

Death by a thousand cuts: how can local scrutiny save itself in an increasingly cold climate?

CFPS Annual Conference 1 July 2010

Some important questions

- How many social workers does it take to change a lightbulb?
- None, but half a dozen to set up a national conference on "coping with darkness"
- How many IT helpdesks does it take to change the lightbulb?
- First, have you tried turning it off and turning it back on again?

You are the Senior Management Team

- Well done
- Now get on with your job

The case against scrutiny

- Low profile – the public won't notice
- Cabinet / Senior Officers don't like it
- Cabinet / Senior Officers don't value it
- It doesn't work
- It doesn't help
- We're all in this together – reduce to statutory obligations
- Difficult to measure

The case for scrutiny

- Democracy! Accountability!
- Better decision making
- More engaged backbenchers & opposition
- Accountability of partners
- Localism – new government agenda (?)
- Audit Commission criticism
- What would the neighbours say?

So, did you win?

No.

Bad Luck

Now what?

Dealing with the decision

- Report
 - Get buy in from as many as possible.
 - Get statements of support for principle

Dealing with the decision

- Structure
 - TGs usually “better” than committees
 - Fewer committees, meeting more often
 - Think differently – Rapporteurs etc

Dealing with the decision

- Members
 - Get them engaged & speaking out for scrutiny
 - Get them to act as champions in all forums
 - Use formal training sessions and discreet conversations

"My accountability, bear in mind,"
Said the Grand Vizier: "Yes, yes,"
Said the Shah: "I do --'tis the only kind
Of ability you possess."