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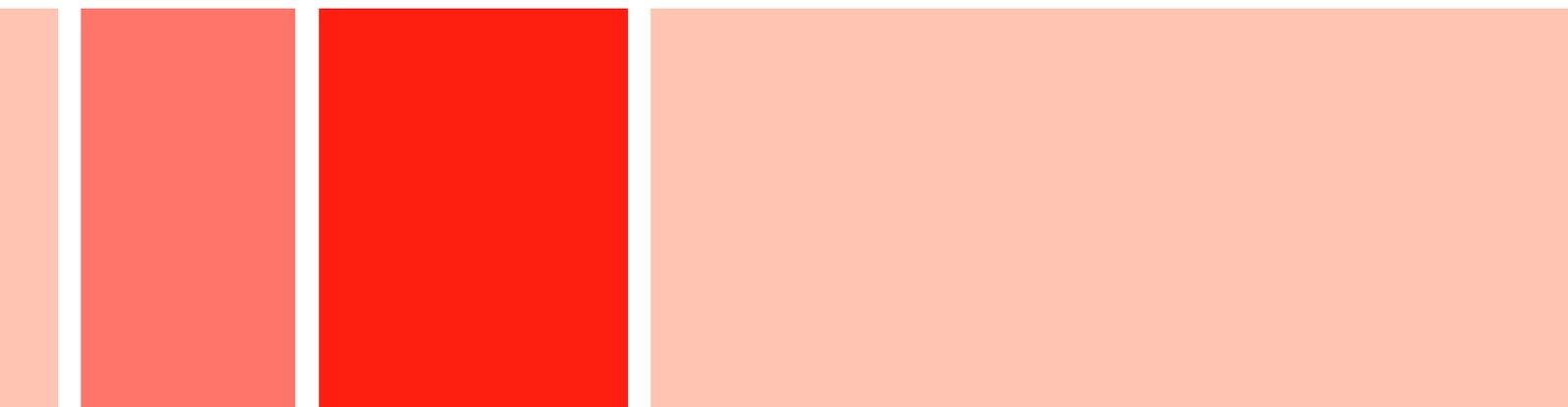
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Establishing a baseline for Local Service Board scrutiny



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Kimberley Horton

Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

For further information please contact:

Name: Lucie Griffiths

Department: Knowledge and Analytical Services

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

Tel: 02920 825780

Email: lucie.griffiths@wales.gsi.gov.uk

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Glossary of acronyms

CfPS	Centre for Public Scrutiny
GSR	Government Social Research
LSB	Local Service Board
LHB	Local Health Board
O&SC	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
RCT	Rhondda Cynon Taff
SIP	Single Integrated Plan
SRA	Social Research Association
WAO	Wales Audit Office
WG	Welsh Government
WLGA	Welsh Local Government Association
WGSB	Welsh Government Sponsored Bodies

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Executive Summary

Introduction

1. This report presents the findings of a research project into Local Service Board (LSB) scrutiny activity across Wales. The aim of the study was to develop an understanding of current practices and issues in LSB Scrutiny so that a baseline can be developed, against which future progress of LSB scrutiny activity in Welsh local authorities can be measured.

Policy Context

2. Public service delivery reforms in Wales have focused on the citizen-centred approach to public service delivery. Accountability and partnership working are seen as important concepts in the simplification agenda. The plan to improve public services and obtain more value for money is key to the Welsh Government's plans for changes in how public services are delivered and held to account.
3. The key partnership and collaborative endeavour in each local authority, the LSB, has not had to be statutorily held to account since its inception six years ago. Although it is generally perceived that some local authorities do undertake scrutiny of the LSB, knowledge of whether this happens on a wider scale is lacking. This research project was undertaken to address this gap in current understanding and establish whether the perceptions match the reality.

Methods

4. The research consisted of a literature review to gain an understanding of the legislation, guidance and research literature regarding LSBs, partnership working and scrutiny. A scrutiny officer in each local authority was then invited to complete an online questionnaire (reproduced in Appendix 1), about LSB scrutiny activities in their local authority and their opinions on challenges to and drivers for, LSB scrutiny. Twenty-one, out of a possible 22 respondents completed the questionnaire.

5. Six scrutiny officers were then interviewed (the interview schedule is in Appendix 3) in order to obtain more detailed information about LSB scrutiny activities, and the officers' views on challenges to LSB scrutiny. LSB scrutiny projects from two local authorities were used as case studies to demonstrate potential ways of overcoming some common barriers to LSB scrutiny.

Findings

6. The picture revealed by this research supports previous research in this area (CRG, 2007; CfPS, 2012a). Generally, local authorities have five scrutiny committees and one or two dedicated scrutiny officers, although this varies between local authorities. LSB scrutiny, in some form or other, is undertaken in 12 local authorities, but eight out of the 10 who do not currently undertake LSB scrutiny, have plans to begin in the next 12 months.
7. There are two main ways in which LSBs are scrutinised in Wales:
 - a. An existing committee, for example, one that is responsible for corporate business chaired by a councillor with an average of 14 elected members, receives reports from the LSB and makes comments or recommendations. Sometimes, specific aspects of the LSB are delegated to the appropriate scrutiny committee, but there is not much evidence that this is widely done.
 - b. A dedicated committee, possibly a sub-committee of an existing overview and scrutiny committee, is chaired by an external co-optee or an elected member who chairs a local authority overview and scrutiny committee, with an average of four elected members and an average of five co-opted members from partner organisations. The focus tends to be either on the LSB as a whole and issues that are cross-cutting, or on particular projects for which the LSB is responsible.

8. Although these two structures are very different, the activities involved in undertaking scrutiny of the LSB are similar. The LSB scrutiny board or panel hold meetings every 4 - 12 weeks where they receive presentations from key officers and stakeholders, question witnesses and make comments or recommendations to feedback to the LSB.
9. The focus of these two typical arrangements differ, as the latter tends to focus more on individual projects and the former more on how the LSB is doing overall. However, things are changing due to the implementation of the Single Integrated Plan (SIP) which is encouraging dedicated LSB scrutiny panels to focus on the cross-cutting issues presented in delivering the SIP.
10. Additional support for officers and members is a feature of LSB scrutiny. However, despite the support available from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and the Scrutiny Timebank, most officers indicated that support was generally obtained from the Welsh Government-funded Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) in the form of training for members and networking events for officers, or from within their local authorities in the form of training and administration staff, or staff from other departments. In terms of future support, the most popular option was the development of an LSB scrutiny toolkit.
11. In the questionnaire and the interviews, scrutiny officers were asked about their views on barriers to LSB scrutiny. The most frequently mentioned barrier, was a lack of knowledge and understanding. Second, was a lack of time and resources. Cultural issues, such as lack of engagement, political concerns and member attitudes were also cited. In addition, lack of guidance from Welsh Government was mentioned frequently in the interviews, as a barrier to implementing LSB scrutiny. These barriers are all supported by existing research on scrutiny.
12. To overcome these barriers, the respondents stated that attempts should be made to improve member and partner understanding, which would mean more training. In addition, building trust and relationships with

communication and openness were seen as other ways of overcoming barriers. This can be achieved by changing the environment in which scrutiny takes place. The case studies give examples of how specific barriers have been overcome in particular contexts.

13. Given the emphasis placed on this by the Welsh Government, it is perhaps unsurprising that the drivers of LSB scrutiny mentioned by the respondents were partnership, collaboration and accountability. The Welsh Government's leadership in this area was recognised, but officers also mentioned their own leadership, stating that members do not, on the whole, go looking for ways to hold the LSB to account. There are some exceptions to this.

Case studies

14. The case studies show that although LSB scrutiny has many challenges, local authorities are able to overcome those challenges and learn from previous activities. The challenges related to how lack of knowledge, understanding and skills can be overcome through appropriate training. Potential cultural differences can be addressed through training and relationship-building. The chosen focus of scrutiny is imperative to securing scrutineers' interest and engagement in their role, and any power inequality between elected and co-opted members can be mitigated by allowing co-opted members voting rights.

Conclusions

15. There is a mixed picture across Wales with regard to LSB scrutiny activities. There is an assumption that LSB scrutiny is a 'good' thing and that it needs to be undertaken effectively. LSB scrutiny appears to be evolving in response to the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Government's drive for collaboration, simplification and accountability. Examples of innovation in LSB scrutiny include involving the public in a more standardised way. More research will be needed once the changes made as a result of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 have been implemented.

1 Introduction and Policy Context

- 1.1 The aim of this research is to develop an understanding of current practices and issues in LSB Scrutiny in Wales so that a baseline can be developed, against which future progress of LSB scrutiny activity in Welsh local authorities can be measured. It was commissioned by the Department of Local Government and Communities within the Welsh Government. This chapter gives a brief introduction to the policy context surrounding Local Service Board scrutiny, before introducing the project itself.

- 1.2 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 is the latest in a string of Wales-specific legislation to implement the recommendations of the 2006 Beecham review (WAG, 2006). Local Service Boards, which replaced Local Strategic Partnerships in Wales following the Beecham review, form part of a wider Welsh drive to reform public service delivery; reforms that draw on a 'citizen-centred' approach. This relies on the much debated concept of the 'voice' of the citizen providing direction for improvement. Local Service Boards, and scrutiny of them, are part of this citizen-centred approach.

- 1.3 The local authority scrutiny function, which has evolved since the implementation of the Local Government Act 2000, is intended to support the effectiveness and accountability of government and service delivery (Snape and Dobbs, 2003). Initially, some commentators saw the overview and scrutiny function as an exciting and powerful development, with non-executive members being involved in the decision-making process and retaining their power (Snape et al, 2002). However, others have since stated that it was a change that had many challenges (Wilson and Game, 2006). If the scrutiny function in general has had challenges, it is perhaps unsurprising that LSB scrutiny may also have similar challenges, particularly as local authorities and their partners are in the process of responding to the 2011 Measure.

- 1.4 Despite LSBs being regarded as supporting a collaborative solution to confront traditionally difficult policy issues, such as domestic abuse and substance misuse, scrutiny of them has not been made statutory (Martin et al, 2011). Indeed, very little is known about the extent to which LSBs are held to account, or how their performance is monitored. This report attempts to address this gap in knowledge. The scope of this report is not to develop understanding of the effectiveness of LSB scrutiny, but to assess how much LSB scrutiny is taking place and what the characteristics of good and effective scrutiny look like. This will include understanding what the barriers are and potential ways these can be tackled.
- 1.5 Chapter two gives a description of the methods used to undertake this research. Chapter three describes and discusses the findings with reference to previous research and precedes two case studies of effective scrutiny and how they approached some of the problems discussed in chapters four and five. Chapter six focuses on how scrutiny officers may be able to learn from this report and draws on links with other work that is ongoing. Finally, chapter seven provides some concluding comments.

2 Methodology

- 2.1 A literature review was undertaken to understand the research literature and legislation, as linked to democratic accountability and the local government scrutiny function and the Welsh Government's developing public service reform agenda, with special emphasis on the simplification agenda for LSBs. Upon completion of the literature review, a questionnaire was developed to gather information on current LSB scrutiny activity within the 22 local authoritiesⁱ.
- 2.2 The questionnaire was administered using Questback, a web-based survey tool. Respondents were asked to use the link sent in an email, and complete the questionnaire. Respondents were reassured that their participation was not compulsory, but consent was assumed if they followed the link and completed the questionnaire. Respondents were also reassured that all responses to the questionnaire would remain anonymous. Of the 22 scrutiny officers who received a link to the survey, 21 completed questionnaires were receivedⁱⁱ.
- 2.3 Receipt of 21 out of 22 questionnaire responses equates to a response rate of 95%. The most similar survey to this is the annual CfPS scrutiny survey of officers from Welsh and English local authorities. In its most recent survey, at least one person from 43% of local authorities participated. The breakdown of the CfPS response rate showed that only 2.1% of respondents were from a Welsh local authority, and only five individual local authorities participated. This means that the responses from the present questionnaire are more representative of Welsh scrutiny officers than the CfPS survey. However, the CfPS survey is very important and in this report it serves as a useful reference point for particular findings.
- 2.4 The quantitative and qualitative responses to the questionnaire are presented in the Findings chapter (three). Generally, modes (most

ⁱ A copy of the questionnaire is in Appendix 1. Copies of the correspondence to the participants are in Appendices 2, 4, 5 and 6.

ⁱⁱ Although one respondent did not fill in the questionnaire, the officer submitted a written response explaining the local authority's approach to LSB scrutiny.

frequent answers) are given, but where appropriate other descriptive statistics are used, including the range and the mean. These are presented in tables and charts. These descriptive statistics provide information on the quantitative aspects of LSB scrutiny, for example how many co-opted members are involved and what future support officers would like to be offered.

2.5 All questionnaire respondents who indicated that their local authority had established some sort of LSB scrutiny arrangements, were invited to indicate their willingness to participate in the interviews. Eight respondents stated that they would be willing to be contacted to participate in a follow-up interview.

2.6 There was a preliminary analysis of the responses, which helped inform the schedule for the follow-up interviews. The topics included in the interview schedule were:

- LSB scrutiny set-up.
- LSB scrutiny within the local authority.
- LSB scrutiny process .
- Scrutiny training and development.
- Issues in scrutinising the LSB.
- Welsh Government involvement.
- LSBs.

2.7 Potential interviewees were contacted and consent was obtained to conduct a telephone interview. Six interviews were undertaken with scrutiny officers reporting a variation in the level of scrutiny activity being undertaken.

2.8 The responses to the questions were coded and analysed thematically. The codes came out of the questionnaire and its responses, the literature review, and the interview data itself. As such, the findings chapter is organised around the following themes:

- General details.

- LSB scrutiny plans.
- LSB scrutiny arrangements, membership and structure.
- Support and officers.
- Activities and focus of scrutiny.
- Barriers.
- Enablers, drivers and overcoming barriers, including conditions conducive to effective LSB scrutiny.

2.9 From the six scrutiny officers interviewed, two local authorities were chosen for case studies. The two local authorities in question offered examples of effective LSB scrutiny. In addition, one of those local authorities has had to deal with many of the barriers identified in the questionnaire responses, interviews and literature. The other local authority has recently changed the focus of its scrutiny and has had to learn from issues encountered in the original incarnation of its LSB scrutiny panel. Therefore, the cases are presented in terms of the issues they have encountered and how they were overcome. These are given in chapters four and five.

2.10 When reading this report the care should be taken in interpreting the results and applying the findings to LSB scrutiny projects. This is particularly pertinent with the case studies, which are examples of work that have been done in just two authorities which have their own unique conditions and circumstances. These are not definitive ways of undertaking LSB scrutiny, indeed they do not provide an account of how to do LSB scrutiny, but are given to show how certain problems can be overcome.

2.11 Ethically, there is very little in this research that could cause harm to either the participants or the local authorities. However, GSR and SRA ethical guidelines were followed and the researcher adhered to the GSR ethics checklist. This meant that all participants were informed of what participation would involve before they agreed to participate. It was explained to potential participants that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time.

In addition, their responses were kept confidential within the research team and any direct quotes were only used after permission was obtained from the source of the quote.

2.12 Given the nature of scrutiny officers' networks, it is possible that scrutiny officers are aware of each others' LSB scrutiny arrangements and difficulties. Unintentional disclosure is therefore possible, particularly from the individual interviews. Care has been taken to ensure that disclosive comments and information are not published as part of this report. In contrast, the case studies identify their origins as both local authorities agreed to be identified in these sections of the report.

2.13 For the questionnaire, all respondents were able to choose whether to complete it in Welsh or English and correspondence about the questionnaire was provided in both languages. However, as the researcher is not a Welsh speaker, the interviews were carried out in English. The present report is available in both Welsh and English.

3 Findings

- 3.1 Generally, there has been very little LSB scrutiny over the past 12 months. The election in May meant that although some attempts to undertake LSB scrutiny were commenced, these did not get very far. In addition, some local authorities have changed their scrutiny arrangements within the past year and some scrutiny activities have been put on hold. Moreover, local authorities are awaiting guidance from the Welsh Government on the designated persons' provision and the Single Integrated Plan (SIP).

General Details

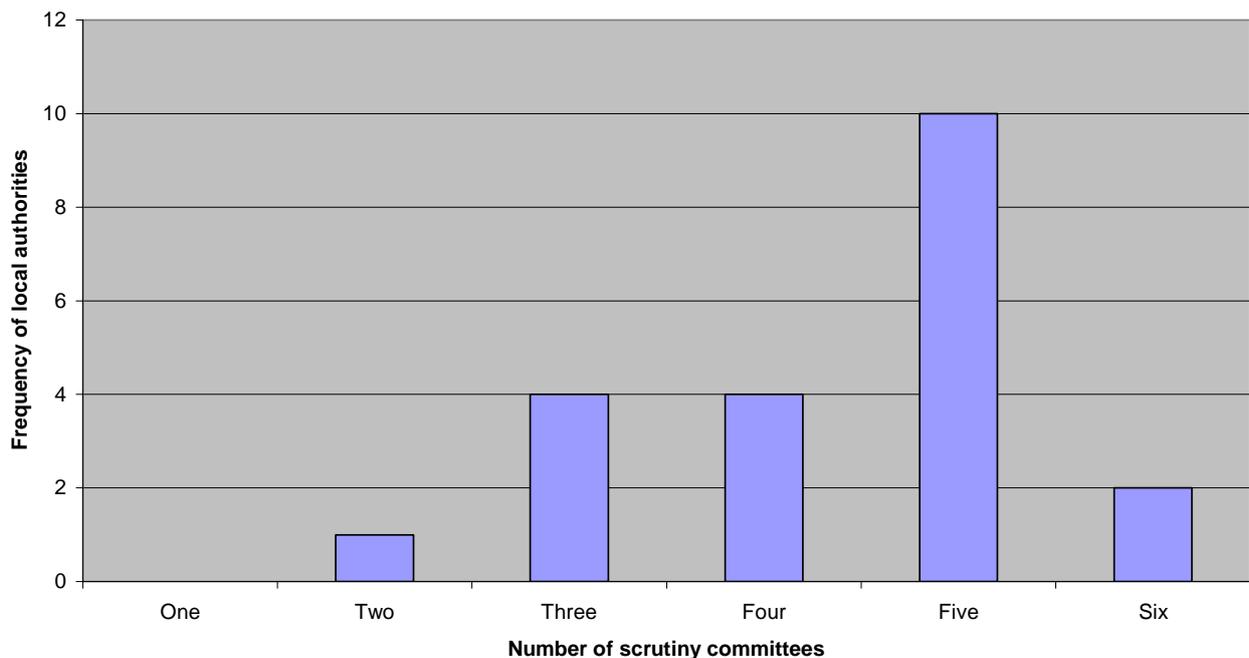
- 3.2 The Local Government Act 2000 represented a change in how local authorities operate (Downe and Ashworth, 2011). It established division between decision-making and scrutiny within local authorities. This meant that separation between the executive and non-executive members was also introduced. The 'new' overview and scrutiny function has the broad role of reporting and recommending to the executive and the authority issues affecting the area and its inhabitants (WLGA, 2010). In its most general form, scrutiny refers to activities which are designed to discover the effectiveness of, or otherwise investigate thoroughly, the activities of a particular body, service or individual. Scrutiny is about ensuring the effectiveness and accountability of government.
- 3.3 Public scrutiny is about elected or appointed organisations or offices examining and monitoring the activity of a public sector body, in order to improve the quality of public services.

“Scrutiny ensures that executives are held accountable for their decisions, that their decision-making process is clear and accessible to the public and that there are opportunities for the public and their representatives to influence and improve public policy” (CfPS, 2012b).

3.4 These executives are local authority executive members, but could also mean executives of non-local authority public service providers. This is particularly important as decisions are made by non-local authority public service providers, such as police, health, voluntary services, and these decision-making executives are not democratically elected. The 2000 Act means that local authorities are expected to have a number of overview and scrutiny committees, but how many they have is not prescribed.

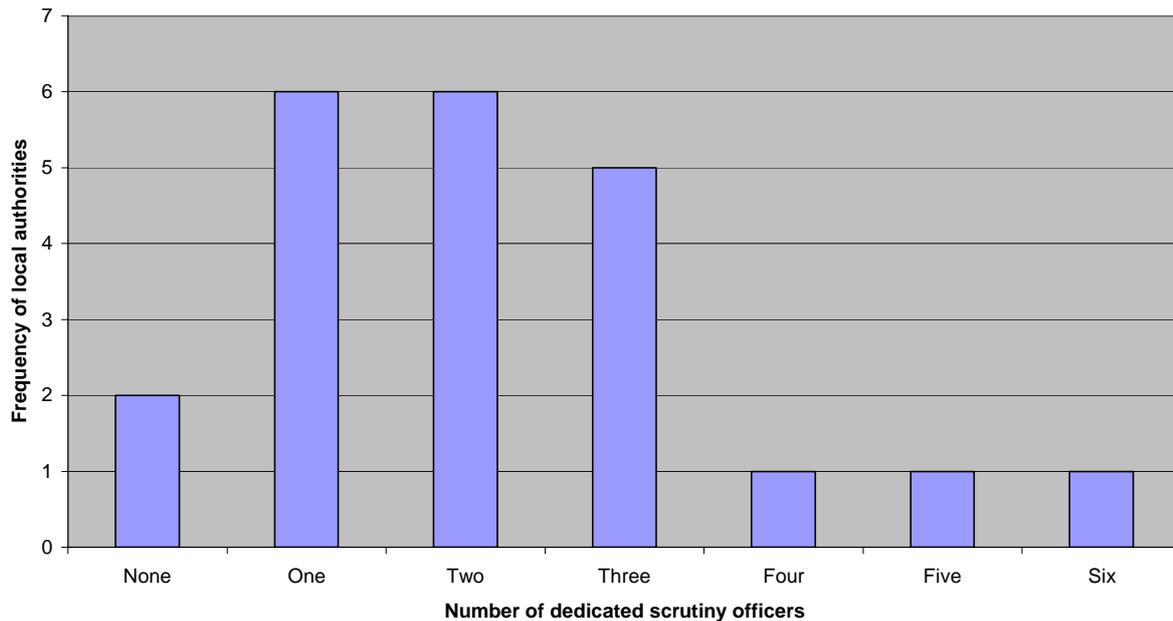
3.5 In light of the lack of prescription over how many scrutiny committees local authorities should have, it is not surprising that there is variation in the number of scrutiny committees and officers, as shown in Chart 3.1 below. On average, local authorities tend to have four scrutiny committees, but 10 local authorities have five scrutiny committees. This is similar to the findings of the most recent CfPS (2012a) survey, which found that Welsh local authorities have an average of 4.5 scrutiny committees, compared to the England and Wales average of 3.7.

Chart 3.1: Frequency of local authorities to number of scrutiny committees



- 3.6 There is also no prescription about how much support scrutiny panels should have. CRG (2007) found that officer support for scrutiny varied across Wales in terms of numbers and roles. On average, Welsh local authorities have two dedicated scrutiny officers. Eighteen local authorities have fewer than four dedicated scrutiny officers, but three local authorities have four, five and six scrutiny officers respectively, as shown in Chart 3.2 on page 14. However, some local authorities have part-time staff and other in-house support, which is outlined below. The CfPS (2012a) measure many aspects of scrutiny support officers in their annual survey, but for the purposes of this research the average number of full-time equivalent officers between 2004 and 2010 rose from 1.2 to 3.2.
- 3.7 The responses to the questionnaire show that the average number of dedicated scrutiny officers in Wales is 2.2. In its 2012 survey, the CfPS (2012a) found that 73% of respondents said that they had a dedicated officer or team for scrutiny, which means that 27% did not. Whereas in Wales alone, according to this research, only 9% (two) of local authorities did not have a dedicated scrutiny officer or team. However, this is not to say that there was no support for scrutiny in these local authorities as there may have been officers for whom scrutiny support is only part of their role. Indeed, the questionnaire responses show that 10 scrutiny officers are able to draw on the support of other staff within their local authority. The questionnaire responses show that the average number of full-time equivalent scrutiny officers in Wales is two, which is slightly less than the England and Wales average of 2.7 (CfPS, 2012a).

Chart 3.2: Frequency of local authorities to number of dedicated scrutiny officers



LSB Scrutiny plans

3.8 Out of the 22 officers who responded to the questionnaire, 10 indicated that their local authority had not established any sort of LSB scrutiny mechanism. These 10 respondents were then asked about their local authority's plans for such scrutiny; eight said that their local authority had plans to develop LSB scrutiny in the next 12 months. All local authorities' plans for LSB scrutiny over the next 12 months are illustrated in Table 3.1 on page 15.

3.9 Table 3.1 shows that the extent to which local authorities who are not currently undertaking LSB scrutiny, plan to do so within the next 12 months varies. Those that have been interviewed, who indicated on their questionnaire that their local authority had already set up some form of LSB scrutiny, continue to plan their future LSB scrutiny activities shown in Table 3.1. These interviewees mentioned their local authorities' plans to implement the 2011 measure in helping to develop and scrutinise the SIP and prepare for the designated persons' provision. One interviewee mentioned that a new member of staff may drive more scrutiny of the LSB and another mentioned that the LSB had indicated its desire to change the current arrangements

in order to involve a people’s forum and a stakeholder group of partner organisations in scrutinising it.

Table 3.1: Range of current plans for future LSB scrutiny

	No plans; Awaiting guidance	New personnel; Vague ideas	Agreement in next 12 months	Plans and discussions in 2012	Concrete plans
No current LSB scrutiny	2	0	1	2	3
LSB scrutiny	0	1	0	2	3
Total	2	1	1	4	6

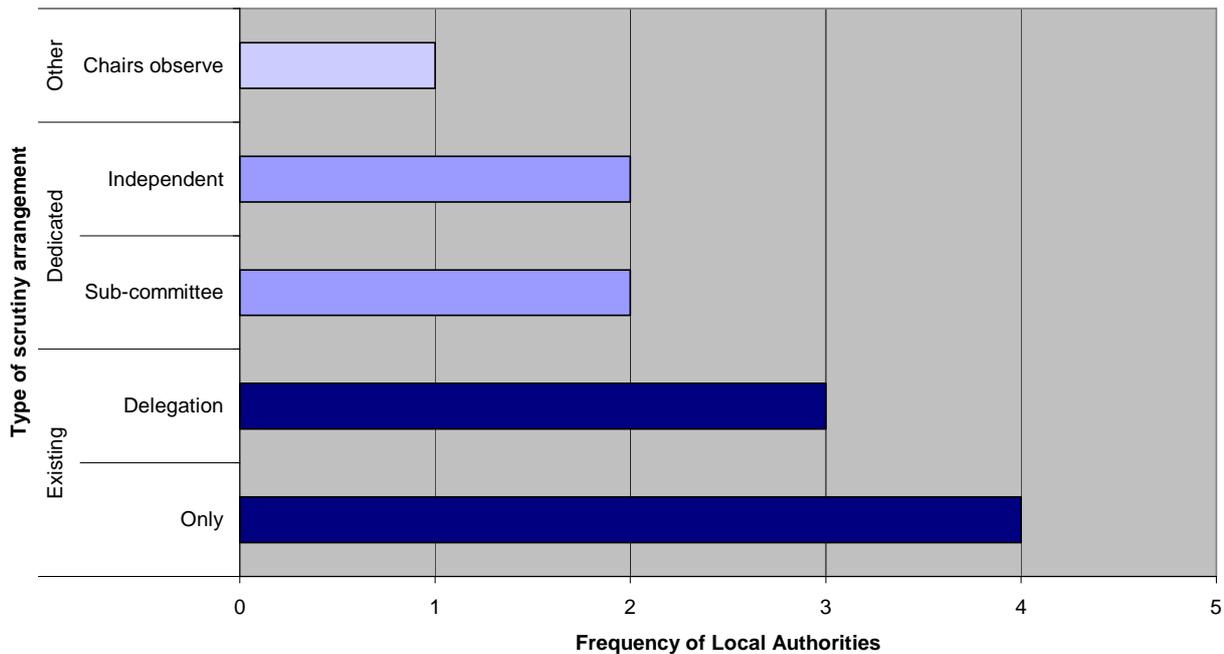
LSB Scrutiny mechanism

3.10 The Simpson report (Simpson, 2011) stated that scrutiny of collaborations may take place within existing scrutiny structures, which does have advantages, such as the ability to retain focus on impact for a particular authority, clear democratic link to the community, working within existing resources and perception of a lower risk of duplication and confusion (Mckenna, 2012). However, implementing new scrutiny arrangements may encourage the scrutiny function to operate more innovatively.

CRG (2007) found that the ‘approach to implementation’ of overview and scrutiny varies widely across Welsh local authorities. The research undertaken for this report seems to support CRG’s assertion. Twelve out of the 22 respondents stated that their local authorities had established some kind of LSB scrutiny mechanism. They were asked about their local authorities’ current LSB scrutiny arrangements. The responses indicate that most local authorities either employ an existing overview and scrutiny committee or create a new, dedicated body to scrutinise the LSB. An existing overview and scrutiny committee may delegate to other existing local authority overview and scrutiny committees on LSB business. In addition, a

new, dedicated panel may be either independent or it may be a sub-committee of an existing overview and scrutiny committee. Also, existing local authority overview and scrutiny chairs may observe LSB meetings. Chart 3.3 below demonstrates how many local authorities have each type of scrutiny arrangement.

Chart 3.3: Frequency of Local Authorities to LSB scrutiny type



3.11 There seems to be two major ways in which local authorities currently arrange to scrutinise the LSB: using an existing committee or setting up a new, dedicated committee. Chart 3.3 shows that most local authorities use existing committees, some of which do all the LSB scrutiny (only) and some of which use other scrutiny committees to investigate topics which are most suited to their remit (delegation). Fewer local authorities set up dedicated, independent, new, LSB scrutiny bodies, whose sole purpose is to investigate the workings of the LSB.

3.12 In interviews with six scrutiny officers, three officers stated that their local authorities are undergoing major changes in their scrutiny arrangements and one local authority has already undergone a major change. One interviewee mentioned that originally the LSB was loosely scrutinised by an existing scrutiny committee which delegated

to other committees, but that in reality the scrutiny committee wanted an 'update' on what the LSB was doing: 'it didn't scrutinise it really' (interview one). This has led to ongoing changes over the past six months in how the LSB is scrutinised and may or may not reflect how other existing committees approach LSB scrutiny.

3.13 In one local authority, the overview and scrutiny committees have been changed which has had an impact on which existing scrutiny committee undertakes scrutiny of the LSB. Previously, a 'corporate governance and policy' overview and scrutiny committee considered the majority of issues relating to the LSB, and specific projects could be scrutinised by other, more appropriate, committees. However, this particular local authority has 'never really been pushed' by members or other organisations 'to put a great focus on the work of the LSB, despite 'the mechanisms and formal arrangements and structure' (interview five) being in place since April 2009. In contrast, the new committee has a focus on partnership and collaboration and this means that scrutiny of the LSB fits neatly into its work, which added to the SIP and designated persons provision, may change the amount and type of LSB scrutiny in this local authority.

3.14 In another local authority, a report which raised concerns over the lack of a scrutiny officer post within the local authority and the way in which the local authority was undertaking scrutiny, encouraged the local authority to appoint a principal scrutiny officer and a scrutiny officer. This has led to developments within the overview and scrutiny function in general, before developing and implementing LSB scrutiny arrangements and involving partners. In a local authority where LSB scrutiny had been undertaken relatively successfully, an independent report raised issues with the focus of the scrutiny, which has since been changed.

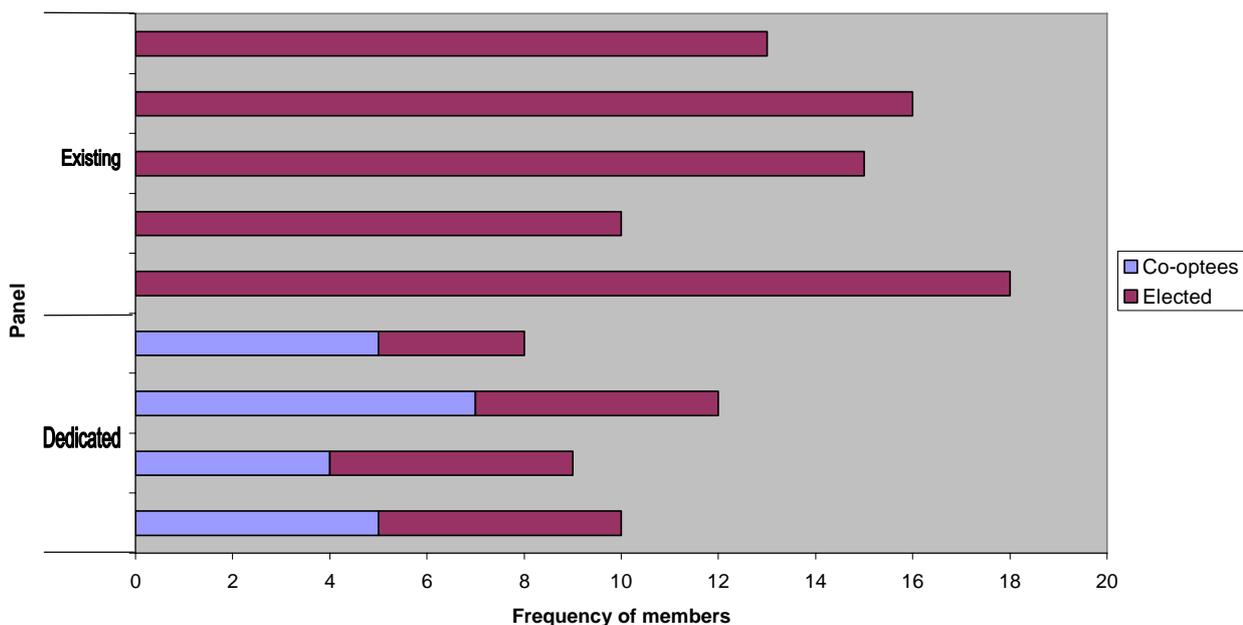
3.15 These results show that scrutiny arrangements vary. However, in some local authorities, arrangements are changed as a result of self-evaluation; in others, arrangements are changed as a result of outside

influence. This is an encouraging finding given the current and future work being undertaken by the WAO, the CfPS and the local authorities on self-evaluation of scrutiny.

Membership

3.16 The questionnaire posed questions concerning co-opted members and elected members. The people involved in LSB scrutiny varies widely across Wales. Elected members are an essential part of the scrutiny function, but there is no legislation on how many elected members should be on a scrutiny panel. Equally, legislation and guidance does not dictate on the co-option of partners to an LSB scrutiny panel or working group. Co-option means allowing non-elected partner members (or people who have a professional or expert interest in the panel) to attend, contribute and sometimes vote at panel meetings (Local Government (Wales) Measure, WG, 2011). The extent to which co-optees may participate in the panel and at meetings should be set out in the panel’s terms of reference.

Chart 3.4: Frequency of co-opted and elected members on existing and dedicated LSB scrutiny panels



3.17 Four respondents indicated that co-opted members are included as an integral part of LSB Scrutiny in their local authority. Chart 3.4 on page 18 demonstrates the number of co-opted and elected members each LSB scrutiny panel has. It also splits these up by panel type (existing and dedicated). Co-opted members only exist in LSB scrutiny arrangements when there is a dedicated board (not an existing scrutiny panel where no co-opted members are invited to attend). The CfPS (2012c) found that the average England and Wales committee membership was between 10 and 13 over the period 2005–2010, and the Welsh average over the same period was 11 and 14. The average committee membership of LSB scrutiny panels found in this research is 12. This is more than the most frequent range of overview and scrutiny committee members in England and Wales found in the CfPS survey (2012a), which was 6–10.

3.18 These co-optees represent a variety of organisations, but all four local authorities' LSB scrutiny co-optees represent a voluntary organisation at the county level, the police service and some health representation (NHS trust, LHB). The following agencies and organisations were represented once across Wales on LSB scrutiny panels:

- a charity;
- the Fire and Rescue service;
- the probation service;
- the private sector; and
- an equalities group.

3.19 Scrutiny requires certain specific skills (Coleman et al, 2009), which need to be developed. One way of achieving this is through appropriate training (Coleman et al, 2009). All four of the respondents whose local authorities have co-opted members, indicated that they had been given training on LSB scrutiny by the local authority.

3.20 Co-option, as discussed above, means that non-elected interested individuals, usually senior officials from public service delivery

organisations, attend and contribute to meetings and other activities of the panel (Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011). However, the legislation states that they do not need to have voting rights (ibid). The officers who responded to this questionnaire, indicated that all the co-opted members on LSB scrutiny panels have voting rights. Indeed, one respondent emphasised the importance of co-optees having voting rights for LSB scrutiny to work effectively and for all members to feel equal (this is an important enabler for effective LSB scrutiny which will be discussed below).

- 3.21 Elected members are integral to overview and scrutiny (Snape and Dobbs, 2003). Non-executive elected members are expected to partake in overview and scrutiny committees (Local Government Act 2000). However, they have other roles in addition to overview and scrutiny. Elected members' roles may encompass one or more of: representative, community leader, policy maker, monitor and progress chaser and party activist (Snape and Dobbs, 2003; Wilson and Game, 1998).
- 3.22 There is a wide range of difference between local authorities as to the number of elected members that sit on LSB scrutiny panels. Chart 3.4 on page 18 shows how many elected members each of the scrutiny panels have. The average is eight, but most often local authorities have five elected members on their LSB scrutiny panels.
- 3.23 Selecting the chair of the LSB scrutiny panel is key. CRG (2007) stated that the role of chair is pivotal and found that the appointment method varies but that there is concern that it may be the executive that controls the appointment of chairs. Six of the LSB panels have asked elected members, who are already chairing another committee, to chair the LSB scrutiny panel. Two LSB scrutiny panels have chairpersons who are not part of the local authority. Two of the respondents did not give a specific person or role of who chairs the LSB scrutiny panel.

- 3.24 The extent to which the chairs of the LSB and the scrutiny panel meet varies. Five out of the 11 who have some form of LSB scrutiny, indicated that the chair of the LSB and the chair of the LSB scrutiny panel had never met formally. Two respondents said that these chairs meet when required or a meeting is requested and one respondent said that the chairs of the two panels meet once a month. In one local authority, the chairperson of the LSB scrutiny panel cannot be from the same organisation as the vice chair, which means that an attempt is made to maintain independence as much as possible.
- 3.25 One interviewee stated that the LSB was interested in changing the way LSB scrutiny is conducted by encouraging the involvement of the public. The idea is to employ a public forum as well as a stakeholder group to scrutinise. In another local authority, the 2011 measure has had a positive influence on the LSB's desire to engage with other bodies such as the Fire and Rescue service and the Police Force, as potential designated people.

Present LSB scrutiny support and future preferences

- 3.26 Support for scrutiny is seen as particularly important (CRG, 2007; CfPS, 2012c). Support includes scrutiny officers, managers, administrative support, as well as support from outside agencies such as the WLGA, Welsh Government and the CfPS. CRG (2007) found that resources allocated to overview and scrutiny in Wales varies between local authorities. Scrutiny officer seniority and scrutiny budgets varied (CRG, 2007). This variation is partly a reflection on local authority size, but more resources generally meant a perception of scrutiny working better.
- 3.27 In Wales, there are a number of sources that can provide support to scrutiny officers, as well as non-executive members (who should be involved in scrutiny) and co-opted scrutineers. The Welsh Government funded Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) provides support for elected members and officers in the form of

networks and training. The Wales Audit Office is currently managing a local authority-led scrutiny evaluation project, but has also been involved in developing scrutiny in local authorities as a result of its annual local authority reports. The Bridgend-run Scrutiny Timebank allows scrutiny officers from across Wales to give time to support their cross-local authority colleagues and to then claim that time back by obtaining support from their peers. The website also has a 'vault' which contains reports and other documents regarding scrutiny that have been uploaded by scrutiny officers. This is a 'self-managed' web service that relies on its users contributing to it.

3.28 The Centre for Public Scrutiny is a charity which is:

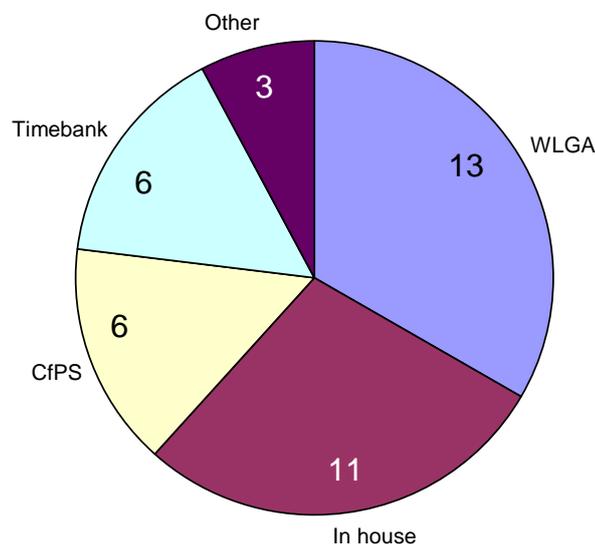
“dedicated to promoting the theory and practice of good governance, and the principles of accountability, transparency and involvement” (CfPS, 2012b, web).

It provides training, literature and support for scrutineers and is currently developing a programme of support for scrutiny in Wales. The Welsh Government provided financial support for scrutiny in the form of the Scrutiny Development Fund (SDF) from 2008 to 2011, to which local authorities bid for help to support their innovative scrutiny projects. In addition, the scrutiny officers may be able to use additional in-house support, such as administration staff.

3.29 These six sources of support were the focus of two of the questions, which asked about the scrutiny officers' access to additional support for their roles. There is variation in the kinds of support that the scrutiny officers reported being able to access. Twenty respondents said that they had access to additional scrutiny support. Nine of the scrutiny officers said that they are able to access support from one source. Five said that they are able to access four sources for support; three said that they are able to access two sources for support and two said that they are able to access three and five sources for support respectively.

3.30 Chart 3.5 below shows the number of officers able to access support from different organisations. By far, the most popular type of additional support comes from the Welsh Government-funded WLGA, as 13 scrutiny officers stated that they are able to access support from the WLGA, including the scrutiny officers' network and members' support. Eleven respondents stated that they were able to access in-house support. Part-time and management staff accounted for some of this support, as well as other members of staff (officers) who perform a scrutiny support role in addition to other roles within the local authority. Seven respondents stated that they are able to access additional support from the Bridgend-run Scrutiny Timebank. Six respondents stated that they are able to access support from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), from its website and via their use of the SDF.

Chart 3.5: Frequency of officers able to access support from different organisations



3.31 Part of the drive for this particular project was the need to provide support for those local authorities who have not yet implemented LSB scrutiny, as well as those who have established LSB scrutiny

mechanisms. The findings of this research could therefore contribute to future provision for LSB scrutiny support. With this in mind, the scrutiny officers were asked about their preferences for future support. They were asked to select three ‘preferred’ options from a list of eight. Table 3.2 below shows the options and the number of respondents who selected each one.

Table 3.2: Respondents’ preferences for future support options (*the answers most frequently given are highlighted in bold*)

<u>LSB scrutiny support option</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Development and dissemination of best practice and case studies via an LSB Scrutiny E-letter	8
Development of an LSB Scrutiny Toolkit. This would contain report templates, draft terms of reference, models of different scrutiny structures, how to develop a FWP, advice on research methods for LSB Scrutiny	15
Regional workshops and seminars on LSB Scrutiny	7
National workshops and seminars on LSB Scrutiny	2
Workshops and seminars within individual councils on LSB Scrutiny	7
Assistance with editing LSB Scrutiny reports and recommendations	2
Peer review activity, such as attendance, observation and analysis at LSB Scrutiny meetings	2
Provision of presentations and advice sessions to LSBs and LSB Scrutiny Panels/Boards/Committees	11

3.32 As you can see from Table 3.2, by far the most popular option was the development of an LSB Scrutiny Toolkit, which 15 respondents selected as one of their top three support options. The next most popular option was the provision of presentations and advice sessions to LSBs and LSB Scrutiny Panels/Boards/Committees, which 11 respondents chose as one of their top three support options. The third most popular option was the development and dissemination of best

practice and case studies via an LSB Scrutiny E-letter, for which eight scrutiny officers voted as part of their top three.

3.33 The interviewees were also asked about support for LSB scrutiny. Generally, there is seen to be a need for officer support in the planning and preparation of new and future scrutiny arrangements, in regional sharing of good practice, in the administration of scrutiny, in training scrutineers, and as a link for co-optees and witnesses attending local authority-led events and meetings. However, there is also recognition that officer support for LSB scrutiny needs to be resourced appropriately and needs to be independent from LSB support.

LSB Scrutiny activities

3.34 CRG (2007) found that a small number of scrutiny panels used 'informal approaches' including 'brainstorming' sessions between officers and councillors, holding public workshops, visiting relevant sites and conducting 'mystery shopping' of services. However, mostly scrutiny involved receiving oral evidence from witnesses in formal meetings (CRG, 2007). Pre-decision or 'contemporaneous' scrutiny, which means that scrutiny occurs before decisions are taken by an executive, is described by some of CRG's (2007) participants as 'good practice'. This could also solve the difficulty of challenging decisions and the political problems which arise from that (CRG, 2007).

3.35 There are several important steps that tend to happen when scrutinising the LSB. The development of terms of reference is an important first step for any panel or committee. Indeed, 10 out of the 11 local authorities who have LSB scrutiny arrangements have terms of reference for those arrangements. A Forward Work Programme (FWP) is also an important part of any panel or committee (CRG, 2007), and seven officers indicated that the LSB scrutiny panel in their local authority have a FWP. The LSBs were consulted on the FWP in

four of these cases. The forward plan is seen by CRG (2007) as important, but they found that they vary in detail and quality.

- 3.36 Task and finish groups are one way of conducting the work of the scrutiny committee. Seven officers indicated that the LSB scrutiny panels in their local authorities have the capacity to undertake task and finish group type investigations. The activities with which LSB scrutiny panels have been involved vary.
- 3.37 The questionnaire responses outlined in Table 3.3 on page 27 show that seven LSB scrutiny panels had been involved in holding the LSB to account against Local Delivery Agreements (LDA) or other planned programmes of work. Three of the respondents indicated that the LSB scrutiny panel had been involved in Task and Finish type investigations as linked to LSB priorities, projects or workstreams. In addition, three of the respondents said that the LSB scrutiny panel is involved in the LSB's annual evaluation exercise. Two of the respondents stated that the LSB scrutiny panel is involved in scoping potential LSB priority projects (pre-decision scrutiny), and two also stated that the LSB scrutiny panel acts as a consultee in LDAs or other LSB projects.
- 3.38 In addition, four respondents stated that the LSB scrutiny panels in their local authorities have undertaken other activities. Two respondents said that the LSB scrutiny panels would act as consultees on the development of the Single Integrated Plan. One respondent stated that the LSB scrutiny panel conducts observations at LSB meetings. One respondent stated that the LSB scrutiny board is new, and will begin scrutinising in October 2012, taking a thematic approach to scrutinising the work of the LSB.

Table 3.3: Frequency of particular scrutiny activities

Scrutiny Activities	Frequency
Holding the LSB to account against Local Delivery Agreements (LDA) or other planned programmes of work	7
Task and Finish type investigations as linked to LSB priorities, projects or workstreams	3
Involvement in the scoping of potential LSB priority projects (pre-decision scrutiny)	2
Involvement as consultees in LDAs or other LSB projects	2
Involvement in the LSB's annual evaluation exercise	3
Other	4

3.39 One important part of scrutiny is reporting and making recommendations to the body being scrutinised. The CfPS (2012c report, in 2010, states that on average, English and Welsh local authority executives accepted 85% and implemented just over 60% of recommendations made by scrutiny committees. The most recent CfPS survey (2012a) found that accepted recommendations have remained the same at 85%, but that implemented recommendations had increased to 86%, which may suggest better quality recommendations, or a less challenging standard of recommendation (CfPS, 2012a). Three officers said that the LSB scrutiny panel in their local authority had made formal reports or recommendations to the LSB, but eight said that it had not. However, it is important to keep in mind that the LSB does not have to act on any report or recommendations that a scrutiny panel makes.

3.40 Overall, the majority of respondents' perceptions of their local authority's LSB scrutiny arrangements were that their local authority had made some initial progress in developing LSB scrutiny arrangements. Three respondents stated that their local authority had fairly well developed arrangements in place, including co-option and regular engagement of cross sector representatives, and five

respondents stated that their local authority had no LSB scrutiny arrangements currently in place.

3.41 The interviews provided a good opportunity to investigate more thoroughly what respondents mean when they say that their local authority has made 'some' progress in LSB scrutiny, or that their local authority has 'fairly well' developed LSB scrutiny arrangements. Where an existing committee undertakes LSB scrutiny, it seems that scrutiny means:

- 1) Existing panel receives reports from the LSB.
- 2a) panel comments on those reports; and/or
- b) panel questions those reports, and/or
- c) panel makes recommendations to the LSB about those reports.
- 3) LSB receives comments/questions/recommendations and acknowledges them.

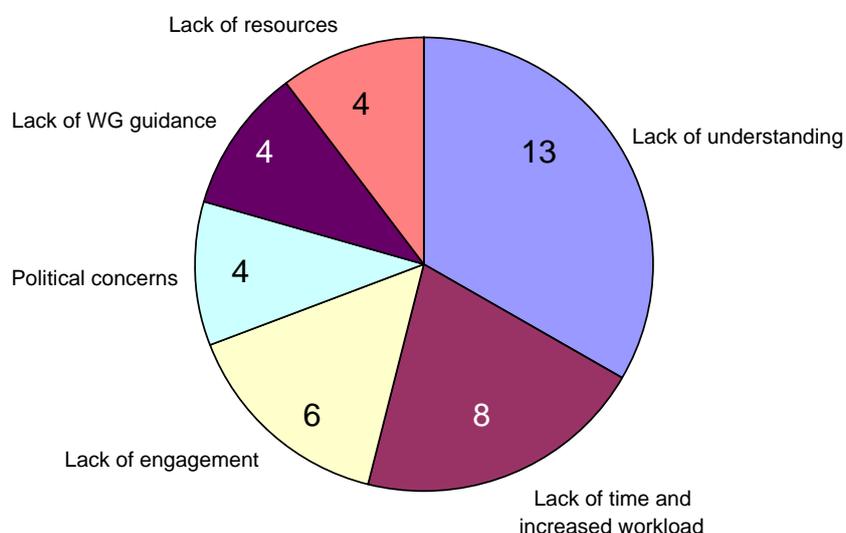
3.42 This means that existing panels are able to take an overview of the LSB's work. In contrast, dedicated panels seem to investigate particular LSB projects or issues that cut across LSB priorities. This difference is unsurprising given the amount of time each type of panel would feasibly be able to dedicate to scrutinising the LSB.

3.43 However, despite this clear difference in approach to LSB scrutiny, general scrutiny activities tend to be similar and include receiving presentations from key people; questioning witnesses; and sharing practice with other organisations (including other local authorities and partner bodies). The scope of this project did not include assessing the effectiveness of different approaches to LSB scrutiny, but the conclusion will outline thoughts about criteria to be used as a framework for describing the quantity and quality of LSB scrutiny activity.

Barriers to LSB scrutiny

- 3.44 Despite the mixed response in the literature to the Local Government Act 2000, there was general support for the overview and scrutiny aspect of this legislation (Snape et al, 2002). However, it was widely recognised that the overview and scrutiny function would have many challenges to overcome if it was to work effectively (Snape et al, 2002). There is a plethora of literature that examines and discusses the barriers to effective scrutiny. The questionnaire asked respondents to list what they thought were the three most important barriers to effective LSB scrutiny. In the interviews, respondents were asked about what they thought were the key challenges to LSB scrutiny.
- 3.45 It is widely recognised that the role of the scrutineer encompasses skills and attributes that need to be developed through training (Coleman et al, 2009). Lack of councillor knowledge and understanding are mentioned by many commentators as being particular barriers (Wilson and Game, 1998; Snape et al, 2002). Chart 3.6 on page 26 shows that the most frequently cited barrier to LSB scrutiny was a lack of understanding of the role of the LSB, how it operates separately from partner organisations and how scrutiny should proceed. Four out of the six interview respondents mentioned a lack of skills, knowledge, understanding and poor training or no training as barriers to LSB scrutiny. CRG (2007) found that part of the reason that scrutiny had not reached its potential was because councillors had not 'grasped the concept' and that they lacked the appropriate skills.

Chart 3.6: Proportion of responses about different barriers to LSB scrutiny



3.46 The second most mentioned barrier was a lack of time, a heavy workload and lack of capacity for scrutiny committees, officers, co-opted members and elected members. Similarly, CRG (2007) found there was a view that ‘scrutiny does not make effective use of member and officer time’ (CRG 2007, p29). However, Snape et al (2002) state that one of the key conditions for effective scrutiny is effective and direct officer support.

3.47 Welsh councillors perceive that resources and technical support influence the effectiveness of local scrutiny (Ashworth, 2003). Three interview respondents mentioned lack of resources, capacity or funding as a barrier to scrutiny. CRG (2007) found that resourcing varies between Welsh local authorities. Wilson and Game (1998) stated that a lack of dedicated resources is detrimental to scrutiny reaching its full potential. The CfPS ask about funding in its annual survey on scrutiny in England and Wales. Its analysis of eight years worth of surveys found that budgets for the scrutiny function have been declining (CfPS, 2012c).

- 3.48 Although no specific question about funding was asked in this research, lack of resources was cited by four questionnaire respondents as a barrier to effective scrutiny. In the interviews, one scrutiny officer mentioned that a pilot LSB scrutiny project was disbanded due to lack of funds and has only recently restarted as the local authority has found some money to employ a support officer part-time. However, the funding is only available for a year, and unless the local authority is able and willing to fund the support role next year, the future of the scrutiny panel is in doubt.
- 3.49 The CfPS (2012a) has found that the effectiveness of a local authority's scrutiny arrangements is more to do with culture than with structure. In both the interviews and the questionnaire responses for this research, cultural issues were cited as barriers to LSB scrutiny. The third most frequently cited barrier in the questionnaire responses was a lack of engagement by partners, by the LSB and by councillors. Getting councillors to engage with the overview and scrutiny role is a common barrier mentioned in the literature (Wilson and Game, 1998). CRG (2007) found that the level of commitment to scrutiny varies across Welsh local authorities.
- 3.50 Fewer respondents indicated that political concerns were a barrier to LSB scrutiny. CfPS (2012a) found in its England and Wales survey that 47% of respondents felt that party politics affected scrutiny 'a lot'. CRG (2007) state that scrutiny is perceived only as a local government role and is not perceived to be about scrutinising partners. This is something that many commentators refer to in their discussions of barriers to effective scrutiny (Wilson and Game, 1998). In a survey of Welsh councillors, it was found that they perceive political concerns, such as one-party dominance and the relation between the executive and scrutiny, as influencing the effectiveness of local scrutiny (Ashworth, 2003). Snape et al (2002) state that one of the key conditions for effective scrutiny is non-partisan working. CRG

(2007) found that there is often reluctance for members to hold their political party colleagues to account.

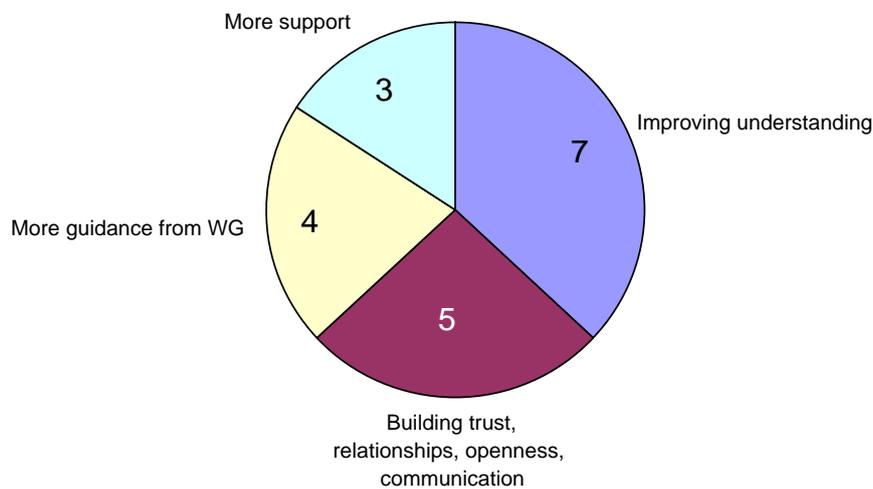
- 3.51 One of the key conditions for effective scrutiny is member leadership and engagement (Snape et al, 2002). However, three interviewees talked about how member attitudes to scrutiny of the LSB held it back. One said that members and partners were apathetic to LSB scrutiny; members felt they could not see how LSB scrutiny could make an effective difference. Using co-opted members means that these local authorities are subscribing to the partnership and collaboration drives, but it also means involving partners who do not have a democratic mandate. CRG (2007) found that many councillors were concerned that some partnerships lacked democratic accountability.
- 3.52 Some respondents said that a lack of guidance from the Welsh Government, including about the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and new requirements and a lack of resources are all barriers to LSB scrutiny. One interviewee said that part of the reason for not undertaking LSB scrutiny was ‘there was no hard and fast guidance ...from Welsh Government about how you should undertake LSB scrutiny’ (interview 4). The interviewees were asked what they thought about the designated person’s provision outlined in the 2011 Measure, and two of them mentioned that there could be difficulties, firstly about the extent to which independent scrutiny panels would have the power to make the designated people attend, and secondly about whether the LSB or the scrutiny panel would be responsible for calling those designated people in. Mckenna (2012) argued that ‘many in local government are waiting for...final guidance’ (McKenna 2012, p. 6).
- 3.53 Public engagement is recommended as part of good scrutiny (CfPS, 2012c; Martin et al, 2011). The CfPS (2012a) survey showed that just over half (52%) of respondents in England and Wales claimed that their local authority did not receive or take up any suggestions from the public. However, this number does not include councillors’

suggestions from their ward work. In addition, it does not mean that the citizen is not considered when scrutiny takes place. In this research, the case studies show that the citizen's position and viewpoint was considered when questioning executives, but public engagement was otherwise not mentioned by the participants in this research at all, which suggests that its use is far from wide.

Overcoming barriers to LSB scrutiny

3.54 In the questionnaire, respondents were asked for potential solutions in overcoming barriers and for what they thought were three important drivers for effective scrutiny. Chart 3.7 shows the proportion of responses about overcoming barriers to LSB scrutiny.

Chart 3.7: Proportion of responses about overcoming barriers to LSB scrutiny



3.55 In answer to the question about overcoming barriers, the most frequently cited method of overcoming barriers to LSB scrutiny was to improve understanding and knowledge of roles, powers, purpose and responsibility of individuals and scrutiny in general. This is

unsurprising given that lack of knowledge and understanding was given as a key barrier to LSB scrutiny.

- 3.56 The extent to which panel members, whether elected or co-opted, have knowledge and experience of scrutiny, varies. Co-opted members may come from organisations where this kind of scrutiny does not take place (CfPS, 2009). Conversely they may be very aware of scrutiny and how to undertake it. New councillors are unfamiliar with scrutiny and the local authority's arrangements, which is something the interviewees mentioned. In contrast, established and incumbent members are aware and have probably practised scrutiny. However, using training to overcome a lack of knowledge and understanding may be difficult, as co-optees do not necessarily have the time to attend scrutiny training on top of their full time jobs and other commitments (CfPS, 2009).
- 3.57 Interviews with scrutiny officers suggest that in most local authorities, all new members are given general, standard training in the workings of the local authority, the scrutiny function and the members' roles within that, and the LSB and its role. However, this training is unlikely to include specific reference to the scrutiny of the LSB.
- 3.58 The next most frequently cited way to overcome barriers was to build trust and relationships with openness and communication. CRG (2007) found that there was a widespread view that partnership working was down to 'personalities'. In this research, co-opted partners were included on only four LSB scrutiny panels. However, scrutiny officers from three out of these four showed that partnership working was generally embraced. People's perceptions of the value of scrutiny are seen as being important for the culture in which scrutiny is taking place (CfPS, 2012a). The CfPS (2012a) says:

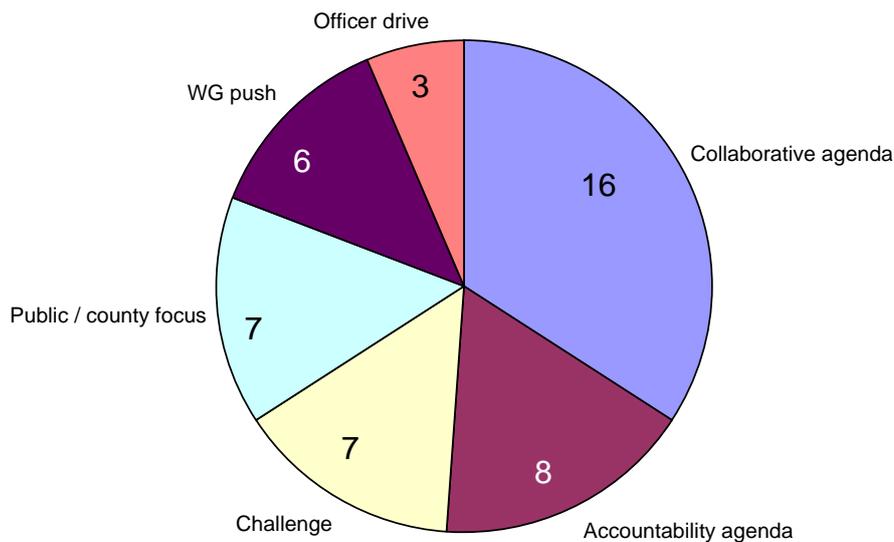
“...for scrutiny to be perceived to be working effectively, effort needs to be taken both by the executive and by scrutiny to build up a positive relationship” (p.20).

- 3.59 The literature shows that not challenging witnesses enough because they are there due to 'good will' rather than by statutory force is a barrier to effective scrutiny. This tension between good scrutiny, statutory duty and 'good will' identified by CRG (2007) may be present in the scrutiny of LSBs. However, this problem may be overcome by the designated person's provision. In addition, it can be overcome by making witnesses feel welcome, providing a supportive atmosphere and asking constructive questions, all of which can be improved by better education and training and better meeting structures. The CfPS (2012a) found that its most recent survey results show that generally those being held to account are co-operative, but that further research is needed to find out whether poorer co-operation happens on critical, challenging issues.
- 3.60 There is a plethora of research about what makes LSB scrutiny effective. When LSBs were piloted in 2006, the Welsh Government did not dictate what LSBs should do, how they should operate, nor did they dictate who should be a member of an LSB. Local authorities and their partners had 'freedom to innovate' (CfPS, 2009). This research has shown that some local authorities would appreciate more guidance from the Welsh Government; indeed, a key driver for LSB scrutiny was seen to be the push from Welsh Government, in terms of the SDF and the 2011 measure particularly.
- 3.61 There were a few questionnaire responses about obtaining more support, in terms of the chief officers of partner organisations and officer support from the local authority. Similarly, CRG (2007) found that there was a perception that having a corporate advocate was a driver for scrutiny. In the interviews, scrutiny officers did not elaborate on this topic, but did mention that support should be of a good quality. This included support for sharing good practice, good quality training, and may mean that support officers need more time to provide good quality support.

Drivers for LSB scrutiny

3.62 The questionnaire asked respondents about their thoughts on three drivers of LSB scrutiny. Chart 3.8 below, shows the proportion of responses about drivers for LSB scrutiny.

Chart 3.8: Proportion of responses about LSB scrutiny drivers



3.63 The most frequent comment about LSB scrutiny drivers centred on the collaboration and partnership agenda. This is supported by research done by others (CRG, 2007), which showed that partnership working and community strategies are growing in importance. Indeed, the CfPS (2012a) asked its respondents what scrutiny would look like in 10 years time; 54% thought that it would be more partnership-focused. However, CRG (2007) found that partnership was not at the forefront of elected members' minds and officers felt that most councillors were not fully engaged with the partnership role. In this research experiences varied; interviews with scrutiny officers showed that some councillors are reluctant to include co-opted partners in scrutiny because they do not have a democratic mandate. In contrast, some scrutiny officers considered their councillors to be very engaged in the partnership agenda.

3.64 The research literature and the Welsh Government guidance suggest that the scrutiny function is seen as ensuring the effectiveness and accountability of local government and service delivery. Indeed, the second most frequently mentioned driver was the accountability agenda, both councillor and Welsh Government-led. Similarly, there were also a number of comments about the need and desire to challenge the LSB.

3.65 Seven questionnaire responses also mentioned involving the public, focusing on the public and the desire and need to get the best for the county and its citizens. CRG (2007) found that “involvement of external stakeholders including the public, public service and voluntary service partners, and established experts was seen by many interviewees as a key determinant of the success of overview and scrutiny” (p.41). This is important because scrutinising the LSB is where these people can and have been involved.

3.66 There were also a few comments about the push from Welsh Government and local government officers driving LSB scrutiny. This seems to suggest that scrutiny of the LSB is not a member or partner-led activity. The interviewees seemed to confirm this. Officers stated that LSB arrangements developed out of discussions between officers, the SDF was a driver for starting LSB scrutiny and members and partners were instructed to undertake LSB scrutiny. This is heavily related to the barrier of lack of member and partner engagement.

Case studies

3.67 The following two cases offer examples of how LSB scrutiny has been developed in two different local authorities. Although the examples seem similar in their approach, there are important differences between them. They are not to be used as instructions to undertake good scrutiny. Instead, these cases illustrate potential strategies for overcoming some common barriers to effective LSB scrutiny.

3.68 Both of these cases have been considered before. The Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) case was used by Downe and Ashworth (2011) in their review of the Scrutiny Development Fund, and by the Welsh Government in its guidance for the Local Government Wales Measure 2011. The Cardiff case was reviewed by the CfPS (2009) and was mentioned during the NAFW review of the LSB pilots (2008). However, the intention of this report is not to repeat what others have already said. Instead, this section will explore how local authorities have chosen to respond to the challenges they have faced in developing its scrutiny of the LSB. In so doing, the challenges and enablers identified throughout this report and drawn from both the literature and the qualitative work undertaken as part of this research, are referred to in both case studies.

4 Case study 1: Rhondda Cynon Taff

This case study uses the work undertaken by Rhondda Cynon Taff on Domestic Abuse to illustrate potential approaches to some common challenges for LSB scrutiny. More specific details about this project have been reported elsewhere, as noted above.

Rhondda Cynon Taff – Scrutiny of the LSB’s Tackling Domestic Abuse project.

General details

Rhondda Cynon Taff has five Scrutiny Committees, one of which, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, is the parent Committee of the LSB scrutiny working group. The membership of the Working Group was comprised of five Councillors from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and representatives from the Police Authority, the Voluntary Sector and the Local Health Board.

The Council applied to the Scrutiny Development Fund (SDF) in 2009 and was awarded £10,000, which it supplemented by £4,000. The project aimed to explore how best to scrutinise the Local Service Board by first scrutinising how the Local Service Board was performing in relation to one of its identified key priorities, namely, “Tackling Domestic Abuse”. Following a period of planning the working group came together for its first meeting in March 2010. The working group published an interim report in January 2011 and the project ended in July 2011 with the publication of a final report. During this time 11 meetings of the working group were held.

Challenge 1: What should be the focus of LSB scrutiny?

Focus

Engaging the panel members

The focus for this project was the LSB’s priority Tackling Domestic Abuse. The purpose of the project was to learn lessons from undertaking a small piece of work which could be used at a later stage to scrutinise the Local Service Board as a whole or continue with the concept of dealing with priority areas individually. Before embarking on the project, officers sought the agreement of both the LSB and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. At an early stage, the working group identified the need to challenge the robustness of the LSB’s Domestic Abuse Action Plan, which involved interviewing senior representatives of the LSB from the main partner agencies, i.e. the Council, South Wales Police, Cwm Taf Health Board and Interlink.

Challenge 2: Lack of skills, understanding and knowledge of scrutiny and the LSB.

For the working group to succeed in its scrutiny project and to work effectively in partnership, it was crucial to ensure that each of its members had a clear understanding of each other’s roles and responsibilities.

In order to achieve this, the Chief Executive of Rhondda Cynon Taff, in his role as Chair of the LSB, gave a presentation to scrutiny members on the role of the Local Service Board. Similarly, the partner members nominated to the group were provided with a presentation from the Council's Director of Legal and Democratic Services on the role of scrutiny prior to the inaugural meeting.

Knowledge
Understanding
Skills
Training
Activities

What the project was trying to achieve was a steep learning curve for all involved and as the work progressed, it was evident that there was a need to raise the skill level in relation to strategic questioning. As a result, additional development sessions aimed at partnership work were delivered by Dr. Andrew Coulson of INLOGOV and Ian Bottrill of ContinYou Cymru and were funded through the Scrutiny Development Fund.

Cultural differences
Training
Knowledge of focus
Citizen focus
Partnership focus

Challenge 3: The possibility of cultural/ other differences between the co-opted and elected members.

The Working Group was comprised of a mix of co-optees and elected councillors, thus the cultures from which they came were very different. For the project to succeed it was important for the group to bond. Therefore the initial meetings focused on introductions and gaining knowledge of the issues relating to domestic abuse and in particular the LSB's use of the KAFKA process and its citizen-based philosophy. This steady approach proved successful and the dynamics of the Group developed with improved interaction and familiarity between all members.

This led to members taking ownership of the project and a determination to 'make a difference'. members were not afraid to challenge the performance of their own organisations with robust questioning of witnesses and this helped to maintain a partnership focus. In addition, the project was supported by the Authority's two Scrutiny Support Officers and the Democratic Services Manager. The project also benefited from the involvement of the Authority's Director of Legal and Democratic Services. The success of the project was dependent on the commitment of both members and officers.

Challenge 4: Inequality between elected and co-opted members.

Each of the partner organisations had an equal role in ensuring the LSB was delivering its aim of tackling domestic abuse. It was therefore important that this was mirrored within the operation of the LSB scrutiny working group. It was fundamental to the group that the co-opted members had the same voting rights as the council members and this was written into the terms of reference of the Working Group. The terms of reference also ensured that the chair and vice chair of the group could not be from the same organisation. It was also suggested at the onset that meetings could take place outside the Council environment. However, it transpired that all members were happy to use the Council's facilities. The time taken at the beginning of the project to ensure that all members were familiar with scrutiny and the issues of domestic abuse also proved valuable to the bonding process. The officers involved also ensured they were available to support both the elected and co-opted members. Individual scrutineers were able to talk to officers and each other on an ad hoc basis to prepare for future meetings.

Inequality
Co-option
Terms of reference
Bonding
Cultural differences
Training
Support
Venue for meeting

Challenge 5: Individual scrutineers questioning their colleagues/ managers

Power
Individuals
Luck
Skills

There is an inherent power imbalance in scrutiny as it involves executives, or their equivalents, being questioned and held to account by non-executives. This can be a daunting situation for some and can depend largely on the strength of the individual personalities. However, the project showed that it is possible to overcome these potential difficulties through training and through developing a partnership culture whereby the individual members feel that they have the support of their colleagues. Each stage of the process was not rushed, allowing individual members time to grow into their role. It was evident after a few meetings that RCT's working group comprised of individuals who were forthcoming with questions to their colleagues and superiors.

5 Case Study 2: Cardiff

This case study covers the changes Cardiff made for the new partnership scrutiny arrangements, and what they have learned from the previous Local Service Board scrutiny panel and the 2011 Measure.

Cardiff – Scrutiny of the Cardiff Partnership Board (CPB)

General details

Cardiff has five scrutiny committees and five dedicated scrutiny officers. They also have four dedicated scrutiny researchers. The original pilot LSB scrutiny panel was supported by a scrutiny officer from Cardiff, who secured funding from the Scrutiny Development Fund (SDF) of £33,000, in order to share the lessons learned from the pilot with other local authorities across Wales.

The LSB scrutiny panel included the chair of each scrutiny committee and a non-executive member from the Police Authority, Local Health Board, the NHS Trust, the Fire and Rescue Service, Voluntary Action Cardiff (VAC), the Community Health Council and a representative from Equalities groups in Cardiff. This panel started meeting in mid-2008 with introductory and development sessions and a business meeting. They formally met four times over the course of the pilot from November 2008 to September 2009, calling internal and external witnesses. The pilot was extended for six months and the panel met a further three times, with Cardiff Council meeting the cost of the extension. They examined how the LSB were implementing its four projects. They received updates from the projects, instigated performance monitoring reports for the projects, commissioned research, questioned witnesses and received evidence from board members.

In the initial stages of the pilot, some of the scrutiny was project-focused whilst other elements were cross-cutting, such as scrutinising organisational change. During the extension of the pilot, the panel members decided to adopt a thematic approach, scrutinising themes such as citizen engagement, data sharing, LSB functioning and resources as well as project monitoring. All of this was used by the panel to provide recommendations to the LSB on how to improve the work of the partnership projects.

Challenge 1: Establishing Understanding and Trust

The experience of local authority scrutiny of the LSB partner organisations was limited and their view of scrutiny was shaped by their internal scrutiny mechanisms. Work was needed to build understanding and trust that the scrutiny process would not undermine sometimes fragile working arrangements within the LSB. In order to enable this, the work programme of the pilot LSB Scrutiny Panel was carefully negotiated with the LSB projects and officers supporting the LSB. The panel's work was recognised as good practice by the Welsh Government and the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

Lack of experience Trust Understanding Focus

However, the panel identified issues which they would wish addressed in future LSB scrutiny. When the new panel was set up, these issues were addressed by expanding the new terms of reference to include the wider partnership activities and structures. The focus of the Cardiff Partnership Board (CPB) scrutiny is now on cross-cutting partnership issues, such as engagement with service users, and there is no longer such a focus on individual projects due to the large number of workstreams being undertaken by the CPB.

Challenge 2: Lack of time

The scrutiny panel is made up of elected and co-opted members who are very busy with many other roles. Some of them know each other but others do not. The panel meets every quarter and their meetings are time-limited. This means that they have very little time to bond. Evaluations from the previous LSB identified that the members did not feel that they fully bonded and worked effectively until the third scrutiny meeting. This was despite having several introductory, development and training sessions before having their first meeting.

Time
Bonding
Information
Better
recommendations
Public

In order to help form these bonds and raise awareness amongst panel members, the new CPB scrutiny panel conducted two introductory training meetings and held a pre-meeting before the first official scrutiny meeting. This allowed the panel members to discuss what areas they may want to explore in the scrutiny meeting and how it might run. However, pre-meetings held a week before scrutiny meetings are very difficult to organise, and in future Cardiff are considering organising pre-meetings which would be held half an hour to an hour before the official scrutiny meeting starts.

As meetings are time-limited, panel members need to be briefed about and understand issues in a short amount of time. Although presentations can clarify issues, they tend to lengthen the sessions. Cardiff have reduced the number of presentations that witnesses give, and instead prefer to have briefing papers before the meeting accompanied by very short presentations. This allows more time for supplementary questions and more time for the panel to reflect on the evidence provided in the sessions and to draft recommendations.

Challenge 3: Recommendations

The panel's recommendations were initially considered problematic. The panel asked for delivery against recommendations rather than a response to recommendations. Some officers felt that the recommendations were not realistic given the LSB priorities and context. This meant that discussions around the recommendations were taking up too much time in LSB meetings

and that resources were being diverted away from project delivery. Feedback was provided on this issue and the panel altered the ways in which they made recommendations. Recommendations made were SMART-er (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, timely) and presented in a more helpful way. A consequence of this change was that the board's response was more detailed than before. This approach has been continued by the new CPB scrutiny which attempts to make recommendations which follow the SMART model.

Time
Recommendations
Communication
SMART-er
recommendations

Challenge 4: Funding

Funding
Feedback
Support
Focus

As part of the pilot process, the Scrutiny Panel held regular evaluation sessions and invited feedback from witnesses and project leads to help inform the development of the project. At the end of the extension to the pilot, the LSB Scrutiny Panel met with the LSB Executive to discuss the learning from the pilot and the proposed way forward. There was unanimous support for the continuation of a multi-agency LSB Scrutiny Panel and agreement on the need to strengthen the terms of reference and protocol rules for the new Panel.

However, resources for the LSB Scrutiny Panel were difficult to achieve in the challenging economic climate affecting all the participant bodies. The scrutiny panel was put on hold while the partnership was redeveloped and funding secured. The LSB became the Cardiff Partnership Board (CPB) which has since developed a Single Integrated Plan (SIP). The Local Authority has now sourced funding to employ a new part-time scrutiny officer to support the new CPB scrutiny panel. The new scrutiny panel's make up is similar to the previous panel, and includes non-executive representatives from:

- Cardiff 3rd Sector Council (C3CS).
- Community Health Council.
- University Health Board.
- Five chairs of the overview and scrutiny committees.
- Fire and Rescue service.
- Probation service.
- Equalities.
- The Police.

This panel started meeting in early-2012 with introductory and development sessions. It has had one formal scrutiny meeting where it focused on the cross-cutting theme of engagement. The development of the SIP and changes in the partnership delivery structure, has been vital to the changes made in Cardiff and in its LSB scrutiny arrangements. The support and impetus for continuing scrutiny of the partnership was a result of the good work done during the pilot stage, which meant that as soon as funding was secured, the lessons learned could be applied.

6 Learning from this report and links to other work

- 6.1 The purpose of this report is to establish a baseline of LSB scrutiny activity across Wales and to identify some of the key barriers to effective LSB scrutiny. The baseline is set out in chapter four, as are some of the barriers. The case studies in chapters five and six illustrate how two local authorities have tackled some of the barriers to scrutiny, raised in this report and show how changing the focus of LSB scrutiny alone can have a huge impact on barriers.
- 6.2 However, there are unlikely to be many 'one size fits all' solutions to some of the barriers outlined in this report. Scrutiny officers and their colleagues need to determine whether the enablers and case study examples offered here, can help in forming good LSB scrutiny in their local authority, with the particular people involved and the particular issues that are concerning in their locality. Very often, the barriers stem from cultural issues that are very difficult to change. However, this should not be a reason to not attempt to improve scrutiny of the LSB.
- 6.3 The research carried out for this report was done at a time when scrutiny officers were facing competing demand for their time, knowledge and experience from other researchers, and so the author is grateful to those who contributed their time to this project.
- 6.4 Cardiff Business School is conducting a research project into the extent to which scrutiny teams have been collaborating on scrutiny-related activities, and how appropriate support can be provided for peer learning and knowledge exchange between scrutiny officers and elected members. In addition, the Wales Audit Office (WAO) is enabling each local authority to conduct a self-evaluation of scrutiny and encouraging local authorities to meet up in their regional footprint areas to engage in peer learning activities.
- 6.5 The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) is embarking on a Welsh Government-funded Scrutiny Support Programme for Wales. A key

aim of this programme is to enable Welsh local authorities to work jointly on scrutiny in more effective ways, and enhance how local and national partners are engaged with overview and scrutiny.

- 6.6 The large amount of work being done in this area at the time of this report, may have resulted in some scrutiny officers being overburdened by requests for their time and information. In anticipation of this, the Welsh Government policy team, the researcher and the researchers of the Cardiff Business School project, communicated in an attempt to lessen the burden as much as was practicable.
- 6.7 The present report's focus on LSB scrutiny, marks it out as different from the more general scrutiny research being done by both Cardiff Business School and the WAO. This work gives an idea of what is happening across Wales with regard to LSB scrutiny. It also gives insight into some of the key barriers and enablers that scrutiny officers see as important to LSB scrutiny. However, this report does not constitute a 'how to' guide, nor does it intend to represent each individual local authority's view on LSB scrutiny and its barriers and drivers.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 The CfPS (2012a) state that there is a mixed picture of the current and future position of the scrutiny function in England and Wales. The same thing could be said of the current state of LSB scrutiny in Wales. Either LSB scrutiny is able to refresh itself in response to new challenges, or it struggles with real support issues and has little capacity to change to meet new challenges, or each individual local authority is somewhere in the middle (CfPS, 2012a). However, there are examples of effective scrutiny taking place and the two case studies in chapters five and six attest to this.
- 7.2 The assumption that scrutiny of the LSB is an important part of improving partnership working in Wales, drives the Welsh Government's commitment to encourage more of it through initiatives such as the Scrutiny Development Fund. Indeed, interviewees maintained that LSB scrutiny *needs* to be undertaken.
- 7.3 The effectiveness of LSB scrutiny is not the focus of this report. This report offers the first step in understanding the level of scrutiny of Local Service Boards occurring across Wales, from the mechanisms used and the people involved to the perceptions of the current scrutiny landscape. It is also important to consider that this research has been undertaken after a period of change for LSB scrutiny and the landscape may look very different in a year's time. It is recommended, therefore, to undertake a similar study in 12 months' time, when the LSB scrutiny plans alluded to by respondents, have been put in place and the effectiveness of scrutiny can begin to be ascertained.

Current activity in LSB scrutiny

- 7.4 There has been limited LSB scrutiny activity over the past 12 months. In addition, the Simpson report (Simpson, 2011) and the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 have led to changes which local authorities are currently implementing in their LSB scrutiny arrangements. Although it is important to understand what is currently

happening, it is also important to be aware that local authorities across Wales are in the process of changing LSB scrutiny arrangements. This is evidenced by the intentions for future plans indicated both in the questionnaire responses and in the interviews, such as some local authorities' intentions for the LSB scrutiny panel to act as consultees on the SIP and to scrutinise the SIP when it is implemented. Thus, future research as recommended above, may be able to ascertain in more detail how the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 has affected LSB scrutiny arrangements.

LSB scrutiny mechanism

7.5 Apart from the focus of LSB scrutiny, one of the main differences between new, dedicated panels and existing panels undertaking LSB scrutiny is the involvement of partner co-optees. The lack of prescription regarding LSB scrutiny means that local authorities have been free to undertake it using any method they wish. This research indicated that more direction on LSB scrutiny from the Welsh Government would be welcome.

7.6 The CfPS (2012a) has stated that scrutiny effectiveness is influenced more by culture than structure. There were indications in the interviews that innovative arrangements are being developed in at least one local authority. The changes currently being made to LSB scrutiny arrangements across Wales mean that LSB scrutiny is evolving. At this point it is difficult to summarise the current state of play in Wales, as LSBs across Wales are in varying stages of that evolution and are using varying mechanisms and structures.

LSB scrutiny activities

7.7 Although 12 respondents indicated their local authorities undertake LSB scrutiny, when speaking to the interviewees, four of them stated that LSB scrutiny consisted of the existing scrutiny panel receiving reports from the LSB and making comments, as opposed to formal recommendations. Neither were most respondents aware of the consequences of the scrutiny panel's comments. Hence it is difficult to

ascertain the impact of current scrutiny. However, changes are being made in most of these local authorities and LSB scrutiny may look different in the near future.

- 7.8 The CfPS (2012a) found that scrutiny recommendations (general scrutiny, not just LSB scrutiny) are accepted 85% of the time and implemented 86% of the time. In the present study, evidence on recommendations was scarce. However, three officers indicated on the questionnaire that the LSB scrutiny panel in their local authority did send formal reports or make recommendations to the LSB. This may suggest that LSB scrutiny is not yet embedded in the same way that scrutiny in general is embedded across England and Wales.

Barriers to LSB scrutiny

- 7.9 The barriers to effective LSB scrutiny identified by the respondents via the questionnaire and the interviewees, complement the findings of literature on the subject. The key barrier identified in this research is the lack of knowledge and understanding of LSB scrutiny. A way of overcoming this barrier identified by participants was improving knowledge and understanding LSB scrutiny, which could be achieved by training elected and co-opted scrutineers. However, a barrier that may prove more difficult to solve is a lack of time and resources. The case studies show that using innovative ways to use time more effectively helps. In future, perhaps a higher profile for LSB scrutiny may encourage more officer time and more resources for LSB scrutiny from both local authorities and the Welsh Government.
- 7.10 A higher profile for LSB scrutiny may also help overcome the barrier of lack of engagement and political concerns. Indeed, more training and education about LSB scrutiny has the potential to improve engagement. In addition, more trust, better communication and better relationships between local authorities and their partners, the LSB scrutiny panel and executives within the local government and from partners, may help to alleviate political concerns.

Drivers for LSB scrutiny

7.11 The main driver for LSB scrutiny was seen by the scrutiny officers as the collaboration or partnership drive. However, these were not the only drivers, as some scrutiny officers mentioned the accountability drive, the desire to challenge the LSB and the desire to incorporate the needs of the public and the area which the LSB represents. The extent to which members drive LSB scrutiny is minimal. From the interviews, it was clear that LSB scrutiny tends to be initiated by local government officials, sometimes with added impetus from central government as a result of schemes like the Scrutiny Development Fund. This is important because one of conditions conducive to effective scrutiny is leadership and engagement of elected members (Snape et al, 2002).

Support and guidance for LSB scrutiny

7.12 Many local authorities are intending to initiate LSB scrutiny in the near future, and although support is beginning to become available for LSB scrutiny through the newly founded CfPS' Scrutiny Support Programme for Wales, the WAO's current self-evaluation project and the resurrected Welsh Government Scrutiny Development Fund, this research indicates that scrutiny officers feel that more direction on LSB scrutiny should come from the Welsh Government. Guidance will be vital in support of further LSB scrutiny and most of the respondents to the questionnaire chose an LSB scrutiny toolkit in their top three options for future support.

In conclusion...

7.13 There is a mixed picture across Wales with regard to LSB scrutiny activities. There is an assumption that LSB scrutiny is a 'good' thing; that it needs to be undertaken. The present study has provided a 'snapshot' of current LSB scrutiny activity, and illustrates that there is variation in the ways in which scrutiny is undertaken, from the mechanisms used and the membership to the focus of the scrutiny itself. However, LSB scrutiny is evolving as a result of the Local

Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Government's drive for collaboration, simplification and accountability. The Welsh Government can support LSB scrutiny in Wales by building on the support it already offers to enable LSBs to respond to recent developments and make LSB scrutiny stronger as a result.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Establishing a Baseline – LSB Scrutiny Mapping Exercise

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research.

The Welsh Government would like to find out what currently happens with regard to LSB scrutiny within each local authority, so that we are better equipped to provide support.

The survey should take no longer than 15 minutes.

Questions marked with an asterisk (*) are compulsory

General Details

1. What is the name of your council?*

Blaenau Gwent
Bridgend
Caerphilly
Cardiff
Carmarthenshire
Ceredigion
Conwy
Denbighshire
Flintshire
Gwynedd
Isle of Anglesey
Merthyr Tydfil
Monmouthshire
Neath Port Talbot
Newport
Pembrokeshire
Powys
Rhondda Cynon Taff
Swansea
The Vale of Glamorgan
Torfaen
Wrexham

2. How many Scrutiny Committees does your Council have?*

3. How many dedicated Scrutiny Officers does your Council have?*

4. Are you able to access additional scrutiny support?* Such as additional administrative support, support from the WLGA, CfPS or that available from the Scrutiny Timebank.

Yes / no (if yes, please answer question 5)

5. From where are you able to access additional scrutiny support?

LSB Scrutiny Model

6. Have you established any sort of LSB Scrutiny mechanism?* For example an LSB scrutiny panel, utilising an existing scrutiny committee, established a Task and Finish Group to undertake the work, formed a sub-committee to consider the work on the LSB.

(If yes go to Q9 and continue, if no, go to Q7-11 and then Q 28-31.)

7. Are you aware of any intentions within your Council to develop LSB Scrutiny in the next 12 months? Yes / No

8. Please can you outline what the proposed plans for developing LSB scrutiny entail?

9. In your opinion what are the biggest **3** barriers to developing LSB Scrutiny?*

10. Based on your knowledge and experience, what is the most important factor in overcoming barriers to LSB scrutiny?*

11. In your opinion what are the biggest **3** drivers for developing LSB Scrutiny?*

12. From the list below, please choose the option that best describes your council's current LSB scrutiny arrangements:

1. **Dedicated multi-agency board** which is a **sub-committee** of an existing Scrutiny Committee;
2. **Dedicated multi-agency board** which is **independent** of existing scrutiny Committees;
3. **Existing Scrutiny Committee** undertakes LSB Scrutiny role;
4. **Dedicated multi-agency board** which is a **sub-committee** of an existing Scrutiny Committee with **representation of Elected Members** from more than one local authority.
5. Other.

Co-opted Members

13. Are co-opted Members included as an integral part of LSB scrutiny in your council? Yes / no. If yes, answer Q 13-18, if no, go to Q 19.

14. How many co-opted members are included in your LSB Scrutiny arrangements?

15. Which agencies or organisations do they represent? Please tick all that apply

Charity

Voluntary organisation – county level
Police authority/service
Fire and rescue service
Health Board
NHS trust
Wales Probation / Probation service
Business group
Environment agency
Welsh Government
University
College
Parent governors
Countryside Council for Wales
National Park Authority
Housing Association
Citizens Advice Bureau
Job Centre Plus
Town and community councils
Communities First
Other – please specify

16. Have Co-opted Members been given any training on LSB scrutiny?
(Yes or No) (if yes, please answer question 17)

17. Who provided this training?

Local Authority
WLGA
External agency
Other

18. Do the co-opted members currently have voting rights? (Yes or No)

LSB Scrutiny Structure, Function and Capacity

19. How many Elected Members sit on your LSB Scrutiny Board / Panel / Committee?

20. Does your LSB Scrutiny Panel / Board / Committee currently have terms of reference? (Yes / No)

21. Has it established a Forward Work Programme?
Yes / no (If yes, then please answer Q22 and 23, if no, go to Q24)

22. Was the LSB consulted upon the development of the Scrutiny Panel / Board / Committee's forward work programme? Yes / No

23. Does your LSB Scrutiny Panel / Board / Committee have capacity to undertake Task and Finish Group type investigations? Yes / No

24. Who currently chairs your LSB Scrutiny Panel / Board / Committee?
Please specify role

25. How often does the Chair of the Scrutiny Panel / Board / Committee meet with the Chair of the LSB?

- Never
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Once every quarter
- Once every six months
- Other

Scrutiny Activity and Progress to Date

26. Have your LSB Scrutiny arrangements been involved in any of the following scrutiny activities to date? Please tick all that apply

- Holding the LSB to account against Local Delivery Agreements (LDA) or other planned programmes of work.
- Task and Finish type investigations as linked to LSB priorities, projects or workstreams
- Involvement in the scoping of potential LSB priority projects (pre-decision Scrutiny)
- Involvement as consultees in LDAs or other LSB projects.
- Involvement in the LSB's annual evaluation exercise
- Other

27. Have your LSB Scrutiny arrangements made any formal report or recommendations to the LSB to date? (Yes / No).

28. Taking everything into account, which category would best describe the current development of your council's LSB Scrutiny arrangements?* Please choose from the categories below

1. No LSB Scrutiny arrangements currently in place
2. Some initial progress made in **developing** LSB Scrutiny arrangements
3. Fairly well developed arrangements in place including **co-option and regular engagement of cross-sector representatives**
4. Established arrangements in place including **development and delivery of a FWP** and **regular reporting and communication with LSB partners**

5. Mature arrangements in place where **LSB Scrutiny activity is valued and respected by LSB and regarded as an integral part of its annual evaluation arrangements**

Preferences – Future support?

29. Which **three** of the following options would be best for your council to support its LSB scrutiny arrangements?* Please tick the three most useful:

- Development and dissemination of best practice and case studies via an LSB Scrutiny E-letter
- Development of an LSB Scrutiny Toolkit – this would contain report templates, draft terms of reference, models of different scrutiny structures, how to develop a FWP, advice on research methods for LSB Scrutiny;
- Regional Workshops and seminars on LSB Scrutiny
- National Workshops and seminars on LSB Scrutiny
- Workshops and seminars within individual Councils on LSB Scrutiny
- Assistance with editing LSB Scrutiny reports and recommendations
- Peer review activity, such as attendance, observation and analysis at LSB Scrutiny meetings
- Provision of presentations and advice sessions to LSBs and LSB Scrutiny Panels / Boards / Committees

30. Please feel free to make any additional comment or suggestion regarding any aspect of LSB scrutiny.

31. If you are happy to be contacted about a follow up telephone interview, please enter your email address here.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research.

Appendix 2: Interview schedule

Thank you for taking part in this interview. Hopefully, this should take no longer than an hour, but if you need to go, please let me know about 10 minutes before (if possible), so I can ask some final rounding up questions. I will be asking questions about the development of LSB scrutiny in your council, the process of scrutinising the LSB and training and development. I would appreciate all the information you can give, as well as your personal opinions. If you cannot answer any questions, just let me know and we'll move on. I will be taking notes, so please bear with me. As I think I already mentioned, I would like to record this conversation, is this ok? This will help me to make more detailed notes later and to analyse your responses.

1) *LSB scrutiny set-up*

Taking you all the way back to the beginning, can you tell me about the process of setting up LSB scrutiny in [name of council]?

- *What was the impetus for doing LSB scrutiny?*
- *Who was involved? What kind of level are they at? How senior?*
- *Typical steps*
 - *Terms of reference development?*
 - *Developing which aspects of the LSB members would like to scrutinise?*
 - *Co-optees – how was the role or input of co-optees decided?*
 - *How and why these co-opted members were identified and appointed*
 - *How was the LSB scrutiny team developed? Trained? Team building?*
- *Now you've been through that process, would you recommend doing it that way?*
- *What would you change if you were to do it again?*
- *What advice would you offer a fellow officer setting up LSB scrutiny?*

2) *LSB scrutiny within the LA*

In what ways would you say LSB scrutiny is different from other forms of scrutiny in your council?

- *People / personnel; Processes; Impact; Attitudes*

3) *LSB scrutiny process*

Now, I would like you to take me through an LSB scrutiny project that has been completed over the past 12 months which you think has gone really well, or is the best example of LSB scrutiny in your council. What would you say is your most positive example or experience of LSB scrutiny over the past 12 months? *Give respondent time to think.*

- *Can you take me through the process for developing topics for that LSB scrutiny project?*
- *Once the topic was agreed, how did the scrutiny then go ahead?*
- *Typical steps:*
 - *Commissioning information reports from LSB support officers*
 - *Arranging interviews / discussions with LSB representatives*
 - *Analysing information and making recommendations*

- *Presenting conclusions and recommendations to the LSB*
 - *Undertaking monitoring of previous recommendations*
- *What forms did the scrutiny take?*
- *What was the role of the co-opted members*
 - *Did this aid scrutiny?*
- *What was the role of elected members in the process?*
- *Was public engagement a feature of this project?*
 - *what forms did this take*
 - *What was the impact on scrutiny*
 - *How did that go?*
- *What were the outcomes of the scrutiny activity?*
 - *Formal report / recommendations to the LSB?*
 - *Were the recommendations considered by the LSB?*
 - *Was any action taken as a result?*
- *Has the LSB provided any feedback regarding the work or development of the LSB Scrutiny Board*
 - *How has that been received?*
 - *Have any changes been made?*
- *Has there been any negative feedback about LSB scrutiny*
 - *How has that been received?*
 - *Have any changes been made?*
- *It sounds like it went really well, were there any barriers or challenges?*
 - *How did these manifest themselves?*
 - *How did you attempt to overcome them?*
- *Was the WG involved at any point with this particular project? How did that go?*
- *Would you say that was a typical process? Do LSB scrutiny projects tend to go that well?*

4) Now, I would like you to take me through an LSB scrutiny project which was less successful, or one that didn't go to plan. What would you say has been a less successful example of LSB scrutiny over the past 12 months?

- *Can you take me through the process for developing topics for that LSB scrutiny project?*
- *Once the topic was agreed, how did the scrutiny then go ahead?*
- *Typical steps:*
 - *Commissioning information reports from LSB support officers*
 - *Arranging interviews / discussions with LSB representatives*
 - *Analysing information and making recommendations*
 - *Presenting conclusions and recommendations to the LSB*
 - *Undertaking monitoring of previous recommendations*
- *What forms did the scrutiny take?*
- *What was the role of the co-opted members?*
 - *Did this aid scrutiny?*
- *What was the role of elected members in the process?*
- *Was public engagement a feature of this project?*
 - *What forms were taken?*
 - *What was the impact on scrutiny?*
 - *How did that go?*

- *What were the outcomes of the scrutiny activity*
 - *Formal report / recommendations to the LSB?*
 - *Were the recommendations considered by the LSB?*
 - *Was any action taken as a result?*
- *Has the LSB provided any feedback regarding the work or development of the LSB Scrutiny Board?*
 - *How has that been received?*
 - *Have any changes been made?*
- *Has there been any negative feedback about LSB scrutiny?*
 - *How has that been received?*
 - *Have any changes been made?*
- *It sounds like it was going pretty badly? How did you deal with that?*
- *Was the WG involved at any point with this particular project? How did that go?*
- *Would you say that was a typical process? Do LSB scrutiny projects tend to go like that?*

Thanks very much for that. Those are really useful examples.
Now I'd like to ask just a few questions about training and support.

5) *Scrutiny training and development*

- *Have you or anyone involved in LSB scrutiny in your council accessed any training / development?*
- *Can you tell me about that?*
 - *Who provided it?*
 - *What topics were considered?*
 - *How useful was it?*
 - *good practice guides? WLGA networks etc? CfPS? In house?*
- *What other support mechanisms have you or your colleagues in LSB scrutiny accessed? WLGA guidance? Networks? CfPS, WG support; Development Fund, in house support?*
- *How useful do you find that support?*
- *Are there any gaps in the support available?*

6) *General concluding questions (esp. if respondent needs to ring off 'early')*

- *What are your thoughts about LSB scrutiny as it has been conducted in (name of council)?*
- *What are your thoughts about LSB scrutiny in general?*
- *What are your thoughts about the designated persons provision as outlined in the Local Government measure?*
- *What do you think the key challenges are for developing LSB scrutiny?*

What would you say to other councils who are about to implement LSB scrutiny? What advice would you give them?