THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE: 1ST JULY, 2024

REFERENCE FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS GROUP: 28TH MAY, 2024

"(5)   "Tools of Effective Scrutiny" Elected Member Workshop(s) –

The report provided an update on the workshops that had been held as one of the initiatives that had been approved to support effective scrutiny having been considered by all Scrutiny Committees in May 2023 as well as having been agreed as an action by the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group following the Group's consideration of the 2023 Scrutiny Impact Survey results. The report detailed the feedback that was received from all Scrutiny Members who attended the workshops, three sessions having been held, it being noted that the workshops had been highly rated with comments received that they had been well run, considered very useful and engaging and met all of the intended objectives. It was also noted at paragraph 2.4 of the report that some Members who had attended the sessions had expressed a concern that they were noticeably behind their peers in terms of digital literacy and skills. As a result, a select number of Members had been contacted following the sessions and offered a 1:1 digital navigation and advice session with the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer.

Following the presentation of the report by the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer, the Chair stated that he had enjoyed the sessions and from his point of view, he had learned a lot. Councillor Lloyd-Selby commented that with regard to the recommendation that the training be made mandatory in the 2027 Elected Member Induction Programme for all Elected Members including Members who may be returning.

Having considered the report, it was subsequently

AGREED –

(1)   T H A T the feedback received from Scrutiny Members as set out in Appendix A of the report be noted.

(2)   T H A T the report be referred to Democratic Services Committee and subsequently Cabinet with the recommendation that the "Tools of Effective Scrutiny" workshop be included as a mandatory session within the 2027 Elected Member Induction Programme.

Reasons for decisions

(1)   Having regard to the content of the report and discussions held at the Group meeting on the progress to date and feedback received following the "Tools of Effective Scrutiny" Workshop sessions offered to Scrutiny Committee Members throughout March 2024.

(2)   To ensure that the Democratic Services Committee is sighted on the report to meet its responsibility for overseeing the Council's approach to Member Development, as per the Committee's Terms of Reference."

Attached as Appendix: Report to Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group: 28th May, 2024

Meeting of:	**Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group**
Date of Meeting:	**Tuesday, 28 May 2024**
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Corporate Performance and Resources
Report Title:	**'Tools of Effective Scrutiny' Elected Member Workshop(s)**
Purpose of Report:	To update Group on the progress to date and feedback received following the workshop sessions offered through-out March 2024.
Report Owner:	Karen Bowen; Interim Head of Democratic Services
Responsible Officer:	Amy Rudman; Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	All Scrutiny Committee Members in attendance at the workshop(s) were surveyed follow their respective session. Democratic and Scrutiny Services Team. The Director of Corporate Resources. Operational Manager for Corporate Strategy.
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision.

Executive Summary:
- All Elected Members who held a Scrutiny Seat, as well as Co-opted Members with voting rights on the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee, were invited to attend a Workshop entitled 'Tools of Effective Scrutiny' on a choice of three dates in March 2024.
- The workshop was one of the initiatives that was approved to support effective Scrutiny having been considered by all Scrutiny Committees in May 2023 as well as having been agreed as an action by the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group following the Group's consideration of the 2023 Scrutiny Impact Survey Results.
- Feedback during the workshop sessions, as well as via the post session survey, was positive. The results of which are included at Appendix A.
- The Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group are now requested to consider the report and propose any recommendations for consideration by the Democratic Services Committee that has responsibility for overseeing the Council's approach to Member Development.

Recommendations

1. T H A T the feedback received from Scrutiny Members, as set out in Appendix A of the report, be noted.

2. T H A T the report be referred to the Democratic Services Committee with a request that the 'Tools for Effective Scrutiny' Workshop be included as a mandatory session within the 2027 Elected Member Induction Programme.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. Having regard to the content of the report and discussions held at the Group meeting on the progress to date and feedback received following the 'Tools of Effective Scrutiny' Workshop sessions offered to Scrutiny Committee Members throughout March 2024.

2. To ensure that the Democratic Services Committee is sighted on the report to meet its responsibility for overseeing the Council's approach to Member Development, as per the Committee's Terms of Reference.

1. Background

1.1   All Elected Members who held a Scrutiny Seat, as well as Co-opted Members with voting rights on the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee, were invited to attend a Workshop entitled 'Tools of Effective Scrutiny' on one of the following three dates in March 2024:

Wednesday, 13th March: 6pm – 9pm [Evening]

Tuesday, 19th March: 9:30am – 12:30pm [Morning]

Friday, 22nd March: 1pm – 4pm [Afternoon].

1.2   The three-hour, non-mandatory, interactive workshop focused on the tools that were available to Elected Members in undertaking their role within the Council's Scrutiny Function:

1) Council Constitution Section 7 – Overview and Scrutiny Committees

2) Council Constitution Section 25 – Member Role Descriptions

3) Candidate and Elected Member Handbook

4) Scrutiny and Cabinet Roles and Responsibilities Protocol

5) MemberNet – Member Development Resource Material Content Page

6) Scrutiny Question Aide Memoire

7) Committee HUB Training Folder – Development Session Recordings

8) Committee Report Recommendation Writing Guidance.

1.3   The objectives of the Workshop were:

1) To identify and signpost Members to the various tools readily available to support them with their scrutiny work.

2) Increase Member awareness on the Scrutiny Chair and Committee Member Roles as per the Council's Constitution.

3) To establish key considerations in relation to Scrutiny report analysis and recommendations.

1.4   The Workshop was offered in-person, on three separate occasions, on different weeks and at different times of day to support with Member availability and subsequent attendance.

Out of a possible 47 Scrutiny Committee Members, 28 (60%) attended the Workshop. 25 out of a possible 43 Elected Members attended (58%).
3 out of a possible 4 Co-opted Members attended (75%).

1.5   The workshop was one of the initiatives that was approved to support effective Scrutiny having been considered by all Scrutiny Committees in May 2023 as well as having been agreed as an action by the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group following the Group's consideration of the 2023 Scrutiny Impact Survey Results:

The Effective Scrutiny 13 Principles Insight Board Action Plan -Principle (9)
"A workshop to be held to remind Members of the tools available for effective Scrutiny and the roles and responsibilities as laid down in the Constitution of Elected Members and in their roles as Chairs / Vice-Chairs of Committees."

Scrutiny Impact Survey Results April 2023 Edition - Confirmed Action Point (U)
"A workshop be held regarding the tools to support effective Scrutiny roles and the responsibilities as set out in the Council's Constitution (Elected Members and in their Roles as Chairs / Vice-Chairs and Members of Scrutiny Committees). This to also include the re-launch of the Scrutiny and Cabinet Roles and Responsibilities Protocol approved by Cabinet on 21st May 2021. The workshop should be designed to increase member confidence to participate during meetings, set out the practicalities of how the scrutiny function works and the fact Members can approach officers/chairs/DSSO in advance of meetings, explore different ways to undertake Scrutiny and to stress the point that Scrutiny Committees should not be political party agenda led but rather cross-party collaboration to the benefit of Vale of Glamorgan residents."

1.6   Once the workshop sessions had concluded, the session materials were uploaded to the Member Development Resource Material Content Page on MemberNet for Members' information/ future reference.

Due to the Workshops being held in-person, it was not possible to record the session(s).

2. Key Issues for Consideration

2.1 All Scrutiny Members who attended the Workshop were invited to provide feedback via a short, anonymous, Microsoft Forms Survey shortly after attending. 15 out of a possible 28 (54%) kindly responded, the results of which are set out in **Appendix A** to this report.

2.2 Feedback during the sessions, as well as via the post session survey, was positive. Key points as raised by Scrutiny Members within the survey can be summarised as follows:

- The Workshop was highly rated, well-run, considered very useful, engaging, and met all of its intended objectives.

- Members wished that they had been offered the opportunity to take part in the Workshop nearer the start of their political term.

- Members gained greater insight in to how their existing and ongoing scrutiny work fitted in to the aims of the Council's Scrutiny function.

- Members appreciated the opportunity to explore the internal file storage systems, Microsoft Office tools, as well as navigation of both StaffNet and the Vale of Glamorgan public website.

- Members appreciated being given additional knowledge on more efficient ways to access information.

2.3 As well as the feedback received from Members via the survey, Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officers also had some observations from facilitating and supporting the workshop sessions, which can be summarised as follows:

- Members were often defaulting to finding information via external resources rather than internal resources which was increasing the time to find information. i.e. searching for a Committee agenda via the public website rather than via the Committee HUB.

- During the workshop Members appreciated further discussion, advice and guidance relating to the process for Member Register of Interests and Declarations of Interests at Council meetings. It was suggested that a scenario / conversation-based workshop on Member Register of Interests and Declarations of Interest, in addition to mandatory training provided by the Monitoring Officer, be considered to be included along with an effective scrutiny workshop as part of the Member Induction Programme for 2027. Those present considered that the information provided at the workshop would likely be of use and interest to Members when they commence their Councillor duties following the Local Government Elections in 2027.

- Members engage in a range of different methods for storing their working documents and often save information direct to a device rather than their dedicated and transferrable Home Drive.   Therefore, further advice on file storage, including the benefits of OneDrive, would likely be of use and interest to Members.

- With the implementation of the new corporate 'Teams Phone' system, Members would appreciate up to date advice on how to find Officer contact details as well methods by which Officers can be contacted.

- A dedicated Co-opted Member only advice session would be appreciated by Co-opted Members to confirm their file access rights and expectations around correspondence and permitted information since the information provided to them at the start of their political term.

2.4   Some Members who attended the session expressed a concern that they were noticeably behind their peers in terms of digital literacy and skills. As a result, a select number of Members were contacted following the sessions and offered a 1-2-1 digital navigation and advice session with a Democratic Services Officer.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

3.1   The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act sets out a duty for the Council to ensure the Sustainable Development Principle underpins all of the work undertaken by the Authority, requiring us to demonstrate how decisions are formulated, taken and scrutinised via five ways of working, the Act underpins the Council's Corporate Plan.

3.2   The approach to managing and developing the Workshop was collaborative and involving. The contents of the Act would be used to inform the development of any subsequent actions arising from the Workshop feedback in line with the Council's Member Development Programme over the coming years.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

4.1   There are no direct climate change implications arising from the carrying out of the Workshops.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

<u>Financial</u>

5.1   Future Member Development provision will continue to comprise a mixture of delivery which, whilst largely delivered internally, will also include external facilitators where considered appropriate and beneficial.

<u>Employment</u>

5.2   There are no direct employment implications arising from the carrying out of the Workshops. The main implication was in terms of Officer time.

5.3   The Workshops were delivered in-house by Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officers, the Director of Corporate Resources and the Operational Manager for Corporate Strategy and Insight.

Legal (Including Equalities)

5.4 Member Training and development is required by the Local Government Act 2000 and Local Government Measure (Wales) 2011.

5.5 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places new duties on Local Government in relation to Member knowledge and development.
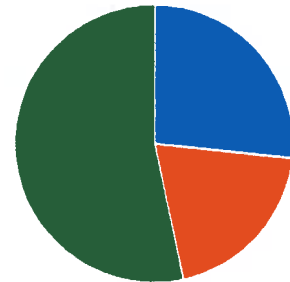
6. Background Papers

Appendix A – Effective Scrutiny Microsoft Forms Feedback Survey Results.

1. Which of the three offered sessions were you able to attend?

More Details   Insights

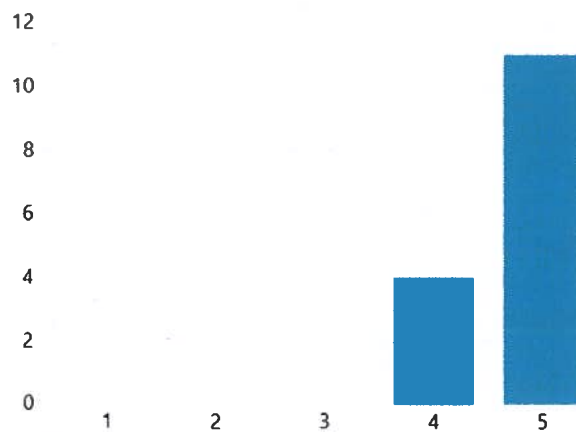|		
🔵 Wednesday 13th March (6-9pm)	4
🔴 Tuesday 19th March (9:30am - 1...	3
🟢 Friday 22nd March (1-4pm)	8

2. How would you rate the workshop overall?
   (1 star being the lowest score and 5 stars being the highest)

More Details   Insights

4.73
Average Rating

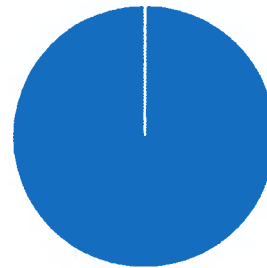3. Can you tell us why you've chosen the score in Question 2 please?

15 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	It was a really practical session, well run, helpful and informative.
2	anonymous	The way the workshop was run meant we had tasks to keep us engaged. I struggle to take in information without discussion and this way of working meant i learnt significantly more than any previous training. As well as this, it gave us time to have conversations with each other, and learn from each other which i have found a shame in how we work as councillors. As a teacher, i know that not all people are not auditory learners, which means the usual way of training does not work for everyone. The tasks were engaging, fun, collaborative and informative. Amazing work by the democratic team.
3	anonymous	Very engaging, super useful!
4	anonymous	As a new Councillor - very helpful hints and tips - some I was not aware of.
5	anonymous	It was difficult to read the information on the screen
6	anonymous	Excellent communication from officers present and I really learned something new.
7	anonymous	Not everything perfect
8	anonymous	I learned some new pathways to information
9	anonymous	I learnt loads but may have learned a bit more by doing the tasks on my own rather than in a group.
10	anonymous	Very informative and useful, very well led by the officers.
11	anonymous	It was very well presented and all queries answered in a very 'down to earth' way which made things a lot easier.
12	anonymous	extremely practical and brilliant advice and very useful information & training MORE from Democratic please !!
13	anonymous	well-run, informative
14	anonymous	I learnt a lot, mainly getting use from my laptop and using it in a different way.
15	anonymous	no

Compiled by Amy Rudman

4. Do you feel the workshop objectives were achieved?

- Identify and sign-post members to the various tools readily available to support them with their scrutiny work.
- Increase member awareness on the Scrutiny Chair and Committee Member Roles as per the Council's Constitution.
- Establish key considerations in relation to Scrutiny report analysis and recommendations.

More Details   Insights

● Yes	15	
● No	0	
● Other	0	

5. Did you learn anything new from taking part in the workshop? What were the main take-away points for you?

15 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	I suppose that I have had the opportunity to learn this content previously but it is only now that it makes sense. I think I have been doing most of my scrutiny work outside of the formal Scrutiny process. I will carry on with what I'm already doing but the Committee work is going to seem less removed from what I'm already doing, e.g. writing to officers in response to Scrutiny reports before Scrutiny meetings is definitely something that I can see myself doing in future, as a result of the training. Also, realising that we can influence the agenda-setting process was a bit of a revelation!

2	anonymous	-Ways to use the system effectively to read reports in a more user friendly way -I now understand terms i did not previously. Overall, i feel more confident in my role as a councillor. I would really benefit from more sessions like this in general.
3	anonymous	The usefulness of the links highlighted I will be passing on to others (plus I had forgotten about pdf bookmarks!)
4	anonymous	Yes - quick fix to obtain information, look forward to receiving the slides to keep the links for easy access.
5	anonymous	Navigating the laptop - as I believe others have said, it would have been very useful to have laptop training and navigating what is on the desktop as soon as i became a VoG Cllr
6	anonymous	Yes I did, and also some help with using laptop.
7	anonymous	location of various documents
8	anonymous	ways to access information
9	anonymous	how to use different functions on the computer that will make my day quite a bit easier
10	anonymous	It made me feel more confident in my role on a scrutiny committee and more able to find the right information when needed.
11	anonymous	It just enhanced my knowledge and with new technology now inplace which wasnt there when I was first elected, it is so good to know who to go too for queries and it certainly got the message out on how to deal with issues in Scrutiny committees and to make sure you only deal with matters appertaining to that committee.
12	anonymous	Yes many points Inc. information on how to make nates & prepare for scrutiny electronically & where to find important information to assist us.
13	anonymous	A better understanding of the resources available, and the way Scrutiny fits in with he rest of the way the Council operates
14	anonymous	having more confidence in circumnavigating my computer. it was interesting to see how much we all get to the same item but in different ways.
15	anonymous	how to find things quickly