



Draft Scrutiny Framework

Co-ordinating O&S Committee

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This report sets out the actions taken since September 2020 on the development of the Scrutiny Framework and asks that Members agree the attached version for submission to Full Council on 13th April 2021.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That Members of Co-ordinating O&S Committee ask Full Council to endorse the attached Scrutiny Framework.

3 Background

- 3.1 In September 2020, the Co-ordinating O&S Committee agreed to develop a Scrutiny Framework on a cross party basis, to strengthen cross-party engagement in scrutiny and ensure scrutiny's place in the good governance of the Council. The report can be found [here](#).
- 3.2 The aim of the Scrutiny Framework is to set out a statement of collective understanding of scrutiny's role within the council and the value that it adds through that role. It will be a guide for elected Members and other parties outlining the purpose of Scrutiny, the interface between Scrutiny and the Executive and the principles that underpin the relationship. Further operational details will be set out in a series of procedure notes.
- 3.3 The Framework is for the whole Council, with an essential role for Scrutiny Members, the Executive and senior officers to create the right culture, lead the way and make achieving this standard a reality – this is what makes it different from a protocol.

4 Activity Since September 2020

- 4.1 In relation to designing the Framework, Members were mindful of the advice from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS)¹ in the Good Scrutiny Guide, emphasising the importance of involving all Members, backbench and Cabinet Members:

¹ Now the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny



“In CfPS’s experience, the value in the production of such a document derives from the conversations that precede its agreement, rather than the document itself.”

- 4.2 Therefore, the approach taken commenced with Scrutiny Members (Co-ordinating O&S Committee) but then included workshops with Cabinet Members and senior officers; and with backbench Members. Members were supported in this by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, and we wish to thank the Chief Executive, Jacqui McKinley, for her assistance in holding the workshops.
- 4.3 A cross-party group of Members (Cllr Carl Rice, Cllr Sir Albert Bore, Cllr Debbie Clancy, Cllr Roger Harmer, and Cllr John Cotton representing the Executive) then developed a draft for consultation. This was endorsed by the Co-ordinating O&S Committee, then circulated to all Members and drop in sessions were held for Members to feedback their views. The draft was also discussed at senior officer meetings. Feedback from these sessions was largely positive, with Members and officers broadly welcoming the framework, in particular the provisions on transparency and mutual respect.
- 4.4 The Framework presented is the result of the work of cross-party Members, including backbenchers and Cabinet Members, and of officers. This approach, and the adoption by Full Council, signals the extent to which a strong cultural commitment to Scrutiny is owned by the Council’s leadership.

5 The Framework

- 5.1 The Framework has been designed as a relatively short document, with a vision statement and a set of conditions for success. This would be underpinned by a revised set of procedure notes setting out more detailed practical arrangements. A list of the procedure notes is set out at the end of the Framework document.
- 5.2 It is proposed that both the Framework and procedure notes are reviewed annually by the Co-ordinating O&S Committee.

6 Vision

- 6.1 Currently the Constitution sets out the four principles of good scrutiny. These were developed by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS, then the Centre for Public Scrutiny) and adopted by many councils across the country. They have recently been reviewed and amended by the CfGS.²
- 6.2 Feedback from Members in the workshop suggested an appetite to emphasise the voice of the public. Members agreed that in order to give prominence to this, the order of the principles be changed
- 6.3 The vision set out seeks to emphasise that Scrutiny is a strategic function of the Council, and a critical part of a strong local governance framework. It also highlights the importance of a positive

² <https://www.cfgs.org.uk/revisiting-the-four-principles-of-good-scrutiny/>



culture, as Scrutiny is most effective when it is not reliant on legislation, the constitution or guidance but willing participants, as the Statutory Guidance on Scrutiny recognises:

Creating a strong organizational culture that supports scrutiny is essential to adding value creating efficient and effective services. Conversely a low value for scrutiny often results in poor quality work.

7 Conditions for Success

7.1 The proposed conditions for success were developed from the feedback from the workshops. The intention is that these are succinct summaries, with more detailed guidance contained in the procedure notes.

7.2 The proposed conditions for success are:

1. Parity of esteem between the Executive and Scrutiny
2. Reflecting the Concerns of Citizens
3. Member Leadership and Engagement
4. Mutual Respect and Good Faith
5. Clear Purpose and Focus
6. Evidence Based Conclusions and Recommendations that Add Value
7. Clear Roles, Responsibilities and Relationships
8. Transparency of the Scrutiny Process and Access to Information
9. Co-operation with Partners and Professional Bodies

Appendix: Draft Scrutiny Framework

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