

Aims of Overview & Scrutiny



Following the Local Government Act 2000, additional legislation through the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 provides elected Members with the powers to scrutinise any function of the Council and any local services provided by external service providers, insofar as they impact on a Councillors' individual ward.

Within their Terms of Reference, the three Scrutiny Committees deliver the following functions:

- review and/or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's functions;
- make reports and/or recommendations to the Council and/or the Executive in connection with the discharge of any functions;
- consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants;
- exercise the right to call-in, for reconsideration, decisions made but not yet implemented by the Executive; and
- assist the Council and the Executive with the development of future policies and strategies.

There are a number of specific functions of the Committees:

- Developing and reviewing Council policies – This includes developing the budget and policy framework; conducting research and consultation; enhancing community

participation in policy development; questioning Executive on their proposals; and liaising with external organisations to ensure that the interests of local people are being addressed effectively through partnership working.

- Scrutinising decisions/performance and making appropriate recommendations based on the evidence gathered – This includes reviewing decisions made by Executive and chief officers; reviewing the performance of the Council; questioning the Executive and chief officers about their decisions and performance linked to their service plan and specific projects; making recommendations to Executive as a result of scrutiny reviews; reviewing the performance of other public bodies e.g. NHS, Police; and questioning and gathering evidence from the public (with their consent).
- Scrutiny must report annually to Council on its work and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate.
- Each of the three Scrutiny Committees and Budget Scrutiny Committee may exercise overall responsibility for the finances, if any, made available to them.
- All Committees can deal with petitions referred to it them under Part 7 of the Constitution that contain at least 350 signatures requiring a relevant employee to give evidence at a Scrutiny Committee on a matter for which the officer is responsible as part of their job.

The Four Key Aims of Overview and Scrutiny

The 'Good Scrutiny Guide', published by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, says good public scrutiny should:

- Provide a 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers
- Enable the voice and concerns of the public
- Be carried out by 'independent minded governors' who lead and own the scrutiny role
- Drive improvement in public services