

Review of Scrutiny Arrangements in Sunderland

Scrutiny Coordinating Committee 15th July 2021



Current Position

- Current model introduced in January 2016
- One formal, overarching Coordinating Scrutiny Committee
- Three themed, service-based Scrutiny Committees in relation to:
 - health and wellbeing,
 - economic prosperity and
 - children, education and skills.
- Regional scrutiny committees (outside of the review scope)

Purpose of the Review

Develop a clear and shared understanding on the role, purpose and objectives of the council's scrutiny arrangements through the following scope:

- Set the strategic objectives for the scrutiny of services (both Council and partners)
- Develop a shared understanding of the purpose and crucial role that scrutiny plays.
- Ensure that the scrutiny work programme is effectively designed to provide rigour and depth. In particular, scrutinising the effectiveness of services and holding decision-makers to account for outputs and delivery
- Focus on the priorities that matter most to local people
- Identify who, when and how scrutiny holds to account – focus on accountability
- Suggest areas where more in-depth scrutiny enquiries may assist the process such as specific task and finish groups
- Provide evidence of the impact of scrutiny and demonstrates that it plays an effective role in ensuring that decisions are effective and drive service improvement

Method

- Independent Review will be conducted by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CFGs).
- Engagement with all political parties and key officers
- Member led steering group will oversee the process
- Report with recommendations which will form the basis for proposals for improvement to the council's scrutiny and overview model.

Review framework

- Organisational commitment and clarity of purpose
- Members leading and fostering good relationships
- Prioritising work and using evidence well
- Having an impact

Organisational commitment and clarity of purpose

- What do people in leadership positions think of scrutiny and its work?
- How is scrutiny treated as a “strategic function” of the council, and as a resource for corporate improvement?
- How is scrutiny’s work integrated with the Council’s City Plan?
- How is the relationship between scrutiny and the executive fostered and promoted?
- How do senior officers engage in a timely and proactive way with scrutiny’s expectations on the provision of information?
- How is scrutiny’s overall role articulated both by scrutiny itself and by the wider council?
- How has this role been based on evidence around what might add most value to the lives of local people?
- How does scrutiny seek to engage with the public, including the promotion of scrutiny generally?

Members leading and fostering good relationships

- How do members in scrutiny chair positions operate? How are these members selected?
- How do those members act to build relationships with those on the executive side, and with other scrutiny members?
- How members have the assurance that they have the necessary skills and capabilities to carry out their role? How does the authority have this assurance?
- What training and development opportunities are provided?
- What further use could be made of co-option to broaden and deepen the expertise to which scrutiny has access?
- How do scrutiny members overall work as part of a team with a common purpose

Prioritising work and using evidence well

- How does scrutiny use its role to prioritise and focus its workload (i.e., through work programming)?
- How does scrutiny evaluate the likely impact of forthcoming work when it is considering its forward work programme?
- Could more be done in task and finish groups to embed scrutiny in the policy development process?
- How does scrutiny gather evidence and information to support work programming (for example, through regular consideration of key data sources)?
- How are committee agendas put together, and by whom?
- How well do councillors (and the wider council) understand scrutiny members' formal information rights?

Having an impact

- How are recommendations formulated and agreed?
- To what extent does the current scrutiny committee structure support scrutiny to engage with the right issues, in the right way and at the right time?
- How do scrutiny's relationships with those outside the council influences what and how it recommends?
- How scrutiny evidences its tangible impact – on local people, major decisions and policy development?
- How is scrutiny's work, and impact, acknowledged by others (including those outside the council)?

Evidence gathering

- Desktop work
- Interviews and workshops
- Survey
- Observation

Timescales

- Initial evidence gathering - **July**
- Survey findings, observation and remaining documentary analysis - **August**
- Summary of key areas of findings including proposed areas for actions - **late August / early September**
- Action development session with member steering group - **mid to late September**
- Submission of final report / actions to committee for agreement - **October**

Any questions / comments