



Public Accounts Select Committee

Select Committee Work Programme Report

Date: 28 June 2023

Key decision: No.

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Director of Law and Corporate Governance (Scrutiny Manager)

Outline and recommendations

To ask members to discuss the committee's priorities for the 2023/24 municipal year and to agree an annual work programme.

The Committee is asked to:

- Consider the potential items set out in the draft work programme at **Appendix D**.
- Consider the policy context: the corporate strategy priorities.
- Discuss the committee's priorities and agree a work programme for 2023/24.
- Note opportunities for public engagement, site visits and expert witnesses.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

The Public Accounts Select Committee is scheduled to meet on the following dates in the municipal year 2023-24:

- 28 June 2023
- 21 September 2023
- 30 November 2023
- 23 January 2024
- 14 March 2024

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report asks members to discuss and agree priorities for the Select Committee's work programme for the year ahead and describes the process for its approval by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and ongoing monitoring by the Select Committee.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Committee is asked to:
 - Consider the potential items set out in the draft work programme at **Appendix D**.
 - Consider the policy context: the corporate strategy priorities.
 - Discuss the Committee's priorities and agree a work programme for 2023-24.
 - Note opportunities for public engagement, site visits and expert witnesses.
- 2.2. The Committee may wish to consider appointing a climate champion as suggested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3. The role of the Public Accounts Select Committee

- 3.1. The Committee has a key role in scrutinising the performance and supporting the development of the Council's financial functions and budget setting processes.. It also has a role in engaging and reflecting the views of residents in relation to finance-related matters.
- 3.2. The Committee considers how the Council manages and uses money - it can:
 - Review the way Council managers make decisions about spending money.
 - Challenge the Council to use the most effective means of managing its finances.
 - Examine and challenge the Council's plans for spending over the whole year - and delivering its budget.
 - Recommend ways to improve the Council's processes for buying goods and services (and for managing services to get the best value).
- 3.3. The Committee's full terms of reference are set out in **Appendix A**.

4. Different types of scrutiny

- 4.1. It's important to think early on about the most effective way to scrutinise each item on the work programme. Some issues may only require an initial briefing, circulated by email, for information, some may require site visits and public engagement, and others may require detailed questioning at a formal committee meeting and input from stakeholders.
- 4.2. The *Effective Scrutiny Guidelines* at **Appendix C** set out 5 key principles to take into account when carrying out scrutiny: *Prioritise; Be independent; Work Collectively; Engage; make SMART recommendations*. This will help the Committee decide on the most appropriate approach for the issue at hand.
- 4.3. Members should also note the comments in the [Local Democracy Review](#) about how scrutiny can be even more effective, participative and open. Suggestions included:
 - Focusing on fewer issues more closely linked to council priorities
 - More engagement with the public outside of formal meetings

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- Individual scrutiny members leading on defined topic areas
 - Contributing to new policy proposals at an early stage
- 4.4. Some of the most common scrutiny methods are described below, but members are encouraged to try new ways of gathering evidence and engaging the public and these categories are not absolute or necessarily discrete from one another.
- 4.5. The majority of work programme items tend to involve the below mentioned activities, where scrutiny is carried out as part of a single meeting with members:
- agreeing in advance the information and analysis needed
 - receiving an officer report presenting the relevant information
 - gathering additional evidence via activities outside of meetings
 - asking questions of the presenting officers or external witnesses
 - agreeing recommendations to Mayor and Cabinet and partners.

Pre-decision scrutiny

- 4.6. This is scrutiny undertaken in connection with a forthcoming decision. It may entail reviewing the policy area and issues to which the decision relates and making recommendations to inform the development of the executive's proposals or reviewing the executive's draft or final proposed decision and making recommendations regarding the proposals.

Policy review and development

- 4.7. This is where a committee reviews an issue and any relevant policy and develops policy recommendations to address the issue or improve any related policy.

Performance monitoring

- 4.8. Scrutiny can request a wide range of performance information to examine the effectiveness of council services. This includes monitoring data on key performance indicators and outcomes, financial performance and assessing the delivery of particular programme or projects against set targets, budgets or timescales.

Task and Finish Groups

- 4.9. For issues that require more extensive evidence gathering, members may put forward a proposal for a Task and Finish Group (TFG). The Overview & Scrutiny Committee will agree which TFGs should be established, their membership, terms of reference and duration. TFGs are independent of select committees and make recommendations directly to Mayor & Cabinet.

Information items

- 4.10. Some low-priority items may only require a briefing report to be circulated to committee members by email, with questions put to the report author for written response. There is no provision for discussion of information items at committee meetings.

5. Agreeing the Committee's work programme

- 5.1. A draft work programme is attached at Appendix D. It currently includes:
- suggestions made by the Committee at the last meeting of 2022-23
 - issues arising as a result of previous scrutiny
 - suggestions from Committee members, Cabinet Members and Council officers (further detail is set out in sections below).
- 5.2. It is for the Committee to set its own work programme and agree the priority issues it would like to include – the Committee does not have to look into everything officers, the public or other members suggest.

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- 5.3. When deciding on issues to include in the work programme, the Committee should consider the key services and programmes within the Committee's remit, the criteria for selecting and prioritising topics (see flowchart below), upcoming Mayor and Cabinet decisions (Appendix E) and avoid duplicating the work of any agreed task and finish groups (TFGs).
- 5.4. The Corporate Strategy 2022-26 sets out how the Council will deliver for its residents up to 2026. The Corporate Strategy provides an overarching framework and focus for all council business; and items within the Committee's work programme should be linked to the priorities in the strategy (Appendix B).
- 5.5. The Committee is recommended to schedule no more than **two substantive items per meeting** to allow enough time for detailed discussions and the involvement of any invited witnesses or guests and to leave space for any Mayor & Cabinet responses that may arise throughout the year. The Committee should be responsive and if urgent business arises throughout the year the work programme can be amended with urgent business added and lower priority business removed.
- 5.6. Provision is made for meetings to last for up to 2.5 hours, but the Committee should aim to **manage its business within 2 hours**. In exceptional cases the Committee may decide to suspend standing orders and extend the meeting for a further 30 minutes to conclude any urgent business.
- 5.7. The Committee should specify the information it would like for each item to ensure that officer reports and other evidence meets its needs. This should be done under the work programme item at every meeting.
- 5.8. There is no provision at Committee for the discussion of information items (reports to note). If required, they will be circulated to members by email with questions put to the report author for a written response.
- 5.9. Some of the regular reports that fall under the Committee's remit, which are presented as reports to note and are circulated to members by email in the first instance, include the following. They are only taken as substantive items if wider engagement and scrutiny would add value, in line with the prioritisation process below.
 - Asset strategy update
 - Treasury management mi-year review
 - Audit Panel update
 - Reserves update
- 5.10. An informal briefing and work programme planning session was held on Wednesday 21 June – with members and senior officers in attendance.
- 5.11. Suggestions made by the Committee at the last meeting of 2022-23
 - Children's services finance
 - An update on adult social care.
 - Income generation and commercialisation.
 - A briefing on Council insurances
- 5.12. Suggestions from Officers in view of forthcoming developments
 - Treasury management briefing
 - Capital programme delivery

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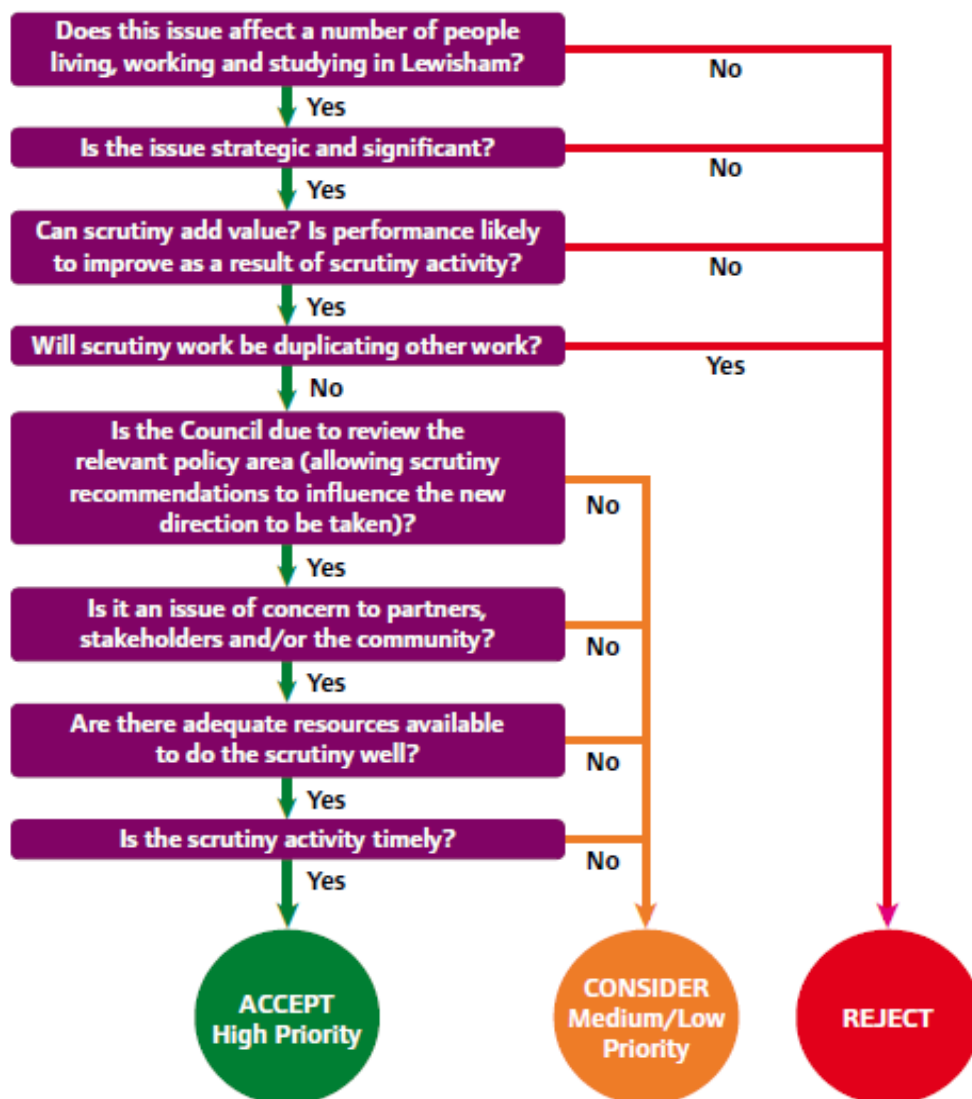
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5.13. Issues arising as a result of previous scrutiny

- Financial monitoring
- Income generation and commercialisation

5.14. It is the Chair's responsibility to keep abreast of developments within the Committee's remit, liaise regularly with the relevant cabinet member(s) and escalate any issues that require action by the Committee to the work programme as appropriate.

Scrutiny work programme – prioritisation process



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6. Approval and ongoing monitoring of the work programme

- 6.1. Each select committee is required to submit its work programme to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval. This is to ensure a coordinated overview and scrutiny work programme across select committees that avoids duplication of effort and supports effective scrutiny. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will meet on 4 July 2023.
- 6.2. The committee's work programme can be reviewed at each meeting to allow urgent items to be added and lower priority issues to be removed. Any potential items should be considered against the priority criteria outlined earlier in this report. If a high-priority item is included, a lower-priority item should be removed. The Committee's work programme must be achievable in the time available.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. Items on the Committee's work programme will have financial implications and these will need to be considered as part of the reports on those items

8. Legal implications

- 8.1. In accordance with the Council's Constitution, all scrutiny select committees must devise and submit a work programme to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the start of each municipal year.

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1. Equality Act 2010 brought together all previous equality legislation in England, Scotland and Wales. The Act included a new public sector equality duty, replacing the separate duties relating to race, disability and gender equality. The duty came into force on 6 April 2011. It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 9.2. The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 9.3. There may be equalities implications arising from items on the work programme and all activities undertaken by the Select Committee will need to give due consideration to this.

10. Climate change and environmental implications

- 10.1. There are no direct climate change or environmental implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. However, in February 2019 Lewisham Council declared a Climate Emergency and proposed a target to make the borough carbon neutral by 2030. An action plan to achieve this target was subsequently agreed by Mayor and Cabinet (following pre-decision scrutiny by the

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Sustainable Development Select Committee)¹. The plan incorporates all areas of the Council's work. Items on the work programme may well have climate change and environmental implications and reports considered by the Committee should acknowledge this.

- 10.2. The Committee may wish to appoint a climate champion as suggested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

11. Crime and disorder implications

- 11.1. There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. Items on the Committee's work programme may have crime and disorder implications and these will need to be considered as part of the reports on those items.

12. Health and wellbeing implications

- 12.1. There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. Items on the Committee's work programme may have health and wellbeing implications and these will need to be considered as part of the reports on those items.

13. Report author and contact

- 13.1. If you have any questions about this report please contact:

Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager) timothy.andrew@lewisham.gov.uk

14. Appendices

Appendix A – Committee terms of reference (see below)

Appendix B – Council corporate priorities (see below)

Appendix C – Effective scrutiny principles (see below)

Appendix D – Draft Work Programme for Public Accounts Select Committee 2023-24 (see attached)

Appendix E – Forward Plan of Key Decisions (see attached)

¹ See <https://lewisham.gov.uk/TacklingTheClimateEmergency> for a summary of the Council's work in

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Appendix A- Public Accounts Select Committee terms of reference

The following roles are common to all select committees:

(a) General functions

- To review and scrutinise decisions made and actions taken in relation to executive and non-executive functions
- To make reports and recommendations to the Council or the executive, arising out of such review and scrutiny in relation to any executive or non-executive function
- To make reports or recommendations to the Council and/or Executive in relation to matters affecting the area or its residents
- The right to require the attendance of members and officers to answer questions includes a right to require a member to attend to answer questions on up and coming decisions

(b) Policy development

- To assist the executive in matters of policy development by in depth analysis of strategic policy issues facing the Council for report and/or recommendation to the Executive or Council or committee as appropriate
- To conduct research, community and/or other consultation in the analysis of policy options available to the Council
- To liaise with other public organisations operating in the borough – both national, regional and local, to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working in policy development wherever possible

(c) Scrutiny

- To scrutinise the decisions made by and the performance of the Executive and other committees and Council officers both in relation to individual decisions made and over time
- To scrutinise previous performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives/performance targets and/or particular service areas
- To question members of the Executive or appropriate committees and executive directors personally about decisions
- To question members of the Executive or appropriate committees and executive directors in relation to previous performance whether generally in comparison with service plans and targets over time or in relation to particular initiatives which have been implemented
- To scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the borough and to invite them to make reports to and/or address the select committee/Business Panel and local people about their activities and performance
- To question and gather evidence from any person outside the Council (with their consent)
- To make recommendations to the Executive or appropriate committee and/or Council arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process

(d) Community representation

- To promote and put into effect closer links between overview and scrutiny members and the local community
- To encourage and stimulate an enhanced community representative role for overview and scrutiny members including enhanced methods of consultation with local people
- To liaise with the Council's ward assemblies so that the local community might participate in the democratic process and where it considers it appropriate to seek the views of the ward assemblies on matters that affect or are likely to affect the local areas, including accepting items for the agenda of the appropriate select committee from ward assemblies.
- To keep the Council's local ward assemblies under review and to make recommendations

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to the Executive and/or Council as to how participation in the democratic process by local people can be enhanced

- To receive petitions, deputations and representations from local people and other stakeholders about areas of concern within their overview and scrutiny remit, to refer them to the Executive, appropriate committee or officer for action, with a recommendation or report if the committee considers that necessary
- To consider any referral within their remit referred to it by a member under the Councillor Call for Action, and if they consider it appropriate to scrutinise decisions and/or actions taken in relation to that matter, and/or make recommendations/report to the Executive (for executive matters) or the Council (non-executive matters).

(e) Finance

- To exercise overall responsibility for finances made available to it for use in the performance of its overview and scrutiny function.

(f) Work programme

- As far as possible to draw up a draft annual work programme in each municipal year for consideration by the overview and scrutiny Business Panel. Once approved by the Business Panel, the relevant select committee will implement the programme during that municipal year. Nothing in this arrangement inhibits the right of every member of a select committee (or the Business Panel) to place an item on the agenda of that select committee (or Business Panel respectively) for discussion.
- The Council and the Executive will also be able to request that the overview and scrutiny select committee research and/or report on matters of concern and the select committee will consider whether the work can be carried out as requested. If it can be accommodated, the select committee will perform it. If the committee has reservations about performing the requested work, it will refer the matter to the Business Panel for decision.

Public Accounts Select Committee has specific responsibilities for the following:

- (a) To exercise all the functions and roles of the overview and scrutiny committee in relation to the following matters:
- To make reports and recommendations to the Council or the Executive which promote the better custodianship of the Council's finances and to make recommendations for best financial practice across the authority.
 - To investigate the possibilities for improving the Council's financial management practice and to make reports and recommendations to Executive or Council as appropriate.
 - To encourage the highest standards of financial custodianship where necessary overseeing training activity for all members in this area.
 - To consult on and to comment on and make recommendations to the Executive in respect of the actual and proposed contents of the Council's budget and without limiting the general remit of the committee, to hold the Executive to account for its performance in respect of all budgetary matters.
 - To receive reports as appropriate from the Audit Panel in respect of their overview of contract procedure rules and financial regulations.
 - To make recommendations and reports for consideration by the Executive or Council to improve procurement practice.
 - To scrutinise the effectiveness of the Audit Panel.

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Appendix B: Corporate Priorities 2022-2026

Cleaner and greener

- We will do everything we can to ensure that over the next four years we make the borough cleaner and greener for our residents. Working to tackle the climate crisis through every area of council policy, we will ensure Lewisham is rated as a ‘top tier’ council for our work on climate action.
- We will continue the excellent work we have done over the last four years on tree planting. By 2026 we will have planted more street trees, tiny forests and community orchards across our borough.
- We will strive to maintain our status as having the best parks in London, continuing to invest in our much-loved parks and using our upcoming Play Strategy to create exciting environments for children within them.
- We will enable more active travel, and aim to reduce reliance on cars, introducing new walking paths to connect our borough, making it easier and more pleasant to get about Lewisham by foot or bike.
- We will keep our high streets cleaner by supporting residents to do what they can and increasing our prosecutions for fly-tipping and street littering.

A strong local economy

- We will continue to expand our apprenticeship programme into new areas of work, building on the 260 apprentices that we placed during the 2018–2022 administration.
- We will invest in our high streets and create more pedestrianised spaces, doing what we can do ensure our borough is the best place in London for entrepreneurs to start their businesses.
- We will continue to promote Lewisham’s Shop Local Campaign, providing support for our independent businesses as well as protecting and improving our local street markets.
- We will actively work to attract jobs and businesses to Lewisham, building on the success of Lewisham Works and creating more spaces for pop-up stores and markets in shops that are temporarily empty.
- We will continue to work with businesses across the borough, encouraging them to become London Living Wage employers.

Quality housing

- We will deliver more social homes for Lewisham residents, working to provide as many people as possible with safe, comfortable accommodation that they can be proud of and happy living in.
- We will aim to improve the conditions in the borough’s housing stock, working with all housing providers to encourage retro-fitting as part of our drive to be carbon-neutral by 2030, and to develop a Lewisham Rent Repairs Charter that improves the quality and timeliness of repairs.
- We will provide more support to renters through further landlord licensing and enforcement of poorly managed homes, holding landlords to account and giving a voice to renters across the borough.
- We will safeguard our heritage by preserving and restoring our historic buildings and landmarks, ensuring Lewisham’s history is preserved and maintained for future generations.

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Children and Young People

- We will continue the fantastic work of the last four years, supporting our schools to improve and increasing the opportunities for young people in Lewisham.
- We will relentlessly focus on pupil achievement, working with our schools and communities to build on our inclusive and high-achieving system of local comprehensive schools.
- We will ensure the most vulnerable children are protected from harm, driving improvement in children's social care and aiming to reduce the number of children coming into care through earlier targeted support for families in crisis.
- We will help to create new breakfast clubs at schools and continue to lobby the government to expand their free school meals programme.

Safer Communities

- We will work with the police to implement our Violence Against Women and Girls strategy. This will include developing a new reporting tool that allows residents to map areas where they don't feel safe, and feed that back to the Council and police.
- We will continue to support the Mayor of London's Have a Word campaign, which encourages men to reflect on their own behaviour and the way they see, treat and talk about women.
- We will reduce the number of young people who enter the criminal justice system, focusing on prevention and expanding our trauma-informed approach, championed by our Youth Offending Service.
- We will continue to focus and develop our successful public health approach to youth violence, aiming to tackle knife crime and reduce sexual exploitation across the borough.

Open Lewisham

- We will celebrate Lewisham's diversity, ensuring we are a representative and inclusive council and workforce.
- We will maintain our status as a Borough of Sanctuary and London's leading borough for refugee resettlement.
- We will develop plans to build on our legacy as London's Borough of Culture, celebrating the diverse and creative communities within Lewisham. This will include creating a new Culture and Live Music Strategy and bringing artists, community groups and businesses together to launch a Black Arts Festival.
- We will maintain and strengthen the Lewisham Way of working in collaboration with our voluntary and community sectors and seek new areas where we can partner together.
- We will actively listen to our residents, being responsive to their concerns and communicative in our approach. We will co-design services with those affected by them and ensure strong consultation processes that reach out to people whose voices are seldom heard.

Health and Wellbeing

- We will partner with local food banks, food growing groups, schools and communities, through our joint Lewisham Food Action Plan. Together, we will ensure that everyone can access food and other essentials.
- We will learn from our Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health Inequalities Review, aiming to mitigate and ultimately end, structural racism and

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discrimination as a driver of health inequalities.

- We will progress towards a fairer social care system, improving conditions for care workers to ensure they feel valued, and that Lewisham is known as an exemplary employer.
- We will work with the local NHS to deliver the services Lewisham residents need and create the Lewisham Health Care and Wellbeing Charter.
- We will collaborate with other organisations to deliver the places, activities and programmes our residents need to feel empowered to live a physically active lifestyle.

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Appendix C- Effective Scrutiny Guidelines

At Lewisham we:

1. Prioritise

It is more effective to look at a small number of key issues in an in-depth way, than skim the surface of everything falling within scrutiny's remit. We try to focus on issues of concern to the community and/or matters that are linked to our corporate priorities. We only add items to the work programme if we are certain our consideration of the matter will make a real and tangible difference.

2. Are independent

Scrutiny is led by Scrutiny Members. Scrutiny Members are in charge of the work programme, and, for every item, we specify what evidence we require and what information we would like to see in any officer reports that are prepared. We are not whipped by our political party or unduly influenced by the Cabinet or senior officers.

3. Work collectively

If we collectively agree in advance what we want to achieve in relation to each item under consideration, including what the key lines of enquiry should be, we can work as a team to question witnesses and ensure that all the required evidence is gathered. Scrutiny is impartial and the scrutiny process should be free from political point scoring and not used to further party-political objectives.

4. Engage

Involving residents helps scrutiny access a wider range of ideas and knowledge, listen to a broader range of voices and better understand the opinions of residents and service users. Engagement helps ensure that recommendations result in residents' wants and needs being more effectively met.

5. Make SMART evidence-based recommendations

We make recommendations that are based on solid, triangulated evidence – where a variety of sources of evidence point to a change in practice that will positively alter outcomes. We recognise that recommendations are more powerful if they are:

- Specific (simple, sensible, significant).
- Measurable (meaningful, motivating).
- Achievable (agreed, attainable).
- Relevant (reasonable, realistic and resourced, results-based).
- Time bound (time-based, time limited, time/cost limited, timely, time-sensitive).

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