

Appendix 1

Evaluation of New Scrutiny Structure – 2024-25 - Member Feedback from Scrutiny Workshops.

- Number of panels – Some Members commented that they would like to see a return to five thematic panels in addition to OSB, stating they believed scrutiny to be more effective with this structure.
- Size and remit of panels – Whilst one Member, commented that the remit of the People Panel was too wide and that a separate Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel should be established, another commented that they felt the current structure had worked well and particularly valued the support of two Democratic Services Officers and expressed concern that should additional panels be created, this could significantly dilute support time available from Democratic Services. A further comment was received expressing concern regarding the remit of People Panel covering the two highest-spending areas of the council – Adult Social Care and Children’s Services, however, further concerns were expressed regarding potential issues with Member attendance should the Scrutiny Panel be split in two.
- A further suggestion was to align scrutiny panels with the Council Plan priorities.
- Recognition of the importance of the scrutiny function with appropriate resourcing.
- The workload of Democratic Services could limit scrutiny and further resources were required.
- Update on progress against the work programme – Members suggested that regular updates on how current topics were progressing against the work programme should be provided during Scrutiny Panel meetings.
- Suggested greater involvement from Panel Members in agenda setting for the next/future meetings, guided by the terms of reference for the current topic.
- The role of the Chair in encouraging and involving Members in the work of the panel.
- Members identified a training need around involvement in Task and Finish Groups and increased admin support. A Member also commented that it would be useful to identify expectations of tasks to be undertaken by Members and Officers (eg who does what).
- Suggestion of site visits.
- Meeting days and timings – This provided a mixed response. Some Members expressed a preference for meetings to be held earlier in the day (up to a 3.30pm start time), whilst others indicated a preference for 4.00/4.30pm start times.

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- Regarding evening meetings, some Members/Officers may rely on using public transport which can make attendance more difficult at evening meetings.
- Late meetings can also impact on officers having to make alternative/additional arrangements outside of normal working hours so a balance was needed between Members' preferences and available resources.
- Member attendance – feedback was received from a Member that they had concerns regarding meeting attendance by Members and highlighted that there were many variables as to why Members may not be able to attend scrutiny meetings, particularly for those that were in full time employment.
- Need to ensure that each scrutiny panel was held on a different day of the week.
- Pre-decision scrutiny – a suggestion was made regarding increased oversight of the Executive Forward Work Programme and continued engagement with Executive.
- Strengthening communication between Executive and Scrutiny. A Member suggested that it would be useful to discover proposals being made by Executive in areas which scrutiny is interested in at an early stage in order to make a potential contribution and to ensure scrutiny input is valued.
- In relation to Executive Member attendance at OSB, it was suggested that due to Members having limited time in which to present to the Board, it may be useful for areas of focus/potential questions to be submitted to the Executive Member in advance of the meeting.
- To examine how the role of scrutiny in policy development can be increased, ensuring the relevant scrutiny panels are made aware of long term/future issues as early as possible and that scrutiny can add value. This could include improving communication between Chairs/Vice Chairs and the Service Directors.
- Ensure there is a mechanism to undertake 'ad-hoc' scrutiny investigations on certain issues.
- Reference was made to the recent Care Quality Commission report, stating that staff felt more scrutiny was needed.
- Suggestion to examine whether there is scope for a Members to undertake individual research, in their own time, and submit it to a scrutiny panel or to OSB.