

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
<p><i>1. Is there a clear and shared understanding and application of the role and purpose of Overview and Scrutiny (O&amp;S) amongst executive and non-executive members, senior officers, scrutiny officers and key local partners?</i></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"> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>	<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"> <li>→ Scrutiny defining its own agenda, leading and owning the process.</li> <li>→ Scrutiny meetings attended by the Executive when requested.</li> <li>→ The Executive preparing adequately for scrutiny meetings.</li> <li>→ The Executive referring complex issues via pre-decision scrutiny for a view.</li> </ul> <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>

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<b>2. Does O&amp;S enjoy a high status and is it held in high esteem, trusted and respected both within and outside the Authority?</b>		
<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"> <li>• A willingness of internal officers, the Executive and partners to attend scrutiny meetings.</li> <li>• Adequate preparation for meetings.</li> <li>• Often an acknowledgement that Scrutiny's lines of inquiry are appropriate and reasonable questions.</li> </ul> <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"> <li>• Effective utilization of pre-meetings to plan questioning strategies.</li> <li>• Appropriate questioning of responsibility holders and officers.</li> <li>• An observed positive working culture evidenced by fair and respectful conduct.</li> </ul>	<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>
<b>3. Is there a well-defined and constructive relationship between O&amp;S, the executive and senior officers?</b>		
<p>There is a clear improvement in this area, evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good Executive Member attendance at scrutiny meetings, the executive attending prepared and able to respond to scrutiny's questions.</li> <li>• The Executive are responding to recommendations made by</li> </ul>	<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>

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<p>scrutiny via formal communication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved attendance by senior officers, officers attending prepared and with a clearer understanding of the type of information members need (pitching has improved).</li> </ul>	<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"> <li>Regular performance reports are brought to scrutiny committees in an improved format (context added to performance indicators based on a traffic light system).</li> <li>Regular detailed financial reporting brought to scrutiny with a concise summary of pressures within service areas.</li> <li>Chief Officer Self-evaluations are scrutinised to ensure accountability for performance, but also to present the future strategic direction for the service.</li> <li>Regular risk management reports</li> </ul>	<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"> <li>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.</li> <li>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).</li> </ul>

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<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
<b>5. Is there regular and effective two-way communication between O&amp;S and external/internal auditors, regulators and inspectors?</b>		
<p>The communication between scrutiny and internal and external auditors has improved, evidenced as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• The Scrutiny Manager provides an input into the Chief Auditor's Annual Governance Statement.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Scrutiny is aware of reviews being undertaken by external regulators</li> </ul>	<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"> <li>• Continue to engage with particular regulators on their work programmes at the beginning of the year to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Avoid duplication in effort.</li> <li>- Enable scrutiny to play an enhanced role ~ conducting pre-inspection scrutiny as well as the performance monitoring role.</li> <li>- Ensure timely scrutiny of final reports and timely scrutiny of action plans in response to regulatory recommendations.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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and programmes final findings into scrutiny committees for ongoing performance monitoring.		
<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Positive Aspects</b>	<b>Areas for Improvement</b>
<b>6. Does O&amp;S have clear governance arrangements that are understood and applied effectively?</b>		
<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"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	<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>

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<b>7. Are O&amp;S chairs and executive members actively promoting the role and value of the scrutiny function to a variety of internal and external stakeholders?</b>		
<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"> <li>• Driving scrutiny development in terms of assisting with officer training on scrutiny</li> <li>• Meeting with stakeholders to encourage input at scrutiny meetings</li> <li>• Ensuring continuous improvement in practice through working with the Scrutiny Manager to implement key changes in scrutiny practice.</li> <li>• Providing an integral input to the Scrutiny Service Plan (this is the Wales Audit Office Scrutiny Action Plan).</li> <li>• Attending workshops and events outside of scrutiny meetings to champion the role and value of scrutiny.</li> </ul>	<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>

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<b>8. Do O&amp;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?</b>		
<p>This area has scored highly, in recognition of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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).</li> </ul>	<p>Members are supported through a Scrutiny Member Development Programme by an experienced Scrutiny Manager, who provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training in-house using expert members of staff (specifically for training on performance management and financial scrutiny).</li> <li>Training with external consultants on some subjects in order to provide their unique experiences ~ namely individuals who have acted in a Councillor role previously.</li> </ul>	<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
<b>9. Does O&amp;S have a sufficient level of dedicated support from officers who are able to research independently and are able to provide O&amp;S members with high quality objective analysis and support?</b>		
<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"> <li>Coordinating scrutiny's workload</li> </ul>	<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>

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<p>across the 5 scrutiny committees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending all scrutiny meetings</li> <li>• Leading all scrutiny activities, including task and finish groups and workshops</li> <li>• Undertaking associated background research and suggesting appropriate lines of inquiry</li> <li>• Ensuring scrutiny delivers outcomes in terms of conclusions, recommendations and follow-up actions</li> <li>• Training members in-house on their roles and responsibilities and supporting them to perform their capabilities in line with their job description</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>		<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>
<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Positive Aspects</b>	<b>Areas for Improvement</b>
<b>10. Is the role of officers directly supporting scrutiny activity well understood and valued within the organisation?</b>		
<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>



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<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><b>Evidence</b></p>	<p><b>Positive Aspects</b></p>	<p><b>Areas for Improvement</b></p>
<p><b>11. Does the O&amp;S process receive effective support from the council's wider officer core as and when required?</b></p>		
<p>The scrutiny process does receive effective support from wider officers, evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Financial accountants provide regular reports to scrutiny, advising on budgetary positions.</li> <li>• Senior officers can provide strategic leadership to scrutiny on key topics being scrutinised via Task and Finish Groups and scrutiny workshops.</li> <li>• The Legal Team and the Council's Digital Team provide technical support as and when required.</li> </ul>	<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>

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<b>12. Is information provided to O&amp;S relevant, robust, balanced, meaningful, responsive to requests, of high quality and provided in a timely and consistent manner?</b>		
<p>The quality of information being brought to members is felt to have improved, evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cover reports that provide a balanced outline of the key issues and relevant implications of a decision.</li> <li>Greater clarity on the purpose of bringing to scrutiny (less 'for information' items) with clear recommendations for scrutiny.</li> <li>Pre-decision scrutiny of decisions being accompanied by Future Generations evaluations.</li> </ul>	<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>
Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
<b>13. Does O&amp;S provide evidence based, constructive challenge; operate objectively, apolitically and with independence from executive decision makers?</b>		
<p>The team feel that scrutiny does operate independently from the executive and challenges apolitically, evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Executive neither influences scrutiny's choice of topics nor any</li> </ul>	<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>

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<p>recommendations it makes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no sense of obstruction to scrutiny's work and its recommendations are welcomed.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	<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>	
<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Positive Aspects</b>	<b>Areas for Improvement</b>
<b>14. Do O&amp;S members identify appropriate topics for challenge or policy review/development and develop outcome focused forward work programmes?</b>		
<p>This has scored highly and is not felt to be an areas of concern, evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>	<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>

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<b>15. Do O&amp;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?</b>		
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.
<b>16. Are O&amp;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?</b>		
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.
<b>17. Does O&amp;S regularly engage with members, officers, the public and other external stakeholders in planning and conducting its work?</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We do engage with the public in our scrutiny work, either through co-opting people onto our</li> </ul>	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

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<p>committees or holding meetings with them to seek their views.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>	<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>
Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
<p><b>18. Does O&amp;S have a balanced and focused work programme that is developed by public and partners and discussions with executive members and senior officers?</b></p>		
<p>We feel we have improved in this area evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scrutiny Members lead and own the scrutiny process.</li> <li>Members may accept officer suggestions onto work programmes but they also focus their attention on what they feel is important to the community.</li> <li>Work programmes tend to align with the direction of the Council and look to actively support it.</li> </ul>	<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>

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<b>19. Do O&amp;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?</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> </ul>	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.
Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
<b>20. Are scrutiny forward work programmes routinely shared with auditors, inspectors and regulators to influence planning of improvement activity?</b>		
<p>There has been improvement in this area, evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> </ul>	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.
Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
<b>21. Does O&amp;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?</b>		
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

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)**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 self-evaluation / self-reflection reports produced by the Scrutiny Manager over a period of 4 years</li> <li>• 2 subsequent reports on the scrutiny function conducted by the WAO during a 4 year period</li> <li>• A further self-evaluation with WAO and peer observation by neighbouring councils undertaken in 2014</li> <li>• A focus on scrutiny as part of the Corporate Assessment undertaken in February 2015</li> <li>• The current self-evaluation being undertaken between January and May 2017 with peer observation</li> </ul>	<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 <a href="http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/scrutiny">www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/scrutiny</a></p>	<p>this process.</p>
<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Positive Aspects</b>	<b>Areas for Improvement</b>
<b>22. Does overview and scrutiny regularly contribute to the improvement of proposed/existing policies for the benefit of the area and its local communities?</b>		
<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

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

<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Positive Aspects</b>	<b>Areas for Improvement</b>
<b><i>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?</i></b>		
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.
<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Positive Aspects</b>	<b>Areas for Improvement</b>
<b><i>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?</i></b>		
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"> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>	Training has been given on constructive challenge, although we recognise new members will need training around questioning techniques, listening skills and forming 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)

Evidence	Positive Aspects	Areas for Improvement
<b>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?</b>		
<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>
<b>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?</b>		
<p>We feel that we have made significant improvement in this area, evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> <li>Holding a public open forum on the agenda of every scrutiny meeting, and enabling public involvement in pre-decision scrutinies and in the</li> </ul>	<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.