

GUIDE TO SCRUTINY IN PEMBROKESHIRE

Introduction

As a result of the Local Government Act 2000, changes were introduced to political structures within Councils which altered their decision making processes. These changes allowed for the introduction of a Leader and Cabinet (the Executive) model, as well as at least one Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Details are contained within the Council's Constitution.

The Role of Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Within this structure, the role of Overview and Scrutiny Committees is to hold the Executive to account, by reviewing, investigating and challenging decisions, contributing to Policy development and monitoring performance. The aim of scrutiny is to;

- Improve the Council's performance
- Ensure that services delivered by the Council provide value for money
- Ensure that Council services are receptive to local needs
- Engage with the public and communities about decisions which affect them

Overview and Scrutiny Committees cannot make decisions; they can only make recommendations to the Executive or the Council. They also cannot become involved with concerns or complaints from individuals which do not affect the wider community.

How does Scrutiny work?

Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a forward work programme which provides details of what the Committee will scrutinise over a 12 month period. Work programmes consist of items that will be, or have been, considered by Cabinet (pre and post decision scrutiny), departmental performance monitoring or items of interest or concern to Committee members. Members of the public may also put forward suggestions for items to be discussed by Overview and Scrutiny Committees and provide written submissions in relation to matters being considered by a Committee. For this reason, forward work programmes are designed to be flexible and may change to accommodate issues that may arise within the year and which are within the remit of Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The Role of the Chairs, Vice-Chairs and members of Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Chairs and Vice-Chairs

Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees should work together to support the work of their Committee, through;

- prioritising the work of the Committee
- ensuring Committee members are engaged and have the opportunity to contribute and have their views heard
- working closely with officers to agree the business for each meeting and set the agendas

Committee Members

The following list outlines what a Scrutiny Member should and should not do to ensure that the scrutiny function is discharged successfully and to ensure the aims of scrutiny are met;

- ensure that they understand their role fully, so that they are able to contribute at meetings and be part of the 'critical friend' process
- not use meetings to air personal agendas
- prepare for meetings by reading papers, making notes and formulating challenging questions
- not raise subjects that are not on the agenda
- ask positive and challenging questions
- not make statements rather than ask questions, or try to score political points
- contribute to setting forward work programmes and be prepared to assist in any Task and Finish groups
- try to ensure that they attend every meeting.

Scrutiny in Pembrokeshire

Pembrokeshire has five Overview and Scrutiny Committees;

- Corporate
- Services
- Policy and Pre-decision
- Partnerships
- Schools and Learning

Each Committee has 13 members, with an additional 4 statutory co-optees on the Schools and Learning Committee and 4 co-optees on the Partnerships Committee in relation to Crime and Disorder matters. Each Committee is politically balanced to reflect the composition of the Council and holds at least five meetings per year, which are usually held in Committee Room 1 in County Hall. Joint meetings of two or more Committees are held when appropriate. Members of the public are able to attend all meetings unless confidential or exempt information is being discussed.

The portfolio of each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees is as follows, however, certain issues or cross-cutting themes may be discussed by more than one committee;

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The role of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to review and scrutinise corporate functions and support services.

The Committee will have oversight of the overall strategic direction, policies, plans and priorities of the Cabinet and Council (post-decision) and monitor their implementation. The Committee will also scrutinise corporate services utilising relevant management information such as Service Improvement Plans and Business Risk Registers. Any areas of specific concern may be referred to the Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee as appropriate.

The remit and scope of the Committee in relation to Corporate functions and services is as follows;

Corporate functions

- Office of the Leader
- Cabinet Member annual reports
- Chief Executive
- Budget Monitoring (annual and quarterly)
- Corporate Performance Monitoring (annual and quarterly)
- Corporate planning
- Wales Audit Office corporate reports
- Service improvement
- Safeguarding

Corporate services

- Financial Services
- Information Technology
- Audit and Risk
- Customer Services
- Human Resources
- Legal and Committee Services
- Procurement
- Marketing and Communications
- Electoral Services

Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The role of the Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to review and scrutinise the services delivered by the Council.

The Committee will scrutinise the quality and performance of services delivered by the Council to the public.

The remit and scope of the Committee in relation to Council services, and divisions within these services, is as follows;

- Highways and Construction
- Environment and Civil Contingencies
- Housing
- Planning
- Property
- Revenue Services
- Public Protection
- Regeneration
- Cultural Services
- Adult Care
- Children's Services

- Leisure Services

Policy and Pre-decision Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The role of the Policy and Pre-decision Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to review and scrutinise policies, plans and strategies prior to decision by Cabinet.

The Committee will undertake pre-decision scrutiny or order to contribute to the quality and robustness of Cabinet decision-making. A further function of the Committee is to ensure that Cabinet decision making is compliant with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and takes account of the 'sustainable development' principle and 5 ways of working (long term, preventative, involving, collaborative and integrated) as well as other statutory requirements as appropriate (e.g. Equality Act 2010).

The remit and scope of the Committee is as follows;

- Cabinet forward work programme
- Proposals for service changes, transformation and/or efficiencies
- Integrated Impact Assessments
- Strategies and plans (as appropriate)
- Annual budget proposals

Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The role of the Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to review and scrutinise activity where the Council works in partnership or collaboratively with other agencies.

The Committee will act as the committee designated with responsibility for scrutinising the activity of the Public Services Board (PSB) as required under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Committee will also scrutinise, where appropriate, where the Council works in partnership to deliver or commission services. It will also provide oversight where the Council works collaboratively with partners at a regional or national level. This is also the designated Committee for Crime and Disorder matters in accordance with section 19(1) of the Police and Justice Act 2006.

The remit and scope of the Committee in relation to PSB and other scrutiny is as follows;

PSB

- Development and production of a local Well-being Assessment
- Development and production of a Well-being Plan
- PSB Annual Plan
- PSB activity and progress in delivering priorities
- Requiring any member or invited participant of the PSB to attend and give evidence (but only in relation to the exercise of joint functions undertaken by them as members of the PSB)

Other

- Joint Working Register (strategic partnerships)
- Joint Strategic Commissioning
- Statutory Partnerships (e.g. Community Safety Partnership)

Schools and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The role of the Schools and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to review and scrutinise services delivered to improve outcomes for children and young people, youth support and other community based services, including Adult Learning. It will support the raising of educational standards and outcomes for learners.

The remit and scope of the Committee is as follows;

- Educational outcomes, particularly at Key Stage 4
- School categorisation
- Education through Regional Working (ERW)
- Individual schools (via a School Scrutiny Panel)
- Inclusion services
- Youth Support and other community based services
- Post-16 learning, skills and training
- Financial information relating to schools and learning

Training of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members

Training available to Overview and Scrutiny members consists of a mix of generic and Committee specific packages, as well as strategic site visits where Councillors can learn more about issues relevant to the work of their Committee. In terms of generic training, examples of seminars/workshops that have been provided include;

- Questioning Skills
- Chairing Skills
- Equality Training
- Code of Conduct
- County Council budget proposals
- Safeguarding

Training is arranged as required, with Councillors being able to request training when they feel they need a greater understanding of a particular subject or area of their work programme. A training needs analysis is undertaken by Members annually to inform the training programme.

How is Scrutiny monitored?

From 2014, Overview and Scrutiny Committees will produce annual reports, which will review the work of the Committees over the previous year. As the scrutiny function in Pembrokeshire develops, it is hoped that more qualitative and cost-based approaches to measuring the impact of scrutiny can be explored, which will then be reflected in future annual reports.

Officer Support

Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee has support from a Scrutiny Support Co-ordinator who provides advice and guidance to the Chair, Vice-Chair and Committee members and to any working groups established to undertake detailed investigations into particular areas of the work programme. Co-ordinators are involved with organising training for Committee members and also prepare and gather reports for consideration at Committee meetings.

Public Engagement

Public engagement in the Scrutiny process is important to ensure that local services are citizen-focused.

To facilitate public engagement, mechanisms are in place whereby members of the public can bring their views on any item which forms part of a work programme to the attention of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members of the public can also suggest topics for consideration by a Committee. Access to this facility is available on the Scrutiny section of the Council's website.