"It is sometimes difficult to enlighten the public's perception of how various departments and committees work and their responsibilities, irrespective of how open local government is - it is therefore imperative that consultation continues to grow and be used as SDDC attempts to do".

"The public are not greatly interested in structural changes in committees, etc and their perception is the one that matters".

On whether the new structure will enable the Council to develop an effective Community Leadership role:

"Not until the public see themselves as taking part, i.e. if they can see that their input has some effect".

Other comments:

"The role (of members) is changing so quickly it's hard to keep up with the perceived dilution of the role".

"I still feel uncertain about my role as a member of a scrutiny committee".

"The support and training received to date is adequate. Training programmes must and will continue in to the future, to keep abreast of the many changes being introduced".

"As a member of Overview & Scrutiny I feel very alienated from the general work of the Council. Unless I attend committee meetings I rarely come into contact with fellow councillors and feel very much on the outside of proceedings. This of course is probably more likely to be experienced by a member of the minority party".

"I originally supported the option we adopted but now have doubts that we have improved much".

"Public consultation & accountability may be slightly improved but the committee system overlaid with scrutiny & overview is too cumbersome".

"Where overall policy is decided is not clear to me anymore".

"I consider it is early days to feel totally comfortable and in the culture of the new system".

Senior Officers' questionnaire

Questionnaires were sent to **16** senior managers: the corporate management team and all divisional managers. **10** questionnaires were returned, representing a return rate of **63%**.

As for the members' questionnaire, officers were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements and the results are shown below. Most of the statements used were the same as for the members' questionnaire but there were some differences.

Again, where we have referred in the report to the proportion of senior officers holding a particular view, we have grouped together the figures for Strongly Agree/Agree and Disagree/Strongly Disagree. For example, in the report we say that 40% of senior officers don't think that Scrutiny is helping them to work more effectively - this is made up of the 3 officers who Disagree, and the 1 who Strongly Disagrees, with the statement *"The Scrutiny process is helping me, as an officer, to work more effectively".* This gives a total of 4 officers, representing 40% of the returned questionnaires.

Because of the small population size for this survey, caution should be exercised when talking in terms of proportions, e.g. saying that 20% of senior officers hold a particular view means that this is based on the views of 2 people.

We have also provided below the written comments made by officers returning the questionnaire.

Table 2 – Senior Officers' data

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not answered
Decision-making					
1. Decision-making at SDDC is open and transparent	0	6	4	0	0
2. It is clear to members of the public who is responsible and accountable for decisions	0	2	8	0	0
3. The role of the Policy Committees is clear	0	6	4	0	0
4. The Policy Committees are operating effectively	1	4	5	0	0
5. Decision-making is now more streamlined	1	3	5	1	0
6. Policy Committees should concentrate more on key, strategic issues	3	7	0	0	0
7. We have got the right balance between decisions made at Policy Committee and decisions delegated to officers	0	3	5	2	0
Overview & Scrutiny					
8. I am clear about the roles of Scrutiny and how it relates to the rest of the Council	2	6	2	0	0
9. The Scrutiny Committees are operating effectively	2	6	2	0	0
10. The Overview & Scrutiny Committees are proving effective in holding decision-makers to account	0	6	4	0	0
11. The Scrutiny Committees have struck the right balance between challenge and consensus	1	6	2	0	1
Statement	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly**	**Not**

				Disagree	answered
12. The Scrutiny Committees operate free of undue party political influence	3	6	0	0	1
13. The Overview & Scrutiny Committees are proving effective at developing and reviewing policy	1	4	4	0	1
14. The Scrutiny process is helping me, as an officer, to work more effectively	0	6	3	1	0
General					
15. The new structure will help the public understand the work of the Council and will make the Council more accessible	0	5	4	1	0
16. The new structure will enable the Council to develop an effective Community Leadership role	0	4	5	1	0
17. I am clear about my role, as an officer, in the new political structures	2	6	2	0	0
18. I have received adequate training and development on these new structures	2	5	3	0	0

Officers' comments in the questionnaire replies:

Decision-making

"*Trust in officers to exercise delegated executive responsibility is not high enough*".

"*I do not think that the Policy Committees are 'modern'. They continue to operate in much the same way as before*".

"*The issue of delegation to officers has been 'ducked' which means that Policy Committees spend a lot of time on small 'executive' type decisions. Also members do not have any sense of owning the agenda*".

"*The key is to sort out the delegation - that will not be easy because of on-going mistrust between members and officers*".

"*The Policy Committees are not engaged in policy development but in the main focused on routine matters which would be better delegated to officers. The absence of policy frameworks makes that delegation problematic*".

Overview & Scrutiny

"Not yet settled in. Jury is still out".

"Scrutiny fills a hole. I cannot take information-only reports to committee. This only leaves the members' bulletin which has fallen in to general decline".

"Perhaps officers can suggest items for scrutiny. It allows questions and answers to issues outside of the usual political arena".

"Scrutiny is still in its infancy".

"In terms of policy development, this has not been tested fully and reflects that we are still in the first year of scrutiny. There are promising signs that scrutiny could deliver this role".

"Scrutiny does not really hold decision-makers (i.e. members) to account. It is very much focused on officers. This should be addressed".

"A good start has been made in overview & scrutiny and members have been realistic about what they can achieve".

"It is not a primary role of Scrutiny in Alternative Arrangements to 'hold decision makers to account' where that decision has been legitimately made by a policy committee".

General

(On whether the new structure will help the public understand the work of the Council and make it more accessible): *"not unless the policy committees are strengthened. A key issue for me is to modernise the Policy Committees".*

"My personal view is that the leader/cabinet structure is understood better by the public although this was not necessarily supported by surveys. Against this the committee system provides a more inclusive approach to policy and planning".

"Power to take decisions in a community led process is hampered by a Committee decision-making process rather than (a) model where services are led by portfolio holders".

"No training given".

Arrangements elsewhere

In Table 3 below we provide contacts or website links for some authorities adopting alternative arrangements. Please note that we don't warrant the web-based information in any way, the links are provided simply to help facilitate building a picture of the range of alternative arrangements being adopted. The relevant Council should be contacted direct if you wish to confirm the details of structures/arrangements. The government's web-based A-Z index of public bodies can be found at: http://www.open.gov.uk/index/orgindex.htm

Table 3

Council	New committee structure
Adur DC	http://www.adurdc.gov.uk/docs/committee/adur-committee-structure-table.pdf
Babergh DC	http://www.babergh-south-suffolk.gov.uk/polypers/bdcs&f.pdf
Bridgnorth DC	Contact: Paul Walker, Director of Development Services. Email: pwalker@bridgnorth-dc.gov.uk
Cotswold DC	http://www.cotswold.gov.uk/committee.html
East Dorset DC	http://www.eastdorsetdc.gov.uk/democracy/cmm/
East Northants DC	http://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/Your_Council.htm
Gosport BC	http://www.gosport.gov.uk/council/committee/membershipboards.htm
Malvern Hills DC	Contact: Kevin Douglas, Corporate Director Email: kevin.douglas@malvernhills.gov.uk
Mole Valley DC	http://www.mole-valley.gov.uk/molevalley/council.nsf/pages/politicalarrangements.html
North Shropshire DC	Contact: Rod Owens, Head of Legal & Administrative Services
North Warwickshire BC	Contact: Jerry Hutchinson, Chief Executive Email: jerryhutchinson@northwarks.gov.uk
South Shropshire DC	Contact: Graham Biggs, Chief Executive

Democratic Renewal

South Derbyshire
District Council

ACTION PLAN
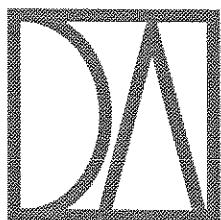
audit 2001/2002

The Authority is invited to respond to all our recommendations listed in this action plan.

Ref.	Issue	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Authority's response	Officer responsible	Timescale
Decision making						
R1	Creating a more appropriate balance of strategic and operational issues at member level	Review the scheme of delegations	3			
		Ensure the delegation agreement is transparent to members and, where appropriate, that it will allow delegated decisions to be scrutinised.				
		Review the working of Policy Committees to devote more time to policy development and performance monitoring.				
		Develop the policy framework to underpin the scheme of delegation.				
		The review of delegations should consider how the Council can operate more effectively within its partnerships.				
		Consider making all Policy Committee Chairs members of the Finance & Management Committee.				
R2	Giving decision-making members options for decision, where appropriate	Review the reporting arrangements for Policy Committees	1			
Role of full Council						
R3	Modernising and adapting the	Review the ways in which full Council	2			

audit 2001/2002

Ref.	Issue	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Authority's response	Officer responsible	Timescale
	role of full Council	operates				
		Review the working of full Council to try to eliminate any redundant bureaucracy, open up debate on current issues and provide more information to all members on key issues facing the Council.				
		Review how the Council can better communicate and engage with the wider community, particularly hard-to-reach groups and the disaffected.				
Overview & Scrutiny						
R4	Developing an appropriate role for Scrutiny Committees in monitoring Council performance	Review how performance can be effectively scrutinised	2			
R5	Developing the scrutiny role.	Review the ways in which Scrutiny operates to hold the Policy Committees to account	2			
R6	A key element of the modernisation agenda is making Councils more outward-looking	Review the ways in which Scrutiny operates, to further develop an outward-looking focus	2			
R7	For the new structures to be effective, members and officers must understand clearly how it all works.	Ensure that officers and all members are clear about the roles and operation of scrutiny	2			
R8	There is some risk that the call-in rules may fetter the scrutiny	Review the call-in rules	2			

audit 2001/2002

Ref.	Issue	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Authority's response	Officer responsible	Timescale
	role.					
		Ensure that staff resources for Scrutiny are in balance with the work programme and member expectations. The work of Scrutiny should support the Corporate Plan.	2			
Quasi-judicial functions						
R9	Individual regulatory decisions should not be subject to scrutiny.	Clarify, in the constitution, the rules governing the scrutiny of regulatory decisions	3			
New ethical framework						
R10	Some key governance arrangements need to be implemented over the next few months.	The Council must ensure that it adequately manages the next phase in implementing its ethical arrangements	3			
R11	Ensuring everyone understands his or her ethical obligations.	Ensure that all members are clear about their obligations under the new ethical arrangements	3			
R12	Responding to changing demands on resources.	It is important that the operational effectiveness of the new ethical arrangements is not unduly constrained by inadequate resourcing.	1			
		Ensure the Standards Committee looks to be a visible presence in promoting high levels of probity in both Parishes and in the District	2			

Ref.	Issue	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Authority's response	Officer responsible	Timescale
Other matters		Council.				
R13	Adequate capacity among members and officers.	Ensure that members and officers have the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to carry out their roles effectively	3			
R14	Various items need to be included in the constitution	Ensure that the constitution is complete	3			
		Consult staff and members and make any minor amendments to the constitution that would smooth the working of the Council.				
		Ensure the final constitution is promoted and widely understood by members and staff.				
		Review the working of Area Meetings so that they can work more co-operatively with the County Council, and more effectively represent and lobby for their community.	2			

ANNEXE B: NEW POLITICAL STRUCTURES ACTION PLAN

The recommendations below are intended to further strengthen the 'modernised committee system'.

REF.	ISSUE/RECOMMENDATION	PROPOSED ACTION	PRIORITY High/Medium/Low	RESPONSIBILITY
	Decision Making			
OVER/1	Confirm that the number and size of Committees continues to be acceptable along with the frequency of meetings		High	
OVER/2	Review Terms of reference of Policy Committees to identify and resolve any overlapping issues		High	
DA/1	Review the scheme of delegations		High	
CMT/1	Ensure the delegation agreement is transparent to members, and, where appropriate, that it will allow delegated decisions to be scrutinised.		High	
CMT/2	Review the working of Policy Committees to devote more time to policy development and performance monitoring.		High	
OVER/3	Strengthen policy framework/guidelines to support delegation arrangements		High	
CMT/3	Develop the policy framework to underpin the scheme of delegation		High	
CMT/4	The review of delegation should consider how the Council can operate more effectively within its partnerships		High	
CMT/5	Consider making all Policy Committee Chairs members of the Finance and Management Committee		High	
DA/2	Review the reporting arrangements for Policy Committees		Low	

1

Ref	Description	Priority
OVER/4	Reconsider the composition of agendas for Policy Committees.	*Low*
OVER/5	Investigate the feasibility of allowing members of the public to speak at: ■ Policy committees and Council ■ Development Control Committee	*Low* *High*
EXTRA/1	Clarify responsibility for asset management	*High*
Role of full Council		
DA/3	Review the ways in which full Council operates	**Medium**
CMT/6	Review the working of full Council to try to eliminate any redundant bureaucracy, open up debate on current issues and provide more information to all Members on key issues facing the Council.	**Medium**
OVER/6	Explore new ways of getting local people involved in the work of their Council (e.g. e-government)	*Medium*
CMT/7	Review how the Council can better communicate and engage with the wider community, particularly hard to reach groups and the disaffected.	**Medium**
Overview and Scrutiny		
DA/4	Review how performance can be effectively scrutinised	**Medium**
DA/5	Review the way in which Scrutiny operates to hold the Policy Committees to account	**Medium**
DA/6	Review the ways in which Scrutiny operates, to further develop an outward-looking focus	**Medium**
DA/7	Ensure that officers and all Members are clear about the roles and operation of Scrutiny	**Medium**
EXTRA/2	Review and clarify the terms of reference for Overview and Scrutiny Committees	*High*
DA/8	Review the call-in rules	**Medium**
OVER/7	Review arrangements for call in and providing feedback to Policy Committees	*Medium*
EXTRA/3	State reasons for 'call in'	*High*
CMT/8	Ensure that staff resources for Scrutiny are in balance with the work programme and Member expectations. The work of Scrutiny should support the Corporate Plan.	**Medium**
EXTRA/4	Review arrangements for substitution at Scrutiny Committee meetings	*Medium*

	Quasi-judicial functions	
DA/9	Clarify, in the constitution, the rules governing the scrutiny of regulatory functions	High
	Area Meetings	
CMT/9	Review the working of Area Meetings so that they can work more co-operatively with the County Council and more effectively represent and lobby for their community.	Medium
OVER/8	Explore with DCC possibility of combining county and district Area Meetings	Low
	New Ethical Framework	
DA/10	The Council must ensure that it adequately manages the next phase in implementing its ethical arrangements	High
DA/11	Ensure that all members are clear about their obligations under the new ethical arrangements	High
DA/12	It is important that the operational effectiveness of the new ethical arrangements is not unduly constrained by inadequate resourcing	Low
CMT/10	Ensure the new Standards Committee looks to be a visible presence in promoting high levels of probity in both Parishes and the District	Medium
	Other matters	
DA/13	Ensure that members and officers have the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to carry out their roles effectively	High

Ref	Action		Priority
DA/14	Ensure that the constitution is complete	The following items need to be included: • Details of members of the various committees and bodies • Rules governing the conduct and proceedings of the Policy Committees, Standards Committee and Joint Arrangements • Scheme of Delegations • Code of conduct for employees (when published) • Members' code of conduct • Description of the members; register of interests and procedures for publicising, maintaining and updating the register • Protocol for officer/member relationships • Rules governing the recruitment, appointment, dismissal and disciplinary action for officers • Rules and procedures in respect of legal proceedings • Protocol on monitoring and review of the constitution • Update the details of the members' scheme of allowances (when applicable)	High
CMT/11	Consult staff and members and make any minor amendments to the constitution that would smooth the working of the Council.		High
CMT/12	Ensure the final constitution is promoted and widely understood by Members and employees.		High
OVER/9	Investigate feasibility of taking meetings out into the community		*Low*
OVER/10	Link review of political management arrangements to the Council's community leadership role		*Medium*
EXTRA/5	Add to constitution items listed in CIPFA/SOLACE Corporate Governance Guidance	In addition to DA/R14 (above), add anti fraud and corruption policy; complaints procedure; arrangements for Members' induction and training; equal opportunities policy	*High*
EXTRA/6	Review 'housekeeping arrangements' with Legal and Members' Services		*Medium*
EXTRA/7	Publicise and promote the constitution amongst the community		*Medium*