

Scrutiny

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Introduction

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A guide to scrutiny - What is scrutiny?

Scrutiny is based on the parliamentary select committee model of governance. This is where groups of MPs hold inquiries into issues and make recommendations. Scrutiny is the main activity for most Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet. It works to the common aim of improving services for the local community.

All scrutiny committees are held in public and will have a formal agenda and minutes. Any members of the public or any organisation can come and sit in during a scrutiny meeting – or watch a live webcast.

It is best practice to only look at a few issues at a time. These topics could be cabinet decisions, service reviews or policy development.

Scrutiny does not make decisions; it uses evidence to make recommendations to the Cabinet to request change.

Download and print our [At a glance guide to scrutiny](#).

A guide to scrutiny - What does scrutiny review?

Scrutiny committees are independent of Cabinet and each committee determines its own programme of work.

To do this, scrutiny needs to consider whether the subject is of public concern, if the law or government policy has changed, if there is a problem with performance or spend or other intelligence suggests that scrutiny could add value.

A guide to scrutiny - How does it work?

Scrutiny Committee meetings

Committees meet approximately 5 times a year in public

Task Groups/Spotlight Review

A more informal style of working; in line with the select committee model, in depth consideration of a service or issue, reporting back to committee.

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Call in

To challenge a decision made by the Cabinet, a special committee meeting will be held to examine the decision and may ask that the Cabinet reconsiders.

A guide to scrutiny - What is my role in scrutiny?

Councillors work with a variety of people to improve services.

Expert witnesses are invited to give information to the Committee or task group; these may be service users, academics, businesses, service providers, other councils or anyone who can help shape the outcome of the review.

Members of the public have a right to attend committee meetings and can always watch the live webcast. Views and opinions may also be sought by the committee outside the formal meetings in a variety of other ways.

Officers may be asked to present information to a committee or task group. This will be to inform councillors about how the service currently works and to help contribute ideas for future improvement.

A guide to scrutiny - The 4 principles of good scrutiny

1. Provides critical friend challenge to executive policy and decision makers
 - Constructive, robust and purposeful challenge
 - Non-aggressive to create optimum conditions for investigative evidence based process.
2. Enables the voice and concerns of the public
 - Meetings conducted in public and are webcast
 - Innovative public communication, consultation and feedback.
3. Carried out by independent minded councillors
 - Councillors actively engage in the scrutiny function to drive improvement
 - Areas are reviewed in an a-political atmosphere.
4. Drives improvement
 - Promotes community well-being and improves the quality of life

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/democracy/>



- Strategic review of corporate policies, plans, performance and budgets.

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