SCRUTINY PROJECT GROUPS – GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

The Council Constitution provides for its Overview and Scrutiny Committees to appoint Scrutiny Project Groups for a fixed period of time (i.e. informal task and finish working groups). These Scrutiny Project Groups are not Statutory Scrutiny Committees and do not have the powers of those committees. Their purpose is to enable informal, co-operative working to help develop policy and improve services as opposed to a holding to account role.

1.	A Scrutiny Project Group (SPG) will comprise at least 3 members, to include any council Member and officer. The Scrutiny Committee will agree (retrospectively) the Group's remit (scope / terms of reference), membership, duration, reporting back procedures, and private status.
2.	The Scrutiny Committee may determine a Member to act as Scrutiny Project Group Lead Member, otherwise the group itself can decide who will take the Lead role.
3.	The Group's completed Brief/Scope form is to be submitted to and agreed by the Scrutiny Committee as soon as possible. It should be received by the Scrutiny Committee Chair and Policy and Scrutiny Officer within 2 weeks of Committee approval to appoint the group, together with a completed Resource Needs Request Form. * Work should not commence before the scoping form is received.
4.	It is important for the Project Group Lead Member / Group members, to have informal conversation with the relevant Executive Members and/or the Executive Member for Governance (Scrutiny), to help develop a good understanding of related, wider issues and context before finalising the Group's Brief/Scope document and commencing the work. The relevant Executive Member and Head of Service should be consulted on the Group's agreed Brief/Scope for comment. Group Lead's are also encouraged to talk informally to relevant Executive Members and officers throughout the project.
5.	Scrutiny Project Groups are encouraged to 'project plan' their work. This will help them to manage the review more effectively by agreeing tasks/actions in advance including Group/Committee meeting dates, who to involve, evidence and resources needed (including Members' own skills, experience and capacity to do the work). The Policy and Scrutiny Officer, and Committee and Scrutiny Co-ordinators, can help with project management.
6.	A pre-commencement review guidance meeting with the Policy and Scrutiny Officer and/or Scrutiny Committee Chairs can be provided for the Project Group Lead Member.
7.	The Project Group Lead Member will provide a progress update to every meeting of the Group's parent Scrutiny Committee.
8.	The Project Group Lead Member will be expected to produce any final written group report and/or recommendations, present it to the relevant Scrutiny Committee and if approved also to attend Cabinet to present as necessary.
9.	A report template is available for Members to draft their own review reports. The Policy and Scrutiny Officer, Committee and Scrutiny Co-ordinators, or other service officers can help with writing and finalising the reports if needed.

10.	All final SPG reports must be received at a Scrutiny Business Meeting (ie by the Scrutiny Chairs and Policy and Scrutiny Officer) for sign-off before progressing through the decision making process. The Policy and Scrutiny Officer will manage transition of all reports to Scrutiny Committee and onwards to Cabinet (or other decision making body) as appropriate.
11.	The Project Group Lead Member will be responsible for co-ordinating group meeting arrangements and requests for attendance and information.
12.	There is an understanding that all Project Group Members will meet their own administrative requirements as much as they possibly can including taking notes of their meetings.
13.	The Policy and Scrutiny Officer will not normally attend Group meetings unless technical input (scrutiny advice and guidance) is needed.
14.	Link Officers can help with communications with specific service areas if needed.
15.	Heads of Service/Service Managers can provide specific service related technical support and information to Project Groups if needed, and given their resource availability.
16.	If necessary, subject to 11. above and resource availability, the Project Group Lead Member may request Committee and Scrutiny Co-ordinators (or if not available the Central Support Services unit) to: (a) book rooms for meetings and any refreshments needed; (b) arrange meetings, send out meeting invitations and papers / documents; (c) undertake other associated administrative duties, such as photocopying, typing, document production and formatting; (d) attend the Group meetings to take notes / minutes - (or as a very last resort and in an adequate time frame, request arrangements for audio recording equipment to be provided for the meeting).
17.	At least one week's notice to attend Scrutiny Project Group meetings should be given (and if audio recording equipment is to be used, the intention must be made clear to all attendees in advance, ideally with the invitation one week before).
18	If Scrutiny Project Group Lead Members feel unable to continue with their lead role or are unable to progress the review work to timetable, they must contact the Policy and Scrutiny Officer or Scrutiny Committee Chairs as soon as possible.
19	The Scrutiny Project Group Lead Member will assist with evaluation of their review on its completion to enable ongoing assessment and improvements of the review process.

(Adopted by Overview and Performance Scrutiny Forum on 25.07.13. *Amended 28.11.13).