



COUNCIL – 16TH APRIL 2019

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF SCRUTINY

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR CORPORATE AND EDUCATION SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report on the findings of the scrutiny self-evaluation and scrutiny workshops and make recommendations.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report outlines the history and background to the scrutiny function in order to provide context to the recent Wales Audit Office report, 'Scrutiny Fit for the Future'. The report gives the findings of the scrutiny self-evaluation questionnaire sent to all members in October 2018 and the finding from the scrutiny workshop sessions. The report provides options and suggests areas for improvement which members are asked to consider.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Council is asked to consider the following:
- 3.2 To change the names of Education for Life and Health Social Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committees, so they reflect the terms of reference for the respective scrutiny committee and no longer refer to the former Caerphilly Community Strategy.
- 3.3 Endorse which Scrutiny Committee Structure is preferred from the options as set out in 5.18:
- **Option 1** - Retain the current number of 4 scrutiny committees plus Partnerships but re-align the terms of reference to address the workloads of each scrutiny committee.
 - **Option 2** - Reduce the number of committees to 3 to align them to the responsibilities to each of the Corporate Directors.
 - **Option 3** - Increase the number of Scrutiny Committees to 5 to recognise the workloads in respect of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee and create a Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.
 - **Option 4** - Increase the number of Scrutiny Committees to 5 to recognise the workloads in respect of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and create a separate Housing Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.4 If there is an increase in the number of scrutiny committees, that this is reviewed 12 months after the change is implemented.
- 3.5 Determine if the frequency of committee meetings should continue on a six weekly basis, should the number of scrutiny committee's increase to 5.

- 3.6 Determine if the number of Members who sit on scrutiny should continue to be 16 should the number of scrutiny committee's increase to 5.
- 3.7 To ensure that scrutiny committee Chairs and Vice Chairs are consulted on all reports to their respective scrutiny committee, in a timely fashion and where applicable, in order to allow them to ensure that the information requested by the scrutiny committee is included.
- 3.8 Further develop public engagement with the scrutiny process by use of social media and utilising the existing Council mechanisms and also consider options to webcast scrutiny committee meetings.
- 3.9 Further develop scrutiny specific training as detailed in point 5.25 to be monitored by the Scrutiny Leadership Group.
- 3.10 Remove the Cabinet Member statement from Scrutiny Committee agendas with Cabinet Members presenting reports to scrutiny committee for their portfolio areas and answering questions on those reports, with the assistance of officers to answer technical queries.
- 3.11 Include on scrutiny committee agendas a specific agenda item for the scrutiny committee to carry out policy development work. This can carry across a number of meetings and outcomes can be reported with recommendations.
- 3.12 To agree that a scrutiny improvement action plan will be developed following approval of recommendations by full Council and subsequently monitored by Scrutiny Leadership Group.
- 3.13 That Council give authority to the Monitoring Officer to amend the Council constitution to reflect any decisions in respect of scrutiny committee structure, size and terms of reference that are agreed by Council from this report.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To address the areas for improvement highlighted by WAO and also the issues identified from the self-evaluation and scrutiny workshops. To improve the scrutiny function and develop an improvement action plan.

5. THE REPORT

Background

- 5.1 Scrutiny at Caerphilly County Borough Council was established in 2000 as a result of the Local Government Act 2000, and was revised following the Audit Commission report 'Democratic Renewal' in 2003. As a result of an Audit Commission report, Council established the Modernisation Working Group (MWG) who recommended revised arrangements in respect of scrutiny; full Council approved these in May 2005.
- 5.2 In 2012/13 WAO carried out a national study of scrutiny across Wales. The WAO used the responses of all 22 local authorities to produce their report 'Good Scrutiny? Good Question?' published in May 2014. Following the submission of the Council's final self-evaluation to WAO a Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan (SIAP) was drafted. Council approved the SIAP in October 2013 which was produced before WAO published the findings of the national study.
- 5.3 The Wales Audit Office report 'Follow-up of the Special Inspection and Reports in the Public Interest', dated January 2015 identified further improvements scrutiny. The Improving Governance Project Board (IGPB) had overall responsibility for overseeing the improvements to scrutiny and reported to Council in October 2015.

- 5.4 These actions were all completed by May 2016 aside from the self-evaluation that was carried out November 2016 and a peer review process completed by April 2017. The findings were reported to Scrutiny Leadership group in July 2017 with a recommendation to carry out a further self-evaluation twice per council term in order to monitor performance. This was endorsed by Democratic Services Committee in September 2017 and also Council in October 2017. The self-evaluation was planned for late Autumn 2018.

WALES AUDIT OFFICE REVIEW – SCRUTINY FIT FOR THE FUTURE

- 5.5 Wales Audit Office carried out a review of the scrutiny function across all 22 Welsh local authorities in order to establish how 'fit for the future' they are in responding to current challenges such as the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015, scrutiny of Public Services Boards and continued pressure on public finances. The WAO also looked at the progress made in addressing the recommendations from their earlier national improvement study 'Good Scrutiny? Good Question'.

- 5.6 The proposals for improvement to the scrutiny function are as follows:

P1 - Improving the provision of training and development opportunities for members to help:

- a. improve their understanding of their role in overview and scrutiny;
- b. develop their skills to be able to scrutinise effectively; and
- c. improve their understanding and consideration of the Well-being of Future Generations Act when undertaking scrutiny activity by providing further training.

P2 - Clarifying the role of Cabinet Members within the overview and scrutiny process to ensure that arrangements support transparency and accountability.

P3 - Setting clear priorities and actions for improvement for the scrutiny function taking into account current and future challenges.

- 5.7 Wales Audit Office has published their national feedback and has highlighted the following six key areas for councils to reflect on:

- In some councils there remains some fundamental confusion and misunderstanding around roles and responsibilities in practice.
- Many councils still say they need to improve the way they engage with the public.
- Improvements are needed to the way councils prioritise and then plan their scrutiny activity to improve its impact
- Some councils may need to consider reviewing support and training for scrutiny committee members.
- Most councils do not routinely evaluate the effectiveness of their scrutiny functions.
- Welsh Government and Councils need to consider how these themes impact on local governance arrangements role.

- 5.8 Finally WAO have identified six steps to better scrutiny in Wales, as follows:

- Know your role
- Know your powers and what's 'possible' in scrutiny
- Know what you are trying to achieve
- Plan your scrutiny work to achieve your aims
- Design support arrangements to achieve your aims
- Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of scrutiny activity and make changes based on feedback

5.9 The proposals for improvement specific for Caerphilly, as detailed in 5.6 above, were reported to Scrutiny Leadership Group on 11th October 2018 and Audit Committee on 16th October 2018, where it was agreed that an action plan would be developed to address the areas for improvement.

5.10 The methodology for identifying further improvements to scrutiny was arranged as follows:

- To progress the planned self-evaluation as agreed by Council in October 2017, the questionnaire to be based upon the ‘Characteristics for Good Scrutiny’
- Workshops to be held with Members and senior officers to consider the proposals from WAO and identify improvements.
- Develop recommendations which will be monitored by an action plan and overseen by Scrutiny Leadership Group.

Self-Evaluation Questionnaire 2018

5.11 The self–evaluation questionnaire was sent to all councillors and senior officers in October 2018. There were a total of 63 responses and when compared to the responses of the previous questionnaire in 2016, there was very similar level of responses (29 Councillors and 36 Officers). The following table gives a breakdown of the responses to the more recent questionnaire:

Respondent (possible)	Responses	Percentage of possible responses	Percentage of total responses received
Scrutiny Member (59)	27	46%	43%
Cabinet Member (9)	1	11%	2%
Non-Scrutiny Member (3)	2	67%	3%
Other (2)	1	50%	2%
Total Members (73)	31	42%	49%
Officers (98)	31	32%	49%
Not indicated	1	n/a	2%
Totals (171)	63	37%	n/a

Note: 1 person indicated and stated that they were not in a political group and therefore did not have a scrutiny place, therefore indicated in brackets are the number of Members that this applies to, although the second Member may have responded as a non-scrutiny member.

5.12 The results from each of the questions in the questionnaire for 2018 along with a comparison for the results from 2016 are attached at appendix 1.

5.13 The results for each question are broadly the same when comparing responses for 2016 with 2018. However there were some changes for the following statements:

- Scrutiny has a valued role in the council's improvement arrangements - show a 10% increase in those disagreeing, and 8% reduction in those strongly agreeing.
- Overview and scrutiny meetings and activities are well-planned – shows a 15% increase with those agreeing and a 17% reduction in those strongly agreeing. With a 5% increase by those who disagree.
- Overview and scrutiny meetings and activities are chaired effectively – shows a 16% increase in those agreeing and 6% reduction in those strongly agreeing.
- Scrutiny operates non-politically – shows a reduction in those who strongly disagree and disagree of 3% and 9% respectively and a 20% increase in those who agree.

The responses also show a desire to increase the amount of independent evidence based work with measurable outcomes, and also engaging more with the public and challenge of decision makers.

Workshops

- 5.14 In addition to the self-evaluation questionnaire two workshops were arranged for scrutiny committee members and Cabinet and Corporate Directors. The sample of the feedback from the workshops and a sample of the comments from the questionnaire responses have been collated under the following headings (the feedback is in italics, and where appropriate is an officer response in order to provide context and suggest solutions to address the issues raised):

Scrutiny Committees

Questionnaire comments: *3 Agenda items reduces debate so important items are tabled as information only - don't agree. Cross Party Chairs - ability does not seem to count unless you are in the ruling group. Many Members still put ward issues before their Scrutiny role. Meetings should take place in the day. Less members on the committee.*

Workshop comments: *The workload of Policy and Resources has been heavily balanced with Housing related matters. With the work moving towards post WHQS in 2020 we should set up a new scrutiny committee for Housing and disband the Caerphilly Homes Task Group, allowing tenants to be co-opted onto the new Housing Scrutiny Committee. Look at the titles for scrutiny committees, Health Social Care & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee doesn't look at health related items very often the majority of agenda items are social services.*

Officer Response: The titles of the scrutiny committees were originally set up in 2003 (point 5.1) and were aligned to the themes of the former Caerphilly community strategy which ceased in 2013. However since then the Living Environment and Regeneration have merged to form Regeneration and Environment, leaving Education for Life and Health Social Care and Wellbeing. Therefore it may now be appropriate to look at the names and composition for all the scrutiny committees.

Analysis of the number of reports discussed by Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee since May 2017, shows that 42 reports have been considered by the committee on the main agenda with 24 of those housing related. Information items are circulated to all Members and the committee can choose to add the report to a future agenda for discussion, it is a matter for the scrutiny committee to prioritise.

The times of meetings are in accordance with the questionnaire issued to all councillors following the local government elections, as required in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

Pre-meetings and Meeting Attendance

Workshop comments: *Need better attendance at Scrutiny. The (pre-meeting) time should be included on the agenda, and attendance monitored. Concerns were raised that not all scrutiny members attend pre-meetings.*

Officer Response: This has been monitored by Scrutiny Leadership Group who received a report on 11th October 2018. The report showed that over a 12 month period that generally most scrutiny committee members who are present at scrutiny committee meetings attend the pre-meeting. It was also suggested that should a member arrive late or leave early that it be included in the minutes. In order for this to be accurately reflected it would need to be announced in order to be picked up by the minute taker, as in some cases members leave and then return.

Regularity of Scrutiny Meetings

Workshop comments: *A 6 week gap is too long.*

Officer Response: Research across Wales has shown that local authorities can have between one main scrutiny committee (supported by a number of subject panels or groups) to three, four, five or six committees. The total number of meetings range from fourteen to 74 meetings per annum and membership can range from five to thirty six. For the majority of local authorities the frequency of meetings is either monthly, 6 weekly or 8 weekly. However the size and regularity can also differ between committees within a local authority. Wales Audit Office has also commented in feedback that scrutiny should move away from the traditional committee approach and think more about impact.

Reports

Questionnaire comments: *The volume of information presented to members at times is too great to really absorb to allow proper debate and scrutiny in the meetings. This is evidenced by Members regularly asking questions that are answered in the reports.*

Workshop comments *Chair & Vice Chairs should be consulted with, reports are too long and need a good summary.*

Officer Response: Following the last scrutiny review in 2015, Scrutiny Leadership Group (SLG) was tasked with reviewing the quality of reports for 12 months following the implementation of the changes to scrutiny. In that timescale SLG held two workshop sessions and reviewed sample of reports, the Interim Monitoring Officer attended and took on board the views of SLG to feed back to CMT. Since then the report template has been changed to provide a summary and recommendations on the first page and also state how the proposals will link into Corporate Priorities.

Work Programmes and Engagement

Questionnaire comments: *Whilst scrutiny has been somewhat streamlined, it still does not appear to be functioning at a strategic level and properly scrutinising council policies and services to any great extent. The agenda is also still heavily officer driven. I think a significant amount of Scrutiny time is dedicated to pre-decision scrutiny and much less toward policy shaping. Members are often afforded the opportunity to ask parochial or ward based questions to the strategic issues under discussion and this can sometime detract from the focus on the matter in hand.*

Workshop comments: *Committees need to be more involved & supported to understand issues; Ownership. Need to look forward, use social media, Newline should publicise the work programmes, we should use modern IT such as an Application, Webcasting. More witnesses at meetings; triangulation of evidence is important. More deep dive single topic meetings. Purpose and Key issues to be clearer and we should reduce frequent changes. Consider offering scrutiny training to community councils to raise awareness of the function.*

Officer Response: The role of scrutiny is as follows:

- To ensure service delivery is in line with expected performance standards
- Help shape new council policies and services
- Monitor the Council's budgets
- Holding decision makers to account
- Undertaking reviews of council policies and services
- Representing the views of local communities

In order to assist scrutiny committees to decide what topics will be included in work programmes, a prioritisation matrix was developed following the scrutiny review in 2015. Scrutiny committees use this when developing their work programmes at the annual work programme workshop and it asks that the following is considered:

- Is the issue of strategic importance?
- Is there concern of poor performance or has a significant budgetary issue has been identified?
- Is it an issue highlighted by an Auditor, Regulator or Inspector identified areas for improvement?
- Has the issue been identified as a corporate priority or identified as a service or corporate risk?
- Is there a change to Legislation or Guidance requiring Policy change?
- Is there evidence of public dissatisfaction (e.g. Public Satisfaction Survey)
- Is the topic timely?
- Will scrutiny be able to make recommendations?

The work programme is also on the agenda for discussion at every programmed meeting and Members can suggest topics and agree witnesses to be invited. The work programmes are published with each agenda pack and also have a page on the external website. There is further work that can be done in this area through use of social media to engage with the public and perhaps consider webcasting of scrutiny committee meetings.

Performance Management

***Workshop comments:** Needs improvement.*

Officer Response: It is difficult to respond to this comment as there is no context. Scrutiny committees have an annual performance management meeting when they will review performance. The new performance framework will see performance information produced on a quarterly basis and reported to dedicated scrutiny meetings twice per annum.

Task and Finish

***Workshop comments:** Need to do more policy development.*

Officer Response: There has been limited use of task and finish groups work during the past two years, although Members have had the opportunity to take part in working groups such as Street Scene, Waste and 21st Century Schools. Perhaps the balance of work needs to be re-considered with more task and finish group work and less pre-decision scrutiny.

Outcomes and Influence

***Questionnaire:** The administration can only better itself if it is willing to listen to (and accept) criticism and take on board ideas that may come from outside of the corporate management and leadership team.*

Officer Response: This could be addressed by carrying out more policy development work at meetings of scrutiny with strategic topics identified and time allocated on every agenda. The committee could consider one topic over a number of meetings, where witnesses and independent evidence could be heard. The scrutiny committee could then draw conclusions and make recommendations.

Training

***Questionnaire comments:** I'm not sure that scrutiny members do a lot of evidence based challenging - the process is more akin to a Q and A session which is a very different animal*

***Workshop comments:** More specific scrutiny & service focussed. Members need to concentrate on one committee and specialise. Attendance an issue, more E-Learning and refreshers needed. Develop a schedule of all training for diaries. Put recorded versions of training on Portal. Short good practice guides, peer observations internal and external, more flexible, more detail on content, mandatory, skills based. Scrutiny committees could hold a short de-brief after the meeting. Newly elected members could be offered as part of their induction training on reports structure and also a buddy scheme.*

Officer Response: There are 16 Councillors on each scrutiny committee and 5 Members sit on more than one committee (not including Policy and Resources sitting as Partnerships). It may be difficult for members from smaller political groups to avoid sitting on more than one committee and 'specialise'. Since 2017 there have been two scrutiny committee training sessions, and the training programme for 2018 -2020 included skills training such as chairing and questioning. A number of seminars have been held which included the following topics:

- MTFP (September 2017 & January 2018)
- Treasury Management
- Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
- 21st Century Schools
- Civil Parking Enforcement
- Sport and Leisure Strategy
- Universal Credit

Feedback from Democratic Services Committee asked that all training and seminars to be sent out as meeting request to allow Members to accept and automatically add to their diaries.

Cabinet Member Role

Questionnaire comments: *'The Cabinet Member statement does not add value and actually takes up meeting time which could be devoted to the main work programme.'* *'Executive Members need to research subjects not read off a script and refer to officers.'* *'There are examples of Cabinet members giving effective answers/feedback to scrutiny questions but questions are also passed on to officers on numerous occasions.'* *'There are other more appropriate mechanisms for publicising Cabinet Member activity.'*

Workshop comments: *'Cabinet Members should answer more questions, Statements are more like newsletters and not relevant to the meeting.'* *'Cabinet member(s) should sit opposite the chair and questions addressed to them by default.'* *'Officers are only there to answer technical questions.'* *'Cabinet member should have full knowledge of the agenda and their area.'* *'There is limited added value of the statements.'* *'Cabinet members would need to prepare in order to introduce reports at scrutiny.'* *'However there is the benefit that cabinet members can set out the purpose of reports against their cabinet priorities and the corporate plan.'*

Officer Response: Cabinet Member statements were introduced in 2005 (point 5.1) and having compared with other Welsh local authorities, there are none that have such a statement on the agenda. Comparison shows that two local authorities have space on the agenda for questions to the Cabinet Member. However with the recent changes to questions to Cabinet at full Council and the changes to the report format with the summary and recommendations on the front page, it may be opportune to remove the statement altogether, as this would also allow more time for debate for main agenda items.

Future Challenges

Workshop comments: *'Distracted by austerity, Wellbeing of Future Generations should be the main focus',* *'concerns that scrutiny doesn't have enough knowledge'. 'It is important that members are made aware of legislative changes and the impact on service areas, such as social care'. 'Scrutiny committees should make time on their agendas for looking ahead and not always look back.'*

5.15 Conclusions

- 5.16 In order to address the issues highlighted by the self-evaluation and the Member workshops the following options have been identified.

Scrutiny Committee Names

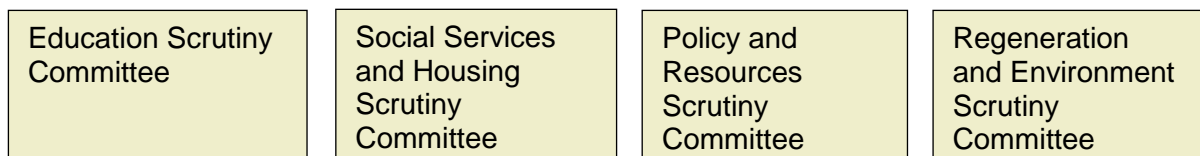
- 5.17 The scrutiny committee names were aligned with the former Caerphilly Community Strategy which expired in 2013. This has continued in respect of Health Social Care and Wellbeing and also Education for Life, this may be the time to remove this link and re-name them to reflect their terms of reference.

Scrutiny Committee Structure

- 5.18 There are a few options available to respond to the issues identified during this review:

Option 1

Retain the current structure of four scrutiny committees plus Partnerships and re-align the terms of reference to address the workloads, as follows:



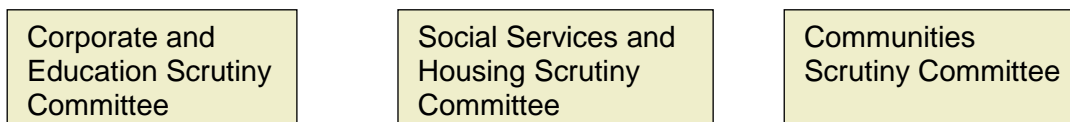
In this structure Education Scrutiny Committee terms of reference would remain the same. Social Services and Housing Scrutiny Committee will take on Housing responsibility in line with the responsibility of the Corporate Director for Social Services and Housing. The scrutiny committee would consider the remainder of the WHQS programme and the legacy, once the programme is completed.

Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee would no longer be responsible for Housing and Property Services could also be removed, recognising the need to re-balance agendas and ensure that all of the responsibilities of the committee have more committee time. In addition the committee also meet as the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee, twice per annum; this may increase to reflect the development in the outcomes of the Public Services Board Wellbeing Plan.

Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee would take on Property Services responsibility in line with the responsibility of the Corporate Director for Communities.

Option 2

Reduce the number of committees to 3 and align them to the responsibilities to each of the Corporate Directors, renaming them as follows:

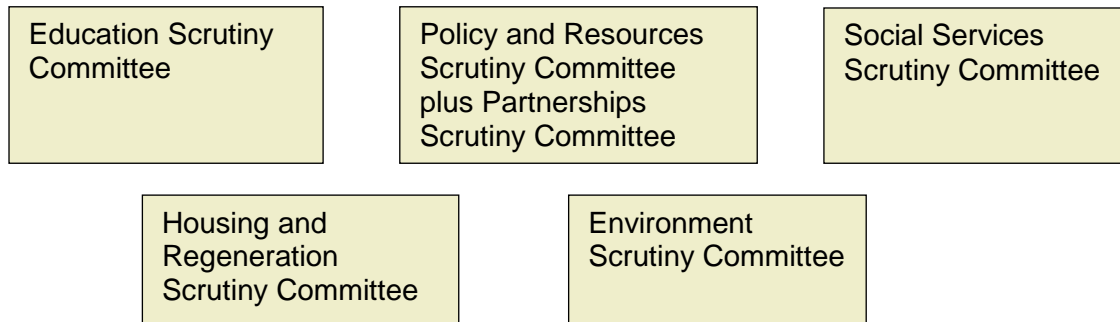


The responsibility for scrutiny of the Public Services Board (Partnerships Scrutiny Committee) would need to be attached to one of above. The Social Services and Housing scrutiny committee would consider the remainder of the WHQS programme and also the legacy once the programme is completed.

Option 3

Increase the number of Scrutiny Committees to 5 to recognise the workload in respect of Housing reports upon Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and also take into account the workload of Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee. This could be addressed by the formation of the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration would consist of both Planning and Regeneration items). The creation of a scrutiny committee for

Housing and Regeneration would be an opportunity to bring together two service areas that have a connection in terms of community regeneration and affordable housing. The scrutiny committee would be responsible for the Regeneration Strategy, the Economic Strategy and also City Deal.



If the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee were to be created it would take on the scrutiny of the remainder of the WHQS programme and also the legacy once the programme is completed. This proposal would create a further senior salary.

Option 4

Increase the number of Scrutiny Committees to 5 to recognise the workloads in respect of Housing reports to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and create a separate Housing Scrutiny Committee. In addition remove the connections in the titles of Health Social Care & Wellbeing and Education for Life to the Caerphilly community strategy.



If the Housing Scrutiny Committee were to be created it would take on the scrutiny of the remainder of the WHQS programme and also the legacy once the programme is completed. This proposal would create a further senior salary.

Meeting Attendance

- 5.19 Attendance at Pre-meetings has been monitored by Scrutiny Leadership Group and essentially the majority of members who attend the main meeting also attend the pre-meeting. With regard to actual meeting attendance this is published on the council website and also included in Members Annual reports. Individual Chairs or groups may wish to address this on a broader or individual basis.

Regularity of Scrutiny Meetings

- 5.20 Research across Wales has shown that less than half of other local authorities' scrutiny committees meet on a 6 weekly basis. If the number of meetings per committee were to be increased this would have an impact upon staff resources in terms of servicing and arranging the meetings. This would also have an impact upon the demands on Members time. If it is considered appropriate to increase the regularity the overall size of each committee membership should be considered, and perhaps reducing the committee size to 12 or 14 members. Any increase in the number of scrutiny committees should also consider the regularity of meetings and the size of membership.

Reports

- 5.21 Arrangements should be put in place to ensure that scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs are consulted on all reports to Scrutiny in a timely fashion and where applicable, to allow them the opportunity to ensure that the information requested by the scrutiny committee is included.

Work Programmes and Engagement

- 5.22 Scrutiny committees can shape their own work programmes but perhaps further training could be provided to help them further develop the skills and knowledge to decide on the most appropriate topics. The confidence to select fewer but more strategic topics and the time and resources to support independent work should address these concerns. The prioritisation matrix for deciding which reports should be added to the work programme is highlighted during the annual work programme workshop and also when the scrutiny committee consider an individual Member or public requests to add an item to the work programme. Additional officer capacity has been provided to support task and finish groups and also develop public engagement. In addition we could look at developing webcasting of meetings to further promote the work of scrutiny.

Performance Management

- 5.23 The new performance framework will be in place for 2019/20, scrutiny committees will be asked to hold two dedicated performance management meetings per annum. The framework will include a Directors summary, progress against service priorities, service performance against agreed KPIs, customer intelligence, a snapshot of sickness and the service budget position, a risk profile and a conclusion with agreed actions.

Outcomes and Influence

- 5.24 This links into the work programmes and also task and finish group work. The need for members training and also the additional support from a new scrutiny officer will provide more assistance to the scrutiny function and enable more independent work. Allowing space on each scrutiny agenda for policy development should encourage more independent outcome focussed meetings.

Training

- 5.25 There are several opportunities to develop member training further, the programme has already offered pre-meeting training, chairing skills and questioning skills. This links into the WAO proposal for improvement, point 5.6. It is suggested that the following training is added to the member development programme:
- Re-run the questioning skills training.
 - Develop E-learning opportunities and video wherever possible.
 - Offer a range of scrutiny function training to include work programmes.
 - Advertise the wide range of scrutiny good practice guides already available from the WLGA and located on the Members Portal.
 - Arrange further peer observations, or direct Members to webcasting of other councils' scrutiny committees.
 - Ensure the feedback is considered when devising the next Member Induction Programme.
 - Wellbeing of Future Generations Workshop – already planned.

Cabinet Member Role

- 5.26 The feedback indicates that the purpose and need for a Cabinet Member Statement is no longer required. The changes to report format with the summary and recommendations on the front page would seem to be an opportunity to give the Cabinet Members a more central role to introduce reports on each scrutiny agenda. The scrutiny committee could then ask the Cabinet Member questions that relate to the strategic aims of the report. Officers would then

respond to any questions relating to operational or technical matters. This also links into the specific WAO recommendations to provide clarity to the Cabinet member role, point 5.6. This also complies with Welsh Government Guidance on Executive and Alternative arrangements 2006. The guidance states that: *“The executive and overview and scrutiny committees should always bear in mind that it is for the elected executive to answer questions about its policies and decisions. When officers appear to answer questions their contribution should, as far as possible, be confined to questions of fact and explanation relating to policies and decisions.”*

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 The assumptions in this report assume that Members agree that the issues identified by Wales Audit Office and also the self-evaluation questionnaire will be addressed by the feedback during discussion at the Member workshop and the proposals and options suggested in this report.
- 6.2 There are some options that relate to the number of scrutiny committees and their terms of reference. If it is decided to increase the number or frequency of scrutiny meetings further sufficient resources would need to be made available to support those changes.

7. LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES

- 7.1 The operation of scrutiny is a statutory function that ensures that members have the opportunity to properly scrutinise council policies including the Corporate Plan.

7.2 Corporate Plan 2018-2023

Objective 1 - Improve education opportunities for all

Objective 2 - Enabling employment

Objective 3 - Address the availability, condition and sustainability of homes throughout the county borough and provide advice, assistance or support to help improve people's well-being

Objective 4 - Promote a modern, integrated and sustainable transport system that increases opportunity, promotes prosperity and minimises the adverse impacts on the environment

Objective 5 - Creating a county borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the sustainable Development Principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Objective 6 - Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being.

8. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 8.1 The self-evaluation proposals contribute to the following Well-being Goals within the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2016 by ensuring that scrutiny function evaluates its effectiveness and identifies areas for improvement. An effective scrutiny function can ensure that council policies are scrutinised against the following goals:-

- A prosperous Wales*
- A resilient Wales*
- A healthier Wales*
- A more equal Wales*
- A Wales of cohesive communities*
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language*
- A globally responsible Wales*

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The scrutiny self-evaluation questionnaire included questions on involving a wide range of evidence and perspectives, with a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders. The aim was to evaluate the scrutiny function and identify any further areas for improvement.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Further additional resource in Democratic Services will be required to support additional committees, or increased frequency of meetings, if members make that decision. The cost of an additional part time committee services officer would be £17,685. A further senior salary will be payable if the number of scrutiny committees is increased, at an additional cost of £8,700. This growth will increase the savings target in the Authority's MTFP for 2020/21. As the Budget has been set for 2019/20 any additional part year costs for this financial year will need to be taken from corporate service reserves.
- 10.2 There may also be associated costs for webcasting of all scrutiny committee meetings that would have to be subject to a tender exercise. If there are any additional costs these will need to be funded by growth for 2020/21, with any in year additional costs being funded from corporate service reserves.

11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 If the frequency of scrutiny committee meetings is increased to every 4 weeks, this would create additional workload for Democratic Services staff who are already working at full capacity. There would also be additional burden if an additional scrutiny committee is created. An additional part time committee services officer would be required to support the team.
- 11.2 The benefit of the recent appointment of a scrutiny officer may be diminished in supporting these additional meetings and thus lessen the opportunity to support task and finish groups in more in-depth work.

12. CONSULTATIONS

- 12.1 There has been significant consultation in developing this report; all 73 Councillors and the Management Network were asked to complete the self-evaluation questionnaire in October 2018. In addition all Scrutiny Committee Members, Cabinet Members and the Corporate Directors were invited to attend the scrutiny workshops held in January and March 2019.
- 12.2 There was one response that highlighted the experience of Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee in respect of the WHQS programme, referenced the cross party working group and the significant focus of the scrutiny committee in achieving improvements. They suggested that the WHQS element of Housing should be retained by Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee until the completion of the programme.

13. STATUTORY POWER

- 13.1 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000.
- 13.2 Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

Authors: Catherine Forbes-Thompson, Interim Head of Democratic Services
Rob Tranter Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer

Consultees: Richard Edmunds Corporate Director Education and Corporate Services
Christina HARRY, Interim Chief Executive
Dave Street, Corporate Director Social Services and Housing
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director Communities
Councillor Barbara Jones, Deputy Leader Finance, Performance and Governance
Councillor James Pritchard, Chair Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Gez Kirby, Vice Chair Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Tudor Davies, Chair Regeneration & Environment Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Christine Forehead, Vice Chair Regeneration & Environment Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Derek Havard, Chair Education for Life Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Carol Andrews, Vice Chair Education for Life Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Lyndon Binding, Chair Health Social Care & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee
Councillor John Bevan, Vice Chair Health Social Care & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Dave Poole, Leader of Council
Councillor Colin Mann, Leader Plaid Cymru Group
Councillor Kevin Etheridge, Leader Independents Group
Councillor Nigel Dix
Councillor Kevin Dawson
Nicole Scammell, Head of Corporate Finance and Section 151 Officer
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Steve Harris, Interim Head of Business Improvement

Background:

Guidance for County and County Borough Councils in Wales On Executive And Alternative Arrangements 2006 - No. 56
Council 17th May 2005 agenda item 4.4
Council 8th October 2013 agenda item 7.3
Wales Audit Office 'Good Scrutiny Good Question?' May 2014
Council 10th October 2017 agenda item 8
Council 6th October 2015 agenda item 10

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Scrutiny Self-Evaluation Questionnaire 2018 – Comparison with 2016

Scrutiny Self-Evaluation Questionnaire 2018 – Comparison with 2016

Scrutiny has a clearly defined role in the council's improvement arrangements					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	2%	6%	62%	29%	2%
2016	2%	6%	58%	31%	3%
Scrutiny has a valued role in the council's improvement arrangements					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	0%	18%	52%	29%	2%
2016	2%	8%	49%	37%	5%
Scrutiny have the dedicated officer support it needs from officers					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	0	0	53%	41%	7%
2016	2%	6%	47%	39%	6%
Scrutiny members have the training and development opportunities they need to undertake their role effectively					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	2%	11%	44%	21%	22%
2016	2%	8%	55%	22%	14%
The scrutiny process receives effective support from the Council's Corporate Management team who ensure it receives high quality information in a timely manner					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	0	3%	53%	32%	11%
2016	This question wasn't included in 2016				
Scrutiny is recognised by the Executive and Corporate Management team as an important council mechanism for community engagement					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	3%	10%	48%	27%	13%
2016	2%	6%	56%	27%	10%
Scrutiny inquiries (Task & Finish Group) are non-political					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	2%	13%	59%	16%	11%
2016	3%	13%	56%	13%	16%
Scrutiny inquiries (Task & Finish Group) are methodologically sound					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	2%	8%	64%	8%	19%
2016	2%	9%	61%	9%	19%
Scrutiny inquiries (Task & Finish Group) incorporate a wide range of evidence and perspectives					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	2%	8%	60%	13%	18%
2016	2%	10%	54%	21%	14%
Scrutiny is member-led and has `ownership` of its work programme					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	2%	13%	57%	21%	8%
2016	2%	11%	55%	28%	5%

Scrutiny takes into account the views of the public, partners and regulators, whilst balancing between prioritising community concerns against issues of strategic risk and importance					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	3%	13%	62%	11%	11%
2016	0%	19%	53%	19%	9%
Stakeholders have the ability to contribute to the development and delivery of scrutiny forward work programmes					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	5%	10%	62%	18%	6%
2016	0%	11%	59%	17%	13%
Overview and scrutiny meetings and activities are well-planned					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	0%	10%	73%	14%	3%
2016	0%	5%	58%	31%	6%
Overview and scrutiny meetings and activities are chaired effectively					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	0	3%	74%	19%	3%
2016	5%	5%	58%	25%	8%
Overview and scrutiny meetings and activities make best use of the resources available to it					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	2%	13%	65%	11%	10%
2016	0%	6%	69%	17%	8%
Scrutiny is characterised by effective communication to raise awareness of, and encourage participation in democratic accountability					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	2%	16%	56%	19%	8%
2016	0%	11%	65%	14%	10%
Scrutiny operates non-politically					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	2%	25%	59%	11%	3%
2016	5%	39%	39%	11%	6%
Scrutiny deals effectively with sensitive political issues, tension and conflict					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	2%	19%	51%	13%	16%
2016	3%	14%	62%	14%	6%
Scrutiny builds trust and good relationships with a wide variety of internal stakeholders					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	2%	11%	68%	6%	13%
2016	0%	16%	58%	15%	11%
Scrutiny builds trust and good relationships with a wide variety of external stakeholders					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	3%	11%	62%	6%	18%
2016	0%	17%	52%	14%	17%

Scrutiny regularly engages in evidence based challenge of decision makers					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	3%	19%	60%	14%	3%
2016	2%	18%	58%	18%	5%
Scrutiny regularly engages in evidence based challenge of service providers					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	3%	21%	56%	14%	6%
2016	0%	23%	58%	13%	7%
Scrutiny provides viable and well evidenced solutions to recognised problems					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	5%	26%	47%	13%	10%
2016	2%	26%	44%	16%	13%
Nonexecutive members provide an evidence based check and balance to Executive decision making					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	0	16%	65%	10%	10%
2016	3%	13%	55%	15%	15%
Decision makers give public account for themselves at scrutiny committees for their portfolio responsibilities					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	2%	11%	67%	19%	2%
2016	5%	13%	60%	16%	7%
Overview and scrutiny enables the 'voice' of local people and communities across the area to be heard as part of decision and policy-making processes					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
2018	3%	16%	67%	10%	5%
2016	3%	18%	63%	8%	8%