

Article 6 – Scrutiny

Scrutiny is a statutory role fulfilled by councillors who are not members of the cabinet.

The role of the scrutiny committees is to help develop policy, to carry out reviews of council and other local services, and to hold decision makers to account for their actions and decisions.

2.6.1 The scrutiny committees

2.6.2 Council has decided that there will be five scrutiny committees. The remit of those scrutiny committees is set out in part 3 section 4 of the constitution, and how they operate is in accordance with the functions scheme and scrutiny rules.

2.6.3 Composition

2.6.4 Each committee will comprise seven members of the council. The Scrutiny Management Board members include the other four Scrutiny Committee Chairpersons, an elected chair and vice chair person and other elected members as required to make the committee politically balanced.

2.6.5 Role

2.6.6 Between them the scrutiny committees oversee and scrutinise the work of the leader and cabinet and the council as a whole. This allows members outside the cabinet and citizens to have a greater say in council matters by investigating issues of local concern. This can include questioning cabinet members, committee chairmen, or senior officers of the council, and inviting people from outside the council to give opinions and expert advice.

NEW The role of a scrutiny committee is also to influence the council's policies, providing early insight and shape to a policy whilst it is in development.

2.6.7 The scrutiny committees also have the power to scrutinise the services provided by organisations outside the council e.g. NHS services and the work of the community safety partnership.

2.6.8 The scrutiny committees can make reports and recommendations to the leader, Council and some partner organisations. The decision takers are not required to implement the recommendations but do have to consider any recommendations made.

2.6.9 The scrutiny committees can 'call-in' an executive decision which has been made but not yet implemented. This enables them to consider whether the decision has been taken in accordance with the principles of good decision making. They may recommend that the decision taker reconsiders the decision. They may also be consulted by the leader, other cabinet members or Council on forthcoming decisions and the development of the budget and policy framework.

The Scrutiny Management Board is responsible for the strategic direction and oversight of the scrutiny function and work programme. The SMB undertake

scrutiny activity on items that cross across more than one function of the other four scrutiny committees. This includes the budget process.

- 2.6.10 The council appoints a statutory scrutiny officer with statutory responsibilities to promote the role of the council's scrutiny committees within the council, and support the work of the scrutiny committees by providing help and advice to scrutiny members and also to those being scrutinised. (This role cannot be held by the head of paid service, the chief finance officer or the monitoring officer.)
- 2.6.11 The public can be involved in the scrutiny process and help shape and inform decision making and policy by:
- (a) asking questions on a matter that is the function of the committee or is on a committee agenda;
 - (b) submitting evidence for consideration by a scrutiny committee or one of its task and finish groups;
 - (c) suggesting items for inclusion in the work programme of the committee.