

National Studies

| WAO National Study | Good Scrutiny? Good Question! – May 2014 |
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| WAO Proposal for improvement | R1 Clarify the role of executive members and senior officers in contributing to scrutiny. |
| WAO Proposal for improvement | R2 Ensure that scrutiny members, and specifically scrutiny chairs, receive training and support to fully equip them with the skills required to undertake effective scrutiny. |
| WAO Proposal for improvement | R3 Further develop scrutiny forward work programming to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide a clear rationale for topic selection; • be more outcome focused; • ensure that the method of scrutiny is best suited to the topic area and the outcome desired; and • align scrutiny programmes with the council's performance management, self-evaluation and improvement arrangements. |
| WAO Proposal for improvement | R4 Ensure that scrutiny draws effectively on the work of audit, inspection and regulation and that its activities are complementary with the work of external review bodies. |
| WAO Proposal for improvement | R5 Ensure that external review bodies take account of scrutiny work programmes and the outputs of scrutiny activity, where appropriate, in planning and delivering their work. |
| WAO Proposal for improvement | R6 Ensure that the impact of scrutiny is properly evaluated and acted upon to improve the function's effectiveness; including following up on proposed actions and examining outcomes. |
| WAO Proposal for improvement | R7 Undertake regular self-evaluation of scrutiny utilising the „outcomes and characteristics of effective local government overview and scrutiny“ developed by the Wales Scrutiny Officers“ Network. |
| WAO Proposal for improvement | R8 Implement scrutiny improvement action plans developed from the Wales Audit Office improvement |
| WAO Proposal for improvement | R9 Adopt Participation Cymru's 10 Principles for Public Engagement in improving the way scrutiny engages with the public and stakeholders. |
| Current position in October 2015 | <p>The Scrutiny function in Monmouthshire strives to continuously improve its' service offer: Feedback from Members, officers, partners and inspectors informs how effective the service is and whether it is progressing in the right direction. The service self-evaluates annually using the 'Characteristics of Good Scrutiny' as a benchmark (R7) and the Scrutiny Chairs Liaison Group is the forum where robust self-reflection takes place. The most recent self-evaluation preceded the Council's recent Corporate Assessment, through which, it was clear that the function had implemented the recommendations of the WAO Scrutiny Study (as above).</p> |

The Scrutiny Chairs undertake pre-meetings and sum-up actions, making recommendations to the Cabinet via Chairs Letters (R6). The scrutiny function has a 'Scrutiny and Executive Protocol' in place (R1) which ensures absolute clarity in terms of roles and responsibilities for Cabinet Members and Senior Officers in relation to scrutiny. The Scrutiny Manager delivers a comprehensive rolling Scrutiny Development Programme for Members, including Performance Management, Schools Financial Management, Financial Scrutiny, Scrutiny Challenge and Raising the Bar in Scrutiny (R2). The Council applies Participation Cymru's Principles for Public Engagement corporately and the Select Committees engage frequently with the public through their work, enabling public speaking at Select Committee meetings (R9). The Scrutiny Handbook is a guide for Members, officers and the public on the role and value of scrutiny and the website www.monmouthshire.gov/scrutiny displays the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme and invites public submissions.

Members lead and own the scrutiny process and the Cabinet and Council planner is emailed weekly to Members to ensure maximum opportunity for early engagement with scrutiny (R3). Select Committees liaise directly with regulators to programme inspection work into the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme (R4). Any relevant scrutiny reports are emailed to external bodies, who are requested to respond to Scrutiny's recommendations and attend Scrutiny Meetings if appropriate ~ effective working relationships with external bodies such as Aneurin Bevan Health Board have developed through direct engagement via the scrutiny process (R5).

The scrutiny function has a 'Scrutiny Service Improvement Plan' which is the 'Monmouthshire Scrutiny Action Plan' produced in response to the WAO Scrutiny Study's recommendations. The plan is built into the Council's improvement framework and is updated quarterly, being challenged by the Council's improvement team and the Head of Democratic Services. The plan is also scrutinised by the Council's Audit Committee annually to ensure they are satisfied that the Council has appropriate and effective scrutiny arrangements in place (R8).

| | New or Existing | Action | Action Holders | Timescales |
|--------------------|-----------------|---|--|----------------------------|
| Mitigating Actions | Existing | Self-evaluation of Scrutiny applying the 'Characteristics of Good Scrutiny'. | Scrutiny Manager and the Scrutiny Chairs Liaison Group | April 2016 |
| | Existing | Table the Quarter 2 Service Improvement Plan (WAO Action Plan) to the Council's Audit Committee | Scrutiny Manager | December 2015/January 2016 |