



SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP GROUP – 15TH SEPTEMBER 2020

SUBJECT: SCRUTINY - MEMBERS SURVEY

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To review the Scrutiny Committee arrangements adopted by Council at its meeting on 9th April 2019 and to consider the outcome of the scrutiny committee Member survey on these arrangements prior to making a recommendation to Council.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 To consider the outcome of the scrutiny committee member survey and to make a recommendation to Council.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Scrutiny Leadership Group to note the findings of the Member survey attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 To make a recommendation to Council on the outcome of the survey to retain the current number of scrutiny committees.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To monitor and provide oversight of the scrutiny function.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Scrutiny Review report was considered by Council on 16th April 2019 and made a number of recommendations to improve the scrutiny function. The recommendations were developed following the Wales Audit Office report, 'Scrutiny Fit for the Future', the findings of the scrutiny self-evaluation questionnaire and the findings from the scrutiny workshop sessions.
- 5.2 Council endorsed option 3 which increased the number of scrutiny committees to 5, subject to a review of this arrangement after 12 months. As a result in February 2020 a short survey was developed and sent to all Members seeking their views on the present structure and providing an opportunity to put forward suggestions. There was a response rate of 79% for the survey with 80% agreeing that the option to increase the number of scrutiny committees to 5 was the right option. In terms of meeting frequency 83% consider that meetings should remain at 6 weekly and that the membership should continue with 16 councillors. There were a few comments suggesting the establishment of a Community Engagement and Consultation Scrutiny Committee, and that Members should be nominated based upon skills and knowledge. The outcome of the survey is attached at Appendix 1.

5.3 In terms of scrutiny activity during the past year (2019/20) compared to the previous year, the following tables provide Members with information on the number of meetings held, number of items considered, average attendance and also average length of meetings.

5.4 **Meetings held April 2019 – March 2020 Compared to same period 2018/19**
(Total inclusive of specials – these are shown in brackets)

Scrutiny Committee	Number of Meetings 2018/19	Number of Meetings 2019/20
Education	10 (3 special)	9 (1 special)
Environment and Sustainability	N/a	7
Housing and Regeneration	N/a	8 (1 special)
Regeneration and Environment	9 (2 special)	N/a
Partnerships	2	2
Policy and Resources	8 (1 special)	7 (1 special)
Social Services	8 (1 special)	7
Total	37 (7 were specials)	40 (3 were specials)

The above table shows a reduction in the number of special meetings held in 2019/20 compared to 2018/19. It should be noted that there is a limit of two special meetings per scrutiny committee, during each municipal year. Education for Life Scrutiny Committee held three for the period April to March 2018/2019, however one of these was in the previous municipal year so did not exceed the total permitted.

Overall the additional meetings (when excluding specials) increased by seven during 2019/20, which reflects the establishment of Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee. When considering the difference in the number of meetings including the number of specials over the two years, the difference in the total number of meetings is three. This may indicate that the additional scrutiny committee established in 2019/20 has provided more capacity and therefore reduced the need for specials. When compared to previous years the number of scrutiny committee meetings has increased overall from 33 (including 5 specials) in 2015/16, to 34 (including 6 specials) for 2016/17 and also 2017/18, indicating an overall upward trend.

5.5 **Comparison of Number of Agenda and Information Items per Scrutiny Committee**

	2018/2019	2018/2019	2019/2020	2019/2020
Scrutiny Committee	Agenda Items	Info Items	Agenda Items	Info Items
Education for Life	22	14	24	15
Environment and Sustainability	N/a	N/a	19	8
Housing and Regeneration	N/a	N/a	19	7
Regeneration and Environment	20	14	N/a	N/a
Partnerships	5	3	6	3
Policy and Resources	26	24	18	10
Social Services	21	1	18	3
Total	94	56	104	36

In terms of the items discussed at scrutiny committees since April 2019, there has been an increase in items from 94 in 2018/19 to 104, a difference of 10. There has been a decrease in information items (which are not included in agenda packs, but are still published) from 56 in 2018/19 to 46 in 2019/20. However the number of agenda going forward may reduce with the end of the WHQS programme in 2020. There were 5 reports in 2018/19 and 4 reports in 2019/20 related to WHQS.

5.6 **Average Meeting Time** (hours:minutes)

Scrutiny Committee	2018/19	2019/20
Education for Life	1:43	1:27

Environment and Sustainability	N/a	1:16
Housing and Regeneration	N/a	1:07
Regeneration and Environment	1:36	N/A
Partnerships	1:59	2:05
Policy and Resources	2:00	1:32
Social Services	1:35	1:28

Comparison across the scrutiny committees show that average meeting time has either remained the same or has reduced. Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee for example has considered 8 fewer items during 2019/20 which may account for the reduced average time. In addition the removal of Cabinet Member statements from the agendas, may explain the average time of meetings reducing slightly.

5.7 Members Attendance

Scrutiny Committee	Average Cllr Attendance 18/19	% 2018/19	Average Cllr Attendance 19/20	% 2019/20	Variance
Education	12	75%	11	69%	-1
Environment and Sustainability	N/a	N/a	13	81%	
Housing and Regeneration	N/a	N/a	11	69%	
Regeneration and Environment	12	75%	N/a		N/a
Partnerships	11	69%	10	63%	-1
Policy and Resources	12	75%	12	75%	nil
Social Services	12	75%	11	69%	-1

Comparison of attendance across scrutiny committees for the two years shows very little difference in the level of attendance. The difference between attendance at Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee is of interest, the same councillors sit on both committees but the average has been slightly less for Partnerships, at 75% and 63% respectively.

There is no direct comparison for attendance at the new scrutiny committees (Environment and Sustainability & Housing and Regeneration) in 2019/20. However attendance can be compared to Policy and Resources and the former Regeneration and Environment (which were previously were responsible for these areas). The table above shows that attendance at Housing and Regeneration in 2019/20 has been 69% compared to 75% at both Policy and Resources and the former Regeneration and Environment in 2018/19, a difference of one Member.

5.8 Future of Scrutiny

As outlined in the report to Cabinet on 22nd July 2020 entitled 'Strengthening Team Caerphilly' there will be a review of Decision Making which will include the scrutiny function. Scrutiny Committee Members will therefore have an opportunity to engage over the coming months on the future direction of the scrutiny function.

5.9 Conclusion

The analysis of the number of meetings, items discussed and the length of meetings shows some changes since 2019, there have been a reduced number of special meetings and information items suggesting that the additional capacity has absorbed this workload. The

length of meetings has slightly reduced possibly due to the removal of the Cabinet Member statement. The average number of agenda items has remained very similar apart from Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and this is probably due to losing housing related items.

The Member survey shows that the majority of Members are content with the changes to the number and structure of scrutiny committees agreed by Council in April 2019.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 That the majority of Members, based on a response rate of 79%, agree with the changes made to the number of scrutiny committees in April 2019.

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 scrutiny function contribute to the following Well-being Goals within the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2016 by ensuring that it is effective in providing oversight for all Council services and that they 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 There are no equalities implications.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no financial implications.

11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no personnel implications.

12. CONSULTATIONS

12.1 This report has been sent to the Consultees listed below and all comments received are reflected in this report.

13. STATUTORY POWER

13.1 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000.

13.2 Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

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Background Papers:

Council 16th April 2019 Agenda Item 9

Cabinet 22nd July 2020 Agenda Item 6

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Scrutiny Member Survey Results