

Overview & Scrutiny in practice: a development session for Thurrock Council Overview and Scrutiny Members

**Monday 22 September 2014
7 pm to 9pm**

This is an introductory session to Overview and Scrutiny delivered by Tim Young, an experienced scrutiny trainer who works with councillors and officers on most aspects of local government. It will focus on essential information and some useful skills that scrutiny Members need to carry out Overview and Scrutiny to best effect. It also sets this work within the current legislative and financial context, which poses several challenges for Overview and Scrutiny Members and for councils generally.

The session will be grounded in the four principles of good scrutiny (developed originally by the Centre for Public Scrutiny), which see effective scrutiny as:

- providing 'critical friend' challenge to the Executive and partners
- reflecting and enabling the voice and concerns of the public and its communities
- being carried out by 'independently-minded governors' who lead and own the scrutiny process
- driving improvement in public services and helping to find efficiencies

The session will focus on how Overview and Scrutiny is organised and carried out in Thurrock, with examples from other parts of the country illustrating best practice and how other authorities are using overview and scrutiny to tackle a range of pressing issues.

The overall aim is to help provide Members with the knowledge and confidence to make a real difference to the lives of people in Thurrock through their Overview and Scrutiny work.

In the course of the session there will be time for Members to raise any queries that they may have about the material or Overview and Scrutiny generally.

Methods used are group discussion, teaching and handouts.

Please see overleaf for the programme for the evening, with approximate timings.

7.00 Introduction and the programme

7.10 Overview and Scrutiny – what is it and what does it do? (*and discussion*)

- how Overview and Scrutiny fits into Thurrock’s governance structure
- the four principles of effective scrutiny
- the various roles of Overview and Scrutiny
- what can Overview and Scrutiny cover?
- the new challenges for Overview and Scrutiny

7.45 Work programming: getting the best results (*and discussion*)

- a committee’s work programme:
 - what are you trying to do?
 - how to add value and avoid being a rubberstamping body
- planning and managing the annual work programme

8.10 Break

8.15 Key skills and approaches for successful Overview and Scrutiny work (*and discussion*)

- making Overview and Scrutiny work as a frontline councillor
- the value of a lay, non-expert perspective
- building effective working relationships
- in-depth reviews: how they work and your role
- tools and approaches for scrutiny reviews
- scoping and carrying out a review
- some key lines of questioning for three common scrutiny tasks
- evaluating your work and learning from what you do

8.45 Reflections and ways forward

9.00 Evaluation and close

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