

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY ONE OF THE CHAIRMEN OF THE SHADOW SCRUTINY PANELS
ON 1st MARCH 2005**

There has been much comment in recent weeks over the perceived politicisation of the Shadow Scrutiny process, in particular around the proposal to subject the Migration Policy to scrutiny.

I am taking this opportunity to announce that my Panel has taken the decision to scrutinize the proposed Migration Policy, with the most rigorous and fair methodology possible, as a major topic and to examine the proposed Tourism lease, (P.22/2005). using a mechanism similar to the use of “call in”. Accordingly I have sought and obtained agreement from the President of the Economic Development Committee to seek the permission of the Assembly to defer debate of the latter until the 15th March 2005. Similarly, I have written to the President of the Policy and Resources Committee to seek deferral of the debate on that Committee’s Migration Policy for a period of one month to enable scrutiny to take place. Members will recognize that this timetable is significantly constrained in comparison to the reviews undertaken by the Shadow Scrutiny Panels in the first year of the Shadow Scrutiny function. However, I believe that sufficient lessons have been learned from previous experience to enable my Panel to set itself such a tight and disciplined timetable.

It has been agreed at our Chairmen’s Panel that the primary duty of the Shadow Scrutiny Panels is not to scrutinise *per se*, but to investigate and test the scrutiny process so as to recommend a way forward for the years ahead. This is what we shall do. The topics chosen by my Panel have deliberately been chosen neither for their own intrinsic merit, nor for any political motive, but as the topics most likely to illustrate the potential and limitations of the scrutiny process.

I would like to draw members’ attention to the words which immediately follow and define the term the role of “critical friend” in the Centre for Public Scrutiny’s (CfPS) *Good Scrutiny Guide*:

“To provide constructive, robust and purposeful challenge to prompt executive reflection on policy development and decision-making....Scrutiny must command the attention of those held within its gaze if the role is to have credibility. It must also have the ability to influence them – to shift opinion. There is little point in a scrutiny function without consequence, however minimal the effect. But a failure to overturn a decision does not necessarily weaken scrutiny – there is significant value in having more information in the public domain.”

The prime success indicator of my Panel is, and will continue to be, to achieve a more informed debate both in public and in this Chamber. To “shift opinion” in the Executive remains a bonus, dependant upon the attitudes that prevail on either side of the balance of power.