



The Practical Guides Series

This is the first in a series of 6 Practical Guides for Scrutiny

The remaining Guides are :-

Guide 2: Members' Guide to Scrutiny

Guide 3: Members' Guide to Effective Performance Management

Guide 4: A Guide for Members of the Public on Scrutiny

Guide 5: A Guide for Witnesses attending Scrutiny Committees

Guide 6: A Guide for Officers attending Scrutiny Committees

Vale of Glamorgan

Council



a practical guide to Scrutiny





What is Scrutiny?

Cabinet and Scrutiny functions were created as a result of the Local Government Act 2000.

The Cabinet makes most of the Council's decisions.

Scrutiny Committees consist of Councillors who are not members of the Council's main decision making group, namely the Cabinet. They can examine all functions and responsibilities of the Council, look at issues affecting the wider community and assist the Cabinet in improving and developing services.

Scrutiny enables Councillors to influence decisions that are taken by the Cabinet and to ensure that the views and needs of local people are taken into account.

What are the aims of Scrutiny?

- To help improve the Council's performance
- To help the Council to deliver services which are sensitive to local needs by involving local people
- To ensure that decision making is clear, transparent and accountable
- To engage service users and the wider community in decision making



For more information on how Scrutiny works at the Vale of Glamorgan Council please contact:-

**Democratic and Scrutiny Services Section
The Vale of Glamorgan Council
Civic Offices
Holton Road
Barry CF63 4RU**

**E-Mail: jerees@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk
jrwyatt@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk
Tel nos: 01446 709413 or
01446 709408**

Scrutiny Website:

http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/our_council/scrutiny/more_about_scrutiny.aspx

Council website:

www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk



Who can attend Scrutiny meetings?

All scrutiny meetings are open to the public unless confidential matters are being discussed.

Agendas and Minutes of Scrutiny Committee meetings

All agendas and minutes of Scrutiny Committees, as well as reports of any Task and Finish Groups or reviews, are available by following the links on the Council's website[http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/council/minutes_agendas_and_reports/minutes_agendas_and_reports.aspx]. Agendas are available at least 5 clear days prior to the meeting. Hard copies are also available for public inspection at the Civic Offices.

When and Where are Scrutiny Committees held?

Meetings are usually held at the Civic Offices but can also be held in venues such as schools, libraries and community centres to help engage service users and members of the public.

Meetings are normally held every **four** weeks, the dates, venues and times of which are available on the Council's website:

http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/our_council/scrutiny/more_about_scrutiny/meetings.aspx

All meetings generally start at 6.00 pm unless otherwise advised.



Why is Scrutiny important?

- Holds decision makers to account
- Challenges and improves performance
- Supports the achievement of Value for Money
- Challenges the way things are done
- Influences decision makers with evidence based recommendations
- Brings in evidence and views of stakeholders, users and citizens.
- Undertakes pre/post scrutiny of Cabinet proposals

Scrutiny Committees, as well as making suggestions for improvements, acknowledge good practice and performance.

Scrutiny in the Vale:

There are five Scrutiny Committees in the Vale :-

- **Corporate Performance and Resources** deals with the internal working of the Council and its finances
- **Environment and Regeneration** deals with Waste Management, Highway Maintenance, Planning (but not matters such as planning applications), Transportation and Economic Development
- **Homes and Safe Communities** deals with Council Housing and related maintenance, Private Sector Housing, Community Safety and Crime and Disorder (including Youth Offending Services) and Shared Regulatory Services functions
- **Learning and Culture** deals with all School matters (which includes School Improvement, Post-16 Education, Community Education, Youth Services), the Library Service and Training
- **Healthy Living and Social Care** deals with Adult Services, such as Care Homes, Children and Young People Services (e.g. Adoption Service) and Healthy Living and Leisure



The Work of Scrutiny Committees

The following are different types of work undertaken by Scrutiny Committees to ensure services improve and value for money is achieved.

Policy Review - Scrutiny of topics due to changes in legislation/government guidance or because a policy is in need of updating/reviewing locally. Undertaken in line with corporate priorities so as to add value to the work of the authority.

Performance Review - Scrutiny of specific service areas following consideration of the quarterly Corporate Performance Monitoring Reports. In addition issues can also be brought forward by Councillors either on underperforming services in their local area or on an authority wide basis.

Service Plans - Scrutiny Committees consider the Service Plans for their relevant directorates and scrutinise whether they will help the Council achieve its corporate priorities and continue to develop and improve services.

Local Scrutiny - Consideration of a specific issue that is important to local people in their community, which may be an issue raised directly by a member of the public, Councillors or other organisations. It provides local people with the opportunity to get involved in the decision making process by looking at specific topics that are important to them in their community.



agenda with some exceptions. Alternatively, written representations can also be submitted (Please refer to the public participation guide and procedure at [<http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Our%20Council/Scrutiny/Guidance/Scrutiny-Public-Participation-Guide.pdf>] for details on how to register to speak or submit written representations. Members of the public, including service users, can also be invited to attend Scrutiny Committees to assist Scrutiny Committee Members in their work by giving evidence and taking part in the discussion and consideration of topics.

How can suggestions be put forward for discussion?

Any member of the public, outside organisations or Councillors themselves can request a service area or issue to be considered by a Scrutiny Committee. The appropriate forms to be submitted can be found on the Council's Scrutiny website or by contacting the Democratic and Scrutiny Services section.

[http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/council/scrutiny/more_about_scrutiny.aspx]

Members of the public who submit requests for consideration will be advised accordingly if the Scrutiny Committee approves the request and advised of the process the review will take.

Any person wishing to make a representation at any time to a Scrutiny Committee is requested to contact the Democratic and Scrutiny Services section or the relevant Chairman to discuss the matter.



- Co-ordinating work with other Scrutiny Committees and Chairmen
- Ensuring the remit and timescales for each review topic is clear, taking into account resources and workload
- Ensuring all Members are engaged and have the opportunity to contribute and be heard
- Keeping Members focussed on the topic
- Assisting with developing the skills and knowledge of Committee Members
- Promoting the role of scrutiny within and outside the Council.

The Role of Officers

Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officers directly support their relevant Scrutiny Committees by providing advice and guidance during meetings, assisting Committees in choosing topics and undertaking research for their work programmes.

Service Directors and senior officers can be called upon to provide input e.g. during preparation of Scrutiny Committees' Work Programmes and in presenting written reports and recommendations.

Public Involvement

Scrutiny provides the opportunity for the public to become involved in the Council's activities. Members of the public can speak at Scrutiny Committees on items on the



Call-in - Each and every decision of the Cabinet can be subject to challenge by a Councillor. The process for governing this is known as 'Call-in'.

Budget Scrutiny - Scrutiny plays an important role in holding the Cabinet to account and scrutinising the Budget Strategy to assess whether it will support the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities. It also has a role in budget and financial monitoring identifying issues for more in-depth analysis. Scrutiny also helps in exploring cost efficiencies and ensuring that value for money is provided in all service areas.

Work Programmes

Each Scrutiny Committee develops its own work programme for the year which includes regular monitoring of performance, revenue and capital expenditure, decision tracking of its recommendations etc and areas of service it wishes to consider [http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/council/scrutiny/scrutiny_committees.aspx]

Annual Scrutiny Work Programme

Scrutiny Committees report the outcomes of their Work Programmes and other matters annually to the Council. Work Programme issues are those that the Committee Members judge to be most important, should add most value and should be the focus of detailed Scrutiny work.



How is Scrutiny work monitored?

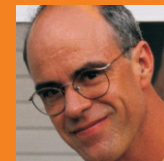
Scrutiny Committees monitor the impact of their work by reviewing the implementation of their recommendations. Committees produce an Annual Scrutiny Report that is presented to Council, usually in September of each year.

The Annual Report includes a review of the previous year's work and focuses on the impact that the Committees have made. This report also looks to the future by identifying the topics and priorities that the Committees wish to set themselves for the forthcoming twelve months.

[http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/council/scrutiny/more_about_scrutiny.aspx]

The Role of a Scrutiny Member

- Contribute to discussions on possible topics for Scrutiny review.
- Discuss and decide the clear remit for any reviews and how each will be undertaken.
- Prepare for meetings and visits (read briefing papers, prepare questions for witnesses etc).
- Ask probing questions rather than make statements when hearing evidence.
- Participate as fully in Scrutiny activities as time



commitments allow (attending site visits, taking part in activities outside formal meetings such as focus groups or working parties).

- Make recommendations based on their deliberations and information received.
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals and organisations invited to attend.
- Treat witnesses, officers and other Councillors with courtesy and consideration.
- Take part in training and development activities as provided.

The Role of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of a Scrutiny Committee

It is expected that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman will work together as a leadership team to promote the overall development of Scrutiny as well as having responsibility for their own Committee. These responsibilities include :-

- Chairing and managing meetings
- Prioritising Committee work
- Working with appropriate officers to decide on the business to be undertaken at each meeting and the methods to be employed and, together with the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer, agree the agenda