



Cambridge City Council

Performance, Assets & Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Tuesday, 10 June 2025

Time: 5.30 pm

Venue: Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Market Square, Cambridge CB2 3QJ [access the building via Peashill entrance]

Contact: democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk, tel: 01223 457000

Agenda

- 1 **Apologies for Absence**
- 2 **Declarations of Interest**
- 3 **Minutes** **(Pages 3 - 78)**
To agree the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees which met prior to the changes in committee establishment agreed by the annual meeting of Council on 22 May 2025.
- 4 **Public Questions**
- 5 **The Role of Overview and Scrutiny in Local Authorities** **(Pages 79 - 202)**
To discuss guidance on the Overview and Scrutiny function in local government and how this should be best accommodated at Cambridge City Council.
- 6 **Update on Budget-Setting Timetable 2026-27** **(Verbal Report)**
Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) to be heard.
- 7 **Update on Changes to Performance Management Framework and Approach** **(Verbal Report)**
Chief Operating Officer to be heard.

An update to be provided on the progress of changes to the council's Performance Management Framework Principles and Approach, as reported to the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 31 March 2025, and the Annual Customer Feedback Report.

<https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=159&MId=4470&Ver=4>

- 8 **Update on the Shared Services Partnership Agreement** (Verbal Report)
Chief Operating Officer to be heard.
- 9 **Update on Stock Condition Survey Commissioning** (Verbal Report)
City Services Director to be heard.
- 10 **Update on Housing Performance and Social Housing** (Verbal Report)
Assistant Director of Development to be heard.
- 11 **Overview and Scrutiny Annual Business: Work Programme and Forward Plan** (Pages 203 - 234)
To consider a report outlining the committee's work planning arrangements for the municipal year.

Performance, Assets & Strategy Scrutiny Committee Members: Porrer (Chair), Gawthroe Wood (Vice-Chair), Baigent, Clough, Dalzell, Davey, Griffin and Sheil

Alternates: Bennett, Bick and Martinelli

PLANNING AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 January 2025

5.30 - 7.20 pm

Present: Councillors Nestor (Chair), Baigent (Vice-Chair), Bick, Clough, Divkovic, Griffin, Porrer and Swift

Executive Councillor: Thornburrow (Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure)

Officers:

Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development: Stephen Kelly

Deputy Director, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning and 3C Building Control: Heather Jones

Strategic Planning Manager: Caroline Hunt

Senior Policy Planner: Mark Deas

Principal Planner: Rachel Lambert

Committee Manager: Claire Tunnicliffe

Meeting Producer: James Goddard

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

25/1/PnT Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

25/2/PnT Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor Baigent	All	Personal: Member of Cambridge Cycle Campaign
Councillor Clough		Personal: Member of South Newnham Neighbourhood Forum
Councillor Nestor	25/31/PnT	Personal: Member of the Advisory Panel of Cambridge Connects

25/3/PnT Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

25/4/PnT Public Questions

Members of the public asked a number of questions, as set out below.

Question No 1:

- i. In last month's Devolution White Paper, the Government committed to the creation of Unitary Authorities in areas currently served by two tiers of local government.
- ii. What steps have been agreed to facilitate increased cooperation and coordination with East Cambridgeshire District Council, which decided in October to commence preparation of a new Local Plan?

The Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure responded.

- i. Cooperation with our neighbouring authorities was an important part of the Plan making process, and Officers continued to engage with the Council's neighbours.
- ii. The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlighted that local planning authorities and county councils (in two-tier areas) continued to be under a duty to cooperate with each other, and with other prescribed bodies, on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries. The Authority Monitoring Report (AMR), included on this committee agenda, documents activities undertaken towards meeting the requirements.
- iii. There was on-going engagement with East Cambridgeshire and the other surrounding local authorities. The process and outcomes were documented in the Statement of Common Ground and Statement of Compliance which form part of the Local Plan evidence base. Draft versions of these were published alongside the First Proposals Consultation and would be updated at the draft plan stage.
- iv. The Council would also be requested to comment on the proposed new Local Plan for East Cambs District Council at the appropriate stages in the consultation process.
- v. The devolution white paper outlined the commitment of Government to creating unitary authorities and the Council would be considering the implications in due course. However, no discussions had been started in respect of Local Plan preparations. The Council has continued to progress with the emerging joint Local Plan for Greater Cambridge.

Supplementary Question:

- i. Since publishing the Devolution White Paper, the Government had made it clear that it expects local authorities to agree on a single unitarization proposal for each local area and not to submit competing proposals. Had there been any initial discussions between the City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council regarding how these proposals would be developed for Cambridgeshire.

The Executive Councillor said the following:

- i. Discussions were taking place, but the Shared Planning Service was not involved at this stage. It was hoped as discussions developed, the Service would become involved given the importance of the future Local Plan and future planning matters.

Question No 2:

- i. Could a property within a conservation area replace wooden windows with UPVC windows? The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning webpage with information about windows in conservation areas says

Doors and windows

*These are important features which add to the attractiveness of buildings and streetscapes. Changes to the size or location of window and door openings need planning permission. Replacement materials used in exterior work should be **like** those already in use. (My emphasis).*

- ii. Is a UPVC a material 'like' wood?
- iii. A link to the webpage from which the quote above here is taken:
<https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/design-heritage-and-environment/historic-environment/conservation-areas/what-needs-permission-in-a-conservation-area/#a2>

The Executive Councillor said the following:

- i. Regulations currently stated that in a conservation area if wooden windows were replaced it was important that the change must meet the details of the existing windows, this meant the same colour, the glazing pattern and the proportion of the window. But it was not a specific requirement that they remained wooden windows, if the replacement met the criteria of the appearance as outlined, it would be possible to change to UPVC windows.

Question No 3:

- i. The proposals from East West Rail confirm that they would be carrying out work at the Cambridge-Newmarket chord by the Beehive Centre and Cambridge Retail Park. Coldham's Road which has the Cambridge

Museum of Computing and Plurabelle's Bookstore are also on the other side of the railway line.

- ii. Given RailPen's acquisition of both the Beehive Centre & Cambridge Retail Park, and their substantial plans for the former (and in time, most probably the latter), please could Cambridge City Council amend its draft responses to the consultation and urge East West Rail to open negotiations with RailPEN for contributions towards exploring the possibility of a suburban or light rail stop built around Coldham's Lane Bridge. I've described how this could happen in principle in a blogpost at <https://cambridgetownowl.com/2024/12/31/cambridge-city-council-says-east-west-rail-should-build-an-eastern-entrance-to-cambridge-railway-station/>
- iii. At public consultations, the representatives for RailPen have confirmed that Network Rail has not approached them regarding rail-based transport. Please could the council use its offices to ensure that Network Rail and its successors, Great British Rail commence exploratory talks to identify what might be possible regarding a rail/light rail link for The Beehive Centre, and thus substantially reducing any future motor traffic to the redeveloped site.

The Executive Councillor responded with the following:

- i. The Council would ensure through its ongoing engagement with EWR that reference was made to the proximity of EWR's draft Order Limits and safeguarded area to strategic development sites within the City, including Beehive Centre & Cambridge Retail Park. However, there were no firm proposals for a light rail link, or any other transport connections within the area specified.
- ii. Should the proposals for East West Rail evolve to include new transport infrastructure capable of serving this part of the City, or the emerging Transport Strategy promote such a solution, Officers would expect to engage with those proposals at that time.
- iii. Officers had noted EWR Co's consultation response to the Beehive application (23/03204/OUT) which raised no objection. However, requested that a condition was applied requiring details of any development of land within the East West Rail safeguarded area to be agreed with East West Rail Company prior to the submission of reserved matters.

Supplementary question:

- i. The latest update received from Parliament regarding the restructure of Unitary Authorities, Government would expect local government to be restructured by 2028.

- ii. Had tried to lobby RailPen to contribute towards a suburban or light rail station around Coldham's Lane Bridge and it seemed they have been waiting for someone else to take the initiative; the Council and East West Rail were of the same mindset.
- iii. Would encourage the City Council to sit down with RailPen, East West Rail and the Department of Transport to agree funding for at least a feasibility study given the huge transport demands not just from the Beehive Centre but also the Cambridge Retail Park.

The Executive Councillor said the following:

- i. Noted the comments made and stated there did used to be railway unloading point on the site.
- ii. Any forthcoming development on site should consider future proofing to allow for adaptability to accommodate for new transport needs, such as a station, which would have a positive impact in the area.

Question No 4:

- i. Referred to the Annual Monitoring Report for Greater Cambridge 1 April 2023 to 31 Mar 2024 which is an impressive document, and I am grateful to the officers who have put so much time into its preparation.
- ii. My main question is about the number of housing units completed in the annual monitoring period (AMP) which is the nine months since the end of the monitoring report and the forecast completion in the balance of this current monitoring year.
- iii. Para 3.6 says: in the AMP 249 dwellings were completed of which 20 were affordable houses (Para 3.19). The affordable housing completion number is also shown in the tables in the appendices on p.192 and p.197.
- iv. I would like to ask how many houses at social rent were completed in Cambridge in the AMP. What are equivalent figures for total completions, affordable housing completions and social rent completions in the nine months to the end of December 2024?
- v. And what are the equivalent three figures for the balance of the current AMP (January - March 2024)?

The Executive Councillor replied with the following:

- i. Believed the question related to the data for the nine-month period from April-December 2024 and then anticipated data for January-March 2025, in which case the Council did not have the data.

- ii. The AMR was for April 2023 to March 2024, and data that the question related to would come from the housing completions monitoring, which was only carried out annually.

Supplementary question:

- i. To clarify, the question concerned the period from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 and the affordable housing completions and how many houses at social rent were completed in Cambridge in that period.

The Senior Policy Planner advised the following:

- i. Cambridge Investment Partnership was a key provider of affordable housing in the City and their programme just happened to have a dip in 2023-24. This was exacerbated by a scheme currently under construction actually demolishing 36 dwellings in 2023-24 which will be replaced by 70 new affordable homes over the next two years. Over half of these would be at Social Rent.
- ii. There remain significant commitments for affordable housing on strategic sites in the city.

The Executive Councillor responded:

- i. The previous year to this reporting period there had been 316 completions and reiterated that the completion rate would increase again.

25/5/PnT Authority Monitoring Report 2023-24

Matter for Decision

The report referred to the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) for Greater Cambridge 2023-2024.

Decision of the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure

- i. Agreed the Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) for Greater Cambridge 2023-2024 (included as Appendix A) for publication on the Councils' websites.
- ii. Delegated any further minor editing changes to the Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, Authority Monitoring Report for Greater Cambridge 2023-2024 to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Senior Policy Planner.

In response to Members' questions the Senior Policy Planner, Planning Policy Manager and Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development said the following:

- i. Did not believe that the AMR had implications for the Duty to Cooperate. The AMR reported on the progress that the Council had made on the Duty to Cooperate.
- ii. The total number of new houses built in Cambridge during the report period was low. The annual Housing Trajectory Report had predicted a smaller figure, so this was no surprise to Officers.
- iii. This reporting period was always going to record a low number of completions, there were some schemes that had been completed the year before, with other schemes not yet started.
- iv. The Housing Trajectory Report did anticipate high levels of growth in future years. Officers had begun the process of updating the housing trajectory for next year. The Government's new housing targets for Cambridge and the surrounding areas would have significant implications for the Council's ability to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply going forward.
- v. Officers would be writing to all developers of schemes of ten or more dwellings requesting profiles of their buildout rates to update the HJR.
- vi. The Housing Trajectory Report would show site by site where and when housing completions were expected. The current report demonstrated that the Council has a five-housing land supply which meant planning policies could be considered up to date.
- vii. Most permissions (planning applications) had applied water related conditions. Officers had looked at the few applications where conditions relating to water had not been applied. Some had gone to successful appeal and the Inspector had not applied the condition when the Council would have done. The remainder were a small number of holiday lettings where it had not been appropriate to apply the water conditions and single dwellings.

- viii. Therefore, the total number of new houses in the reporting period which had been conditioned regarding water was higher than 90%. There were only two non-residential permissions where water conditions had not been applied as one was for temporary use and the other due to its small size was deemed not appropriate.
- ix. The water conditions had been applied to all strategic sites.
- x. The purpose of the AMR was to demonstrate how effectively Local Plan policy was working.
- xi. The AMR highlighted the changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the importance of the Council's planning committees and services which continued to find ways to support the delivery of new homes, including affordable homes in the City rather than just South Cambridgeshire.
- xii. The Housing Trajectory Report and AMR could be viewed at the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning website on the monitoring page at the link: [Monitoring delivery in Greater Cambridge](#)
- xiii. District centres within Cambridge were being monitored by Officers. There had not been any significant deterioration in this area.
- xiv. It was difficult to monitor the change of use for retail units as some changes of use no longer required planning permission.
- xv. Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment had been completed. Work was being undertaken to look at potential sites and stopping places.
- xvi. More recent engagement with the Government through the Cambridge Delivery Company continued to explore how the Council could be more confident in the future delivery of affordable and new house and the appropriate infrastructure.
- xvii. A report will be presented at the February meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee which would provide an update on the Cambridge 2050 project.
- xviii. In response to questions around why fewer Neighbourhood Plans were coming forwards in the City Council area, officers expressed a view that that it was potentially easier to develop a neighbourhood plan in a rural location where there was a parish council who were able to start the plan process. In a non-parish area, there had to be a group of people who were willing to work together and organise a neighbourhood development order in the first instance.
- xix. Neighbourhood Plans sometimes come forward because those in the local area had specific planning objectives that they were seeking to deliver beyond those set out in the adopted Local Plan. Therefore, the lack of Neighbourhood Plans in Cambridge was not necessarily a bad thing.

- xx. Noted the comment that it was important to ensure that growth was sustainable.

The Committee voted **unanimously** to endorse the Officer recommendations.

The Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Transport approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted).

None

25/6/PnT Draft Response to East West Rail Non-Statutory Consultation

Matter for Decision

The report provided an update on the East West Rail (EWR) Development Consent Order (DCO) as well as setting out details and proposing the Council response in respect of the non-statutory consultation currently being undertaken by East West Rail Co., which commenced on 14 November 2024 and is due to end on 24 January 2025.

Decision of the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure

- i. Noted the commencement of the non-statutory consultation for the EWR project, which began on 14 November 2024 and will continue until 24 January 2025.
- ii. Agreed that the content of the Officer's report and the schedule of feedback/responses (Appendix B) would comprise the formal consultation response from the Council, and delegate authority to the Director of Planning and Economic Development to submit the report on behalf of Cambridge City Council subject to any changes made by the Executive Member and any minor amendments required in the interests of accuracy or clarity.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Strategic Planning Manager.

In response to comments from Members Principal Planner, Strategic Sites (EWR DCO Lead) responded:

- i. Noted the list of comments made by Councillor Porrer.
- ii. Officers were actively encouraging East West Rail to engage with residents.
- iii. Would be providing feedback to East West Rail on the lessons learnt from the process so far, both positive and negative.
- iv. One of the lessons learnt from earlier rail project implementation in Buckingham, was that honesty was the best policy with residents and businesses. If there was going to be disruption for several weeks, it was important to tell the truth, so those effected could plan for such things.
- v. Noted the comment that a second entrance to Cambridge main station would be welcomed and would be of considerable use to those living in Romsey Ward; a station in Cherry Hinton was very much needed.
- vi. Comments in the response had been collated from technical officers which could be expanded upon in dialogue with the EWR team, these also requested additional detail on some of those mitigation requirements.
- vii. As the project progressed, and further engagement took place, Officers would push for a more intense dialogue between East West Rail and the host authorities.
- viii. Would take on board all the comments raised by the Committee and would discuss further with the Executive Councillor.
- ix. The response would be updated and amended to reinforce the comments made where necessary.
- x. Would continue to encourage as many people to respond to the consultation as possible.
- xi. The proposal showed from Cambridge Station along the existing line to Cherry Hinton a turn back, which was currently a single line, however, had noted it was previously a twin track.
- xii. There was a Cambridge East Station in the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) strategic vision so hoped that this proposal would become reality.

The Committee voted **unanimously** to endorse the Officer recommendations.

The Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Transport approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted).

None

25/7/PnT Greater Cambridge Local Development Scheme (local plan timetable)

Matter for Decision

This report provided an update regarding the Local Development Scheme (LDS), which was a timetable to produce a new or revised development plan documents that set out the planning policy framework for Greater Cambridge.

The LDS was prepared jointly between South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council as the plans in preparation are both joint plans for the authorities' combined area.

Decision of the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure

- i. Agreed the Greater Cambridge Local Development Scheme (local plan timetable) 2025 at Appendix 1 of the Officer's report be confirmed as the Local Plan Timetable
- ii. Approved the Greater Cambridge Local Development Scheme (local plan timetable) 2025 be shared with Government and be published on the Greater Cambridge Planning website, superseding the Greater Cambridge Development Scheme 2022.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Strategic Planning Manager.

In response to comments from Members, the Strategic Planning Manager, the Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development and Executive Councillor said the following:

- i. Noted the comment that extending the Plan period seemed sensible to accommodate the growth required.
- ii. Members would be kept informed as Officers moved forward with the Local Plan preparation to produce a Plan which could be submitted to the Secretary of State by December 2026

- iii. The Government were aware of key issues that sat behind the emerging Local Plan through the Cambridge Delivery Company, discussions with the Combined Authority and other external stakeholders.
- iv. In all the engagement, opportunities were being taken to highlight the work on the emerging Local Plan and issues raised, with Ministers, through the CPCA and the Water Scarcity Group
- v. Had stressed the significance of the decision on the Development Consent Order as part of Cambridgeshire's growth ambition with all external partners.
- vi. Would expect to bring a report on progress at a future meeting.
- vii. The proposal to submit the Greater Cambridge Local Plan by the end of December 2026, was not just about the proposed sites in the area but highlighted the Council's policies, standards and quality. Would continue to engage with South Cambridgeshire District Council and opposition parties on this work.

The Committee voted **unanimously** to endorse the Officer recommendations.

The Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Transport approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted).

None.

25/8/PnT To Note Record of Urgent Decision Taken by the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure

25/8/PnT a Huntingdonshire Local Plan (Regulation 18) Further Issues and Options consultation response

The decision was noted.

25/9/PnT Officer Delegated Decision

25/9/PnTa Delegated Officer Decision: South Newnham Neighbourhood Plan – Receipt of Examiners Report and Decision to Proceed to Referendum

The decision was noted.

The meeting ended at 7.20 pm

CHAIR

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PLANNING AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

25 March 2025
5.30 - 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Nestor (Chair), Baigent (Vice-Chair), Bick, Clough, Porrer and Swift

Executive Councillor: Thornburrow (Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure)

In attendance: Councillor Blackburn-Horgan

Officers:

Joint Director for Planning: Stephen Kelly

Planning Policy Manager: Jonathan Dixon

Built & Natural Environment Manager: Jane Green

Environmental Health Manager: Yvonne O'Donnell

Built Environment Team Leader: Trovine Monteiro

Team Leader (Planning Policy and Strategic Planning): Terry DeSousa

Principal Planning Policy Officer: Lizzie Wood

Senior Urban Designer: Tom Davies

Policy Planner: Vaughan Bryan

S106 Officer: James Fisher

Committee Manager: Claire Tunnicliffe

Meeting Producer: Boris Herzog

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

25/1/PnT Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Divkovic and Griffin. Councillor Pounds attended as an alternate.

25/2/PnT Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Interest
Baigent	All	Personal: Member of Cambridge Cycle Campaign.

25/3/PnT Public Questions

There were no public questions.

25/4/PnT To Note Record of Urgent Decision Taken by the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure

Cambridge Northern Neighbourhoods Design Code for Arbury, King's Hedges and parts of West Chesterton

The decision was noted.

25/5/PnT Cambridge Neighbourhoods Design Code for Arbury, Kings Hedges and Parts of West Chesterton Supplementary Planning Document

The purpose of the report was to seek approval to adopt the Cambridge Neighbourhoods Design Code for Arbury Kings Hedges and parts of West Chesterton as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Decision of the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure

- i. Considered the main issues raised in the public consultation, agreed responses to the representations received and agreed proposed changes to the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) as set out in the Statement of Consultation (appendix 01 of the Officer's report).
- ii. Subject to (i), adopted the amended Cambridge Neighbourhoods Design Code SPD for Arbury, Kings Hedges and Parts of West Chesterton, March 2025 (appendix 02 of the Officer's report).
- iii. Delegated to the Joint Director of Planning, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure, the Chair and Spokes for the Planning Policy and Transport Scrutiny Committee, the authority to make any necessary editing changes to the SPD prior to publication.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Built Environment Team Leader.

In response to comments from Members the Built Environment Team Leader and the Executive Councillor said the following:

- i. Noted the request to avoid having blank walls at the end of a facade, as a blank wall usually encouraged unsolicited graffiti. SPD wanted to encourage more active uses of blank walls throughout public spaces and at the end of terraced houses.
- ii. Developers were expected to take account of the detailed design of buildings including the accessible letterboxes as referenced in the character chapter of the Design Code.
- iii. The SPD would be reviewed through the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). The impact of the Design Code would also be assessed based on the outcome of planning applications received for the area.
- iv. The project team had carried out different types of public engagement, in person and online to try and capture local views. Did not expect members of the community to come to Officers, but instead Officers tried to go out into the community with the project.
- v. Officers had engaged with local schools on numerous occasions, engaging with the young people as the occupiers and users of houses in the future; working with schools through the Planning Department's Youth Engagement Service was also aimed at extending engagement to the student's families.
- vi. Local resident groups had also been consulted several times through various platforms.
- vii. Producing a Design Code which was area based and did not have a Master Plan was instead focused upon receiving views from residents to identify priorities that were important to those who lived, worked or studied in the area.
- viii. The Design Code had been led by a series of phased consultations. The first phase asked residents what they liked and didn't like about the area through an online and in person survey. The key principles were then drafted and through a series of consultations asked if they were the right principles. Once the responses had been received to the suggested principles, more detail had been added to formulate the document itself.
- ix. Would be difficult to provide a breakdown of percentages for favourable and non-favourable responses as there had been many phased consultations over a year and a half from initial concept ideas through to support on the principles, consulting on the detail informally and then formally.
- x. There had been approximately three hundred responses submitted with different levels of responses to each question.
- xi. Agreed there could be lessons learnt such as the length and size of the document.

- xii. Noted it would be interesting to see how this SPD and the newly adopted South Newnham Local Plan would be used for schemes coming forward and if these would encourage better place making.
- xiii. Taking the Design Code forward as an SPD would be the first step of validating the document.
- xiv. Officers wanted to make sure that the SPD would be used by developers and the community for designing schemes coming forward. For Planning Officers to scrutinise and assess these schemes using the SPD as an aid.
- xv. Through the new emerging Local Plan process, all SPD's may have to be reviewed, and amendments made if necessary.

The Committee voted **unanimously** to endorse the Officer recommendations.

The Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Transport approved the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor thanked the Officers for all their hard work and looked forward to seeing how this would improve planning applications.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted).

None

25/6/PnT Cambridge Biomedical Campus Supplementary Planning Document Adoption

The report referred to the Cambridge Biomedical Campus Supplementary Planning Document which set out the guidance on the implementation of policies within the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) and the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) regarding future development at the Cambridge Biomedical Campus.

The SPD set out planning principles to guide future development proposals at the Cambridge Biomedical Campus and provided a planning framework for consideration when determining planning applications.

Decision of the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure

- i. Considered the main issues raised in the public consultation, agreed responses to the representations received, and agreed proposed changes to the Cambridge Biomedical Campus Supplementary Planning

Document as set out in the Statement of Consultation (Appendix A of the Officer's report).

- ii. Subject to (i), adopt the amended Cambridge Biomedical Campus Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix B of the Officer's report).
- iii. Agreed to delegate to the Joint Director of Planning in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure and Chair and Spokes the authority to make any subsequent material amendments and editing changes to the SPD prior to publication.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Principal Policy Planner.

In response to comments from Members the Principal Policy Planner, Joint Director of Planning, Team Leader (Planning Policy and Strategic Planning) and Executive Councillor said the following:

- i. Understood the delivery, phasing and mechanisms to ensure that deliveries were carried out effectively on the campus. The emerging Local Plan would also look at the use of logistic hubs for deliveries and how the site could work more efficiently
- ii. Would amend principle 4b 3.1 of the SPD to include reference to nursesey provision.
- iii. Confirmed that CBC referenced in the comments was CBC Limited.
- iv. Members of the Planning Committee and Joint Development Control Committee had expressed frustration when considering individual applications that there was not a Master Plan. This SPD should help to bring cohesion to the development of this important area, but did not replace the need for a Master Plan.
- v. There were limitations of what could be included in an SPD as new policy could not be added, but the Council could encourage and support good practice..
- vi. The emerging Local Plan would also pick up on transport issues exploring movement to and around the site.
- vii. The SPD was also limited to what could be included as it had to follow the adopted Local Plan versus the ambitions of the emerging Local Plan.
- viii. Officers were working with the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA), as the transport authority, and other external partners

such as the Greater Cambridge Partnership, to look at, and model, the transport consequences for the biomedical campus. This would manifest itself into the emerging Local Plan.

- ix. Removing unnecessary trips to the campus through the development of accommodation on the site or development of consolidation hubs might form a part of the subsequent may be part of the transport strategy being developed by CPCA to address existing congestion challenges.
- x. The SPD should be used to aid development control decisions in the short term.
- xi. Officers were working with Housing colleagues from Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council to explore the potential housing options to meet some of the Campus housing needs.
- xii. Officers did not anticipate any housing schemes being brought forward ahead in the short term (potentially of the adoption of the Local Plan).

Councillor Blackburn-Horgan (Ward Councillor for Queen Edith's) spoke in support of the SPD.

The Committee voted **unanimously** to endorse the Officer recommendations.

The Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Transport approved the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor again thanked the Officers for all their work on this document

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted).

None

25/7/PnT Greater Cambridge Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document Adoption

The report referred to the Greater Cambridge Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which set out the approach, policies and procedures taken by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council in respect of the use of planning obligations.

Decision of the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure

- i. Considered the main issues raised in the public consultation, agreed responses to the representations received, as set out in the Statement of Consultation (Appendix A of the Officer's report).
- ii. Agreed that revisions to the draft Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and additional evidence be prepared, and a decision on revisions be taken by the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure in consultation with Chair and Spokes.
- iii. Agreed that subsequent to those revisions, an additional public consultation be carried out in summer 2025 on the amended draft SPD and supporting evidence.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Planning Policy Manager

In response to comments from Members the Planning Policy Manager and S106 Officer said the following:

- i. Noted the comment that the preference would be for biodiversity net gain wherever possible provided on site, or near to a site.
- ii. Officers had been careful with the wording on the matter of biodiversity as this SPD could not to change the Council's Planning Policy on biodiversity. There was already a separate Biodiversity SPD but would revisit the wording to ensure that the references were clear to the Council's approach on biodiversity net gain.
- iii. Nursey provision was a private enterprise but there were elements of the subject matter picked up in the education cost.
- iv. No date had been set for further public consultation as outlined in the recommendation but hoped this could be achieved in the summer term.
- v. The premise of the S106 monitoring contribution was to ensure that the costs in relation to administration of the agreement were fully covered. It was important that only the costs were covered.
- vi. A charging regime had been put forward to address infrastructure costs and the Council had received considerable representations on this

matter which was being reviewed by Officers. It was important to ensure that developers were not paying more than was necessary.

- vii. Noted the comment that all charges should be linked to inflation.

The Committee voted **unanimously** to endorse the Officer recommendations.

The Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Transport approved the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor again thanked the Officers for all their work on this document.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted).

None

25/8/PnT Health Impact Assessment Supplementary Planning Document Adoption

The report referred to the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) that provided guidance on the implementation of policies within the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (2018) and the Cambridge Local Plan (2018) with regards to the assessment and consideration of health impacts for some types of new development in Greater Cambridge.

The planning and design of the built environment had a major influence on human health and wellbeing and a HIA provides a structured way of assessing the prospective health impacts of a development on all parts of the community and ensuring that any potential negative impacts are avoided or minimised and that positive impacts are maximised.

Decision of the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure

- i. Considered the main issues raised in the public consultation, agreed responses to the representations received, and agreed proposed changes to the Health Impact Assessment Supplementary Planning Document as set out in the Statement of Consultation (Appendix A of the Officer's report).
- ii. Subject to (i), adopt the amended Health Impact Assessment Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix B of the Officer's report).

- iii. Agreed to delegate to the Joint Director of Planning in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure and Chair and Spokes the authority to make any subsequent material amendments and editing changes to the SPD prior to publication.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Policy Planner.

In response to comments from Members the Policy Planner and the Joint Director for Planning and Planning Policy Manager said the following:

- i. Officers had used and adapted (with permission) the Healthy Urban Development Unit checklist (HUDU) which was a document to create healthy sustainable communities and ensured that new developments were planned with health in mind.
- ii. There were HIA SPD's which had been rolled out with Local Authorities in London, Birmingham, Brighton and Hove, these were becoming more prevalent in practice, particularly after Public Health England had published their national guidance in 2020.
- iii. It had been important to make sure that the SPD had been relevant and in context to the local area.
- iv. Officers did not believe that it was appropriate for the SPD to address issues such as banning smoking in public places. It would be very difficult to ban smoking through an SPD as there were other legislative provisions outside the Planning Acts with primary responsibility for addressing this issue.
- v. Matters of air quality were picked up through the Environmental Health Team, such as, when looking at contaminated land and the compatibility of neighbouring land uses when considering the environmental impacts of new developments.
- vi. It was essential for all developers to consider and note the significance and importance of health in their developments. The SPD highlighted the importance of mental health in the design process and expectation was that developers would take this into consideration for new developments.
- vii. The SPD underlined how people in the local area and existing local communities could benefit from a new development, through a sense of

community, community facilities, green spaces and the quality of environment.

- viii. There had been a push for increased references to delivering healthy spaces in planning which had broadly derived post pandemic.
- ix. Limits and thresholds referenced in the SPD had been based on policy thresholds. The existing adopted Local Plans outline different thresholds for a HIA between the City and South Cambridgeshire District Council. With the emerging Local Plan, the limits and thresholds would be revisited.
- x. Monitoring would be through the Annual Monitoring Report and conversations were being held on the monitoring of the effectiveness of policies.

The Committee voted **unanimously** to endorse the Officer recommendations.

The Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Transport approved the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor again thanked the Officers for all their work on this document.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted).

None

The meeting ended at 7.00 pm

CHAIR

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 March 2025
5.30 - 7.40 pm

Present: Councillors Griffin (Chair), Robertson (Vice-Chair),
Gawthroe Wood, Gardiner-Smith, Lee, Martinelli, Swift and Tong

Executive Councillors: Bird (Executive Councillor for Housing) and Holloway
(Executive Councillor for Community Safety, Homelessness and Wellbeing)

Tenant/Leaseholder Representatives:
Best (Leaseholder Representative), Birch (Tenant Representative), Minns
(Tenant Representative) and Powell-Hardy (Tenant Representative)

Officers present in person:

Assistant Director, Housing and Health: Samantha Shimmon
Assistant Director, Development: Ben Binns
Committee Manager: Sarah Steed
Meeting Producer: James Goddard

Officers present online:

Asset Manager: Will Barfield
Strategic Resettlement and Community Equity Lead: Keryn Jalli
Housing Strategy Manager: Helen Reed
Home Improvement Agency Manager: Frances Swann

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

25/9/HSC Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Thittala and Tenant Representative Justyna Ulman-Jaworska. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Lee.

25/10/HSC Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor Bird	25/15/HSC	Had received assistance from the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (CHIA) in the past.

25/11/HSC Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

25/12/HSC Public Questions**Question 1**

We are the Save Ekin Road community group, and we are writing to you regarding Cambridge City Council's plans for Ekin Road. We are a group of council tenants and freehold residents living on Ekin Road, and we seek an update from you regarding the Ekin Road project.

We note that council tenants within the redevelopment zone received a letter last month from the Council, outlining that the Council expects all such residents to have moved out by December 2025, and that legal proceedings will commence against them if they have not moved by then. This was the first these residents had heard about such a deadline, and it was communicated to them through a complicated legal notice.

We also note that in Agenda Item 9 of this meeting, in Section 4.6.4, only 47 council-owned households of the 96 within the redevelopment zone have been relocated in the 9 months since a decision was taken to redevelop Ekin Road. This is fewer than 50%, and there remains only 9 months for the council to relocate over 50% of those households. These will undoubtedly be those who have the most complicated needs, i.e., are currently in houses rather than flats, and/or who need the largest homes.

Many of our members report to us that they are constantly looking at, and bidding on, homes on home-link, and that most weeks there are no suitable homes available. Those that do bid have, by and large, been unsuccessful as they are in need of 3 or 4 bedroom houses.

Thus, we would like to ask you the following questions today:

Question 1:

How does the Council plan to finish relocating the remaining 49 council-owned households on Ekin Road within the 9 months remaining before its self-imposed deadline of December 2025?

Question 2:

In light of the impending deadline of December 2025 for council tenants to move out, does the Council still plan to honour its commitment to tenants to provide them with “like for like” housing?

Question 3:

For those council tenants who are actively seeking homes on Home-Link, what will happen to them if they have been unable to successfully bid on a home by the December 2025 deadline?

Kind regards,
Save Ekin Road

The Executive Councillor for Housing responded:

- i. The Council had relocated 47 out of 82 tenanted households, which was the position expected at the midway point in the relocation process. The Council would continue to offer support to the remaining 35 tenanted households and 11 property owners on the estate. Residents were encouraged to contact the Council should they wish to discuss their circumstances in more detail or if they had any questions regarding the relocation process.
- ii. The Council relocated tenants on a 'like for like' basis unless the needs of the household changed.
- iii. The Council would work closely with all tenants throughout this year to ensure that they could move to a home of their choosing. If a move had not been possible, the Council would make up to two direct offers of a suitable alternative property, the second of which would be reserved for the household.

Supplementary question:

- i. Asked whether the Council would comply with its promise to residents to offer 'like for like' accommodation. Believed the promise had been made from at least June 2022.
- ii. Expressed concern that the Council was not complying with its promise in the documentation that residents had received as it advised that residents needed to move by December 2025 if they had not moved before then.
- iii. Asked if residents were moved in December 2025, would accommodation be 'like for like' or classed as 'suitable' accommodation.
- iv. Believed 'like for like' accommodation was receiving the same quality of home in roughly the same area, with roughly the same amount of garden.

- v. Commented that some residents at Ekin Road were paying a price for this redevelopment as they did not want to leave and had no choice.
- vi. Expressed concern regarding the legal letter which had been received by residents, which advised that they needed to move out of their property by December 2025, which might not be 'like for like' but 'as the needs of the resident required'.

The Assistant Director (Development) responded:

- i. Advised that tenants would be relocated to 'like for like' accommodation unless the needs of the household had changed.
- ii. Agreed that a formal legal letter had been sent to residents; it was necessary as part of the legal process.

The Executive Councillor for Housing responded:

- i. Tenants had been advised that they would be offered 'like for like' accommodation. Also confirmed that residents could move back to Ekin Road once the redevelopment had been completed.
- ii. Encouraged tenants to contact Officers if they had any concerns and said they could also contact her with any concerns.

Question 2. The Chair exercised discretion to accept this public question despite it being received after the deadline had passed.

I wish to ask a question in relation to agenda Item 9 para 4.6.8 Framework for Change for North Cambridge.

The crucial importance to the local community of Arbury Town Centre and Arbury Court shops, including the library and Post Office, has been recognised in the Draft North Cambridge Design Code.

As a local resident I was very disturbed to hear from some shopkeepers that their leases will not be renewed beyond 2030 because it is proposed to demolish the shopping centre and flats for redevelopment. It appears that they have been offered no further information or mitigation to support the viability of their businesses leading up to and beyond that date. I am very concerned that we will lose these family-run shops as well as Budgens and the Post Office and library.

1. To what extent is any of the above true?
2. When will councillors and/or officers be engaging directly with the shopkeepers?

3. Will you be offering them incentives to renew their leases or incentives to trade through the rebuild period so that they can occupy any new premises?

The Executive Councillor for Housing responded:

- i. There was a decision at Housing Scrutiny Committee (HSC) in June 2024 that negotiations on commercial leases at Arbury Court would take account of the need to consider future options for a District Centre. There was a decision at HSC in September 2024 to develop a Framework for Change for North Cambridge. This report noted the importance of Arbury Court as a centre for the area. Future options were being considered through discussions with the commercial tenants. Engagement with the commercial tenants would be an important part of the way forward.
- ii. Discussions had taken place with individual commercial leaseholders whose leases were coming to an end. It was proposed to start community consultations on a broader basis from May and, as the September report said, the commercial centre and the commercial leaseholders would have a central role in this. The Council would be offering meetings to all commercial tenants. No decision had been taken beyond creating flexibility from 2030 and any decisions would follow on from the consultation.
- iii. All the negotiations had led to new leases that extended to 2030. Understood the concerns about the impact on the centre. There was a timetable for the consultation process to end in January 2026. If there was a decision to redevelop, the Council was committed to keeping the shops open during the development period.

Supplementary question:

- i. Noted the Executive Councillor had referred to engaging with commercial tenants but commented that when he had spoken with two commercial tenants, they advised that their leases had been extended but they were 'in the dark' about the redevelopment proposals.
- ii. Asked if Officers could produce a simple one-page route map through the process for the shop keepers so that they could understand what would happen and when.

The Assistant Director Development responded:

- i. Advised that the Council would publish the key dates for the proposed consultation process and that these were already publicly available in the HSC September report.

- ii. Each commercial tenant would be invited to a meeting with Officers in the next couple of weeks so that they could discuss any concerns they had.
- iii. A consultation with residents would take place in May-June 2025.

25/13/HSC Structural repairs and associated works at Bermuda Terrace flats – 2025

Matter for Decision

The Council owns six blocks of flats at Bermuda Terrace, Histon Road. A programme of structural repairs and associated works is required to ensure the buildings are maintained in a good state of repair.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Approved the award of a contract to Chas Berger Limited, subject to the completion of the required consultation with leaseholders. Chas Berger Ltd achieved the highest score following the tender evaluation process.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Asset Manager.

It was noted that this agenda item had not been included on the Forward Plan for the whole 28-day requirement before the meeting. This was because pre-tender estimates predicted a contract value below £1 million. Following tender clarifications, the contract value would exceed £1 million which changed the category of decision so that it was now a key decision. With the permission of the Chair of Housing Scrutiny Committee the urgency procedure was invoked to suspend the 28-day requirement so that the item could be considered at Committee, so it was open to scrutiny and debate rather than a decision being made through the out of cycle process.

The Asset Manager and Assistant Director for Housing and Health said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Noted concerns about some leaseholder's ability to be able to pay for the repairs undertaken and advised that the works were not expected to be

completed until April 2026 and therefore bills were not anticipated to be sent until September 2026. Meetings would take place with leaseholders to discuss the payment timetable and options for repayment. Agreements could be made with leaseholders if they were struggling financially. Repayment would be discussed on an individual basis. Noted that a high proportion of the Council's leaseholders rented their properties out.

- ii. Advised that reference to a 'threshold' was in relation to who could make the decision to award the contract. As the contract value had exceeded £1million this meant that the decision could not be made by an officer under delegated authority and instead the decision needed to be brought through Housing Scrutiny Committee and made by the Executive Councillor.
- iii. Noted that balcony resurfacing had been undertaken about 10 years previously but there had been some movement in the buildings since. Repairs wouldn't be required to all buildings and surveys would be carried out to see which buildings needed to be repaired.
- iv. The contract was for structural repairs and not energy efficiency works, however if during the surveys it was found that there were gaps in cavity wall insulation / loft insulation then the gaps would be addressed.
- v. Noted concerns regarding the removal and replacement of trees on the site and advised that a consultation would be undertaken with residents to ensure suitable trees were provided and a robust maintenance programme was in place.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendation.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

25/14/HSC Pledge to Support the Resettlement of Refugees

Matter for Decision

In 2020 the Council made a pledge to resettle 200 refugees over 5 years. A major part of the resettlement programme is the provision of housing. In 2021, the Council agreed to provide 4 council properties per annum, outside of the current Lettings Policy, for the next five years, to help deliver the pledge. To continue the Council's resettlement work, the resettlement pledge needed to

be renewed including the allocation of housing outside of the current Lettings Policy.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Agreed the pledge to:
 - a. Welcome refugees and asylum seekers to rebuild their lives in Cambridge and the surrounding areas through wraparound support under our resettlement programme.
 - b. Allocate a minimum of 4 City Council properties per annum, outside of the current Lettings Policy, for the next five years to help deliver the pledge to resettle refugees. With a proportion of these properties provided to refugees that require secure accommodation as prescribed by central Government refugee schemes.
 - c. Engage with the East of England Strategic Migration Partnership to identify suitable accommodation for refugees based on household needs.
 - d. Provide advice to refugees who are homeless to explore their housing options, including the Private Rented Sector.
 - e. Work alongside local communities, agencies, and charities to provide services that support welcoming, cohesion, and the removal of any barriers to resettlement.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Strategic Resettlement and Community Equity Lead.

The Strategic Resettlement and Community Equity Lead said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. It was difficult to comment how the Council compared to other local authorities as the needs of people seeking sanctuary varied. Some local authorities would have a higher number of people seeking asylum, whereas in Cambridge there were a higher number of people with refugee status and the challenges people faced because of their status

was different. A needs assessment with refugees had been undertaken and the data from this would inform work moving forwards. There were national challenges that people faced for example access to health care, dentistry and school places. Benchmarking against other local authorities had been undertaken in relation to grant funding. The Council had been recognised as demonstrating good practice in the region and Central Government officials had visited the Council and met with refugees the Council supported.

- ii. Advised that the Council provided Central Government with data regarding the resettlement work the Council undertook for example the number of people who had been able to access English classes, the number of people who had been supported into employment and the number of people assisted with the health care system.
- iii. The holistic support for the resettlement work was fully funded through Central Government grant funding and was based on the number of people the Council resettled in the city. With reference to the Local Authority Housing Fund, the Council had agreed to pursue this as the grant offered by Central Government through the Local Authority Housing Fund was at a better rate than the grant offered through Homes England, so it was believed to be a better decision to invest in these properties using the Local Authority Housing Fund.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

25/15/HSC Housing Adaptations, Repairs and Renewal Policy

Matter for Decision

The draft policy contained within Appendix A of the Officer's report aims to replace the existing Cambridgeshire Adaptations & Repairs Policy adopted in 2019. It proposes a continuation of the same types of financial assistance for eligible applicants on low incomes for adaptations, repairs and improvement to their homes, but with some improvements to help support positive health and wellbeing outcomes.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Approved the Cambridgeshire Housing Adaptations, Repairs and Renewals Policy 2025-2030 at Appendix A of the Officer's report, as it related to Cambridge City Council, to replace the existing Cambridgeshire Adaptations & Repairs Policy 2019.
- ii. Delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Housing & Health to agree, subject to sufficient funding being available from the council's ring-fenced capital allocation, and in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing, Chair & Vice-Chair of Housing Scrutiny Committee and Opposition Spokes (or their successors):
 - a. any future changes to the maximum amounts of financial assistance payable which may be needed during the life of the policy;
 - b. capital funding of any additional partnership work or other projects which may be appropriate to meet the objectives of the policy; and
 - c. any other minor changes which may be required during the life of the policy.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Housing Strategy Manager.

The Housing Strategy Manager and the Home Improvement Agency Manager said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. A Project Officer had been employed specifically to increase awareness of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFGs) within the Council's administrative area and to network with communities as there had been an underspend in the DFGs over recent years. Other work to promote DFGs included reaching out to over 1000 residents through 15 public facing events, 30 professional organisations across health and social care, and targeted leaflet drops to 1400 properties.
- ii. In the past additional DFG funding had been allocated to all local authorities. Due to Cambridge City Council's underspend, the Council passed their additional allocation to Huntingdonshire District Council as part of the shared Home Improvement Agency service as their demand

for DFG funding was higher and it served to support the Cambridgeshire areas social care needs as a whole.

- iii. Approximately 80 DFG adaptations were undertaken in Cambridge per annum at a cost of around £540,000 against a budget of £827,000. Agreed to provide data and demography about the grant recipients outside of the meeting.
- iv. In terms of forecasting DFG need year on year it wasn't just about demographic need but also the life of adaptations and potential need for replacement which needed to be taken into account.
- v. Cambridge City tended to have a younger population compared with neighbouring authorities and there are also some affluent areas within the City which means some applicants are not eligible for the means tested grants.
- vi. Noted reference to a 'savings cap'; £6000 savings would be disregarded as part of the means test for grant funding.
- vii. The 'means test' is outdated; many people are not eligible for the grant funding due to their income / occupational pensions which are all considered as part of the application process.
- viii. The increased DFG top up grant funding will particularly help with children's cases where disabled needs could not be met, as construction costs have increased. Five years ago an extension would have cost in the region of £40,000, which now costs £60,000; without top up funding the works could not be funded.
- ix. A team of Caseworkers are employed to help applicants complete their application forms. They also support applicants through the planning and building regulation process and liaise with builders.
- x. Officers had explored whether the application process could be digitalised but this tended to make the process more complicated.
- xi. The law requires consultation with social services and most referrals to the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (CHIA) came in following occupational therapy assessments.
- xii. CHIA offers a self-funding service to people who are not eligible for a grant.
- xiii. In response to a query about whether CHIA explored why people didn't use the service following an expression of interest - advised that if people weren't eligible for grant funding, they would either fund the adaptations themselves, they may move or they may choose not to have the adaptations done which could put them at risk.
- xiv. Noted that Huntingdonshire District Council did not have their own council housing stock. Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Council spent approximately £1.6 million in addition to the DFG budget on adapting council homes.

- xv. Partners of applicants are also means tested for DFGs as this is a legislative requirement. Officers do identify and challenge situations where financial / coercive control is suspected.
- xvi. DFG funding cannot be used to fund mobility scooters, officers are not aware if other grant funding is available.
- xvii. Where a contractor delayed the delivery of adaptations there would be flexibility with regards to the requirement for the works to be delivered within 12 months of the grant approval.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

25/16/HSC City Centre Regeneration Sites

Councillor Lee joined the meeting from this agenda item.

Matter for Decision

The purpose of the report is to provide an update on city centre sites: Stanton House, East Road and Hanover and Princess Court. The report also sought approval to proceed with the demolition of Stanton House and redevelopment of the site through the Cambridge Investment Partnership (CIP) to provide 29 new highly sustainable affordable homes.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Approved that the Stanton House scheme be brought forward as an affordable housing development and included in the Housing Capital Programme, with an indicative capital budget of £9,808,469 for the construction costs, professional fees and further associated fees.
- ii. Authorised the Director of Economy & Place in consultation with the Executive Councillor to deliver 100% affordable housing (29 units), with It is proposed that the affordable homes will be let in line with the Councils Housing Strategy, i.e. inclusive of a mix of social rent, 60% market rent and 80% market rent.
- iii. Authorised the Director of Economy & Place in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing to approve variations to the scheme

including the number of units and mix of property types, sizes, tenure, rent and the nature and level of the provision of special needs as outlined in this report.

- iv. Approved that delegated authority be given to the Executive Councillor for Housing conjunction with the Director of Economy & Place to enable the site to be developed through Cambridge Investment Partnership (CIP) subject to a value for money assessment to be carried out on behalf of the Council.
- v. Delegated authority to the Director of Economy & Place to instruct the demolition of the existing building at Stanton House.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Director (Development).

The Assistant Director (Development) said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Planning Officers had been very clear that a community room would need to be provided as part of the redevelopment of Hanover and Princess Court. The Housing Development Team would work closely with the Communities Team to agree how this would be delivered.
- ii. Noted concerns raised about the loss of specialist housing with regards to the redevelopment of Stanton House but advised that the Housing Development Team had to respond to the current housing need, which was for general housing stock. There was specialist housing within the existing housing stock and unfortunately due to the nature of the occupants although there was a waiting list for the accommodation, people were able to access the specialist housing relatively quickly. Officers would reflect upon comments made at previous meetings about housing provision for older persons accommodation.
- iii. Advised that a higher proportion of the residents within Stanton House were older homeless people as the accommodation wasn't generally desirable as the studio flats were quite small. As part of the redevelopment relocation process, residents who continued to need sheltered accommodation were accommodated in other sheltered

housing schemes and other residents had been relocated to 'Long Drift Place'.

- iv. With the decant process, Officers worked with residents to find alternative accommodation which fitted their individual needs. Some residents had moved into general housing stock and other resident's needs had increased and therefore some were accommodated in Ditchburn Place. If residents wanted to stay in a city centre location, Officers would try to accommodate this where possible.
- v. Acknowledged the proposed Stanton House redevelopment scheme would provide less units than was there previously but advised that the units would be much larger. A consultation would take place with Housing Officers to determine the appropriate level of rent for the area. If the Council was awarded Homes England grant funding this may also dictate housing tenure / rent levels.
- vi. With reference to the Hanover and Princess Court redevelopment, paragraph 4.1 of the officer's report summarised the starting point for redevelopment which included a percentage range of affordable housing provision of 40-60% of 138 properties. Officers were hopeful that the total number of homes that may be able to be delivered will be higher, but it may be towards the lower range of the affordable housing provision. If viability suggested that total numbers were lower than 138 or that a lower percentage (below 40%) of affordable housing would be delivered, then a further Executive Councillor decision would be required.
- vii. Biodiversity would be improved as part of the Hanover and Princess Court redevelopment and the community would be involved in developing ideas for this.
- viii. There was currently no date for the demolition of Hanover and Princess Court but once the planning application had been submitted Officers would meet with residents to advise them about the redevelopment timeline.
- ix. Officers would check the information contained within paragraph 5.9.1 'Physical Disability'. Post meeting note responding to the query raised. The needs analysis was carried out by the County Council. The County Council analysis seeks to identify the need for specialist accommodation; it is not identifying all people who have the specialist needs in question. Some people may have their needs met in other ways - for example by adaptations to their present homes or because in addition to their physical disability they have other needs which are a priority. The Committee Report is correct that the County Council analysis data does project that demand for supported living will reduce to 0 by 2026. As noted in the Committee Report the County Council analysis does also state that this may reflect a weakness in the available source data which

may be unduly affected by an anomalous fluctuation in demand for the period 2020-2022. There will be further discussions with the County Council about the best way to address specialist housing needs in the new development at Stanton House.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

25/17/HSC Update on New Build Council Housing Delivery

Matter for Decision

This was a regular quarterly report showing progress on the City Council's new housing delivery and development programme.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Housing

- i. Noted the continued progress on the delivery of the approved housing programme as outlined in Appendix 1 and 2 of the Officer's report.
- ii. Noted the issues encountered with Heating Systems at a number of new build schemes as identified in Para 4.11, and the Council adoption of an (MEP) Guardian/Consultancy route toward full system health checks, ensuring readiness for 2025 Heat Network Regulation implementation.
- iii. Noted that Funding of £4,577,000 has now been allocated to the council for the first phase of development at East Barnwell through Homes England's 21-26 AHP.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Director (Development).

The Assistant Director (Development) said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Noted concerns raised regarding the Ekin Road redevelopment. The Council had an excellent record of finding the right home for people according to their needs. The letter which had recently been sent to residents was a technical letter and was something the Council had to do as part of the legal process. This was the period as part of a redevelopment process where officers could spend more time working with vulnerable residents. A meeting with residents would be organised in the summer so tenants could talk through their concerns and officers could advise them about choices available to them.
- ii. In response to a question about Ekin Road, referred to paragraph 4.6.4 of the officer's report which stated that '1 out of 3 freehold properties had been purchased, 3 out of 9 leasehold properties had started the legal process of selling and 47 out of 82 tenanted households had moved'.
- iii. The East Barnwell redevelopment was proposed to start on the 17 March 2025. It was a 2-year development programme, and it was hoped that the first apartments would be handed over in 2 years' time.
- iv. Confidential discussions were taking place with shop keepers at East Barnwell. One retail unit would be delivered in phase one of the development.
- v. Advised that the local housing allowance rent was set by Central Government; it wasn't set by the Council.
- vi. Noted reference to 'commonhold housing'; the Council would comply with any new legislative requirements as part of its redevelopment programme. It wasn't clear at the moment whether this legislation would apply retrospectively or not.

The Committee resolved by 6 votes to 0 with 2 abstentions to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

The meeting ended at 7.40 pm

CHAIR

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 20 March 2025
5.30 - 6.45 pm

Present: Councillors Pounds (Chair), Nestor (Vice-Chair), Ashton, Divkovic, Glasberg, Hauk, Payne and Swift

Executive Councillors: Wade (Executive Councillor for Communities)

Also present Councillor Davey (ex-officio as Leader of the Council)

Officers:

Chief Executive: Robert Pollock

Director, Communities Group: Sam Scharf

Culture & Community Manager, Frances Alderton

Committee Manager: James Goddard

Meeting Producer: Boris Herzog

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

25/11/EnC Apologies for Absence

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Divkovic (who joined mid-discussion of Folk Festival item).

25/12/EnC Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor Ashton	25/14/EnC	Personal: Folk Festival was located in his ward. Attended the Folk Festival when acting as Mayor of Cambridge 2022-2023.

25/13/EnC Public Questions

There were no public questions.

25/14/EnC Folk Festival**Matter for Decision**

The Officer's report was presented following a request for a special meeting of Environment and Community Scrutiny in accordance with Section 43 of the Council's standing orders. The information in the report reflects and responds to the request for this special meeting. It focuses entirely on the fallow year of the Cambridge Folk Festival, the basis and timings of the decision and outline plans for 2025.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Communities

Noted the information provided regarding the Folk Festival 2024, decision making and future planning.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Director of Communities. Additional comments were made by the Chief Executive, Culture & Community Manager and Executive Councillor for Communities.

Opposition Councillors asked questions covering the following general topics:

- i. A special meeting was requested to discuss the Folk Festival January 2025, so wanted clarification why the meeting was not heard before 20 March 2025?
- ii. Were there any cost savings from the Executive Councillor's decision? Total of costs not to run Folk Festival appeared similar to those to run it, so why was the Folk Festival cancelled?
- iii. When was the decision taken to cancel the Folk Festival?

The Chair said the City Council's constitution, Part 4A Council Procedure Rules para 43, provides that two members of the committee have the right to call a special meeting on a single item of business. Once the request was received, the Chair consulted members of the committee to find a suitable date

that all members could attend ie 20 March 2025. Members of the committee should note that the procedure rules do not entitle the members who requested the special meeting to determine when the meeting should take place.

The Director of Communities said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The decision to delay the Folk Festival was made 7 January 2025 but this decision was not announced until 17 January due to commercial sensitivities. Having a fallow year had commercial implications so details had to be confirmed before a public announcement could be made.

The Executive Councillor for Communities added that once a decision was made, Officers had five working days to respond. There were no delays in communication to manipulate the situation. Consistent wording was used in communications ie 'delay' not 'cancel' to avoid confusion.

- ii. Referred to cost details in the report. The expected surplus from the 2024 Folk Festival did not materialise, this led to a readjustment in the budget.

The Executive Councillor for Communities said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Was unable to reallocate funding when it appeared the Folk Festival was experiencing financial difficulties. The Executive Councillor had regular updates from Officers. She received a report on 30 December 2024 that the Folk Festival was in trouble and discussed it with the Labour Group in January 2025.
- ii. Folk Festivals across the world were in trouble, not just the city. Dorset Folk Festival went into liquidation 20 March 2025 and many other Folk Festivals were in trouble as costs increased and ticket sales declined. It was also harder to get acts to perform. Many Folk Festivals were permanently cancelled in the UK to date. The country was still feeling the impact of Covid-19 so smaller independent Folk Festivals found it harder to get headliner acts.

The Committee queried if Opposition Councillors had the opportunity to approach Officers for information before committee. It was clarified that Councillors could approach the Director then raise questions in committee or at Full Council. The Chair said a list of questions had been submitted when a special meeting was requested. Councillor Payne added Opposition Councillors had the opportunity to liaise with Officers prior to Committee, but this was the first opportunity to scrutinise the Executive Councillor in a public forum.

The Director of Communities said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Cost trends had contributed to Folk Festival decline. There were fewer ticket sales nationally for Folk Festivals. This led to the need to review the sustainability of the Cambridge Folk Festival.
- ii. There was some delay in communications to ensure details were correct and stakeholders were confident that a delay to the Folk Festival 2025 would mean the Folk Festival could go ahead in 2026. Commercial sensitivity meant that certain stakeholders were contacted before a public announcement was made in January 2025.

Councillor Payne specifically queried when it was known the Folk Festival had financial difficulties. It should have been apparent after the 2024 Folk Festival, so why was action not taken sooner ie August 2024 rather than January 2025? The Executive Councillor said four options were listed in the report she was given by Officers in December 2024, two of which were to cancel or postpone until 2026.

The Director of Communities said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. There were sufficient staff in place to manage Folk Festival arrangements. Business transformation strengthened arrangements and resilience. The City Council staff restructure did not affect the Folk Festival.
- ii. City Council Officers has successfully delivered the Folk Festival for fifty-nine years. They had the skills to continue doing so.
- iii. The Folk Festival was normally cost neutral in the Council budget so the Executive Councillor did not need to be involved. She had been involved

this year due to reasons set out in the Officer's report i.e. expected financial loss.

Councillor Payne asked for specific details on when bookings were planned for Folk Festival acts. Were these being taken in the autumn as normal (for example) or not, so the Folk Festival was cancelled by a fait accompli?

The Director of Communities said the following in response:

- i. A decision to make 2025 a fallow year was taken 7 January. The Folk Festival could have gone ahead at this point if the decision had not been taken. Contracts were drawn up in January each year. Agents were still offering contracts 7-17 January when the postponement decision was publicly announced, so the Folk Festival was not cancelled by fait accompli.
- ii. Two hundred early bird tickets were offered refunds and tickets to alternative 2025 events, forty-five contacts accepted this to date.
- iii. Fallow years were common for Folk Festivals. For example, Glastonbury had fallow years on alternate years.
- iv. A review was required to develop a sustainability plan for 2026.

The Executive Councillor for Communities had received generous and supportive feedback from the Folk Festival community when they learned of plans for 2025-26.

The Chair asked Officers to provide regular updates for Councillors to pass onto residents. She suggested Councillors could contact Officers for further details.

The Committee resolved nem con to endorse the recommendation.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

The meeting ended at 6.45 pm

CHAIR

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 20 March 2025
7.00 - 9.40 pm

Present: Councillors Pounds (Chair), Nestor (Vice-Chair), Ashton, Divkovic, Glasberg, Hauk, Payne and Swift

Executive Councillors: Holloway (Executive Councillor for Community Safety, Homelessness and Wellbeing), Moore (Executive Councillor for Climate Action and Environment), Smart (Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services) and Wade (Executive Councillor for Communities)

Officers:

Director, Communities Group: Sam Scharf

Head of Greater Cambridge Shared Waste: Bode Esan

Community, Sport & Recreation Manager: Ian Ross

Market and Street Trading Manager: Tim Jones

Strategic Delivery Manager: Alistair Wilson

Technical & Specialist Services Manager: John Richards

Waste Policy, Change and Innovations Manager: Rebecca Weymouth-Wood

Equality & Anti-Poverty Officer: Helen Crowther

Projects Officer: James Ogle

Committee Manager: James Goddard

Meeting Producer: Boris Herzog

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

25/15/EnC Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

25/16/EnC Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor Ashton	25/23/EnC	Personal: Ward Councillor for Cherry Hinton where some tree planting occurred.

25/17/EnC Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

25/18/EnC Public Questions

A list of public questions was publishing on the meeting page available via: [Agenda for Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 20th March, 2025, 6.00 pm - Cambridge Council](#)

Responses to public questions and supplementary questions were included below:

Question 1: Weekly Food Waste Collections - RARE Team

The Executive Councillor for Climate Action and Environment responded:

- i. Apologised for any confusion caused by her comments on the radio.
- ii. Details in the press release were correct.
- iii. When Re-Gen have a site in England 2025 then waste will go there instead of Northern Ireland.

Question 2: Can the City Council commit to managing the large roundabout at the junction of Chesterton Rd and Elizabeth Way? - On the Verge

The Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services responded:

The City Council supported managing the roundabout. The Highways Authority were responsible but the City Council were happy to work with them. Undertook to provide updates as work progressed.

25/19/EnC Market Traders Terms and Conditions

Matter for Decision

The Officer's report provided details of the proposed changes to Cambridge General Market (General Market) Terms and Conditions, the engagement exercise undertaken with existing traders and its findings, and subsequent recommendations for Scrutiny Committee and Executive Councillor review and approval.

A decision was needed to bring the General Market Terms and Conditions for Cambridge (currently known as Regulations) in line with current industry standards - as recommended by the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) - and enable the Council to continue to operate clean, safe, attractive, and vibrant markets meeting its corporate objectives and the needs of customers.

The General Market Terms and Conditions were relevant to the day-to-day operation of Cambridge Markets and provided clarity on market powers so that there was a reference point for any action the Council may wish to take in respect of protecting and supporting its current and future markets.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Climate Action and Environment

- i. Noted the approach taken to engage with Market Traders and their representatives on proposed changes to their terms and conditions (Section 7 of the Officer's report), and the findings from this exercise (Section 5.4 of the Officer's report).
- ii. Approved the introduction of these new General Market Terms and Conditions.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

See Officer's report.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Strategic Delivery Manager.

The Executive Councillor said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The Markets & Street Trading Manager liaised with traders to monitor their carbon footprint. Traders who generated high levels of waste were asked to take it away with them. Traders had waste management certificates that could be monitored.

- ii. The project was to ensure the long-time life of the market, make it a better civic space and create better conditions for traders. It was not a way to cancel the market and get rid of traders.
- iii. Traders were consulted on arrangements but there was a low response rate to liaison.
- iv. Traders may be asked to move on a specific day to make the best use of facilities such as electricity. Traders would not be asked to relocate far, just somewhere else on the market.
- v. Extenuating circumstances would be considered in (ref #7.3 on P50) “Traders that fail to attend the market for a period of 4 consecutive weeks without the written consent of the Market Management Team will be subject to disciplinary procedures”.

In reference to #7.3 and #7.8 the Strategic Delivery Manager said communication would start in writing then move onto other types if no response was received.

- vi. The disciplinary procedure was amended and the objector who raised concerns was informed.
- vii. The market square would always be the market square in the civic quarter plan. Plans were still in development.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

25/20/EnC Weekly Food Waste Collections

Matter for Decision

The Environment Act 2021 required all councils to align their household waste and recycling services with new nationwide requirements known as ‘Simpler Recycling’ by 31 March 2026.

Greater Cambridge Shared Waste (GCSWS) already met many of the requirements, but the most pressing task was to introduce a weekly collection for food waste, for domestic households by 1 April 2026.

Our ability to progress this task has been hampered by a lack of information on additional grant funding from DEFRA. This was still awaited, but due to the scale of the project, Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee was being asked to approve the proposals and associated budget so that a start can be made on planning for the introduction of food waste weekly collections.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Climate Action and Environment

- i. Endorsed the proposed approach for implementing mandatory weekly food waste collections from 1st April 2026.
- ii. Noted the potential costs to implement the weekly collection of food waste including the current capital allocation shortfall of approximately £200,000 and potential revenue shortfall (currently unknown.)
- iii. Noted that costs had been included within the 2025/2026 Budget Setting Report.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

See Officer's report.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Waste Policy, Change and Innovations Manager. Amended recommendations were set out on the addendum sheet:

- ~~i. Endorsed the proposed approach for implementing mandatory weekly food waste collections from 1st April 2026.~~
- ~~ii. Noted the potential costs to implement the weekly collection of food waste including the current capital allocation shortfall of £464,000 and potential revenue shortfall (currently unknown).~~

- ~~iii. Noted that costs have been included within the 2025/2026 Budget Setting Report.~~
- ~~iv. Delegated the decision to approve the use of The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) funding received to the Head of Finance so that Implementation can commence.~~
- i. Endorsed the proposed approach for implementing mandatory weekly food waste collections from 1st April 2026.
- ii. Noted the potential costs to implement the weekly collection of food waste including the current capital allocation shortfall of approximately £200,000 and potential revenue shortfall (currently unknown.)
- iii. Noted that costs had been included within the 2025/2026 Budget Setting Report.

The Head of Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Would aim to recruit and train up sufficient staff to cover the Waste Service. Agency staff would be used to cover any gaps in the short term.
- ii. Public awareness campaigns would be undertaken to communicate what the Waste Service was doing and why regarding food waste, to maximise uptake and correct use of the new waste collection stream by residents.
- iii. The County Council would be responsible for treatment of the collected food waste.
- iv. Anaerobic digestion was suitable for biodegradable or non-biodegradable plastic bags in food caddies and all food types.
- v. For dry recyclable materials, collected waste would go to a bulking facility in Waterbeach Facility, then onto the newly procured ReGEN MRF (Materials Recovery Facility) in Northern Ireland, and / or in UK Mainland in future.

The Executive Councillor said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Caddies would be provided that could be kept in peoples' kitchens for any type of food waste. Any plastic bag could be used as liner. Central

Government were rolling out a similar scheme nationally. Other local authorities had separate food waste collections to green bins.

- ii. Food waste could be used to produce energy through anaerobic digestion; it was more valuable to use it that way instead of making compost (compost was unsuitable for some types of food such as dairy), and better than sending food waste to landfill.
- iii. It was cheaper to roll out the food waste collection service to all households instead of doing it on an ad hoc basis to some properties. All would receive the same communication even if the household was already composting food waste.
- iv. DEFRA funding for the service had just been confirmed as per details in the amended Officer report.
- v. People (eg in large households or HMOs) could ask for extra bins/caddies as per green bins, but it was hoped the weekly collection service and discouragement of food waste would mitigate demand for this.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

25/21/EnC Leisure Management Contract 2026

Matter for Decision

This report was being presented to update Members and conclude the on ongoing work to review the Council's leisure provision of facilities and services and gain authority to retender Council leisure services.

The review highlights the opportunities to deliver even more cost-effective services in the future and the rationale behind this, as well as the opportunities for contract update, modernisation and expansion, all of which contribute to improved cost efficiencies, and drive the delivery of even greater social value.

This review of leisure services has required consideration of:

- What the Council's core leisure offer should comprise.
- Rationalisation of current facilities and provision if these were no longer required, or assessed not to be fit for purpose.
- Opportunities for alternative and modernised service provision to inform future capital investment and to meet the city and sub regions' changing demands or growth in demand.
- Opportunities for education, community, and commercial providers to join in the future for management of their leisure facilities.
- Models that could help the council to achieve financial sustainability, and accessible leisure provision, in a challenging financial climate.
- Different operating models and management options where appropriate, including community asset transfer, in-house delivery, arms-length trust and external contract (s), and any other arrangements that could be considered.
- In the context of changing leisure trends and demands, the need to make savings to the Council's revenue budgets.
- The need to increase levels of physical activity in the community and contribute to a reduction in health inequalities.
- Partnership opportunities for engaging and delivery of interventions and health improvement programmes with Public Health.

Decisions were needed on:

- To continue with an outsourced contract arrangement.
- The principles and ethos underpinning future contract scope and timescales.
- The length and scope of the immediate next contract.
- Financial envelope available.
- To extend opportunities both inside and outside of the city boundaries to other local providers, school academies and local authority facilities to join the contract for facilities management.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Community Safety, Homelessness and Wellbeing

Agreed:

- i. To retain a core physical activity and leisure service within the City Council.

- ii. The future of leisure services should be focussed on where investment and resources will have most impact on reducing health inequalities and increasing levels of physical activity.
- iii. Development and adoption of a strategic Vision for future provision of physical activity facilities and services across the city.

Facilities

- iv. Authorise Officers to go to the marketplace and procure an outsourced leisure management model for a term of up to 15 years to 31st March 2041, embedding in strategic breaks.
- v. Retain an “Agency Model” within the new contract to realise benefits of changes to reclamation of irrecoverable VAT on leisure services.
- vi. Reduce the financial impact of the leisure portfolio on the Councils finances to:
 - a. Lower the management costs towards a break even position.
 - b. Seek to increase income from the leisure management contract.
 - c. Seek partnership opportunities for investment in facilities.
 - d. Explore opportunities for community asset transfers.
- vii. Ensure any new Contractor will adopt a Real Living Wage remuneration within the local workforce.
- viii. Adopt Community Wealth Building opportunities within the Contract.
- ix. Allow Officers to engage and negotiate an extension of the scope of the new outsourced contract to include:
 - a. Educational establishments sports and leisure facilities within the City Council boundaries.
 - b. Sports and Leisure Facilities within South and East Cambridgeshire District Councils boundaries, including any District Council, Parish Council and Educational Establishment Facilities.
 - c. Any third party operators or clubs facilities in either Local Authority boundaries.
- x. Develop an investment plan reflecting the findings of the Built Facility Strategy. Priority investments for:
 - a. Decarbonisation of the portfolio to reach the Council's Net Zero aspirations by 2030.
 - b. Improvements to Jesus Green Lido.
 - c. Improvements and expansions of fitness suites and studio provision.

- xi. Include Health outcomes aligned with Public Health and NHS Commissioning Boards within the specification with clear KPIs and outcomes to be delivered.
- xii. Allow the procured Contractor to be able to deliver some elements of social prescribing.
- xiii. Work with developers in relation to strategic sites identified in the emerging Local Plan to 2041 for:
 - a. Allocation of offsite funds to new pool locations and existing pool and indoor and outdoor sports improvements.

KPIs

- xiv. Develop a suite of relevant leisure KPIs that reflect and align to corporate priorities which enable the impact of service outcomes to be evaluated and develop a regular reporting process to update and be reviewed by Members.

Partnerships

- xv. Review all grant aid support including National Non Domestic Rate Relief (NNDR); focussing on where it will have most impact on reducing inequalities and decreasing inactivity and improving healthy lifestyles.
- xvi. Work with Public Health and NHS Commissioning Boards to determine areas of investment and collaborative partnerships to deliver Health outcomes aligned to both organisations objectives and with clear KPIs to be delivered.
- xvii. Consider options for asset transfer and report back to Scrutiny committee should there be any changes or requests to transfer assets.
- xviii. Develop the relationship with Friends of Jesus Green Lido for capital investment and fund raising opportunities through their charitable status.

Devolution

- xix. To consider and build in flexibility within the contract term to adjust to any impacts on the Leisure Management Contract that may develop across the District as a result of devolution.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

See Officer's report.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Community, Sport & Recreation Manager.

The Community, Sport & Recreation Manager said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The future expansion of the city's population size was factored into the new leisure contract considerations. Contract provision matched expected city size in the future along with the new growth areas and the additional leisure facilities these would provide.
- ii. Various sustainability features were in place such as decarbonising swimming pools and replacing boilers with air source heat pumps. The intention was to get to net zero by 2030 and details were to be set out in the contract specification for investments needed and collaborative working on the proposed district heating network.
- iii. Strategic Break clauses were in place if contactors did not meet their obligations.
- iv. Contractors were responsible for training their staff to keep up to date on current regulations and legislation.

Councillor Ashton sought clarification if current outsourced leisure facilities would be brought in-house? The Executive Councillor said in-sourcing was considered as part of the options appraisal but the City Council did not have the skills to do this currently, and there would be a significant additional ongoing costs to the City Council if this were to be brought back in-house.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

25/22/EnC Equalities Objectives for 2025/26

Matter for Decision

The Officer's report sought approval of new equalities objectives applicable from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 to meet our statutory requirement to produce one or more equality objectives at least every 4 years. The report also meets the council's legal obligations to publish information on general Public Sector Duty compliance regarding people affected by the council's policies and practices every year. It does so by reporting back on progress relating to activity of services across the four years of the Single Equality Scheme that set out the council's objectives between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2025 (see Appendix A of the Officer's report).

In addition, the Comprehensive Equalities and Diversity Policy has been updated in line with the council's transformation (see Appendix B of the Officer's report), which needs approval.

Finally, the report feeds back on the conversation on the Disabled People's Manifesto at the Equalities Panel in July 2024, as was committed to at Full Council in May 2024 (see section 4.6 of the Officer's report).

Decision of Executive Councillor for Communities

- i. Noted progress made relating to the previous equalities objectives in the Single Equality Scheme, which covers the period between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2025 set out in Appendix A.
- ii. Approved equalities objectives for 2025/26 and key priorities relating to them set out in section 4.5 of this report.
- iii. Approved the updated Comprehensive Equalities and Diversity Policy at Appendix B.
- iv. Noted the content of discussions relating to the Disabled People's Manifesto that were held at the Equalities Panel meeting in July 2024 and associated activity to support disabled people based on themes raised. This was set out in section 4.6.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

See Officer's report.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Equality & Anti-Poverty Officer.

The Equality & Anti-Poverty Officer said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The City Council was a key partner in the Community Safety Partnership to address hate crime etc. It undertook a lot of partnership working such as obtaining Purple Flag status for the city.
- ii. In order to address the diverse health and wellbeing needs of city residents, the City Council worked with different partners to address different groups' equality needs to learn directly from each group eg elderly, homeless etc.
- iii. Referred to paragraph 5 on P147, there was a perception that larger firms seemed to find it easier to win contracts than smaller firms. Issues had been discussed with the Procurement Officer. A social value framework was being developed to inform contractors of City Council expectations. Undertook to liaise with Councillor Ashton on this after committee.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

25/23/EnC Review of the Environmental Improvement Programme**Matter for Decision**

This report provides an update for the Scrutiny Committee, Executive Councillor and ward councillors on the current position with the Council's Environmental Improvement Programme (EIP), considers several options available to the Council, and makes recommendations around future delivery and focus through 2025/26.

The report included an outline and critique of how other Councils delivered similar programmes of environmental enhancement, and how Cambridge's programme might be further adapted to provide additional value to the Council and communities.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services

Agreed to:

- i. Support continuation of the Council's Environmental Improvement Programme (EIP), based on a combination of projects in delivery, those committed and substantially developed, and those committed that still offer value to the Council and will proceed when capacity allows (Appendix A of the Officer's report, Tables 1 and 2).
- ii. Support the allocation of remaining available funds to increase budgets for those already committed projects that would benefit from and can be delivered with a funding top-up (Appendix A, Table 3).
- iii. Support discontinuing with those previously committed projects that were proving difficult to implement or no longer offer good value to the Council (Appendix A, Table 4).
- iv. Support a further review of EIP delivery, and focus, through 2025/26, identifying where existing committed schemes might be further discontinued; and how the programme might be further adapted to continue to provide good, and additional value to the Council.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

See Officer's report.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Projects Officer.

The Technical & Specialist Services Manager and Projects Officer said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Other local authorities had different funding models so could be more flexible in how they delivered EIP projects than Cambridge City Council.

- ii. The intention was to allocate funding to projects that could be completed. The intention (as per recommendation iii) was to stop projects that could not be delivered.
- iii. Ward based EIP information could be sent to Ward Councillors to show how projects were progressing.

Councillors requested a change to the recommendations. Councillor Divkovic proposed amending recommendation (iii) in the Officer's report:

Support discontinuing with those previously committed projects that were proving difficult to implement or no longer offer good value to the Council (Appendix A, Table 4).

**** Officers to review whether N3 – 2023 - Hazelwood Close seating installation should be removed from the recommendation.**

Reason: Officers to check if seating already ordered and installed. Project to go ahead if so.

The Committee approved this additional recommendation nem con.

Post Meeting Note: Officers confirmed the amendment was not applicable. The project in question was confused with another EIP project which has since been delivered.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations as amended.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

25/24/EnC Herbicide-Free Weed Management: Work Programme and Communications Plan

Matter for Decision

The Officer's report provided an update on the implementation of the herbicide-free weed management programme for Cambridge. It outlined the

planned work programme and the accompanying communications strategy to ensure effective delivery and public engagement.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Open Spaces and City Services

- i. Approved the work programme (appendix A) to ensure systematic implementation across all wards.
- ii. Approved the communications plan (appendix B) to support public engagement and transparency.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

See Officer's report.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Strategic Delivery Manager.

The Strategic Delivery Manager said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Officers expected to visit wards one or more times per year to undertake deep clean work. Details would be put on the city council website and communicated to Ward Councillors.
- ii. Deep cleans would be undertaken in addition to general clear up work. Officers preferred to follow a program of work, but could deviate from this if necessary. Various stakeholders such as On The Verge were proactive in communicating issues such as weeds in gutters.
- iii. People could report areas that needed cleaning through a form on the City Council website.
- iv. The City Council was proactive in its communication about work to manage stakeholder expectations.
- v. The City Council would consider supporting other organisations in future clean-up work as a possible revenue stream (for provision of a clean-up service using City Council staff/expertise) or to help volunteers, but would focus on City Council needs in the short term.

- vi. Noted Councillor concerns that it was difficult to liaise with the Highway Agency to cone off parts of roads for a deep clean, but work was undertaken quickly when it went ahead.
- vii. Herbicide free methods were sustainable in the long term. There were time/financial costs in the short term. As technology changed, cheaper electrical versions of equipment should become available that were prohibitively expensive at present, such as electric vehicles to replace diesel ones.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm

CHAIR

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STRATEGY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

31 March 2025
5.30 - 9.15 pm

Present: Councillors Robertson (Chair), Gawthrope Wood (Vice-Chair), Baigent, Bennett, Bick, Sheil and Young

Executive Councillors: Davey (Leader) and S. Smith (Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources)

Officers:

Chief Operating Officer: Jane Wilson

Chief Financial Officer: Jody Etherington

Director of Economy and Place: Lynne Miles

Joint Director, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning and 3C Building Control: Stephen Kelly

Programme Director – Major Regeneration: Fiona Bryant

Assistant Director, Development: Ben Binns

Committee Manager: James Goddard

Meeting Producer: Boris Herzog

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

25/9/SR Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received from Councillors.

25/10/SR Declarations of Interest

Name	Item	Interest
Councillor Baigent	All	Personal - Member of Cambridge Cycling Campaign.

25/11/SR Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2024 and 10 February 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

25/12/SR Public Questions

There were no public questions.

25/13/SR Cambridge City Council Performance Management Framework

Matter for Decision

This proposal sets out the new approach the Council will use to manage its performance. It will be a part of the policy framework for the Council, it was therefore being presented to the Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources for approval.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources

- i. Approved the attached Performance Management Framework Principles and Approach document in Appendix 1 of the Officer's report.
- ii. Noted the next steps for implementation.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

See Officer's report.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Chief Operating Officer.

The Chief Operating Officer said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The Performance Management Framework looked at inputs, outputs and outcomes such as resident satisfaction. Some measures were statutory. The baseline was a mix of data to date, or 'form now' if no prior data sets were available.

Councillor Robertson drew comparison to key performance indicators reported to Housing Scrutiny Committee.

- ii. Key performance data has been tested using other data sources to ensure they would work.

- iii. The risk management framework and performance dashboard was currently being tested and Officers were working with Corporate Managers to ensure they had the details to produce data reports.
- iv. Data collection points would determine if data could be reported quarterly or annually to Scrutiny Committee or Cabinet.
- v. The initial proposal was to present measures to Councillors, report for a period, ascertain if Councillors were happy with the process then review if Officers would publish data to the public as often as it was reported to Councillors.

The Executive Councillor said the purpose of the Corporate Hub should be to enable the Council to be an effective and efficient, high performing organisation. This was important to show it had impacts meaningful to residents, the environment and stakeholders.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

25/14/SR Combined Authority Update

Matter for Decision

This was a regular report to the Strategy & Resources Scrutiny Committee providing an update on the activities of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) Board.

Decision of Leader

Noted the update provided on the issues considered at the meeting of the Combined Authority Board held on 19 March 2025 and the forward plan for future items.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

See Officer's report.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Director of Place & Economy.

The Director of Place & Economy said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Two sections of the orbital bus route would go live in phase 1 (summer 2025) and the remainder in phase 2. Acknowledged the orbital route would not be a whole 360 degrees around the city until complete. When complete, commuters would not have to pass through the city centre to reach their destination. Acknowledged commuting through the city centre could cause travel delays.

The Leader undertook to liaise with the Combined Authority Mayor and clarify orbital bus route details with Councillor Bick.

- ii. Peterborough station improvements included:
 - a. Commitment to step free access.
 - b. More and faster trains between Cambridge and Peterborough.
- iii. Noted there was some out-of-date information about Peterborough station improvements in the public domain so would ascertain if updated details could be provided to residents.

The Committee resolved nem con to endorse the recommendation

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

25/15/SR Cambridge Delivery Company: Update Report**Matter for Decision**

The report updated Members of Strategy and Resources Committee on the recent developments with Central Governments project for the growth of Cambridge.

Decision of Leader

Noted the update on the progress of the Cambridge Delivery Company implementation.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

See Officer's report.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Joint Director of Planning.

The Committee made the following comments in response to the report:

- i. Ministers were visiting other parts of the city, not just Cambridge City Council. This needed public scrutiny. Ministers appeared able to change housing delivery figure targets for the City Council to deliver. Ministers should be invited to visit the City Council to hear the views of local Councillors on the practicalities of delivery.
- ii. Queried if more power would be given to Mayors in future which would take planning decisions away from the City Council?
- iii. There appeared to be two rival processes described in the Officer's report:
 - a. The Local Plan developed through the joint planning service.
 - b. Central Government ambitions for Cambridge City.
 - c. Appropriate infrastructure was required to deliver proposed housing.

The Leader said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The Cambridge Growth Company had established an Advisory Council. Quarterly updates could be provided to Cambridge City Council Committee(s). These were process discussions that were outside public scrutiny as occurred with some City Council processes.

- ii. Ministers were visiting other parts of the city, not just Cambridge City Council, about issues that could affect the Council eg water. The city was the focus of ministerial attention.

The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources said water scarcity was a known issue in the east of England so this would affect Local Plan housing figures that could be delivered. If Central Government wanted more housing than was listed in the Local Plan they would need to put in substantial resources to deliver extra housing. The speculative figures mentioned in the media could not be delivered without supporting infrastructure.

- iii. Would ask Peter Freeman to attend future Cambridge City Council committee meetings.

The Joint Director of Planning said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Referred to P87 of the agenda pack. Officers were seeking clarification regarding the relationship between the Local Plan (as a statutory development plan) and Central Government ambitions from Central Government and the Cambridge Growth Company.
- ii. The Local Plan was the foundation for future growth and had prominence through legislation.
- iii. The Joint Local Plan was in place until 2045. The Cambridge Delivery Company should accelerate the delivery of planned growth strategies.
- iv. The planning phase to deliver appropriate infrastructure for housing should conclude by spring 2026. Separately the Council would consult on various strategies such as transport. Details would be confirmed in future. Separately, the Combined Authority was also undertaking some consultation to conclude by 2026.
- v. Ministers had mentioned housing targets in the media eg 150,000 but there was no set amount in plans. The City Council followed a set process for developing the Local Plan as set out in law. The Cambridge Development Company had a different type of plan and processes. It was not a 'plan' in the same way as the City Council Local Plan.

- vi. The Cambridge Delivery Company had no statutory role so could not supersede the Local Plan. They had to follow the Local Plan unless there were exceptions such as Ministerial guidance.
- vii. The relationship between the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's Spatial Development Strategy and City Council's Local Plan was set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (and subsequent amendments). The Local Plan set out allocated sites for housing.
- viii. The whole country had infrastructure stress. This was an opportunity to improve infrastructure in the Greater Cambridge area and make the case for need to the Treasury as part of delivering housing. This would show what could be delivered over and above the Local Plan if appropriate resources were in place.
- ix. Robust policies were in place to manage water supply, the challenge was to deliver.

The Committee resolved nem con to endorse the recommendation.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

25/16/SR CIP Loan Facility

The Chair ruled that under 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 the late item be considered despite not being made publicly available for this committee five clear days prior to the meeting.

The following item on the agenda related to a key decision that was not included on the Forward Plan for the whole 28-day requirement before the meeting. This was because it wasn't clear whether contracts and affordable housing agreements for Fanshawe, ATS/Murketts and Newbury Farm would be signed and sealed in time for the March 31st S&R Committee. As it became clear that there was a possibility of sealing all contracts in time, a paper was submitted.

With the permission of the Chair of Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee the urgency procedure was invoked to suspend the 28-day requirement so that the item can be considered at Committee, so it was open to scrutiny and debate rather than a decision being made through the out of cycle process.

Matter for Decision

The council has acted in the past as the development debt provider to fund the development of regeneration and housing schemes delivered by Cambridge Investment Partnership (CIP). To date this partnership has already delivered over 1,000 new homes since 2018, across 23 sites, including 732 council homes, with 656 being net new council homes.

As stated in the CIP Members Agreement, the development costs for mixed tenure schemes are funded by 60% of debt, and 40% equity funded internally by Hill Partnerships and the council as investment partners.

Development financing has been in place for Mill Road and Cromwell Road. Since then, there had been considerable change in public sector lending rules since prior funding arrangements were agreed between the council and CIP. Most notably the requirements of the subsidy control principles set out in the Subsidy Control Act / (Gross Cash Amount and Gross Cash Equivalent) Regulations 2022.

The Council proposed to continue to fund the development of regeneration and housing schemes delivered by Cambridge Investment Partnership (CIP) whilst acknowledging the changes required to be compliant. Future loan facilities will be subject to a covenant, to the effect that any draw down is to be utilised solely for the purposes of Housing delivery, including regeneration activities, new build development and delivery of affordable housing.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources

Recommended to Full Council to:

- i. Approve a capital budget for 3 loan facilities amounting to £18,500,000, to be provided to Cambridge Investment Partnership (CIP) and to be utilised solely for the purposes of Housing delivery, including

regeneration activities and new build development at Newbury Farm, ATS/Murketts Histon Rd, and Fanshawe Road.

- ii. Delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer to make arrangements for capital financing of the loans in accordance with relevant statutory guidance and the council's Treasury Management Strategy and Capital Strategy.
- iii. Approve the setting of interest rates applicable to the 3 loan facilities at 3.5% margin above 5-year Gilt Rates.
- iv. Delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer to agree the detailed terms of the loans, including (but not limited to) availability period, drawdown dates and arrangements, pricing dates, and restrictive covenants.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

See Officer's report.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Director of Development.

The Assistant Director of Development said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. Three loans amounting to £18,500,000 were secured on land for each development. The development program showed loans would be paid after two years for each development. The return on investment should include the land value and purchase cost.
- ii. The CIP bought land which the loans were secured against, and would pay this back quickly, so the risk (ie possible decline in land value) transferred from the City Council to CIP.
- iii. Value for money options had been reviewed to ascertain if the City Council was paying the right amount for land/housing/development.

The Chief Finance Officer said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The loans were a fifty-fifty joint venture with CIP. Regular scrutiny committees and project delivery meetings occurred so accounts were monitored.
- ii. CIP had never defaulted on loans so they were considered an acceptable investment.
- iii. Officers had sought advice on how to interpret MRP guidance. They did not expect to charge MRP on the loans. If money was lost through land value decline, the City Council would impose an additional charge to make up the difference.

Councillor Bick sought clarification on the number of affordable homes to be delivered and if a restrictive covenant was required to limit how homes could be marketed so city residents could be prioritised instead of overseas investors.

The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources said Hills brought agility to the housing delivery process. The private sector wanted to work with the public sector although they could get comparable borrowing rates elsewhere. The partnership was to deliver housing in line with market conditions ie quality and affordable.

The Assistant Director of Development said a policy was in place not to market homes offshore. He referred to the sales and marketing subcommittee policy that the City Council and CIP would not undertake offshore marketing of homes.

The Committee unanimously resolved to endorse the recommendations.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

25/17/SR Cambridge Leisure Development Proposal

Matter for Decision

The Officer's report set out a proposal regarding Cambridge Leisure Development.

Decision of Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources

Approved the Officer's recommendations.

Reason for the Decision

As set out in the Officer's report.

Any Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Scrutiny Considerations

The Scrutiny Committee resolved to exclude members of the public from the meeting on the grounds that, if they were present, there would be disclosure to them of information defined as exempt from publication by virtue of paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted)

No conflicts of interest were declared by the Executive Councillor.

The meeting ended at 9.15 pm

CHAIR

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Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Statutory guidance

Overview and scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities

Published 22 April 2024

Applies to England

Contents

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Ministerial foreword

The role that overview and scrutiny can play in holding an authority's decision-makers to account remains fundamentally important to the functioning of local democracy. Effective local authority decision-making is crucial for sector sustainability, and this updated guidance reinforces the role that overview and scrutiny has in making such decisions.

Effective scrutiny helps secure the efficient delivery of public services and drives improvements within the authority itself. Conversely, poor scrutiny can be indicative of wider governance, leadership and service failure.

It is vital that councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities know the purpose of scrutiny, what effective scrutiny looks like, how to conduct it and the benefits it can bring. This guidance aims to increase understanding in all four areas.

Authorities with effective overview and scrutiny arrangements in place share certain key traits, the most important being a strong organisational culture. Authorities who welcome challenge and recognise the value scrutiny can bring reap the benefits. But this depends on strong commitment from the top - from senior members as well as senior officials.

This guidance reflects new developments such as the further devolution of powers and funding to local areas and the establishment of combined authorities and combined county authorities. Just as the principles in this statutory guidance apply to the good scrutiny function of councils, they are equally fundamental to that of English institutions with devolved powers. The accountability of these institutions is core to the success of areas with devolution agreements, and they should use this guidance alongside that in the English Devolution Accountability Framework and the Scrutiny Protocol.

Government recognises that all authorities have democratic mandates, are ultimately accountable to local people and that authorities themselves are best placed to know which scrutiny arrangements are most appropriate for their own individual circumstances.

I strongly urge all councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities to cast a critical eye over their existing arrangements and, above all, ensure they embed a culture that allows overview and scrutiny to flourish.

Simon Hoare MP
Minister for Local Government

About this guidance

Who the guidance is for

This document is aimed at councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities in England to help them carry out their overview and scrutiny functions effectively. In particular, it provides advice for senior leaders, members of overview and scrutiny committees, scrutiny officers and any officers with a role in supporting scrutiny committees.

Aim of the guidance

This guidance seeks to ensure councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities are aware of the purpose of overview and scrutiny, what effective scrutiny looks like, how to conduct it effectively and the benefits it can bring.

As such, it includes a number of policies and practices all authorities should adopt or should consider adopting when deciding how to carry out their overview and scrutiny functions.

The guidance recognises that authorities approach scrutiny in different ways and have different processes and procedures in place, and that what might work well for one authority might not work well in another.

The hypothetical scenarios contained in the annexes to this guidance have been included for illustrative purposes and are intended to provoke thought and discussion rather than serve as a 'best' way to approach the relevant issues.

While the guidance sets out some of the key legal requirements, it does not seek to replicate legislation.

Status of the guidance

This is statutory guidance from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Overview and scrutiny committees of local authorities, combined authorities and combined county authorities must have regard to it when exercising, or deciding whether to exercise, any of their functions. The phrase ‘must have regard’, when used in this context, does not mean that the sections of statutory guidance have to be followed in every detail, but that they should be followed unless there is a good reason not to in a particular case.

Not every authority is required to appoint a scrutiny committee. This guidance applies to those authorities who have such a committee in place, whether they are required to or not.

This guidance has been issued under [section 9Q of the Local Government Act 2000](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/22/section/9Q) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/22/section/9Q>) and under [paragraph 2\(9\) of Schedule 5A to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/20/schedule/5A) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/20/schedule/5A>) and under [paragraph 2\(9\) of Schedule 1 to the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/55/schedule/1/paragraph/2/enacted) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/55/schedule/1/paragraph/2/enacted>), which require authorities to have regard to this guidance.

In addition, authorities may have regard to other material they might choose to consider, including that issued by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, when exercising their overview and scrutiny functions. Areas with a devolution deal should further consider the Scrutiny Protocol issued by government on 22 November 2023 (see paragraph 7).

Terminology

Unless ‘overview’ is specifically mentioned, the term ‘scrutiny’ refers to both overview and scrutiny^{[\[footnote 1\]](#)}. Where the term ‘authority’ is used, it refers to councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities. Where the term ‘Council’ is used, it means a county council in England, a district council or a London borough council, this definition includes unitary authorities^{[\[footnote 2\]](#)}.

Where the term ‘scrutiny committee’ is used, it refers to an overview and scrutiny committee and any of its sub-committees. As the legislation refers throughout to functions conferred on scrutiny committees, that is the wording used in this guidance. However, the guidance should be seen as applying equally to work undertaken in informal task and finish groups commissioned by formal committees.

Where the term ‘executive’ is used, it refers to executive members.

For combined authorities, references to the ‘executive’ or ‘cabinet’ should be interpreted as relating to the mayor (where applicable) and all the authority members including non-constituent members and associate members as well as constituent council members.

For authorities operating committee rather than executive arrangements, references to the ‘executive’ or ‘cabinet’ should be interpreted as relating to councillors in leadership positions.

Expiry or review date

This guidance was published on 22 April 2024 and replaces guidance published on 7 May 2019.

This guidance will be kept under review and updated as necessary.

1. Introduction and context

Legislative context

1. Overview and scrutiny committees were introduced in 2000 as part of new executive governance arrangements to ensure that members of a local authority who were not part of the executive could hold the executive to account for the decisions and actions that affect their communities.

2. The requirement for councils in England to establish overview and scrutiny committees is set out in [sections 9F to 9FI of the Local Government Act 2000](#)

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/22/part/1A/chapter/2/crossheading/overview-and-scrutiny-committees>) as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The Localism Act amended the Local Government Act 2000 to allow councils to revert to a non-executive form of governance - the ‘committee system’. Councils who adopt the committee system are not required to have overview and scrutiny but may do so if they wish. The legislation has been updated since 2000.

3. Requirements for combined authorities are set out in [Schedule 5A to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009](#) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/20/schedule/5A> ^[footnote 3] and those

for combined county authorities are set out in Schedule 1 to the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023^{[footnote 4](#)}.

What overview and scrutiny committees do

4. Overview and scrutiny committees have statutory powers^{[footnote 5](#)} to scrutinise decisions the executive is planning to take, those it plans to implement, and those that have already been taken/implemented. Combined authority and combined county authority overview and scrutiny committees also have powers to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the mayor of any general (i.e. non-PCC) functions. Overview and scrutiny committees may make reports or recommendations to the authority or mayor about the discharge of their respective functions, and also on matters that affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of the area. Recommendations following scrutiny enable improvements to be made to policies and how they are implemented. Overview and scrutiny committees can also play a valuable role in developing policy.

Effective overview and scrutiny should:

- provide constructive 'critical friend' challenge
- amplify the voices and concerns of the public
- be led by independent^{[footnote 6](#)} people who take responsibility for their role
- drive improvement in public services and strategic decision-making

5. Current overview and scrutiny legislation recognises that authorities are locally accountable^{[footnote 7](#)}. Authorities themselves are best placed to determine which overview and scrutiny arrangements best suit their own individual needs, and so gives them a great degree of flexibility to decide which arrangements to adopt.

6. In producing this guidance, the government fully recognises these authorities' democratic mandate and that the nature of local government has changed in recent years, with, for example, the creation of combined authorities and combined county authorities, and councils increasingly delivering key services in partnership with other organisations or outsourcing them entirely.

7. The ongoing deeper devolution of powers and funding to local areas brings the requirement and provision for greater accountability. It is crucial

that the local scrutiny of institutions with devolved powers sets robust standards to hold them to account for delivery, as well as playing a critical role in policy and strategy development. This is particularly important when scrutinising devolved powers. To strengthen the scrutiny for those English institutions with devolved powers, government has published [the Scrutiny Protocol guidance \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scrutiny-protocol-for-english-institutions-with-devolved-powers/scrutiny-protocol\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scrutiny-protocol-for-english-institutions-with-devolved-powers/scrutiny-protocol) which can be considered a supplement to this advice for those institutions.

2. Culture

8. The prevailing organisational culture, behaviours and attitudes of an authority will largely determine whether its scrutiny function succeeds or fails.

9. While everyone in an authority can play a role in creating an environment conducive to effective scrutiny, it is important that this is led and owned by members, including any directly elected mayor, given their role in setting and maintaining the culture of an authority.

10. Creating a strong organisational culture supports scrutiny work that can add real value by, for example, improving policy-making and the efficient delivery of public services. In contrast, low levels of support for, and engagement with, the scrutiny function often lead to poor quality and ill-focused work that serves to reinforce the perception that it is of little worth or relevance.

11. Members and senior officers should note that the performance of the scrutiny function is not just of interest to the authority itself. Its effectiveness, or lack thereof, is often considered by external bodies such as regulators and inspectors, and highlighted in public reports, including best value inspection reports^{[\[footnote 8\]](#)}. Failures in scrutiny can therefore help to create a negative public image of an authority as a whole.

How to establish a strong organisational culture

12. Authorities can establish a strong organisational culture by:

(a) Recognising scrutiny's legal and democratic legitimacy

All members and officers should recognise and appreciate the importance and legitimacy the scrutiny function is afforded by the law. It was created to

act as a check and balance on the executive and is a statutory requirement for all councils operating executive arrangements and for all combined authorities and combined county authorities.

Scrutiny committee members have a unique legitimacy derived from their being democratically elected councillors in the first instance. The insights that they can bring by having this close connection to local people are part of what gives scrutiny its value.

(b) Identifying a clear role and focus

Authorities should take steps to ensure scrutiny has a clear role and focus within the organisation, i.e. a niche within which it can clearly add value. Therefore, prioritisation is necessary to ensure the scrutiny function concentrates on delivering work that is of genuine value and relevance to the work of the wider authority – this is one of the most challenging parts of scrutiny, and a critical element to get right if it is to be recognised as a strategic function of the authority (see [chapter 6](#)).

Authorities should ensure a clear division of responsibilities between the scrutiny function and the audit function. While it is appropriate for scrutiny to pay due regard to the authority's financial position, this will need to happen in the context of the formal audit role. The authority's section 151 officer should advise scrutiny on how to manage this dynamic.

While scrutiny has no role in the investigation or oversight of the authority's whistleblowing arrangements, the findings of independent whistleblowing investigations might be of interest to scrutiny committees as they consider their wider implications. Members should always follow the authority's constitution and associated Monitoring Officer directions on the matter. See further [guidance on whistleblowing](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/whistleblowing-guidance-and-code-of-practice-for-employers) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/whistleblowing-guidance-and-code-of-practice-for-employers>).

(c) Ensuring early and regular engagement between the executive and scrutiny

Authorities should ensure early and regular discussion takes place between the scrutiny function, the executive and any directly elected mayor, especially regarding the executive's or directly elected mayor's future work programme. Authorities should, though, be mindful of their distinct roles:

In particular:

- The executive or mayor should not try to exercise control over the work of the scrutiny committee. This could be direct, e.g. by purporting to 'order' scrutiny to look at, or not look at, certain issues, or indirect, e.g. through the use of the whip or as a tool of political

patronage, and the committee itself should remember its statutory purpose when carrying out its work. All members and officers should consider the role the scrutiny committee plays to be that of a 'critical friend' not a de facto 'opposition'. Scrutiny chairs have a particular role to play in establishing the profile and nature of their committee (see [chapter 4](#)); and

- The chair of the scrutiny committee should determine the nature and extent of an executive member's or mayor's participation in a scrutiny committee meeting, and in any informal scrutiny task group meeting.

(d) Managing disagreement

Effective scrutiny involves looking at issues that can be politically contentious. It is therefore inevitable that, at times, an executive or mayor will disagree with the findings or recommendations of a scrutiny committee.

It is the job of both the executive (including any directly elected mayor) and scrutiny to work together to reduce the risk of this happening, and authorities should take steps to predict, identify and act on disagreement.

One way an authority can achieve this is by setting its own 'executive-scrutiny protocol' (see [annex 1](#)) which can help define the relationship between the parties and mitigate any differences of opinion before they manifest themselves in unhelpful and unproductive ways. The benefit of this approach is that it provides a framework for disagreement and debate, and a way to manage it when it happens. Often, the value of such a protocol lies in the dialogue that underpins its preparation. It is important that these protocols are reviewed on a regular basis to demonstrate the impact of scrutiny and seek ongoing improvement of scrutiny functions.

Scrutiny committees do have the power to 'call in' decisions, i.e. ask the executive or mayor to reconsider them before they are implemented, but should not view it as a substitute for early involvement in the decision-making process or as a party-political tool.

(e) Providing the necessary support

While the level of resource allocated to scrutiny is for each authority to decide for itself, when determining resources an authority should consider the purpose of scrutiny as set out in legislation and the specific role and remit of the authority's own scrutiny committee(s), and the scrutiny function as a whole.

Support should also be given by members and senior officers to scrutiny committees and their support staff to access information held by the authority and facilitate discussions with representatives of external bodies (see [chapter 5](#)).

(f) Ensuring impartial advice from officers

Authorities, particularly senior officers, should ensure all officers are free to provide impartial advice to scrutiny committees. This is fundamental to effective scrutiny. Of particular importance is the role played by ‘statutory officers’ – the monitoring officer, the section 151 officer and the head of paid service, and where relevant the statutory scrutiny officer. These individuals have a particular role in ensuring that timely, relevant and high-quality advice is provided to scrutiny.

(g) Communicating scrutiny’s role and purpose to the wider authority

The scrutiny function can often lack support and recognition within an authority because there is a lack of awareness among both members and officers about the specific role it plays, which individuals are involved and its relevance to the authority’s wider work. Authorities should, therefore, take steps to ensure all members and officers are made aware of the role the scrutiny committee plays in the organisation, its value and the outcomes it can deliver, the powers it has, its membership and, if appropriate, the identity of those providing officer support.

(h) Maintaining the interest of full Council in the work of the scrutiny committee

Part of communicating scrutiny’s role and purpose to the wider authority should, in a local authority, happen through the formal, public role of full Council – particularly given that scrutiny will undertake valuable work to highlight challenging issues that an authority will be facing and subjects that will be a focus of full Council’s work. Authorities should therefore take steps to ensure full Council is informed of the work the scrutiny committee is doing.

One way in which this can be done is by reports and recommendations being submitted to full Council rather than solely to the executive. Scrutiny should decide when it would be appropriate to submit reports for wider debate in this way, taking into account the relevance of reports to full Council business, as well as full Council’s capacity to consider and respond in a timely manner. Such reports would supplement the annual report to full Council on scrutiny’s activities and raise awareness of ongoing work.

In order to maintain awareness of scrutiny at the combined authority or combined county authority and provoke dialogue and discussion of its impact, the business of scrutiny should be reported to the combined authority or combined county authority board, and the committee should consider also reporting to the chairs of the relevant scrutiny committees of constituent and non-constituent councils, including councils which nominate non-constituent members.

At those chairs' discretion, particular combined authority or combined county authority scrutiny outcomes, and what they might mean for each individual area, could be either discussed by scrutiny in committee or referred to full Council of the constituent councils and councils which nominate non-constituent members.

(i) Communicating scrutiny's role to the public

Authorities should ensure scrutiny has a profile in the wider community. Consideration should be given to how and when to engage the authority's communications officers, and any other relevant channels, to understand how to get that message across. This will usually require engagement early on in the work programming process (see [chapter 6](#)).

(j) Ensuring scrutiny members are supported in having an independent mindset

Formal committee meetings provide a vital opportunity for scrutiny members to question the executive and officers. Inevitably, some committee members will come from the same political party as a member they are scrutinising and might well have a long-standing personal, or familial, relationship with them (see paragraph 26).

Scrutiny members should bear in mind, however, that adopting an independent mind-set is fundamental to carrying out their work effectively. In practice, this is likely to require scrutiny chairs working proactively to identify any potentially contentious issues and plan how to manage them.

Directly elected mayoral systems

13. A strong organisational culture that supports scrutiny work is particularly important in authorities with a directly elected mayor to ensure there are the checks and balances to maintain a robust democratic system. Mayoral systems offer the opportunity for greater public accountability and stronger governance, but there have also been incidents that highlight the importance of creating and maintaining a culture that puts scrutiny at the heart of its operations.

14. Authorities with a directly elected mayor should ensure that scrutiny committees are well-resourced, are able to recruit high-calibre members and that their scrutiny functions pay particular attention to issues surrounding:

- rights of access to documents by the press, public and authority members

- transparent and fully recorded decision-making processes, especially avoiding decisions by ‘unofficial’ committees or working groups
- delegated decisions by the Mayor
- whistleblowing protections for both staff and councillors
- powers of Full Council, where applicable, to question and review

15. Authorities with a directly elected mayor should note that mayors are required by law to attend overview and scrutiny committee sessions when asked to do so (see paragraph 45). In combined authorities and combined county authorities, mayors typically exercise specified functions; scrutiny functions in such mayoral authorities should consider how best to ensure that both the authority and the mayor are held accountable for the exercise of their respective functions. For example, should there be different committees for each?

3. Resourcing

16. The resource an authority allocates to the scrutiny function plays a pivotal role in determining how successful that function is and therefore the value it can add to the work of the authority.

17. Ultimately it is up to each authority to decide on the resource it provides, but every authority should recognise that creating and sustaining an effective scrutiny function requires them to allocate resources to it.

18. Authorities should also recognise that support for scrutiny committees, task groups and other activities is not solely about budgets and provision of officer time, although these are clearly extremely important elements. Effective support is also about the ways in which the wider authority engages with those who carry out the scrutiny function (both members and officers).

When deciding on the level of resource to allocate to the scrutiny function, the factors an authority should consider include:

- scrutiny’s legal powers and responsibilities
- the particular role and remit scrutiny will play in the authority
- the training requirements of scrutiny members and support officers, particularly the support needed to ask effective questions of the executive and other key partners, and make effective recommendations

- the need for ad hoc external support where expertise does not exist in the authority
- effectively-resourced scrutiny has been shown to add value to the work of authorities, improving their ability to meet the needs of local people
- effectively-resourced scrutiny can help policy formulation and so minimise the need for call-in of executive decisions

Statutory scrutiny officers

19. Combined authorities, combined county authorities and upper and single tier authorities are required to designate a statutory scrutiny officer^{[\[footnote 9\]](#)}, someone whose role is to:

- promote the role of the authority's scrutiny committee
- provide support to the scrutiny committee and its members
- provide support and guidance to members (including any mayor) and officers relating to the functions of the scrutiny committee

20. Authorities not required by law to appoint such an officer should consider whether doing so would be appropriate for their specific local needs.

Officer resource models

21. Authorities are free to decide for themselves which wider officer support model best suits their individual circumstances, though generally they adopt one or a mix of the following:

- committee – officers are drawn from specific policy or service areas
- integrated – officers are drawn from the corporate centre and also service the executive and/or mayor
- specialist – officers are dedicated to scrutiny

22. Each model has its merits – the committee model provides service-specific expertise; the integrated model facilitates closer and earlier scrutiny involvement in policy formation and alignment of corporate work

programmes; and the specialist model is structurally independent from those areas it scrutinises.

23. Authorities should ensure that, whatever model they employ, officers tasked with providing scrutiny support are able to provide impartial advice. This might require consideration of the need to build safeguards into the way that support is provided. The nature of these safeguards will differ according to the specific role scrutiny plays in the organisation.

4. Selecting committee members

24. Selecting the right members to serve on scrutiny committees is essential if those committees are to function effectively. Where a committee is made up of members who have the necessary skills and commitment, it is far more likely to be taken seriously by the wider authority.

25. While there are political proportionality requirements that must be met^{[\[footnote 10\]](#)}, the selection of the chair and other committee members is for each authority to decide for itself. In a combined authority or combined county authority, the chair must be either an independent person or an appropriate person – both terms are defined in legislation.^{[\[footnote 11\]](#)}

Members invariably have different skill sets. What an authority must consider when forming a committee is that, as a group, it possesses the requisite expertise, commitment and ability to act impartially to fulfil its functions.

26. Local authorities are reminded that members of the executive cannot be members of a scrutiny committee^{[\[footnote 12\]](#)}. Authorities should take care to ensure that, as a minimum, members holding less formal executive positions, e.g. as Cabinet assistants, do not sit on scrutinising committees looking at portfolios to which those roles relate. Local authorities should articulate in their constitutions how conflicts of interest, including familial links (see also paragraph 32), between executive and scrutiny responsibilities should be managed, including where members stand down from the executive and move to a scrutiny role, and vice-versa.

27. Members or substitute members of a combined authority or combined county authority must not be members of its overview and scrutiny committee(s)^{[\[footnote 13\]](#)}. This includes any mayor and any non-constituent members and associate members of the authority. It is advised that Deputy Mayors for Policing and Crime are also not members of the combined authority's or combined county authority's overview and scrutiny committee.

Selecting individual committee members

28. When selecting individual members to serve on scrutiny committees, an authority should consider a member's experience, expertise, interests, ability to act impartially, ability to work as part of a group, and capacity to serve. Combined authorities and combined county authorities may also want to consider the balance of committee members drawn from each constituent council.

29. Authorities should not take into account a member's perceived level of support for or opposition to a particular political party (notwithstanding the wider legal requirement for proportionality referred to in paragraph 25).

Selecting a chair

30. The Chair plays a leadership role on a scrutiny committee as they are largely responsible for establishing its profile, influence and ways of working.

31. The attributes authorities should and should not take into account when selecting individual committee members (see paragraphs 28 and 29) also apply to the selection of the Chair, but the Chair should also possess the ability to lead and build a sense of teamwork and consensus among committee members.

Chairs should pay special attention to the need to guard the committee's independence. Importantly, however, they should take care to avoid the committee being, and being viewed as, a de facto opposition to the executive.

32. Given their pre-eminent role on the scrutiny committee, it is strongly recommended that the Chair not preside over scrutiny of the decisions made by close friends or relatives^{[\[footnote 14\]](#)}. Combined authorities and combined county authorities should note the legal requirements that apply to them where the Chair is an "independent person"^{[\[footnote 15\]](#)}.

33. The method for selecting a Chair is for each authority to decide for itself, however every authority should consider taking a vote by secret ballot. Combined authorities and combined county authorities whose chair is an

“appropriate person” should be aware of the legal requirements regarding the party affiliation of their scrutiny committee Chair^{[footnote 16](#)}.

Training for committee members

34. Authorities should ensure committee members are offered induction when they take up their role and ongoing training so they can carry out their responsibilities effectively. Authorities should pay attention to the need to ensure committee members are aware of their legal powers, and how to prepare for and ask relevant questions at scrutiny sessions.

35. When deciding on training requirements for committee members, authorities should consider talking to other similar authorities to share learning and expertise as well as taking advantage of opportunities offered by their sector membership bodies and external providers.

Co-option and technical advice

36. While members and their support officers will often have significant local insight and an understanding of local people and their needs, the provision of outside expertise can be invaluable.

37. There are two principal ways to procure this:

- co-option – formal co-option is provided for in legislation^{[footnote 17](#)}. Authorities must establish a co-option scheme to determine how individuals will be co-opted onto committees
- technical advisers – depending on the subject matter, independent local experts might exist who can provide advice and assistance in evaluating evidence (see [annex 2](#))

5. Power to access information

38. A scrutiny committee needs access to relevant information the authority holds, and to receive it in good time, if it is to do its job effectively.

39. This need is recognised in law, with members of scrutiny committees enjoying powers to access information^{[footnote 18](#)}. In particular, legislation gives enhanced powers to a scrutiny member to access exempt or

confidential information. This is in addition to existing rights for members to have access to information to perform their duties, including common law rights to request information and rights to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

40. When considering what information scrutiny needs in order to carry out its work, scrutiny members and the executive should consider scrutiny's role and the legal rights that committees and their individual members have, as well as their need to receive timely and accurate information to carry out their duties effectively.

41. Scrutiny members should have access to a regularly available source of key information about the management of the authority – particularly on performance, management and risk. Where this information exists, and scrutiny members are given support to understand it, the potential for what officers might consider unfocused and unproductive requests is reduced as members will be able to frame their requests from a more informed position.

42. Officers should speak to scrutiny members to ensure they understand the reasons why information is needed, thereby making the authority better able to provide information that is relevant and timely, as well as ensuring that the authority complies with legal requirements.

While each request for information should be judged on its individual merits, authorities should adopt a default position of sharing the information they hold, on request, with scrutiny committee members.

43. The law recognises that there might be instances where it is legitimate for an authority to withhold information and places a requirement on the executive to provide the scrutiny committee with a written statement setting out its reasons for that decision^{[footnote 19](#)}. However, members of the executive and senior officers should take particular care to avoid refusing requests, or limiting the information they provide, for reasons of party political or reputational expediency.

Before an authority takes a decision not to share information it holds, it should give serious consideration to whether that information could be shared in closed session.

44. Legislation stipulates a timeframe for executives to comply with requests from a scrutiny member^{[footnote 20](#)}. When agreeing to such requests, authorities should:

- consider whether seeking clarification from the information requester could help better target the request
- ensure the information is supplied in a format appropriate to the recipient's needs

45. Scrutiny committees should be aware of their legal power to require members of the executive, including any directly elected mayor and deputy mayor, and officers to attend before them to answer questions^{[\[footnote 21\]](#)}. It is the duty of members and officers to comply with such requests^{[\[footnote 22\]](#)}.

Seeking information from external organisations

46. Scrutiny members should also consider the need to supplement any authority-held information they receive with information and intelligence that might be available from other sources and should note in particular their statutory powers to invite other persons to attend meetings of the committee and to access information from certain external organisations.

47. When asking an external organisation to provide documentation or appear before it, and where that organisation is not legally obliged to do either (see [annex 3](#)), scrutiny committees should consider the following:

(a) The need to explain the purpose of scrutiny

The organisation being approached might have little or no awareness of the committee's work, or of an authority's scrutiny function more generally, and so might be reluctant to comply with any request.

(b) The benefits of an informal approach

Individuals from external organisations can have fixed perceptions of what an evidence session entails and may be unwilling to subject themselves to detailed public scrutiny if they believe it could reflect badly on them or their employer. Making an informal approach can help reassure an organisation of the aims of the committee, the type of information being sought and the manner in which the evidence session would be conducted.

(c) How to encourage compliance with the request

Scrutiny committees will want to frame their approach on a case-by-case basis. For contentious issues, committees might want to emphasise the opportunity their request gives the organisation to 'set the record straight' in a public setting.

(d) Who to approach

A committee might instinctively want to ask the Chief Executive or Managing Director of an organisation to appear at an evidence session, however it could be more beneficial to engage front-line staff when seeking operational-level detail rather than senior executives who might only be able to talk in more general terms. When making a request to a specific individual, the committee should consider the type of information it is seeking, the nature of the organisation in question and the authority's pre-existing relationship with it.

Following 'the tax-payer pound'

Scrutiny committees will often have a keen interest in 'following the tax-payer pound', i.e. scrutinising organisations that receive public funding to deliver goods and services.

Authorities should recognise the legitimacy of this interest and, where relevant, consider the need to provide assistance to scrutiny members and their support staff to obtain information from organisations the authority has contracted to deliver services. In particular, when agreeing contracts with these bodies, authorities should consider whether it would be appropriate to include a requirement for them to supply information to or appear before scrutiny committees.

6. Planning work

48. Effective scrutiny should have a defined impact on the ground, with the committee making recommendations that will make a tangible difference to the work of the authority. To have this kind of impact, scrutiny committees need to plan their work programme, i.e. draw up a long-term agenda and consider making it flexible enough to accommodate any urgent, short-term issues that might arise during the year.

49. Authorities with multiple scrutiny committees sometimes have a separate work programme for each committee. Where this happens, consideration should be given to how to co-ordinate the various committees' work to make best use of the total resources available.

Being clear about scrutiny's role

50. Scrutiny works best when it has a clear role and function. This provides focus and direction. While scrutiny has the power to look at anything which

affects ‘the area, or the area’s inhabitants’, authorities will often find it difficult to support a scrutiny function that carries out generalised oversight across the wide range of issues experienced by local people, particularly in the context of partnership working. Prioritisation is necessary, which means that there might be things that, despite being important, scrutiny will not be able to look at.

51. Different overall roles could include having a focus on risk, the authority’s finances, or on the way the authority works with its partners.

52. Applying this focus does not mean that certain subjects are ‘off limits’. It is more about looking at topics and deciding whether their relative importance justifies the positive impact scrutiny’s further involvement could bring.

53. When thinking about scrutiny’s focus, members should be supported by key senior officers. The statutory scrutiny officer, if an authority has one, will need to take a leading role in supporting members to clarify the role and function of scrutiny, and championing that role once agreed.

Who to speak to

54. Evidence will need to be gathered to inform the work programming process. This will ensure that it looks at the right topics, in the right way and at the right time. Gathering evidence requires conversations with:

The public

It is likely that formal ‘consultation’ with the public on the scrutiny work programme will be ineffective. Asking individual scrutiny members to have conversations with individuals and groups in their own local areas can work better. Insights gained from the public through individual pieces of scrutiny work can be fed back into the work programming process. Listening to and participating in conversations in places where local people come together, including in online forums, can help authorities engage people on their own terms and yield more positive results.

Authorities should consider how their communications officers can help scrutiny engage with the public, and how wider internal expertise and local knowledge from both members and officers might make a contribution.

The authority’s partners

Relationships with other partners should not be limited to evidence-gathering to support individual reviews or agenda items. A range of partners are likely to have insights that will prove useful:

- public sector partners (like the NHS and community safety partners, over which scrutiny has specific legal powers)
- voluntary sector partners
- contractors and commissioning partners (including partners in joint ventures and authority-owned companies)
- in parished areas, town and parish councils
- in combined authority and combined county authority areas, constituent councils
- in combined county authority areas, councils which nominate non-constituent members
- neighbouring principal councils (both in two-tier and unitary areas)
- cross-authority bodies and organisations, such as Local Enterprise Partnerships [\[footnote 23\]](#)

The executive

A principal partner in discussions on the work programme should be the executive, including any directly elected mayor (and senior officers). The executive should not direct scrutiny's work (see [chapter 2](#), but conversations will help scrutiny members better understand how their work can be designed to align with the best opportunities to influence the authority's wider work.

Information sources

55. Scrutiny will need access to relevant information to inform its work programme. The type of information will depend on the specific role and function scrutiny plays within the authority, but might include:

- performance information from across the authority and its partners
- finance and risk information from across the authority and its partners
- corporate complaints information, and aggregated information from political groups about the subject matter of members' surgeries
- business cases and options appraisals (and other planning information) for forthcoming major decisions. This information will be of particular use for pre-decision scrutiny
- reports and recommendations issued by relevant ombudsmen, especially the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

As committees can meet in closed session, commercial confidentiality should not preclude the sharing of information. Authorities should note,

however, that the default for meetings should be that they are held in public (see guidance on [Open and accountable local government \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-and-accountable-local-government-plain-english-guide\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-and-accountable-local-government-plain-english-guide)).

56. Scrutiny members should consider keeping this information under regular review. It is likely to be easier to do this outside committee, rather than bringing such information to committee 'to note', or to provide an update, as a matter of course.

Shortlisting topics

Approaches to shortlisting topics should reflect scrutiny's overall role in the authority. This will require the development of bespoke, local solutions, however when considering whether an item should be included in the work programme, the kind of questions a scrutiny committee should consider might include:

- Do we understand the benefits scrutiny would bring to this issue?
- How could we best carry out work on this subject?
- What would be the best outcome of this work?
- How would this work engage with the activity of the executive and other decision-makers, including partners?

57. Some authorities use scoring systems to evaluate and rank work programme proposals. If these are used to provoke discussion and debate, based on evidence, about what priorities should be, they can be a useful tool. Others take a looser approach. Whichever method is adopted, a committee should be able to justify how and why a decision has been taken to include certain issues and not others.

58. Scrutiny members should accept that shortlisting can be difficult; scrutiny committees have finite resources and deciding how these are best allocated is tough. They should understand that, if work programming is robust and effective, there might well be issues that they want to look at that nonetheless are not selected.

59. Selected topics can be scrutinised in several ways, including:

(a) As a single item on a committee agenda

This often presents a limited opportunity for effective scrutiny, but may be appropriate for some issues or where the committee wants to maintain a formal watching brief over a given issue.

(b) At a single meeting

Which could be a committee meeting or something less formal. This can provide an opportunity to have a single public meeting about a given subject, or to have a meeting at which evidence is taken from a number of witnesses.

(c) At a task and finish review of two or three meetings

Short, sharp scrutiny reviews are likely to be most effective even for complex topics. Properly focused, they ensure members can swiftly reach conclusions and make recommendations, perhaps over the course of a couple of months or less.

(d) Via a longer-term task and finish review

The 'traditional' task and finish model – with perhaps six or seven meetings spread over a number of months – is still appropriate when scrutiny needs to dig into a complex topic in significant detail. However, the resource implications of such work, and its length, can make it unattractive for all but the most complex matters.

(e) By establishing a 'standing panel'

This falls short of establishing a whole new committee but may reflect a necessity to keep a watching brief over a critical local issue, especially where members feel they need to convene regularly to carry out that oversight. Again, the resource implications of this approach means that it will be rarely used.

7. Evidence sessions

60. Evidence sessions are a key way in which scrutiny committees inform their work. They might happen at formal committee, in less formal 'task and finish' groups or at standalone sessions.

Good preparation is a vital part of conducting effective evidence sessions. Members should have a clear idea of what the committee hopes to get out of each session and appreciate that success will depend on their ability to work together on the day.

How to plan

61. Effective planning does not necessarily involve a large number of pre-meetings, the development of complex scopes or the drafting of questioning plans. It is more often about setting overall objectives and then considering what type of questions (and the way in which they are asked) can best elicit the information the committee is seeking. This applies as much to individual agenda items as it does for longer evidence sessions – there should always be consideration in advance of what scrutiny is trying to get out of a particular evidence session.

Chairs play a vital role in leading discussions on objective-setting and ensuring all members are aware of the specific role each will play during the evidence session.

62. As far as possible there should be consensus among scrutiny members about the objective of an evidence session before it starts. It is important to recognise that members have different perspectives on certain issues, and so might not share the objectives for a session that are ultimately adopted. Where this happens, the Chair will need to be aware of this divergence of views and bear it in mind when planning the evidence session.

63. Effective planning should mean that at the end of a session it is relatively straightforward for the chair to draw together themes and highlight the key findings. It is unlikely that the committee will be able to develop and agree recommendations immediately, but, unless the session is part of a wider inquiry, enough evidence should have been gathered to allow the chair to set a clear direction.

64. After an evidence session, the committee might wish to hold a short 'wash-up' meeting to review whether their objectives were met and lessons could be learned for future sessions.

Developing recommendations

65. The development and agreement of recommendations is often an iterative process. It will usually be appropriate for this to be done only by committee members, assisted by co-optees where relevant. When deciding on recommendations, however, members should have due regard to advice received from officers, particularly the Monitoring Officer.

66. The drafting of reports is usually, but not always, carried out by officers, directed by members.

67. Authorities draft reports and recommendations in a number of ways, but there are normally three stages:

- i. the development of a 'heads of report' – a document setting out general findings that members can then discuss as they consider the overall structure and focus of the report and its recommendations;
- ii. the development of those findings, which will set out some areas on which recommendations might be made; and
- iii. the drafting of the full report.

68. Recommendations should be evidence-based and SMART, i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timed. Where appropriate, committees may wish to consider sharing them in draft with interested parties.

69. Committees should bear in mind that often six to eight recommendations are sufficient to enable the authority to focus its response, although there may be specific circumstances in which more might be appropriate.

Sharing draft recommendations with executive members should not provide an opportunity for them to revise or block recommendations before they are made. It should, however, provide an opportunity for errors to be identified and corrected, and for a more general sense-check.

Annex 1: Illustrative scenario – creating an executive-scrutiny protocol

An executive-scrutiny protocol can deal with the practical expectations of scrutiny committee members and the executive, as well as the cultural dynamics.

Workshops with scrutiny members, senior officers and Cabinet can be helpful to inform the drafting of a protocol. An external facilitator can help bring an independent perspective. English institutions with devolved powers should consider the advice in the [Scrutiny Protocol](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scrutiny-protocol-for-english-institutions-with-devolved-powers/scrutiny-protocol) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/scrutiny-protocol-for-english-institutions-with-devolved-powers/scrutiny-protocol>) to further inform development of their own protocol.

Councils should consider how to adopt a protocol, e.g. formal agreement at scrutiny committee and Cabinet, then formal integration into the Council's constitution at the next Annual General Meeting.

The protocol, as agreed, may contain sections on:

- The way scrutiny will go about developing its work programme (including the ways in which senior officers and Cabinet members will be kept informed).
- The way in which senior officers and Cabinet will keep scrutiny informed of the outlines of major decisions as they are developed, to allow for discussion of scrutiny's potential involvement in policy development. This involves the building in of safeguards to mitigate risks around the sharing of sensitive information with scrutiny members.
- A strengthening and expansion of existing parts of the code of conduct that relate to behaviour in formal meetings, and in informal meetings.
- Specification of the nature and form of responses that scrutiny can expect when it makes recommendations to the executive, when it makes requests to the executive for information, and when it makes requests that Cabinet members or senior officers attend meetings.
- Confirmation of the role of the statutory scrutiny officer, and Monitoring Officer, in overseeing compliance with the protocol, and ensuring that it is used to support the wider aim of supporting and promoting a culture of scrutiny, with matters relating to the protocol's success being reported to full Council through the scrutiny Annual Report.

Annex 2: Illustrative scenario – engaging independent technical advisers

This example demonstrates how one Council's executive and scrutiny committee worked together to scope a role and then appoint an independent adviser on transforming social care commissioning. Their considerations and process may be helpful and applicable in other similar scenarios.

Major care contracts were coming to an end and the Council took the opportunity to review whether to continue with its existing strategic commissioning framework, or take a different approach – potentially insourcing certain elements.

The relevant Director was concerned about the Council's reliance on a very small number of large providers. The Director therefore approached the Scrutiny and Governance Manager to talk through the potential role scrutiny could play as the Council considered these changes.

The Scrutiny Chair wanted to look at this issue in some depth, but recognised its complexity could make it difficult for her committee to engage – she was concerned it would not be able to do the issue justice. The Director offered support from his own officer team, but the Chair considered this approach to be beset by risks around the independence of the process.

She talked to the Director about securing independent advice. He was worried that an independent adviser could come with preconceived ideas and would not understand the Council's context and objectives. The Scrutiny Chair was concerned that independent advice could end up leading to scrutiny members being passive, relying on an adviser to do their thinking for them. They agreed that some form of independent assistance would be valuable, but that how it was provided and managed should be carefully thought out.

With the assistance of the Governance and Scrutiny Manager, the Scrutiny Chair approached local universities and Further Education institutions to identify an appropriate individual. The approach was clear – it set out the precise role expected of the adviser, and explained the scrutiny process itself. Because members wanted to focus on the risks of market failure, and felt more confident on substantive social care matters, the approach was directed at those with a specialism in economics and business administration. The Council's search was proactive – the assistance of the service department was drawn on to make direct approaches to particular individuals who could carry out this role.

It was agreed to make a small budget available to act as a 'per diem' to support an adviser; academics were approached in the first instance as the Council felt able to make a case that an educational institution would provide this support for free as part of its commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility.

Three individuals were identified from the Council's proactive search. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the committee had an informal discussion with each – not so much to establish their skills and expertise (which had already been assessed) but to give a sense about their 'fit' with scrutiny's objectives and their political nous in understanding the environment in which they would operate, and to satisfy themselves that they will apply themselves even-handedly to the task. The Director sat in on this process but played no part in who was ultimately selected.

The independent advice provided by the selected individual gave the Scrutiny Committee a more comprehensive understanding of the issue and meant it was able to offer informed advice on the merits of putting in place a new strategic commissioning framework.

Annex 3: Illustrative scenario – approaching an external organisation to appear before a committee

This example shows how one council ensured a productive scrutiny meeting, involving a private company and the public. Lessons may be drawn and apply to other similar scenarios.

Concerns had been expressed by user groups, and the public at large, about the reliability of the local bus service. The Scrutiny Chair wanted to question the bus company in a public evidence session but knew that she had no power to compel it to attend. Previous attempts to engage it had been unsuccessful; the company was not hostile, but said it had its own ways of engaging the public.

The Monitoring Officer approached the company's regional PR manager, but he expressed concern that the session would end in a 'bunfight'. He also explained the company had put their improvement plan in the public domain and felt a big council meeting would exacerbate tensions.

Other councillors had strong views about the company – one thought the committee should tell the company it would be empty-chaired if it refused to attend. The Scrutiny Chair was sympathetic to this but thought such an approach would not lead to any improvements.

The Scrutiny Chair was keen to make progress, but it was difficult to find the right person to speak to at the company, so she asked council officers and local transport advocacy groups for advice. Speaking to those people also gave her a better sense of what scrutiny's role might be.

When she finally spoke to the company's network manager, she explained the situation and suggested they work together to consider how the meeting could be productive for the Council, the company and local people. In particular, this provided her with an opportunity to explain scrutiny and its role. The network manager remained sceptical but was reassured that they could work together to ensure that the meeting would not be an 'ambush'. He agreed in principle to attend and also provide information to support the Committee's work beforehand.

Discussions continued in the four weeks leading up to the Committee meeting. The Scrutiny Chair was conscious that while she had to work with the company to ensure that the meeting was constructive – and secure their attendance – it could not be a whitewash, and other members and the public would demand a hard edge to the discussions.

The scrutiny committee agreed that the meeting would provide a space for the company to provide context to the problems local people are experiencing, but that this would be preceded by a space on the agenda for the Chair, Vice-chair, and representatives from two local transport advocacy groups to set out their concerns. The company were sent in advance a summary of the general areas on which members were likely to ask questions, to ensure that those questions could be addressed at the meeting.

Finally, provision was made for public questions and debate. Those attending the meeting were invited to discuss with each other the principal issues they wanted the meeting to cover. A short, facilitated discussion in the room led by the Chair highlighted the key issues, and the Chair then put those points to the company representatives. At the end of the meeting, the public asked questions of the bus company representative in a 20-minute plenary item.

The meeting was fractious, but the planning carried out to prepare for this – by channelling issues through discussion and using the Chair to mediate the questioning – made things easier. Some attendees were initially frustrated by this structure, but the company representative was more open and less defensive than might otherwise have been the case.

The meeting also motivated the company to revise its communications plan to become more responsive to this kind of challenge, part of which involved a commitment to feed back to the scrutiny committee on the recommendations it made on the night.

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1. A distinction is often drawn between ‘overview’ which focuses on the development of policy, and ‘scrutiny’ which looks at decisions that have been made or are about to be made to ensure they are fit for purpose.
 2. As defined in section 9R of the Local Government Act 2000.
 3. Added by section 8 of and Schedule 3 to the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 and further amended by section 70 of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.
 4. Further provision for combined authority and combined county authority scrutiny is set out in The Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) (S.I. 2017/68). Note this SI has been amended by S.I.2024/430.
 5. Section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000; paragraph 1 of Schedule 5A to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009; and paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 to the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.
 6. Combined authority and combined county authority overview and scrutiny committees must have a chair who is either an “independent person” or an “appropriate person” – both terms are defined in legislation.
 7. Combined authorities and combined county authorities may have directly elected mayors and their constituent council members are elected members of those councils appointed to the authority.
 8. See Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999.
 9. Section 9FB of the Local Government Act 2000; article 9 of the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017.
 10. See, for example, regulation 11 of the Local Authorities (Committee System) (England) Regulations 2012 (S.I. 2012/1020) and article 4 of the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017 (S.I. 2017/68).
 11. “Appropriate person” is defined at para 3(5) of schedule 1 to the 2023 Act and art.5(6) of S.I. 2017/68 for combined county authorities and at para 3(5) of schedule 5A to the 2009 Act and art.5(6) of S.I. 2017/68 for combined authorities. “Independent person” is defined at art.5(2) of S.I. 2017/68 for both combined authorities and combined county authorities.
 12. Section 9FA(3) of the Local Government Act 2000.
 13. Paragraph 2(3) of Schedule 5A to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and paragraph 2(3) of Schedule 1 to the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.
 14. A definition of ‘relative’ can be found at section 28(10) of the Localism Act 2011 and article 2(2) of The Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017.

15. See article 5(2) of the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017 (S.I. 2017/68).
16. Article 5(6) of the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017.
17. Section 9FA(4) Local Government Act 2000.
18. Regulation 17 - Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012; article 10 Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017.
19. Regulation 17(4) – Local Government (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012; article 10(4) Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017.
20. Regulation 17(2) – Local Government (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012; article 10(2) Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017.
21. Section 9FA(8) of the Local Government Act 2000; paragraph 2(6) of Schedule 5A to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009; paragraph 2(6) of Schedule 1 to the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.
22. Section 9FA(9) of the Local Government Act 2000; paragraph 2(7) of Schedule 5A to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009; paragraph 2(7) of Schedule 1 to the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.
23. Authorities should ensure they have appropriate arrangements in place to ensure the effective democratic scrutiny of Local Enterprise Partnerships' investment decisions.

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📌 Visit our **devolution and LGR hub** for the latest information, support and resources (<https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/devolution/devolution-and-lg-reorganisation-hub>)



A councillor's workbook on scrutiny

This workbook has been designed to provide councillors with insights and information on the 'overview and scrutiny' function of councils to support them in their role as councillor.

Councillor development

26 Sep 2023

Scrutiny in government

Introduction

The Local Government Act (2000) introduced a new political governance system for councils in England and Wales, requiring them to have a separate 'executive' in the form of a leader, or elected mayor, and cabinet. To provide a counterweight to this, the Act also introduced the concept of 'overview and scrutiny,' whereby every council with an executive governance structure is required to have an overview and scrutiny committee. This enables the rest of the council to scrutinise the decisions and policies of the executive, issuing reports and recommendations informed by evidence and understanding of the needs of local communities.

Then, the Localism Act (2011) gave councils the option of converting to a committee system form of governance. Councils that have chosen this option are not required to have a separate overview and scrutiny committee, although they may choose to do so. It is still expected that

scrutiny will take place within committees to identify where improvements need to be made, and arrangements for scrutiny of community safety partnerships and health are still required.

This has been supplemented by **statutory guidance on overview and scrutiny (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overview-and-scrutiny-statutory-guidance-for-councils-and-combined-authorities>)**, which is intended to ensure that local authorities are aware of the purpose of overview and scrutiny and how to conduct it effectively. Section 1 of the guidance includes a number of policies and practices authorities should adopt or should consider adopting when deciding how to conduct their overview and scrutiny functions.

Whichever governance system a council operates, scrutiny is an essential part of ensuring that local government remains transparent, accountable, and open—resulting in improved public policies, services and outcomes.

As a councillor, you have been elected by your local community because they believe that you will represent them, and ensure that the council provides the services they need, to the standard they expect. One of your primary roles in overview and scrutiny is providing constructive challenge to achieve better outcomes for residents. Scrutiny achieves this by questioning cabinet or committee members, officers, and other council partners to gain further knowledge around an issue and make effective, evidenced-based recommendations.

Your role also provides an important opportunity for all councillors to be involved in policy development as part of the ‘overview’ aspect of overview and scrutiny and to enable councillors to ensure the interests of their communities are considered.

Whether or not you are directly involved in the scrutiny function, it is important that you understand how scrutiny works and the benefits that it can bring. This workbook will:

- explain what scrutiny is and how it works in practice.
- describe the scrutiny review process.
- look at who is involved in scrutiny.
- give an overview of useful skills for carrying out scrutiny.

Throughout this workbook you will encounter different types of information, and suggested actions, indicated by the symbols shown below:



Guidance

– this icon indicates guidance such as definitions, quotations and research



Challenges

– this icon indicates questions asking you to reflect on your role or approach



Case studies

– this icon indicates examples of approaches used in different settings



Hints and tips

– this icon indicates best practice advice



Useful links

– this icon indicates sources of additional information

Powers of scrutiny

The principal power of a scrutiny committee is to influence the policies and decisions made by the council and other organisations involved in delivering public services. The scrutiny committee gathers evidence on issues affecting local people and makes recommendations based on its findings.

Scrutiny has statutory powers to scrutinise decisions the executive is planning to take, those it is planning to implement, and those that have already been taken / implemented.

When undertaking scrutiny, it is important to think about not only scrutiny's legal powers but also about how to build a positive working relationship with those who are the subject of scrutiny's recommendations. This ensures a much higher chance of scrutiny's recommendations being implemented.

Generally, a scrutiny committee has the legal power to require that:

- information relating to business transacted at decision-making meetings, individual councillor decisions, or decisions delegated to officers under executive arrangements, is made available in the form of written reports to enable their scrutiny, and to require attendance by relevant officers and cabinet members at committee meetings
- the cabinet responds to its recommendations within a set timeframe.

Scrutiny also has powers relating to certain external partners.

Details of several topic-specific guides which might be of relevance to you in your role are listed at the end of this workbook.

More information can be found on the **Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) website** (<https://www.cfgs.org.uk/publication-category/practical-guidance/>).

Effective scrutiny

For scrutiny to be effective it needs to act and be seen as a 'critical friend,' identifying where decisions could be improved and how to prevent mistakes being made or repeated. Scrutiny is, by its nature, political; that is, it is driven by politicians whose insights are a fundamental part of scrutiny's work to review decisions which are themselves political and may be politically contentious. However, the focus should be on forward thinking and enabling positive outcomes, rather than apportioning blame and focusing on the negatives or political point-scoring. The challenge for you, as a scrutiny councillor, is to use your political skills and understanding of the needs of local people to shape the discussions, while not acting in a party-political manner or using the discussions to further party-political objectives.

More information can be found in the **Good Scrutiny Guide** (<https://www.cfgs.org.uk/?publication=the-good-scrutiny-guide>) published by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.

Keeping your focus on this will help to foster positive and constructive relationships between scrutiny, the executive and officers.

Successful scrutiny relies on the following conditions:

- while everyone in a council has a role to play in creating an environment conducive to effective scrutiny, the process should be led and owned by councillors.



Establishing a strong organisational culture

(extracted from the statutory guidance on overview and scrutiny in local and combined authorities, paragraphs 11a, b, c, d, j)

Local and combined authorities can establish a strong organisational culture by:

- recognising scrutiny's legal and democratic legitimacy
- ensuring that all councillors and officers recognise and appreciate the importance and legitimacy the scrutiny function is afforded by the law – it was created to act as a check and balance on the executive and is a statutory requirement for all authorities operating executive arrangements and for combined authorities.

Councillors have a unique legitimacy derived from their being democratically elected. The insights that they can bring by having this close connection to local people are part of what gives scrutiny its value. These insights include:

- identifying a clear role and focus
- local and combined authorities should take steps to ensure scrutiny has a clear role and focus within the organisation,

that is, a niche within which it can clearly demonstrate it adds value – therefore, prioritisation is necessary to ensure the scrutiny function concentrates on delivering work that is of genuine value and relevance to the work of the wider organisation – this is one of the most challenging parts of scrutiny, and a critical element to get right if it is to be recognised as a strategic function of the local or combined authority

- local and combined authorities should ensure a clear division of responsibilities between the scrutiny function and the audit function – while it is appropriate for scrutiny to pay due regard to the authority’s financial position, this will need to happen in the context of the formal audit role – the authority’s Section 151 officer should advise scrutiny on how to manage this dynamic
- while scrutiny has no role in the investigation or oversight of the authority’s whistleblowing arrangements, the findings of independent whistleblowing investigations might be of interest to scrutiny committees as they consider their wider implications– councillors should always follow their local or combined authority’s constitution and associated monitoring officers’ directions on the matter (see further guidance on whistleblowing)
- ensuring early and regular engagement between the executive and scrutiny
- local and combined authorities should ensure early and regular discussions take place between scrutiny and the executive, especially regarding the latter’s future work programme
- local and combined authorities should, though, be mindful of their distinct roles, in particular:
 - the executive should not try to exercise control over the work of the scrutiny committee – this could be direct, for example, by purporting to ‘order’ scrutiny to look at, or not look at, certain issues, or indirect, for

example, through the use of the whip or as a tool of political patronage, and the committee itself should remember its statutory purpose when carrying out its work— all councillors and officers should consider the role the scrutiny committee plays to be that of a ‘critical friend’ not a de facto ‘opposition’ –scrutiny chairs have a particular role to play in establishing the profile and nature of their committee (**see chapter 4**)

- the chair of the scrutiny committee should determine the nature and extent of an executive member’s participation in a scrutiny committee meeting, and in any informal scrutiny task group meeting
- managing disagreement
- effective scrutiny involves looking at issues that can be politically contentious – it is, therefore, inevitable that, at times, an executive will disagree with the findings or recommendations of a scrutiny committee
- it is the job of both the executive and scrutiny to work together to reduce the risk of this happening, and local and combined authorities should take steps to predict, identify and act on disagreement
- ensuring scrutiny members are supported in having an independent mindset
- formal committee meetings provide a vital opportunity for scrutiny members to question the executive and officers. Inevitably, some committee members will come from the same political party as a member they are scrutinising and might well have a long-standing personal, or familial, relationship with them
- scrutiny members should bear in mind, however, that adopting an independent mind-set is fundamental to carrying out their work effectively— in practice, this is likely to require scrutiny chairs working proactively to identify any potentially contentious issues and plan how to manage them.

- There is accompanying guidance in the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's publication: **Overview and scrutiny in combined authorities – a plain English guide** (<https://www.cfgs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CfGS-CA-Scrutiny-Guidance-2nd-Edition-SINGLE-PAGES.pdf>).

In addition, the process of scrutiny can be aided by:

Effective work programming

Work programming is the planning stage of scrutiny, where subjects for detailed consideration are identified. It is most effective when there are clear criteria for the selection of subjects and agenda items. This is covered in more detail later in the workbook.

Positive attitude of the council executive and council officers

Scrutiny works well when the council's executive and officers view it in a positive light and as an opportunity to improve council performance. Scrutiny's effectiveness will be reduced if the executive experiences it as aggressively critical, which will lead to defensive behaviour and make it difficult for scrutiny to influence change.

Similarly, scrutiny will be more effective where council officers provide information and assistance proactively and when required.



What is effective scrutiny?

Fundamentally, all scrutiny work must add value— it must make a positive contribution to the lives of local people and scrutiny committee members must be very clear about how their work will do this. When scrutiny is conducted properly it is constructive and focuses on the priorities of local people, which feeds into the priorities of the council and its partners.

Good scrutiny:

- tackles priority issues of direct relevance to local people
- tackles issues where, through the unique perspective of councillors, it can add the most value.
- is informed by high quality evidence.
- is about talking to a wide range of people, drawing them together and building consensus.
- is about challenging the accepted ways of doing things and acting as a champion for developing a culture of improvement in the local area.

Adding value

The purpose of scrutiny is to improve the lives of local people through improved public services. It is important to be able to demonstrate that scrutiny work adds value and makes a difference to local people.

A scrutiny review is successful if it fulfils one or more of the following conditions:

- it meets the objectives set out by the scrutiny committee.
- feedback from the public shows that they think there has been the service improvement they desired.
- the work has helped to achieve corporate or partnership priorities.
- there is a return on investment, demonstrating scrutiny's impact and outcomes in financial terms.

The impact scrutiny has can be measured in two ways:

- high-quality recommendations are accepted and implemented by the executive
- understanding how those recommendations lead to positive outcomes for local people.



The COVID Step Back Review

Councillor David Andrews – Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny, Hertfordshire County Council

The COVID Step Back Review was an opportunity to scrutinise Hertfordshire's response to the pandemic. The prospect of trying to unpick one of the most impactful events in modern history provided several challenges, with the most obvious being scale. We based our approach to this scrutiny on a Centre for Governance and Scrutiny webinar hosted in May 2020 which advised scrutineers to concentrate on a key service or service to ensure much more focus and stronger recommendations.

My vice chairmen and I agreed to narrow our focus to examine how the county council's services have responded to COVID-19, specifically adult care services and the council's resources directorate which includes both finance and communications.

Our key lines of enquiry for this scrutiny were to identify lessons learned and establish how innovations developed as part of the council's response to the pandemic can be adapted to improve services. We conducted the review which enabled our voluntary sector colleagues to participate fully. It also meant we could hear from our director of public health around his other pressing commitments.

Being able to hold these meetings throughout the pandemic has ensured that the quality of our scrutiny has not suffered despite the significant changes to our working practices.

Over a one-day scrutiny, five county councillors heard evidence from officers from local authorities, the chair of the Community Reassurance Cell of the Local Resilience Forum and chief executives from community and voluntary sector organisations. The latter had been instrumental in ensuring services were maintained to our most vulnerable residents. One commented:

“It was an honour to be asked to present evidence to this important review and to contribute to the report the impact that Hertfordshire charities made working together as part of Operation Sustain should not be underestimated.” Simon Aulton, Chief Executive Officer – Community Action Dacorum

Councillors recognised that services and staff continued to work in challenging circumstances. They were particularly impressed with the quality of partnership working and identified some notable innovations. Members commended that the approach taken by the authority in its work with the voluntary and community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector was based on trust and mutual respect and was instrumental in maintaining vital services to our most vulnerable residents.

Councillors were also impressed by the way officers redesigned services and how approaches were modified in real time. What I noted most during the review were the formidable challenges associated with ensuring the wellbeing of our most vulnerable residents. I was impressed with the efforts, pace and adaptability shown by all our witnesses.

Officers of local authorities and the NHS have worked determinedly to safeguard residents and the enormous effort and achievements of the voluntary sector was impressive to hear.

The review made five recommendations all of which are being implemented by the authority and its partners:

- that the authority maintains and builds on existing and new partnerships for agile working and clear evidence of this is shared at Impact of Scrutiny Advisory Committee
- that adult care services, children’s services and public health look at creating opportunities for greater joint working with the community and voluntary sector; in addition, adult care services, children’s services and public health review existing funding allocation processes to engender co-operation rather than competition in the

voluntary and community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector

- that the authority revisits its resilience planning in light of the pandemic to prepare for future sustained emergencies and clear evidence of this is shared at Impact of Scrutiny Advisory Committee (ISAC)
- that the council identifies how the innovative and more agile practices developed during the pandemic can be built into Shaping Our Future and specific service initiatives
- that Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) ensures that the Communication Strategy maintains multiple approaches to reach all residents so that no group is left behind or marginalised.

Evidence was presented at the Impact of Scrutiny Advisory Committee (ISAC) six months after the review.

Further reading: [Scrutiny frontiers 2020/21 – experiences from the scrutiny frontline | Centre for Governance and Scrutiny \(CfGS\)](https://www.cfgs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CfGS-Scrutiny-Frontiers-2021-v2-SINGLE-PAGES-002-1.pdf) (<https://www.cfgs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CfGS-Scrutiny-Frontiers-2021-v2-SINGLE-PAGES-002-1.pdf>)



Being cost-effective

Scrutiny committees need to work effectively with limited resources. They can do this by:

carrying out work more efficiently – for example, holding single-topic committee meetings, so that a group of councillors can speak to a large number of witnesses in a round-table format

targeted and effective work programming – having processes in place to plan and prioritise effectively so that scrutiny’s work adds value– this will better enable resources to be planned and used more cost-effectively and to time reviews to be to achieve greatest impact

providing officer support more efficiently – for example, by thinking more carefully about what support scrutiny committee members want and need from officers and what skillsets officers have and require

circulating information – providing information to councillors prior to meetings – councillors and officers can work together to limit the volume of material councillors are sent to material that is relevant and useful to them.

Work programming

The role of scrutiny is to achieve positive outcomes for local people by undertaking a thorough, targeted examination of the council’s service provision and procedures. However, it is not possible to examine every service in detail, so it is important for the scrutiny committee to prioritise and plan its workload. Some councils do this at the beginning of each year, and some do it on an ongoing basis.

Planned scrutiny

Work programming is the process for determining which topics scrutiny will look at over the coming year, either at committee meetings or in task and finish groups. This involves evaluating several factors to decide which topics are to be investigated and when. The process will typically involve long-listing and then shortlisting topics before making a final decision.

Responsive scrutiny

The priorities for scrutiny need to be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis. This makes sure scrutiny can be flexible and responsive to high priority issues or policy changes that occur throughout the year.



The scrutiny topic selection process

Each council has its own method for selecting topics for scrutiny; in some councils there may be a very structured selection process, while in others it may be more informal. Whatever level of detail is involved, the general process should include the following activities.

Identify issues

You can identify potential issues by:

- consulting with a range of stakeholders, both internal and external to the council – this would include all elected members and senior officers, as well as relevant outside bodies
- looking at corporate priorities, business plans and the forward plan of the council (and the council's neighbouring councils)
- considering events and decisions in the council's calendar that could require an input from scrutiny, such as setting budgets.
- reviewing council performance information and identifying any follow-up work required to previous scrutiny work.
- conducting work to engage with local people, for example, through surgeries, local media, opinion surveys and online forums.

Prioritise topics

Identify and prioritise potential scrutiny topics, considering the resources they would require and the level of impact they could achieve.

Plan scrutiny work

Decide which scrutiny topics to review and include them in the work programme for consideration and updating at each scrutiny meeting.

Review and evaluate

Review progress and evaluate outcomes to demonstrate the value added by scrutiny.



Criteria for prioritising scrutiny topics

The following criteria provide a useful guide for identifying which topics are suitable for scrutiny to review, and prioritising them.

Topics are suitable for scrutiny when:

- scrutiny could have an impact and add value
- the topic is of high local importance and reflects the concerns of local people
- the resources are available that would be required to conduct the review, in terms of manpower and budget
- it avoids work duplication elsewhere
- the issue is one that the committee can realistically influence
- the issue is related to an area where the council, or one of its partners, is not performing well
- the issue is relevant to all or large parts of the local area
- the review would be in the council's interests.

Topics are not suitable for scrutiny when:

- the issue is already being addressed elsewhere and change is imminent
- the topic would be better addressed elsewhere (and will be referred there)

- scrutiny involvement would have limited or no impact upon outcomes
- the topic may be 'sub judice' or prejudicial to the council's interest
- the topic is too broad to make a review realistic
- they do not relate to executive matters, for example, planning or licensing decisions
- new legislation or guidance relating to the topic is expected within the next year
- the topic area is currently subject to inspection or has recently undergone substantial change.

Defining scrutiny topics

For every item on the work programme / new referral, answers to the following questions should be made clear:

- What is the issue / activity / project under consideration?
- What is scrutiny being asked to do?
- What are the reasons for / expected benefits of involving scrutiny in the matter?
- Is there a specific deadline for the piece of work?

Challenge 1 – Prioritising topics

Consider the issues that are important to the people you represent in your ward.

List the five issues you think are the most important, then put them in order of priority; make a note of your reasoning.

Think about how you would translate these into strategic issues which might be appropriate for scrutiny. Here is an example:

The issue

Several residents have been complaining that the trees in the local area are not being pruned regularly enough, becoming a hazard, and presenting a potential danger to the public. Complaints include difficulty in walking on the pavement, damage to tall vehicles, trip hazards from tree roots and gardens being overshadowed by trees.

Strategic considerations

The council needs to consider how it allocates its environmental services' resources so that it can be efficient while also meeting the needs of residents.

It can look at:

- how services are procured, commissioned, and contracted
- which are the most hazardous streets and where the biggest improvements can be made
- prioritising and planning a programme of work for tree pruning.

Having done so, consider how you would translate this into the scope for a scrutiny committee review.

How scrutiny works

Committees usually conduct the ongoing formal business of scrutiny. Scrutiny work is also conducted in smaller, informal 'task and finish' groups, which are not covered in legislation. These are time-limited bodies established by scrutiny committees to gather evidence and produce recommendations on a specific subject.

The overview and scrutiny committee

Councils that operate under executive governance arrangements are required by law to have an overview and scrutiny committee. This must be composed to reflect the political proportions of the council as a whole.

Councils using a committee system of governance are not required by law to create an overview and scrutiny committee, but they may do so if they wish. However, it is a requirement that they make arrangements for scrutiny of health (where applicable) and community safety partnerships.

Members of the council's executive **may not** sit on the overview and scrutiny committee; where there are deputy or assistant cabinet members, they may sit on scrutiny committees, since the executive's decision-making powers cannot be delegated to them. However, to avoid a conflict of interests it is good practice for assistants to be assigned to committees that do not reflect their portfolios.

Challenge 2 – Scrutiny in your council

There is no prescribed structure for implementing scrutiny in a council – there may be one overview and scrutiny committee, or several committees and sub-committees. Find out how scrutiny is implemented in your council.

Scrutiny meetings

Scrutiny committee meetings are formal and public. The council's constitution must have rules of procedure for overview and scrutiny committees. They provide a forum where councillors can:

- discuss written information they have received, from the council and external bodies.
- hear evidence from witnesses, which could include other councillors, council officers, experts, representatives from other organisations and members of the public
- question witnesses to gain a better understanding of the issues.

- draw conclusions from their discussions and the evidence examined, in the form of an outcome.

The purpose of scrutiny is to provide recommendations for improvement, so it is important, when planning the meeting agenda, to be clear what the outcome of the meeting should be.

Task and finish groups

Task and finish groups are informal, usually small and time-limited bodies comprised of councillors and, often, co-optees brought in from outside the council for their specific skills and experiences. A parent committee establishes them to undertake a discrete piece of scrutiny work, and report back to that committee with their findings and recommendations.

Most councils make provision for task and finish groups in their constitution. The following rules of thumb have been developed by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS):

- membership should be defined and agreed by the group's parent committee.
- the parent committee should also decide on who should chair.
- while party whips may nominate other councillors to sit on groups, the ultimate decision rests with the committee and the committee chair.
- as far as possible, membership should loosely reflect the political proportionality of the authority (the only caveat being that attempts are usually made to involve smaller parties where they otherwise would not be entitled to a seat)
- members of the group (and even the chair) need not be drawn exclusively from the group's parent committee – any councillor can be nominated to participate.
- decision-making in the group (i.e., deciding on the wording of a final report and deciding on recommendations) should be undertaken through consensus rather than through a vote, given the fact that the membership may not directly reflect political proportionality.

In the interests of transparency and accountability, it is recommended that task and finish groups make minutes of their meetings and evidence-gathering sessions accessible to the public.

Further reading: [The Good Scrutiny Guide \(https://www.cfgs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CfPS-Good-Scrutiny-Guide-v4-WEB-SINGLE-PAGES.pdf\)](https://www.cfgs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CfPS-Good-Scrutiny-Guide-v4-WEB-SINGLE-PAGES.pdf) (section 4.2.2.2 | Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS))



Effective scrutiny meetings

The role of the committee chair is critical in making sure the committee works as a team and fully understands the issues under discussion in scrutiny meetings. The chair takes an active role in leading and directing the discussion and managing any disagreement between committee members. This is covered in more detail later in the workbook.

There are several ways that scrutiny meetings can be made more effective, although a council's ability to do all of these will be limited by the resources it has available.

Agenda

Have clear criteria for assessing agenda items so that items appear on the agenda only where there is value to be added from their discussion rather than inclusion of 'for information' papers.

Limit the number of agenda items to help keep meetings focused and easy to manage. Evidence from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) annual survey suggests that any more than three substantive items per meeting is detrimental to a meeting's effectiveness.

Preparation

Prioritise and plan any information you need to prepare or read before meetings—this is essential so that you can participate fully

in the discussion.

Manage agendas effectively and provide a short briefing with key sources of corporate information prior to meetings– this allows for more time to be spent on analysis and discussion.

Pre-meeting

Hold a pre-meeting to plan questions–this can help to ensure that meetings are more effective and use time well.

Objectives

Have clearly defined and agreed objectives and outcomes for the meeting –this means that:

- councillors can work towards a common target in their questioning and witnesses can be fully prepared
- discussions can be easily summarised at the end of the meeting and in the minutes, with a focus on actions, post-meeting communication and follow-up work
- findings and conclusions can be more easily converted into clear, concrete recommendations at the meeting.

Outcomes

Clarifying outcomes at the end of the meeting makes sure that agenda items are concluded with certainty and there are no ‘repeat items’ at the next meeting.

It also makes it possible to monitor progress on outcomes and commitments at the following meeting.



Addressing local inequalities

**Councillor Roisin Cavanagh – Chair of the
Economic Inequalities Working Party and Place
Scrutiny Board, Calderdale Council**

In Calderdale, we have increasingly tried to make sure that our scrutiny work is informed by different people and organisations; so, recently we have heard from the National Farmers Union, Calderdale's Youth Council, and a peer of the realm, amongst many others.

But the most important people for us to listen to are the people we serve – Calderdale residents. So, when we saw local and national evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted in a very unequal way, we decided to listen to what local people had to tell us about their experiences. I chaired a cross-party group of four councillors to discover the Calderdale experience.

Our primary aim was to listen to young people, women, disabled people, people from minority communities and people on low incomes or in insecure employment to understand their lived experience during the pandemic, focusing on the impact on their economic situation. Our aim was to feed into the council's recovery plan by preparing and amplifying the voices of people who might not normally be heard. We felt it important that – as elected representatives – we were the ones who should listen to what people had to tell us.

We arranged 17 focus groups where we talked with small groups who had direct experience themselves or were frontline workers providing services to the people we identified. We supplemented the rich data from the focus groups using SurveyMonkey to ask Calderdale residents 25 questions about how the pandemic impacted their; education, training, and employment; overall financial stability; experiences of accessing financial support; as well as anything else they wanted to tell us. We expected to get around 50 responses but were blown away to get over 350 replies. All our work has been done under the current restrictions through Zoom or other electronic means.

Here are a few things people said.

“We are trying to live more frugally, but despite efforts, the fact that I had to shield and have online deliveries has pushed up even basic shopping bills by approximately £30 a week.”

“I become anxious when technology goes wrong, or I can’t understand it. I put off using the food banks for ages but eventually just had to ask for help. Calder Community Cares was amazing when I spoke to them– very helpful caring and the food we receive has been good.”

“The pandemic has cut our household income in half. My boyfriend and I moved back in with his parents as he lost his job, and we could no longer make ends meet. “

We concluded that:

- COVID-19 has exacerbated existing inequalities and created new challenges for those already struggling and new issues for certain groups such as young people
- intersectionality means some vulnerable groups, particularly BAME people and people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds are facing a double disadvantage around their financial stability
- the digital divide has demonstrated that increasing digital literacy and access to equipment and data should be considered as important as providing basic utilities, essential for modern life in 2021
- disabled people and families of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have experienced increasing challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic
- the ability for women from different backgrounds to work, earn more money and access career progression has been detrimentally impacted through ‘lockdown’ where they have provided most of the home schooling and caring work
- it is essential support is provided for parts of the community hardest hit as part of our recovery plan.

What did we learn from our approach?

- Speaking directly to people in the community, and those working in the voluntary, community and social enterprise and public sectors, provides a good picture of the impact of COVID-19 on communities from different perspectives.
- People in communities are willing to speak about their experience if they feel it makes a difference, in particular informing the policies and practice of the council.
- Having a project plan, and a good working relationship and ongoing community between scrutiny officers and councillors leads to 'good work.'

Co-optees

Council scrutiny functions have the opportunity to co-opt people from outside the council to sit either on scrutiny committees (as voting or non-voting co-optees) or on task and finish groups, to bring technical expertise / knowledge or personal insights relevant to the matter scrutinised.

The formal appointment of a co-optee onto an overview and scrutiny committee is provided for in the Local Government Act (2000). Task and finish groups may co-opt group members without restriction.

For councils responsible for education functions, there is a requirement for certain co-optees to be appointed to the relevant committee. The provisions in the 1996 Act apply to overview and scrutiny committees by virtue of Schedule 1 of the 2000 Act.

For most councils, this will be two diocesan representatives (one Church of England, one Catholic) and two parent governor representatives (one primary, one secondary, and both from maintained schools). Such co-optees have voting rights and are treated as opposition councillors for the purposes of political proportionality (in order to assure that the largest party retains an absolute majority at committee).

For task and finish groups, the parent committee chooses co-optees at the scoping stage.

Combined authorities

The Cities and Local Government Devolution Act (2016) requires that all combined authorities in England have their own overview and scrutiny committee.

Combined authorities have a significant part to play in big decisions around economic development, skills, and transport, as well as other areas such as health and social care. The scope and nature of these decisions mean that having robust scrutiny arrangements in place is particularly important.

In the English Devolution Accountability Framework, Government has set out its intention to develop a protocol on the relationship between the mayor / directly-elected leader, the institution, and its scrutiny function.

Further reading: [English Devolution Accountability Framework \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-accountability-framework\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-accountability-framework) | GOV.UK

The large areas covered by combined authorities means that there will be logistical difficulties in relation to getting councillors together for overview and scrutiny meetings. These meetings are additional to those held in individual local councils, so there will be an additional workload for some councillors too. This means that it is vital for combined authority overview and scrutiny committees to be extremely focused and targeted in their work.

In practice, combined authority overview and scrutiny committees work similarly to joint committees (see below) although some of the legal and practical issues are slightly different.

Further reading: [Overview and scrutiny in combined authorities – a plain English guide \(https://www.cfgs.org.uk/?publication=overview-and-scrutiny-in-combined-authorities-a-plain-english-guide\)](https://www.cfgs.org.uk/?publication=overview-and-scrutiny-in-combined-authorities-a-plain-english-guide)
Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS)

Scrutiny of services beyond the council

Many services affecting residents are delivered by partnerships or bodies beyond the boundaries of the local authority. Effective scrutiny of these services will require work with people from other bodies. This partnership-working is discussed later in this workbook.

Joint committees are committees that have representatives from two or more local authorities. In particular, they have an important role to play in health scrutiny.

Several considerations need to be considered for a joint scrutiny committee to work effectively:

- **logistics** – finding mutually convenient venues to ensure no one councillor or local authority loses out
- **work objectives** – gaining broad agreement on the committee's aims and objectives
- **political and personal opinions** – bringing together a larger number of people to sit on a committee makes it harder to find consensus and manage differences of opinion.

Scrutiny of partnership arrangements can also take place through informal joint work and information-sharing.

The scrutiny review process

Scrutiny reviews can take place before or after a decision has been made.



The scrutiny review process

Each council has its own process for conducting a scrutiny review, which will be influenced in part by the resources it has available. Here is a generic scrutiny review process.

Scope the review

A good scope will include:

- the topic of the review, and an explanation for why the topic is being framed in the way that it is
- the objectives of the review and its expected impacts and outcomes
- the strategic context
- the overall method (and why it's the right method for this topic currently)
- the key individuals and groups involved, and how they will be involved
- other key sources of research which will be used, how they will be analysed, by whom and when
- the timescale for the review – when meetings will happen, where, and who will be involved
- a communications plan relating to all the above
- a statement of the resources which will be necessary to deliver the above.

Gather evidence

To gather evidence well:

- undertake consultation through public meetings, surveys, workshops and focus groups
- conduct site visits
- source data and reports
- interview experts and witnesses
- collaborate with officers and councillors to research issues.

Evaluate evidence

To evaluate the evidence, consider all the evidence in the context of the scope of the review.

Further reading: **The Good Scrutiny Guide** (<https://www.cfgs.org.uk/?publication=the-good-scrutiny-guide>) (Section 4.2.1)
|Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS)

Monitor

To monitor effectively:

- track progress of the changes being implemented
- evaluate and assess impact
- conduct further investigation and make additional recommendations if necessary.

Pre-decision scrutiny

Pre-decision scrutiny is planned during the work programming activity and could take place either immediately before, or a more significant amount of time before, a decision is made.

By challenging assumptions and assessing what risks might arise from the implementation of a decision, scrutiny provides the opportunity to influence policy and improve decisions and the design of solutions before they are finalised.

Councils are required to give at least 28 days' notice of a key decision through a forward plan, so this is a useful scrutiny tool for identifying pre-decision topics and should be a standing agenda item for the overview and scrutiny committee. The council's corporate plan can also be useful to identify work planned over the longer term which may benefit from scrutiny.

Pre-decision scrutiny that is conducted immediately before a decision is made will have obvious time limitations, so it is best focused on key questions around the decisions, implementation, risks and measures of success.

Scrutiny carried out several months before a decision is made will have more time and resources with which to delve into the fundamentals of the decision and propose alternative options. Pre-decision scrutiny can help the decision-making process by:

- **challenging assumptions and making evidence-gathering more robust** – for example, scrutiny can gather evidence and look at projections relating to the impact of the decision – financial,

social, economic, environmental – and consider whether those projections and assumptions are objectively justified

- **developing realistic plans and targets** – scrutiny can help to develop challenging but realistic targets that will be impartial and focused on outcomes rather than outputs
- **securing ownership and buy-in to the final decision** – engaging with scrutiny will help the executive to understand the expectations of the wider group of elected councillors and, by extension, the expectations of residents
- **engaging with and satisfying the public** – scrutiny can help the council to understand local needs, through public engagement led by councillors in their community leadership role.

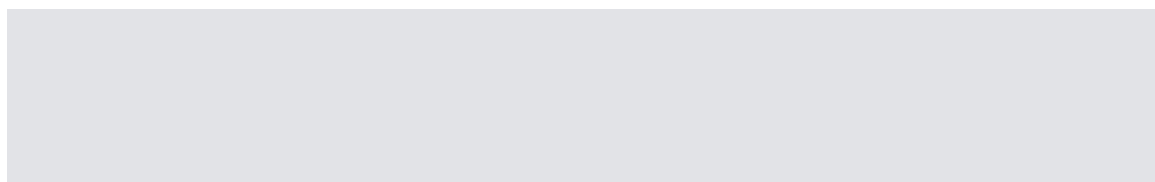
Post-decision scrutiny and call-in

Post-decision scrutiny takes place in response to decisions that have already been made.

For decisions that have been made but not implemented, scrutiny has the power to 'call in' the decision and, having done so, may require the executive to reconsider the decision. This applies to 'key decisions,' which are predominantly decisions made by the executive, either as individuals or as a whole. Councils set their own definition of what is a key decision within the parameters set by national legislation: you can find your council's definition within its constitution. However, post-scrutiny could also be monitoring the effectiveness of a policy / decision that has been implemented, 12 months later.

'Call-in' provides an opportunity for challenge as a long stop, when other attempts to influence or challenge a decision have failed.

It is a tool that should be used in exceptional circumstances and is only one of a number of tools at scrutiny's disposal (such as pre-decision scrutiny) to influence decision-making. Each council will have its own rules, set out in its constitution, for how call-in operates.



Challenge 3 – The 'call-in' process at your council

The 'call-in' process, and the approach to managing call-in meetings, differs from council to council.

Look at the relevant part of your council's constitution and make a note here about how your council manages call-in.

Gathering evidence

There are several methods for using meetings to gather evidence, including scrutiny challenge panels (evidence gathering over one day), light touch reviews (a short series of meetings on a narrow topic) or full-length reviews (in-depth work over a period of months). Standing panels can be used to oversee an ongoing council process.

The important thing is to gather relevant information from both internal and external stakeholders such as members of the public so that you have all the available information when making decisions. This could include undertaking scrutiny days away from council premises, in a community venue. Careful consideration should be given to how best to encourage and enable members of the public and other stakeholders to contribute.

Sources of information

The information gathered during a scrutiny review, and where to find it, will depend on the topic under review. In the interests of efficiency, scrutiny councillors have a responsibility to actively seek out information for themselves, so, it is important that you are aware of what information is available and how to access it. Here are some examples of information that could be useful.

Information on performance, finance, and risk

Information on performance, finance, and risk can be found in:

- quarterly performance and finance reports
- programme and project management information
- risk registers

- complaints logs
- reports
- ombudsman reports
- internal reviews and action plans.

Strategic information

Strategic information can be found in:

- council service plans and strategies
- budget and policy frameworks
- external inspection reports
- corporate peer challenge reports and action plans
- departmental plans and strategies
- partnership plans and strategies
- cross-departmental strategies
- improvement plans
- information from benchmarking clubs.

Feedback

Feedback can be obtained from:

- consultations and residents' panels
- frontline staff.

Challenge 4 – Where to find information.

You will have direct access to much of the information you need through your council's website or internal computer systems. There is a benefit to reviewing raw data rather than a report prepared by an officer, because it allows you to use your unique perspective as an elected representative, with detailed knowledge of your ward, to make your own links and connections between performance issues.

Do you know where to find management information for your council?

Make a note of where your council makes this kind of information available.

Using evidence effectively

Using evidence effectively means looking at it alongside other sources of data, to see what themes emerge and whether different evidence sources disagree about services being provided on the ground. This process is called triangulation.

For example, customer complaints data and resident feedback can be compared with performance information, finance information and risk registers, to take a comprehensive view of the performance of a given service. While performance information may suggest that all targets are being met, the service may be overspending, and complaints data may demonstrate that the public are unhappy with the level of service being provided – an issue which has not been identified in the risk register as needing action. Making connections between information in this way allows judgements to be made about difficulties which can help to frame and focus solutions in a way that will be useful to officers delivering the service on the ground.

This should not prove particularly complex but there are several issues to consider in doing so:

- **how will different sources of evidence be weighed?** – not all evidence and information are of equal value – complex, quasi-scientific weighing exercises are not required, but having a general sense of what should be afforded more attention, and less, is necessary
- **how much evidence is needed in order to produce an accurate picture?**—there maybe a tendency to seek out increased information to establish the most 'comprehensive' picture possible, but this may be resource intensive, add little to the evidence gathering process and delay the achievement of improved outcomes – officers and councillors should discuss between them the most appropriate balance.

Further reading: The Good Scrutiny Guide (<https://www.cfgs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CfPS-Good-Scrutiny-Guide-v4-WEB-SINGLE-PAGES.pdf>) (Sections 4.1.3 and 4.1.4) | Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS)

Making a recommendation

Recommendations are the way that scrutiny can have an impact. Making good recommendations, and monitoring them, makes it more likely that scrutiny's work will add value.

A good recommendation is:

- specific about the change recommended
- evidence-based and realistic
- focused on measurable outcomes
- addressed to a specific person or group
- realistic about financing requirements
- developed in partnership with the council's executive, officers and partners.

The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations (2012) require that the executive responds to recommendations within two months of them being made. If recommendations are made to a named partner organisation, however, they do not generally have a responsibility to formally respond, although they do have a responsibility to 'have regard to' the recommendations.

The response to a recommendation from a decision-maker should consist of:

- a clear commitment to delivering the measure within the timescale set out
- a commitment to be held to account on that delivery in six months or a year's time
- where it is not proposed that a recommendation be accepted, the provision of detailed, substantive reasons why not.

Scrutiny can help decision-makers to view recommendations in a positive light, and submit acceptable responses, by agreeing with the executive beforehand when and how recommendations will be made,

and what an acceptable response will look like.

Monitoring recommendations

It is scrutiny's responsibility to monitor and evaluate recommendations once they are implemented, even though it is not their responsibility to deliver the changes.

Tracking the progress of recommendations does not require a full scrutiny review, but a simple check that after six or 12 months they are being implemented and the outcomes detailed in the decision-maker's response are being fulfilled. Action can be taken if required; if everything is on track, scrutiny can trust the implementations are being made satisfactorily and move on.

Working with others

The effectiveness of the scrutiny committee relies on it establishing positive relationships with the council's executive, its officers and partner organisations.

The council's executive and officers

The responsibility for scrutiny working well is shared with the council's executive, which has a duty to ensure its councillors do not undermine or denigrate scrutiny.

The Local Government Act (2000) requires the council executive and officers to:

- attend meetings when required to do so – the word 'require' is not defined in the Act, but it can be assumed that it does not confer a choice as to whether or not to attend – the appropriate executive councillor will be held to account – a senior officer may support them, although it is sometimes appropriate for the officer who has the appropriate technical expertise to answer questions
- provide information, where required to do so – again, this must be complied with
- respond to recommendations.

With some planning and consideration, scrutiny can make it easier for the executive and officers to engage with scrutiny; therefore, making it more likely that they will accept and implement recommendations. The scrutiny committee can do this by:

- being clear about why topics have been chosen for scrutiny review and demonstrating, where possible, how they fit with the executive's priorities
- making invitations to scrutiny committee meetings far enough in advance that people are more likely to have availability, informed by a well-planned scrutiny work programme
- being clear about the purpose of committee meetings and why people are being invited to attend
- where possible, sharing scrutiny reports and recommendations in draft form; this makes sure there are no surprises for anyone, and allows the executive to highlight where it feels recommendations may require alteration for practical reasons
- involving the executive and officers in discussion and dialogue as the work programme is put together
- making sure the executive's viewpoint is fully understood and reflected in scrutiny review reports.

Several councils have developed a protocol to manage the scrutiny/executive relationship, in line with a suggestion in the 2019 statutory guidance. The process of discussions to inform the drafting of the protocol can be as valuable as the document itself. More tips on the relationship between scrutiny and the executive can be found in section 2.1.1 of **The Good Scrutiny Guide** (<https://www.cfgs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CfPS-Good-Scrutiny-Guide-v4-WEB-SINGLE-PAGES.pdf>).

Scrutiny officer

The statutory scrutiny officer has the responsibility for promoting the role of overview and scrutiny, supporting overview and scrutiny committees and their members, and providing support and advice to officers and councillors about overview and scrutiny committees.

They will not necessarily have the word 'scrutiny' in their job title; similarly, someone with the job title 'scrutiny officer' will not necessarily be the council's statutory scrutiny officer.

District councils do not have a duty to designate a statutory scrutiny officer.

Scrutiny and partner organisations

Councils often collaborate with partner organisations to deliver services. These could be in the private, public or voluntary sectors and include:

- contractors
- organisations with whom the council has jointly commissioned services
- organisations that the council funds to deliver certain services by means of grant funding or service level agreements
- trading companies.

It is likely that many services a council delivers, and therefore any scrutiny review, will involve a partner organisation in some way. Scrutiny has statutory powers to investigate the work some of a council's partners.

Health

The aim of health scrutiny committees is to ensure that the needs of local people are considered in the commissioning, delivery, and development of health services, and to hold relevant NHS bodies and health service providers to account. They may investigate any health-related issue in their area and have an obligation to invite interested parties when they choose to conduct such investigations.

When they make recommendations to local NHS bodies, scrutiny committees have the right to require a response within 28 days. Scrutiny can conduct investigations on its own initiative, or at the suggestion of the local Healthwatch.

Community safety

Under the Police and Justice Act (2006), a committee of the council designated as a community safety scrutiny committee has the power to

ask local community safety partners for information, request that those partners attend meetings (given reasonable notice) and require that those partners consider recommendations submitted to them.

Flood risk management

Scrutiny committees have a formal role regarding flood risk management, which allows for the review and scrutiny of such functions carried out by upper tier authorities.

Other partners

Scrutiny has some loose legal powers in relation to partner organisations working with the council to deliver public services. In real terms, though, it does not have any more rights than a private citizen, so it is important to foster positive working relationships with partners for scrutiny to achieve its objectives.

Scrutiny can, however, ask these partners to attend meetings, request information from them and require them to 'have regard to' their recommendations. There is no legal definition for 'having regard to,' but some councils have defined it through scrutiny/partner protocols.

Contracted-out and commissioned services

Scrutiny of these services is not specifically provided for in legislation. However, scrutiny has a general responsibility to hold to account those people who commission services and manage contracts. This requires discussion and liaison with council officers in 'client-side' positions who are responsible for managing the relationship with contractors and providers.

Scrutiny is beneficial in this context because its perspective is informed by listening to and understanding the experiences of local people, thereby measuring services in terms of value to the community.



Partners

Other councils, public, community or private sector bodies might be the council's partners for some activity and service delivery. Understanding what drives them and considering how scrutiny work might add value to their work will be productive. These organisations will have their own accountability and governance systems.

Contracted partners – the council may contract with the other organisations on a more traditional basis. It is more common now for contracts to have written into them provisions requiring that the contractor respond to scrutiny requests.

The Good Scrutiny Guide (<https://www.cfgs.org.uk/?publication=the-good-scrutiny-guide>) | Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS)

Other 'scrutineers'

In addition to councils' own internal audit functions, there are other organisations that have an involvement in the oversight, regulation, inspection, and review of distinct public policy areas. It is important that organisations work together in the interest of streamlining governance with a view to sharing the limited resources available to scrutiny and to avoid duplication of effort.

Joint working includes activities such as sharing information, conducting informal background research, and working on a formal joint task force or committee.

Other relevant bodies include:

Local government

- other tiers of government
- local neighbourhood and area structures
- the Local Government Association (LGA), which conducts corporate peer challenges at the request of councils
- external audit.

The functions of audit and scrutiny should complement each other, and it is important to understand their distinct roles.

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) publication—**Audit committees and scrutiny committees – working together** (<https://www.cfgs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CfGS-Audit-and-scrutiny-v2.pdf>)— provides a guide to how councillors who are members of audit and scrutiny committees can work together more closely. The guide suggests practical ways for these councillors, and the officers supporting them, to share information and work together better to ensure robust financial and governance oversight.

Social care and health

Social care and health organisations include:

- Ofsted (children’s social care)
- Care Quality Commission (adult social care)
- local Healthwatch
- NHS regulation organisations.

Education

Educational organisations include:

- Ofsted
- school governing bodies.

Policing

Policing organisations include:

- police and crime panels
- police and crime commissioners.

Fire and rescue

Fire and rescue organisations include:

- fire and rescue authorities.

Useful skills

Questioning techniques

Questioning is a crucial component of ‘critical friend’ challenge and an important part of good public scrutiny. The key to successful questioning is balancing the need to get answers with the need to build strong relationships. This can be achieved by a combination of good preparation, and clarity of scrutiny objectives. Knowing what questions to ask and when to ask them, and understanding which style is appropriate for different situations is essential.

Questioning is best conducted after some preliminary evidence-gathering and research has been undertaken, so that questions can be targeted on the appropriate issues and the appropriate witnesses can be identified for questioning.



Selecting witnesses for questioning

Committee members can ask themselves these questions when selecting witnesses for questioning:

- How will speaking to this witness help to achieve scrutiny’s objectives?
- Will this witness be willing to help?
- Can this evidence be acquired from anywhere else?
- Will it be necessary to balance this witness’s views with the views of others, as part of the wider evidence gathering?

A pre-meeting can be a useful preparation tool to decide how to conduct the questioning, considering, for example:

- Who will ask the questions?
- How the questions will be organised?

- Will the chair call people to ask questions in a free format, or will the use of supplementary questions will be tightly defined?
- How will the committee work as a team?
- Which types of question to use for different witnesses?
- How to respond to a witness who is unhelpful or evasive?



Question types

Open questions

Open questions allow the witness to open up and to share all the information they have.

Encouraging the witness to elaborate early on will allow them to speak and will calm their nerves. This will help them to relax and can be helpful in ensuring the witness will answer further questions in a more helpful manner.

Useful words:

- how...?
- why...?
- when...?
- who...?
- what...?

Closed questions

Where a simple yes or no answer will suffice it is advisable to stick to closed questions (such as when checking a fact). Closed questions are harder to avoid and easier to challenge.

Useful phrases:

- Did you ...?
- Have you told.....?
- What I think I'm hearing is... Is that right?

Reflecting questions

These are used to clarify something which has been said, and/or to get the respondent to speak about a subject in more depth.

Useful phrases:

- You said that...
- You sound as if...
- I get the feeling that...

Extending questions

Extending questions invite the witness to offer more information, and to elaborate on what they have already said.

Useful phrases:

- How else could...?
- Could you tell me more about...?

Comparative questions

These can be used to compare situations (for example on a before and after basis).

Useful phrases:

- What has it been like since...?
- What difference has...?

Hypothetical questions

The use of hypothetical frameworks allows the witness to answer a question from a safer theoretical position and may encourage them to explore issues in more depth.

Useful words:

- If...
- Imagine...

Rephrasing or paraphrasing

Another technique that can be used to clarify something that has been said by the witness, it may also encourage the witness to elaborate on their previous answer and provide more detail.

Useful phrases:

- Are you saying that...?
- Let me see if I understand the problem completely...

Linking questions

Linking questions rely on active listening on the part of the scrutineer (see below). By linking previous responses offered by the witness to other issues the scrutineer can demonstrate that he has valued the witness's input. This technique may then encourage the witness to offer further explanation.

Useful phrases:

- You mentioned earlier that...
- How would you....?

Listening skills

Listening skills are an important part of the scrutineer's role and are closely linked with questioning. Active listening ensures the witness feels that they are being properly heard and understood, which can help to facilitate further questioning.

The basic principles of active listening are:

- **positive body language** – look attentive and show positive signs of encouragement; consider the body language of the witness to gain a fuller understanding of their response
- **check understanding** – use paraphrasing and repetition to check that you have understood the witness
- **take notes** – these can be referred to later or used to challenge the witness if an explanation has not been fully understood, or where a contradiction has appeared in the witnesses' statements.

Chairing scrutiny

The chair of a scrutiny committee should seek to provide, through strong leadership, a good environment for the constructive challenge of decision-makers. They should foster discussion and encourage all concerned stakeholders to be involved in the process, while ensuring that all opinions are expressed in a constructive manner that contributes

to the intended outcomes of the process. Statutory guidance says the chair should possess the ability to lead and build a sense of teamwork and consensus among committee members.

The chair is also responsible for ensuring that the scrutiny process – within and outside the context of formal committee meetings – is managed in a way that creates a fair and balanced environment, keeping the scrutiny process free from political point scoring and allowing for the effective scrutiny of all evidence that is produced.

The chair also has a role in ensuring that the constitution, including the member code of conduct and committee procedure rules are complied with.

In summary, the chair needs to ensure that all work being delivered by the committee, or panel:

- makes a positive impact on services and outcomes
- promotes good practice
- challenges underperformance
- acts as a catalyst for change
- deals, where appropriate, with relevant partnership issues.

Final summary

It is important that all levels of government are scrutinised and held accountable for the decisions they make and the impact they have on local communities. In local government, the scrutiny function ensures that decisions made by the council executive are transparent and robust, and focused on improving public services.

Being an effective councillor and representing the needs of your community, require a commitment to promoting scrutiny and ensuring that it takes place. It is a tool which you can use to make sure your local community's needs are reflected in the decisions made by the council – a unique perspective afforded to you by being a councillor.

Effective scrutiny involves:

- **effective work programming** – planning ahead, selecting appropriate topics, allocating time and resources, scoping, and

planning activities

- **positive and constructive relationships** – fostered through effective communication with the council’s executive, officers, partners, and other scrutineers
- **involvement** – ensuring that residents and local businesses participate in the wider process of scrutiny to ensure that both council decisions are informed by local needs and the transparency of scrutiny
- **effective research and analysis** – examining raw data and prepared reports, using appropriate questioning techniques, and selecting appropriate witnesses
- **effective meetings** – preparing the meeting and the invitees, communicating in advance and afterwards, staying on topic, summarising, and confirming decisions
- **specific recommendations** – stating what needs to change, associated time scales, who needs to be involved and how it should be implemented
- **good monitoring and evaluation** – ensuring that recommendations are being implemented and measuring success in terms of outcomes.

Appendix – sources of further information and support

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) has published a series of practice guides and skills briefings.

Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) publications

- **The Good Scrutiny Guide** (<https://www.cfgs.org.uk/?publication=n=the-good-scrutiny-guide>)
- **Audit committees and scrutiny committees – working together** (<https://www.cfgs.org.uk/?publication=audit-committees-and-scrutiny-committees-working-together>)
- **Scrutiny of children’s services – a short guide** (<https://www.cfgs.org.uk/?publication=scrutiny-of-childrens-services-a-short-guide>)
- **Health scrutiny – a short guide** (<https://www.cfgs.org.uk/?publication=health-scrutiny-a-short-guide>)

- **Scrutiny and work programming** (<https://www.cfgs.org.uk/?publication=scrutiny-and-work-programming>)
- **The use of call-in – guidance for English authorities** (<https://www.cfgs.org.uk/?publication=the-use-of-call-in-guidance-for-english-authorities>)
- **Scrutiny frontiers 2020/21 – experiences from the scrutiny frontline** (<https://www.cfgs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CfGS-Scrutiny-Frontiers-2021-v2-SINGLE-PAGES-002-1.pdf>)

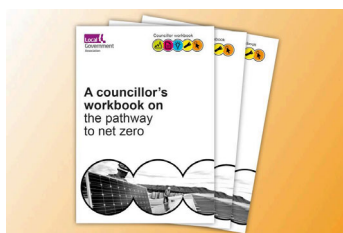
LGA publications

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Planning work, delivering impact

Using the work programme and the annual report to make scrutiny more effective

Centre for Governance and Scrutiny

November 2020

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About this guide

This is a guide to enhancing the impact of scrutiny by using the scrutiny work programme, and the annual report. It replaces previously-published material on this subject¹.

This guide should be used alongside other publications:

- “Overview and scrutiny statutory guidance” (MHCLG, 2019)
- “The good scrutiny guide” (CfGS, 2019)
- “Scrutiny self-evaluation framework” (CfGS, 2018)
- “A councillor’s workbook on scrutiny” (LGA, 2017)

It sets out a six-step process for the management and delivery of an effective work programme that makes an impact – and sets out how that impact can be demonstrated.

Many councils have robust and mature arrangements for work programming. Many, however, do not – either because scrutiny does not benefit from the resourcing necessary to support such a process, or because councillors do not know where to access support. This paper is designed to support this second group of councils by drawing on the experiences of the first.

¹ “A cunning plan” (CfGS, 2011) and “The lion that roared” (CfGS, 2011).

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General principles

Before getting into the detail it's important to set out some first principles – because councils conduct work programming in different ways. This section covers four overarching issues:

- The importance of a member-led process;
- Whether to have a rolling work programme, updated throughout the year, or an annual, planned, process;
- Whether to have a single work programme for the whole scrutiny function, or individual work programmes for each committee;
- The integration of member development opportunities into substantive scrutiny work.

Member-led

Development and ownership of the work programme is something which has to be led by members.

Councillors are the people with the insight and perspective – and the legitimacy, derived from their status as elected representatives – to carry out this role. Officers can advise, and evidence can be taken from a wide range of sources. But ultimately the decision rests with scrutiny councillors.

Exercising this role with confidence means that scrutiny councillors should take the time to reflect on their priorities, and to apply some self-criticism to their own preferences. Councillors need to recognise that there may be subjects in which they are particularly interested – but they may not be the highest priority for the council, and scrutiny may not be able to add much by looking at those subjects. Being assured that the process is both member and evidence led is key to success.

A rolling work programme

Work programming is not a “start-stop” process. Scrutiny's business is dynamic – priorities change as new issues emerge throughout the year. We wouldn't recommend an approach which sees the entire work programme set out in advance – either for committee business or work in task and finish groups.

But time does need to be set aside for reflection and thinking – and for horizon-scanning. It's right that scrutiny should, on a semi-regular basis, review and reflect on its overall priorities, and seek to refine the framework within which work sits. This paper assumes an annual work programme development and review process, aligned to the municipal calendar. An example of this is given in section xx.

A crucial part of being able to deliver a proportionate and effective work programme is the need to “escalate” new topics to scrutiny as the year goes on –

and to remove topics which may no longer be important. Chairs and support officers can periodically discuss the work programme off-line, develop ideas for new projects and propose them for confirmation at a committee meeting. This maintains proper oversight – and a clear system by which important issues can be escalated for more detailed discussion. Reasons for escalation are discussed in Step 3 below.

A single work programme

For councils which may only have one scrutiny committee, this question is moot. Many councils continue to have multiple committees though, and for them the issue needs to be addressed.

CfGS suggests that a single work programme for the whole scrutiny function is the most effective approach.

A single programme:

- Allows for better co-ordination, including the identification of cross-cutting issues and avoiding duplication;
- Ensures that scrutiny, overall, is consistently focused on the most important issues for the area, and that resources are directed appropriately;
- Avoids the risk that work has to be “found” to keep some committees “busy”, while others are overwhelmed;
- Makes executive, and partner, engagement in the work programming process easier to manage.

Some councillors might be concerned that this approach removes the independence of individual chairs, but if decisions can be made through consensus – by way of a transparent work programming process which involves a wider range of councillors – it will arguably make the process more robust.

Work programming as member development

With increased financial pressures on councils, opportunities to invest in member development are limited. There can be value in designing the work programme deliberately to take advantage of opportunities for “on the job” learning – this has the added benefit of taking learning out of the training room and into real-life scrutiny experiences.

This may be needed in election years, where the early contents of a new year’s work programme can be set by outgoing councillors and implemented as part of a member induction process. New councillors – whose work initially is likely to focus on scrutiny committees – can be tasked with carrying out a handful of short and sharp reviews, supported by officers. These will be on issues of local importance, but with the scopes of the work already set and designed to provide an introduction to council business – with the benefit that they will see members

making a substantive impact on the business of the authority before summer is out.

Indicative timetable

December and January	Step 1: ideas formation and longlisting
Early February	Step 2: fleshing out the detail
Early March	Step 3: prioritisation and shortlisting
Late March	Step 4: agreement
May onwards	The work programme for the municipal year is in place, and is subject to dynamic amendment as the months go by.
February / March	Feeding into the design of the following year's programme, Steps 5 and 6: evaluation and review

Step 1

Ideas formation and longlisting

What are the big issues affecting the local area and its inhabitants?

What changes do we expect in the coming year (or years) – and how can we influence those changes?

These are perhaps the two biggest questions that scrutiny can ask as it carries out its work.

At the time of writing, the future of local government (and local governance) is very unclear. The time has passed when councils could confidently put in place detailed ten-year strategies and go on to predictably deliver them. The world we live in is much more dynamic.

But some kind of planning is still needed. At the start of a working planning process, people involved in the scrutiny function will all have their own sense of what the big issues are likely to be in the short, medium and long term.

Usually, people with a direct, regular involvement in scrutiny will be invited to present ideas for reviews. This is likely to include:

- Councillors – both on scrutiny and on the executive;
- Council officers including those working in research/ policy;
- People working in partner organisations;
- Members of the public.

To garner the views of members of the public, scrutiny may put out a general call for topic ideas. The success of this depends on scrutiny's visibility in the local community. Scrutiny may, for example, be able to use networks developed in previous scrutiny work to reach people. Issuing general press releases is unlikely to result in much response, but experiences do differ.

Councillors are likely to have well-developed insights into the kinds of things which are important to their constituents.

Where ideas come from

- The council's Corporate Plan, and other key strategic documents (such as the manifesto of the Council's majority party);
- Major Government strategies, White Papers and new laws which materially affect how the Council will need to work;
- Monitoring information from the council, and from partners – performance data, research and insight, financial outturns, information from risk

registers, and complaints data, which give a sense of where problem areas might lie;

- Evidence from external sources – for example, peer reviews and inspections by organisations like CQC and Ofsted;
- Evidence from other organisations and local campaigns. Some local groups may feel strongly about an issue affecting their neighbourhood;
- Evidence from the council’s complaints system and Ombudsman;
- Surveys carried out by the council;
- One to one discussions with senior officers and members of Cabinet – the issue of liaison with Cabinet is discussed in the next section;
- Previous scrutiny reviews. Avoiding “scope creep” in existing reviews means that when an ongoing review highlights a pressing, new issue, that should be considered as a separate topic rather than as a bolt-on to an existing review;
- Evidence of how local people are living their lives. Evidence from councillors on issues bubbling up through their ward surgeries and other work in neighbourhoods. Demographic data can also be useful here.

If you have one, much of this evidence might already be available to councillors in the form of an information digest. If not, and your council operates a one-year work programme, an exercise might be required to pull together a specific evidence base to support that annual process. A briefing setting out key information about the area and its challenges might be brought together to support a member workshop or conference, for example.

In a programme, the above information can be kept under periodic review. This is discussed in more detail in section 4.

The focus should be on seeing scrutiny as a place to which critical local issues can be escalated. These may be complex matters of developing policy, stubbornly poor performance in a certain area, or worries about future priorities driven by changes in national policy in a given area. Understanding which are the “right” things to escalate depends on a clear understanding of scrutiny’s role.

Ideas and scrutiny’s role

There may be some things that residents, and councillors, find important – but it may be that scrutiny would struggle to take action on them.

In order to understand what these issues might or not be, councillors will need to have regard to scrutiny’s central role.

The statutory scrutiny guidance comments on the importance for scrutiny of having a clearly articulated role. This can be used to focus your mind on where looking at an issue would contribute to this role or not. This is something we discuss in more detail when we come onto topic shortlisting, but councillors will also have to have regard to it at the earliest stages.

Step 2

Fleshing out the detail – liaising with decision-makers and developing “mini” scopes

With a range of ideas at scrutiny’s disposal, work is needed to decide how that work can be designed and framed to maximise its effect.

What topics can clearly be discarded – because they do not relate to scrutiny’s role (ie because scrutiny cannot add clear value), or because they might duplicate what is happening elsewhere, or because they do not relate to a matter which is a priority to the council or its residents?

These are questions which also need to be asked of topic ideas which emerge during the year.

Making a judgement on these questions – and helping to flesh out those ideas which *do* make the grade – is likely to involve discussion with the executive. In some councils, this may be a challenge. Relationships may make a full and frank conversation about scrutiny’s priorities difficult. But such conversations are necessary. If they do not happen, and at this comparative early stage, the risk is there that a review on a topic which might otherwise deliver real change is instead unproductive, and/or duplicates work happening elsewhere.

Informal conversation with the executive and senior officers can help to flesh out the issue, and can give scrutiny members the insight they need in order to refine their approach. At this and every stage, the final decision of what scrutiny work should be undertaken, and how, remains the decision of scrutiny alone.

Impact is the main criterion of whether a piece of work is worth developing or not. The longlisting process – when a chair (or chairs) works through a list of possibilities with a support officer – is about applying this criterion to loose ideas before going any further.

At this point, we suggest an informal conversation with the Council’s Leader and Chief Executive. This is not to allow these people to vet work programme suggestions, but to provide context which might be useful to councillors as they come to make a firm decision on the work programme.

There may be a number of reasons why suggested topics might need to be rethought, or reframed.

- It relates to similar review and oversight being carried out by the Executive – active contract monitoring, for example;
- It is not happening at the right time. The timescale may be too tight to influence a decision;
- It does not relate to an issue on which scrutiny can influence a decision-maker. The main issues involved may lie within the purview of central Government, or another partners, to resolve.

It's unlikely that any kind of scrutiny review on a given topic will be wholly unproductive. There will usually be an angle of some kind that scrutiny can use to approach a topic which presents a different, fresh perspective on a given topic or area. A rethink may reveal a way that scrutiny can look at a topic differently, and by so doing unlock opportunities to effect change.

Transparency here is key. Councillors and others will have presented possible ideas for scrutiny, so feedback on those suggestions will need to be provided.

A council's executive-scrutiny protocol might provide a mechanism by which this kind of early conversation can be carried out.

“Mini-scopes”

Talking about issues with the executive, with other stakeholders, and between scrutiny members themselves, will be helped by sketching out what a given topic is likely to entail. This will help significantly with the prioritisation and shortlisting process described below.

A short, mini-scope will provide enough detail for a potential topic to be properly evaluated. It will set out:

- The objectives for undertaking the work;
- The basics on method – how evidence will be gathered;
- The likely, or hoped for, outcomes.

It is likely to only be a side or two long. It is an exercise which can be used to determine whether or not a topic has legs – and what the best way might be to carry it out.

A mini-scope is probably not necessary in order to decide whether a single item is placed on a scrutiny agenda – but members will still need to justify the inclusion of such items with reference to the outcomes they will deliver.

Step 3

Prioritisation and shortlisting

This is a critical phase. The ultimate decision on what topics are taken forward sits with scrutiny members, supported by officers. The selection process needs to be transparent and fair. Scrutiny members all need to feel a sense of common ownership of what is decided – and the Executive will need to be able to understand what decisions have been made, and why.

The purpose of this exercise is to put together a work programme which will provide a framework for the year's activities, rather than attempting to plan out every single aspect of scrutiny's work for the next twelve months. Setting broad themes and agreeing major pieces of work which will fit within those themes, and deliver clear objectives, will provide members with the confidence to fill out and refine the programme further as the year goes on, as set out in the next section.

The critical things to be decided at this stage are:

- How will we decide what topics we do and don't look at? The section below talks about selection criteria, and about the use of conferences and informal dialogue to refine things;
- What are the most appropriate ways of working to deliver the outcomes those topics demand?
- Who do we need to speak to, in order to make this work a success?

Using selection criteria

Many councils have found that using a set of criteria against which possible topics can be judged brings rigour to the work programming process.

Selection criteria can bring transparency to the process. They can help to manage competing ideas. But they are no substitute for critical judgement. The application of selection criteria is subjective. Members and officers should recognise that political instinct is a valuable tool in selecting topics.

CfGS thinks that dialogue about a given topic, driven by the central question “will carrying out this work make a difference to local people?” provides a rigour that the use of more complex criteria could obscure. However, we also recognise that selection criteria can provide a reliable framework for such a conversation – with the caveats that such criteria should be approached with care, and that they provide the jumping-off point for a reasoned dialogue.

Examples of selection criteria

PAPER (Newport City Council)

<https://democracy.newport.gov.uk/documents/s2104/APPENDIX%201.pdf>

- PUBLIC INTEREST: The concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen for scrutiny;
- ABILITY TO CHANGE: Priority should be given to issues that the Committee can realistically influence, and which will result in a Cabinet decision being taken;
- PERFORMANCE: Priority should be given to the areas in which the Council, and other agencies, are not performing well;
- EXTENT: Priority should be given to issues that are relevant to all or large parts of the city;
- REPLICATION: Work programmes must take account of what else is happening in the areas being considered to avoid duplication or wasted effort.

TOPIC (Oxford City Council)

<https://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/documents/s48039/Appendix%202%20-%20TOPIC%20Work%20Plan%20Scoring.pdf>

- Timely
- Oxford priority
- Public Interest
- Influence
- Cost

Each criterion is scored from zero to 2. Supporting material states that “TOPIC can be used as a reference guide for councillors in selecting items, or it can be rigidly applied as a scoring system. How strictly the criteria is applied will depend of the number of items suggested and the resources available. Whilst the scoring system aspires to be objective, it cannot necessarily take account of the nuances and complexities of all issues, and Committees should use their best judgement in agreeing which items to take forward.”

Other examples

Some councils have a more comprehensive flowchart-style process, like these ones:

- Waverley:
https://www.waverley.gov.uk/downloads/file/5879/selection_criteria_for_overview_and_scrutiny_topics

- Guildford (in the O&S Procedure Rules, at 4-66): <http://www2.guildford.gov.uk/councilmeetings/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=8166>
- Norwich (also containing a set of TOPIC criteria using a slightly different set of definitions to those used above): <https://tinyurl.com/yxbfsnk7>
- Lewisham (on page 4): <https://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s75003/05%20CYP%20first%20meeting%20work%20programme%20report%202020-21.pdf>
- Caerphilly (at Appendix 3): <https://democracy.caerphilly.gov.uk/documents/s32919/Environment%20Sustainability%20Forward%20Work%20Programme.pdf?LLL=0>

Criteria can be negative as well as positive. So, one criterion which would work against selection might be that the issue is already been dealt with satisfactorily elsewhere.

Topics will often be scored against criteria. Topics with the highest scores are those which end up getting selected. As above, care should be taken in this exercise – a scoring process will be subjective.

“Scrutiny conferences”

It used to be common for councils to convene member workshops or conferences to develop, prioritise and agree the work programme. In some councils these were quite involved affairs – sometimes taking up a full day and involving contributions from external invitees (such as representatives of the NHS).

These kind of events do represent the “gold standard” for drawing scrutineers and partners together to talk about future priorities. The free flow of conversation and reflection can be useful for partners just as much as scrutiny, by giving them insights into each others’ work and priorities. They do, however, require careful planning and organisation, and this comes at a cost.

These kinds of conferences can:

- Raise scrutiny’s profile within and outside the authority;
- Provide a prompt for senior council officers and executive members to engage, where they might otherwise be difficult to pin down;
- Nudge people in other positions and power and influence (partners, for example) to engage where otherwise local government scrutiny might not be seen as a priority;
- Be a visible expression of member leadership of the scrutiny function.

Designing a work programming conference as a deliberative process can also help to break down conflicts and tensions and can resolve competing priorities

between potential topics. It could be a good way to consciously “reset” attitudes on scrutiny in a council where the impact and effectiveness of the function is thought to have drifted.

Other ways of drawing together the work programme

If a large conference is simply not a possibility, there are plenty of alternatives.

Smaller, informal discussions between councillors and other stakeholders are a good place to start. Councillors can be invited to collectively review and update a document held in the cloud (although willingness to do this will depend on councillors’, and officers’, IT proficiency). Under these circumstances, an iterative approach is likely to work best – slowly refining and adding to a work programming document over the course of a few weeks, as part of a time-limited exercise. Keeping things open-ended risks that nothing will end up being decided. In the case of disagreement the final decision will lie with the chair.

Identifying different ways of working

Increasingly, the traditional large-scale task and finish review feels more resource intensive, and less realistic, to deliver. Fewer councils benefit from a team of scrutiny officers, able to devote months full-time to investigate a given topic. The policy landscape in councils is now much more fast moving – a six-month (or longer) review may end up delivering its outputs into a very different space than the original scope envisaged.

Experimenting with different ways of working allows scrutiny to adopt a suite of less resource intensive ways of working, and to mould ways of working to better suit the range of topics being looked at.

Many of these different ways of working have a long pedigree.

More detail can be found in “The good scrutiny guide” (2019), but some methods are described below.

Different methods

- An item on a normal committee agenda. A typical scrutiny agenda will typically have only two or three substantive items on it, and each of those items will be ones on which scrutiny is prepared to make substantive recommendations. If the proposal is to put an item on a committee agenda to learn more about it, or to “note” progress, committee is probably not the best place for that update. It goes without saying that reports produced by officers to support such items will need to engage directly with members’ objectives, rather than just providing generalised information on the subject at hand;

- A committee meeting with a single item on the agenda. Where a committee meeting is wholly given over to a single substantive topic it will be easier to dig into that issue. Evidence can be taken from a variety of sources. A support officer, or other officer, may produce a more detailed briefing for councillors driven by the needs of members. Because the meeting is still a formal committee meeting it may have the feel of a Parliamentary select committee – it may be used to hold a Cabinet member or senior officer to account on a pressing performance issue, for example;
- A single meeting (not necessarily a committee meeting). Removing scrutiny from the constraints of a formal committee meeting can mean conducting work which engages better with local people, and a wider range of stakeholders. These events can be designed as traditional public meetings, or more innovatively as spaces where local people can deliberate alongside councils, and come out with a consensus view on a complex local topic supported by information provided by independent experts – a “deliberative mini-public”;
- An inquiry day. This is a single half-day or all-day session which might involve a group of members taking evidence from a wide range of witnesses, and having small group discussion with a larger range of stakeholders;
- A single member being commissioned to carry out research on behalf of a committee. A member can be commissioned as a rapporteur, to investigate a topic (probably with some officer support) and to return to the committee in due course with their own recommendations;
- A small group of councillors carrying out a short review. This will look more like a traditional, longer, task and finish group, but will be less resource intensive. Members might get together three or four times over a month or so to talk over a topic. Meetings have to be planned carefully to ensure that councillors get the right information at the right time, and to make sure that the group stays focused on their objectives.
- A longer term task and finish group, or a standing panel. Longer term pieces of work are more resource intensive, and are often broader and more exploratory. This is where the risk of “scope creep” is most significant. There is still a place for these kinds of reviews – particularly on complex, cross-cutting issues like equality or climate change. But increasingly, even better resourced councils will find themselves unable to commit to more than a couple of these kinds of reviews in a year.

Engaging the public

Different ways of working can also involve different ways of engaging the public. The early scoping process will need to consider how the public ought to be engaged in a piece of work, because this is likely to influence its effectiveness.

Traditional methods can include local surveys, workshops, site visits, public engagement “events”, focus groups and interviews with individual people – which can be either informal or formal. Members of the public, or other stakeholders, can also be co-opted onto working groups.

Novel methods can integrate members of the public more meaningful into scrutiny work through co-production (using “hack days” to develop a solution to a complex problem), or through the establishment of citizens’ juries or assemblies.

There should probably be a mix of methods used across a range of topics across the year – reflecting the need for scrutiny to be involved in a varied slice of issues, each with their own distinct demands. Quite apart from anything else this also introduces variety to members’ work – and recognises that councillors are likely to have a range of personal, professional and civic commitments which means that their ability to engage will vary significantly. Having a sense of councillors’ working constraints will assist; councillors can be invited to take part in certain reviews as a deliberate attempt to contribute to member development.

Work that does not require a group of members to come together in set times and places to discuss issues can provide a useful way to engage groups of councillors who may otherwise struggle to commit to taking part.

Rather than expecting members to attend frequent meetings, they can come together online through tools like MS Teams, reviewing shared documents together and reflecting on issues when time allows. Where a small number of members are happy to work together like this, it has the potential to make for a less resource-intensive – and more obviously member-led – process.

Managing a work programme in an election year

Election years can present a particular challenge to the transaction of effective scrutiny. Business needs to stop to avoid the pre-election period in March. Committees may only convene, after the election, in June – meaning that detailed scrutiny work may not begin in earnest until September. An effective “loss” of six months of work during this period is clearly not ideal.

This challenge may be felt particularly keenly in councils that elect by thirds.

One solution is to design an induction process for new scrutiny members which involves short, sharp work on recognised priorities – to give members a grounding in how the council works and how scrutiny works, framed by the opportunity to get involved in work that delivers an actual result.

A couple of short reviews in June and July will allow new members to cut their teeth on real work, deliver induction and training objectives, and ensure that momentum is built around scrutiny’s work which can be followed through into the autumn. In the autumn, the opportunity can be taken to agree a fuller work programme for the whole year, drawing on the learning from these introductory exercises.

Step 4

Agreement and dynamic amendment

Agreeing the work programme

The overall work programme for the year will usually be formally agreed at a committee meeting; in a non-election year this can be expected to happen in March.

A good work programme will usually:

- Plan out enough work to provide a framework for members' activity for the coming year – giving a level of certainty around resource allocation for the most significant pieces of work;

Provide enough opportunity for the councillors who want to flag up where emerging issues are likely to develop during the year and provide space for them;

- Provide a basis for councillors to return to the objectives in the programme and evaluate them when the programme is complete.

Amending the work programme to account for new priorities

New priorities will emerge during the year. When this happens, new topics will need to be subject to the same process of review that we have set out above. New ideas will need to be floated with senior officers, a mini-scope will need to be developed to tease out the detail and a selection process will need to be undertaken, usually managed by the chair. In other publications we have referred to this as a process of “escalation” of important matters to committee.

These topics, however, are likely to have a different flavour to those which may be set out in an annual process. They are likely to reflect emerging issues – probably involving performance concerns – where swift and effective scrutiny action is needed. They may demand a particularly flexible and light touch approach to methodology – with the use of member rapporteurs, or single committee agenda items, being the default.

Chairs and others will need to keep a watching brief on matters across the area as they emerge – making use of an information digest.

This is not about gathering and distributing large amounts of information, but about councillors and the scrutiny officers who support them having their ears to the ground, keeping abreast of local and national developments and having the confidence to grasp knotty issues as they arise. This is the principal means by which members can avoid the risk of important matters “falling between the gaps” – a perennial worry for councillors, but only resolvable if the information digest has the right information, presented in a way that makes sense for councillors, at the right time. Out of date or partial information in the digest risks that members are lulled into a false sense of security.

Sniffing around: the need for informal investigation

Ideas for scrutiny work often germinate from the idea that something doesn't quite smell right – official data might be at odds with what councillors have experienced on the ground, or a councillor may have been contacted by a member of the public with concerns about a topic.

Scrutiny does not deal with individual complaints or problems – but it can and should use those one-off examples as a jumping off point for investigating whether a wider, more systemic issue exists. Before deciding whether a matter should be escalated to scrutiny for more formal consideration, a chair or ordinary member – possibly with officer support – can look into a given issue in a little more detail to understanding whether fuller, formal inquiry is required. Councils should recognise that this is a legitimate way for scrutiny to consider how its resources should be used.

This investigation could demonstrate that further inquiry is not justified – or it could reveal a more significant issue.

The nature of how councils work means that councillors and officers should expect to engage in light touch work of this nature throughout the year; these discussions can be reported back to committee in the interests of transparency.

The way members keep this “watching brief” must give members the confidence that they are getting an accurate picture of what is happening on the ground. This will reduce the risk of missing important issues.

When new issues do emerge, councillors will need to be able to transparently make quick and confident decisions about inclusion of important matters on the programme. This is why building in space in the annual programme for such in-year matters is important.

Step 3

Post-delivery evaluation

What impact did our work have?

What insight can we feed into the way that we work in future?

Sometimes, it can be easier to move on to new work after a long review is complete. Evaluation can feel like an afterthought.

There is value in conducting a “wash up” of larger pieces of work once complete – and of semi-regular washup of scrutiny’s work more generally. Far from being a navel-gazing exercise, this is about scrutiny living its values – reflecting on its own activities and performance in order to improve, using a form of self-scrutiny.

- Washing up individual pieces of work – the subject of this section.
- Washing up scrutiny’s activity more generally – the subject of the next section.

Washing up and debriefing from individual pieces of work needs not be a complex exercise, but it does require thought. There are likely to be two stages:

- Debriefing shortly after the work is complete. Once scrutiny has considered an issue (and recommendations have been submitted) the chair, along with other members, and support officers might get together for half an hour and think about how the work went;
- Debriefing on outcomes. This is a longer term proposition. Some months, or possibly more than a year, after the work has concluded members and officers can meet to consider the actual impact of the work. Were recommendations implemented? Have things now improved for local people?

Step 6

Reporting back and taking action to improve – completing the cycle

Annual reports

The act of learning lessons can be formalised by way of a scrutiny annual report.

Often, annual reports are summaries of activity – descriptions of work carried out with little analysis. They can be subject to fairly perfunctory discussion at full Council.

Really, annual reports provide a way of evaluating the implementation of the work programme, and of scrutiny more generally. They are an annual MOT of scrutiny and its work.

So what should the objectives be of a good annual report?

- Highlighting excellent work that scrutiny has done, and success stories in terms of impact;
- Accounting for the resources expended on the function during the year;
- Reflecting on performance generally, drawing on the washups of individual reviews;
- Drawing in the views of stakeholders on scrutiny's work;
- Provoking discussion at Council about scrutiny's role, responsibilities and effectiveness.

It is the role of the council's statutory scrutiny officer (in an upper tier or unitary authority) to carry out work to promote and support the function, and the statutory officer should therefore have a prominent role in carrying out work to support the production of the report.

Members should “front up” the report – but more than that, the report should be a product of member conversation. It should give a member view on scrutiny's role now, and its role in the future.

Putting an annual report together in practice

Information on scrutiny's work will be collected throughout the year – in responses to scrutiny's recommendations, washup exercises on individual reviews, and so on.

The annual report will draw this information together.

The timing of the report's preparation will depend on the time of year when it is due to be presented. It makes some sense that the annual report be presented to Council to coincide with the production and agreement of the work programme. But it may be logistically easier to do it at a different time of year.

The main tasks will be:

- Member agreement on the report's objectives;
- Collation of information about scrutiny's performance in line with these objectives;
- Discussion with key stakeholders about scrutiny's performance. This may be the time to carry out a short member survey on scrutiny's effectiveness. Some possible questions are listed in the appendix;
- Member discussion about actions to take on improvement. Council may be invited to hold the scrutiny function to account on its implementation of improvement and development plans; this is about scrutiny living its values as a part of the council focused on improvement;
- Finalisation and editing of written material. An annual report should be light on discursive narrative, focused on evidence of effectiveness and impact and detail on improvement actions. A six or eight side document will probably be sufficient;
- Agreement on the nature of a debate at full Council. Rather than for scrutiny's annual report to be simply noted, presentation at Council is an opportunity for member reflection on support to the function. It presents a good opportunity for the executive to formally and publicly commit to the function too.

An annual report should not be subject to "signoff" by anyone other than scrutiny members themselves. Depending on council practice and standing orders, it may be that the report is agreed at a scrutiny committee prior to submission to Council, but this is not necessary.

Scrutiny evaluation in general

Ongoing evaluation of the scrutiny function is always valuable, and provides the opportunity for a stocktake more fundamental than that provided through an annual report. Councils do this in different ways.

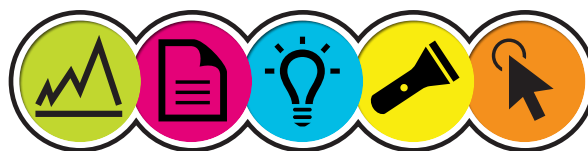
As is good governance practice, some councils may carry out more formal evaluations – and may bring in external organisations to do so. CfGS is one of these organisations. These types of reviews offer a valuable reset opportunity if

scrutiny is thought to be ineffective, or if the council is bringing about a significant change to its operating model which requires reflection on scrutiny's overall role or the scrutiny function has not been evaluated in this way for a while. Whatever the reason, there is probably no need to carry out such reviews more than once in a few years.

Some councils may carry out more frequent internal evaluations, which may coincide with a review of the constitution or of governance systems more generally. These could focus on the scrutiny rules and procedures. CfGS has produced material to support self-evaluations, which can be found at <https://www.cfgs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CfPS-Scrutiny-Evaluation-v2-SINGLE-PAGES.pdf>.

More information on the kind of independent advice that CfGS can provide on scrutiny improvement can be found at <https://www.cfgs.org.uk/home-2/consultancy/sir/>

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A councillor's workbook on scrutiny of finance



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Introduction

This Local Government Association (LGA) workbook has been designed as a distance learning aid for local councillors. It is intended to provide councillors with insight and assistance and develop the key skills which will help you to be most effective in your role. Some of the content may be of most use to more newly elected councillors, but nonetheless if you have been a councillor for some time, the workbook should serve as a useful reminder of some skills, approaches and tactics that make up the key features of financial scrutiny. If you fall into the latter category the workbook should serve as a useful reminder. It may even challenge you to reconsider how you have approached aspects of the role to date. This workbook will provide you with an understanding of the principles and practicalities of scrutinising the financial affairs of your council.

The workbook offers few firm rules for councillors as it is recognised that each individual must decide how best to approach their role in relation to financial scrutiny. This will be influenced by the type of area you represent, any specialist roles you have taken on and the nature of the financial management arrangements in your council.

The workbook can be used as a standalone learning aid or alongside other material you may cover such as training courses, e-learning modules or sessions within your own council. As such, the workbook should serve more as a direction marker rather than a road map.

You do not need to complete it all in one session and may prefer to work through the material at your own pace. In working through the material contained in this workbook you will encounter a number of features designed to help you think about your role in scrutiny of finance.

These features are represented by the symbols shown below:



Guidance – this is used to indicate research, quotations, explanations and definitions that you may find helpful.



Challenges – these are questions or queries raised in the text which ask you to reflect on your role or approach – in essence, they are designed to be thought-provokers.



Case studies – these are ‘pen pictures’ of approaches used by other people or organisations.



Hints and tips – these represent a selection of good practices which you may find useful.



Useful links – these are signposts to sources of further information and support, outside the workbook, which may help with principles, processes, methods and approaches.

The importance of financial scrutiny

Financial scrutiny is the term used to describe the process of applying overview and scrutiny (O&S) to the financial management arrangements of a council:

- **Overview** – a proactive policy development and review process. In effect, gathering and using evidence to consider whether the financial plans and strategies of the council are sound and have taken into consideration all relevant factors.
- **Scrutiny** – a reactive challenge to decision-making, budgeting, service delivery or performance issues. In effect, using evidence to hold the council to account for its expenditure or to investigate pertinent financial concerns.

For simplicity, the shorthand term scrutiny is used throughout this workbook to describe both the overview and scrutiny element.

The legal framework for financial scrutiny

The Local Government Act 2000 states that it is the responsibility of the full council, on the recommendation of the executive, to approve the budget and related council tax demand. The Act makes it clear that the role of scrutiny in the financial process is to hold the executive to account and to ensure that its decisions are in the best interests of the community. Some scrutiny of budget setting and other financial planning processes is therefore essential.

The Local Government Act 2003 provides the central legislation surrounding a council's financial planning and budgeting arrangements. Sections 28 and 29 of the Act require members to be involved in budget monitoring throughout the year, although it is not specified whether this is primarily an executive or scrutiny function.

The council's financial affairs – who's interested?



Challenge 1

Write down who you think might wish to know about the financial affairs of your council and why:

Who has to know?

Why?

Who might need to know?

Why?

Who might want to know?

Why?

The councillor's role: scrutiny of finance

As a councillor, you have an essential role to play in understanding and scrutinising your council's use of public money. The sums of money involved can often be sizeable and the task can be one of the most challenging elements of the wider scrutiny function.

There are many stakeholders who have a vested interest in the financial affairs of your council, including central government, partner agencies, local public auditors and the various communities you serve. All of these look to you to act with a degree of financial stewardship to help ensure that your council spends its money wisely. This, therefore, is a key task of financial scrutiny.

Why financial scrutiny is important

From a council perspective, there are many good reasons for undertaking financial scrutiny. For example, to:

- reality check budgets and financial plans prior to their approval
- ensure that there are clear links between budget setting and strategic/operational plans
- assess the value for money provided by local public services or provided by council grant funding programmes
- research and learn best practice in other local authorities
- investigate matters in the public interest or address financial issues raised by constituents or community groups
- oversee how the council is pooling its resources with partner agencies to tackle jointly agreed priorities
- identify evidenced based options for reducing costs, generating income or introducing new models of delivery
- challenge how resources are allocated and used and examining their impact
- provide an additional and transparent challenge to the executive's management of the council's finances.



Challenge 2 – financial scrutiny in your council

Write down some examples of financial scrutiny in your council. Using the information available to you (members' library, internet/intranet site, committee papers), identify what happened as a result of each scrutiny activity, ie

a) no evidence of action by the executive/council

b) some recommendations accepted by the executive/council, or

c) most or all recommendations accepted by the executive/council.

Having completed the activity, what lessons can you draw from the council's choice of financial scrutiny work?

Being a good financial scrutineer does not require you to be a financial expert. But it does require you to ask questions and challenge when you are not clear about how the council is spending its money and how it is ensuring that there are sufficient financial resources to fund its current and future plans. Similarly, don't be put off by the columns of detailed figures you may be presented with as a member. The same principle applies – if the key messages are not clear to you, ask your cabinet members or financial officers to explain what the information is supposed to tell you. Good financial scrutiny will require you to develop a reasonable knowledge of the council's financial standing, but it will require you to ask pertinent questions even more.



Guidance

“Understanding local government finance is not just about understanding where the money comes from, but also about understanding how we can make this money work for the local community and meet local needs.”

Scrutiny of the council's financial affairs

The constitution of your council will make it clear who has the principal responsibility for monitoring important aspects of the organisation's financial health: from issues of budget monitoring and financial probity to long term financial planning and fiscal stability. In most cases, it is not usually an effective use of scrutiny time to duplicate these roles if they are being carried out in a clear, transparent and effective way.

That said, there are some important scrutiny tasks in this area that can add value. For example:

- Reviewing draft financial plans (eg the medium term financial plan) to challenge the forecasts, affordability, risks, clarity and feasibility of what is proposed. In particular, how any financial plans will affect other important corporate or service plans? It is also a good idea not to review these plans only once per year. Scrutiny can follow the budget reporting cycle of the executive/cabinet.
- Monitoring some internal and external audit reports or the council's risk registers to identify areas where further, more detailed, scrutiny may be beneficial in improving financial systems, reporting processes, resource allocation or resource prioritisation.
- Responding to requests from the public for greater clarity on the council's finances and spending plans, eg reviewing the financial plans and financial reports made available to the public, to ensure that they are sufficiently clear and understandable.
- Carrying out periodic 'post implementation reviews' of large revenue or capital projects to determine whether these were delivered on time and within budget, achieved their stated aims and delivered the outcomes and value for money anticipated.
- Challenging decisions relating to new service commitments, investments and previously un-budgeted demands.
- Scrutinising the financial implications of greater partnership working, eg how partnerships are financially managed, the impact of pooled budgets on the council's spending, the financial rationale for entering into partnerships and what impact, if any, spending is having in cross-cutting policy areas.
- Keeping a regular 'watching brief' on important matters affecting general resource management, eg improvements in procurement or programme/project management.



Guidance

"Members need to get an understanding of how the spending matches against policies, and so must get to grips with the numbers. Don't be mesmerised by the big numbers – as councillors you are here to deliver on programme – you don't need to be a financial expert but understanding the figures is a useful skill for members to have."



Case study

Bristol City Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Board reviewed how scrutiny was working to find new and better ways of working. Eleven priority topics were identified and each piece of scrutiny would be conducted in the way that was considered most appropriate for the topic. One of the priority areas identified was the council's medium term financial plan (MTFP). Due to the importance of this work, it was agreed that a scrutiny commission would meet regularly to carry out this ongoing scrutiny.

"For any large organisation a clear financial strategy is essential. The work which is being undertaken will ensure a robust and rigorous framework for the MTFP, which will be reviewed on an annual basis.

It will improve transparency and ensure that all officers, residents, interested parties and members can have a single view of council finances".

Councillor Graham Morris, Chair of the Resources Scrutiny Commission



Hints and tips

Scrutiny checklist – financial planning

- Has the council got an MTFP?
- How well is it integrated with other corporate strategies and plans in the council?
- How is the MTFP used in the annual budget setting process?
- How is the MTFP monitored on an on-going basis by members?

Budget setting and monitoring – the importance of scrutiny

Just as the budget process in your council is carried out on a cyclical basis throughout the financial year, budget scrutiny must also be carried out on a rolling programme. This work can involve:

- Challenging how the budget has been constructed before it is agreed and before the level of council tax has been set. In particular, probing any assumptions that lie behind the executive's budget strategy, ie is the approach incremental or is it starting from a base budget, what are the main savings proposals, how will any growth be funded, are the financial implications of proposals from departments or committees built into the overall budget and has an appropriate level of reserves been set?
- Carrying out budget monitoring activity, for example in areas where expenditure against budget looks to be well above or below forecasts and where growth/savings targets and revised forecasts are involved. As a scrutiny chair with responsibility for financial scrutiny, a relationship with the chief finance officer and relevant executive member is essential.
- Undertaking some evaluation of performance and value for money.
- Maintaining a 'big picture' view of the financial pressures affecting the council and continuously challenging how these might impact on existing budgets and budget setting in subsequent years.

An important area for members to constantly bear in mind is the format and content of any budget monitoring information. Many councils now use summary information, exception reporting or 'traffic light' style indicators to cut down on detailed financial information and to provide 'early warnings' of potential problems. If this type of information is not available or could be improved to enable better scrutiny, members could suggest it to their executive/ cabinet and/or officer colleagues to make such information available.



Scrutiny checklist – questions to ask during budget setting

- Do the proposed spending plans fit with the council's overall aims, objectives and priorities?
- Is it clear how outcomes/outputs will be measured?
- What opportunities are there to generate income for the council? (eg from fees, charges etc)?
- Have targets been established? Are these targets acceptable and how will they be monitored by members?
- Has the budget been reviewed thoroughly by members and set in accordance with the medium term financial plan?
- How well does the budget link with expected service demand?



Scrutiny checklist – questions to ask during budget monitoring

- Did expenditure meet (or help to meet) the performance objectives set by members?
- Are officers aware of the reasons for any under or overspends?
- What impact do under/overspends have on the achievement of the council's plans and policies?
- Has this impact been taken into account for next years' budget and future budgets?
- Have revenue generation targets been reached?
- What are the risks if they are not? How will these be monitored and addressed?



Challenge 3 – budget scrutiny: getting the full picture

Imagine you are scrutinising the budget performance of a service in your council.

You are presented with the following scenario:

a) performance in the particular service area looks to have fallen short of a key corporate target, and

b) expenditure in the service area concerned is below budget.

Are the two indicators linked in any way? Why?

The simple answer to the question posed is 'they might be'. But without further questioning and analysis it would be difficult to draw any conclusions. Analysis of basic budget information and performance indicators can help to flag up areas of concern and matters that need to be further investigated but only further scrutiny can give you a more complete picture of performance.

Scrutinising performance, efficiency and value for money

Scrutiny can play a major role in improving performance, delivering efficiencies and demonstrating value for money. In examining these issues, members might have questions on the following:

- **Inputs** – the resources used in delivering a service, eg the financial and staffing costs of delivering a housing benefits service each year. In value for money terms, a service that operates to minimise the inputs required is described as economic in its use of resources.
- **Processes** – the approach that an organisation takes in using its available financial and staffing resources to deliver a customer service, eg the method of processing housing benefits claims. In value for money terms, a service which makes best use of the inputs it has available in delivering high quality processes is described as efficient in its use of resources.
- **Outputs** – the services that are delivered as a result of the inputs and processes of the council, eg the number of customers receiving their housing benefits payments as planned each month.
- **Outcomes** – the improvements in the quality of life experienced by those in the community as a result of the outputs delivered by the council, eg the reduction in poverty resulting from the efficient delivery of housing benefits payments to those in need.

In value for money terms, a service which delivers a high volume of quality outputs and/or outcomes is described as effective in its use of resources.

Planning and structuring financial scrutiny work

Most councils use a variety of approaches in carrying out financial scrutiny. This can include:

- specific financial and budget scrutiny activity as part of the regular work of standing scrutiny committees
- budget scrutiny panels which ‘shadow’ the financial monitoring work carried out by executive members
- service scrutiny panels which take the lead in scrutinising all aspects of individual service performance, including departmental budget performance and value for money issues
- time limited ‘task and finish’ groups which can investigate a particular financial issue or look in more depth at the scope for efficiency savings or value for money improvements.

Whatever structural arrangements are adopted, financial scrutiny work should be programmed and planned as efficiently as all other elements of the scrutiny function and will rely on three essential ingredients:

- robust and effective work planning which is owned and driven by members
- the development of an effective culture of scrutiny, based on consensual politics, robust challenge and accountability (as opposed to party politics, opposition and blame) (see text box)
- a reliance on evidence and reasoned judgement rather than opinions and speculation.



Financial scrutiny – characteristics of an effective culture of scrutiny

New scrutiny culture:

- inquisitorial
- questioning
- cross-examination
- probing the ‘heart of the matter’
- dialogue and debate
- variety of views
- holding to account

As with other scrutiny work, good information is needed for members to form opinions and draw conclusions. In financial scrutiny it is likely that quantitative evidence will be the main source of information, ie numerical data or information that can be converted into numbers, eg financial accounts, budget reports, performance indicators or analyses of user or population statistics. This can provide answers to the essential questions of 'how many?', 'how much?', 'how often?' and 'at what cost?'

However, in budget monitoring and value for money reviews, the importance of qualitative evidence should not be overlooked in helping members to understand the processes and procedures that lie behind any analysis of costs and performance. Much of this can be gathered through the effective questioning of expert witnesses and other relevant stakeholders as illustrated below:



Effective questioning during financial scrutiny

Positive practice

- **Free narratives and open questions** – asking an open question and allowing the respondent to give a free narrative of the situation from their perspective, eg “What are your thoughts regarding the cost overrun...?”
- **Probing** – using a range of techniques to elicit information and deepen understanding:
- **Challenging** – “What exactly did this cost?”
- **Encouraging** – “That is a significant underspend!” (with a pause for a further response).
- **Acknowledging/repeating** – “You said that no overspend was predicted in this area, can you explain more about how these conclusions were reached?”

- **Probing for details** – “Did you do anything else to make savings?”
- **Direct questions** – “How do other authorities manage to stay within budget?”
- **Showing understanding** – “I see” (allowing time for the respondent to elaborate).

Unhelpful practice

- **Double bind questions** – impossible to answer without incrimination,
- **Biased question** – which have an inbuilt bias, eg “What do you think about the problems that the lack of budget is causing?”
- **Leading questions** – which unfairly lead the respondent to a particular answer, eg “I think the financial controls are poor – what do you think?”
- **Terminating statements** – which prevent the respondent from answering, and implicitly assume that the person agrees with the point raised, eg “I could ask you what cost controls were in place, but your earlier comments have already confirmed that you believe no financial control was evident”
- **Tag questions** – which are small additions to the end of a statement in order to prompt a response, eg “This is the best course of action, isn't it?”
- **By focusing on good information** – gathering techniques and making best use of a range of questioning approaches, those involved in financial scrutiny should be able to form sound judgements, conclusions and recommendations.

Overcoming the challenges of financial scrutiny

In earlier sections of this workbook we hinted at some of the inherent challenges presented by financial scrutiny. This includes the fact that it is often seen as a technical pursuit and can be viewed as overly 'political', highlighting financial shortcomings at both a corporate and service level and potentially bringing scrutiny members into conflict with executive members and/or officers.

Many of these problems can be overcome by building an effective culture of scrutiny (see text box on page 10) and by considering the following good practice tips:

- be positive and seek to enhance and influence, not criticise or undermine
- challenge the jargon, technical language and acronyms. If you can't understand the information presented, it is likely that others won't be able to either
- concentrate on adding value, rather than opposing for its own sake
- be clear about the value of different roles at different times, eg challenging the budget setting process at a time when it can make a difference rather than attacking it after the event.
- focus on the big picture – don't scrutinise the budget or financial plans in isolation and don't demand unnecessary detail
- challenge issues of integration within the planning process, eg how the longer term capital strategy is aligned with the annual budgeting process and medium term financial plan.

In overall terms, remember that while financial scrutiny should be critical, it should also be constructive: scrutiny is often deemed the 'critical friend'.

A final word – summary

Financial scrutiny is an important element of the overall scrutiny armoury. If council services are to be run economically, efficiently and effectively, they must make best use of the scarce resources allocated to them. This requires sensible financial planning, transparent processes for resource allocation, robust fiscal controls and strong budgetary and performance monitoring. In all of these areas, financial scrutiny can add value in challenging how councils make best use of the public money they receive.



Challenge 4 – where do you go from here?

Look back over the material contained in earlier sections of this workbook and consider the following:

a) What key action points can you identify to improve your contribution to financial scrutiny, ie what three or four things might you start doing, keep doing or stop doing?

b) Have you identified any gaps in your knowledge or shortcomings in your personal skills? If so, please set these out below and identify how any further training or development might help you, eg further reading/research, attending courses, coaching, mentoring, work shadowing etc.

Appendix

Sources of further information

Printed publications

LGA Councillors' Guide

www.local.gov.uk

The LGA website has many pages discussing community leadership and a number of publications, a series of case studies, the Knowledge Hub, and development programmes for councillors and council officers.

For more information please go to www.local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-political-leadership

The Centre for Public Scrutiny website has extensive resources for scrutiny: publications, events, a library of review reports and a discussion forum.

www.cfps.org.uk

The website of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

www.cipfa.org.uk

Local Government Information Unit (LGIU)

The Local Government Information Unit website gives information on publications and other scrutiny work.

www.lgiu.org.uk

Useful websites

The LGA website is an invaluable source of help and advice for all those in local government.

www.local.gov.uk

Leadership Essentials: Effective Scrutiny

The LGA delivers a two day programme for new or aspiring scrutiny chairs or task-and-finish group review lead members covering:

- leading and managing a scrutiny review
- chairing scrutiny meetings in all their forms
- increasing participation by members and the public
- ensuring impact of scrutiny recommendations.

Drawing on experts in their field, the programme offers the opportunity to focus in depth on the hot topics that are currently most relevant to your work, whether that is children's safeguarding, welfare reform, changes in health services or pressure on budgets driving major changes in how services are delivered or commissioned.

For further details on how to apply and dates: <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-political-leadership/leadership-essentials>



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We consider requests on an individual basis.



REPORT TITLE: Annual Workplan of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees

To:

Performance, Assets and Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 10 June 2025; and
Services, Communities and Climate Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 1 July 2025

Report by:

Matthew Stickley, Interim Committee Manager

Matthew.Stickley@cambridge.gov.uk

Wards affected:

All wards

1.	Recommendations
1.1	It is recommended that the committees: Note the arrangements through which the two Overview and Scrutiny Committees will determine their business through the municipal year.
2.	Purpose and reason for the report
2.1	This report is to be presented to the first meetings of both the Performance, Assets and Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Services, Communities and Climate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide the committees with an outline of how committee business – and individual meeting agendas – will be determined throughout the municipal year. The recommendation to note this report is to provide the committees with a record of having been provided with an overview of the function of the newly established Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the methods through which their business is determined during the municipal year. It should be noted that the new committee Chairs and Vice Chairs, Overview and Scrutiny Committee members, and all other councillors have been provided with training and resources regarding the new Overview and Scrutiny Committees outside of the committee meetings formally convened through statutory powers.

3.	Alternative options considered
3.1	Do nothing: the committee would still exercise its powers in accordance with the council's constitution and statutory requirements and guidance but would not have had the opportunity to debate the committee's arrangements for work programming nor to have had context on the committee's early annual work programme nor the Cabinet's Forward Plan.
4.	Background and key issues
4.1	At its annual meeting on 22 May 2025, Council resolved to establish two new Overview and Scrutiny Committees: the Performance, Assets and Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and the Services, Communities and Climate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. These two newly created Overview and Scrutiny Committees will exercise the Overview and Scrutiny powers as defined in law.
4.2	The two committees each have remits which cover the Cabinet portfolios: <u>Services, Communities and Climate Overview and Scrutiny Committee</u> - Climate Action and Environment - Communities - Safety, Wellbeing & Tackling Homelessness - Open Spaces - Culture, Economy & Skills <u>Performance, Assets and Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee</u> - Planning and Transport - Finance and Resources - Housing - Leader
4.3	The council's constitution (Section 5 – Overview and Scrutiny Committees) provides a summary of the powers and arrangements for these Overview and Scrutiny

	Committees.
4.4	These newly established committees reflect a change in focus of the council's Overview and Scrutiny function following a broader review of the council's governance arrangements by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny and subsequent consideration by councillors through working groups and the Civic Affairs Committee. These newer points of focus include: - Emphasis on post-decision scrutiny, allowing the Council (through these committees) to measure the impact of decisions taken by Cabinet and other decision-makers. - To hold the Executive (IE Cabinet) to account, both collectively and individually - To advise on emerging policies
4.5	Section 5 – Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules – of the council's constitution provides an overview of the procedures to be followed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, including the business which may be considered at each meeting. These arrangements for committee business can be found throughout Section 5, particularly at 5.7 and 5.11, and can be summarised as follows: - Business which is a standard requirement of local authority meetings (e.g., minutes, declarations of interest) - Public participation - Matters referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee via the call-in procedure - Interaction with Cabinet (5.11) - Interaction with Council and its committees (5.11) - Consideration of the Forward Plan and Overview and Scrutiny Committees' Work Programme - Other business agreed by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (5.11)
4.6	These constitutional and statutory parameters to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees are broad and allow the committees flexibility in how their business is to be determined throughout the year and how meetings will be structured.

4.7	In all matters, the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and officers will need to communicate openly and regularly. This is important both in determining how the business of meetings will be determined, but also in understanding what pieces of work can be delivered by officers and by when to best meet the needs of the committees, as emphasised at Section 5.11.1. It should be noted that routine requests for information from Overview and Scrutiny Committee members do not necessarily need to be considered as requests for Overview and Scrutiny Committee business; that councillors can have informal discussions with officers on services outside of the committee process. <u>Forward Plan</u>
4.8	The Cabinet Forward Plan is a legal requirement of local authorities operating an executive governance model (as Cambridge City Council is) to publish notice of decisions due to be taken by the executive [Cabinet] collectively and individually 28 clear days before the decision is to be made. The Cabinet Forward Plan of Cambridge City Council can be found on the council's website¹ and its latest version (published for June 2025) is attached to this report at Appendix 1.
4.9	The Cabinet Forward Plan gives notice of decisions due to be taken by Cabinet and so will be an important route through which the Overview and Scrutiny Committees can emphasise their post-decision scrutiny. Overview and Scrutiny Committee members will receive notice, via the Forward Plan, of upcoming decisions, make recommendations on such decisions to Cabinet, be able to see any debate around the decision to be taken, and, should they feel it necessary, can then call a Cabinet member to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting to discuss the proposed – or actual – impact of the decision. <u>Work Programme</u>
4.10	Appendix 2 to this report is the nascent Work Programme of the two Overview and

¹ <https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=532&RD=0>

	Scrutiny Committees. This Work Programme provides a short list of items which officers have submitted for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Items listed may also be listed on the Cabinet's Forward Plan, but the Work Programme includes items which are not necessarily listed on the Forward Plan but may nonetheless be of interest to the committee. As well as discussing the committee's Work Programme during meetings, the committee will be able to feed into the programme outside of meetings through discussions with officers. As it is the Chair's constitutional prerogative to add items to agendas (Section 5.11.1), committee members who wish to see are encouraged to initially share their requests for committee business via email to: - The Chair and Vice Chair of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or, if unsure as to which committee would be responsible for the item, to the Chairs and Vice Chairs of both committees) - The relevant lead officer(s) - The member of the Democratic Services responsible for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or to the Democratic Services team)
4.11	The Chairs and Vice Chairs and relevant officers have agreed to hold joint monthly meetings to consider the overall business of the two Overview and Scrutiny Committees, coordinate business which may need triage between the two Overview and Scrutiny Committees, and to consider how the Overview and Scrutiny Committees are exercising their powers. As part of determining business, the Chairs and Vice Chairs are minded to focus most of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees' time through the municipal year on fewer items but with a deeper focus rather than scrutinising many items at surface level.
4.12	Although there may be urgent requests for items to be taken at meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, as far as practicable members are encouraged to submit requests for committee business with as much notice as possible to allow the requests to be properly considered, agendas to be planned, and officers to be tasked with preparing reports and other information. <u>Items of interest</u>

4.13	Several items were discussed in preparing the agendas for the first Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings which have not been listed on the agendas due to either the timing of the item and the need for policy proposals to be agreed by Cabinet before being available for post-decision scrutiny, or information which would inform proposals:
4.14	An update on the Local Plan is in part subject to the Spending Review 2025 and decisions regarding the Cambridge Growth Company. Clarity will inform the date on which such an item would be reported to Cabinet.
4.15	Section 5.9 of the council's constitution provides guidance on how the Overview and Scrutiny Committees will set their Work Programmes:
4.16	<i>The Overview and Scrutiny Committees will be responsible for setting their own work programme and in doing so they will take into account wishes of Members of that Committee who are not Members of the largest political group on the Council. The work programme should retain flexibility to deal with urgent issues.</i> <i>In setting its work programme, the Overview and Scrutiny Committees will take into account;</i> <i>- the Council's corporate and strategic priorities;</i> <i>- significant policies and proposed decisions in the Forward Plan;</i> <i>- submissions from members of the public;</i> <i>- submissions from Councillors/Cabinet; and</i> <i>- the need for a clear rationale for including items for consideration and with regard to the Forward Pan, ensuring that the largest, strategic items or those which are otherwise likely to have a significant impact are given precedence.</i>
5.	Corporate plan
5.1	The Overview and Scrutiny Committees will exercise broad powers to scrutinise all decisions taken by Cambridge City Council in pursuance of the corporate plan. It should be noted that the statutory basis for an Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to hold an Executive to account rather than to determine council policies itself.

6.	Consultation, engagement and communication
6.1	The changes to the council's governance, as formally agreed by the annual meeting of Council on 22 May 2025, were subject to extensive consultation, and a nine-month review of the new constitution is scheduled. In determining its business through the municipal year, the Overview and Scrutiny Committees may take representations from its members, the wider Council, interact with other committees and Cabinet, receive requests from members of the public, interact with external organisations and groups, and be supported by officers.
7.	Anticipated outcomes, benefits or impact
7.1	It is intended that this report provides the new Overview and Scrutiny Committees with a sound basis for developing their workplans through the year, complemented by ongoing officer support and training in the Overview and Scrutiny function within local authorities.
8.	Implications
8.1	Relevant risks
	As this is a report outlining already agreed new arrangements there are no material risks arising from the recommendation(s) of this report.
	Financial Implications
8.2	As this is a report outlining already agreed new arrangements there are no material financial implications arising from the recommendation(s) of this report.
	Legal Implications
8.3	As this is a report outlining already agreed new arrangements there are no material legal implications arising from the recommendation(s) of this report.
	Equalities and socio-economic Implications

8.4	As this is a report outlining already agreed new arrangements there are no equalities and/or socioeconomic implications arising from the recommendation(s) of this report.
	Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications
8.5	As this is a report outlining already agreed new arrangements there are no Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications arising from the recommendation(s) of this report.
	Procurement Implications
8.6	There are no such implications arising from the recommendation(s) of this report.
	Community Safety Implications
8.7	There are no such implications arising from the recommendation(s) of this report.
9.	Background documents Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.
9.1	None.
10.	Appendices
10.1	1 – Cabinet Forward Plan 2 – Overview and Scrutiny Committees’ Work Programme
11.	To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Matthew Stickley, Interim Committee Manager Matthew.Stickley@cambridge.gov.uk.



Cabinet Forward Plan of Key and Non-Key Decisions for Cambridge City Council

June 2025

Introduction

This Forward Plan sets out the key and non-key decisions to be taken by the Cabinet. This includes any decisions that are due to be taken in private.

Published 23 May 2025

Executive Forward Plan and Notices required by the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

There is a legal requirement for local authorities to publish a notice setting out the key decisions that will be taken by the Cabinet or Individual Cabinet Member at least 28 clear days before such decisions are to be taken. This Forward Plan incorporates the Notice of Intention to make Key Decision and sets out the decisions which are intended to be taken at Cambridge City Council by Cabinet or Individual Cabinet Members. Whilst this document provides details of known decisions for the following month, where details of decisions to be made after this period are known, they are provided for information.

The Plan also sets out where, if at all, it is anticipated that part of a Cabinet meeting will be held in private. This is where confidential or exempt information (as defined in the constitution) is likely to be made known. Notice is hereby given that it may be necessary for part of a Cabinet meeting to be held in private because it becomes apparent at the meeting that confidential or exempt information will otherwise be made known. Should this become apparent at the meeting the relevant part of the meeting will only be held in private upon the passing of a resolution which (where exempt information will be made known) describes the description of exempt information pursuant to Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Forward Plan will be updated and rolled forward on a monthly basis. As this takes place, the programme will be adjusted and further decisions will be added or anticipated ones may be rescheduled or removed.

If a key decision is not included in the published Forward Plan for 28 clear days before a decision needs to be taken the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee must be notified and a supplement to the Forward Plan published at least 5 clear days before the date on which the decision is proposed to be taken. If the date by which the decision has to be made makes compliance with this requirement impracticable the decision can only be made with the consent of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee who must be satisfied that the making of the decision is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred.

If it is necessary to discuss an issue in private and 28 days' notice has not been given the decision may only be taken or the item discussed in private with the agreement of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee who must be satisfied that the need for the item to be taken to the meeting is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred

Key Decisions

The Key decision thresholds at Cambridge City Council are:

- The decision is likely to result in the City Council incurring expenditure or making savings in excess of £500,000 (excluding procurement decisions or decisions relating to land acquisition or disposal). Excluded from this definition are all loans to banks or other financial institutions made in accordance with the Treasury Management Policy.
- Procurement decisions involving expenditure of £1,000,000 or more. In relation to letting contracts the key decision is seeking authority to procure (and delegate authority to award).

Or

- An acquisition or disposal of land or an interest in land with a value in excess of £600,000.

Or

- The decision is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the City.

Part 1 – Key Decisions						
Decision Title	Decision Description	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Contact Officer	Documents to be considered	Relevant Scrutiny
Procurement of Contractor(s) to deliver energy efficiency and associated works to Council homes	Approve the issue of tenders and, following evaluation of tenders, authorise the Director of Economy and Place to award a contract(s) to a contractor(s) to carry out energy efficiency improvements to Council homes.	Cabinet	24 June 2025	Negin Ghorbani, Steph Salmon, Director of Economy and Place (Lynne Miles)	Report on procurement process and award decision.	Services, Climate & Communities
Public Health Contract for Tier 1 & 2 Services	Update and permissions to enter into contract if the Council is	Cabinet	24 June 2025	Laura Adcock, Ian Ross, Director, Communities Group (Sam	Report on procurement process and award.	Services, Climate & Communities

	successful for a tender for a 7-year contract with Public Health.			Scharf)		
Expansion of the Smoke Control Area to cover the whole city (excluding permanent residential moored vessels)	Recommendation to revoke the existing smoke control areas (SCA) and replace with a single SCA that covers the whole of the city excluding permanent residential moored vessels, following public consultation.	Cabinet	24 June 2025	Jo Dicks, Elizabeth Bruce, Sam Scharf Director of Communities, Scientific Officer	Greater Cambridge Air Quality Strategy / Consultation Responses / questionnaire and interviews with residents living on moored vessels / Cambridge SCA Impact Study.	Services, Climate & Communities
Disposal of Grafton East (top two levels)	Recommendation to dispose of the top two levels of Grafton East car park as	Cabinet	24 June 2025	Philip Taylor, Director of Economy and Place (Lynne	Report seeking approval for proposed transaction	Performance, Assets & Strategy

	part of the wider Grafton Centre redevelopment			Miles)		
Commissioning stock condition surveys (Social Housing)	Approve the issue of tenders and, following evaluation of tenders, authorise the Director of City Service to award a contract(s) to a contractor(s) to carry out stock condition surveys in support of long-term strategic asset management.	Cabinet	15 July 2025	Sean Cleary Director, City Services Group (James Elms)	Stock Condition Survey Briefing Note	Performance, Assets & Strategy

Greater Cambridge Impact - Council's Investment	Drawdown from Reserves for Council's £0.8m investment in Greater Cambridge Impact.	Cabinet	15 July 2025 / Sept 2025 (TBC)	Jemma Little, Director of Economy and Place (Lynne Miles)	Update on fundraising and decision to release Council's investment, and other arrangements	Performance, Assets & Strategy
Shared Services Partnership Agreement	Approval of the renewed Shared Services Partnership Agreement.	Cabinet	15 July 2025	Jane Wilson, Chief Operating Officer Robert Pollock, Chief Executive	Report and agreement.	Performance, Assets & Strategy
Cambridge North Framework for Change	Report on outcomes with recommendation for next steps.	Cabinet	23 September 2025	Ben Binns, Assistant Director, Development	Report on proposal.	Performance, Assets & Strategy
Small Sites Development	Update report noting progress	Cabinet	September 2025	Ben Binns, Assistant	Report on proposal.	Performance, Assets &

update	and seeking budgetary approvals to bring forward schemes.			Director, Development		Strategy
Greater Cambridge Local Plan – Draft Regulation 18 plan for consultation	Agree the draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan and supporting documents and evidence base for consultation (mirror report to SCDC on the emerging joint local plan.	Cabinet	21 October 2025	Jonathan Dixon, Joint Director, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning and 3C Building Control (Stephen Kelly)	Report will be supported by full suite of supporting and evidence base documents, updated from the First Proposals GCLP consulted on in late 2021, and will include earlier consultation drafts.	Performance, Assets & Strategy
Cambridge Civic Quarter Project	Approval to proceed with the	Cabinet	23 September 2025 (TBC)	Ben Binns, Assistant	Stage 3 Final Designs	Performance, Assets &

Update	submission of a planning application and funding to deliver the next stage of the project.			Director, Development	Business Plans for Guildhall, Corn Exchange and Market Square Outcomes of Public Consultation. **Note some aspects of the report will be confidential (TBC).	Strategy
Leisure Management Contract 2016-2041	Outcomes of the retendering procurement exercise of the leisure portfolio and award of Contract.	Cabinet	16 December 2025	Ian Ross James Elms Director, City Services Group, Director, Communities Group (Sam Scharf)	Report on procurement process and award decision.	Services, Climate & Communities
East Barnwell	Potential	Cabinet	16 December	Ben Binns,	Report on	Performance,

Phase 2	Approval for revised Development proposal - subject to finalising further design.		2025	Assistant Director, Development Lynne Miles, Director Economy & Place	proposal.	Assets & Strategy
City Centre Heat Network	Report on outcomes of Detailed project development including, with recommendation for next steps. Includes key decisions related to Financial Implications, Addressing of net Zero commitments and allocated use/reallocation of Council	Cabinet	10 February 2026	Ben Binns, Assistant Director, Development	Report on outcomes. Business Case. Heads of Terms.	Services, Climate & Communities or Performance, Assets and Strategy tbc

	assets.					
Community Grants 2026-27	The approval of the Annual Community Grants with a value over £5,000 to voluntary and community groups, subject to budget approval in February 2026, and other recommendations on multi-year grants if appropriate.	Cabinet	27 January 2026	Julie Cornwell Director, Communities Group (Sam Scharf)	Report with summary of recommendations and Appendices.	Services, Climate & Communities
Climate Change Strategy	Approval of new Climate Change Strategy for 2026 - 2031.	Cabinet	24 March 2026	Janet Fogg, Jemma Little, Catherine Stewart (Oakly) Director of Economy and Place (Lynne	Report on proposed Strategy including evidence base, consultation process and	Services, Climate & Communities

				Miles)	action plan.	
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Non-Key Decisions

Non-key decisions are those that do not have a significant impact on the local community or budget but still need to be documented for transparency. These decisions can be taken by the relevant Cabinet Members or Senior Officers. There will be some circumstances where Cabinet may want to consider and take non-key decisions.

Part 2 – Non-Key Decisions						
Decision Title	Decision Description	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Contact Officer	Documents to be considered	Relevant Scrutiny
Quarterly update on new build housing delivery	Regular update on the delivery of new council homes under the 500 and 10 year new homes programmes.	Cabinet	24 June 2025	Ben Binns, Jaques van der Vyver, Director, Communities Group (Sam Scharf)	Report on new build housing delivery.	Performance, Assets & Strategy

Annual Customer Feedback Report	To publish the Annual Customer Feedback Report	Cabinet	15 July 2025	Tony Stead, Chief Operating Officer (Jane Wilson)	Complaints performance data and Annual Report	Performance, Assets & Strategy Scrutiny Committee
Folk Festival 2026	To set out the recommendations following the Folk Festival Review to support 2026 Folk Festival Planning and Programme	Cabinet	15 July 2025	Frances Alderton, Director, Communities Group (Sam Scharf)	Report following consultant review, sounding board feedback, setting out options and considerations for 2026	Services, Climate & Communities
Housing Performance	To provide overarching housing performance report, including Annual Housing	Cabinet	15 July 2025	Clarissa Norman, Tony Stead, Chief Operating Officer (Jane	Complaints performance data (Housing Only), Annual report, Housing Ombudsman	Performance, Assets & Strategy

	Customer Feedback report and self assessment (complaints) as well as Annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures results			Wilson)	self-assessment, Tenant Satisfaction Measures report, Housing Performance Report	
Climate Change Strategy Consultation	To approve the Draft Strategy and issues for Consultation.	Cabinet	23 September 2025	Janet Fogg, Jemma Little, Lynne Miles, Catherine Stewart (Oakly), Climate Change Officer, Head of Economy Energy and Climate, Director of Economy and Place, Climate Change Officer Director of	Draft Strategy and consultation plan.	Services, Climate & Communities

				Economy and Place (Lynne Miles)		
Quarterly update on new build housing delivery	Regular update on the delivery of new council homes under the 500 and 10 year new homes programmes.	Cabinet	23 September 2025	Ben Binns, Jaques van der Vyver, Director, Communities Group (Sam Scharf)	Report on new build housing delivery.	Performance, Assets & Strategy
Quarterly update on new build housing delivery	Regular update on the delivery of new council homes under the 500 and 10 year new homes programmes.	Cabinet	16 December 2025	Ben Binns, Jaques van der Vyver, Director, Communities Group (Sam Scharf)	Report on new build housing delivery.	Performance, Assets & Strategy
Homelessness Prevention Grants to Agencies	To approve the award of homelessness prevention grants (HPGs) to agencies.	Cabinet	27 January 2026	Simon Hunt, Director, Communities Group (Sam Scharf)	Report setting out proposed grant allocations following application process.	Services, Climate & Communities

Quarterly update on new build housing delivery	Regular update on the delivery of new council homes under the 500 and 10 year new homes programmes.	Cabinet	24 March 2026	Ben Binns, Jaques van der Vyver, Director, Communities Group (Sam Scharf)	Report on new build housing delivery.	Performance, Assets & Strategy
S106 Projects for Sports, Communities and Open Spaces	Permissions to award S106 funds to local eligible projects.	Cabinet Member for Open Spaces and City Services	Not before 24th June, 2025	Ian Ross, James Elms, Director, City Services Group, Director, Communities Group (Sam Scharf)	S106 report and updates of available funds in Wards and time limited funding needing to be committed to projects.	Services, Climate & Communities

Exemptions and Confidential Decisions

If any decision is to be taken in private (i.e., exempt from public access), a brief explanation of the grounds for the exemption must be provided. A link to those can be found here [Local Government Act 1972](#)

Part 3 – Decisions That Are Confidential						
Decision Title	Decision Description	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Contact Officer	Documents to be considered	Relevant Scrutiny
North East Cambridge Hartree Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)	Possible amendments to Grant determination agreements. Infrastructure Loan for phase 1 and 2. Possible amendment to GDA where requires reserved matters decision under the JV	Cabinet	15 July 2025	Fiona Bryant, Programme Director – Major Regeneration	Possible amendments to GDA and Infrastructure loan document , where Council decision is required under the JV LLP Members Agreement.	Performance, Assets & Strategy

	LLP Member Agreement.					
Proposals for redevelopment of Cambridge Leisure Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)	Approval for high level masterplan scheme and associated commercial deal proposals.	Cabinet	15 July 2025	Fiona Bryant, Programme Director – Major Regeneration	Cultural Infrastructure Strategy/Heads of Terms/Masterplan proposals/backing evidence	Performance, Assets & Strategy
Leisure Management Contract 2016-2041 Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular	FINANCIAL INFORMATION in relation the business case from the Tenderer will be commercially restricted.	Cabinet	16 December 2025	Ian Ross, James Elms Director, City Services Group, Director, Communities Group (Sam Scharf)	Report on procurement process and award decision.	Services, Climate & Communities

person (including the authority holding that information)						
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Cabinet Dates 2025/26:

2025: 24 June, 15 July, 23 September, 21 October, 18 November, 16 December,

2026: 27 January, 10 February, 24 March

Members of Cabinet

Cllr Holloway	Leader of the Council
Cllr Wade	Deputy Leader of the Council
Cllr S.Smith	Finance and Resources
Cllr Moore	Climate Action & Environment
Cllr Smart	Open Spaces & City Services
Cllr Bird	Housing
Cllr Todd-Jones	Safety, Well-Being and Tackling Homelessness
Cllr Thornburrow	Planning & Transport
Cllr A Smith	Communities
Cllr Nestor	Culture, Economy & Skills

Overview & Scrutiny Committees:

Performance & Assets: 10 June 2025 9 September 2025 4 November 2025 13 January 2026 3 March 2026	Services, Climate & Communities 1 July 2025 30 September 2025 2 December 2025 3 February 2026 11 March 2026
Leader (inc Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority reports)	Climate Action & Environment
Planning & Transport	Communities
Finance & Resources	Safety, Wellbeing & Tackling Homelessness
Housing	Open Spaces
	Culture, Economy & Skills

Contact Details

For more information on any of the decisions listed, please contact:

Contact Name: James Goddard

Email Address: democratic.services@cambridge.gov.uk

Phone Number: 01223 457000

Name of Item	Decision needed (provisional recommendation)
	e.g., 'to agree the Open Spaces Strategy', 'to award a contract of value £500,000'
Climate Change Strategy	To consider the emerging strategy and response to public consultation
Equalities Strategy	This will require approval from Cabinet for 2026 onwards - we currently have a 1 year temporary Strategy
Community and Democratic Engagement Plan	Doesn't require a decision, however, would benefit from Member engagement
Update on Corporate KPIs Review	

Description of Item	Why does this item need to go to Scrutiny?	Scrutiny Committee
Provide a short summary of the item including useful context. E.g. 'The Open Spaces Strategy will set out the council's management of parks and greenland. Pressures will come from the budget increase of 5% being sought and mild political opposition is expected.'	Provide the reason(s) why this needs to go to a scrutiny committee rather than directly to a decision-making body	
The Council's current climate change strategy runs to 2026 and therefore we are beginning work to update it. We expect to go to Cabinet for approval to consult in autumn on a draft. The period of the next strategy ends in 2030 which is the target date		Services, Climate and Communities
The Council has statutory equalities duties that we are required to evidence. Through 2025 we are reviewing our approach and focus for equalities work internally and externally. We expect their to be political interest in the approach and focus of this work	Creation of Task and Finish Group	Services, Climate and Communities
Follows report to Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee in March 2025: https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=159&Mid=4470&Ver=4		Performance, Assets and Strategy

Service Area	Lead Officer
Select the service area which is leading on this item.	Full name and job title of the lead officer for this item (IE the officer who is holding the pen on this report).
	Only one name. Co-authors can be added to the report when it is drafted.
Economy and Place	Jemma Little, Head of Economy, Energy & Climate
Communities	Keryn Jalli, Strategic Resettlement and Community Equity Lead
Corporate Hub	Jane Wilson, Chief Operating Officer

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