# Public Document Pack

**Stevenage**
**BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - SITTING AS A SELECT COMMITTEE

**Date: Monday, 11 November 2019**
**Time: 6.00pm,**
**Location: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete**
**Contact: Lisa Jerome (01438) 242203**
**lisa.jerome@stevenage.gov.uk**

Members:    Councillors: L Martin-Haugh (Chair), P Bibby CC (Vice-Chair),
S Barr, J Brown, L Chester, M Downing, ME Gardner,
S-J McDonough, A McGuinness, J Mead, S Mead, A Mitchell CC,
R Parker CC and C Parris

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## AGENDA

### PART 1

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

2. **COLLATED MEMBER RESPONSE TO SELF-EVALUATION SCORING MATRIX**

    Members are invited to consider the collated Member response to the self-evaluation scoring matrix.

    Pages 3 – 6

3. **INTERVIEW WITH FORTH TIER MANAGERS**

    Members are invited to interview tier four Managers Claire Davies HR Manager, Geoff Caine Leisure Services Manager & Julia Hill, Environmental Policy & Services Manager regarding their experience supporting Scrutiny reviews.

4. **INPUT FROM SCRUTINY OFFICERS AT OTHER AUTHORITIES**

    To consider input from Scrutiny officers from Herts County Council and Watford Borough Council, regarding their view of the Council's Scrutiny arrangements.

5. **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

    To consider any Part 1 business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

6. **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

    To consider the following motions –

1.  That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

2.  That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

7.      **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

To consider any Part II business accepted by the Chair as urgent.


Agenda Published 1 November 2019

**Scrutiny Self Evaluation Framework Scoring Matrix**

| **Key Areas** | Current Procedure (brief description + presentation for each column) (Score 5 high 1 low) | Scrutiny & Executive Member Involvement (Score 5 high 1 low) | SLT involvement (Score 5 high 1 low) | Overall score (out of 15) | Opportunities for improvement (completed by Members at the meeting on 23 September 2019) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.Work Programming | Work programming starts in Jan/Feb. Scrutiny Members provide Scrutiny Officer with issues. Council's Social Media canvass views of public. Issues brought to Members in Committee reports in March, following discussion with SDs and ADs.<br><br>Score of current procedure:<br><br>1=<br>2=<br>3= IIIII  II<br>4= II<br>5= I | Each Scrutiny Member is invited to contribute ideas. Response rate is a little over 50%<br><br>Executive Members are not able to direct the work programmes of the Scrutiny Committees…<br><br>Score Member Involvement:<br><br>1=<br>2=<br>3= IIIII  III<br>4= II<br>5= | SLT receive details of the ideas that Members have raised when the report is being drafted. Following Members decision at the 3 meetings in March the work programme items for each committee are shared with SLT to agree timings and commitments.<br><br>Score of SLT Involvement:<br><br>1=<br>2= II<br>3= II<br>4= IIIII I<br>5= | Score out of 15:<br>8<br>11<br>11<br>8<br>12<br>10<br>10<br>11<br>9<br>10<br>= Average score<br>10 | • Should be using Customer Service Centre info they gather to inform what is scrutinised<br>• Need grid of Portfolio Holders areas of responsibility<br>• Can more be done to encourage a better response rate to work programme ideas/responses from Members?<br>• Do other Council's enjoy a better engagement level?<br>• The lag in the system is not ideal but need to accept it<br>• A bit haphazard, Chairs need to ensure other Members contribute and give an idea about how this relates to priorities<br>• Timing does have an effect on the quality of how much time we have and resources available<br>• Happy that channels are opened to invite comments/uptake from both members and public<br>• Once topics are collated – could be voted on by all Members rather than just the select committee and possibly public vote<br>• Scrutiny topics should be informed in part by CSC record of complaints also satisfaction surveys need to be used also (housing) SLT Members should provide written response<br>• Understand the need to start the process early. Not all Members want to respond to the surveys are they happy to be led? Sometimes SLT seek to influence the work programme – this should not be the case<br>• The process is Member led which I believe is a good thing<br>• Too much lag; out of date; not responsive; new councillors not involved. Allow at least some uncommitted time until June meetings. A little beholden to SLT<br>• Realise why work programming is agreed in March but could be a completely different committee and Chair and Vice-chair |
| 2.Scoping | Each substantive review item has a scoping document drafted and presented to the Select Committee for consideration…<br><br>Score of current procedure<br>1=<br>2=<br>3= II<br>4= IIIII  II<br>5= I | Currently the Chair and Vice-Chair receive an early draft copy of the scoping document…<br><br>Score Member Involvement:<br><br>1=<br>2=<br>3= IIIII<br>4= III<br>5= II | SLT receive a copy of the draft scope written by the Scrutiny Officer…<br><br>Score of SLT Involvement:<br><br>1= I<br>2=<br>3= III<br>4= IIIII<br>5= I | Score out of 15:<br>11<br>11<br>13<br>10<br>7<br>15<br>10<br>11<br>11<br>12<br>= Average score<br>11 | • A short introduction giving background info into scoping document detailing why and how it has come to scrutiny<br>• Scoping document needs to be a living document and be flexible to reflect the evidence given during scrutiny<br>• Should all scrutiny members have the chance to comment on the draft document?<br>• Do we receive details of SLT comment? Make scoping documents more flexible<br>• The most important thing about a scoping document is that it does not restrict anything. Should not be too precise but allow for the unexpected<br>• I'm not sure that members always understand this document an introduction to the current context of the issue could be added and why it was chosen as a scrutiny topic<br>• An updated scoping document should be provided at a strategic point to reflect on any change of focus or additions and what has been achieved to date<br>• At scoping meeting an explanation why the issue has been chosen should be provided to help new Members |
| 3.Evidence | Depending on the review | Members are involved | ADs and Lead Officers | Score out of 15: | • Site visits are sometimes inconvenient/can't make when held during the day |

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| Gathering/site visit/interviews | site visits are set up…<br><br>Score of current procedure<br>1=<br>2=<br>3= III<br>4= III<br>5= II | with preparing questions for witnesses, attending site visits…<br><br>Score Member Involvement:<br><br>1=<br>2=<br>3= IIIII I<br>4= I<br>5= I | take a lead on site visits and in providing evidence that Members have requested.<br><br>Score of SLT Involvement:<br>1=<br>2=<br>3= I<br>4= IIIII<br>5= II | 10<br>10<br>Nil<br>10<br>Nil<br>13<br>12<br>15<br>Nil<br>11<br>= Average score 11.57 | • Would like to see more evidence coming from members of the public<br>• I think this works really well but we should be open to suggestions for improvements from external witnesses<br>• No experience as never been on select committee<br>• Use call-in procedure more / with interviews<br>• Training in interviewing & questioning. Need for planning what outcome and value is expected from a site visit<br>• Where relevant witnesses are used the scrutiny acquired solid recommendations<br>• Regarding Member involvement - not all Members take an active part. Input should be credited in the minutes<br>• Regarding SLT and Officer involvement – much of the success is due to the scrutiny officer<br>• Who checks that the evidence is accurate?<br>• Stop last minute circulation of papers. For O&S the double agenda is cumbersome<br>• Often when site visits are arranged they are not always convenient for all Members, but not sure how this would be overcome |
| 4.Final reports & recommendations | Nearing the end of the review the Scrutiny Officer drafts a report which is sent to the Chair & Vice-Chair…<br><br>Score of current procedure<br>1=<br>2=<br>3=<br>4= IIIII  III<br>5= I | The Chair and Vice-Chair receive a copy of the first draft for comment prior to sending to the whole Committee.<br><br>Score Member Involvement:<br>1=<br>2=<br>3= II<br>4= IIIII I<br>5= I | SDs & ADs have an opportunity to amend the wording of reports and recommendations in consultation with the Chair's agreement…<br><br>Score of SLT Involvement:<br>1=<br>2=<br>3= III<br>4=IIIII<br>5= I | Score out of 15:<br>11<br>12<br>12<br>10<br>12<br>15<br>12<br>Nil<br>10<br>12<br>= Average score 11.77 | • Could improve but can't put my finger on how<br>• I think this works really well but we should be open to suggestions for improvements from external witnesses<br>• Regarding supposed weaknesses of directing focus in the wrong areas will result in wrong outcomes, surely that is the whole point? The key is to ensure it is the right slant.<br>• Strongly agree that there are often too many recommendations<br>• Regarding SLT having opportunities to amend the final report and recommendations – I don't like this happening<br>• Agree that the final word must be with the elected Members<br>• The scrutiny committees should have ownership. Regarding the final reports and recommendations – Maybe sometimes they will not be led by Future Town Future Council or Executive priorities<br>• When the draft report goes to Committee in some cases the outside witnesses who have been interviewed should also be invited to comment |
| 5.Monitoring outcomes | As part of the monitoring of recommendations and agreed actions, reports are responded to within the Statutory deadline of two months…<br>Score of current procedure:<br>1=<br>2= I<br>3= III<br>4= II<br>5= II | Executive Portfolio Holders and relevant officers receive a template document detailing the recommendations…<br>Score Member Involvement (both Scrutiny & Exec):<br>1=<br>2= I<br>3= II<br>4= IIII<br>5= I | The relevant ADs and officers meet up with the Executive Portfolio Holder within the Statutory 2 month period to agree the response…<br><br>Score of SLT Involvement:<br>1= I<br>2=<br>3= IIII<br>4= II<br>5= I | Score out of 15:<br>10<br>10<br>10<br>5<br>15<br>13<br>12<br>Nil<br>9<br>= Average score 10.50 | • Sometimes feel that the response from the Executive Portfolio is slow<br>• Need to tighten up of going back to scrutiny 6-9 months down the road<br>• We are doing what is required by statute but could monitoring be done quicker, more often in a more transparent way?<br>• Question effectiveness of monitoring/challenging response<br>• Need to be more assertive and systematic. Some Executive/SD responses do not show sufficiently serious engagement<br>• The process sounds well organised<br>• Yes monitoring happens. However, the timeframe is far too long. They change things and then say in the report that they've done it anyway. I find this infuriating. The Executive Member response should be published on the website and displayed on the front window<br>• Some responses very grudging. Some recommendations completely lost e.g. |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | BTC and transport<br>• When recommendations have been carried out and officers have reported back witness statements should also be obtained to ensure the tenants/public/community are satisfied with the outcomes of the recommendations being implemented |
| 6.Council Priority | Within the scoping process, Scrutiny Members are invited to reflect on the suitability of the subject matter being scrutinised and whether this fits with the Council's core priorities?<br><br>Score of current procedure:<br>1= I<br>2=<br>3= III<br>4= II<br>5= III | Scrutiny Members are invited to agree the work programme items through the process explained above, this provides adequate time to test the suitability of the issue and links to the Council's priorities.<br><br>Score Member Involvement:<br>1=<br>2= I<br>3= II<br>4= IIIII<br>5= I | SD & ADs are able to comment on the suitability of a work programme item when the work programme is being considered and also at an early stage in the scoping process.<br><br>Score of SLT Involvement:<br>1=<br>2= I<br>3= IIIII<br>4= I<br>5= I | Score out of 15:<br>12<br>9<br>9<br>Nil<br>10<br>14<br>10<br>12<br>5<br>11<br>= Average score 10.55 | • The priorities should be set by the Customer Services Centre complaints log<br>• Council priorities are not always our residents priorities<br>• I wonder if we sometimes try to scrutinise things which SBC has no control over? Examples are post offices, busses etc.<br>• Are we asked to relate to council priorities?<br>• Should scrutiny help to modify / change priorities<br>• As a scrutiny Member I'm not too clear about SD & ADs involvement<br>• As this has been linked with agreeing the work programmes, as Chair, I invite a vote /objections. However, there is nothing formal as in there is no requirement. It may be that a recorded vote is taken?<br>• In terms of a weakness it isn't a weakness when Scrutiny looks to address any issue that is of concern regarding existing practice. If an urgent issue arises you could question the focus of the Future Town Future Council priorities?<br>• The Future Town Future Council is not the only priority for the town's people<br>• I think it's a good thing that the choice of items reviewed are not always the Councils direct priorities<br>• Scrutiny must be independent of the Executive. This is the wrong question, an example of this is the review of damp and mould, officers and the Executive didn't want this to be scrutinised. Policy Development should be chaired by chair of committee<br>• Scrutiny committees should scrutinise all issues that concern the community, even if it does not come under the control of the Council as our input could be of some value in certain areas |

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