

**Outcomes and characteristics for effective scrutiny (from the WAO report
Good Scrutiny? Good Question!)**

Outcome <i>What does good scrutiny seek to achieve?</i>	Outcomes and characteristics <i>What would it look like? How could we recognise it?</i>
<p>1. Democratic accountability drives improvement in public services</p> <p><i>'Better outcomes'</i></p>	<p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Scrutiny has a clearly defined and valued role in the council's improvement and governance arrangements; (ii) Scrutiny has the dedicated officer support it needs from officers who are able to undertake independent research effectively, and provides councillors with high-quality analysis, advice and training; <p>Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (iii) Scrutiny inquiries are non-political, methodologically sound and incorporate a wide range of evidence and perspectives; <p>Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (iv) Scrutiny regularly engages in evidence based challenge of decision makers and service providers; (v) Scrutiny provides viable and well evidenced solutions to recognised problems.
<p>2. Democratic decision making is accountable, inclusive and robust</p> <p><i>'Better decisions'</i></p>	<p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Scrutiny councillors have the training and development opportunities they need to undertake their role effectively; (ii) The process receives effective support from the Council's corporate management team who ensures that information provided to scrutiny is of high quality and is provided in a timely and consistent manner;

	<p>Practice</p> <p>(iii) Scrutiny is councillor-led, takes into account the views of the public, partners and regulators, and balances the prioritisation of community concerns against issues of strategic risk and importance;</p> <p>(iv) Scrutiny meetings and activities are well-planned, chaired effectively and make best use of the resources available to it;</p> <p>Impact</p> <p>(v) Decision makers give public account for themselves at scrutiny committees for their portfolio responsibilities.</p>
<p>3. The public is engaged in democratic debate about the current and future delivery of public services</p> <p><i>'Better engagement'</i></p>	<p>Environment</p> <p>(i) Scrutiny is recognised by the Executive and corporate management team as an important council mechanism for community engagement, and facilitates greater citizen involvement in governance;</p> <p>Practice</p> <p>(ii) Scrutiny is characterised by effective communication to raise awareness of, and encourage participation in democratic accountability;</p> <p>(iii) Scrutiny operates non –politically and deals effectively with sensitive political issues, tension and conflict;</p> <p>(iv) Scrutiny builds trust and good relationships with a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders;</p> <p>Impact</p> <p>(v) Scrutiny enables the 'voice' of local people and communities to be heard as part of the decision and policy-making processes.</p>

Recommendations of the Williams and WAO reports with respect to scrutiny

Williams Report	WAO Report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ scrutiny’s role with respect to performance management was underlined, but it goes further and recommends that scrutiny has a role to play in co-designing and co-producing new service delivery solutions; ➤ that scrutiny was a key accountability mechanism within local government; ➤ the importance, status and value of scrutiny must be prioritised, continually sustained and reinforced by all elected members, independent members and officers. In addition scrutiny’s independence needs to be asserted and protected; ➤ there needs to be increased visibility for all of the outputs and outcomes from local government scrutiny ; ➤ local authorities need to regard scrutiny as an investment to deliver improvements and realise future savings – with a ‘best practice’ rather than a ‘least required’ approach being adopted towards scrutiny. The outcomes and characteristics of effective scrutiny tie in to this and need to be adopted by the councils within six months; ➤ scrutiny is presently “too closed and too insular, and does not fulfil its potential to engage citizens and communities in accountability and influencing decision making”; ➤ scrutiny needs to engage more with the public and partners, including co-opting external members onto committees to increase capacity and capability to provide constructive and informed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ clarify the role of executive members and senior officers contributing to scrutiny; ➤ ensure that scrutiny members, and specifically scrutiny chairs, receive training and support to fully equip them with the skills required to undertake effective scrutiny; ➤ further develop scrutiny forward work programming to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide a clear rationale for topic selection; - be more outcome focused; - ensure that the method of scrutiny is best suited to the topic area and the outcome desired; and - align scrutiny work programmes with the council’s performance management, self-evaluation and improvement arrangements ➤ ensure that the impact of scrutiny is properly evaluated and acted upon to improve the function’s effectiveness; including following up on proposed actions and examining outcomes; ➤ undertake regular self-evaluation of scrutiny utilising the ‘outcomes and outcomes and characteristics of effective scrutiny’; ➤ implement scrutiny improvement action plans developed from the WAO improvement study; and ➤ adopt Participation Cymru’s 10 Principles for Public Engagement in improving the way scrutiny engages with the public and stakeholders (Appendix 5)

<p>scrutiny;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ auditors, regulators and inspectors should report on individual organisations to scrutiny or the audit committee and where appropriate, assist the committee in its consideration and in holding the executive to account	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ ensure that scrutiny draws effectively on the work of audit, inspection and regulation and that its activities are complementary with the work of external review bodies;➤ ensure that external review bodies take account of scrutiny work programmes and the outputs of scrutiny activity, where appropriate, in planning and delivering their work;
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