

Scrutiny Self Evaluation – Possible recommendations for improvement of the function

Key Areas	Current Procedure (brief description + presentation for each column) (Score 5 high 1 low)	Opportunities for improvement (completed by Members at the meeting on 23 September 2019)	Possible Recommendations
1. Work Programming	<p>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.</p> <p><u>Score of current procedure:</u></p> <p>1= 2= 3= IIIII II 4= II 5= I</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be using Customer Service Centre info they gather to inform what is scrutinised • Need grid of Portfolio Holders areas of responsibility • Can more be done to encourage a better response rate to work programme ideas/responses from Members? • Do other Council's enjoy a better engagement level? • The lag in the system is not ideal but need to accept it • A bit haphazard, Chairs need to ensure other Members contribute and give an idea about how this relates to priorities • Timing does have an effect on the quality of how much time we have and resources available • Happy that channels are opened to invite comments/uptake from both members and public • Once topics are collated – could be voted on by all Members rather than just the select committee and possibly public vote • 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 • 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programme – this should not be the case • The process is Member led which I believe is a good thing • Too much lag; out of date; not responsive; new councillors not involved.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 • Realise why work programming is agreed in March but could be a completely different committee and Chair and Vice-chair 	<p>Recommendation: That the way work programming is arranged be amended to incorporate a better engagement from the public and also from all scrutiny Members this could include:</p> <p>(i) Use the Customer Service Centre & Satisfaction Surveys data as a source to generate local issues to scrutinise</p> <p>(ii) Work with Scrutiny Members to capture their ideas – possibly with a one day event to gather ideas rather than relying on the current survey – introduce a voting system for all Scrutiny Members to state their preference</p> <p>(iii) Address the perceived problem of the lag in the system – describe as a rolling work programme that items can drop off and be added to during the year but still be published in the spring</p> <p>(iv) The process must be Member led with Scrutiny Members having the last word on subjects to scrutinise</p> <p>(v) The Communications Team should be asked to advise on what is trending on social media</p>
2. Scoping	<p>Each substantive review item has a scoping document drafted and presented to the Select Committee for consideration...</p> <p><u>Score of current procedure</u></p> <p>1= 2= 3= II 4= IIIII II 5= I</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A short introduction giving background info into scoping document detailing why and how it has come to scrutiny • Scoping document needs to be a living document and be flexible to reflect the evidence given during scrutiny • Should <u>all</u> scrutiny members have the chance to comment on the draft document? • Do we receive details of SLT comment? Make scoping documents more flexible • 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 • 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 • 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 • At scoping meeting an explanation why the issue has been chosen should 	<p>Recommendation: That the way scoping is carried out be amended to incorporate a better understanding of the issues under consideration with both Scrutiny Members and relevant officers prior to a review starting and ways of keeping the scope in focus during the review:</p> <p>(i) That a short introductory background presentation detailing the issues around the scrutiny be brought to Members, this would help all Members but especially new Councillors who may not be familiar with the issues and process</p> <p>(ii) An updated scoping document should be provided at strategic points during a review, reflecting on any changes of focus or additions and what has been achieved so far</p> <p>(iii) That all Scrutiny Members be given the chance to comment on the scope</p>

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3.Evidence Gathering/site visit/interviews	<p>Depending on the review site visits are set up...</p> <p><u>Score of current procedure</u> 1= 2= 3= III 4= III 5= II</p>	<p>be provided to help new Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site visits are sometimes inconvenient/can't make when held during the day • Would like to see more evidence coming from members of the public • I think this works really well but we should be open to suggestions for improvements from external witnesses • No experience as never been on select committee • Use call-in procedure more / with interviews • Training in interviewing & questioning. Need for planning what outcome and value is expected from a site visit • Where relevant witnesses are used the scrutiny acquired solid recommendations • Regarding Member involvement - not all Members take an active part. Input should be credited in the minutes • Regarding SLT and Officer involvement – much of the success is due to the scrutiny officer • Who checks that the evidence is accurate? • Stop last minute circulation of papers. For O&S the double agenda is cumbersome • Often when site visits are arranged they are not always convenient for all Members, but not sure how this would be overcome 	<p>Recommendation: That the way evidence is gathered including site visits and interviews is carried out be amended to incorporate more engagement and evidence from the public, changes to how and when site visits are carried out, better engagement with all Scrutiny Members and ways to check if the evidence is accurate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Promote ways to engage more with the public in the evidence gathering process (ii) Provide a range of options including some evenings for Member site visits (iii) Provide opportunities to engage with all Scrutiny Members on a Committee and credit Members who take a lead role in a specific issue the review
4.Final reports & recommendations	<p>Nearing the end of the review the Scrutiny Officer drafts a report which is sent to the Chair & Vice-Chair...</p> <p><u>Score of current procedure</u> 1= 2= 3= 4= IIIII III 5= I</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could improve but can't put my finger on how • I think this works really well but we should be open to suggestions for improvements from external witnesses • 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. • Strongly agree that there are often too many recommendations • Regarding SLT having opportunities to amend the final report and recommendations – I don't like this happening • Agree that the final word <u>must</u> be with the elected Members • 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 • When the draft report goes to Committee in some cases the outside witnesses who have been interviewed should also be invited to comment 	<p>Recommendation: That the way recommendations and final reports are drawn together should incorporate less recommendations to maintain the reviews impact, make sure that this is a Member led part of the review with Members having the final word on reports and recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Review final reports should incorporate less recommendations to maintain the reviews impact (where possible these could be grouped together) (ii) That a process be drawn together to invite comment from all Scrutiny Members regarding the final report and recommendations – (possibly an item on an agenda with draft recommendations for comment and amendment prior to the publishing of the final report)
5.Monitoring outcomes	<p>As part of the monitoring of recommendations and agreed actions, reports are responded to within the Statutory deadline of two months...</p> <p><u>Score of current procedure:</u> 1=</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes feel that the response from the Executive Portfolio is slow • Need to tighten up of going back to scrutiny 6-9 months down the road • We are doing what is required by statute but could monitoring be done quicker, more often in a more transparent way? • Question effectiveness of monitoring/challenging response • Need to be more assertive and systematic. Some Executive/SD responses do not show sufficiently serious engagement • The process sounds well organised • Yes monitoring happens. However, the timeframe is far too long. They 	<p>Recommendation: That the way monitoring outcomes is currently undertaken is looked at to consider if there can be some improvements in the way monitoring is undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) That officers are encouraged to adopt recommendations that are in scrutiny reports once agreed with the relevant Portfolio Holder, but that this should be acknowledged in responses and not passed off as being current practise when it is actually in response to the review.

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	2= I 3= III 4= II 5= II	<p>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</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some responses very grudging. Some recommendations completely lost e.g. BTC and transport • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (ii) Executive responses should be displayed prominently on the Council's web site (in addition to just being published with an agenda on the web site). (iii) Following a review the loop should be closed with witnesses and with any tenants or members of the public who have contributed via a satisfaction survey.
6.Council Priority	<p>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?</p> <p><u>Score of current procedure:</u> 1= I 2= 3= III 4= II 5= III</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The priorities should be set by the Customer Services Centre complaints log • Council priorities are not always our residents priorities • I wonder if we sometimes try to scrutinise things which SBC has no control over? Examples are post offices, busses etc. • Are we asked to relate to council priorities? • Should scrutiny help to modify / change priorities • As a scrutiny Member I'm not too clear about SD & ADs involvement • 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? • 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? • The Future Town Future Council is <u>not</u> the only priority for the town's people • I think it's a good thing that the choice of items reviewed are not always the Councils direct priorities • 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 • 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 	<p>Members are of the view that there is no requirement to make a link between the Council's priority and the issues that Members wish to scrutinise as these issues may converge but they may also diverge as they may be of local interest but not be a Council service.</p>

Additional Recommendation:

Recommendation that was arrived at during the review but not directly from the commentary/scoring matrix:

That the Portfolio Holder Advisory Groups be Chaired by Scrutiny Members as a Pre Scrutiny Advisory Group, which could include the Executive Portfolio Holder as a key contributor answering questions along with the relevant Assistant Director, prior to the Policy being considered at the Executive.