

Scrutiny Survey Report 2014 – Appendix 2: Trend and respondent analysis

Format **Web – a link to the survey was emailed to members and officers**

Date range: **28th April 2014 to 16th May 2014**

Total responses: **44 (web)**

Q1: How effectively do you think the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee structure is working?						
	2013/2014					2012/13
	All Respondents		Scrutiny Member	Other Member	Officer	All Respondents
	No	%				
Very effective	6	14.3%	14.3%	33.3%	8.3%	8.7%
Effective	24	57.1%	57.1%	66.7%	50.0%	60.9%
Neither	1	2.4%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	13.0%
Not very effective	2	4.8%	14.3%	0.0%	4.2%	4.3%
Not effective at all	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Don't know	9	21.4%	0.0%	0.0%	37.5%	13.0%
Trend (Total of 'effective' responses 2013/14 compared with 2012/13)						+1.8

Q2: How could we improve the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Structure further?	
Tell people about it and what you do	Officer
Whilst there will always be fresh items of business, e.g. dealing with call-in requests, I still feel the Committee is trying to do too much; and, at times, diverts its attention away from its agreed work programme on to single issue items of business. Just as the Council has narrowed its priorities to better align with the financial and officer resources available, the Committee might wish to consider doing likewise.	Officer
Not sure I have enough knowledge to say how to improve it.	Officer
Understand what the role is and what decisions are made by the committee	Officer
Many staff are not aware of the important role that Scrutiny undertake and have little contact with members of the Committee.	Officer
This comment is not really about the structure as such but I feel it would improve the whole scrutiny experience. By encouraging all members to take a more positive and pro-active role in the scrutiny process. There are still complaints now and again that back bench members aren't informed about things etc - if they became more involved with scrutiny they would not only be informed but also be able to have some input into policies, strategies and courses of action before the final decision is made.	Other Member
I have been on scrutiny so don't know	Other Member
Better communication	Other Member
The very close relationship between Executive and Scrutiny undermines the scrutiny process. Some members of scrutiny do not say anything in the presence of members of the executive. They don't even ask questions and yet they are expected to take part in scrutiny.	Scrutiny Member

Can think of no improvements at the moment but, as always, we will seek to improve.	Scrutiny Member
Support for admin needs to be firmed up especially as there have been changes in Democratic Services. Also more Councillors need to be involved in the Groups. I think that a cabinet member not attached to the issue under Scrutiny could take part as we have Asst Execs as well as excess so reducing available pool.	Scrutiny Member

Q3: How useful has the introduction of scrutiny link officers been?						
	2013/2014					2012/13
	All Respondents		Scrutiny Member	Other Member	Officer	All Respondents
	No	%				
Very useful	10	22.7%	14.3%	33.3%	8.3%	21.7%
Useful	16	36.4%	57.1%	66.7%	50.0%	30.4%
Neither	6	13.6%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%
Not very useful	0	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%	4.2%	4.3%
Not useful at all	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Don't know	12	27.3%	0.0%	0.0%	37.5%	39.1%
Trend (Total of 'useful' responses 2013/14 compared with 2012/13)						+7%

Q4: How could we improve the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Structure further?	
More involvement at team meetings etc	Officer
Tell people what you do	Officer
I haven't encountered the function so difficult to make suggestions.	Officer
Who are the scrutiny link officers?	Officer
If I am very honest I probably don't pay enough attention to scrutiny, having a number of other interests to juggle (chair of planning committee, ward member - where my two colleagues are currently indisposed on medical grounds (so I am doing all the casework), Member of County council for another area, vice chair of Audit at the county and member of the fire authority. Unless scrutiny directly impacts on these areas if I am honest I can't see me taking an active role in the near future.	Other Member
Seems to be little enthusiasm from some of the officers but this is improving meeting by meeting. Meetings are now to be held less often so may improve the quality of the ones we do hold.	Scrutiny Member

Q5: How effective are the informal scrutiny pre-agenda meetings?						
	2013/2014					2012/13
	All Respondents		Scrutiny Member	Other Member	Officer	All Respondents
	No	%				
Very effective	1	2.3%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	4.5%
Effective	16	37.2%	28.6%	50.0%	37.5%	40.9%
Neither	6	14.0%	28.6%	0.0%	16.7%	13.6%
Not very effective	1	2.3%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	4.5%
Not effective at all	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Don't know	19	44.2%	14.3%	50.0%	45.8%	36.4%
Trend (Total of 'effective' responses 2013/14 compared with 2012/13)						-5.9%

Q6: How could we improve pre-agenda meetings?	
Not attended any meetings, so difficult to comment. But, I understand that they're effective.	Officer
Could be better used / attended by officers / members bringing reports forward. Perhaps better promotion would help.	Officer
I'm not aware of the scrutiny process, so unsure of the benefits of the pre agenda meetings	Officer
Effective but time consuming	Officer
Without detracting from the informality sometimes they could do with a bit more focus.	Other Member
I haven't attended one personally but I believe they are effective at least from what officers have said. Scrutiny members and those attending to address the committee all appear to be more at ease and working from the same hymn sheet!	Other Member
This is a difficult one. Feel that pre agenda meetings are a great idea, but I am never sure when they take place. Perhaps if the meetings better flagged up it would be useful.	Scrutiny Member
Not always necessary to have one, but we have had very good meetings when they have taken place. Up to date information not always available as early as needed, but this is because officers want scrutiny to have the most relevant data at the meeting.	Scrutiny Member

Q7: Has the scoping of scrutiny reviews improved over the last 12 months?						
	2013/2014					2012/13
	All Respondents		Scrutiny Member	Other Member	Officer	All Respondents
	No	%				
Improved a lot	3	6.8%	14.3%	20.0%	0.0%	4.3%
Improved	15	34.1%	42.9%	40.0%	29.2%	30.4%
Stayed the same	8	18.2%	42.9%	0.0%	16.7%	26.1%
Got worse	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%
Don't know	18	40.9%	0.0%	40.0%	54.2%	34.8
Trend (Total of 'improved' responses 2013/14 compared with 2012/13)						+6.2%

Q8: What could we do to improve the scoping of scrutiny review further?	
I think this activity has improved. But, I would encourage the Committee to draw more on the officer resources of the Council to help scope future reviews. There are occasions where a particular path has been followed, which could have been closed down earlier if advice from officers had been sought.	Officer
Consult relevant service head / manager and relevant portfolio holder for comment.	Officer
I don't have access to the reviews	Officer
Panel chairs do not always have the skills to undertake the scoping and yet there are no resources they can draw on. This is a deterrent for people who want to volunteer to chair panels.	Scrutiny Member
The tools we use for the report are a bit difficult to get ones head round especially if one has used other project planning and reporting tools	Scrutiny Member

Q9: What else could we do to improve the operation and outcomes of scrutiny reviews?	
Publish reviews	Officer
We need to make the right appointments to the new roles that have been created within Democratic services to help support the scrutiny review panels with their research, report writing etc.	Officer
More pre planning with key Officers involved in the review	Officer
Consult relevant manager / portfolio holder on final draft scrutiny project report so comments can be considered by the Project Group before they finalise the report. Ensure there is a written report back from Cabinet with a decision on scrutiny recommendations so it is clear when recommendations have been approved or refused and the impact of scrutiny can be clearly measured.	Officer
Don't know sorry!	Officer
Not sure	Officer
I think care needs to be taken in capturing contributions and ensuring they are timely in terms of policy development.	Other Member
Involve relevant (cabinet) members and officers from the beginning and also keep them informed etc. Of the 2 scrutiny reviews I can think of that had some involvement with my portfolio, the first I wasn't even aware of until being asked to attend scrutiny committee where it was getting a final reading, the 2nd I knew little about even when I attended one of the review meetings!	Other Member
I am not aware of what goes on in scrutiny as I am not on the committee and never have been	Other Member
Better sharing of findings	Other Member
Don't know	Other Member
Encourage proper discussions rather than party political charade. I think some members of scrutiny do not seem to know the difference between scrutiny and political jousting. Each member of scrutiny should be afforded even when you don't agree with their view. Having two chairs is not at all effective as their different styles of chairing increase inconsistencies. I have every respect for one even when I disagree but have no consideration to the other who seems to think all members of scrutiny from other parties are enemies just because they don't tow the line.	Scrutiny Member
I believe a number of scrutiny members find scrutiny confusing, I think some 'inset' sessions would help to remove some of confusion in our attempts to scrutinise council policy.	Scrutiny Member
Ensure they are carried out to the agreed date where possible and also ensure the scoping is agreed before ANY action is taken	Scrutiny Member
I think it needs a bit more time for us to see the groups work under the new scheme as it is early days yet. I think Officers still need to understand the new way of working as some still appear to think we are being critical after the event	Scrutiny Member
Secretarial assistance	Scrutiny Member

Q10: Has the resource support for scrutiny and scrutiny reviews improved over the last 12 months?						
	2013/2014					2012/13
	All Respondents		Scrutiny Member	Other Member	Officer	All Respondents
	No	%				
Improved a lot	3	7%	14.3%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Improved	9	21%	42.9%	10.0%	16.7%	17.4%
Stayed the same	8	18%	14.3%	10.0%	20.8%	43.5%
Got worse	2	5%	28.6%	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%
Don't know	22	50%	0.0%	60.0%	62.5%	34.8%
Trend (Total of 'improved' responses 2013/14 compared with 2012/13)						+10.6%

Q11: How could we improve the resourcing for scrutiny and scrutiny reviews?	
Ensure Scrutiny Project Group Leads complete and submit the relevant Resource Request Form to the Policy and Scrutiny Officer / Scrutiny Chair	Officer
what are the current arrangements for scrutiny support	Officer
Still no admin support.	Scrutiny Member
If anything it has decreased at a time when scrutiny is taking on more and more work. The resources identified in the review that lead to the new structure have not materialised. Panels have no resources to support them and it seems that the scrutiny officer feels her support is to the forum chairs.	Scrutiny Member

Q12: To what extent have new constitutional scrutiny procedure rules and informal protocols improved?						
	2013/2014					2012/13
	All Respondents		Scrutiny Member	Other Member	Officer	All Respondents
	No	%				
Improved a lot	3	6.8%	0.0%	10.0%	4.2%	13.0%
Improved	19	43.2%	71.4%	60.0%	29.2%	26.1%
Stayed the same	5	11.4%	14.3%	0.0%	16.7%	13.0%
Got worse	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%
Don't know	17	38.6%	14.3%	30.0%	50.0%	43.5%
Trend (Total of 'improved' responses 2013/14 compared with 2012/13)						+10.9

Q13: How could we improve the procedures and protocols further?	
It has been useful to have the communications but as i haven't been through the process for a while it's hard to say how to improve.	Officer
Scrutiny seems to have upped its profile and was impressed by the public consultation at assemblies	Other Member

Q14: How useful have induction/follow up learning sessions for members and officers been during the last 12 months?

	2013/2014					2012/13
	All Respondents		Scrutiny Member	Other Member	Officer	All Respondents
	No	%				
Very useful	2	4.8%	0.0%	22.2%	0.0%	4.5%
Useful	15	35.7%	71.4%	33.3%	25.0%	50%
Neither	3	7.1%	14.3%	0.0%	8.3%	9.1%
Not very useful	1	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%	0.0%
Not useful at all	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Don't know/have not attended	21	50.0%	14.3%	44.4%	62.5%	36.4%
Trend (Total of 'useful' responses 2013/14 compared with 2012/13)						-14%

Q15: How could we improve the procedures and protocols further?

More inset required	Scrutiny Member
The members who attend seem happy, but not very well attended. It has been suggested that we have them later, but this would mean a special meeting held separately from the forum. This may not be popular either.	Scrutiny Member

Q16: Are you aware of any scrutiny project group reviews being reported to full Council over the last 12 months? (This does not include the Scrutiny Annual Report)

	2013/2014					2012/13
	All Respondents		Scrutiny Member	Other Member	Officer	All Respondents
	No	%				
Yes	17	40.5%	28.6%	66.7%	37.5%	61.1%
No	25	59.5%	71.4%	33.3%	62.5%	38.9%
Trend ('yes' responses 2013/14 compared with 2012/13)						-20.6%

Q17: What scrutiny project group reviews do you think should have been reported to full council during the last 12 months?

New proposed leisure centre at Queen's Park	Officer
The outcomes of a number of reviews have been reported at Cabinet, on the basis that this is the appropriate decision-making body pertaining to the subject matter(s) under review. I can't think of any reviews that should have been reported to full Council during the past 12 months.	Officer
New QPSC	Officer
All scrutiny project reviews report to Cabinet and the minutes of all Cabinet meetings are considered by full Council. Therefore full Council is aware of all scrutiny project reviews that have reported to Cabinet	Other Member
I could be wrong but I think all the scrutiny reviews were reported to cabinet. Perhaps it would be a good idea to report all scrutiny reviews to full council first, if the recommendations are something that cabinet has to make the decision about full council can always refer it to cabinet. By reporting to council first, all members will hear the details etc and would get an opportunity to ask questions - whether to the scrutiny lead or a cabinet member, perhaps both - and discuss etc	Other Member

Q18: Has your awareness of the forward plan, key decisions and their importance improved over the last 12 months?						
	2013/2014					2012/13
	All Respondents		Scrutiny Member	Other Member	Officer	All Respondents
	No	%				
A great deal	8	18.6%	14.3%	22.2%	16.7%	31.8%
To some extent	19	44.2%	57.1%	44.4%	45.8%	54.5%
No	11	25.6%	28.6%	11.1%	29.2%	9.1%
Don't know	5	11.6%	0.0%	22.2%	8.3%	4.5%
Trend (Total 'yes' responses 2013/14 compared with 2012/13)						-23.5%

Q19: How could we further raise the profile of the forward plan and its importance?	
As I'm working with the Forward Plan every week, I'm very much aware of it. It might be worth publishing through social media (Facebook, Twitter) advance notice of up and coming key decisions.	Officer
Given my position I was fully aware of them before An article in Borough Bulletin, info on intranet	Officer
Ensure each entry in the Forward Plan clearly outlines what the matter is about.	Officer
By encouraging members, particularly, members of Scrutiny Committees to read it. Maybe whenever the forward plan is updated all Members could automatically be sent an e mail that includes a link to the updated forward plan.	Other Member
Discussion at assemblies - I attend 3 of the 4.	Other Member
I have always used forward plan effectively in the last 5 years.	Scrutiny Member

Q20: Do you agree that the scrutiny and executive working relationship involving members and officers throughout the organisation has improved over the last 12 months?						
	2013/2014					2012/13
	All Respondents		Scrutiny Member	Other Member	Officer	All Respondents
	No	%				
Strongly agree	8	18.6%	14.3%	33.3%	16.7%	28.6%
Tend to agree	18	41.9%	42.9%	66.7%	29.2%	38.1%
Neither	6	14.0%	28.6%	0.0%	16.7%	19%
Tend to disagree	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0
Strongly disagree	1	2.3%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0
Don't know	10	23.3%	0.0%	0.0%	37.5%	14.3%
Trend (Total 'agree' responses 2013/14 compared with 2012/13)						-6.2%

Q21: Please give reasons for your answer:	
I can't really talk from personal experience, as I've only been on a couple of occasions. But, I sense from talking to Executive members and officer colleagues that relationships are much improved.	Officer
The Link Officers meeting has been instrumental in this	Officer
Much more pro-active working and informal communication taking place between officers and members around scrutiny and scrutiny work.	Officer
As a member of cabinet I have benefitted from invites to and information from	Other

scrutiny.	Member
The periodic informal discussions between the Scrutiny Chairs and Executive Members have started and seem to be working satisfactorily. In addition, Executive Members are now attending brief sessions with Scrutiny Members before the start of Scrutiny Forum meetings to update them on progress with Great Place Great Service.	Other Member
I am a Cabinet member rather than a scrutiny member - from my perspective (as a former scrutiny member and now a cabinet member) the scrutiny / executive relationship is improving constantly. 3 years ago I don't think there was a relationship between the two - it was frustrating as a scrutiny member to be presented with a document, make valid comments and suggestions that meant nothing as the document had already been signed off - scrutiny had no input! As far as I can I always ask for things to go to scrutiny before sign off. Scrutiny members may have a different view to this!	Other Member
higher profile	Other Member
Refer to previous remarks. Closer relationship leading to worse outcomes in my opinion.	Scrutiny Member

Q22: Do you support the continuation of bi-monthly informal meetings between the Chair, Vice Chair and Cabinet Portfolio members?						
	2013/2014					2012/13
	All Respondents		Scrutiny Member	Other Member	Officer	All Respondents
	No	%				
Yes	24	54.5%	57.1%	60.0%	50.0%	59.1%
No	1	2.3%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%
Don't know	19	43.2%	28.6%	40.0%	50.0%	31.8%
Trend ('Yes' responses 2013/14 compared with 2012/13)						-4.6

Q23: Please give reasons for your answer:	
Did not know that happened	Officer
Ensure joined up thinking between Scrutiny chairs and Exec members	Officer
Provides opportunity for informal conversations about scrutiny outside of the public arena.	Officer
what are the benefits of these meetings?	Officer
We live in challenging times where difficult decisions have to be made. Scrutiny becomes very important in these circumstances.	Other Member
How else can the Chair and Vice Chair be kept informed about current developments and what will be coming up over the horizon in relation to the portfolio holder's portfolio. Nothing beats regular face to face discussions.	Other Member
I haven't been to one as yet, I haven't felt the need to. However, if there was something I wanted to discuss with the scrutiny chairs I would contact them anyway. In addition, I do try to ensure all new projects etc in my portfolio are taken to scrutiny in one form or another - for example, the relevant officer may just have an informal meeting with the chairs, who can then decide whether a committee should get involved etc.	Other Member
Too often once a month should be sufficient	Other Member
Not aware of such meetings	Scrutiny Member

Scrutiny should be careful about seeing to collude with Lead Members. This is hierarchical and not democratic	Scrutiny Member
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Q24: Have you experienced any barriers or difficulties under the new scrutiny arrangements?						
	2013/2014					2012/13
	All Respondents		Scrutiny Member	Other Member	Officer	All Respondents
	No	%				
Yes	4	9.30%	28.6%	20.0%	0.0%	N/A
No	27	62.80%	57.1%	50.0%	70.8%	N/A
Don't know	12	27.90%	14.3%	30.0%	29.2%	N/A

Q25: If yes, what are the barriers and how could we reduce them?	
I believe that Scrutiny needs to become more flexible in terms of arranging dates, times and venues for both committee meetings and informal meetings with Executive Members, to make more use of the telephone for ascertaining availabilities and to make more use of the Microsoft Calendar system for issuing invitations to meetings.	Other Member
Sometimes lack of notice. Once a lack of invite to a relevant scrutiny meeting.	Other Member
The issue of cutting across other formal processes such as planning	Scrutiny Member
There is a lot of antagonism towards members of the main opposition and this has 2 effects: - their views are quickly disregarded if they are not shouted down - some opposition members no longer contribute as they see the process as a waste of time.	Scrutiny Member

Q26: Thinking about your overall experience of scrutiny over the last 12 months, do you think scrutiny has improved?						
	2013/2014					2012/13
	All Respondents		Scrutiny Member	Other Member	Officer	All Respondents
	No	%				
Improved a lot	7	16.3%	14.3%	20.0%	12.5%	26.1%
Improved	18	41.9%	57.1%	70.0%	29.2%	21.7%
Stayed the same	4	9.3%	14.3%	0.0%	12.5%	26.1%
Got worse	1	2.3%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Don't know	13	30.2%	0.0%	10.0%	45.8%	26.1%
Trend (Total 'improved' responses 2013/14 compared with 2012/13)						+10.4