

Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan

Scrutiny Environment				
No.	Area for Improvement	Proposed Actions	By when/date for review	By whom
1.	Improve public engagement and interaction with scrutiny (links to nos. 8 & 9 below)	1.1 Review seating arrangements at scrutiny meeting	Completed (revised seating arrangements used as and when the Committee Chair feels it's appropriate)	SCVCG
		1.2 Develop a short information leaflet on 'scrutiny' to be available to the public at scrutiny meetings (similar to the one produced by Wrexham CBC)	Completed and leaflet available	Scrutiny Coordinator
		1.3 SCVCG to discuss potential methods for raising scrutiny's profile amongst residents	Initial discussions underway. Twitter account now opened and some use of the Corporate Facebook site to invite the public to provide evidence of impact of budget cuts for the Cutting Our Cloth Task and Finish Group (review summer 2016)	SCVCG

		1.4 Develop a protocol/memorandum of understanding for public interaction with scrutiny	April 2016	SCVCG and Democratic Services Officers
2.	Improve and enhance Scrutiny and Executive members' interaction and roles in actively promoting scrutiny's role, its value and benefits both internally and externally	2.1 SCVCG members to discuss with Cabinet arrangements for Lead Members' attendance and role at scrutiny committee meetings (including the feasibility of Lead Members presenting reports to scrutiny)	Completed – Lead Members are now invited to attend scrutiny meetings to present and answer questions if appropriate	Scrutiny Coordinator
		2.2 links to 2.1 above. SCVCG to discuss ways of actively promoting the benefits of scrutiny internally and externally (e.g. utilising former scrutiny chairs and vice-chairs who now sit on Cabinet to promote scrutiny's benefits as part of their roles)	Continual – the benefits of scrutiny outlined during the presentation of the Scrutiny Committees' Annual Report to Annual Council in May 2015 - Regular interaction with Cabinet members at scrutiny meetings and through the SCVCG meeting periodically with the Leader	SCVCG/Scrutiny Coordinator

		<p>2.3 utilise the presentation of the National Scrutiny Improvement Study report to Council Briefing as an opportunity to highlight to all county councillors how they can promote scrutiny to their constituents and community groups</p>	<p>The recommendations from the National Study were incorporated into the presentation at Annual Council (May 2015) of the Scrutiny Committees' Annual Report. The presentation included the promotion of the 'Member Proposal Form' which any county councillor can complete and submit if he/she thinks a subject merits scrutiny's input</p>	<p>SCVCG/Democratic Services Manager/Scrutiny Coordinator</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Consider the resources allocated to dedicated scrutiny support with a view to realising scrutiny's optimum potential to the Council</p>	<p>(Peer Assessment Team questioned Denbighshire's capacity to deliver the powers and duties conferred on scrutiny under the Local Government (Wales) Measure with only one dedicated scrutiny officer)</p> <p>3.1 Consideration to be given as part of the budget setting process to the level of dedicated scrutiny support required in future (having regard to financial constraints and legislative requirements)</p>	<p>completed via the Freedoms and Flexibilities process, but due to financial constraints no additional resources can be made available at present or for the foreseeable future.</p>	<p>Head of Legal & Democratic Services and Democratic Services Manager (Head of Democratic Services)</p>

Scrutiny Practice				
No.	Area for Improvement	Proposed Actions	By when/date for review	By whom
4.	4 (i) Highlight the importance of topic selection/ prioritisation to all scrutiny members	<p>Scrutiny Chairs and Scrutiny Coordinator to emphasise to committees on a regular basis the importance of topic selection and prioritisation. The need to link to Council's corporate priorities, community/partners' needs, be outcome focussed to enable the impact of scrutiny to be evaluated, also to be emphasised</p> <p>(training events to be arranged on chairing, questioning and work programming skills as and when required)</p>	<p>Continual</p> <p>SCVCG has issued guidance to the scrutiny committee on the areas which scrutiny should focus on for the term of this Council. This guidance appears in every Scrutiny Work Programme report presented to the committees.</p> <p>A new Members' Proposal Form process has been introduced which seeks members to clearly stipulate why a topic merits scrutiny's input and how scrutiny can add value to the desired outcome. All requests, be they officer or member requests, are considered by either the Committee or the SCVCG who apply a strict test, called the 'PAPER' test, to determine whether the subject does merit scrutiny's time.</p> <p>Training sessions on chairing, questioning and work programming skills have been</p>	Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs/Scrutiny Coordinator

			offered, but a couple were poorly attended or had to be cancelled.	
	4(ii) Topics to be carefully scoped and officers to conform with brief given	Committees to clearly define the reasons why a report is required, what information is expected, the desired outcomes from scrutinising the subject and the value scrutiny can add	Continual See 4.1 above (will form part of regular training programme)	Scrutiny Coordinator and Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs
5.	Enhancing scrutiny's effectiveness by applying effective questioning, listening and analytical skills	5.1 In conjunction with Member Support and Development commission chairing, questioning, work programming and other required scrutiny specific training from providers such as the WLGA, CfPS and possible observation sessions at other local authorities	April 2015 - completed (events held on chairing, questioning and work programming skills during 2014/15 – see 4(i) above). Any future events will have to be facilitated internally or held on a regional basis as funding to the CfPS in Wales by WG has been withdrawn and funding to the WLGA for such work has been cut	Scrutiny Coordinator and the Member Support & Development Manager
6.	Improve work planning methods with external bodies with a view to aligning scrutiny	6.1 Discuss work programmes with Business Improvement & Modernisation and external regulators/auditors/inspectors to see if scrutiny committees' work plans need to be re-	May 2016 – some preliminary enquiries made. However, this work will be on-going as the focus of audit and regulatory work changes in future and the proposals contained in the WG's	Scrutiny Coordinator

	work programmes to achieve maximum benefits for all concerned	aligned (having regard to the Corporate Governance Committee's role with respect to regulators' reports)	<p>White Paper on Reforming Local Government: Power to Local People are implemented.</p> <p>Some initial discussions took place on the interface between scrutiny and external auditors, inspectors and regulators, at the 'Many Hands' Conference in Llandrindod in March 2015</p>	
		6.2 Contact Community Plan partners (LSB members) on an annual basis to establish which strategies/plans etc. they intend to introduce or consult on within the year so that the SCVCG can determine whether to include them in the committees' forward work programmes	<p>Section 35 of the Well-being and Future Generations Act (Wales 2015) makes provision for local authorities to scrutinise designated Public Service Board (PSB) members in relation to their decisions and actions on behalf of the PSB.</p> <p>In the meantime the LSB's Strategic Well-being Plan continues to be monitored by Partnerships Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>During the year the Fire and Rescue Authority have attended scrutiny as part of their consultation on their proposed budget and service delivery plan</p>	Scrutiny Coordinator

			<p>Report on arrangements for the establishment of the new Public Service Board and its scrutiny to be considered by Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on 14 January 2016.</p> <p>Implications of the Future Generations Act and how the delivery of its outcomes will be scrutinised by the Council are being considered by scrutiny during the spring of 2016. Report templates and member/officer proposal form templates will be amended to ensure that all reports presented to scrutiny have regards to the Act's seven goals</p> <p>On-going</p>	
7	Apply varied scrutiny methods with a view to realising maximum benefits and adding value to the outcome	When appropriate make more use of alternative scrutiny methods tailored to the desired outcomes to be achieved (e.g. Task and Groups/Working Groups, Scrutiny Service Leads, expert witnesses etc.)	Underway and Continual (more use of task and finish groups made during the last year. The need now is to utilise such groups in future to engage with the public and seek their views/evidence e.g. the Cutting Our Cloth T&F Group could seek	Scrutiny Chairs/individual committees/Scrutiny Coordinator

			public input on how service changes have affected them etc.)	
--	--	--	--	--

Impact of Scrutiny				
No.	Area for Improvement	Proposed Actions	By when/date for review	By whom
8.	<p>Developing scrutiny's role in scrutinising external bodies (where appropriate on a collaborative/joint basis) and monitoring policy recommendations</p> <p>Also links to no. 1 above</p>	<p>8.1 Update/Develop, on a North Wales basis, protocols/memorandums of understanding (MoU) for scrutinising external bodies and for joint scrutiny of external partners (based on the Framework developed by Denbighshire in 2009)</p>	<p>Currently under development with respect to GwE and proposed PSB</p> <p>In the meantime partners and external bodies are invited to attend scrutiny as and when required</p> <p>Proposals for scrutinising GwE and the new PSB currently under consideration</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Scrutiny Coordinator/North Wales Scrutiny Officers Network/SCVCG</p>

		8.2 obtain the agreement of all parties/partners to the protocols/MoU	<p>Currently under development for GwE and PSB</p> <p>(work has been undertaken regionally in South Wales to develop a joint scrutiny handbook which was shared on a national basis in March 2015)</p> <p>See above</p>	Scrutiny Coordinator/North Wales Scrutiny Officers Network/SCVCG
9.	Improve public engagement and interaction (see also no.1 above)	<p>See actions listed in no. 1 and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - review scrutiny page(s) on Council website to improve public information and make scrutiny accessible - Set-up a Twitter account and include a link on the webpage 	<p>As per no.1 above</p> <p>December 2015</p> <p>(Twitter account already opened – need to publicise it when everything is in place)</p> <p>Some use made of the Corporate Facebook page for Cutting our Cloth Task and Finish Group inquiry</p>	SCVCG and Democratic Services Officers

Outcomes and Characteristics of Effective Local Government Overview and Scrutiny				
No.	Area for Improvement	Proposed Actions	By when/date for review	By whom
10	Adoption of the Outcomes and Characteristics for effective scrutiny as detailed in appendix 2 to the Wales Audit Office report 'Good Scrutiny? Good Question' (May 2014)	SCVCG to adopt the characteristics	<p>Completed</p> <p>The Outcomes and Characteristics for Effective Scrutiny were used as the basis for the scrutiny self-evaluation exercise undertaken during the spring of 2015</p>	SCVCG/Head of Democratic Services/Scrutiny Coordinator