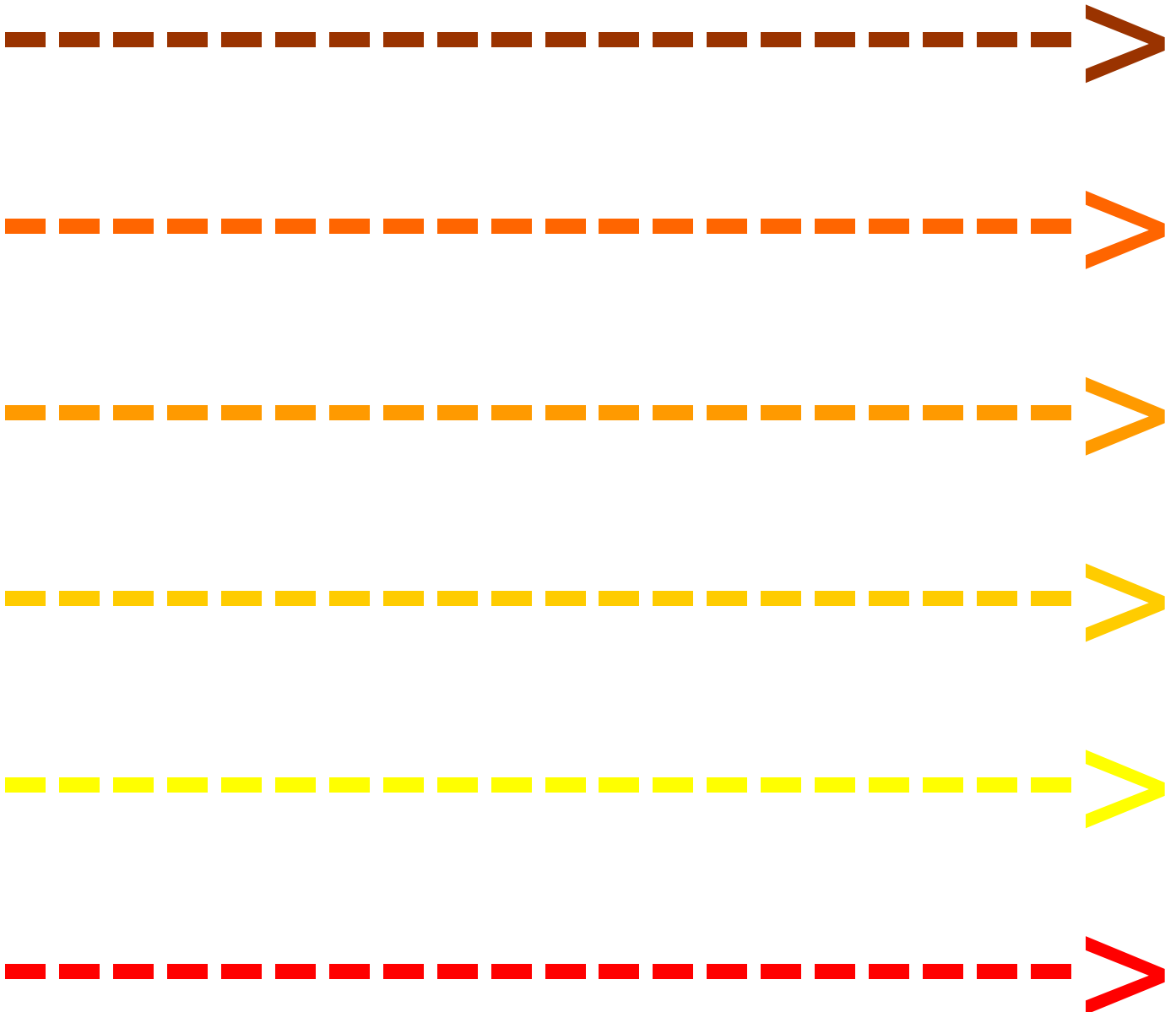


# Successful scrutiny

2011

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# Introduction

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For four years, the Centre for Public Scrutiny has awarded its Good Scrutiny Awards. What it has shown is that there are a large number of people carrying out exceptional and high-quality work holding decision-makers to account.

Every year, the entries prove emphatically wrong the prevailing orthodoxy that scrutiny and accountability is bureaucratic, boring and irrelevant. Our independent judging panel goes through dozens of examples from around the country where real, tangible results for local people have been achieved – making improvements that, but for their involvement, would not have occurred.

The primary purpose of our Awards is to recognise this work and to celebrate with the winners, and those shortlisted, the impact of their involvement.

Increasingly, we have been welcoming entries from outside local government. Other national and local organisations have put forward some exciting work which we've been delighted to promote to a wider audience. This is the second purpose of the Good Scrutiny Awards – sharing new, different and effective practice from around the country. To further this aim, this year, for the first time, this document will also include summaries of some of the best entries that just missed out on shortlisting.

I'd like to encourage not only fellow scrutineers, but also decision-makers, to look at these examples and to think differently about how scrutiny and accountability can succeed and work in their own organisations.

And, of course, I'd like to congratulate our worthy winners, and those who were shortlisted.



Jessica Crowe  
Executive Director, Centre for Public Scrutiny

You can find out more about all the winners and shortlisted entries at  
[www.cfps.org.uk](http://www.cfps.org.uk)

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## Category

# Community Influence

Winner

## Our Life

### Healthy eating

Our Life is a charitable social enterprise that is also a membership organisation, campaigning for changes to policy and business practices relating to healthcare in the North West. This review involved the establishment of a citizens' jury to improve access to healthier food by securing commitments from local decision makers to help the participants take forward action in their local community.



### Impact

- Introduction of cooking lessons for people on a housing estate, including training on basic cooking skills and basic food hygiene;
- The development of a local food co-op selling healthy locally grown produce;
- Further investigation into whether these developments could be supplied from a local allotment – since “growing your own” is seen as vital in improving access to healthy food.

**This was a targeted piece of work carried out by local people which had significant success in influencing decision-makers.**

“Our Life supported the residents through a process of engagement which saw them grow from enthusiastic novices interested in healthy eating and nutrition to community members with a real understanding of the local, national and European aspects of improving access to healthier foods. You were able to focus the group each week, maintain enthusiasm and brought about a list of recommendations that the group now own and have discussed with local stakeholders.”

**Julie Webster, Interim Director of Public Health, NHS Western Cheshire**

## Category

# Community Influence

Shortlisted

## Blaby District Council Car parking charges

An investigation into car parking charges, which arose following a petition, led to the introduction of a simpler system, with which local people are happier, and which is also running ahead of income projections. A key element of the review focused on actively engaging with residents, local businesses and other local councils.



### Impact

- The review resulted in significant change to the car parking policy;
- The issue of displacement (whereby people parked on residential streets rather than in charged-for car parks) was dealt with, easing community tensions.
- The community focused approach to the review has helped raise the profile of scrutiny with the public.

## Devon County Council Learning disabilities

This review resulted in a restructure of the Council's directorates to give a renewed focus on learning disabilities as well as other substantive improvements.



### Impact

- Outcome focused assessments as a result of a more personalised approach to service delivery;
- Training of key staff to better understand the needs of individuals;
- A more robust approach to procurement through the use of framework agreements with lists of approved providers;
- An increase in resources available for safeguarding, leading to improved response times;
- A “key-ring” scheme to provide network support to meet people’s non-eligible care needs.

Category

**Innovation**

**Winner**

## Brighton and Hove City Council

Adaptation to climate change

The scrutiny panel reviewed the city's degree of preparedness for the extreme weather which can be associated with climate change. Scrutiny has well developed relationships with the city's two universities with academics frequently giving evidence to scrutiny panels. For this panel, things were taken a step further by asking an academic to be an independent Chair.

### Impact:

- The panel's recommendations were all accepted by the executive and preparedness for climate change was made central to local authority and city partnership planning.
- Scrutiny has had a direct influence on local authority strategies with better partnership working on energy issues
- The success of having an independent chair is moving the council to an "area scrutiny" model with members joining with city partners, academic specialists and local people for better outcomes.
- Has empowered the scrutiny function to break free from organisational boundaries.



'Charing the climate change adaption panel for Brighton and Hove City Council was a valuable and rewarding experience'

For me, it was a valuable way to learn about the local reality of developing potentially important initiatives in a financially constrained environment.

**Professor Gordon MacKerron, Director of the Science and Technology Policy and Research Unit, Sussex University**

## Category

# Innovation

# Shortlisted

## Gloucestershire County Council Community safety

Gloucestershire has a joint committee made up of councillors from the county and district councils and a member of the Gloucestershire Police Authority. The joint committee scrutinises crime and disorder issues and the council's Community Safety Directorate.

### Impact:

- Establishment of Gloucestershire Stronger Safer Justice Commission
- Better county wide co-ordination of funding allocations, having a direct effect on lifesaving services
- Better joint working to avoid duplication, improve efficiency and improve accountability
- Helped to safeguard Gloucestershire's Tri-Service Centre combining Police, Fire and Ambulance.



## Westminster City Council Young People's Scrutiny Panel

The young people's scrutiny panel is a group of 23 young people aged 15-18 with a role in scrutinising issues that matter to them and influencing the council's decision making process.

### Impact:

- Has directly involved and empowered young people as service users and citizens
- The panel has succeeded in making scrutiny a proactive tool of engagement and policy development
- Identified and brought about cultural change in the way scrutiny and accountability operates
- Improved inter-generational relationships



## Category

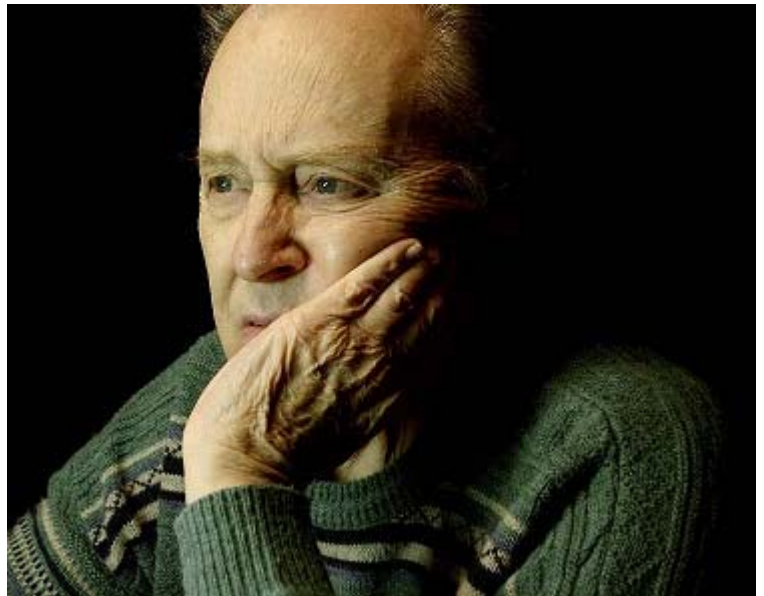
# Joint working

Winner

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## Overall Winner – Impact Through Scrutiny North East Health Scrutiny Joint Committee Health of ex-servicepeople

This was a major project involving all twelve councils in the North East reviewing the health inequalities suffered by ex-service people and their families. The report involved positive collaboration with voluntary support groups and the ex-service community and has achieved recognition for its work at the highest levels. The project was partly supported by CfPS after the region became a joint Scrutiny Development Area.



### Impact:

- Recommendations for improvements were made across 47 areas of work which some organisations have already taken up
- 3 authorities in the region have amended their Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA) to include ex-service communities, one authority has appointed an Armed Forces Champion in its cabinet and others are including ex-service communities' needs in services such as housing
- The recommendations align closely to national work on the proposed Military Covenant and have been supported at national level for inclusion in these proposals
- The Minister for Care Services has committed to ensuring the report's recommendations are considered by regional Armed Forces networks

"This is groundbreaking work and the collaboration seen between local authorities, armed forces and other organisations is unique and much needed."

**Joint statement - 15 Brigade, York, Ministry of Defence Military Civil Integration Project & Royal British Legion**

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## Category

# Joint working

Shortlisted

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## Basildon Borough Council Commuter parking

This review provides an excellent example of scrutiny influencing a wide range of partner organisations and achieving improvements for local residents, who had initially raised concerns with ward councillors.

### Impact:

- Practical improvements have resulted, such as more parking enforcement to protect residents from commuter parking.
- High levels of press coverage and public engagement were achieved, with over 1000 responses from residents and commuters.
- Resources were pooled – including from the rail operators – which enabled more consultation to be carried out
- The constructive partnership approach led to greater buy-in and commitment to implementing the recommendations resulting in £245k investment in local stations.



## Norfolk County Council & Norfolk LINK Diabetes services

A great example of a Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) and Local Involvement Network (LINK) collaborating over a prolonged period of time to achieve improved diabetes services for local people.

### Impact:

- Public profile for both the HOSC and LINK's work, providing an impetus for commissioners and providers to respond and make progress
- Improved joint work between NHS Norfolk and the County Council on support for children with diabetes
- Prompted more funding for diabetes clinicians and other support staff in local hospitals and GP surgeries



## Category

# Non-executive of the year

Winner

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## Cllr Carol Goodall

South Somerset District Council

Councillor Goodall is a new councillor who has embraced the unfamiliar world of scrutiny and has made an outstanding contribution. Her work on the Choice Based Lettings review demonstrates her dedication and commitment to the scrutiny function and her local community.

### Impact:

- Has created and maintained a positive relationship between scrutiny, the executive and partners.
- Cllr Goodall has impressed on the executive the value of joint scrutiny exercises on key services.
- Instrumental in formulating recommendations on choice based lettings to a county-wide board, all of which were accepted and are currently being implemented.
- Cllr Goodall has achieved real service improvements for vulnerable residents with easier use and access to social housing.



“The report was an excellent piece of work and has undoubtedly proved the value of joint Scrutiny”

**Cllr Ric Pallister, Deputy Leader & Housing Portfolio Holder, South Somerset District Council**

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## Category

# Non-executive of the year

# Shortlisted

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## Cllr Randolph Conteh Stoke on Trent City Council

Councillor Conteh has chaired the overview and scrutiny management committee, responding to the council's budget proposals and successfully securing amendments. He has led a review on parking issues connected to Stoke City FC, involving the council, the police and the football club. His approach is typified by positive, constructive joint working.



### **Impact:**

- Cllr Conteh's approach to budget scrutiny has led to changes in the way that Cabinet and scrutiny work together on this high-profile issues;.
- Cllr Conteh became directly involved in planning and managing discussion on a petition relating to a Pupil Referral Unit, as a result of which the unit was kept open. He has been a champion of petitions since before the statutory duty on councils was introduced in 2010;
- Cllr Conteh has used a range of innovative means to ensure that the opinions and views of local people are accurately represented in scrutiny's work.

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## Cllr Alan White Staffordshire County Council

Alan White chairs the corporate review scrutiny committee. He is an active champion for overview and scrutiny and his inclusive approach exemplifies the principle that scrutiny should not be dictated by political agendas.



### **Impact:**

- Cllr White's leadership when challenging the closure of Burntwood Household Waste Recycling Centre supported by a 12,000 strong petition, leading to the facility remaining open.
  - Cllr White has positioned scrutiny to strongly influence the executive with regard to commissioning and being more community led.
  - He has directly influenced the council's input into the development and scrutiny of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
  - He commissioned a DVD promoting scrutiny that has been used for officer training.
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## Greater Manchester Police Authority

### Major events policing

This was the first scrutiny commission project for Greater Manchester Police Authority and the first comprehensive review of major events policing in the country. Gathering evidence from over 1200 individuals, examining case studies and doing interviews with key personnel, it shows the impact that positive scrutiny of the police can have on national policy, practice and raising the profile of policing.



#### Impact:

- As a result of the report's recommendations, Greater Manchester Police have significantly changed their practice in relation to major events policing
- Improved approach to liaison with local authorities and protest groups before, during and after protests and other events
- The police are developing a training package in crowd psychology in partnership with Liverpool University
- The review has been cited nationally as good practice by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and the approach has influenced other areas and organisations

"The review helped greatly in raising the profile and value of informed scrutiny, particularly how it can bring about positive change and assist organisations to develop"

**Peter Fahy, Chief Constable, Greater Manchester Police**

## Category

# Raising the profile

Shortlisted

## Manchester City Council

### Images and perceptions of young people

In response to concerns expressed by young people about their portrayal in the media, scrutiny gave young people an opportunity to challenge senior media representatives and council officers, securing commitments to change and media coverage in equal measure.



#### Impact:

- Commitment secured from the media for more balanced stories about young people and to offer work experience / volunteering opportunities to local young people
- Council officers pledged to continue to ensure young people were listened to despite pressure on resources
- Scrutiny enabled young people to put their views directly to decision-makers and opinion-formers
- The event attracted positive media coverage, including a feature in the Manchester Evening News

## Bristol City Council

### Raising the profile of scrutiny through e-democracy

Bristol has used e-democracy for a number of years, but scrutiny has taken it a step further, making its work more interactive and demonstrating a commitment to openness and participation. .



#### Impact:

- Engaged thousands of people in gathering evidence on what the Council should do to reduce carbon emissions
- Extremely high number of contributions to scrutiny's Climate Change review online forum;
- Views directly influenced the Climate Change Strategy and Energy Security Framework, with council decisions now having to have an environmental impact assessment.
- Live blogging service, during webcasting, enabled 53 readers to contribute 48 comments, while a video of young people's views was posted on Youtube with over 200 views to date.

## Category

# Team of the year

Winner

## City and County of Swansea

### Child and family services overview and scrutiny board

The Child & Family Services Overview & Scrutiny Board was set up in response to serious failings in child and family services and a Welsh Assembly Government order placing the service 'at risk of intervention'. The team has since provided a high level of critical friend challenge leading to service improvements and changes in the way scrutiny is done across the Council.



#### Impact:

- The work of the Board led to the removal of the 'intervention' order and improvements in services for children and families
- The Board has developed effective cross party working
- Pioneered new approaches to scrutiny that have been replicated across the council
- Quoted by Welsh Assembly Government as good practice
- Members report 'doing real scrutiny' and 'making a difference'

'Ideas do not occur in a vacuum but through a process of iteration and that is what the Board is providing to the department and to me'

**Cllr Nick Tregoning, Cabinet Member for Social Services, City and County of Swansea**

## Category

# Team of the year

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## Shortlisted

## Neath and Port Talbot County Borough Council

The scrutiny team at Neath and Port Talbot Council was established two years ago. The Council's approach to scrutiny has changed radically with more focus on key strategic issues facing the council. Scrutiny is now seen as a more challenging environment and members are far more comfortable in probing problem areas.



### Impact:

- Significant development of the function in the last two years;
- A more strategic approach has resulted in a better approach to work planning;
- Strengthened links across the Council with more relevant information coming before non-executives;
- Effective and focused task and finish working;
- Informed recommendations which have resulted in real impact.

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## Brighton and Hove Council

Brighton and Hove was a late adopter of the Cabinet and Scrutiny model but in the last three years has developed a reputation for innovation and high quality scrutiny. A key focus has been to move towards partnership based scrutiny, complementing rather than duplicating work carried out by others.



### Impact:

- Council is better integrated in to the decision making processes of the City's key public sector organisations;
  - Strong relationship with local third sector resulted in the Community and Voluntary Sector Forum (CVSF) being included in service commissioning workshops and budget setting process;
  - Effective engagement with the public in selecting work programme items.
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## Category

# Value for money

Winner

## Knowsley MBC

### Benefits administration

Carried out by a Working Group of the Scrutiny Coordinating Committee, the review showed non-executives influencing the use of resources, generating significant savings and improving services for customers. The review assessed the way in which the current application/assessment process for benefits could be streamlined.



### Impact:

- Scrutiny achieved savings of £50,000;
- A single integrated team has been set up between three service areas;
- There is now a simplified application process for local people;
- A more streamlined and effective collection and recovery process is in place;
- A robust methodology ensured a strong evidence base, leading to recommendations that were transparent and making implementation more likely.

“The recommendations have simplified the process for customer and helped to make sure that they receive the help that is rightfully theirs”

**Cllr Norman Keats, Cabinet Member, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council**



## Category

# Value for money

Shortlisted

## East Sussex County Council Winter highways maintenance

This review examined the gap between public expectations for winter highways maintenance and what the council could afford to provide. This required changing public attitudes as well as taking a critical, value for money look at the services being provided.



### Impact:

- Prompted a rethink of how roads are prioritised for winter treatment, leading to efficiencies and the ability to respond to a wider range of local concerns;
- Facilitation of significant community take up of salt sacks and grit bins, using council procurement capabilities to achieve economies of scale;
- Numbers of complaints and reports of poor service received from the public significantly declined between 2009/10 and the December 2010 snowy weather spells;
- Communication of advice and information before and during adverse weather is now much more effective.

## North Lincolnshire Council Managing sickness absence

This work has been carried out over a long term period (since 2001) and demanded more efficient use of resources. This has led to total savings of £2.3 million.

### Impact:

- This long term review has kept up pressure to improve;
- The most recent (2010) recommendations have led to some service areas seeing a reduction in sickness levels by as much as a quarter within 9 months of recommendations being implemented;
- Almost all managers have been retrained on managing sickness;
- The review has brought about significant cultural change in the authority.

Help the council  
to get well soon

- Revised sickness absence policy now in place.
- Refresher training for all line managers from 19 July 2010.

Let's work together to get  
sickness absence down.



  
NORTH  
LINCOLNSHIRE  
COUNCIL  
[www.northlincs.gov.uk](http://www.northlincs.gov.uk)

# Longlisted entries

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Some long-listed entries just missed out on being in the “top three” in their categories.

## **Camarthenshire County Council**

### Luncheon club provision

This review examined the provision of luncheon clubs for older people who were socially isolated. The council operated 17 of these clubs, but they were poorly attended. Scrutiny's recommendations led to the transfer of the clubs to the voluntary sector, with the Council also providing assistance to people looking to start their own luncheon club services. Luncheon clubs became, as a result of scrutiny's recommendations, a vehicle for promoting and advancing other health and well-being initiatives.

## **Rugby Borough Council**

### End-to-end reviews and systems thinking

Members investigated Rugby's approach towards systems thinking – the idea of looking at the totality of a service and how it responds to customer needs as a way of highlighting value and driving out waste. Scrutiny's involvement has highlighted the potential of systems thinking to the authority at large, embedding it within the organisation's culture. It has also developed members' understanding of the need for, and use of, performance management measures in their own work.

## **Gedling Borough Council**

### Health promotion services for the over 60s

This review was prompted by the reality of an ageing population and the growing need for multi agency approaches to ensure the best outcomes for older people. As a direct result of the review, risk management has been incorporated into the council's plans to recognise the issues around an ageing population; other council strategies have been revised to take account of the various related policy issues; the NHS is using the data presented by the review to inform the funding and commissioning pathways to services; and the Council for Voluntary Services is using the report to help establish the future support needs of its members.

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## **Bridgend County Borough Council**

### **Scrutiny Timebank**

Bridgend were the host of a national scrutiny resource for Wales, encouraging collaboration amongst authorities and building capacity. The well-used resource has allowed authorities to share time and resources with each other, enhancing joint working and providing a central repository of relevant research.

## **Wyre Borough Council**

### **Budget Scrutiny Group**

Over the past three years, Wyre's Budget Scrutiny Group has focused on the highest spending areas of the Council's budget, to try and identify opportunities to make the greatest savings. By carrying out a number of value for money reviews, the BSG has helped to identify savings of at least £1.3 million. The BSG's work has also supported the retendering of the Council's waste collection and street cleansing contract. To date, all the BSG's recommendations have been accepted by the Executive.

## **Gloucester City Council**

### **Review of bulky waste**

This review, into the provision of bulky waste removal services by the council, resulted in the introduction of a new scheme for residents across the city. This scheme was cost-neutral, involved a reduction in waiting times, ensured that bulky waste could be collected from within buildings, while promoting recycling, re-use and a reduction in waste going to landfill.

## **Devon County Council**

### Devon's railways

Rail overcrowding and inadequate rolling stock were issues raised by local people, which scrutiny decided to investigate further. Scrutiny found that governance and decision-making structures for the rail industry were complex, but sought to unite regional rail stakeholders to agree a joint approach to improvements in the future. The review aimed to build momentum towards achieving change in the long term, and to this end has been successful in leading to the establishment of a summit involving stakeholders and MPs.

## **Sunderland Council**

### Health inequalities

A “community event day” was held by the council’s Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee to gather evidence for their policy review into tackling health inequalities in Sunderland. 120 delegates attended, and the evidence from the day provided a sound evidence base for the committee’s recommendations, which included the production by the Council and its partners organisations of a health inequalities toolkit to ensure all new policies and service designs consider the potential health impacts of implementation.

## **Northampton Borough Council**

### Increased participation in scrutiny

Northampton decided to engage in work to enhance the participation in scrutiny by a range of stakeholders – cabinet members, the public and other partners. This has involved a more robust approach to pre-scrutiny of important decisions, contributing to major partnership strategies (such as the Northampton Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy). Through its proactive approach scrutiny has also been behind a number of major innovations for the authority, such as market-testing the waste, grounds and street care service, leading to a letting process in which scrutiny was directly involved.