considers the information and comments accordingly.

### **4. Report details.**

4.1 The Local Government Act 2000 does not specify how a local authority must organise its scrutiny arrangements. This is left for each council to decide which has led to wide variance in the number and remit of scrutiny committees and the type and quantity of support provided.

4.2 The level and effectiveness of Scrutiny members' own contribution has a big influence on the overall effectiveness of scrutiny, and this will naturally vary between committees and over councils. However, the support that an authority provides scrutiny is very important to achieving the four core roles of scrutiny and accountability:<sup>1</sup>

- constructive 'critical friend' challenge
- amplifies the voices and concerns of the public
- led by independent people who take responsibility for their role
- drives improvement in public services. Find out more about these four principles in our Good Scrutiny Guide.

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<sup>1</sup> Centre for Public Scrutiny [www.cfps.org.uk](http://www.cfps.org.uk)

4.3 For this report, I have identified key support as scrutiny staff; discretionary budgets, and training. Scrutiny staff may undertake a variety of different roles including organisational and administrative support, providing advice and information, and undertaking research. The officers themselves may work entirely or primarily for scrutiny (dedicated officers) or have a percentage of their work involving scrutiny. Some council's may give scrutiny a budget in addition to staff costs (discretionary budgets) to pay for costs arising from scrutiny activities.

4.4 The number of standing scrutiny committees and meetings will be a factor in evaluating how much support is likely to be left after the basic organisational and administrative tasks that enable a committee to meet and plan future meetings. The appendix gives a brief overview of the structures and support in the 6 counties.

4.5 More detailed information on the scrutiny functions of each council is available in their annual reports.

Anglesey's Annual Report:

<http://www.anglesey.gov.uk/Journals/2012/05/11/Overview-Scrutiny--Annual-Report-2011-2012.pdf>

Conwy's Annual Report:

<http://modgoveng.conwy.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=207&MId=3231&Ver=4>

Denbighshire's Annual Report:

<https://moderngov.denbighshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=4477&Ver=4&LLL=0>

Flintshire's Annual Report:

[http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/wps/portal/english/services?WCM\\_GLOBAL\\_CONTEXT=/web+content/flintshire/english/services/100004/200033/1031](http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/wps/portal/english/services?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/web+content/flintshire/english/services/100004/200033/1031)

Gwynedd's Annual Report:

[http://www.gwynedd.gov.uk/gwy\\_doc.asp?cat=4255&doc=21639&Language=1&p=1&c=1](http://www.gwynedd.gov.uk/gwy_doc.asp?cat=4255&doc=21639&Language=1&p=1&c=1)

Wrexham's Annual Report:

<http://www.wrexham.gov.uk/MinutesData/Council/cl26092012a.htm>

## **5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

No decision required at this stage.

**6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

This report is intended to provide information for a debate and there is no direct impact on any other services.

**7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.**

Not required for this report.

**8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

Scrutiny units in the other north Wales authorities have contributed information for this report.

**9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

Not obtained for this report.

**10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

N/A

**11. Power to make the Decision**

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 enables the Democratic Services Committee to review and make recommendations on the level of resources available to the scrutiny function.