

## **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY PROTOCOL**

The aim of this protocol is to set out an agreed way of working with the Executive, in line with the Council's Constitution, to facilitate the role of Scrutiny in respect of pre-decision scrutiny.

The purpose of the protocol is to continue to embed a culture that recognises the importance of Executive and Scrutiny working together in a collaborative way.

Scrutiny is an essential part of ensuring that local government remains transparent, accountable and open, resulting in improved public policies and services.

In order for effective scrutiny to happen the Executive and Scrutiny need to work together for the benefit of the Council and to improve decision-making.

Considering decisions before they are made provides an important means to influence those decisions, and to improve them. It gives Councillors the opportunity to challenge assumptions that may have been made as the decision was developed. It also provides an opportunity to consider how decision-makers have considered what risks might arise from the implementation of the decision, and how those risks might be mitigated.

Scrutiny Councillors can bring a different perspective to the decision-making process than that provided by Executive Members or Officers, which can help decisions to be more robust.

Looking at a decision before it is made can often be seen as a more effective means of scrutiny than looking at a decision after it is made (for example, through the Call-in process), when the opportunity to influence and change that decision is quite limited. Post-decision scrutiny can, however, help to influence future policy changes in the medium to long-term.

Scrutiny carried out well in advance of a decision being made should allow for more time and resources to explore the fundamentals of the decision and if appropriate, propose alternative options.

Pre- decision scrutiny can help the decision-making process by:

- Providing an impartial perspective.
- Challenging assumptions.
- Developing realistic plans and targets.
- Engaging with the public.

### **Process**

- The Overview and Scrutiny Board will monitor and review the Council's Forward Work Plan of forthcoming Executive Decisions (key and non-key) to determine which items they would like to identify for pre-decision scrutiny before decisions are made by the Executive.

- As the Forward Plan is a live document and is available to view via the Council's Committee Management System, Modern.Gov, Scrutiny Members should review this document when they can, outside of scheduled meetings.
- Where requests for information are made at scheduled meetings, the Democratic Services Officer (DSO) will record any requests for further information in relation to items on the Forward Work Plan in the minutes of the meeting. An action will be added to Modern.gov for the relevant officer to respond to the request and send their response to the DSO via email.
- The DSO will email the Officer response to all Members of the Scrutiny Panel at which the query was raised.
- The DSO will try to ensure that responses are provided by the next Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting. Any delays in receiving information, and the reasons for the delay, will be reported to the Board.
- An update will be provided by the Chair/DSO or other relevant officer at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting. This is a standing agenda item.
- If further information is subsequently required by individual Scrutiny Panel Members on the same topic, this may be facilitated directly with the Officer providing the information as appropriate.
- Requests for pre-decision scrutiny information may also be made at meetings of the Adult Social Care and Health, Children's and Place Scrutiny Panels, a similar process to the above will be followed and information will be reported back to the relevant Scrutiny Panel.