



Overview and Scrutiny 2018-2020

Overview and Scrutiny



“Effective overview and scrutiny of decisions made by the executive is essential to effective decision making.

Executive and non-executive councillors and council officers working together, engaging with residents, is the way we make the best decisions.

Transparency and openness within the council and without, are the essential values we must always follow to meet this aim.”

- Councillor Bill Brown, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny



Scrutiny in Numbers: 2018 - 20

43 Councillors on Lewisham's Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC)

6 Select Committees

10 Councillors on each select committee

3 Parent governor representatives

2 Diocesan representatives

2 Business panels

2 Joint health overview and scrutiny committees

1 Health and adult social care protocol

1 Scrutiny structure review

83
Select Committee meetings

7

OSC meetings

2

Education Business Panel meetings

22

Business Panel meetings

More than

90

external guests / expert witnesses

10

in-depth reviews

49

evidence gathering visits

58

referrals to Mayor and Cabinet

The purpose of scrutiny

The following principles, developed by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, underpin scrutiny's work:

Effective scrutiny:

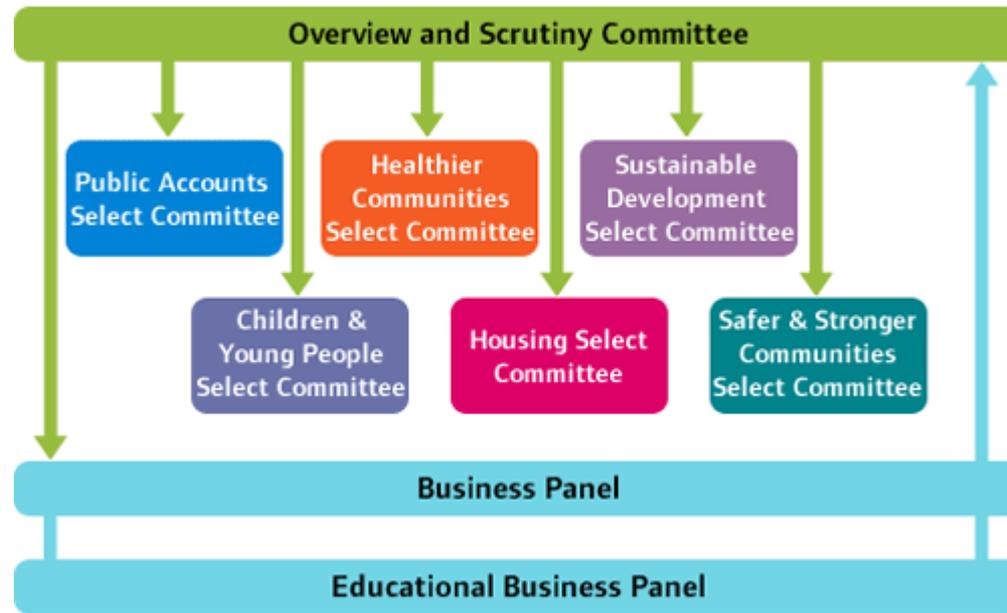
- Provides a 'critical friend' challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers
- Enables the voice and concerns of the public and its communities
- Is carried out by independent-minded governors who lead and own the scrutiny process
- Drives improvement in public services.

Scrutiny oversees and reviews the implementation of Council policy, uses performance information to monitor the quality of services and holds decision makers to account for the decisions they make. Scrutiny councillors and officers have worked hard over the last two years to ensure that these responsibilities have been met by:

- Scrutinising decisions before they are made and before they are implemented
- Holding the Mayor and other decision makers to account once decisions have been made
- Reviewing policies and their implementation as well as their impact on local people
- Contributing to the development of policy by investigating issues of local concern and making recommendations for change.

Scrutiny councillors play a different role to professional officers. The value they bring is a different perspective: 'thinking outside the box'; introducing new ideas; and amplifying the voice of service users, their needs and their aspirations.

The Structure of Scrutiny at Lewisham 2018-20



Lewisham has six dedicated select committees, each carrying out specialised scrutiny and undertaking in-depth reviews into topical issues:

- Children and Young People
- Healthier Communities
- Housing
- Public Accounts
- Safer Stronger Communities
- Sustainable Development

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee holds the Mayor and Cabinet to account through dedicated question and answer sessions. It also looks at strategic and cross-cutting issues such as the Council budget and the Corporate Strategy.

The Business Panels review key decisions, referring them back to the decision maker when required.

Scrutiny Structure Review

Once we return to “business as usual” following the Covid-19 public health emergency, changes will be made to the scrutiny structure in order to maximise its effectiveness. The Local Democracy Working Group has agreed that a task and finish group approach for in-depth/topical scrutiny should be developed, in place of in-depth reviews being carried out by select committees.

- To enable this each select committee will have 5 meetings scheduled across the course of the year to free up capacity for the introduction of task and finish groups, which will be established by the full overview and scrutiny committee.
- Each select committee will appoint 6 councillors, apart from the Children and Young People Select Committee which will appoint 8 councillors, to sit alongside the 5 education representatives.

Other Practice Changes:

Shorter meetings

Each meeting will conclude its business within 2 hours and certainly within 2.5 hours. If standing orders are suspended in *exceptional* circumstances to allow urgent business to be concluded, the meeting will continue for no longer than a further 30 minutes.

Fewer substantive items per meeting

Chairs and committees will only add items to work programmes if they are certain their consideration of the matter will make a real and tangible difference. There will be 2 (3 at most) substantive items per meeting and capacity will be retained at the start of the year to allow committees to look at urgent issues as they arise.

Information items

To support Select Committees in looking at fewer items, whilst ensuring that important issues do not “fall through the gaps”, scrutiny members will be provided with information updates outside of formal meetings. This will take the form of a regular information digest which will provide council wide performance and policy information; and specific information reports prepared for particular committees. Committee Members will be able to review the information they receive and intervene “by exception”, escalating any issues that require action by the committee to the work programme as appropriate.

Fit for purpose reports

Committees will specify what information they want to see in officer reports to ensure they meet expectations. The work programme item will be an active item and given more prominence, so that the items for the next meeting are properly reviewed and specific requests for the content of upcoming reports and presentations are made.



A democratic
and open
Lewisham

Scrutiny Chairs 2018-20



**Councillor John Muldoon,
Healthier
Communities,
2018-20**



**Councillor Luke Sorba, Children
and Young People,
2018-20**



**Councillor Bill Brown, Overview
and Scrutiny,
2018-20**



**Councillor Peter Bernards,
Housing, 2019-20**



**Councillor Susan Wise, Housing,
2018-19**



**Councillor Liam Curran, Sustainable
Development. 2018-
20**



**Councillor John Mallory, Public
Accounts, 2018-20**



**Councillor Juliet Campbell, Safer,
Stronger
Communities,
2019-20**

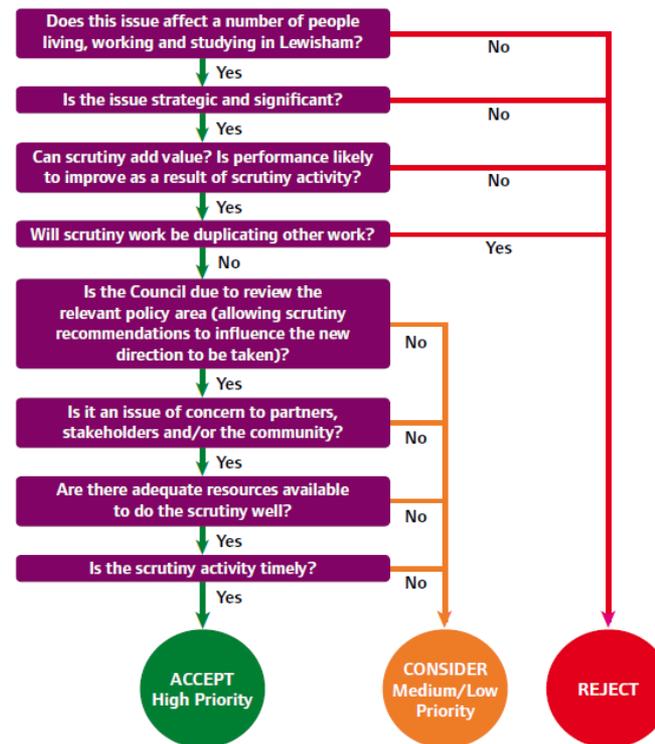


**Councillor Pauline Morrison, Safer,
Stronger
Communities,
2018-19**

Prioritisation

Scrutiny aims to focus only on those issues where it can make an impact, so prioritising items for scrutiny is crucial. Scrutiny Members follow a **prioritisation process** when deciding on what to include in work programmes

Scrutiny work programme – prioritisation process



Guidelines for Effective Scrutiny

At Lewisham, we:

Prioritise

It is more effective to look at a couple of key issues per meeting in an in-depth way, than skim the surface of a large number of items. We try to focus on issues of concern to the community and 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.

Stay independent

Scrutiny is led by Scrutiny Members. We are not whipped by our political party or unduly influenced by the Cabinet or senior officers.

Work collectively

We collectively agree in advance what we want to achieve in relation to each issue we consider, including what the key lines of enquiry should be. We work as a team to question witnesses and ensure that all the required evidence is gathered.

Engage

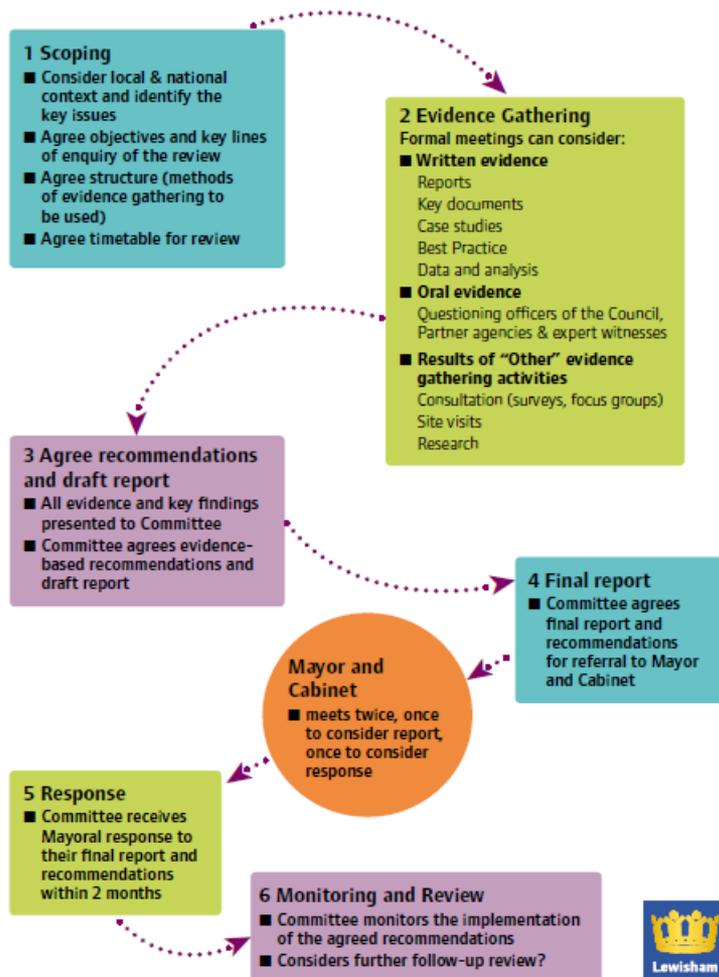
Involving residents helps scrutiny access a wider range of ideas and knowledge, listen to a broader range of voices and better understand the opinions of residents and service users. We engage so that our recommendations result in residents' wants and needs being more effectively met.

Make evidence-based recommendations

We know that scrutiny has the most impact when our recommendations are based on solid, triangulated evidence – where a variety of sources of evidence point to a change in practice that will positively alter outcomes.

The impact of scrutiny

How to carry out an in-depth review



Scrutiny is committed to creating maximum impact for its work. We use evidence from a broad range of sources to challenge the performance of the Council and partner organisations and drive improvement.

Through the in-depth review process, we hear from guest witnesses and experts alongside council officers and representatives of other public services. Lewisham has a clear process for developing and managing in-depth reviews.

A chart showing the reviews completed during 2018-20 can be found overleaf, followed by examples of scrutiny evidence gathering and a series of case studies highlighting examples of in-depth review work.

In-Depth Reviews 2018-20

Committee	2018-19	2019-20
Sustainable Development	Preserving Local pubs	Parks Management
	Development of the Local Plan (2018-20) The Regeneration of Catford town centre (2018-20)	
Housing		Resident Engagement
Safer, Stronger, Communities	Prevent and Stop & Search	Equalities
Children and Young People	Exclusions	The effect of temporary accommodation on children
Public Accounts	Strategic income generation and commercialisation	Commercialisation and culture change

Evidence Gathering



The Children and Young People Select Committee visited Sedgehill Secondary School in September 2018. Members wanted to see the school in action and meet the United Learning School Improvement Partnership Team that had been appointed following the school going into 'Special Measures'. Secondary school improvement was a key focus for the Committee in 2018/19 and Sedgehill featured heavily in councillor casework and school improvement discussions. The visit gave context to the various papers they had received on the subject and provided the opportunity to ask questions of the United Learning team.

In October 2018, Scrutiny Members visited Parliament to observe and discuss national scrutiny practice. Members observed a session of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee, and met with the both the Chair of the Committee and the Clerk. There was a useful discussion on how parliamentary scrutiny works and the work done in advance of a session, including the preparation of questions, to ensure the committee gets the evidence it needs to further its inquiry.



Evidence Gathering



In December 2018, the Vice Chair of the Healthier Communities Select Committee visited Castlebar Care Home in Forest Hill. The purpose of the visit was to better understand this type of adult social care provision from the perspective of the resident and also, to understand the role of the council in overseeing these establishments.

The Safer Stronger Select Committee was invited to observe a session of the Police and Crime Committee at the London Assembly in January 2019; meeting the Committee afterwards. Councillor Sheikh and the scrutiny manager were able to hear the evidence being presented on stop and search from a number of experts and community youth groups; which provided the London wide context for the Committee's review into stop and search in Lewisham.



Evidence Gathering



In June 2019, As part of its ongoing scrutiny of the Council's new homes programme the Housing Select Committee visited Longfield Crescent in Forest Hill. The Committee was interested in the build quality of the latest tranche of new council homes and, in particular, how the development fitted in physically with the existing estate. With a significant number of the homes in the Council's home building programme expected to be on infill sites the Committee wanted to get a better understanding of how it might feel for existing communities as well as new residents.

Evidence Gathering



In December 2019, the Children and Young People Select Committee visited Hamilton Lodge (a homeless hostel). The purpose was to understand more about emergency accommodation provision, both in terms of room size, state of repair and other practical considerations; and to give context to the Committee's review into the effects of temporary accommodation on children. It also afforded the Chair of the Committee the chance to ask more informal questions that are easier asked outside of the formal committee setting.

In February 2020, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee visited Glasgow to gather evidence for the Committee's equalities review. They met two members of the Council's Executive Committee and the City Convenor for Workforce including Equalities. They gathered evidence on how Glasgow's equality objectives were shaped through consultation and engagement mechanisms; and embedded across all service areas. The high quality of Equality Impact Assessments was also discussed and how these were made accessible to the public.



In-depth Review: Parks Management

In 2019 the Committee embarked on a review of parks management in Lewisham. This was timely – because the parks service was considering options for the future management of the borough’s parks, as the end of a long term contract with an external provider was coming to an end. The Committee visited a number of the borough’s parks – and invited witnesses to give evidence. Its recommendations during the options appraisal for the end of the contract led to Mayor and Cabinet agreeing to expedite the options appraisal for an environmental services local authority trading company.



As a result of the review the committee recommended that:

- A play strategy should be published, which develops a coordinated approach to inclusive play for children of all abilities.
- The Council should consider how best it can support park user groups. This should include an action plan for establishing user groups in all major parks and green spaces, who can report issues, in time for the insourcing of the park service (November 2021).
- Planting in parks should support the Council’s ambitions for biodiversity and for climate change adaptation, with a further biodiversity impact analysis being carried out on the playing pitch strategy; and an integrated pest management policy, which prioritises biodiversity and sustainability.
- There should be close collaboration between the insourced Lewisham Council parks service and Lewisham Homes’ ground maintenance service.
- The Council’s future approach to the management of cafes in parks should strongly emphasise social value.
- In advance of the insourcing of the parks service there should be an audit of the formal and historic assets in Lewisham’s parks and the parks service should then develop a programme to manage and maintain these special features.

In-depth Review: Stop and Search

In 2018/19, the Safer Stronger Community Select Committee carried out a review focussed on two distinct areas where there were concerns that the implementation of national policies may disproportionately target particular groups – the Police's use of Stop and Search and the Government's Prevent Strategy.

Overview and Scrutiny
Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee:
The Impact of Stop and Search and Prevent on
Community Relations

March 2019



The Committee's review was picked up by the Centre for Public Scrutiny as an example of good practice in Scrutiny. It was also reported in local press.



Range of Evidence: Community consultation played a major part in the evidence gathering. This included a number of visits to understand best practice; and consultation with partner organisations and community groups, including the Lewisham Safer Neighbourhood Board. Engagement was also carried out with the Lewisham Interfaith Forum, the Lewisham Police Youth Independent Advisory Board and the Lewisham Young Advisors. The Committee commissioned a number of experts to give evidence to the review including the Home Office, MOPAC, Lewisham's Police Borough Commander and Stop Watch.

The evidence the Committee received on stop and search emphasised the high levels of disproportionality of those stopped, with Black people being substantially more likely to be stopped than White people. The evidence also highlighted the young age profile of those stopped which was a concern to many committee members.

The “quality” of the stop and search and the importance of it being fair and polite was a theme repeated throughout the report. Other areas highlighted include the importance of young people in particular knowing their rights in terms of stop and search, which was highlighted by MOPAC, young people and the evidence from Stopwatch.

With respect to Prevent, the report highlighted that the policy itself was based on safeguarding. Where the policy was being implemented successfully there appeared to be some positive outcomes for community groups. However, the Committee felt the number of referrals of children and young adults in the national and regional figures was of concern. The Committee was also very concerned that the local data was not available for them even confidentially and that there was a lack of transparency in the policy. This is was reflected in the Committee's recommendations.

In-depth Review: Resident Engagement

In June 2019 the Housing Select Committee agreed to carry out an in-depth review of resident engagement in housing development. Given that the Council is committed to delivering 1,000 new social homes by 2022 – a programme that will involve various levels of resident engagement – the committee agreed that it would be an opportune time to review current practice in order to support the Council to achieve its strategic objectives.



The committee considered information from a wide range of sources during the review, from public engagement workshops to evidence sessions with subject experts. It was clear from the evidence that there were already a number of examples of good practice in Lewisham – particularly in relation to seldom-heard groups.

The committee nonetheless set out a series of recommendations in relation to early engagement; ongoing engagement; and seldom-heard groups. This included:

- *That early engagement should be broad and seek to identify local issues, potential opposition, seldom-heard groups, and engagement preferences.*
- *That early engagement should explain the benefits of new homes to an area as well as the social necessity.*
- *That plans for ongoing engagement should be developed with residents and feature a range of activity which reflects their engagement preferences.*
- *That there should be different levels of engagement based on proximity to the development which are made clear from the start.*
- *That engagement methods for seldom-heard groups should include making targeted contact and holding community events tailored to their interests.*
- *That data on engagement activity should be monitored and residents involved in evaluating engagement plans.*



“... while there is a growing number of people who support the building of new homes, there is also a growing number of people opposed to development, which should be taken into account in resident engagement...”

Committee discussions at first evidence session, 10th July 2019

Holding the Executive to Account



The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, March 2020

Part of the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to hold the Council's Executive to account. Every year it holds Question & Answer sessions with the Mayor and each Cabinet Member. Each session explores the work the Mayor and Cabinet Members have done in relation to their portfolio, looking at priorities, actions, achievements and impact.

The Business Panels review key decisions, referring them back to the decision maker when required. Over the last two years the following decisions have been 'called in':

- Award of Contract for the provision of Carer Information, Advice and Support Services (January 2019)
- Lewisham Homes Articles Amendment (March 2019)
- Recommissioning of Building-Based Day services for Older Adults (November 2019)
- Disposal of Former Wide Horizons Sites in Wales and Kent (February 2020)

Voices we have heard

External input ensures that scrutiny benefits from a wide range of expert evidence and that a balanced range of views is heard. During 2018-20, we heard from many people and organisations, including:

- **Healthier Communities Select Committee:** Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust; Lewisham Local Medical Committee; Lewisham Clinical Commissioning Group; Lewisham Safeguarding Adults Board; South London and Maudsley NHS Trust; Lewisham Speaking Up; Lewisham People's Parliament; Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign; and Rushey Green TimeBank.
- **Children and Young People Select Committee:** South London and Maudsley NHS Trust (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services); ParentENGage; Lewisham Education Group; No More Exclusions; and the Independent Chair of the Lewisham Safeguarding Children's Partnership.
- **Sustainable Development Select Committee:** Volunteer campaigns from the Lennox Project; Architects and Urban Designers from Studio Egret West; Pubs Protection Officer from The Campaign for Real Ale; Campaigner from the Fair Pint Campaign; Chair of Grove Park Neighbourhood Forum/ Baring Hall Trust; Co-Chair, Lee Forum; Chief Executive, Parks for London; Representatives of Lewisham Green Spaces Forum; Director of Resident Services, Lewisham Homes; Head of Environmental Services, Lewisham Homes; and Members of Climate Action Lewisham
- **Safer, Stronger Communities Select Committee:** Voluntary Action Lewisham; Save Lewisham Libraries Campaign; Friends of Manor House Library Campaign; Head of Local Delivery & Communications at the Home Office; Chair of Safer Neighbourhood Board; Head of Lewisham and Southwark Probation; Stopwatch and St. Mary's University; MOPAC; Lewisham Police Service; Age UK; Lewisham Pensioners Forum; Positive Ageing Council; Unite the Union; Rushey Green Timebank; Metro Charity; London Fire Brigade; and the Lewisham Disabled People's Commission.
- **Housing Select Committee:** Regenter B3; Lewisham Homes; Pinnacle; Rydon; Lewisham Tenants' Fund; Homelessness Forum; 999 Club; Bench Outreach; Phoenix Community Housing; and TPAS.
- **Public Accounts Select Committee:** The 'Save Lewisham Libraries campaign' and the Association for Public Service Excellence.



Lewisham
Safeguarding
Children Partnership



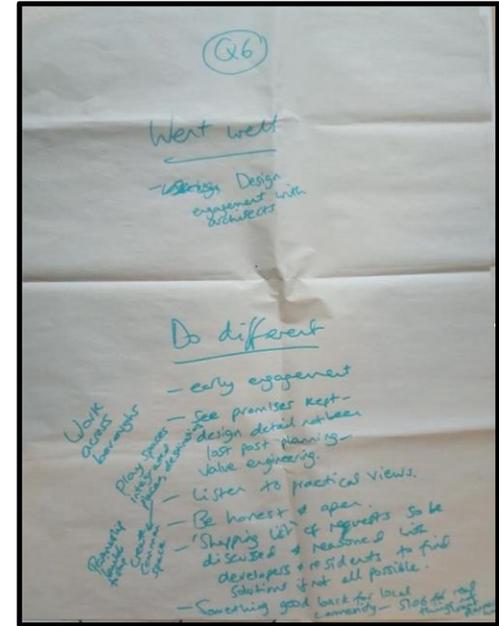
TENANT ENGAGEMENT EXPERTS
tpas

NHS
South London and Maudsley
NHS Foundation Trust

Engagement



Diversity in Lewisham



Engaging Lewisham Homes residents at the 2000 Community Action Centre on the Pepys Estate. The Housing Select Committee recorded ideas from local residents and six TRAs from in and around Deptford.

Engagement

Members of the public are encouraged to participate in scrutiny by suggesting issues to be scrutinised, attending meetings to provide evidence to scrutiny, or participating in scrutiny engagement activities. Lewisham is a very diverse borough. Involving the public in scrutiny helps us access a wider range of ideas and knowledge, listen to a broader range of voices and better understand the opinions of residents. The Council is here to serve residents' needs and interests; and their involvement in policy development improves our understanding of their needs and interests; and ensures that they are more effectively met.

Scrutiny Branding

With the help of the Communications team, a distinctive brand has been developed for Scrutiny which will be used on all agendas, scrutiny documents and letters.

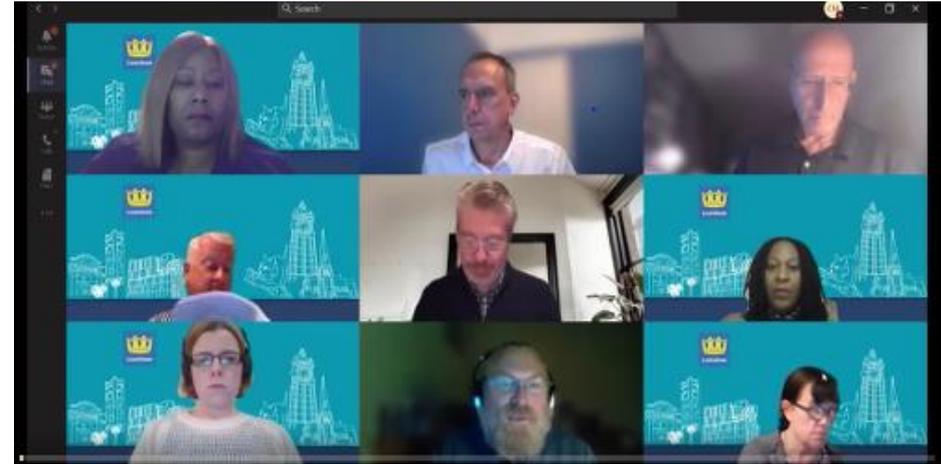
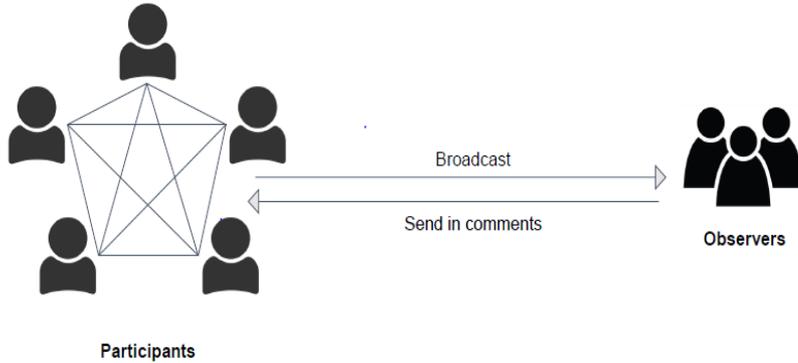
This is part of broader work to raise awareness of scrutiny across the organisation and ensure that scrutiny is visible, distinct and relevant.

We want scrutiny to have a high profile in Lewisham and be seen as a useful, independent resource. A critical friend to the Council, focussed on improving outcomes for residents.

Overview and Scrutiny



Future Challenges: Covid-19



Covid-19

- The start of the new municipal year, 2020-21, has seen councils grappling with the worst public health crisis the country has experienced in a century. We are in a fast-moving and unprecedented situation, within which scrutiny has a key role in examining the Council's response to the emergency. Important decisions are being made which have a significant impact on the lives of the borough's residents and these must be scrutinised.
- The way in which scrutiny holds decision makers to account also needs to change as social distancing measures, and the need to work from home, require meetings to be held remotely.
- In line with CfPS and other national guidance, the Council agreed, at the start of the pandemic, to operate a single scrutiny committee until there was capacity for normal scrutiny to resume: Business Panel, but with an enhanced role. Business Panel would review key decisions before and after they are made and scrutinise the response to the emergency and the impact on key council services.



COVID-19 support to councils

Guide 2: Approaches to scrutiny during the crisis

The Centre for Public Scrutiny is supported by the Local Government Association to provide advice, guidance and support to councils on governance and scrutiny. At this time of crisis we are working closely with national partners, and local authorities, to develop practical solutions to the challenges that this situation poses. This includes a series of the guides on key governance responses to the crisis which will be periodically updated.

CfPS operates a helpline through which we can provide support to councils and councillors on matters relating to governance and scrutiny. This can include answering questions as well as problem-solving a solution and help with member training and development.

Contact: info@cfps.org.uk or [01223300000](tel:01223300000)

We are working closely with other partners – particularly the Association of Democratic Scrutiny Officers and Lawyers in Local Government – to ensure that advice of consistent and accurate.

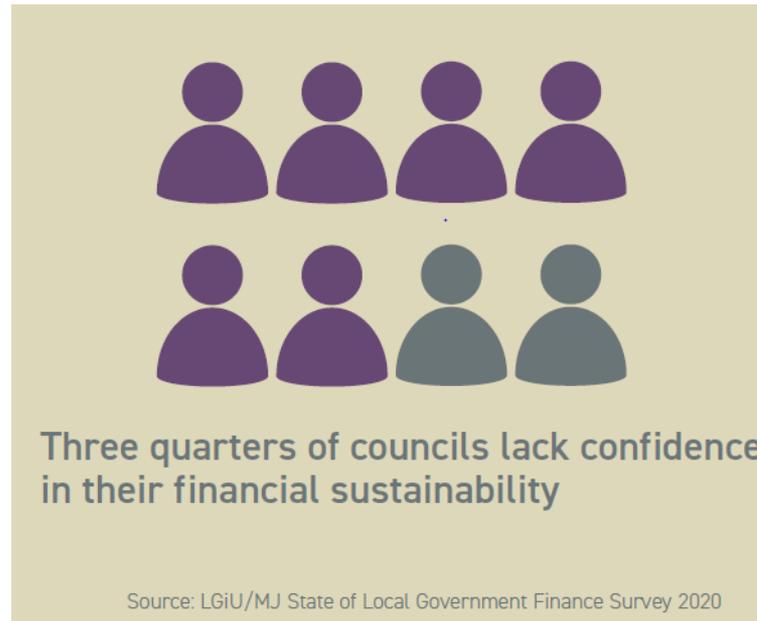
More information can be found at <https://www.cfps.org.uk/home/2020/04/>

This is the second of five guides for councillors (and those supporting them) on managing some of the challenges associated with carrying out their governance roles during the COVID-19 crisis.

It covers the key arguments in favour of continued, robust member-led scrutiny in this time of crisis, and sets out an approach to provide that scrutiny in a way that is proportionate and fits within the constrained resources that councils will have at their disposal. It focuses on the operational of scrutiny under executive arrangements in local authorities. In due course we plan to produce material covering the role that combined authority scrutiny might perform.

Some of the changes we talk about below are likely to necessitate changes to standing orders. CfPS is funded by the LGA to provide direct support to councils on matters relating to governance and scrutiny and would be happy to speak to councillors and officers about how these changes might be made.

Future Challenges: Finance



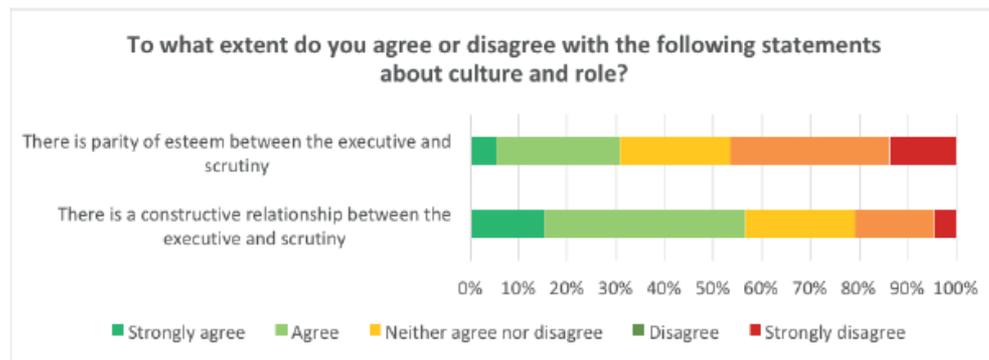
Finance

- The Council will continue to operate within challenging financial circumstances over the next few years. A significant level of savings will be required – the potential budget shortfalls are estimated at circa £40m over the three years to 2023/24. There are also questions over how the emergency response to Covid 19 will be financed.
- The Council's financial position means that it cannot do all that it once did, nor meet all those expectations that might once have been met. Severe financial constraints have been imposed on Council services with cuts to be made year on year on year.
- Scrutiny members will need to assure themselves that they have a good understanding of the Council's changing financial position and, as uncertainties resolve and government policy develops, scrutiny will be required to demonstrate leadership and diligence as it challenges decision makers and fulfils its responsibilities.

Future Challenges: Culture

“We need to foster a culture where there is parity of esteem between the executive and scrutiny; and where scrutiny’s role as an important and equal counter balance to the political executive is valued and respected. Scrutiny is a whole council affair and its worth needs to be recognised by those in leadership roles, including senior officers and cabinet members. Scrutiny leads to better decisions and better outcomes and this needs to be acknowledged.”

- Cllr Bill Brown, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny



In our survey of scrutiny councillors and practitioners, we asked about the extent to which people agreed that there was a parity of esteem between the executive and scrutiny, and whether a constructive relationship between scrutiny and the executive exists. As you will see from the results above, while constructive relationships appear to be common – but not widespread – it is on parity of esteem where worries and concerns are clear.

Source: CfPS *Taking Scrutiny Seriously*, 2020

Culture

As outlined in the recently published statutory scrutiny guidance, a strong and positive organisational culture is a key component of successful scrutiny.

There needs to be:

- “parity of esteem” between scrutiny and the executive
- a recognition of Scrutiny’s legal and democratic legitimacy
- adequate resourcing
- the provision of impartial advice from officers
- support to ensure that scrutiny members can have an independent mindset.

Protocols

We will develop:

- **A *Scrutiny-Executive Protocol*** to help foster a culture where there is early, regular and effective engagement between the executive and scrutiny.
- **A *Communications Protocol*** to ensure that scrutiny’s role, purpose and findings are clearly communicated to the wider authority and the public.