

# **Scrutiny in English Local Government and the Role of Councillors**

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## **Abstract**

*Overview and Scrutiny Committees were introduced in The Local Government Act 2000 that ended the role the full council and its committees as the locus of decision-making for most local authorities in England, and replaced them with government by directly elected mayors or indirectly elected leaders, and small executives or cabinets chosen from the elected councillors. Overview and scrutiny committees composed of councillors not on these executives were tasked with holding them to account. It was recognised from the start that this process would not be easy, and, ten years later, the performance of scrutiny committees is variable. Generally they work best where they concentrate on reviews of policy and practice, with recommendations following from well-researched reports. The paper reviews the difficulties which arise when holding powerful executives to account, and suggests that to strengthen this new legislation is required, in particular to institutionalise scrutiny committees as agencies of the full council, the representative body for the area, comparable to the way in which the select committees at Westminster are the agencies of the Parliament.*

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## *Background*

The Local Government Act 2000 required that, in England, for all bar some of the smallest councils, day-to day decisions would be taken by small cabinets or executives, or by individual cabinet members, or council officials given delegated powers, or, if local areas so chose, directly elected mayors. Subsequent legislation further entrenched this, giving Leaders elected for four-year terms of office the power to appoint cabinets.<sup>1</sup> The annual budget, and approval of key council strategies, have to be approved by the full council, and committees remain responsible for quasi-legal administrative decisions, such as approvals of planning applications and licenses. Councillors not holding cabinet positions are eligible to sit on *overview and scrutiny committees*, loosely modelled on the select committees in the Westminster parliament created in their present form by the Conservative minister Norman St John Stevas at the start of Mrs Thatcher's administration in 1979.

The reforms effectively ended the committee system which, from the point when the workings of local government were codified in statute law, starting with the Municipal Corporations Act in 1835 and concluding with the establishment of London boroughs in 1899, had vested political responsibility in cross-party committees whose decisions were confirmed at public meetings of the full council. The committee system was envied for its inclusiveness and democracy. It was not particularly quick – important decisions would be debated at least once and often at several committees or sub-committees before being confirmed at a meeting of the full council. The committees were not composed of equals: members of a party with a majority on the council could force a change through, and they would normally agree their position in a private meeting before

the public committee; and the chairs of main committees, who maintained close links with powerful chief officers, were in a strong position to influence the other members. But the committee system engendered a sense of comradeship, and gave all councillors an understanding that they were elected to serve not just the electors in their wards but the wider community in the whole council area, and a feeling that, in the last resort, they were involved and in control.<sup>2</sup>

So why did Tony Blair's Labour administration, in its early years, make this radical reform? There was disappointment with the way local government took decisions, expressed by New Labour ministers such as Hilary Armstrong who had found the unwieldy Education Committee in County Durham frustrating and patronising. The system depended on a large number of meetings, with the final outcome of a controversial matter uncertain until it had been confirmed by the full Council. And it entrenched departments whose senior officers worked closely with the committee chairs, and the existence of these 'silos' made it difficult to co-ordinate decisions when they affected more than one department. Underlying the reform was also frustration from central government ministers and civil servants who wanted one or a small group of people who they could rely on and found the distributed leadership of the committee system frustrating and delaying. From a central government perspective, it was a system in which no one person or group was forced to take responsibility, and which often put local government in opposition to central government.

In practice, council Leaders, the small number of councillors in the cabinets, and the senior officials who worked closely with them, found life under the new system easier. In effect, a cabinet is a small committee where the Opposition is permitted to attend and ask questions, but not to vote. Opposition members seldom have the information needed for an effective process of holding to account and there is little debate. It can

take decisions more quickly than the former committees, especially over cross-cutting matters. But in so far as fewer councillors are involved, and the Opposition has no voting rights, it is less democratic.

Meanwhile councillors on overview and scrutiny committees faced new challenges: meetings which could refer concerns to some other body, but not take executive decisions; lack of clarity as to precisely what 'overview and scrutiny' meant and what they were expected to do; uncertainty as to how far a scrutiny committee, whose composition reflected that of the council as a whole, should go towards embarrassing the council leadership. On the positive side, there were some non-executive councillors and others who understood that the committee system was often a charade, giving an appearance of power which disguised the reality of strong chairs or powerful chief executives and chief officers. For some of these councillors, the chance to probe the positions of individual players, to confront a seemingly intractable problem in depth, and make proposals that others would consider and implement, gave them greater feelings of achievement than most other tasks they were asked to undertake as councillors. But for the majority, scrutiny without the power to make decisions, or to ensure that their recommendations were acted upon, was for them personally and, as they saw it, for local democracy, a loss – views reflected in opinion polling of councillors in the early years and subsequently.<sup>3</sup>

### *A hard nut to crack*

The challenges were realised from the start. Snape and Taylor reporting in 2001 on research in councils which piloted scrutiny before the formal legislation was enacted, described scrutiny as 'a hard nut to crack', and identified problems that can still be found today: inexperienced chairing, long agendas which recreated some of the worst features of the

committee system, under-resourcing the officer support, unmanageable work programmes, poor management of specific scrutiny investigations.<sup>4</sup> Cole, in a paper based on interviews with councillors in Devon less than a year after scrutiny was introduced, reported a lack of understanding of what scrutiny was, inconsequential questioning, too much influence on scrutiny from the executive, a focus on policy issues rather than reviewing the actions of the executive, too few meetings to be effective, and little impact.<sup>5</sup> A research report based on ten pilot councils published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister<sup>6</sup> set out to be positive: 'Overview and scrutiny is potentially the most exciting and powerful element of the entire local government modernisation process. It places members at the heart of policy-making and at the heart of the way in which councils respond to the demands of modernisation.' The authors noted that 'policy development and review work has been the most impressive we have seen ... In a number of authorities this has involved a wide range of investigative methods and the production of well honed and targeted reports. They have been carefully project managed, extremely well led by members and well supported by officers'. The report was much more cautious about best value reviews or responses to performance data, where Snape and Taylor had already put 'feed the committee an unremitting diet of best value reviews and performance management' at the top of a list of means 'to kill overview and scrutiny'.<sup>7</sup> Snape, Leach and Copus recognised that the agenda of 'holding to account' was often difficult for politicians in the political parties that formed the administration, or indeed senior officers, and concluded with a set of conditions for scrutiny to succeed: member leadership and engagement; an executive which is responsive to scrutiny recommendations; genuine working across party groups; effective officer support; a supportive culture in the wider officer milieu; and a high level of awareness and understanding of the scrutiny process generally. If any one of these conditions is not met, as will often be the case, successful scrutiny will be extremely difficult.<sup>8</sup>

The 2004 report of the government-financed Evaluation of Local Governance research on the workings of the new constitutions in local government, based on surveys of samples of councillors and council officers, described scrutiny as 'a problematic element of the new constitutional arrangements'. The final report of this study, in 2007, found evidence of scrutiny investigations were often useful, but that only around a third of councillors and council officers believed that scrutiny was effective.<sup>9</sup>

The chairing of a scrutiny committee is more demanding than most other tasks given to councillors, where the norm is discussion around papers prepared in advance by professional officers. A scrutiny chair has to be forceful in dealing with senior politicians and powerful officers, but also constantly tactful, firm with those answering questions but also on occasion with those asking them. The chair must have an overview of where the process is going, and ensure that the short time available is used effectively, while remaining polite and seemingly independent. This is often described as acting as a critical friend – but it is difficult to be a friend and an effective critic at the same time. A minority of councillors have the necessarily character and skills, but they are only a minority.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny sends questionnaires annually to the scrutiny officers in all councils. There were responses to the 2008 survey from 68% of the councils in England and Wales, and it reported that 80% of scrutiny recommendations were accepted by their executives, though only 70% of these recommendations were subsequently implemented.<sup>10</sup> As with the ELG research, the most effective forms of scrutiny were policy review and policy development; the least effective were scrutiny of partnerships and the broad category 'holding to account' – conclusions which reinforce the view that overview and scrutiny committees are most effective when they carry out investigations to review or develop policy.

The average number of full time equivalent scrutiny officers was just over two per council – over four on average for counties, unitaries, metropolitan districts and London boroughs, but less than one full time equivalent for shire districts – many shire districts (and some unitaries) did not employ any dedicated scrutiny officers.

Ashworth and Snape reported that for most councils external scrutiny, i.e. the scrutiny of agents outside the council, 'remains a marginal activity'.<sup>11</sup> But it was given new impetus in the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and especially the ensuing Statutory Instrument No.3048 of 2002, which required that 'where a local NHS body has under consideration any proposal for a substantial development ... or for a substantial variation in the provision of such service, it shall consult the overview and scrutiny committee of that authority'. Where the committee was not satisfied with the logic behind the proposed change, or that there had been sufficient consultation, the legislation gave it the power to refer any concerns directly to the Secretary of State (S.4). It also empowered the committee to 'require an officer of a local NHS body to attend before the committee to answer such questions as appear to the committee to be necessary for discharging its functions' (S. 6.1). Armed with these powers, and small sums of money for training and consultancy from the Department of Health, health scrutiny committees established themselves as safety valves in the processes of health service reorganisation. They also explored policy areas on the interface between NHS provision and local authorities, such as the sexual health of young people, or provision for last months and years of life, and in so doing opened the door for many other kinds of external scrutiny. In general, asked tactfully, treated well, and given an opportunity to explain what they were doing, it turned out that most external agencies were willing to come and answer questions at overview and scrutiny committees, and that useful recommendations would often result.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, as heralded in the pilot scrutiny councils, where scrutiny succeeded, it was most commonly through policy reviews: holding public hearings on areas of policy, and proposing improvements. This is a form of research, conducted in a political context, with awareness of the constraints of budgets and legislation. It has kept non-Executive councillors in touch with the policy process, and has generally been conducted in a non-political manner, drawing on the custom and practice in this regard of the parliamentary select committees.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny maintains a database of these scrutiny investigations. Certain topics appear repeatedly: aspects of recycling, bus service reductions, post office closures, relationships with parish councils, responses to flooding. Investigations have been conducted in the field of social care, or at the interface between health and other council services – into responses to obesity, the prospects for children in care, sexual health, terminal care, facilities for breastfeeding, alcohol or substance abuse.<sup>13</sup> Some councils have used scrutiny investigations for what the London Scrutiny Learning Set<sup>14</sup> calls ‘public interest inquiries’ – such as the reconstruction of Cornmarket Street, Oxford (an interesting early example of joint scrutiny between a county council and a district), the Clissold Leisure Centre in Hackney, or problems in rebuilding part of the central area of Darlington. Others have responded to issues of local concern, such as abuses of postal votes, coastal erosion, or the failures in treasury management that led to their councils investing in Icelandic banks. The qualities of many of the many of these written reports speak for themselves.

### *Scrutiny and holding executives to account*

Holding to account was to be achieved through powers to require officers and leading members to come and answer questions, and powers to call-



in decisions, i.e. within a small number of days of a formal decision being taken to require that decision to be reconsidered. Altering, or reversing a decision is, however, a radical act. If a decision is reversed, this will undermine the reputations of officers who have advised the executive and written drafts of the report; and the cabinet is likely to have considered the matter informally before taking the 'decision' in its formal meeting, and for an important matter will already have secured the support of its party group.

So call-ins are not common. Most come from Opposition councillors - and are subsequently voted down by the majority party. The 2008 survey of the Centre for Public Scrutiny reported on average around two per council per year. These provide a safety valve which allows further consideration of a decision which may have been rushed or poorly justified (though it is rare for the decision itself to be reversed). However, if large numbers of decisions are called in – 90 in one council that responded to the 2008 survey – they become a form of Opposition, turn scrutiny into an ill-informed policy committee, and politicise the scrutiny process. They are too slow and lacking in teeth to be an effective means of holding a single party executive to account on a day to day basis.

There are elements of holding to account in any investigation which starts from the premise that what is being investigated can be improved. But the scrutiny process is limited by the time which councillors are prepared to devote to it. Investigations, if they are to add to what is already well-known, are time-consuming. Those involved need to get to grips with the detail of complex policies, in areas of social policy which many will know little about. They will then be in a position to question witnesses effectively; but only a few witnesses can be examined at any one meeting, and there are other tasks – site visits, workshops, detailed consideration of recommendations. Many councils use short life working parties for particular reviews, which make possible more meetings, visits, etc. But

investigations are not the only tasks. Scrutiny committees are also expected to question executive members and senior officers, to consider call-ins, examine budget proposals and 'policy framework' documents, review the implementation of recommendations previously agreed. 'Calls for action' initiated by local councillors under the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and Police and Justice Act 2006 (but where the enabling legislation did not take effect till 2009) have added to the pressure. The time commitments to be involved in scrutiny stretch the patience and resources of many non-executive councillors - and can still only scratch the surface of all the matters that potentially could be considered.

So, with hindsight, it is apparent that scrutiny could never provide a comprehensive mechanism for day-to-day holding to account. A small number of committees of councillors, in composition reflecting the party-group make-up of the council as a whole, meeting relatively infrequently, and supported in most councils by less than a handful of officers, cannot substitute for an effective Opposition. Its tools for this purpose, including call-in, are cumbersome, bureaucratic, and almost toothless. To bring about change it depends not on sanctions which can be enforced on an unwilling executive, but on a politics of influence between the scrutiny committee and the executive. In contrast, the Comprehensive Area Assessments (and before them the Comprehensive Performance Assessments) conducted by the Audit Commission and other inspectorates, and the associated gradings of councils, had independence and the threat of 'naming and shaming' and no executive could ignore them, though the downsides of this kind of performance regime, including gaming behaviour and the discouragement of initiatives that go beyond uniform provision of standard services, are well known<sup>15</sup> – and no doubt one of the reasons that these assessments were ended by the incoming coalition government in 2010.

In terms of holding to account, scrutiny has much weaker powers than audit. It is instructive to compare the two.<sup>16</sup> Audit is undertaken by large numbers of (mainly junior) professional accountants whose detailed work is digested and reported on in formal reports asking questions and demanding responses; scrutiny is carried out by elected politicians with no requirements for professional expertise, and with limited formal powers. Audit is fundamentally paper-based, checking that expenditure has been authorised and that there are appropriate 'paper trails'; scrutiny is pre-eminently an oral technique, based on questioning of decision-makers. Audit can be comprehensive; scrutiny is inevitably highly selective. Audit has the authority of a profession and its regulators; scrutiny has to justify itself by its outcomes in terms of policy improvement.

In this context, writing on scrutiny and party politics which concludes that Executives, Leaders, or party groups have too much influence on scrutiny is beside the point.<sup>17</sup> The official guidance recognises that, on occasion, Executives will influence the scrutiny process (as when it encourages Executives to delegate matters to scrutiny committees, or to ask for their advice before decisions are made). It is also apparent that scrutiny committee recommendations will normally be drafted in a form that makes it relatively easy for Executives to accept them, as is often the case with the Westminster select committees.

### *Entrenching scrutiny – and learning from the select committees*

Local authority scrutiny draws on the experiences of the parliamentary select committees.<sup>18</sup> But there are important differences. The powers of the select committees come directly from Parliament, and have developed on the basis of resolutions rather than legislation, which has made them more flexible and subject to reform.<sup>19</sup> They can require any individual with an interest in a topic to appear and give

evidence, and are served by a cadre of specialist clerks; they share chairs proportionally to political representation in the Parliament, and report back to it. In contrast, the Local Government Act 2000 gave overview and scrutiny committees powers to require council officers to appear and answer questions – but no corresponding powers to require individuals from outside the council to attend. Neither legislation nor guidance gave much indication about the scale of administrative and technical support needed to make the function effective. The guidance suggested that councils should divide the chairs between political parties, but this was not mandatory and most councils ignored it. The Act had little to say about the responsibilities of the full council, which was not conceived as an independent body or parliament composed of elected representatives from the local area; so reports from scrutiny committees are normally made to cabinets, and scrutiny committees find it hard to be overly critical.

Last but not least, the legislation gave Scrutiny inadequate powers and protections. The Westminster select committees have a stronger constitutional position. They are the creation of the Parliament and report to Parliament (though the number of reports is such that only some get debated, most in St Stephen's House rather than on the floor of the Chamber). They employ their own clerks, a cadre of around 200 officials, separate from the civil service, paid through budgets voted separately by Parliament (and therefore unlikely to be cut). From 2010 its chairs are selected by votes in Parliament.

In contrast, the Local Government Act 2000 does not recognise the full council as the Parliament for the area, and the scrutiny process has no formal place in full council meetings. (When scrutiny reports and recommendations are debated in full council, after consideration by the Executive, a system pioneered in Birmingham City Council and elsewhere, this can produce interesting, well-informed, though non-decision-making

debates, which enhance the standing of scrutiny and those involved in it.) Scrutiny officers are employed in council departments which report to the executive, the budgets for scrutiny are usually hidden in the budgets for democratic services, and there is little to stop a council reducing the staffing of the scrutiny function, or deploying the scrutiny officers to other duties, as has happened in a number of cases and is likely to happen more in a climate of severe financial pressure. Chairs are selected by party groups, not necessarily for being independently-minded, and often all from a majority party. They have restricted powers to require individuals from outside the council to attend. In many councils, the scrutiny function does not appear prominently on websites, or in newspapers or press releases. They have achieved what they have through diplomacy - the skills of their chairs, and the support from small numbers of highly motivated staff - not the constitutional underpinning of their positions.

### *Conclusions*

The future of scrutiny is far from clear. The total numbers of scrutiny officers is declining. It is at risk from Executives or elected mayors who see it as a threat and want it marginalised.<sup>20</sup> In councils where much of its time is spent on ineffective questioning, inconsequential discussions of performance figures or budgets, call-ins instigated by opposition parties, reviews where there is little likelihood of changes resulting, or papers sent to be 'noted' the backbench members can lose interest and attendance drops.

The Local Government Act 2000 was unrealistic in the terms of reference it gave to scrutiny. It implied not only that scrutiny could be apolitical, but also that it could substitute for traditional political opposition. But as long as political parties exist, members of them will be guided by manifesto

and party group commitments. Scrutiny committees, like the Westminster select committees, can work across party lines to collect information and draw out conclusions and recommendations on a consensual basis, but they have neither the powers nor the wills to become Oppositions.

The Local Government Act 2000 entrenched strong single-party executives. In a democratic system, these should account to the broader polity that selects or endorses them, in this case the full council, comprising the elected representatives of the people, the nearest equivalent to a parliament for the local area. But that was not how the Act was drafted. If full councils had been required to hold executives to account, with overview and scrutiny committees a main mechanism through which that was achieved, then they would have been required to report to full councils, their staffing would have been guaranteed along with budgets to bring in external expertise, and they would have been granted much greater powers to insist on responses to their recommendations. Chairs would have been chosen across political parties and they would have had stronger powers to hold hearings on important issues of local concern as these arose. John Stewart has argued that scrutiny committees should have powers to implement at least some of their recommendations – or as a minimum to present them in a debate of the full council with the power to make decisions.

The legislation could also have given more weight to local councillors through area committees, another creation of the Local Government Act 2000. These are committees comprising all the councillors representing residents in a part of the local authority area, not more than 40 per cent of the land area or 40 per cent of the population. These provide regular meetings where individual councillors are questioned by local residents and required to justify and explain their actions and those of the local council, and are a logical place to question or scrutinise decisions which affect just one community or area.

It could have drawn more on the experiences and constitutional position of the Westminster select committees, requiring them to draw up programmes of work to include a small number of topics selected for in-depth investigation, and giving them powers to require anyone with relevant insight to attend and give evidence, access to relevant documentary information, minimum levels of dedicated staffing (at the minimum one full time researcher/administrator per scrutiny committee), mechanisms to select chairs designed to use the available talent to best effect, and guaranteed rights to present their reports to full councils and have them debated. A case can be made that when the council considers a scrutiny report, it should be chaired by the leading scrutiny councillor rather than a ceremonial mayor who may have little interest in that particular matter.

Scrutiny in local government may not be doing what those who created the legislative framework in the Local Government Act 2000 intended, but it nevertheless has the potential to research and investigate problematic policy areas, to propose and assess innovative solutions, and to break through conventional vested interests. A strengthened scrutiny, understood as based on policy review and development, and reporting to the council and not just to the executive, has the potential to bridge the gap between councillors elected to represent wards and the people in their areas on the one hand and the council bureaucracy on the other, and to assist in the co-ordination of service provision across departments and organisations outside the council. It can give a platform to communities and individuals who are critical of the council. It can motivate councillors by enabling them to study areas of interest and concern and to suggest improvements. When things go wrong, it can investigate and bring the facts into the public domain. What it cannot do is to substitute for a political Opposition, or systematically hold an Executive to account. It would work even better if it was more strongly entrenched and protected,

and given greater officer support. But even with present limitations, it has developed highly specialist ways of using the political skills of councillors and communicating with the wider public.

If stronger legislative support is not provided – for example along the lines of the private member’s Local Authorities and Overview and Scrutiny Bill introduced by David Chaytor MP at the end of the Labour government which received ministerial support but did not pass into law because of the opposition of a small number of Conservative grandees – it may wither on the vine, surviving where individual Leaders, chief executives and scrutiny chairs see its value and are prepared to resource it. A more radical strengthening would entrench the position of scrutiny as a creation of the full council, and require it to be properly resourced, with powers to refer matters to Westminster if it felt they were not properly dealt with internally. If the function of overview and scrutiny in local government fails this will amount to an acceptance that councillors not part of the Executive will have little role in policy development, their work largely confined to community activity in their wards. If there is to be more openness, more accountability and more engagement in local government, then it needs to be strengthened. The experience of ten years shows that, where the conditions are right, scrutiny investigations can get to the heart of the most intractable situations and produce relevant policy advice.

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<sup>1</sup> The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007, S.62

<sup>2</sup> Stewart, John *The Nature of British Local Government*, Macmillan, 2000, pp.43-6

<sup>3</sup> Gains, Francesca; Stephen Greasley and Gerry Stoker *A Summary of the Research Evidence on New Council Constitutions in Local Government*. Evaluation of Local Governance Research Project. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004; Stoker, Gerry; Peter John, Francesca Gains,



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<sup>4</sup> Snape, Stephanie and Frances Taylor. *A Hard Nut to Crack? Making Overview and Scrutiny Work*, Local Government Association, 2001

<sup>5</sup> Cole, Michael 'Executive and Scrutiny Reforms: The Agenda and its Impact at Devon County Council', *Local Government Studies* 27,4 pp.19-34 2001

<sup>6</sup> Snape, Stephanie; Steve Leach, and Colin Copus. *The Development of Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government*. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2002, p.7

<sup>7</sup> Snape and Taylor *ibid*; Ashworth, Rachel E and Stephanie Snape (2004) An Overview of Scrutiny: A Triumph of Context over Structure, *Local Government Studies* 30,4 2004, p.549

<sup>8</sup> Snape, Leach and Copus, *op. cit.* pp.111-2

<sup>9</sup> Stoker et al 2004, p.9 2007 Table 29 CHECK

<sup>10</sup> *The 2008 Survey of Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government*, London: Centre for Public Scrutiny

<sup>11</sup> Ashworth and Snape, *ibid*, pp.549-550

<sup>12</sup> Smith, Liz, Ann Shacklady-Smith, and Donna Bradshaw *Learning together: further lessons from health scrutiny in action*. Centre for Public Scrutiny, 2006 and 2007

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*

<sup>14</sup> Shared Intelligence *Redefining Scrutiny: The Experience of the London Scrutiny Learning Set*, 2005

[http://www.sharedintelligence.net/projectuploads/files/si\\_redefining\\_scrutiny\\_Apr05\[1\].pdf](http://www.sharedintelligence.net/projectuploads/files/si_redefining_scrutiny_Apr05[1].pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Bevan, Gwyn and Christopher Hood 'What's Measured is What Matters: Targets and Gaming in the English Public Health System', *Public Administration* 84,3 pp517-538, 2006; Coulson, Andrew (2009) Targets

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and Terror – Government by Performance Indicators, *Local Government Studies*, 35, 2 pp.271-281, 2009

<sup>16</sup> Downe, James and Steve Martin 'External inspection and internal scrutiny: complementary or contrasting approaches to the regulation of local public services?', *ESRC seminar on Accountability, Scrutiny and Regulation*, Cardiff, 2005; Madahar, Brij 'Scrutiny: Contrasts with Audit, Regulation and Inspection', in Coulson, Andrew (ed.) *Scrutiny: Theory and Practice in Local Government*, University of Birmingham, 2010 pp.35-45

<sup>17</sup> Leach, Steve and Colin Copus, 'Scrutiny and the Political Party Group in UK Local Government: New Models of Behaviour' *Public Administration* 82, 2, 331-354, 2004; Leach, Steve (2009) *Party Politics and Scrutiny in Local Government: Clearing the Hurdles*, Centre for Public Scrutiny

<sup>18</sup> Maer, Lucinda and Mark Sandford, *Select Committees under Scrutiny*, The Constitution Unit, University College London, 2004; Hansard Society *30 Years of Scrutiny by Departmental Select Committees*, Day Seminar, Chair Meg Russell, 23 June 2009

[http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/blogs/recent\\_events/archive/2009/06/24/30-years-of-scrutiny-select-committee-conference.aspx](http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/blogs/recent_events/archive/2009/06/24/30-years-of-scrutiny-select-committee-conference.aspx)

<sup>19</sup> As shown in the work of the Wright Committee and the changes that resulted: Wright, Tony *Rebuilding the House*, Reform of the House of Commons Select Committee (Chair, Tony Wright MP), Report, November 2009

<sup>20</sup> Leach 2009, *op. cit.*