

Scrutiny at Leeds City Council

Annual Report 2011/12



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Foreword

On behalf of the Council's Scrutiny Boards, I have pleasure in presenting the 2011/12 Scrutiny Annual Report. This report summarises the achievements and contributions made by Scrutiny Boards over the last 12 months in helping Leeds to fulfil its vision to be the best city in the UK.

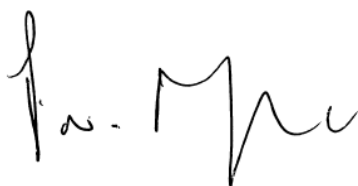
In May 2011, Council recognised the need for Scrutiny to become more strategic and outward looking and decided to align the Scrutiny Boards with the Local Strategic Partnerships. In doing so, Council also tasked Scrutiny Boards with undertaking specific reviews linked to the City Priority Plans of their respective Partnerships. 17 such inquiries were identified and 15 have been completed.

This year, the focus remains on partnership scrutiny. With the City Council becoming less of the traditional provider of services, scrutiny and accountability will remain an important function for elected Members. The Council's Scrutiny Boards are uniquely placed to evaluate how well public services are being delivered and how they could be improved. Elected Members, through the Scrutiny process, have enabled the voice and concerns of the public to be heard and have helped drive service improvement, ensuring the quality of services, whether provided in-house or externally, are the best they can be. With this in mind, Council has asked Scrutiny to act as a 'critical friend' to their respective Partnerships and undertake an assessment of how well the Partnerships are working, with particular focus on how well they have increased the pace of change and also more generally how they are tackling poverty and addressing inequality within Leeds.

During 2012/13, other key areas for Scrutiny relate to the new policing reforms and the transition towards a new public health system. With the arrival of an elected West Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner in November 2012, Community Safety Partnerships are expected to develop robust business plans to reflect their local community safety priorities. Scrutiny will therefore have a key role in supporting the development of this local business plan and also in forging strong links with the new West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel.

In preparation for local authorities becoming responsible for commissioning public health services from April 2013, Scrutiny also has a role in working with the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure that there is clarity on how the NHS and the different service areas across the Council will work collectively in achieving the desired public health outcomes for the residents of Leeds.

This annual report also reflects on the development of Scrutiny over the last 12 months and identifies further key actions to aid continuous improvement.



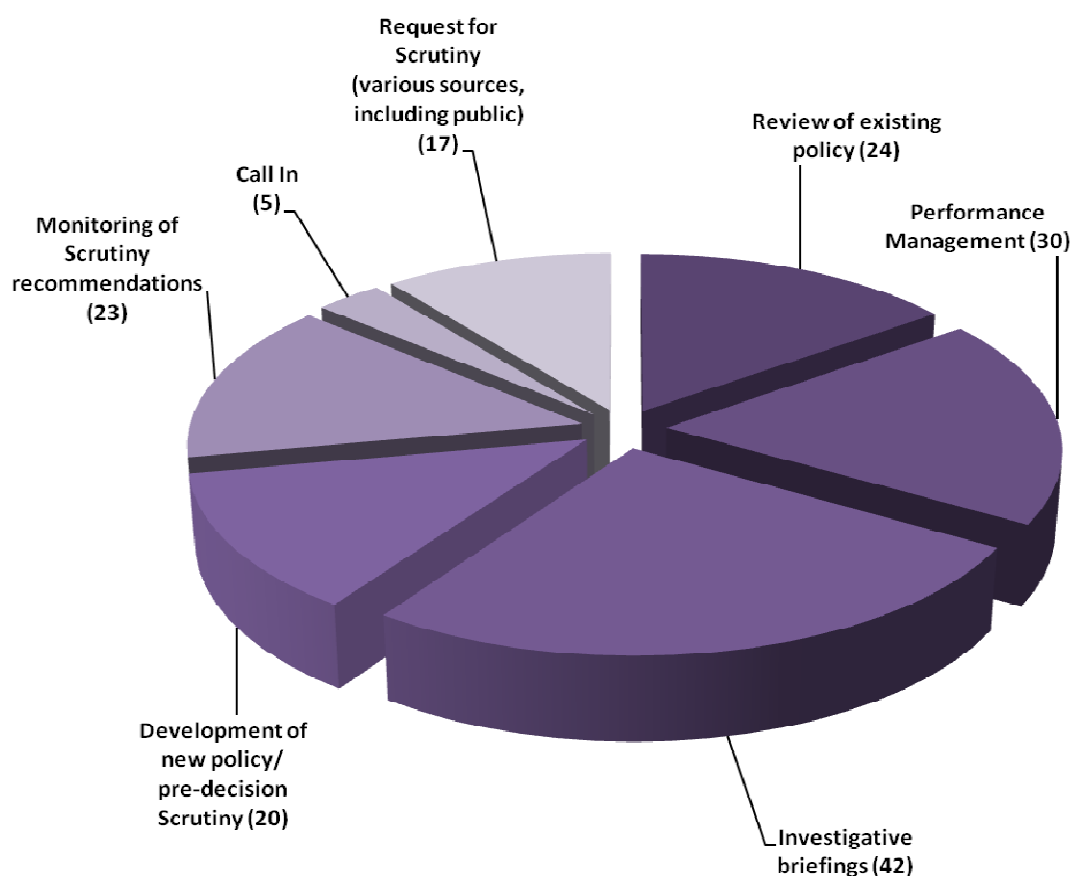
Peter Marrington
Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Summary of work and Publications 2011/12

Summary of Scrutiny Work in 2011/12

This section provides an analysis of the work undertaken by scrutiny over the last 12 months. The chart below represents the type and proportion of work that the Scrutiny Boards have done this year.

Type and total number of Scrutiny work items in 2011/12



Scrutiny Boards remain autonomous in determining their work programmes and are therefore responsible for ensuring that items of scrutiny work come from a strategic approach, as well as a need to challenge service performance and respond to issues of high public interest. This is complemented by more traditional areas of work, which include performance management and recommendation tracking.

The good practice of working closely with Executive Members in identifying potential areas of scrutiny work has continued to be embraced by the Scrutiny Boards over the last few years. In addition, the numbers of requests for scrutiny have also continued to increase from a variety of different sources, including the public. Whilst such requests have prompted initial investigative briefings, these have often led to more detailed reviews of service delivery or policy being undertaken.

Scrutiny also continues to have an important and legitimate role to play in the development of new policy and ‘pre-decision scrutiny’. During 2010/11, there was a notable increase in the proportion of work undertaken by scrutiny in relation to the development of policy and influencing Executive decision making (22% of the overall workload compared to 9% the previous year). This trend has not continued during 2011/12 and therefore has been identified as a key action area for 2012/13.

Scrutiny Boards generally undertake at least three in-depth inquiries a year. These lead to cross party agreement in recommending actions aimed at driving service improvement. Such recommendations are then regularly monitored by the Scrutiny Boards in order to evaluate progress and their overall impact.

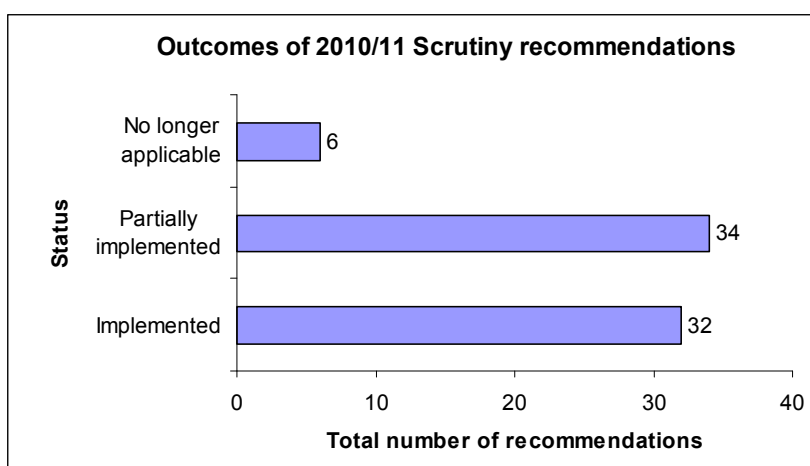
Final Inquiry reports published by the Scrutiny Boards in 2011/12

- Review of Children’s Congenital Cardiac Services
- Affordable Housing by Private Developers
- Services for Children with Disabilities, Special Educational Needs and Additional Health Needs – Inquiry into Service Redesign
- Maximising Powers to Promote, Influence and Create Local Employment and Skills Opportunities
- The Engagement of Young People in Culture, Sporting and Recreational Activities
- External Placements
- Housing Growth
- Improving School Attendance
- Private Rented Sector Housing
- Fuel Poverty
- Employees’ Declaration of Interest
- Reducing Smoking in Leeds

Outcome of recommendations made by Scrutiny in 2010/11

A key element of the Scrutiny Boards’ work involves ongoing monitoring of recommendations arising from previous scrutiny reviews. A statistical analysis of the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Boards in the previous municipal year is produced, showing the outcome status of the recommendations after 12 months of monitoring.

The chart below shows the outcome status (as of May 2012) of all the scrutiny recommendations made during 2010/11.



Highlights and Achievements

A summary of the significant pieces of work undertaken by scrutiny over the last 12 months is presented below. This snapshot identifies the added value brought by scrutiny.

- **Challenging existing policy**

In June 2011, the Executive Board asked the **Regeneration Scrutiny Board** to consider the population and household projection information, including the land banking practices of developers, that will underpin the Core Strategy on housing growth. The Board put forward recommendations aimed at improving current processes and achieving a more robust and effective partnership with developers. Stemming from this inquiry, a further piece of work was undertaken to review the current position with regard to the provision of affordable housing by private developers. This led to a number of recommendations to the Executive Board which included a review of the Council's Affordable Housing Policy to reflect the current economic climate.

As part of its inquiry around health inequalities, the **Health and Wellbeing and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board** added its weight to the growing body of evidence around the wider determinants of health and, therefore, health inequalities. As the Council will take over responsibility for public health from the NHS from April 2013, the Scrutiny Board highlight that, while there will undoubtedly be challenges during the transition, this also provided a unique opportunity for the Council and its partners to more consistently target services towards the most deprived communities to tackle the entrenched social inequalities that form the wider determinants of health.

The **Resources and Council Services Scrutiny Board** conducted a review to obtain an understanding of the current arrangements for the collection and recording of employees declarations of interest. This review set out to determine whether such arrangements were fit for purpose and to consider the merits of having a publicised register of officers' declarations of interests. This resulted in a public register of officer interests being developed.

During its inquiry into Private Rented Sector Housing, the **Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board** recognised that housing standards work remains primarily a demand led service, dealing with a significant volume of reactive complaints work. The Executive Board have accepted the recommendation that, in view of the longstanding issues faced by the Council in striving to achieve consistency in the quality of housing standards within this sector, the Council adopts a more proactive and targeted integrated management approach to enable more robust monitoring and regulation of this sector.

- **Influencing Executive Decision Making**

The **Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board** was asked by the Executive to consider and comment on the draft Leeds Housing Revenue Account Business Plan prior to it being approved. It reported its findings and

recommendations in November 2011, reinforcing the message that the success of the Leeds HRA Business Plan will be very much dependant on informed consultation and decisions being made to build an Asset Management Plan and supporting Financial Plan that will deliver the required aims and objectives.

The **Sustainable Economy and Culture Scrutiny Board** conducted an inquiry into Maximising Powers to Promote, Influence and Create Local Employment and Skills Opportunities. With a focus on policy development, this inquiry led to the production and implementation of a Policy Framework and Charter for Employment and Skills Opportunities. Particular attention was also given to employment and skills obligations in planning and procurement, as defined by the Sustainable Economy and Culture Board, and the need for services to work more collaboratively to deliver a seamless and effective function.

The **Health and Wellbeing and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board** issued observations to the Executive Board, having considered the outcome of public consultation around the future options for long term residential and day care services. The Scrutiny Board observations provided further assurance and helped inform the Executive Board's consideration of the report '*Better lives for Older People: Future Options for Long Term Residential and Day Care Services*'.

• Holding the Executive to Account

The Call In process provides the facility for Scrutiny Board Members to require a decision taker to reconsider a decision. This is a separate function from the Scrutiny Board's ability to review decisions already taken and implemented.

The Call In facility was used on five separate occasions during 2011/12. These related to the following decisions:

1. Review of Parking Fees (July 2011)
2. Beckett Park Building, Foxcroft Close LS6 3NT – Internal Refurbishment Works (November 2011)
3. Waste Solution for Leeds - Residual Waste Treatment PFI Project (November 2011)
4. Three Year Grants to Cultural Organisations (April 2012)
5. Annual Consultation on Admission Arrangements for September 2013 (April 2012)

All of the decisions above were released for implementation. However, as part of the scrutiny process, where particular issues had been identified as a consequence of the Call In, these were acted upon. For example, the Beckett Park Building Call In resulted in the **Resources and Council Services Scrutiny Board** recommending changes to the officer delegation scheme for capital projects to provide greater clarity in terms of who is the responsible service officer making the decision. Changes were also made to require officers to clearly explain how Members were consulted as part of the decision making process. The standard of delegation decision reports has also been improved to match the level of standard expected for Executive Board reports.

- **Championing Collaborative Working**

Collaborative working continues to be a key theme running throughout many of the scrutiny inquiries, reinforcing the need for greater partnership scrutiny. Particular examples of scrutiny inquiries where this has been a key issue are set out below.

The **Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board** conducted an in-depth inquiry into fuel poverty. This inquiry involved a wide range of local services and organisations, reinforcing the complexity of this issue and prompting the Scrutiny Board to make recommendations aimed at raising the profile of fuel poverty amongst key partners and identifying how the Council and its partners can work more collaboratively to achieve greater efficiencies and better outcomes for those at risk of fuel poverty.

The **Resources and Council Services Scrutiny Board** conducted an analysis of the Contact Centre resulting in clear recommendations about its future funding, anticipating service failures and the consequential increase in Contact Centre activity, but also reinforcing the need to develop better working relationships between Directorates and the Contact Centre.

The **Health and Wellbeing and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board** considered a range of information relating to the changing nature and transformation of Health and Social Care Services in Leeds. The final report recognised the significance of some of the challenges facing organisations involved across Leeds' local health and social care economy and acknowledged some of the good work and proposals around service integration. However, the Scrutiny Board also identified some potential improvements around governance arrangements and the presentation of clear information, while highlighting areas where further information was needed on the full impact of some proposals.

- **Leading on Regional Scrutiny**

In March 2011, a **Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee** was established to respond to the national review and consultation around proposals for the organisation and delivery of Children's Cardiac Surgery Services. This Joint Committee was led and supported by Leeds City Council, but drawing membership from across the region.

In October 2011, the joint committee submitted a comprehensive report on the proposals, which highlighted a number of areas that required further consideration and included a number of recommendations – including an alternative model of designated surgical centres. In summary, the joint committee's view was that any future model of designated surgical centres that does not include a centre in Leeds will have a disproportionately negative impact on the children and families across Yorkshire and the Humber.

The joint committee's report has been recognised as the most thorough and comprehensive scrutiny response submitted in response to the national review and options put forward for . The work of the joint committee continues, with a final decision on the future service model and configuration of services expected on 4 July 2012.

- **Enabling the voice and concerns of the public to be heard**

Increasing the level of public/service user participation in the work of the Scrutiny Boards remains a continual key action area. Numerous requests for scrutiny from external sources, including the public, are received. The Scrutiny Boards also continue to give due consideration to the involvement of service users and the public when undertaking pieces of scrutiny work. Examples of where this has taken place are set out below.

The **Health and Wellbeing and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board** conducted an investigation into the provision of services for the blind and visually impaired across Leeds. This followed a request for scrutiny and subsequent deputation to Council. The investigation included a site visit, discussions with service users, and other meetings that also included direct input from service users. The involvement of service users enable the Scrutiny Board to identify physical improvements to some building facilities, in addition to establishing and maintaining effective 'peer support' and 'peer learning' opportunities for service users.

The **Sustainable Economy and Culture Scrutiny Board** undertook an inquiry on how the Council engages with young people in culture, sporting and recreational activities. In doing so, evidence was gathered from young people, aged between 8 – 18 years. Their openness about existing facilities enabled the Board to identify where and how service improvements can be made.

Following a review last year on the future of Leeds Kirkgate Market, the **Regeneration Scrutiny Board** continued to track progress on the development of the Market. In doing so, the Board invited representatives of the National Market Traders' Federation and Kirkgate Market to numerous public Board meetings and also visited the Market to engage with the Market Traders directly.

The NEET inquiry conducted by the **Children and Families Scrutiny Board** involved speaking to numerous young people undertaking courses at Igen and Leeds City College, as well as head teachers and cluster managers.

The **Regeneration Scrutiny Board** continued to work with the Development Directorate in pursuing a way forward for public hire taxis provision at Leeds Bradford International Airport. In doing so, the Board ensured that the taxi drivers were given the opportunity to raise their particular issues with the Board on a number of occasions.

- **Developing innovative methods of evidence gathering**

Scrutiny Board Members continue to explore innovative methods of gathering evidence for scrutiny work, with the emphasis on conducting more 'primary research' and making better use of external data sources and seeking out best practice elsewhere. Examples of the evidence gathering methods used are set out below.

The **Children and Families Scrutiny Board** adopted the 'case study' method again as part of its inquiry into improving school attendance. Two areas of the city were identified and half of the Board membership went to each area to gather evidence.

In both areas, Members had the opportunity to talk to local practitioners and undertake additional visits in smaller groups, including meeting local people, before reconvening for a round table discussion with senior officers.

The **Regeneration Scrutiny Board** made use of the Council's telecommunication technology to conduct a teleconference between Members of the Scrutiny Board and representatives of Clydesdale Bank PLC as part of its inquiry into affordable housing by private developers. The success of this meeting led the Board to conclude that such an approach should be considered for future scrutiny reviews as this is an efficient and cost effective method of facilitating long distance communication.

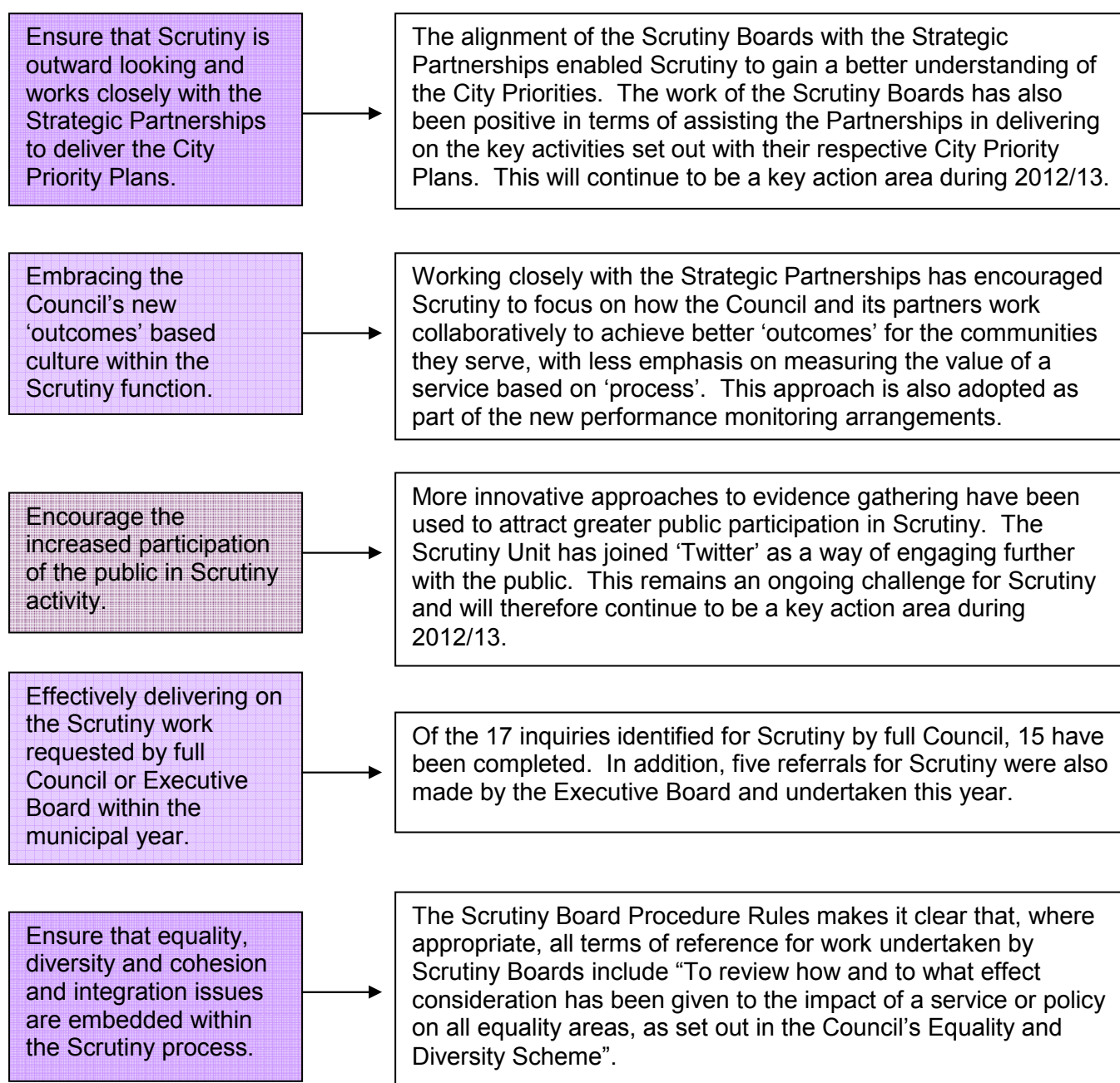
A popular alternative approach to the formal Board meeting continues to be the use of working groups. This method provides greater flexibility in arranging evidence gathering sessions and also provides a more informal setting. This has proved invaluable when engaging with particular groups, such as young people. During 2011/12, this method of evidence gathering was used on 49 occasions by the Scrutiny Boards.

Reflecting on the Year and Planning for the Future

It is vital that we reflect on the experience of past scrutiny activity in order to identify best practice and also continue to improve the way that scrutiny operates in Leeds. Last year we identified a number of key action areas to help develop the scrutiny function. Progress made in delivering these key action areas is summarised below.

Key Action Areas 2011/12

Progress



Developing Scrutiny

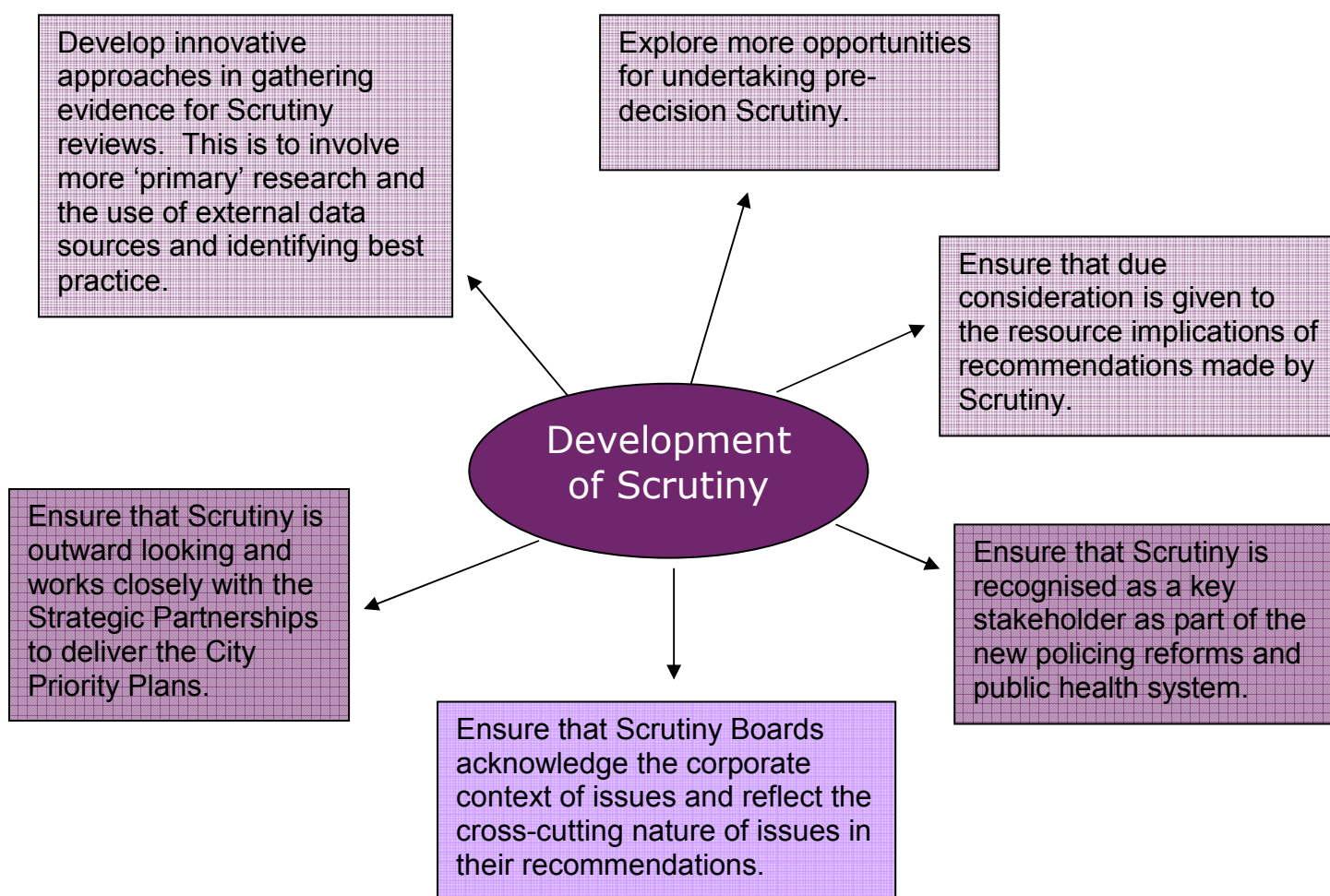
As always a key focus remains on ensuring that scrutiny is a worthwhile process for elected Members and adds value to the running of the Council.

As has been our practice in previous annual reports, we have published an action plan for the coming year identifying our key development areas.

The actions shown below are not an exhaustive list and a number of actions from previous years will continue to be progressed.

Our goals this year include

Key Action Areas 2012/13



For those with access to the internet, further information on scrutiny is also available at www.leeds.gov.uk/scrutiny. This site includes information about each Scrutiny Board and links to the meeting papers and minutes. A list of all final reports since 1999 can also be found on our website.

You can also follow us on Twitter: @scrutinyleeds for updates and links to useful information.