

Self-assessment against the Overview & Scrutiny Statutory Guidance

Section of guidance	Reference to relevant part of guidance	Initial assessment	Comments	Actions
2. Culture	9. Scrutiny is led and owned by members		Some lack of shared understanding and awareness of the role of scrutiny between members and officers	Revisit constitution to remind ourselves of purpose of scrutiny and consider training/updates to members and officers.
	10. There is a strong organisational culture, support for and engagement with the scrutiny functions	See 9 above		
	12(a) All members and officers recognise and appreciate the importance and legitimacy the scrutiny function is afforded by the law		Many unaware of legal powers of scrutiny	Training for members and officers
	12(b)(i) Ensure scrutiny delivers work that is of value and relevant to the authority		Work programme and focused task and finish groups evidence of relevant and value-added work.	
	12(b)(ii) Ensure a clear division of responsibilities between the scrutiny and audit functions		Relationship between Scrutiny / F&P and Audit unclear	Clarify differences and share outcomes via training

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	12(c) Regular discussion between the scrutiny function and the executive		Chair meets with Chief Executive and Leader and separately with Chief Executive, but meetings could be more frequent	
	12(d) There is an executive-scrutiny protocol to define the relationship and mitigate differences of opinion		Protocol isn't a top priority, however shared understanding of the relationship is required.	Define and review existing relationship. Create protocol if felt to be beneficial
	12(e) Resources allocated to scrutiny		<p>Acknowledge extensive officer support for task & finish groups and provision of reports to all overview & scrutiny meetings</p> <p>Concern regarding lack of dedicated support for the overview & scrutiny function, provision of which would improve the effectiveness of the function – this is being reviewed</p> <p>Member commitment / capacity needs to be balanced with work programme and ambitions (if members understand</p>	<p>Identifying best practice in scrutiny capacity / resource for similar councils</p> <p>Member training</p>

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			powers they have, they may be more engaged)	
	12(f) Impartial, relevant, timely and high-quality advice provided to scrutiny (particularly by the statutory officers)		<p>Potential lack of awareness amongst officers of the powers of scrutiny.</p> <p>Lack of items requiring obvious statutory officer attendance illustrates benign nature of some subjects discussed. This potentially limits scrutiny's effectiveness in looking at more challenging subjects</p>	Training for officers
	12(g) Members and officers are aware of the role scrutiny plays in the organisation, its value, outcomes, powers, membership and officer support		Organisational awareness good of the overall role scrutiny plays as evidenced by peer review – this is different to the issue around more detailed understanding of legal powers etc.	
	12(h) Reports and recommendations are submitted to Council, not just Executive		Minutes and annual report go to Council. Scrutiny is aware it can make recommendations to Council if appropriate	

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	12(i) Scrutiny has a profile in the wider community, with early engagement in the work programming process		Profile not promoted. Community feedback on items for work programme not sought	Consider wider community engagement to identify work programme topics. Consider use of comms to promote the work of Scrutiny.
	12(j) Scrutiny members have an independent mindset		Evidence of independent thinking from items considered, however opportunity for wider contributions if role better understood. Debate often limited if item is to be considered by Council (keeping powder dry), for example the budget	
3. Resourcing	17. Resources are provided to the scrutiny function	See 12(e)		
	18. The wider authority engages with those who carry out the scrutiny function (both members and officers)	See 12(g)		
	23. Officers providing scrutiny support are able to provide impartial advice	See 12(f)		
4. Selecting committee members	25. Consideration is given to expertise, commitment and ability to act impartially when selecting members		Difficulty in addressing because of method of selecting membership (first consideration is	Consider how expertise, commitment and impartially could be better exploited.

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			political balance, second is availability and interest) In a larger authority with a greater pool of members to select from, this would be more achievable	Consider creating a role profile for a scrutiny member to demonstrate best practice.
	26. - Members of the Executive are not members of scrutiny - The constitution articulates how to deal with conflicts of interest between executive and scrutiny responsibilities			
	28. Members' experience, expertise, interests, ability to act impartially, ability to work as part of a group and capacity to serve are considered	This is dependent on 25 above so wasn't specifically assessed		
	31. Chair has the ability to lead and build a sense of teamwork and consensus		Purpose of this paragraph of the guidance is ambiguous (is it referring to leadership skills, or constitutional power to lead?). Practical process for selecting chair has political aspects	
	33. Vote for chair is taken by secret ballot		No identified concerns with current process	Explore benefits of secret ballot

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	34(i) Committee members are offered induction training		<p>Induction provided, however more time should be given to understanding the legal position of scrutiny.</p> <p>Scope of induction training to be informed by members following training on legal role of scrutiny.</p>	Discussions on induction content to take place before end of the current term of office to inform future programme
	34(ii) Committee members are offered ongoing training		Need for a more comprehensive ongoing training programme	Create a more comprehensive training programme
	34(iii) Committee members are aware of their legal powers and how to prepare for and ask relevant questions at scrutiny	See 12(a)		
	36. Outside expertise is called upon via co-option or technical advisors		<p>External “witnesses” are called when appropriate for a particular review.</p> <p>Need to clarify description of roles, ie technical advisor v witness</p>	Explore constitutional requirements and benefits of co-option

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5. Power to access information	41. - Scrutiny members have access to a regularly available source of key information about the management of the authority, particularly on performance, management and risk - Members have the support to make requests for information from an informed position		Quality and style of presentation of information could be improved in some areas Evaluate whether too much time is spent on annual/quarterly items for note rather than scrutiny of executive functions and decisions	Review reports, style and content going to various meetings
	45. Scrutiny committees are aware of their legal power to require members of the executive and officers to attend to answer questions		Members are aware that they can do this.	Training to reinforce Clarification of legal powers
	46. Scrutiny members are aware of their statutory powers to invite other persons to attend meetings and to access information from certain external organisations		Evidence of external invitees, for example as part of the healthcare session	
6. Planning work	48. There is a long-term work programme for scrutiny which is flexible enough to accommodate any urgent, short-term issues that might arise		Work programme in place	
	49. The work of all scrutiny bodies is co-ordinated to make best use of resources available		Lack of clarity and co-ordination between Scrutiny Commission and	Consider F&P work programme at triumvirate meeting

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			F&P and overlap with Audit Committee	Review whether regular reports that are presented to F&P are still relevant / required
	50. Scrutiny has a clear role and function and prioritises as necessary		Member driven work programme prioritised. Priorities reviewed regularly Improving clarity of the role will strengthen further the points above.	Role and function should be revisited to ensure culture and understanding is embedded
	54. In gathering evidence for the work programme, conversations take place with: the public the authority's partners the executive			Community awareness and public engagement exercise Training to raise awareness of powers Consider how we engage with the executive
	55. Meetings are generally held in public		Working groups generally not in public	
	57. The committee can justify how and why a decision has been taken to		Work programme is an early item on every	

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	include certain work issues on the work programme and why		agenda and reasons for changes are explained	
7. Evidence sessions	61. Scrutiny considers in advance what it is trying to achieve from an evidence session			Clarify definition of an evidence session