

GUIDE TO SCRUTINY IN PEMBROKESHIRE

What is Scrutiny?

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.

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 or to the communities they represent.

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 pursue personal agendas or air individual grievances
- 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
- Social Care
- 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. Joint meetings of two or more Committees can be 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 by using 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. In addition, the Committee will have oversight of the work of the Public Services Board (PSB) and Community Safety Partnership (CSP) through a standing Partnerships Panel.

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 (half yearly)
- Corporate Performance Monitoring (quarterly)
- Corporate Improvement Plan and review
- Compliance with the Well-being of Future Generations Act
- Wales Audit Office corporate reports
- Welsh Language
- Risk Management
- Corporate Safeguarding
- Whistleblowing
- Transformation programme management
- City Deal programme management

Corporate services

- Financial Services
- Information Technology
- Audit, Risk and Information Services
- Customer Services
- Human Resources
- Legal and Committee Services
- Procurement
- Corporate Policy
- Partnership and Scrutiny Support
- Corporate communications, Press, PR & Marketing
- Electoral Services

Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The role of the Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to review and scrutinise public facing services delivered by the Council, with the exception of those relating to Schools and Learning or Social Care which are covered by specific Committees.

The Committee will scrutinise the quality and performance of services delivered by the Council to the public by using relevant management information such as Service Improvement Plans, Business Risk Registers and performance measures.

The remit and scope of the Committee relates to scrutiny of the following Council services;

- Infrastructure
- Environment and Civil Contingencies

- Housing
- Building Maintenance
- Planning
- Property
- Public Protection
- Economic Development and Regeneration
- Cultural Services
- Leisure Services
- Revenues and Benefits

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)
- Development of and planning for annual budget and Council tax proposals through the Finance Panel

Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The role of the Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to review and scrutinise services relating to the care, support and well-being needs of children and adults.

The Committee will scrutinise the quality and performance of all Social Care related services delivered by the Council, by using relevant management information such as Service Improvement Plans, Business Risk Registers and performance measures, and will look at the following areas;

- Adult Care
- Children's Services
- Strategic Joint Commissioning
- Carers
- Integrated services and well-being
- Domiciliary care
- Work with third sector
- Compliance with the Social Services and Well-being Act

- West Wales Care Partnership
- Regional Safeguarding
- Regional Fostering
- Regional Adoption

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 performance, including support provided to schools
- School categorisation
- School support through Regional Working (ERW)
- Individual schools (via a School Scrutiny Panel)
- Inclusion services
- Youth Support and other community based services (including adult learning)
- Post-16 learning, skills and training
- Memorandum Of Understanding with Pembrokeshire College
- Music Service
- Sports Development
- Children's voice and participation
- Financial information relating to schools and learning
- Safeguarding in Education

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
- Charing 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.

How is Scrutiny monitored?

Each year an Annual Report is produced which will reviews the work of the Committees over the previous year. The report focuses on the work the Committees have carried out, the differences the work of each Committee has made, key outcomes, training and development undertaken by Committee members and challenges for the Committees in the year ahead. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Reports are presented to Council and can be viewed on the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Web pages.

Officer Support

Overview and Scrutiny Committees have support from officers 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. Officers also co-ordinate the preparation and gathering of reports for consideration at Committee meetings.

Public Engagement

Scrutiny provides opportunities for members of the public to get involved with the work of the Council.

If there is a topic that you feel strongly about or one in which you have a particular area of expertise, you can make a request to speak at an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. A protocol is available on our Scrutiny web pages which explains how this process works.

Alternatively, members of the public can submit written views on a matter being considered by a Committee which is already on the Committee's work programme, or can suggest a topic for Scrutiny. Forms are available on the Scrutiny web pages along with work programmes for each Committee, which list areas for Scrutiny over the coming months.