

Short survey for Herts Scrutiny Network re Statutory Scrutiny Guidance

1. Has your authority begun to review its Overview and Scrutiny current procedures and practise, or is it planning to in the light of the Guidance?

No

2. If it is planning to do this has the format to do this been agreed? Self-evaluation, peer review, CfPS/LGA funded review?

N/A

3. What is your current structure? One or more scrutiny committee? Task and finish panels?

Two Scrutiny Committees, each have at least one standing sub-group.

Task and Finish Groups when required, current (new) Chairs prefer to have single topic meetings instead.

4. Are your Scrutiny committees Chaired by Majority Group or opposition Members?

Both are chaired by the opposition, this is not a requirement within our constitution.

5. What do you consider is the current strength of O&S in your authority?

Detailed reviews producing reasoned recommendations, and effective pre-decision scrutiny.

6. What do you consider is any areas of weakness that needs addressing?

Improving the relationship between Scrutiny and the Executive.

7. How is scrutiny perceived in your authority by:

- The Leadership Team – *a way to get political 'buy-in' at pre-decision*
- The Executive Members – *can slow the decision-making process*
- Scrutiny Members – *a way of looking at important matters*
- Officers that are involved in reviews – *additional reports to write, slows down the decision-making process*

8. How do you agree work programmes?

*At the first committee meeting – discussion between all committee members.
Added to and updated throughout the year in consultation with the Chair.*

9. What do you include in a scope?

- *Objective (what is the T&F or report trying to achieve)*
- *Exclusions*
- *Invitees*
- *Report contents (the minimum content requested by the Chair/Committee)*
- *Press release requirements*

10. How are recommendations made?

At Scrutiny Committee meetings, then to Portfolio Holder, Cabinet or Council.

11. How do you monitor outcomes/agreed recommendations and actions from a review?

Via an action tracker at each Committee meeting.

12. Celebrating success / Proving your worth – how do you promote your successes and prove your worth?

Press releases. A Task and Finish Group recommended that when the Council writes to new businesses (paying business rates), that we include a letter to welcome them to the district and point out what the Council can offer and what local support for businesses is available. This was praised by national magazine as 'good practice'.

We also would do a press release when successful recommendations were implemented, depending on the political feeling at the time.

Our Annual Report of Scrutiny Committees goes to full Council, this is a good opportunity to take stock of the work of both Scrutiny Committees and to report the range of work that each one undertakes in a calendar year.

13. What are the barriers to effective scrutiny in your authority?

Given the recent change in administration, there can be a risk for Scrutiny to be used as a political tool.