



## “Scrutiny safeguards the public interest in public services.”

### What is Overview and Scrutiny?

In Birmingham we have eight Overview and Scrutiny Committees, examining a diverse range of services. The Districts and Public Engagement O&S Committee, chaired by Councillor Lisa Trickett is one of those.

Council decisions in Birmingham are taken by a Leader and seven Cabinet Members.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees examine what the Council and its partners do to ensure that it is fair, practical and represents the best interests of the public; and that the Cabinet Members are accountable for their decisions.

Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee is made up of Councillors from different political parties. Every Committee has a Chairperson who takes the lead in organising the Committee’s work. Committees meet at the



Council House. The meetings are usually open to the public with the dates, times and key issues listed on the Scrutiny website at: [www.birmingham.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/scrutiny)

### What do Committees do?

A Committee may help develop policy through **overview** work; call for evidence and examine it as part of a **Scrutiny Inquiry**; **monitor recommendations** in Scrutiny Reviews; and decide whether they should **‘Call In’** a decision, which means asking the Cabinet Members to look again at why a decision was made.

### What is a Scrutiny Inquiry?

Often Committees decide to look closely into one issue and conduct a ‘Scrutiny Inquiry’. An Inquiry provides the Committee with an opportunity to listen to people’s views and find out how things are working. When all relevant evidence is collected and Committee Members have had a chance to examine it in detail, a report is produced that makes suggestions on how things could change to improve services.

When the report is completed it will be shared with the public on the Council website and may be discussed at a City Council meeting. Members of the public are welcome to attend City Council meetings and copies of the reports can be downloaded from:

[www.birmingham.gov.uk/democracy](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/democracy)



## Devolution: Making it Real

### Inquiry of Districts and Public Engagement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## What is devolution?

It is the process of giving more power and decision-making responsibilities to ten district committees across Birmingham. Here local councillors can make decisions according to the needs of local communities.

It is accompanied by localisation which is about building teams of local council staff and giving other staff more responsibility for local areas instead of the city as a whole.

This new agenda for localisation and devolution has the potential to drive forward the social cohesion agenda: reducing disadvantage, tackling deprivation and increasing opportunities and citizen empowerment.

## What is this inquiry?

This inquiry intends to capture the views of a wide range of stakeholders to ensure there is a shared vision about the benefits of devolution and clarity about how success will be measured.

This transitional year will be busy. This inquiry seek to identify the key actions, time-scales and priorities for members, officers and citizens. It will provide a framework for the delivery of devolution. It is also looking at what cultural change is required.

## What is the inquiry seeking to find out?

**What is the purpose of devolution, how do we measure success and what actions are required to achieve that success?**

**In practical terms this means addressing the questions such as:**

- **Where are we with devolution?**
- **What's going well and why?**
- **What's not going well and why?**
- **Where do we need to get to?**
- **What do we need to do ?**
- **What's got to happen and when?**
- **How will we know when we've succeeded?**

**We would be interested in your views on any of the above issues and also:**

- **In terms of working locally with the City Council to make improvements to your area what's worked well?**
- **What's not worked well?**
- **What needs to change (within and outside the Council) to make devolution work?**
- **What are the services that really need improving locally and why?**
- **Where do you think local representative groups (e.g. Neighbourhood Forums) should fit into new structures?**
- **How do you think local councillors should engage with local communities and local community organisations?**
- **How should we measure success?**

## Where do I get more information?

Scrutiny officers have been keeping a blog to inform others of the discussions taking place. It also has the terms of reference. You can see this at:

**[bhamdistrictscrutiny.wordpress.com](http://bhamdistrictscrutiny.wordpress.com)**

The Committee's page on the Birmingham.gov.uk web site can be found using: **<http://bit.ly/SKmWyP>**

## How can I have a say?

If you wish to provide any views on this topic we would appreciate them by 26th October.

Please send the questionnaire or comments to Scrutiny Office, Council House, Victoria Square, Birmingham B1 1BB

Or email [scrutiny@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@birmingham.gov.uk)

Or complete a brief on-line questionnaire at: **<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/QSHC75F>**

## What are the timescales?

The Committee met four times in September 2012 to listen to views and will be holding a number of workshops and working group meetings during October.

Committee members hope to draft a report in November. It is intended that this will be reported to the January Council meeting.