

Effective Scrutiny Guidelines

1. Prioritise

It is more effective to look at one or two key issues per meeting in an in-depth way, than skim the surface of everything falling within the committee's remit. Try to focus on issues of concern to the community and/or matters that are linked to corporate priorities. Only add items to the work programme if you are certain your consideration of the matter will make a real and tangible difference.

2. Be independent

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

3. Work collectively

If you collectively agree in advance what you want to achieve in relation to each item under consideration, including what the key lines of enquiry should be, you 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

Scrutiny has the most impact when its 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. 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).