

What can we learn from Hackney, Doncaster, Mid-Staffs, Rotherham... WAO Shared Learning Seminar 3 December 2014

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When will we ever learn?



- Courage to do the right thing
- Political AND managerial leadership
- Evidence-based independent-minded scrutiny
- Challenging primacy of realpolitik



Hackney in 2000



accountability, transparency, involvement

Councillors jailed for Britain's biggest vote fraud

How corruption destroyed Hackney

Evening Standard News Extra 12 Jan 2001 Page: 6

Hackney chaos threat as 3,000 plan to strike

The current round of cuts is just the start.

With £50 million of cuts over the next three years none of our jobs or conditions are safe.

Byers poised to take over Hackney

Hackney given ultimatum

Council given 14 days to respond to calls for major improvements

Councillors jailed for election fraud

Make the government give back the money – Sack mad Max not the workers.

A nightmare on Mare Street

Strike now to win

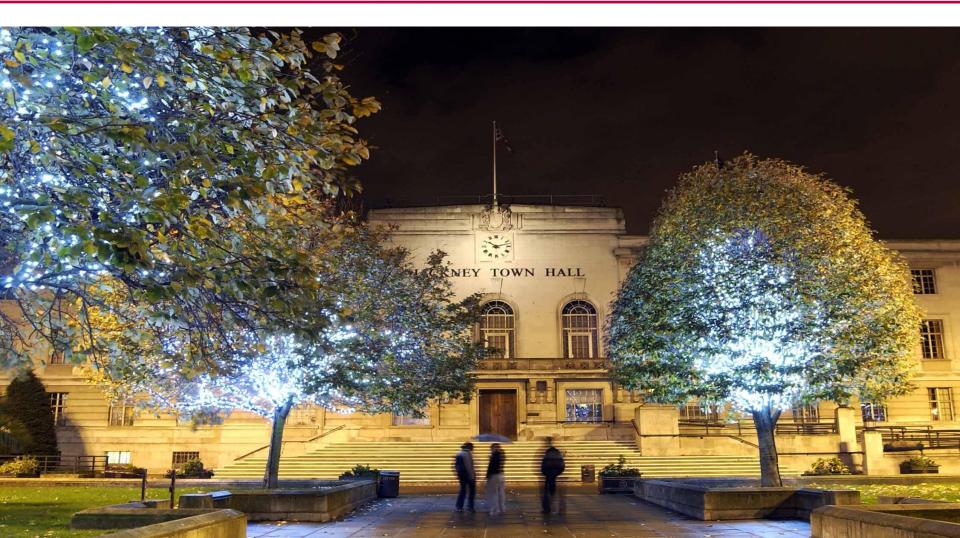
Hackney Town Hall Section 114 notice 2000





Hackney Town Hall budget night 2005





Doncaster Corporate Governance Inspection 2010



"Good governance is about running things properly. It is the means by which a public authority shows it is taking decisions for the good of the people of the area, in a fair, equitable and open way.

It also requires standards of behaviour that support good decision making – collective and individual integrity, openness and honesty.

It is the foundation for the delivery of good quality services that meet all local people's needs. It is fundamental to showing public money is well spent.

Without good governance councils will struggle to improve services when they perform poorly."

Mid-Staffs – Francis report recommendations for scrutiny



- 43 Those charged with oversight and regulatory roles in healthcare should monitor media reports about the organisations for which they have responsibility.
- 147 Guidance should be given to promote the co-ordination and co-operation between local Healthwatch, Health and Wellbeing Boards, and local government scrutiny committees.
- 149 Scrutiny committees should be provided with appropriate support to enable them to carry out their scrutiny role, including easily accessible guidance and benchmarks.
- 150 Scrutiny committees should have powers to inspect providers rather than relying on local patient involvement structures to carry out this role, or should actively work with those structures to trigger and follow up inspections where appropriate rather than receiving reports without comment or suggestion for action.

Rotherham – Jay report very critical of scrutiny



Even more significant is the apparent lack of effective scrutiny exercised by these several groups or bodies, and least of all by the Scrutiny Panels. Scrutiny in its widest sense is an essential component of Cabinet government. Rarely does it appear from the minutes that councillors have held officers to account by checking the evidence for proposals or asking whether their ends could be met in other ways. It may be that the minutes are written in bland, non-specific, language, but that does nothing to reassure the public that genuine accountability is being exercised. It is important that councillors test proposals by reference to their broad experience and their knowledge of the Borough and their own constituents. There should be nothing threatening about this; good officers should welcome challenge as a sentral part of local democracy.

Politics and realpolitik



Recent CfPS Survey:

- 33% said the leader appoints all scrutiny chairs
- Nearly 30% said scrutiny never or hardly ever robustly challenges executive (better at challenging officers)
- Nearly 75% authorities have a large majority is this a problem?

"Leadership culture of evading challenge - and feeding fish to scrutiny to keep them busy. Probably a result of large political majority."

"Decisions made at Group - large majority do not want to show dissent in public"