

Scrutiny work programme

At the first meeting of each scrutiny committee in the municipal year, the committee will set their work programme (having due regard to Council resources) and in doing so they shall consider the wishes of members on that committee. Part of the work programme may be undertaken by small Working Parties of the scrutiny committee.

The scrutiny committees shall also respond, as soon as their work programme permits, to requests from the Executive to review particular areas of Council activity. Where they do so, the scrutiny committee shall report their findings and any recommendations back to the Executive. The Executive shall consider the report of the scrutiny committee at the next available meeting.

The Committees should anticipate that during the municipal year they may wish to undertake pre-decision scrutiny or call-in a decision and accordingly it is advisable leave sufficient time within the planned work programme for these eventualities.

Issues suitable for scrutiny

The following criteria can help to determine a scrutiny committee's programme. A topic does not need to meet all of these criteria in order to be scrutinised, but they are intended as a guide for prioritisation.

- Is the issue a priority area for the Council?
- Is it a key issue for local people?
- Will it be practicable to implement the outcomes of the scrutiny?
- Are improvements for local people likely?
- Does it examine a poor performing service?
- Will it result in improvements to the way the Council operates?
- Is it related to new Government guidance or legislation?

Other points also need to be taken into account when considering whether to review a particular issue:

- Is the subject specific – so that those undertaking the scrutiny can understand exactly what they are scrutinising?
- Is it achievable within the timescale allowed?

The following criteria may also be helpful in identifying what issues are not suitable for scrutiny:

- The issue is already being examined by another body.
- The matter is sub judice or prejudicial to the Council's interests.
- The matter relates to a specific case falling within the complaints procedure.
- The issue relates to an individual disciplinary matter or grievance.

It will be important for members to:

- Ensure that the programme includes a balance of different types of work, including short, medium and long term reviews.
- Issues could be considered at single meetings, or may need to be the subject of a longer term, more in-depth scrutiny review;
- Have regard to the ongoing work of the scrutiny committees, including performance monitoring, budget scrutiny, crime and disorder scrutiny and consideration of the Corporate Plan;
- Ensure that the scrutiny committees retain sufficient capacity to respond to issues that may arise within the year, including pre-scrutiny and call-ins;
- Take into account the resources available to support scrutiny.

The scrutiny chairs will need to consider how best to carry out the pieces of work in discussion with relevant officers and the scrutiny team.