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County Hall
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Friday, 13 April 2018

Notice of meeting

Democratic Services Committee

Monday, 23rd April, 2018 at 2.00 pm,
Council Chamber - Council Chamber

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Apologies for absence	
2.	Declarations of interest	
3.	Public Open Forum	
4.	To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 12th March 2018	1 - 4
5.	Demonstration of Remote Working Security / Members IT issues	
6.	Process of democratic oversight of Evaluation	
7.	Summary reports and Future Generations Evaluation	
8.	Scrutiny Forward Work Plan	5 - 12
9.	Scrutiny Self-Evaluation	13 - 72
10.	Engagement of the Democratic Services Committee around ADM Management Agreement	
11.	Coordinating Role	
12.	Council and Cabinet Work Plan	
13.	To note the date of next meeting as 4th June 2018 at 14:00pm	

Paul Matthews

Chief Executive / Prif Weithredwr

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

County Councillors:

D. Evans
T.Thomas
D. Dovey
L.Dymock
M.Groucutt
G. Howard
L.Jones
J.Treharne
S. Woodhouse
P. Clarke
F. Taylor
J.Watkins

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Welsh Language

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Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Our purpose

Building Sustainable and Resilient Communities

Objectives we are working towards

- Giving people the best possible start in life
- A thriving and connected county
- Maximise the Potential of the natural and built environment
- Lifelong well-being
- A future focused council

Our Values

Openness. We are open and honest. People have the chance to get involved in decisions that affect them, tell us what matters and do things for themselves/their communities. If we cannot do something to help, we'll say so; if it will take a while to get the answer we'll explain why; if we can't answer immediately we'll try to connect you to the people who can help – building trust and engagement is a key foundation.

Fairness. We provide fair chances, to help people and communities thrive. If something does not seem fair, we will listen and help explain why. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently. We cannot always make everyone happy, but will commit to listening and explaining why we did what we did.

Flexibility. We will continue to change and be flexible to enable delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.

Teamwork. We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved so we can achieve great things together. We don't see ourselves as the 'fixers' or problem-solvers, but we will make the best of the ideas, assets and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

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Public Document Pack Agenda Item 4

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held
on Monday, 12th March, 2018 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: County Councillor D. Evans (Chairman)
County Councillor T. Thomas (Vice Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Dovey, G. Howard, J. Treharne,
S. Woodhouse, F. Taylor and J. Watkins

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

John Pearson	Local Democracy Manager
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Matthew Gatehouse	Head of Policy and Governance
Sarah Jones	Principal Planning Policy Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

2. Public open forum

There were no matters for the public open forum.

3. To receive the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 15th January 2018

The minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held on 15th January 2018 were approved and signed by the Chair.

4. To receive for information the final Independent Remuneration Panel report for 2018/19

The Local Democracy Manager presented, for information, the Independent Remuneration Panel report for 2018/19.

It was clarified that Chairs of committees would no longer be paid under two separate bands.

The Committee accepted the report, which will be presented to May 2018 Council.

5. Council Diary 2018/19

The Local Democracy Manager presented the draft diary of meetings for 2018/19.

It was recognised that the inclusion of certain meetings of outside bodies was helpful but this was not a legal requirement and subject to change.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held on Monday, 12th March, 2018 at 2.00 pm

Members raised the issue of meetings being held outside of school term times. Meetings were held during term time where possible but occasionally meetings did fall in a school holiday period.

Frustrations were expressed around meetings being called at short notice and change of dates. It was asked that this be avoided.

The Committee resolved to agree the report and recommend to Council.

6. Governance and decision making

The Head of Policy and Governance presented a report to provide the committee with an update on arrangements to improve the transparency of decision-making and ensure that arrangements for making decisions are robust and fit for the future.

During discussion it was asked if a summary report could be provided at the beginning of more lengthy reports. The Head of Governance responded that it is important to be mindful of who would summarise the reports, but if reports are not worded effectively then there is a problem with the quality of reports.

Councillor Howard highlighted the difficulties for working Members to attend Member workshops, given the usual start times.

Frustrations were expressed around the use of acronyms.

The Committee resolved to accept the report.

7. Involvement and Local Democracy

The Head of Policy and Governance presented a report to provide the Committee with an update on issues of involvement in local democracy.

It had been agreed at a previous meeting that a small working group would be established who would look at a couple of topics and use those as a pilot plan to involve communities.

The Chair suggested that those Members interested let him know following the meeting.

The Committee resolved to accept the report.

8. Members IT Issues

The Local Democracy Manager advised of a survey issued to all members to identify IT issues. There had not been a great response but overall feedback:

- Generally happy with equipment but would appreciate further training in certain areas.
- Split decision on the provision of mobile phones.
- Happy with the support from Democratic Services and SRS.
- Contact information would be provided by Democratic Services.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held on Monday, 12th March, 2018 at 2.00 pm

Members discussed the provision of mobile phones. It was understood there were issues around locations and consideration could be given to other options via the tablet. Training would be arranged for the soft phone option.

9. Coordinating Role

Members were asked to consider if they wished to be sighted on Audit reports. It was decided that reports could be received for information.

10. MONMOUTHSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT SCHEME

The Head of Planning, Housing and Place Shaping presented a report the purpose being to seek comment from the Democratic Services Committee on the draft LDP Community Involvement Scheme.

The Chair recognised the importance of the document and commended officers on the report layout in comparison to previous years.

In response to a question regarding community engagement officers explained that in terms of engaging with Councillors an idea is to have a Members steering group. There may be some bespoke pieces of work divided between committees. Other areas of engagement include Engage2Change, Social Media and Cluster Groups.

Members suggested going into schools and talking to young people directly. It was agreed this could tie in with geography curriculum.

There were concerns regarding the lack of activity on the Monmouthshire Made Open platform, and that this may not be an appropriate tool for engagement. A separate planning twitter account would also be used.

It was questioned if we could pilot a Neighbourhood Plan.

The Cabinet Member for Social Justice welcomed the report and recognised the plan as comprehensive, demonstrating a willingness and desire to want to engage as far and widely as possible. She added that all Elected Members and community representatives have a role to play going forward.

The Committee resolved to accept the report.

11. Council and Cabinet Forward Work Plan

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Services Committee held
on Monday, 12th March, 2018 at 2.00 pm**

Noted.

12. Scrutiny Forward Work Programme

Noted.

13. To note the date and time of next meeting as 23rd April 2018 at 2pm

Noted.

The meeting ended at 11.05am

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2018

Adults Select Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
22 nd May 2018	Supporting People Service Review 2018-19	Usual reporting focusses on funding for the next financial year, however, this year we are delivering a status quo funding budget in line with Welsh Government's intention to maintain Supporting People budgets for the forthcoming year. A service review in 2018/19 will lead to the utilisation of the flexible funding options recently announced by Welsh Government.	Chris Robinson	Performance Monitoring
	Local review of homelessness and related services	Detail TBC	Ian Bakewell	Performance Monitoring
	Care Closer to Home	Discussion on Care Closer to Home and how this sits within Monmouthshire Integrated Services.	Julie Boothroyd	Performance Monitoring
10 th July 2018	Aneurin Bevan University Health Board *TBC*	TBC		
Special late June/early July Joint with CYP	Chief Officers Annual Report (Social Services)	To scrutinise the progress of social services and the future strategic direction.	Claire Marchant	Performance Monitoring

Page 5

Agenda Item 8

Future Agreed Work Programme Items: Dates to be determined

- ✓ Crick Road Care Development ~ Final Business Case
- ✓ Disability Transformation Work ~ Claire Robins
- ✓ ABUHB

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2018

- ✓ **Future Commissioning of Adults Services** ~ linked to "Turning the World Upside Down"
- ✓ **Budget Pressures within services and spend analysis**
- ✓ **Community Development and Well-being**
- ✓ **Welfare** ~ Discussion with Monmouthshire Housing Association on current stock and new home development, support for welfare reform
- ✓ **Housing Report: Local Housing Market Assessment**
- ✓ **Annual Complaints Report for Social Services**

Joint Scrutiny with Children and Young People's Select Committee:

- ✓ **"Information, Advice and Assistance Service** ~ responsibility of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 ~ (January/February 2018)
- ✓ **The implementation of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014** ~ (October 2017)
- ✓ **Mental Health and Learning Disabilities** ~ linked to implications of the DOLS (Deprivation Liberty Safeguards) Grant
- ✓ **Well-being** ~ responsibilities of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 around connected communities and meeting needs
- ✓ **Implementation of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014** ~ review post 18 month together with the duties around prisons ~ (March 2018)
- ✓ **Safeguarding Performance Reporting and Progress of Regional Safeguarding Boards** ~ Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015
- ✓ **Regional Integrated Autism Service**
- ✓ **Annual Report**

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2018

Children and Young People's Select Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
17 th May 2018	2 nd Phase Family Support Review	Detail TBC	Claire Marchant	Performance Monitoring
	Budget Monitoring - Period 12	To review the financial situation for the directorate, identifying trends, risks and issues on the horizon with overspends/underspends).	Mark Howcroft	Budget Monitoring
	Disabled Facility Grants	Report on the progress implementing disabled adaptations further to the additional funding received for 2017/18.	Ian Bakewell	Performance Monitoring
Joint Informal Session with Strong Communities Date TBC	Support for Refugees TBC	Progress report and invitation to young people to attend.	Shereen Williams	Policy Development
28 th June 2018	Education Achievement Service	Report on performance 17/18 and briefing on regional financial policy.	Susan Radford, Blaenau Gwent CBC	Performance Monitoring
Special late June/early July Joint with CYP	Chief Officers Annual Report (Social Services)	To scrutinise the progress of social services and the future strategic direction.	Claire Marchant	Performance Monitoring

Page 7

Future Agreed Work Programme Items: Dates to be determined

- **School Placement Capacity** ~ numbers in the south of the county considering the new housing developments planned.
- **Nursery provision** - the plans for welsh government to give 30 hours free childcare for nursery age - report back when the remit of delivery has been finalised by Welsh Government.

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2018

- **Chief Officer's Self-evaluation Report** ~ Annual report of the Chief Officer on progress of the service and future strategic direction.
- **Verbal update report on Free School Meal assessment (via the Benefits Team).**
- **Additional Learning Needs** - Review and provision/ALN Bill/Readiness and training
- **Schools** - quality indicators from new inspection framework/how categorisation works and actions taken to support improvement/EIB and Intervention Monitoring/ Donaldson Report on Successful Futures. Review of 21st Century Schools.
- **Service Pressures** for the council and schools.
- **Inclusion updates** - wellbeing/attitudes to learning/supporting the pupil voice
- **Non-maintained/Early Years** - provision/outcomes/childcare offer
- **National Categorisation/Estyn outcomes** -Progress towards addressing recommendations
- **Post 16 education provision/Apprenticeships/Engagement and progression**
- **Welsh Education Strategic Plan** - annual update
- **Childcare sufficiency** - annual update
- **Play Sufficiency** - annual update
- **Children's Mental Health and Counselling Services**
- **Well-being reporting (obesity, eating disorders etc)**
- **Gwent Ethnicity Network Grant and support for refugees and asylum seekers**
- **Young Carers Strategy** ~ Implementation of the first year
- **Flying Start** ~ presentation for information

Joint Scrutiny with Children and Young People's Select Committee:

- ✓ **"Information, Advice and Assistance Service** ~ responsibility of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 ~ (January/February 2018)
- ✓ **The implementation of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014** ~ (October 2017)
- ✓ **Mental Health and Learning Disabilities** ~ linked to implications of the DOLS (Deprivation Liberty Safeguards) Grant
- ✓ **Well-being** ~ responsibilities of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 around connected communities and meeting needs

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2018

Economy Select Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
26 th April 2018	Economies of the Future	To discuss the outline/brief of the Economies of the Future report that is currently being prepared by consultants. Outcome ~ Workshop with Select Committee	Cath Fallon James Woodhouse	Strategic Policy
	City Deal	An update on the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Project.	Kellie Beirne	Strategic Policy
11 th May 2018	Economies of the Future WORKSHOP 1	To discuss the interim findings of the Future Economies Report and engage members in future strategic thinking for the county.	Kellie Beirne Cath Fallon James Woodhouse	Action learning
15 th May 2018	Procurement WORKSHOP 3	To discuss actions taken forward from workshop 2 To focus on a specific strand of procurement (TBC).	Rob O'Dwyer Kate Williams Kellie Beirne	Action learning
7 th June 2018	Broadband *TBC*	To invite Welsh Government back to the committee to discuss progress in the rollout of the Superfast Cymru Programme.	Cath Fallon Sara Jones	Performance Monitoring
	Abergavenny Outdoor Structure *TBC*	Invite Councillors Woodhouse and Powell.	Rachael Rogers	Pre-decision Scrutiny

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2018

TBC	Economies of the Future WORKSHOP 2	<p>Discussion on issues arising from the Economies of the Future Workshop that cross county boundaries to explore synergies/learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Affordable housing, transport ✓ Local Development Plan ✓ Impact of the removal of the Severn Tolls ✓ Tourism and enterprise <p>Invite to Gloucestershire First.</p>	Kellie Beirne Mark Hand Cath Fallon James Woodhouse	Action Learning
19 th July 2018				
TBC Page 10	Marketing Monmouthshire for Business WORKSHOP	TBC	Kellie Beirne Cath Fallon James Woodhouse	Action Learning

Future Meeting Items:

Agreed Scrutiny Focus for 2017-18:

- Affordable housing, transport and the LDP
- Impact of the removal of the Severn Tolls
- City Deal and the regional agenda (business plan sign off February 2018)
- Tourism and enterprise

- **ICT in Schools** ~ scrutinise jointly with CYP Select ~ Post Evaluation Review to return. Joint scrutiny of the outcomes for young people: Implementing the technology → delivering the teaching and learning → digital attainment levels.
- **Artificial Intelligence** ~ potential to increase automation internally

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2018

Strong Communities Select Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
24 th May 2018	Air Quality management & role of Environmental Health'	TBC	David Jones How Owen	Policy Development
	People Services	To invite People Services to return to the committee to discuss sickness absence.	Tracey Harry	Performance Monitoring
	Road Side Advertising	Verbal Update on costs and viability.	Steve Lane	Performance Monitoring
12 th July 2018	Heavy Goods Vehicles on country lanes	To consider the implications of restricting HGV's with a view to developing a future policy.	Paul Keeble/Roger Hoggins	Policy Development
Special Meeting TBC	Traffic & Road Safety	To present a strategy for dealing with traffic and road safety	Paul Keeble	Policy Development
		To present the Speeding Management Process being worked upon by the Strong Communities Task and Finish Group) ~ following public workshop.	Roger Hoggins	

Page 11

Future Agreed Work Programme Items: Dates to be determined

- × **Highways Management Plan** ~ Paul Keeble
- × **Open Space Review** ~ review of open spaces and the prioritisation and management of highways ~ strategic review rather than operational.
- × **Gwent Refugees and Asylum Seekers** ~ progress report ~ Joint scrutiny with CYP Select
- × **Modern Day Slavery and Human Trafficking** ~ topic raised by the chair for in-depth scrutiny.
- × **Cremations and Burials**

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Forward Work Programme 2018

Public Service Board Select Committee				
Meeting Date	Subject	Purpose of Scrutiny	Responsibility	Type of Scrutiny
22nd January 2018	Draft Public Service Board Well-Being plan	Opportunity to scrutinise the draft before adoption	Matthew Gatehouse Sharran Lloyd	Pre-decision Scrutiny
	Discussion with Future Generations Commissioner Sophie Howe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Commissioner's vision for the act and what it can achieve • The Commissioner's priorities • The role of PSB Scrutiny and the Commissioner's expectations 	Hazel Clatworthy	Performance Discussion
	Presentation on well-being engagement and measuring well-being at a community level	Understanding community well-being and how it is measured.	Abi Barton Rhian Cook	Presentation
21st March 2018	Deferred.			

Page 12

PSB DATES:

17th July 2018 10am
 17th October 2018 10am
 18th January 2019 10am
 4th April 2019 10am

PSB SELECT DATES: TBC



SUBJECT:	Scrutiny Self-Evaluation ~ November 2017
MEETING:	Democratic Services Committee
DATE:	23rd April 2018
DIVISIONS/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To present the Scrutiny Self-Evaluation completed in November 2017 to the Council's Democratic Services Committee to ensure Members have an awareness of the findings of the report, specifically any issues identified which may relate to the responsibilities of this committee.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Democratic Services Committee considers the report's findings in line with its responsibility to ensure the scrutiny function is adequately supported and resourced by the Council.

3 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 This report is not being brought to the Democratic Services Committee for it to make recommendations upon the performance of the scrutiny function. The responsibility to ensure the Council has 'fit for purpose' and effectively performing scrutiny arrangements in place rests with the Council's Audit Committee, sections 81 to 87 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 making provision for Audit Committees (in relation to the scrutiny function) to;

- Review, scrutinise and issue reports and recommendations on the appropriateness of the authority's risk management, internal control and corporate governance arrangements;

- 3.2 The Scrutiny self-evaluation report is being brought to the Democratic Services Committee to ensure there is oversight of any issues identified within the report which may fall within the committee's remit to ensure adequate support for scrutiny in line with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011. The measure requires a statutory Head of Democratic Service to report to the Democratic Services Committee in respect of discharging the following functions (relevance to the scrutiny function highlighted in yellow):

(a) To provide support and advice (but see note 1 below)

- to the authority in relation to its meetings;
- to committees of the authority and the members of those committees;
- to any joint committee which a local authority is responsible for organising and the members of that committee;

- in relation to the functions of the authority's overview and scrutiny committee(s), to members of the authority, members of the executive and officers;
 - to each member of the authority in carrying out the role of member of the authority (but see note 2 below);
- (b) To promote the role of the authority's overview and scrutiny committee(s);
- (c) To make reports and recommendations in respect of the number and grades of staff required to discharge democratic services functions and the appointment, organisation and proper management of those staff;
- (d) Any other functions prescribed by the Welsh Ministers.

3.3 In introducing the measure, Carl Sargeant, former Minister for Local Government and Communities highlights;

“Strong local democracy is essential to the delivery of good public services. We want scrutiny which is independent, well-resourced and effective in order to identify any weaknesses in service delivery and then to propose improvements. In that sense, the non-executive councillor is the eyes, ears and voice of the electors they represent and it is vital that all councillors play a full and vigorous role in scrutiny”.

He explains that the measure *“introduced Democratic Services committees whose role is to ensure that the non-executive role of councillors is fully supported, including when they are acting in the crucial role of scrutineers”.*

The Council’s Democratic Services Committee is therefore asked to consider this report in terms of their role, the responsibility for taking forward any improvement actions resting with the Scrutiny Manager and the Scrutiny Chairs Group.

3.4 The undertaking of the recent self-evaluation completed in November 2017 demonstrates the ongoing commitment by the scrutiny function to continually improve through regular self-evaluation and peer review. The self-evaluation process stems from a national study of scrutiny conducted by the Wales Audit Office during 2013 which involved a learning exchange team belonging to each Council in Wales conducting an initial self-evaluation of their scrutiny arrangements, prior to selecting partner authorities to shadow its scrutiny function (Caerphilly Council was selected Monmouthshire’s partner) for the study. The Councils met their respective scrutiny teams and observed each other’s scrutiny meetings before drawing their conclusions. Each Council then completed a second self-evaluation at the end of the study to acknowledge any progress made since commencing the study and to identify areas for further improvement.

3.5 Following completion of the WAO study, each Council was required to produce an Action Plan to enable the WAO to continue to monitor scrutiny’s progress as part of their on-going regulatory work. The recent self-evaluation has followed the same approach as the 2013-2014 self-evaluation, but it extended the peer review exercise to work with both Newport and Caerphilly Councils. The requirement to produce an annual ‘WAO Scrutiny Action Plan’ remains and to ensure that this is a relevant and strategic plan that drives the

development of the scrutiny function, the WAO Scrutiny Action Plan is the Council's Scrutiny Service Plan. The Scrutiny Service Plan 2018-2019 will identify actions that will be taken over a specified timescale to improve scrutiny in Monmouthshire, taking into account the findings of the recent self-evaluation and any actions agreed by the Scrutiny Chairs Group. The plan feeds directly into the Council's performance and improvement framework, is updated quarterly and serves as the key document upon which the Wales Audit Office can continue to monitor scrutiny's progress.

4. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 4.1 This report does not provide an options appraisal for this committee ~ the role for this committee in considering this report has been clearly explained. The self-evaluation report provides an executive summary with the key findings and improvement priorities being clearly identified. The report has not duplicated these, but offers members of this committee the context and provides a platform for discussion of the report's findings.

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 5.1 The self-evaluation report provides a full explanation of evaluation criteria relating to the study. Unless this Committee specifically requests the return of this report, this report will not return, but will be the responsibility of the Scrutiny Chairs Group and the Scrutiny Manager to take forward any actions for implementation (unless those actions relate to the responsibility of this committee).

6. REASONS

- 6.1 Scrutiny is a statutory function and performs a fundamental role in the Council's decision-making process. Whilst the Audit Committee is responsible for ensuring the Council's governance arrangements are fit for purpose and that scrutiny delivers its responsibilities effectively, the Democratic Services Committee is responsible for ensuring adequate resources for scrutiny and non-executive members as outlined in the Local Government (Wales) 2011 Measure.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

8. WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS (INCORPORATING EQUALITIES, SUSTAINABILITY, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

- 8.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report, however, the scrutiny function has clear responsibilities to scrutinise the above implications through the Council's decision-making process, so any impingement on their ability to conduct their role would be a matter for this committee to pursue.

9. CONSULTEES

9.1 Scrutiny Chairs Liaison Group to consider the findings of the Self-Evaluation on 19th April 2018.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Scrutiny Self-Evaluation Findings Report November 2017
- Appendix A ~ Peer Review Team's Self-Evaluation
- Appendix B ~ Peer Observation Feedback for Monmouthshire Scrutiny Function
- Appendix C ~ Monmouthshire Scrutiny Survey Findings

11. AUTHOR

Hazel Ilett
Scrutiny Manager

12. CONTACT DETAILS:

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Report Purpose

This report provides the key findings of a self-evaluation of Monmouthshire's scrutiny arrangements undertaken during March and May 2017 and identifies areas for future improvement focus. This self-evaluation ensures there are continued efforts to improve scrutiny practice and to consider how the function can best achieve added value for the Council and the public. The evidence was drawn together during the summer of 2017, which enables new members to develop and implement the priorities for improvement.

An executive summary highlights the key findings of the study and areas for improvement, which has been informed by three evidence sources:

- A self-evaluation conducted internally by scrutineers
- A peer-observation exercise conducted by experienced scrutiny practitioners from other local authorities
- A survey of scrutiny members, executive members and officers

The self-evaluation process was introduced as a national benchmark exercise by the Wales Audit Office in 2013 in preparation for the national study "Good Scrutiny? Good Question", report published in 2014. The process applies the "Characteristics of Good Scrutiny" as performance measures for determining the effectiveness of scrutiny, the measures having been compiled by the National Scrutiny Officers Network in 2012 for both the purpose of self-evaluation and the need for a recognised performance evaluation framework for scrutiny.

Summary of Approach

The self-evaluation, the peer observation exercise and the survey are based upon the "Characteristics of Good Scrutiny", which is the national performance measurement framework for evaluating the effectiveness of scrutiny. The model seeks to provide a situational analysis and to identify actions to address shortcomings, through focusing on the following components:

- **The scrutiny environment** ~ i.e. the culture within which scrutiny operates in a council and how conducive that is to effective scrutiny, the recognition of scrutiny as a key improvement mechanism and a vehicle for citizen engagement, the level of support scrutiny members are given to perform their role (by dedicated officers and wider officers in terms of research and information) and whether scrutiny members have access to development programmes that support them in performing their role.
- **Scrutiny practice** ~ i.e. whether scrutiny operates apolitically, is member-led and well chaired, whether it utilises a wide range of evidence to inform

its work, whether it builds good relationships with stakeholders, partners and regulators, the extent to which it balances the prioritisation of community concerns against issues of strategic risk and importance and whether it actively encourages the public to participate in democratic accountability.

- **Scrutiny's impact** ~ i.e. whether scrutiny's challenge of decision makers and service providers is evidenced based, whether scrutiny offers viable and well evidenced solutions to recognised problems, whether decision makers are held to public account for their responsibilities and the extent to which scrutiny enables the 'voice' of local people to be heard as part of the decision-making process.

The self-evaluation framework presents a series of 'ideal characteristics', incorporating the above components of 'scrutiny environment', 'scrutiny practice' and 'scrutiny impact'. Those undertaking the self-evaluation must assess the degree to which they consider their own scrutiny arrangements supports each statement, ranging from "hindering" to "positively supporting", providing evidence to support their choice and areas for improvement.

Whilst the self-evaluation required the full range of statements to be considered, thus providing an in-depth analysis, the peer observation study entailed fewer statements to be applied, acknowledging that a simple observation of 2 committee meetings (and pre-meetings) may not enable the full range of statements to be considered. Similarly, the scrutiny survey provided a shorter questionnaire containing statements that the audience may be suitably placed to answer in terms of "*strongly disagree*", "*disagree*", "*agree*" and "*strongly agree*".

The key findings are drawn by the Scrutiny Manager and incorporate the views of the three contributory sources to the study; the Peer Review Team, the Peer Observation Team and respondents to the scrutiny survey.

- **The Peer Review Team** ~ comprising the Scrutiny Chairs during 2012-2017, the Scrutiny Member Champion, the Scrutiny Manager and the Council's Head of Democratic Services.

Evidence: Self-evaluation of Monmouthshire's scrutiny function undertaken in May 2017, applying the scrutiny performance benchmark model "the Characteristics of Good Scrutiny".

- **The Peer Observation Team** ~ comprising the above equivalent elected members and officers of Caerphilly County Borough and Newport City councils. Representatives of the Wales Audit Office and the Welsh Local Government Association attended peer observation meetings in a facilitative capacity, which added legitimacy to the exercise.

Evidence: Peer Observation of 2 select committee meetings during March and April 2017, applying the scrutiny performance benchmark model “the Characteristics of Good Scrutiny”.

- **Respondents to the scrutiny survey** ~ the survey was sent to all elected members for the 2012-2017 term and all staff (with a repeat request for staff responses in June) together with an explanation of the study. The first survey link was preceded by a blog on scrutiny, which was placed on the council’s intranet and sent to all staff via email to raise awareness of scrutiny’s role.

Evidence: 76 survey responses were received; 64 responses from officers, 2 responses from cabinet members, 6 responses from scrutiny members and 4 unidentified respondents.

Limitations of the Study

Undertaking self-evaluation is beneficial in enabling those most familiar with the service to critically analyse its performance. The Peer Review Team consisted of individuals who were directly involved in delivering scrutiny. Whilst the team possessed the in-depth knowledge of the function which served as an advantage, there could be argued to be an inherent degree of bias in the self-evaluation.

The Peer Observation Team were able to offer an independent perspective through observation of scrutiny activity in practice. The benefit of the peer observation was that the observers were experienced scrutiny practitioners who were familiar with the “Characteristics of Good Scrutiny” framework and the self-evaluation approach and were able to apply it consistently. The limitations of the peer observation exercise were that the team were only able to provide feedback on what they could evidence through observation of 2 scrutiny meetings.

The survey also has limitations in terms of the statistical validity of the findings. The sample audience was large (all staff and all elected members) and the timing of the survey was poor in terms of securing responses from elected members (the month before a local government election and a general election). It is likely that the timing of the survey impacted upon the number of responses from members. The low number of elected member responses against a significant number of officer responses inevitably introduces a degree of bias to the survey findings. In addition, some officers who responded to the survey claimed they had limited knowledge or experience of scrutiny, which is likely to have impacted on the survey results. With hindsight, a more appropriate targeting of the audience would have reduced bias in the survey findings. This weakness is acknowledged and will be taken into account for future surveys, however, the

views of respondents have been placed in context and have been thoroughly considered as part of the overall findings.

The intention of the self-evaluation was to provide a general picture of how scrutiny is performing in Monmouthshire, not to provide a statistical evidence base and this should be recognised when forming any conclusions as to the validity of the methodology applied.

Outcomes of the Study

The benefits of having undertaken the review are that it:

- ✓ Involved opportunities for shared working, enabling the building of relationships with other councils, identifying areas for further joint working, particularly around self-evaluation and member development.
- ✓ Assisted in developing a better understanding, awareness and appreciation of different approaches to scrutiny.
- ✓ Provided a benchmark of our performance through self-evaluation and peer learning exchange, informed by real time observations and feedback from partner councils which has informed the action plan for improvement.

Executive Summary

This report presents the key findings of a self-evaluation study of the scrutiny function in Monmouthshire County Council. The intention of the study was to provide a general picture of how scrutiny is performing and to outline areas for improvement.

The study consisted of a self-evaluation exercise undertaken in-house by scrutineers (the Peer Review Team), a peer observation exercise with other councils (Peer Observation Team) and a survey sent to all members and officers. The study applied the “Characteristics of Good Scrutiny” criteria, this being the national performance measurement framework for evaluating the effectiveness of scrutiny. The key findings have been drawn by the Scrutiny Manager and incorporate the views of the three contributory sources to the study.

Scrutiny Environment / Culture

The study sought to assess whether the environment in which scrutiny operates is conducive to effective scrutiny. The findings were positive, the Peer Review Team, the Peer Observation Team and the survey respondents reflecting a clear and shared understanding and application of scrutiny’s role and purpose. There

is a sense that scrutiny is generally respected both within the council and externally and that there is an effective relationship existing between scrutiny and the executive. Scrutiny was felt to operate independently from the executive and to challenge apolitically.

The findings indicated that the governance arrangements for scrutiny are clearly understood by the executive and officers and are applied consistently. Scrutiny was felt to have a clear and valued role in performance management and financial management, although it was acknowledged that the strength of challenge by scrutiny members in these areas could be improved.

Scrutiny Practice

In terms of the effectiveness of scrutiny practice, it was largely agreed that scrutiny has the dedicated officer support it needs, however, findings indicate there is a need to improve the capacity of members to constructively challenge. Practice was felt to vary across the select committees, the effectiveness of the chairing of scrutiny meetings being key to ensuring an effective questioning strategy and the driving of the agenda to achieve clear outcomes.

Conduct was regarded as good, however, it was acknowledged that poor behavior by a small minority can severely impact upon scrutiny's status and perceived value. The low attendance of members at scrutiny training sessions was highlighted through survey comments and the Peer Review Team recognised that new members will need significant member development and support to enable them to effectively perform the scrutiny member role.

Scrutiny Impact

The findings support that scrutiny is increasingly holding partners to account for decisions taken that affect the people of Monmouthshire and that it is effectively championing on behalf of communities on major issues such as broadband and business rates. Observers commented positively on scrutiny's attempts to engage the public in its work through inviting relevant key stakeholders and service users to meetings on a 'topic basis'. The Peer Review Team recognised however, that the extent to which scrutiny is affording real democratic engagement on major issues is questionable, suggesting there is a need to consider ways in which scrutiny can more proactively engage with the public and bring the public's perspective to its work.

A key improvement area highlighted in the study was the need for 'evidence-based' constructive challenge. Whilst observers acknowledged that members asked valid questions, they felt there was a lack of a questioning strategy. Survey comments suggest there is a need to strengthen the level of challenge of the executive and officers. Similarly, it was felt that scrutiny members rely heavily on information that is given to them, as opposed to gathering independent evidence to support alternative proposals or to propose solutions.

Way Forward

The improvement priorities presented in the report will need to be taken forward by the Scrutiny Chairs Group, but they fall mainly in the categories of 'scrutiny member and officer training' and improving our weaker scrutiny practices.

The 'Scrutiny Member Development Programme' will need to focus on areas ranging from the role and responsibilities of a scrutiny member to affecting constructive challenge through independent evidence gathering and the need to draw evidenced-based conclusions / develop solutions. Officers suggested via the survey that there is a need to provide further officer training on scrutiny's role, political report writing and governance processes in order to ensure that quality information is provided to members to enable them to challenge effectively.

Improving scrutiny practice requires a clear need to focus on engagement of the right people on the right topics to deliver outcomes. The study highlighted the need to consider how to engage members in 'value added scrutiny' that can deliver timely outcomes. There is a clear interest from members to be actively involved in determining future service delivery and other working styles may be better placed to achieve this than formal meetings. Considering how the scrutiny function can effectively engage the public in decision-making (ensuring a clearer understanding of the decision-making process and vehicles through which they can become involved) needs a concerted focus, if meaningful public engagement is to be achieved.

The opportunities for improvement are significant, due to key developments since this self-evaluation was undertaken. We have a new administration in place for a new council term, we have a new Corporate Plan, a revised constitution and we have refreshed all of our major strategic plans in preparation for a dynamic response to increased challenges in public service delivery. We have also strengthened our governance arrangements; closing loops in our decision-making process, enhancing the role of the Democratic Services Committee and implementing a new 'options appraisal' approach to political reporting. We are also embarking on implementing remote attendance at meetings, all of which demonstrates that continuous improvement is a corporate priority and that we are committed to creating an environment in which scrutiny can become more effective.

Key Findings

The key findings are drawn by the Scrutiny Manager and are based upon general themes emerging from the three elements of the study; namely the Peer Review Team's self-evaluation (**Appendix A**), the Peer Observation Team's Feedback (**Appendix B**) and the responses to the scrutiny survey (**Appendix C**). The report seeks to provide a general overview of the state of play of scrutiny in Monmouthshire and to acknowledge areas for improvement and as such, the evidence sources will be referred to enable the reader to appreciate why the conclusion has been drawn. For simplicity, the evidence source reports are provided as separate appendices.

1) Understanding of Scrutiny Role

There is a clear and shared understanding and application of the role and purpose of scrutiny amongst executive and non-executive members, senior officers and key local partners. There is a Scrutiny and Executive Protocol in place which has afforded scrutiny and the executive a mutual respect for each other's roles and has increased the professionalism of all parties. There is improved attendance by senior officers, officers attending prepared and with a clearer understanding of the type of information scrutiny members need, the quality of information being brought to scrutiny having improved. The Peer Observation Team commented on positive relationships between scrutiny and officers and external partners. Scrutiny is increasingly holding partners to account for decisions taken that affect the people of Monmouthshire. Scrutiny of the Public Service Board is established, however the Peer Observation Team commented that whilst recognising that PSB scrutiny is at a very early stage, there was insufficient information provided to the scrutiny committee meeting they observed to enable scrutiny to robustly challenge. *Evidence: Questions 1, 3, 12 and 27 of Appendix A, Appendix B ~ Peer Observation Feedback, March and April 2017.*

2) Held in high esteem, trusted and respected?

Scrutiny is generally respected within the authority and externally with an effective relationship between scrutiny and the executive. Scrutiny is not always felt to 'be held in high esteem', due to the nature of the role being challenging i.e. cross-examination, critical friend. Practice across the select committees varies and there is room for improvement in terms of some members' capacity to challenge. Conduct is generally very good, however, poor behavior by a small minority can severely impact upon scrutiny's status and perceived value. The Peer Observation Team highlighted respectful behaviour being observed. *Evidence: Question 2 of Appendix A, Appendix B ~ Peer Observation Feedback, April 2017.*

3) A Corporate Role

Scrutiny has a clear and valued role in performance management, enhanced by changes made to how performance information is reported to scrutiny, enabling members to better understand any patterns or inconsistencies within services. The financial reports are taken to scrutiny and to the executive to ensure a wide understanding of the financial pressures within service areas and this enables members to put issues into context when scrutinising both performance and risk management. The chief officer self-evaluations enable both challenge on past performance and an input into determining the future strategic direction for services. It also enables scrutiny to have an oversight of the alignment of activities with wider corporate objectives. The survey suggested that member training in these areas is required to improve the level of challenge. *Evidence: Question 4 of Appendix A, Scrutiny Survey comments (unpublished).*

4) Relationship with Regulators

The communication between scrutiny and internal and external auditors has improved and the relationship with the Wales Audit Office has been positive, in terms of increasing self-evaluation to reduce external regulation. There is an acknowledged room for improvement with some regulators in terms of enabling scrutiny to play an enhanced role. *Evidence: Question 4 of Appendix A.*

5) Clarity in Governance Arrangements

The governance arrangements for scrutiny are clear, are understood by the executive and officers and are applied in a consistent manner. The Scrutiny and Executive Protocol forms part of the constitution and revision of the constitution enabled the Scrutiny Chairs Group to review working practices. *Evidence: Question 6 of Appendix A.*

6) Scrutiny Support and Training

Members are supported by a 'Scrutiny Member Development Programme', however, the survey raised concerns around the attendance of members at training sessions, which are not mandatory. The scrutiny function benefits from independent, objective and dedicated scrutiny support. The wider officer core also support scrutiny members to constructively challenge and by engaging expert officers in performance and finance in scrutiny, they are able to provide independent and objective analysis, which both raises the quality of scrutiny debate and ensures that the information being provided to members is accurate and consistent. *Evidence: Questions 8, 9, 10 and 11 of Appendix A, Appendix C, Scrutiny Survey.*

7) Operating apolitically and independently of the executive?

The Peer Review Team and the Peer Observation Team conclude that scrutiny operates independently from the executive and challenges apolitically and the survey indicates that the executive are held to account by scrutiny. The survey highlighted occasional political behaviour, acknowledging that political influences are difficult to remove entirely. The Peer Review Team stated that "the executive

neither influences scrutiny's choice of topics nor any recommendations it makes". There is a culture of constructive challenge in the council and scrutiny's role as a critical friend in undertaking that challenge appears to be welcomed by the executive. Recommendations are debated openly, the executive attending meetings when requested and being suitably prepared. There is a clear sense of role and purpose in both the executive and scrutiny functions, with no obstruction from the executive to scrutiny's work or its recommendations. *Evidence: Question 13, Appendix B ~ Peer Observation Feedback, March and April 2017, Appendix C, Scrutiny Survey.*

8) The Effectiveness of Chairing

The quality of chairing was commented upon by both sets of observers and survey respondents and is generally regarded as effective. The Peer Observation Team acknowledged that whilst there was effective summing up and drawing of conclusions, there was a tendency to allow non-relevant tangential discussion, which the chair could better manage in order to drive the agenda (this was also commented upon in the scrutiny survey). *Evidence: Questions 14, 15, 16 and 24 of Appendix A, Appendix B ~ Peer Observation Feedback March and April 2017, Appendix C, Scrutiny Survey.*

9) Evidence-based constructive challenge?

The member training sessions on questioning, listening and analysis are felt to have improved the skills of some members in this area, however, at times, questioning lacks clarity and strategy, members conceding rather than pursuing a line of inquiry. The Peer Observation Team observed "good questioning by members", however, they highlighted that some members make statements rather than challenging those responsible. The strength of challenge of the executive and officers was raised in the scrutiny survey, officers reporting mixed experiences across the committees, highlighting the need for improvement.

The extent to which members are gathering independent evidence to support alternative proposals or to propose solutions to problems rather than relying on information given to them is questionable (highlighted through the survey). Scrutiny has conducted numerous reviews which have followed an evidence-based approach, involving experts, key stakeholders and service users, however, Task and Finish Group work has generally taken too long to complete, which has led to scrutiny missing the boat in terms of its impact. The complex and dynamic environment of a modern council may not necessarily lend itself to resource intensive Task and Finish Groups and as such, scrutiny committees have become more flexible, holding special meetings where appropriate to consider emerging issues in a timely manner. The need to ensure public accountability for performance and major policy decisions needs to be balanced against the undertaking of in-depth reviews on subjects of interest (survey feedback). Scrutiny has begun to challenge via other means i.e. short scrutinies and member workshops, enabling members to set the direction with officers facilitating and delivering actions. *Evidence: Questions 14, 15, 16 and 24 of Appendix A,*

10) Public Engagement

Scrutiny does engage the public in its work, inviting relevant key stakeholders and service users to meetings on an 'topic basis', which has proven successful. Members are keen to ensure the public have the opportunity to participate in its work and have sought to engage them in scrutiny work through press releases, business breakfast meeting and focus groups. The scrutiny committees also hold a public open forum at all meetings to enable the public to influence the scrutiny process and all meetings are webcast (acknowledged as good practice by the Peer Observation Team). However, given that public attendance at scrutiny meetings varies across committees, there may be a lack of awareness of the opportunities for the public to participate. In terms of real democratic engagement on major issues, there is a need to consider ways in which scrutiny can engage more proactively with the public and bring the perspectives of the public to its work. *Evidence: Question 17 and 26 of Appendix A, Appendix B ~ Peer Observation Feedback March 2017, Appendix C, Scrutiny Survey.*

Improvement Priorities

1) Member Development

- To ensure a clear understanding of the scrutiny member role and the scrutiny chairing role.
- To ensure an understanding of the parameters of the distinct roles of members and officers ~ members in setting the policy direction and officers in facilitating, enabling and delivery.
- To guide on the role and conduct of a councillor in a modern council environment, including presentational skills and how to effect constructive challenge.
- Training of members on scrutiny chairing, questioning and listening skills and drawing evidenced-based conclusions.
- Training on analysis of the impacts of proposed actions, both financial, legal, future generations.

2) Officer Development

- To guide on political report writing and governance processes.
- To assist officers to understand the scrutiny role and the benefits of robust pre-decision scrutiny (even if this incurs a delay in a decision being made).

- To improve the quality of information being brought to scrutiny and to encourage 'options appraisal' style reporting to ensure that members are able to debate the merits of a range of proposals rather than a preferred option.

3) Information brought to scrutiny

- To align the performance reporting and financial reporting as far as possible to ensure members receive the full picture at the same time. The context provided in each of the reports would be complementary and would enable a broader and more holistic understanding of the position within a service area.
- Ensure that partners also bring good quality information to scrutiny meetings to enable effective challenge.

4) Relationships with regulators

- Engage more proactively with particular regulators on their work programmes to:
 - Enable scrutiny to play an enhanced role ~ conducting pre-inspection scrutiny as well as ongoing performance monitoring.
 - Ensure the timely scrutiny of final reports produced by regulators and the timely scrutiny of action plans in response to regulatory recommendations.

5) Effective Corporate Planning

- Continue to closely monitor the decision-making process to ensure the Council's business is programmed and published correctly. The 'Cabinet and Council Forward Planner' and the 'Scrutiny Forward Work Programme' are available to the public and are tabled to scrutiny meetings, but we need to continue training officers in ensuring the plans are completed in a timely manner with the appropriate detail.

6) Scrutiny Support

- Ensuring the Scrutiny Manager can put arrangements in place for occasions such as annual leave/work conflicts to ensure that scrutiny members have independent and objective scrutiny support.

7) Consider other means of undertaking scrutiny

- There is a need to consider how best to engage members in meaningful scrutiny that can deliver timely outcomes;
 - Members have welcomed senior officer support for focused scrutiny activity and have expressed a desire to become more involved in shaping the future strategic direction of the council.
 - The holding of workshop style meetings with members to actively involve them in determining future service delivery will require senior officer input in order to take member suggestions forward, however, it is a more timely and effective way of engaging members than task and finish groups or seminars.
 - The 'action learning' approach both engages members and enables the council to respond more promptly and dynamically to challenges posed.

8) Public Engagement in Scrutiny and Democracy

There is a need to consider:

- How we can engage the public more effectively in decision-making, by ensuring a clearer understanding of the decision-making process and the vehicles through which they can become involved (i.e. scrutiny).
 - Whilst the public are able to offer suggestions via the website or through attending a meeting, we need to achieve real democratic engagement in the key decisions the council takes. For example, some councils have trialed online public forums for proactively consulting on major proposals in advance of the decision.
 - Scrutiny members could engage more proactively with the public through roadshows or holding specific meetings with residents and communities on particular topics.
 - The scrutiny function could raise awareness of its role and proactively engage with the public on scrutiny topics via social media websites, such as Twitter. Whilst the public may attend meetings if the subject matter is of relevance to them, they may be unaware of the scrutiny role.

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Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Self-Evaluation ~ Final Report (compiled May 2017)

Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
<p>1. Is there a clear and shared understanding and application of the role and purpose of Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) amongst executive and non-executive members, senior officers, scrutiny officers and key local partners?</p>		
<p>There was agreement that significant progress had been made in raising the awareness of the function and applying the role outside of the council. The evidence to support this is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have a Scrutiny and Executive Protocol in place which has proven successful in clarifying the roles and responsibilities of scrutiny and the executive, as well as officers. The shared understanding is enhanced by the protocol and has developed more beneficial working relationships. The Protocol has afforded scrutiny and the executive a mutual respect for each other's roles and has increased the professionalism of all parties. Scrutiny is increasingly holding partners to account for decisions taken that affect the people of Monmouthshire, key examples being the Health Board, Registered Social Landlords, British Telecom and Welsh Government. 	<p>The relationship between Scrutiny and the Executive is positive. The Executive respect that scrutiny has a role to play. This is evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Scrutiny defining its own agenda, leading and owning the process. → Scrutiny meetings attended by the Executive when requested. → The Executive preparing adequately for scrutiny meetings. → The Executive referring complex issues via pre-decision scrutiny for a view. <p>There seems to be a willingness of partners to attend scrutiny meetings. Partners are bringing appropriate individuals to scrutiny meetings to be able to discuss and answer questions and agree actions to take forward.</p>	<p>It is recognised that the elected membership could change to a greater or lesser extent and that the improvement journey will need to begin in order to sustain the positive position in terms of a 'clear and shared understanding of scrutiny's role.</p>

For each question, assess the extent to which your scrutiny arrangements / practice is supporting the statement given...

Hindering

Partly Supporting

Positively Supporting

Significantly Supporting

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Self-Evaluation ~ Final Report (compiled May 2017)

Page 32

Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
2. Does O&S enjoy a high status and is it held in high esteem, trusted and respected both within and outside the Authority?		
<p>There is a sense that scrutiny is respected within the authority and externally. This is evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A willingness of internal officers, the Executive and partners to attend scrutiny meetings. • Adequate preparation for meetings. • Often an acknowledgement that Scrutiny's lines of inquiry are appropriate and reasonable questions. <p>This question has not scored higher, as Scrutiny is not felt to 'enjoy a high status or be held in high esteem', partly due to the very nature of the role i.e. cross examination, critical friend.</p>	<p>There is a sense that scrutiny is fairly trusted and respected. This is partly due to the aforementioned effective relationship between Scrutiny and the Executive (which is underpinned by a clear protocol to ensure no ambiguity of respective roles). This is supported by the manner in which scrutiny operates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective utilization of pre-meetings to plan questioning strategies. • Appropriate questioning of responsibility holders and officers. • An observed positive working culture evidenced by fair and respectful conduct. 	<p>This question could have scored slightly higher, however, practice across all the select committees differs and there is room for improvement in terms of some members' capacity to ask focused questions and ask appropriate follow-up questions if they are not satisfied with answers given.</p> <p>In addition, whilst conduct is generally very good, poor behavior by a very small minority can severely impact upon Scrutiny's status and perceived value. There is an acknowledgement by the Peer Review Team that member conduct plays a pivotal role in securing the trust and esteem of 'the scrutinised' and that this must remain a high priority for the future administrative term.</p>
3. Is there a well-defined and constructive relationship between O&S, the executive and senior officers?		
<p>There is a clear improvement in this area, evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good Executive Member attendance at scrutiny meetings, the executive attending prepared and able to respond to scrutiny's questions. • The Executive are responding to recommendations made by 	<p>There is a clear Scrutiny and Executive protocol in place to ensure roles of the Executive, Scrutiny and officers are understood. There appears to be a mutual respect for roles and there are more frequent occasions when scrutiny is asked to conduct pre-decision scrutiny.</p> <p>Officer training on report writing has improved the quality of reports being</p>	<p>We acknowledge the new intake of members will require scrutiny member development training.</p> <p>We recognise that it will take time for the committees to embed and that this will include agreeing a focused work programme and defining parameters of working (a shared agreement of the behaviour and working practices, which may differ within committees). The Scrutiny Manager will guide and support members on achieving this.</p>

For each question, assess the extent to which your scrutiny arrangements / practice is supporting the statement given...

Hindering

Partly Supporting

Positively Supporting

Significantly Supporting

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Self-Evaluation ~ Final Report (compiled May 2017)

<p>scrutiny via formal communication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved attendance by senior officers, officers attending prepared and with a clearer understanding of the type of information members need (pitching has improved). 	<p>brought to scrutiny meetings.</p>	
Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
4. Does O&S have a clearly defined and valued role in the council's self-evaluation, performance management and improvement arrangements?		
<p>This area has improved, due to changes made to how performance information is reported. Scrutiny has a clear and valued contribution to the performance management framework, evidenced as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular performance reports are brought to scrutiny committees in an improved format (context added to performance indicators based on a traffic light system). Regular detailed financial reporting brought to scrutiny with a concise summary of pressures within service areas. Chief Officer Self-evaluations are scrutinised to ensure accountability for performance, but also to present the future strategic direction for the service. Regular risk management reports 	<p>The new performance reports enable members to better understand any patterns or inconsistencies within services.</p> <p>The financial reports are taken to Scrutiny and to the Executive to ensure a wide understanding of the financial pressures within service areas. This can be put into context by members when scrutinising both performance and risk management.</p> <p>The Chief Officer self-evaluations have become a regular feature at scrutiny meetings and enable challenge on past performance but also an input from scrutiny as to the future strategic direction. This enables scrutiny to have an oversight to ensure that activities align to corporate objectives.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Service Plan (which is also</p>	<p>Whilst it is felt that our arrangements positively support effective scrutiny, we feel that areas for further improvement are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To align the performance reporting and financial reporting as far as possible to ensure members receive the full picture at the same time. The context provided in each of the reports would complement and enable a broader and more holistic understanding of the position within a service area. The current development of a Corporate Plan (under which all strategies will sit) should ensure the alignment of individual strategies with the Council's agreed strategic direction (outlined in the Corporate Plan).

For each question, assess the extent to which your scrutiny arrangements / practice is supporting the statement given...

Hindering

Partly Supporting

Positively Supporting

Significantly Supporting

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Self-Evaluation ~ Final Report (compiled May 2017)

<p>to enable members to challenge the Executive on their management and mitigation of risks relating to their portfolio.</p>	<p>the Wales Audit Office Scrutiny Action Plan) is part of the Council's performance management framework and updates its own performance quarterly.</p>	
Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
<p>5. Is there regular and effective two-way communication between O&S and external/internal auditors, regulators and inspectors?</p>		
<p>The communication between scrutiny and internal and external auditors has improved, evidenced as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Scrutiny Chairs Group have met with the internal auditor to highlight issues of concern and discussed any areas where scrutiny could add value to audit work. • The Scrutiny Manager provides an input into the Chief Auditor's Annual Governance Statement. • The Scrutiny function has had regular liaison with the Wales Audit Office following the previous review of scrutiny arrangements and the Council's Corporate Assessment. In undertaking this self-evaluation, the WAO was invited to peer observations to add credence and legitimacy to the review. • Scrutiny is aware of reviews being undertaken by external regulators 	<p>The opportunity to work with the Wales Audit Office on improving scrutiny practice over a number of years led to the first agreed benchmark indicators for scrutiny across Wales, namely the "Characteristics of Good Scrutiny". The application of a self-evaluation template which focusses on scrutiny practice in addition to the environment/culture has been particularly helpful in terms of comparisons drawn across Wales, in that it takes account of the unique culture of each council. The process of undertaking regular self-evaluation has become embedded in Monmouthshire and the "Characteristics of Good Scrutiny" is a highly useful resource for self-analysis. The undertaking of regular self-evaluation has been recognised 'good practice' by external auditors because it demonstrates a commitment to ongoing performance improvement and reduces the need for sustained external auditing.</p>	<p>The improvements that need to be made are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to engage with particular regulators on their work programmes at the beginning of the year to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avoid duplication in effort. - Enable scrutiny to play an enhanced role ~ conducting pre-inspection scrutiny as well as the performance monitoring role. - Ensure timely scrutiny of final reports and timely scrutiny of action plans in response to regulatory recommendations.

For each question, assess the extent to which your scrutiny arrangements / practice is supporting the statement given...

Hindering Partly Supporting Positively Supporting Significantly Supporting

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Self-Evaluation ~ Final Report (compiled May 2017)

Page 35

and programmes final findings into scrutiny committees for ongoing performance monitoring.		
Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
6. Does O&S have clear governance arrangements that are understood and applied effectively?		
<p>The governance arrangements for scrutiny are clear and understood by the Executive and officers and are applied in a consistent manner, evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny Meetings are administered in accordance to the Council's constitution. The Constitution was revised just over 2 years ago to ensure that it is contemporary and appropriate for today's scrutiny practice. This included the provisions to undertake joint scrutiny (internally with more than one Select Committee) and externally with other councils on collaborative initiatives. • The Scrutiny and Executive Protocol was updated at this time and inserted to the Constitution to ensure it had legitimacy as a working practice protocol to support relationships between scrutiny, the Executive and officers. 	<p>The revision of the Constitution enabled a review of working practices to assess fitness for purpose. The Scrutiny Chairs Group were instrumental in reviewing the practices relating to scrutiny and made recommendations on provisions on joint scrutiny and the number of elected members to comprise Select Committees and these were accepted and included in the revised Constitution.</p>	<p>The current Constitution will need to be revised should the introduction of remote attendance at meetings be introduced, in order to enable remote voting at meetings. The Council was one of the first to adopt live streaming of scrutiny committees and this practice would be a natural extension of the Council supporting elected members to conduct their roles in a digital/electronic working environment.</p> <p>The improvements around governance in terms of ensuring Council business is programmed and published continue. The Cabinet and Council Forward Planner and the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme are available to the public and are tabled to scrutiny meetings to ensure effective corporate planning.</p>

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Self-Evaluation ~ Final Report (compiled May 2017)

Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
<p>7. Are O&S chairs and executive members actively promoting the role and value of the scrutiny function to a variety of internal and external stakeholders?</p>		
<p>The Scrutiny Chairs Group is instrumental in actively promoting the role and value of the scrutiny function to internal and external audiences, through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving scrutiny development in terms of assisting with officer training on scrutiny • Meeting with stakeholders to encourage input at scrutiny meetings • Ensuring continuous improvement in practice through working with the Scrutiny Manager to implement key changes in scrutiny practice. • Providing an integral input to the Scrutiny Service Plan (this is the Wales Audit Office Scrutiny Action Plan). • Attending workshops and events outside of scrutiny meetings to champion the role and value of scrutiny. 	<p>The Scrutiny Chairs Group comprises committed individuals who provide support and encouragement in driving the scrutiny agenda. The relationship between members of this group is robust and enables a collective view/consensus to be reached on issues under discussion, which ensures that the Scrutiny Manager has a clear focus and direction for driving improvement.</p> <p>The Executive understand and respect the scrutiny role and do not in any way prevent scrutiny undertaking its role. Their distance is appropriate and the relationship is professional.</p>	<p>The only reservation for this question not scoring higher is that the Scrutiny Chairs Group recognise that the forthcoming election may alter the composition of the Scrutiny Chair's Group which could require relationships to be re-built, acknowledging that this will take time to enable trust to be built between members and for the necessary knowledge to be acquired to ensure their input into developing scrutiny becomes as significant as evident in this administrative term.</p>

For each question, assess the extent to which your scrutiny arrangements / practice is supporting the statement given...

Hindering

Partly Supporting

Positively Supporting

Significantly Supporting

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Self-Evaluation ~ Final Report (compiled May 2017)

Page 37

Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
8. Do O&S members have access to development and training opportunities focused on need, as part of the council's wider commitment to member support and development?		
<p>This area has scored highly, in recognition of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Scrutiny Member Development Programme ~ agreed by the Scrutiny Chairs Group, provides a range of training for scrutiny members conducted on a rolling basis (programme available). 	<p>Members are supported through a Scrutiny Member Development Programme by an experienced Scrutiny Manager, who provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training in-house using expert members of staff (specifically for training on performance management and financial scrutiny). Training with external consultants on some subjects in order to provide their unique experiences ~ namely individuals who have acted in a Councillor role previously. 	<p>The Peer Review Team acknowledge that this score reflects the position over the past 5 years and that significant work will need to be undertaken with new scrutiny committees to afford members with the skills to be able to perform their roles effectively.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Manager will lead the Scrutiny Induction and will organise appropriate and focused training through the autumn of 2017.</p>
Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
9. Does O&S have a sufficient level of dedicated support from officers who are able to research independently and are able to provide O&S members with high quality objective analysis and support?		
<p>The Peer Review Team believe the scrutiny function benefits from independent, objective and dedicated scrutiny support via the Scrutiny Manager, who is able to research and provide high quality support to Members. This is evidenced by the Scrutiny Manager:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinating scrutiny's workload 	<p>The support provided by the Scrutiny Manager is regarded to be high quality and objective, (however, it is felt that the resource is insufficient). The Scrutiny Service Plan provides details of staffing and budgets for the scrutiny function.</p>	<p>The Scrutiny Manager works independently of the Democratic Services Team and is the only dedicated scrutiny resource. Whilst the Democratic Services Team provide administrative support to scrutiny meetings in terms of clerking select committees, they do not undertake research or analysis for scrutiny committees or task and finish groups or perform any of the responsibilities of the scrutiny manager as discussed.</p>

For each question, assess the extent to which your scrutiny arrangements / practice is supporting the statement given...

Hindering

Partly Supporting

Positively Supporting

Significantly Supporting

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Self-Evaluation ~ Final Report (compiled May 2017)

Page 38

<p>across the 5 scrutiny committees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending all scrutiny meetings • Leading all scrutiny activities, including task and finish groups and workshops • Undertaking associated background research and suggesting appropriate lines of inquiry • Ensuring scrutiny delivers outcomes in terms of conclusions, recommendations and follow-up actions • Training members in-house on their roles and responsibilities and supporting them to perform their capabilities in line with their job description • Producing guidance for members on scrutinising risks and budgets, questioning techniques, the undertaking of task and finish groups, joint scrutiny and scrutiny of the well-being of future generations and Public Service Boards. 		<p>Arrangements should be put in place for occasions when the Scrutiny Manager is on holiday to ensure that scrutiny members have access to independent and objective scrutiny support.</p>
<p>Evidence</p>	<p>Positive Aspects</p>	<p>Areas for Improvement</p>
<p>10. Is the role of officers directly supporting scrutiny activity well understood and valued within the organisation?</p>		
<p>The role of the Scrutiny Manager in directly supporting scrutiny activity is fairly well understood and valued within the</p>	<p>The Executive and Scrutiny Members have a clearer understanding of the role of the Scrutiny Manager and of the other</p>	<p>The Council recognises that the Scrutiny Manager must act impartially and as a key interface between scrutiny, the Executive and officers in order for the</p>

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Self-Evaluation ~ Final Report (compiled May 2017)

<p>Council. There is a tendency for some officers to confuse the Scrutiny Manager role with the administrative role provided by Democratic Services, whilst the Scrutiny Manager role is distinct / overarching (as discussed).</p>	<p>senior officers who present to scrutiny, with roles and responsibilities being understood. This has improved following clarification within the Scrutiny and Executive Protocol.</p>	<p>dynamic to work effectively. All officers in the Council must provide accurate and objective information to scrutiny members and the quality of such information has improved, but will remain a priority improvement area.</p>
<p>Evidence</p>	<p>Positive Aspects</p>	<p>Areas for Improvement</p>
<p><i>11. Does the O&S process receive effective support from the council's wider officer core as and when required?</i></p>		
<p>The scrutiny process does receive effective support from wider officers, evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance reporting undertaken by expert research officers within the Policy and Improvement Team. When requested, these officers will gather and collate information to assist scrutiny. • Financial accountants provide regular reports to scrutiny, advising on budgetary positions. • Senior officers can provide strategic leadership to scrutiny on key topics being scrutinised via Task and Finish Groups and scrutiny workshops. • The Legal Team and the Council's Digital Team provide technical support as and when required. 	<p>Engaging experts in performance (policy researchers) and experts in finance (accountants) in providing independent and objective analysis to scrutiny raises the quality of scrutiny debate and ensures that the information being provided to members is accurate and consistent. It would be felt to be counterproductive to ask officers who are unqualified in such fields to produce information for members, at a risk of inaccuracy, which would lose scrutiny a degree of credibility.</p> <p>Engaging these expert officers in the training of members around performance management and financial scrutiny has proven highly beneficial in terms of ensuring a thorough understanding of the regular reports being brought to scrutiny.</p>	<p>Senior officer support for some of scrutiny's focused priorities has been welcomed and supported by members who have expressed an interest to become more involved in shaping the future strategic direction of the council. This more proactive approach to scrutiny does benefit from senior officer input in order to take ideas suggested by members forward as key actions. This has led to more workshop style meetings being held with members as opposed to task and finish groups or member seminars, as an 'action learning' approach engages members and enables the Council to respond more promptly and dynamically to the challenges posed.</p> <p>With new elected membership possibly having increased commitments in terms of the workload of being a Councillor balanced against a work and family life, there is a need to consider how best to engage members in meaningful scrutiny that can deliver timely outcomes, so this will remain a priority area.</p>

For each question, assess the extent to which your scrutiny arrangements / practice is supporting the statement given...

Hindering Partly Supporting Positively Supporting Significantly Supporting

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Self-Evaluation ~ Final Report (compiled May 2017)

Page 40

Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
12. Is information provided to O&S relevant, robust, balanced, meaningful, responsive to requests, of high quality and provided in a timely and consistent manner?		
<p>The quality of information being brought to members is felt to have improved, evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cover reports that provide a balanced outline of the key issues and relevant implications of a decision. Greater clarity on the purpose of bringing to scrutiny (less 'for information' items) with clear recommendations for scrutiny. Pre-decision scrutiny of decisions being accompanied by Future Generations evaluations. 	<p>Scrutiny committees build flexibility into their work programmes to ensure they are able to scrutinise key issues at the right time in order to achieve maximum impact. The benefit of having a flexible approach is that appropriate information can be made available to scrutiny in a timely manner, which improves the quality of the scrutiny undertaken by members.</p>	<p>The political report template has been revised in January 2017 to assist officers in providing a balanced analysis of options. Scrutiny and the improvement team have also prepared a guideline for officers on the process that should be followed in seeking a political view or decision, to ensure the relevant individuals are engaged prior to decisions being sought (made available on intranet with the political report template).</p> <p>The recent move towards a more options appraisal style of reporting ensures that members are able to debate the merits of a range of proposals rather than a preferred option. This also allows members to form a view based on a thorough analysis of the benefits and limitations of various options ~ this is assisting in considering the needs of future generations and avoids a 'narrowed focus' in decision-making.</p>
13. Does O&S provide evidence based, constructive challenge; operate objectively, apolitically and with independence from executive decision makers?		
<p>The team feel that scrutiny does operate independently from the executive and challenges apolitically, evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Executive neither influences scrutiny's choice of topics nor any 	<p>There is a culture of constructive challenge in the Council and scrutiny's role as a critical friend in undertaking that challenge appears to be welcomed by the Executive. Recommendations are debated openly, Executive Members</p>	<p>It will be important to continue to develop good working relations within the new Council and to train members accordingly. The Scrutiny member Development Programme will need to reflect the anticipated training needs but also any emerging ones once the select committees have embedded.</p>

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Self-Evaluation ~ Final Report (compiled May 2017)

Page 41

<p>recommendations it makes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no sense of obstruction to scrutiny's work and its recommendations are welcomed. Scrutiny members of the controlling party play a full role at meetings, with no discernible sense of pressure from the Executive to hold a particular view ~ on very few occasions is it possible to distinguish members by political party. 	<p>willing to attend meetings when requested, being suitably prepared.</p> <p>There is a clear sense of role and purpose in both the Executive and scrutiny functions, assisted by an agreed protocol.</p>	
Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
14. Do O&S members identify appropriate topics for challenge or policy review/development and develop outcome focused forward work programmes?		
<p>This has scored highly and is not felt to be an areas of concern, evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A scrutiny work programming process being in place with criteria to assist members in selecting topics for scrutiny. This is based on questions designed to define outcomes through scrutiny activity. 	<p>Members are becoming more effective at prioritising issues for scrutiny, holding special meetings where appropriate to consider emerging issues in a timely manner.</p>	<p>There is a need to consider how scrutiny work can be both meaningful and engaging for members, taking into account the parameters of the distinct roles of members and officers. With new elected membership, there will be a need to clarify the role of the member in setting the policy direction and the role of officers in facilitating, enabling and delivering action.</p> <p>Task and Finish Groups have tended to take time in reaching conclusions and as a result, scrutiny has missed the boat in terms of impact, so possible member workshops to engage them in the generation of actions may be a future working arrangement to ensure both effective and timely</p>

For each question, assess the extent to which your scrutiny arrangements / practice is supporting the statement given...

Hindering	Partly Supporting	Positively Supporting	Significantly Supporting
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Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Self-Evaluation ~ Final Report (compiled May 2017)

Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
15. Do O&S members constructively yet robustly challenge policy and decision makers and implementers (including partners etc) through effective questioning, listening and analysis, and develop a good understanding and knowledge of the subject under scrutiny?		
This process has improved, with training on constructive challenge, questioning and analysis having been undertaken. Members have become more skilled as a result of the training they have received.	The training seems to have improved the skills of some Members.	Members could improve their listening skills, in order to effectively continue challenge e.g. asking follow up questions until satisfied with an answer. We recognise this is a key training area and that this is likely to need targeted training for the new scrutiny committees.
16. Are O&S inquiries/reviews in-depth, rigorous and draw upon independent and objective perspectives from a wide range of sources (including making use of benchmarking information) within and outside the council?		
We have conducted numerous reviews, which have followed an evidence-based approach with recommendations being based upon the evidence received through the inquiry, whether via experts, key stakeholders or service users.	We have a scrutiny inquiry approach that is tried and tested and has produced robust pieces of work.	As already highlighted, task and finish group work can often take time to complete and this can mean scrutiny misses the boat in terms of the added value that can be achieved through a review. We are endeavoring to embed other means of challenge i.e. short scrutinies whereby Members call in relevant Members and Officers and challenge directly. Other future working styles incorporate workshops whereby members set the direction and officers progress the work between the workshops.
17. Does O&S regularly engage with members, officers, the public and other external stakeholders in planning and conducting its work?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We do engage with the public in our scrutiny work, either through co-opting people onto our 	We also hold a public open forum at all of our scrutiny meetings to enable the public to speak and through this mechanism,	We do need to consider how we can more effectively the public in determining areas for scrutiny. Whilst the public are able to offer

Page 42

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Self-Evaluation ~ Final Report (compiled May 2017)

Page 43

<p>committees or holding meetings with them to seek their views.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have a process for involving key stakeholders in our call-in procedure and we also have a pre-decision scrutiny process that allows public and key stakeholder involvement. In addition, we have a work programming process, which defines how we set our scrutiny work programmes, who we need to consult with and how we should prioritise items for scrutiny. 	<p>they can influence the scrutiny process.</p>	<p>suggestions via our website or through attending one of our meetings, in terms of real democratic engagement, we need to consider ways in which we can engage more proactively with the public. Whilst recognising our strengths in enabling the public to contribute to our meetings and pose questions to our executive and officers, public engagement remains an area for further improvement.</p>
<p>Evidence</p>	<p>Positive Aspects</p>	<p>Areas for Improvement</p>
<p>18. Does O&S have a balanced and focused work programme that is developed by O&S members, following consultation with the public and partners and discussions with executive members and senior officers?</p>		
<p>We feel we have improved in this area evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our work programming process enables Members to take many aspects into consideration before developing their work programmes. We have a clear criteria to prioritise topics for scrutiny to ensure maximum impact and added value. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutiny Members lead and own the scrutiny process. Members may accept officer suggestions onto work programmes but they also focus their attention on what they feel is important to the community. Work programmes tend to align with the direction of the Council and look to actively support it. 	<p>We have made and will continue to make improvements in our corporate decision-making, in terms of ensuring timely population of the Cabinet and Council Forward Planner together with our improvement made to political reporting. Scrutiny will continue to keep a watching brief to ensure they are aware of forthcoming decisions and can plan accordingly.</p>

For each question, assess the extent to which your scrutiny arrangements / practice is supporting the statement given...

Hindering

Partly Supporting

Positively Supporting

Significantly Supporting

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Self-Evaluation ~ Final Report (compiled May 2017)

Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
19. Do O&S members plan their work considering the appropriateness of a range of scrutiny methods/methodologies, use of clear terms of reference and realistic project plans?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have a clear process for how to conduct a scrutiny inquiry and this includes defining terms of reference and clear objectives for any piece of work. Project plans are then developed after inquiries have been scoped and are deemed feasible. 	We have a clear process for inquiries and task and finish groups.	Sometimes Members choose complex subject areas where the answers they are seeking are unlikely to be found or may be beyond the remit of the Council and its partners and this can frustrate Members in completing their work, with findings being inconclusive. The Scrutiny Manager assists all scrutiny activities to guide members on maximizing their impact by focusing on avenues where they can effect change.
20. Are scrutiny forward work programmes routinely shared with auditors, inspectors and regulators to influence planning of improvement activity?		
<p>There has been improvement in this area, evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work Programmes are shared with auditors, inspectors and regulators on an occasional basis, with efforts made to programme in any inspection work for scrutiny at an appropriate time. 	Our work programmes are public documents and can be accessed any time via our website.	We feel there would be scope to include opportunities for pre-inspections scrutiny as well as post review scrutiny, to enable scrutiny to play a critical friend role in advance of audit work, in addition to monitoring on-going performance.
21. Does O&S play a key role in the council's self-evaluation and assessment arrangements and regularly evaluate itself to ensure that it continues to learn and improve how it adds value and impact?		
We feel that we score highly in this area, demonstrated by our track record of self-evaluation:	Our self-evaluations reflect a strong practice of self-analysis. We continually evaluate our effectiveness and make adjustments to our arrangements as	We consider areas for further improvement to be low, however, we recognise that self-evaluation should continue and that new scrutiny chairs and champions will need to be involved in leading on

Page 44

For each question, assess the extent to which your scrutiny arrangements / practice is supporting the statement given...

Hindering

Partly Supporting

Positively Supporting

Significantly Supporting

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Self-Evaluation ~ Final Report (compiled May 2017)

Page 45

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 self-evaluation / self-reflection reports produced by the Scrutiny Manager over a period of 4 years • 2 subsequent reports on the scrutiny function conducted by the WAO during a 4 year period • A further self-evaluation with WAO and peer observation by neighbouring councils undertaken in 2014 • A focus on scrutiny as part of the Corporate Assessment undertaken in February 2015 • The current self-evaluation being undertaken between January and May 2017 with peer observation 	<p>necessary.</p> <p>Our Scrutiny Service Plan is the Council's Wales Audit Office Scrutiny Action Plan and is updated quarterly and is subject to audit internally and externally. It also features on the Scrutiny Website www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/scrutiny</p>	<p>this process.</p>
Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
<p>22. Does overview and scrutiny regularly contribute to the improvement of proposed/existing policies for the benefit of the area and its local communities?</p>		
<p>We feel there has been improvement in this area, scrutiny conducting pre-decision scrutiny on new policies or significant changes to existing policies. As part of that process, scrutiny has gathered the views of stakeholders, evidenced by examples such as the Carers Strategy and the Young Carers Strategy.</p>	<p>We feel that officers have be better understanding of the role that scrutiny can play in the wider decision-making process and the added value of taking significant decisions via scrutiny. This has been achieved largely through officer training sessions on political reporting.</p>	<p>We need to continue to provide training to officers on scrutiny so that they better understand the role and the benefits of robust pre-decision scrutiny, even if ensuring the opportunity is there for the scrutiny may delay the decision being made.</p>

For each question, assess the extent to which your scrutiny arrangements / practice is supporting the statement given...

Hindering	Partly Supporting	Positively Supporting	Significantly Supporting
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Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Self-Evaluation ~ Final Report (compiled May 2017)

Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
23. Does overview and scrutiny identify instances where agreed policies are not being implemented effectively and recommend appropriate remedial action to whomever is responsible within or outside the Council?		
Scrutiny does identify policies that are not being implemented effectively and policies are frequently brought to scrutiny for review and development. Recent examples are the review of the council's road safety strategy.	Scrutiny Members have a clear understanding of issues on the ground and use this knowledge to inform their investigation.	Members need to become familiar and comfortable with other ways of challenging service delivery and recommending improvement i.e. sometimes it may be more appropriate and timely to challenge officers and the Executive Member directly rather than establish a task and finish group that may take too long and mean scrutiny misses the boat in terms of its impact.
24. Does overview and scrutiny challenge poor performance and its causes and alert senior officers, the executive, full council or partners to instigate remedial action as appropriate whilst continuing to monitor progress to remedy this?		
Scrutiny Members are challenging officers and the Executive on performance, but this role is still a developing role. Members need to gain confidence in their approach and become effective in challenging those responsible. At times, questioning can lack clarity and Members may concede rather than pursue a line of inquiry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The improved process for reporting performance information to scrutiny members is assisting Members in identifying performance issues and is providing them with the right amount and type of information to challenge constructively. Members are being guided by the Scrutiny Manager on where challenge should be levied i.e. questions of policy direction being answered by the Executive and technical responses being given by officers. 	Training has been given on constructive challenge, although we recognise new members will need training around questioning techniques, listening skills and forming recommendations.

Page 46

For each question, assess the extent to which your scrutiny arrangements / practice is supporting the statement given...

Hindering Partly Supporting Positively Supporting Significantly Supporting

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Self-Evaluation ~ Final Report (compiled May 2017)

Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
25. When conducting in-depth inquiries/reviews into areas of poor performance, does overview and scrutiny help shape responses to improve performance and the performance of other public sector providers?		
<p>We feel we have improved significantly in this area, evidenced by:</p> <p>The calling in of external service providers to discuss poor performance, an example being the rollout of broadband in Monmouthshire. Recommendations were made to service providers and Welsh Government and ongoing monitoring will continue.</p>	<p>Scrutiny is beginning to challenge other public service providers, and hold them to account for services delivered to Monmouthshire residents.</p>	<p>Challenging other public sector providers remains a key area for improvement.</p>
26. Does overview and scrutiny ensure that the 'voice' of local people and communities across the area is heard as part of local decision and policymaking processes?		
<p>We feel that we have made significant improvement in this area, evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring the public voice is heard through proactively seeking public involvement in scrutiny activity, examples being the pre-decision scrutiny of the Carer's Strategy, the Young Carer's Strategy and Broadband Services in Monmouthshire Holding a public open forum on the agenda of every scrutiny meeting, and enabling public involvement in pre-decision scrutinies and in the 	<p>Members are keen to ensure the public have every opportunity to participate in its work and have sought to engage them in scrutiny work via press releases and open surgeries / focus groups and on all types of scrutiny activity.</p>	<p>Whilst the public are interested in attending a meeting if the subject matter is of relevance to them, they are largely unaware of what scrutiny is and what scrutiny Members do. There is a need to promote this to ensure the public understand the decision-making process and can see scrutiny as a vehicle through which to become involved in the Council's decision-making process.</p>

For each question, assess the extent to which your scrutiny arrangements / practice is supporting the statement given...

Hindering Partly Supporting Positively Supporting Significantly Supporting

Monmouthshire's Scrutiny Self-Evaluation ~ Final Report (compiled May 2017)

Call-in process if appropriate.		
Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
<i>27. Does overview and scrutiny enhance democratic accountability through regular, robust, constructive and public challenge of local decision makers/deliverers of services in the local area (including other public service providers / providers of 'shared services')?</i>		
This has been referred to under question 25, but we feel this is a developing role and that whilst the response from public service providers was mixed, Members were feeling more confident in challenging poor performance of public service providers.	<p>The select committees are beginning to challenge public service providers as exemplified by the rollout of Broadband Services in Monmouthshire.</p> <p>Good working relationships have been developed with organisations such as the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board who have embraced opportunities for local government scrutiny.</p>	Ensuring local decision-makers / public service providers understand the importance of local government scrutiny is felt to be a challenging area in that the powers for scrutineers relate to scrutiny of the Public Service Board as a partnership. The scrutiny of the PSB is established with key areas of scrutiny having taken place, however, scrutiny's ability to scrutinise other public service providers and how this should be done remains unclear.

Local Authority: Monmouthshire		Meeting: Public Service Board Select Committee on 14 th March 2017		
A. Scrutiny Environment				
1. Scrutiny has a clearly defined and valued role in the council's improvement arrangements (based upon the observation of this meeting)				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments As this is still early days for the committee this was difficult to assess, however it appeared that there was value placed on the role of the committee by the authority but there appeared to be inadequate information supplied for scrutiny to have the evidence and assurances that it needed. It would have been useful to have draft PSB minutes and action sheets in advance of this meeting to prepare a questioning strategy.				
2. Scrutiny has the dedicated support it needs from officers (based upon the observation of this meeting)				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments The committee was supported by a DS officer rather than the Scrutiny officer who was on leave, therefore there may have been some lack of continuity. There was support from other officers providing information for the committee although no scrutiny specific research was evidenced.				
3. Scrutiny members appear to have effective training and development opportunities, evidenced through their questioning, listening and analysis skills and understanding of the subject under scrutiny				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments Members appeared to be well briefed and asked useful and challenging questions with good follow ups although a questioning strategy was not apparent.				
Conclusion: please consider which of the following applies: The score fell between these comments				
Arrangements are hindering improvement	Arrangements are partly supporting improvement	Arrangements are positively supporting improvement	Arrangements are playing a significant role in supporting improvement	

B. Scrutiny Practice				
1. Scrutiny takes into account the views of the public, partners and regulators, balancing the prioritisation of community concerns against issues of strategic risk/importance				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments There were opportunities for the public to take part and members took their views into account, evidenced by their championing of businesses and armed forces. The meeting was webcast as are all scrutiny committees which is a positive opportunity for public engagement.				

2. Overview and scrutiny meetings, activities and work programmes are well-planned (based on observation of this meeting)				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments				
The meeting appeared to have been planned to some extent but the lack of good quality information from the PSB prevented some forward planning. Programme board minutes in advance would be helpful as will future opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny of the well-being plans. A pre-meeting was held which went some way towards establishing individual questions and areas of challenge.				
3. Overview and scrutiny meetings and activities are chaired effectively				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments				
The chair ensured that there were opportunities for all to speak, provided introductions and conducted a pre-meeting, all of which contributed to the effective running of the meeting. The chair might also consider driving the agenda so that it keeps to time and focusses on outcomes. Some of the lengthier contributions from officers could be curtailed, so that more time is available for members questioning. The layout of the room with some people having their backs to the chair may be unhelpful.				
4. Overview and scrutiny meetings demonstrate through their activities the best use of the resources available				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments				
The committee appeared to be resourced adequately. If the Webcasting arrangements permit it might be useful to employ a less formal meeting layout.				
5. Scrutiny operates non-politically and deals effectively with sensitive political issues, tension and conflict				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments				
The committee appeared to operate non-politically and to concentrate on issues rather than politics.				
6. Scrutiny builds trust and good relationships with a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders (based on observation of this meeting)				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments				
There was evidence of positive relationships with officers providing information to the meeting and of engagement with representatives from NRW.				
Conclusion: please consider which of the following applies:				
Arrangements are hindering improvement	Arrangements are partly supporting improvement	Arrangements are positively supporting improvement	Arrangements are playing a significant role in supporting improvement	

C. Impact of Scrutiny				
1. Scrutiny engages in evidence based challenge of decision makers (based on observation of this meeting)				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments It was difficult for Scrutiny members to challenge evidence as they appeared to lack the evidence they needed.				
2. Scrutiny engages in evidence based challenge of service providers (based on observation of this meeting)				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments For the reasons outlined above.				
3. Scrutiny provides viable and well evidenced solutions to recognised problems (based on observation of this meeting)				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments Some evidence was seen of this as the chair agreed to seek more access to information.				
4. Non-executive members provide an evidence based check and balance to Executive decision making				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments This was not evidenced at this meeting.				
5. Decision makers give public account for themselves at scrutiny committees for their portfolio responsibilities				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments There were no contributions from Cabinet members observed.				
6. Overview and scrutiny enables the 'voice' of local people and communities across the area to be heard as part of decision and policy-making processes				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments Many questions related to community concerns.				
Conclusion: please consider which of the following applies:				
Arrangements are hindering improvement	Arrangements are partly supporting improvement	Arrangements are positively supporting improvement	Arrangements are playing a significant role in supporting improvement	

Local Authority: Monmouthshire		Meeting: Strong Communities Select Committee on 6 th April 2017		
A. Scrutiny Environment				
1. Scrutiny has a clearly defined and valued role in the council's improvement arrangements (based upon the observation of this meeting)				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments There was evidence of policy development in respect of the HR review report and the committee had also been involved in reviewing public toilets on the County and sought an update of their previous recommendations.				
2. Scrutiny has the dedicated support it needs from officers (based upon the observation of this meeting)				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments The Scrutiny officer had clear overview of the work of the committee, she was able to brief members on the background and current position of the report and recommendations of the task and finish group.				
3. Scrutiny members appear to have effective training and development opportunities, evidenced through their questioning, listening and analysis skills and understanding of the subject under scrutiny				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments The questioning by some Members was good however difficult to say if this is as a result of training or because of the quality and interest of some Members. Some Members making statements as opposed to asking questions, however there was good understanding of the topics under discussion, supplementary questions were asked.				
Conclusion: please consider which of the following applies:				
Arrangements are hindering improvement	Arrangements are partly supporting improvement	Arrangements are positively supporting improvement	Arrangements are playing a significant role in supporting improvement	

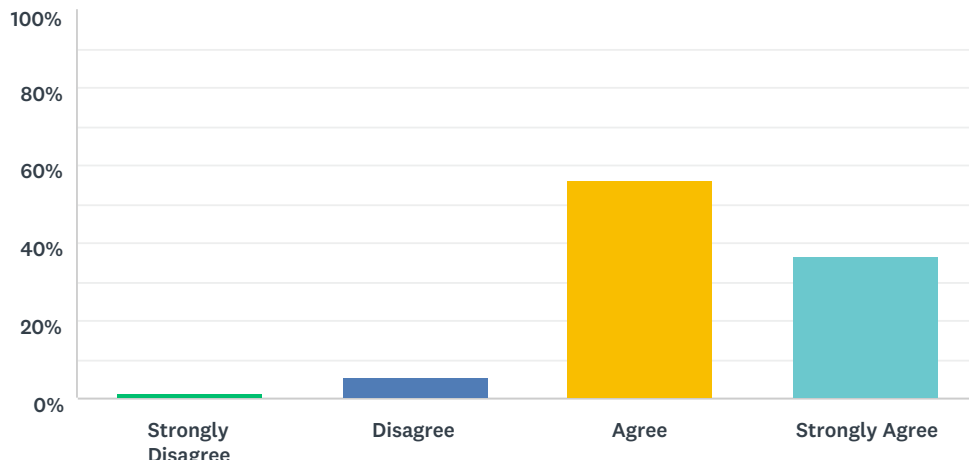
B. Scrutiny Practice				
1. Scrutiny takes into account the views of the public, partners and regulators, balancing the prioritisation of community concerns against issues of strategic risk/importance				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments The Select Committee agendas allow members of the public to put forward items for the committee to discuss, but on this occasion there were no requests made. The review of the public conveniences is clearly an issue of importance to the public and the committee were keen to see the recommendations brought to a conclusion.				

2. Overview and scrutiny meetings, activities and work programmes are well-planned (based on observation of this meeting)				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments The work programme included in the agenda pack demonstrates planning ahead and the committee highlighted items during debate that need to return and when. There was evidence that there had been a pre-meeting as the chair knew who wanted to speak on specific areas.				
3. Overview and scrutiny meetings and activities are chaired effectively				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments The Chair made the observers welcome and explained the purpose of the visit. The Chair was strong in places but did allow the debate to stray off topic on occasion. He brought items to conclusion and summed up the views of the committee. The chair seemed to take over the discussion as certain times. It would have been helpful to have been introduced to the individual committee members, and the first witness.				
4. Overview and scrutiny meetings demonstrate through their activities the best use of the resources available				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments The Committee met in the Council Chamber which allows meetings to be webcast, some of the sound and lighting in the room could be improved, as it was difficult to see and hear some people. Inconsistent use of microphones. The observers liked the layout of the room for observation purposes.				
5. Scrutiny operates non-politically and deals effectively with sensitive political issues, tension and conflict				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments There was no evidence of political tension or conflict; the committee treated each other with respect.				
6. Scrutiny builds trust and good relationships with a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders (based on observation of this meeting)				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments The witnesses at the meeting were treated with respect and courtesy by the committee members, there were external and internal witnesses who gave detailed responses to Members and where they were unable to provide detail offered to provide information at a later date.				
Conclusion: please consider which of the following applies:				
Arrangements are hindering improvement	Arrangements are partly supporting improvement	Arrangements are positively supporting improvement	Arrangements are playing a significant role in supporting improvement	

C. Impact of Scrutiny				
1. Scrutiny engages in evidence based challenge of decision makers (based on observation of this meeting)				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments Unfortunately the Cabinet Members was unable to attend the meeting, the peer group were advised of this beforehand, and therefore are unable to comment.				
2. Scrutiny engages in evidence based challenge of service providers (based on observation of this meeting)				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments There committee asked service providers questions and challenging the evidence provided.				
3. Scrutiny provides viable and well evidenced solutions to recognised problems (based on observation of this meeting)				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments The update of the public conveniences task and finish group demonstrated that the committee had investigated and reported on an issue, provided recommendations and were keen to check on the implementation of those recommendations, then setting a deadline for the implementation of the outstanding item.				
4. Non-executive members provide an evidence based check and balance to Executive decision making				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments Unfortunately the Cabinet Members was unable to attend the meeting, the peer group were advised of this beforehand, and therefore are unable to comment				
5. Decision makers give public account for themselves at scrutiny committees for their portfolio responsibilities				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments Unfortunately the Cabinet Members was unable to attend the meeting, the peer group were advised of this beforehand, and therefore are unable to comment				
6. Overview and scrutiny enables the 'voice' of local people and communities across the area to be heard as part of decision and policy-making processes				
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Comments				
Conclusion: please consider which of the following applies:				
Arrangements are hindering improvement	Arrangements are partly supporting improvement	Arrangements are positively supporting improvement	Arrangements are playing a significant role in supporting improvement	

Q1 Scrutiny has a clearly defined and valued role in the council's improvement arrangements...

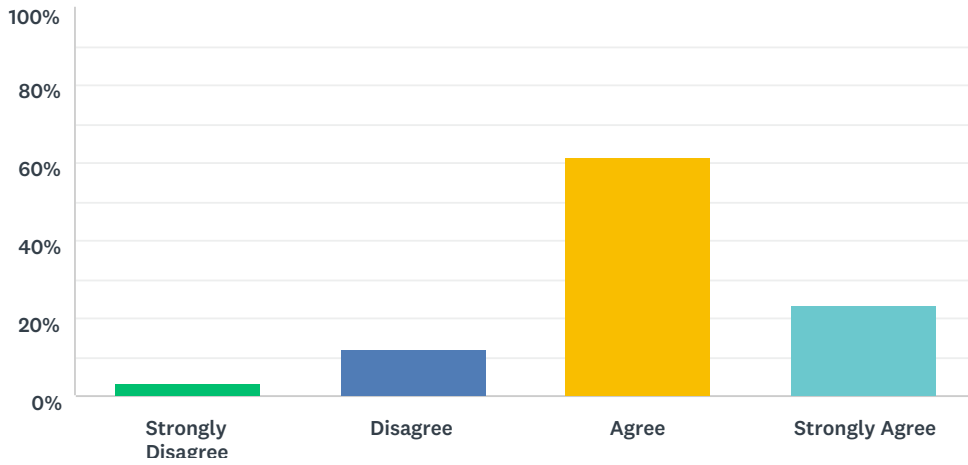
Answered: 71 Skipped: 5



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Disagree	1.41%	1
Disagree	5.63%	4
Agree	56.34%	40
Strongly Agree	36.62%	26
TOTAL		71

Q2 Scrutiny has the dedicated support it needs from officers...

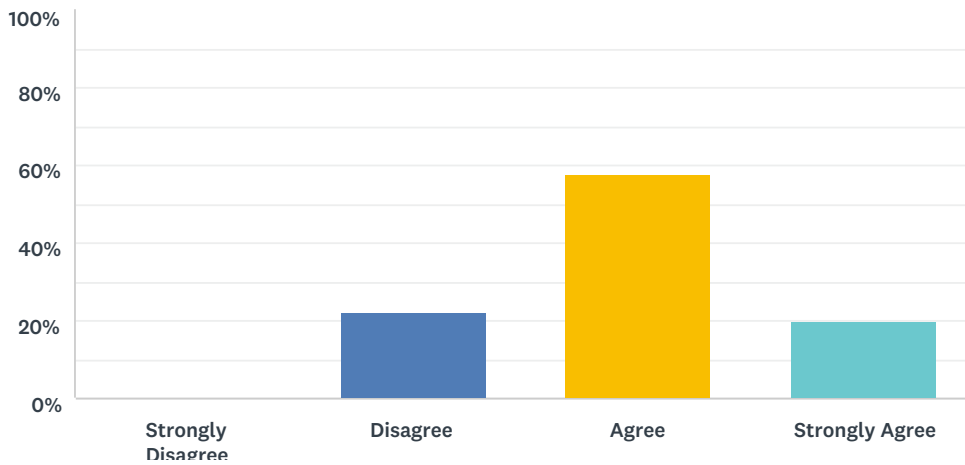
Answered: 65 Skipped: 11



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Disagree	3.08%	2
Disagree	12.31%	8
Agree	61.54%	40
Strongly Agree	23.08%	15
TOTAL		65

Q3 Scrutiny members have the training and development opportunities they need to undertake their role effectively...

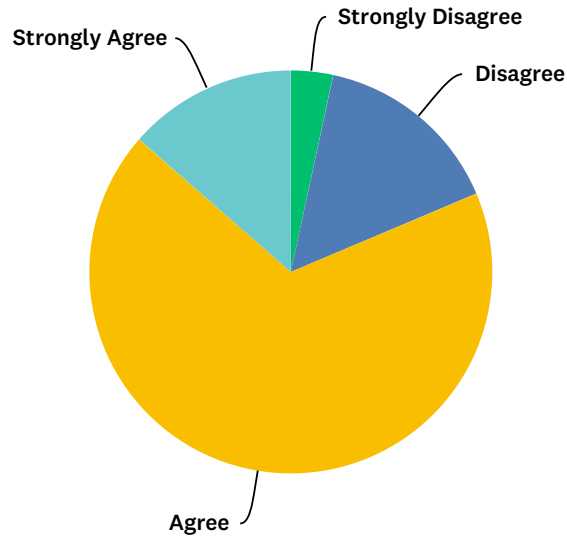
Answered: 45 Skipped: 31



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	22.22%	10
Agree	57.78%	26
Strongly Agree	20.00%	9
TOTAL		45

Q4 The scrutiny process receives effective support form the council's senior leadership team who ensures that information provided to scrutiny is of high quality and is provided in a timely and consistent manner...

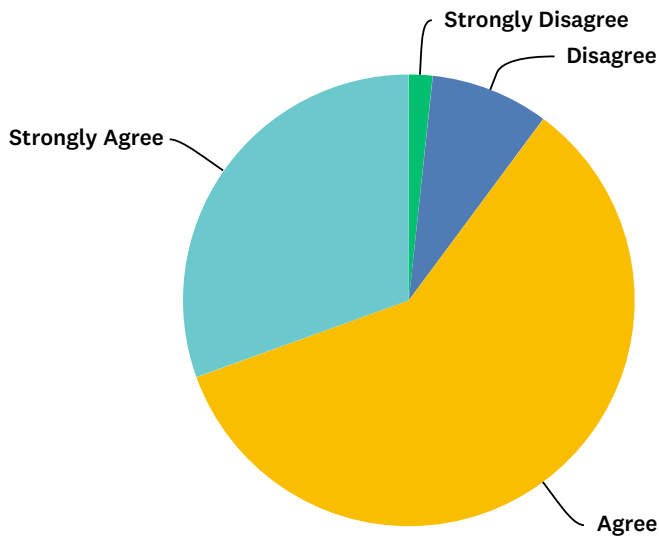
Answered: 59 Skipped: 17



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Disagree	3.39%	2
Disagree	15.25%	9
Agree	67.80%	40
Strongly Agree	13.56%	8
TOTAL		59

Q5 Scrutiny is recognised by the Executive and Senior Leadership team as an important council mechanism for community engagement...

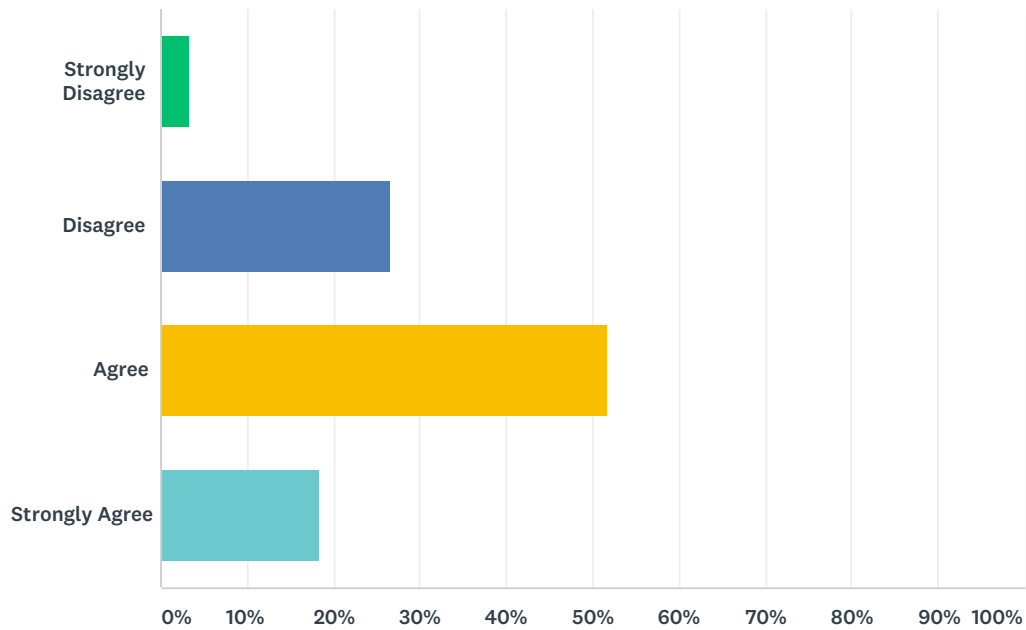
Answered: 59 Skipped: 17



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Disagree	1.69%	1
Disagree	8.47%	5
Agree	59.32%	35
Strongly Agree	30.51%	18
TOTAL		59

Q6 Scrutiny inquiries are non-political, methodologically sound and incorporate a wide range of evidence and perspectives...

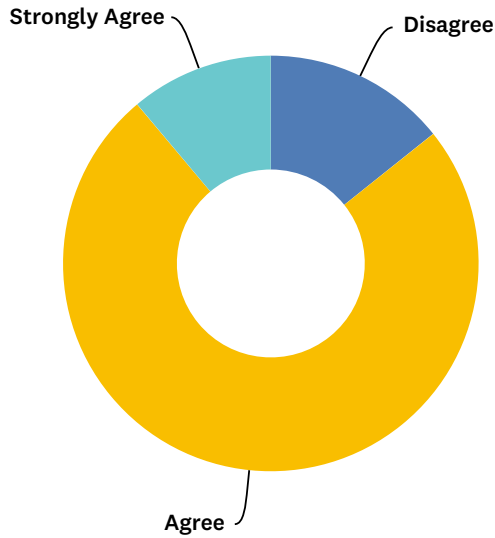
Answered: 60 Skipped: 16



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Disagree	3.33%	2
Disagree	26.67%	16
Agree	51.67%	31
Strongly Agree	18.33%	11
TOTAL		60

Q7 Scrutiny is member-led with ownership of the work programme taking into account the views of the public, partners and regulators, community concern and issues of strategic risk and importance...

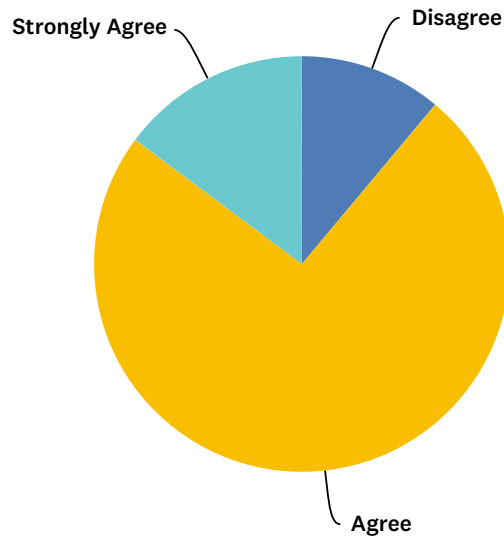
Answered: 63 Skipped: 13



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	14.29%	9
Agree	74.60%	47
Strongly Agree	11.11%	7
TOTAL		63

Q8 Stakeholders have the ability to contribute to the development and delivery of scrutiny forward work programmes...

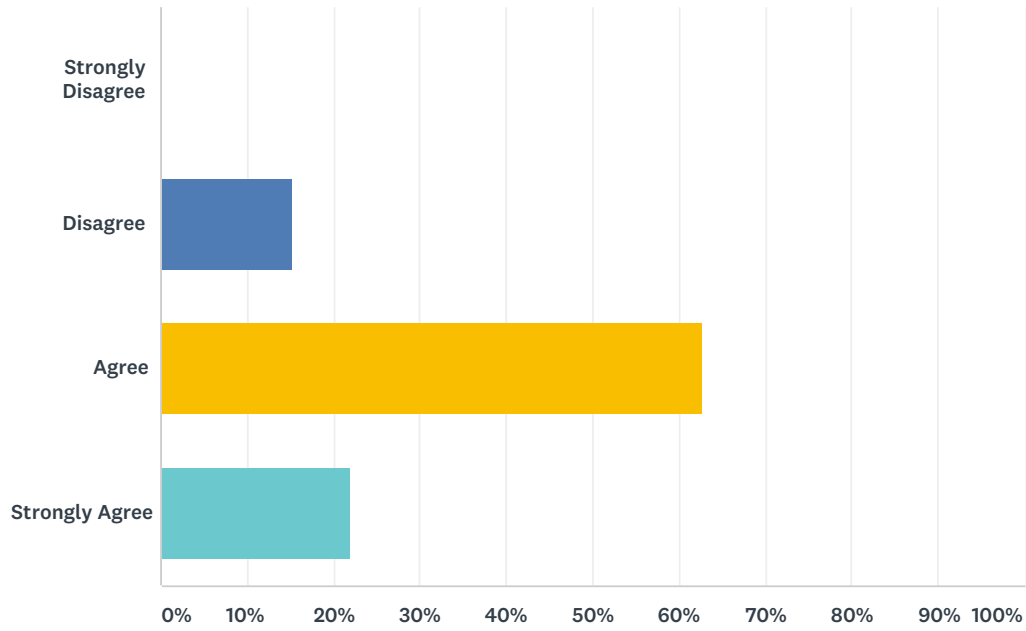
Answered: 54 Skipped: 22



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	11.11%	6
Agree	74.07%	40
Strongly Agree	14.81%	8
TOTAL		54

Q9 Scrutiny meetings and activities are well-planned, chaired effectively and make the best use of the resources available...

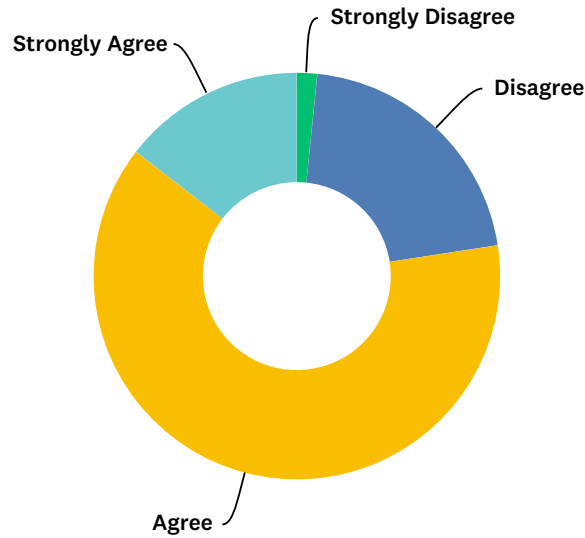
Answered: 59 Skipped: 17



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	15.25%	9
Agree	62.71%	37
Strongly Agree	22.03%	13
TOTAL		59

Q10 Scrutiny is characterised by effective communication to raise awareness of and encourage participation in democratic accountability...

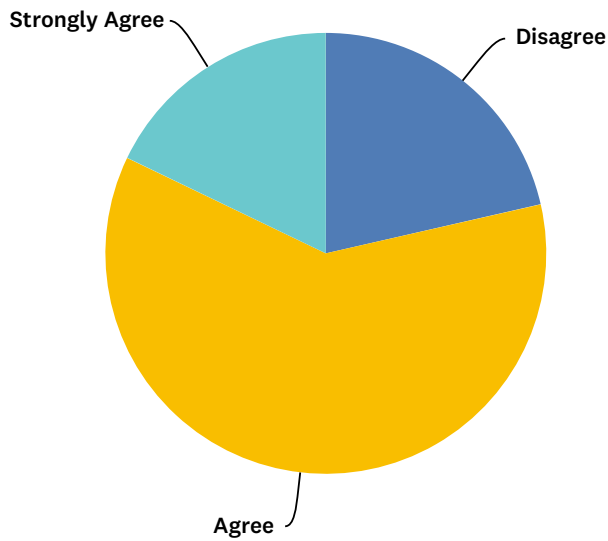
Answered: 62 Skipped: 14



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Disagree	1.61%	1
Disagree	20.97%	13
Agree	62.90%	39
Strongly Agree	14.52%	9
TOTAL		62

Q11 Scrutiny operates non-politically and deals effectively with sensitive political issues, tension and conflict...

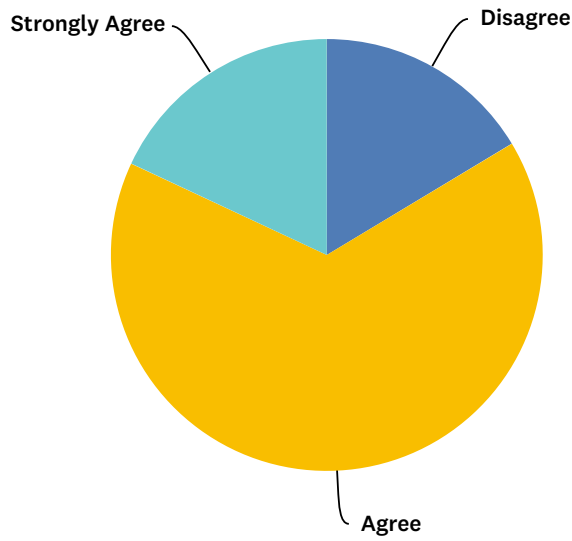
Answered: 56 Skipped: 20



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	21.43%	12
Agree	60.71%	34
Strongly Agree	17.86%	10
TOTAL		56

Q12 Scrutiny builds trust and good relationships with a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders...

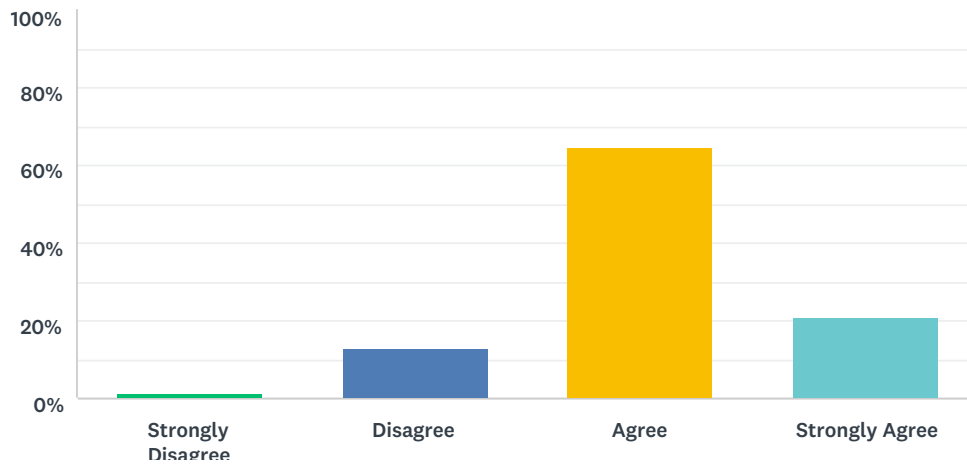
Answered: 61 Skipped: 15



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	16.39%	10
Agree	65.57%	40
Strongly Agree	18.03%	11
TOTAL		61

Q13 Scrutiny regularly engages in evidence-based challenge of decision-makers and service providers....

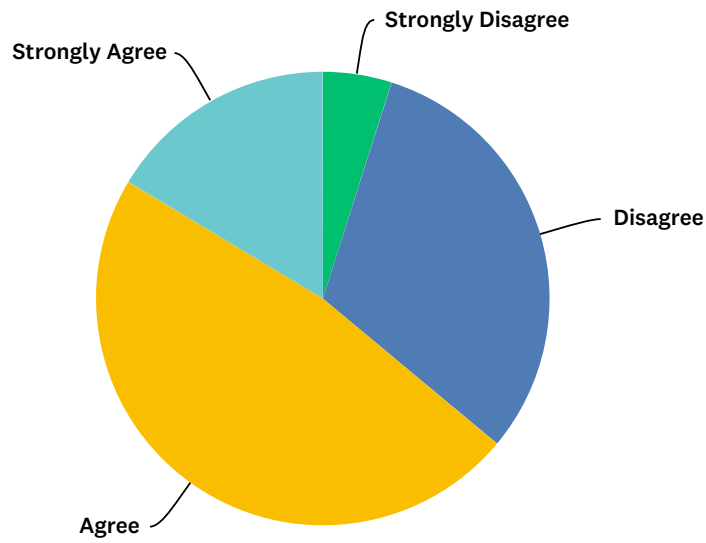
Answered: 62 Skipped: 14



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Disagree	1.61%	1
Disagree	12.90%	8
Agree	64.52%	40
Strongly Agree	20.97%	13
TOTAL		62

Q14 Scrutiny provides viable and well evidenced solutions to recognised problems...

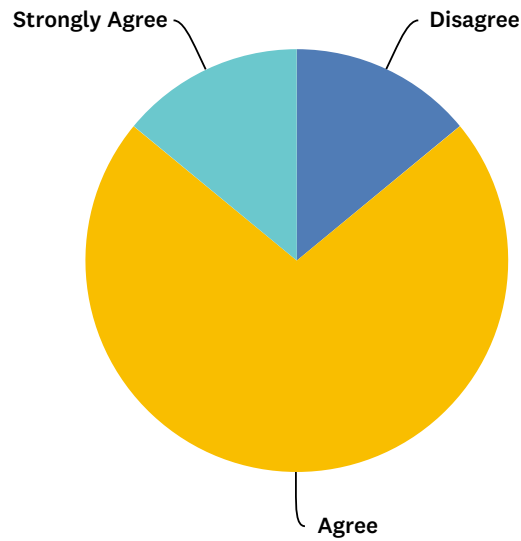
Answered: 61 Skipped: 15



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Disagree	4.92%	3
Disagree	31.15%	19
Agree	47.54%	29
Strongly Agree	16.39%	10
TOTAL		61

Q15 Non-executive members provide an evidence-based check and balance to Executive decision-making...

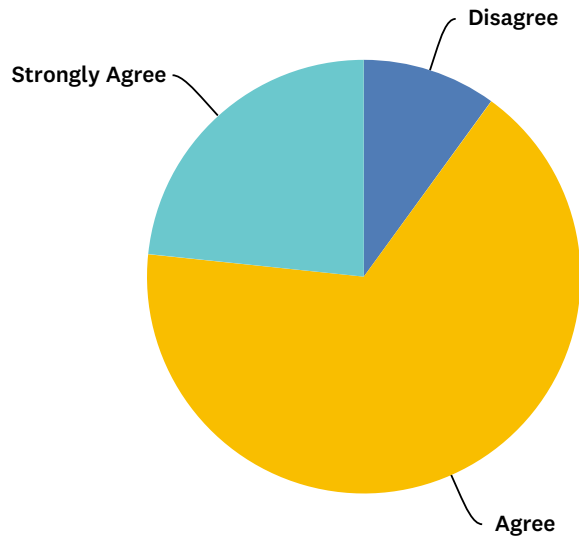
Answered: 57 Skipped: 19



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	14.04%	8
Agree	71.93%	41
Strongly Agree	14.04%	8
TOTAL		57

Q16 Decision-makers give public account for themselves at scrutiny committees for their portfolio responsibilities...

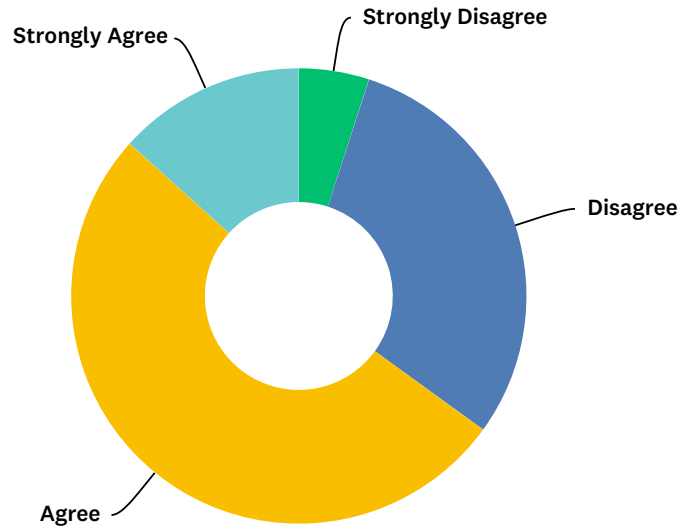
Answered: 60 Skipped: 16



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	10.00%	6
Agree	66.67%	40
Strongly Agree	23.33%	14
TOTAL		60

Q17 Scrutiny enables the 'voice' of local people and communities across the area to be heard as part of decision-making and policy development...

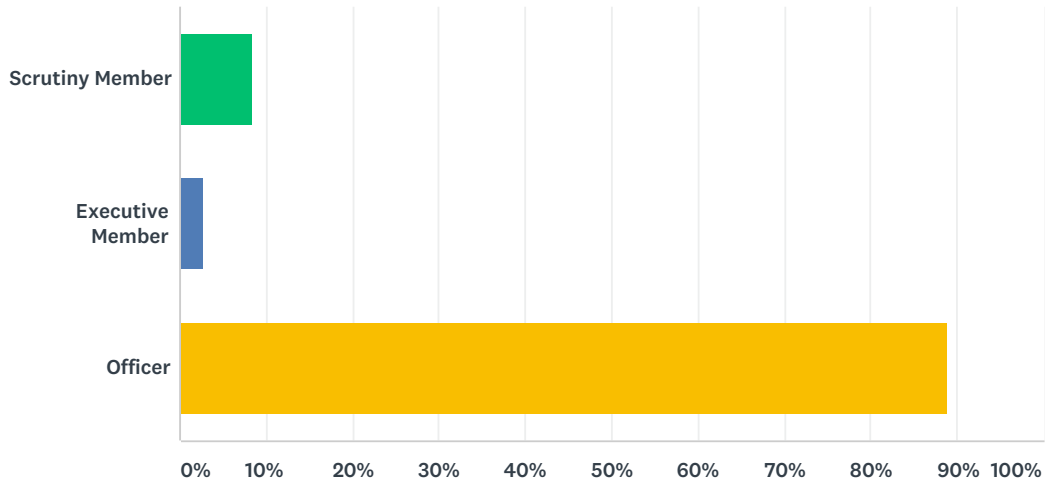
Answered: 60 Skipped: 16



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly Disagree	5.00%	3
Disagree	30.00%	18
Agree	51.67%	31
Strongly Agree	13.33%	8
TOTAL		60

Q18 Are you an elected member or officer?

Answered: 72 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Scrutiny Member	8.33%	6
Executive Member	2.78%	2
Officer	88.89%	64
TOTAL		72