



Guide

LUTON



**DRAFT****Scrutiny Process****What is scrutiny?****Overview – general**

- The old committee system
- The new system
- Relationship between Scrutiny and Executive
- Politics –
  - How detached is the scrutiny process from political make-up-objective?
  - Are meetings a balance of different political parties  
Involving public- relative to politics?
- Scrutiny – political process- arrangements - process of decision-making.
- The remit of scrutiny- outside the remit of scrutiny. (Linked to what goes into the scrutiny work programme)
- What are the objectives of scrutiny

**ROLE OF SCRUTINY**

**DRAFT****Scrutiny in Luton**

- The committees, their remits and their members
- Where did we start
- Where are we now?
- What has been achieved? How has scrutiny impacted upon LBC
- What problems have we encountered?
- How have these problems been dealt with?
- What problems do we still encounter? What barriers are we facing for scrutiny in Luton? How can we deal with these?
  - Participation
- What is the vision for scrutiny for the future? E.g. achieving greater participation, more effective consultation??? (See scrutiny board notes)
- Have we moved on from the old system? – Old style committee meetings? Agendas?
- What tools and resources do scrutiny members need, support, budget, time, information and money?

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Scrutiny Support
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Officers –

- How is it run-
- Organisation of department- Who are the staff – who does what
- How- the project officer/plan process
- Links to committee services.
- Identify examples within other boroughs.

Explain who does what – where including links with committee services and how the scrutiny

Add here flow chart – of systems

It is important that Members are given the necessary support to carry out the scrutiny function- which is different to the agenda being run by officers- needs to be from members- but members will not always have the specialist knowledge- need steer from officers.

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Linking scrutiny across the council
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Scrutiny within the democratic process

Flow chart of how scrutiny should link with the council- executive and officers

Scrutiny within the councils overall vision –2010

- Wider council training – to gain wider understanding of scrutiny across departments-
  - Training
  - Engagement
  - Input and evaluation of scrutiny – from officer point of view
- Publicity- internal communications- newsletter- to discuss with communications-

Linking scrutiny

- What are the relevant links internally and externally for Scrutiny?
- How does Scrutiny link in with other relevant areas with LBC corporate objectives e.g.
  - Best Value Reviews - see existing notes from Geoff's guide
  - Community consultation
  - Area Committees
  - Steering Groups
  - Luton Forum

Community strategy??

Vision 2010??

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Consultation and Participation
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- Political – Apathy
  - Consultation and participation are two separate issues- that can inter-relate (linked to advertising)
  - Barriers to participation - What factors might discourage people from attending?- e.g. Agenda is it old fashioned and hard to follow? Slide 6, 7, 8,9,
  - Is it always necessary for people to be at these meetings- distinctions between consultation and participation?
  - Is Participation always necessary/ practicable- slide 5
  - Why do we want members of the public at meetings?
  - How can we engage young people
  - How can we raise the profile of scrutiny- advertising- explain in easy terms in local paper how the political process works- spread on understanding local decision making- then understanding scrutiny- speak to pr/communications
- What are the key drivers of consultation and involvement (See Key Drivers- good for scrutiny briefing) slides10, 11,12?
  - Consultee database- develop a database of previous consultees-
  - Standard leaflet- explaining scrutiny- process- role of consultees/ witnesses to hand out

Training for regular internal and partner consultees- e.g. TCC etc so they are more aware linked closely with the work.

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## Research

- What type of research do we need? Balance between scientific – large scale projects – quick and dirty projects – depends on project, but research element is different to those needed in say large scale projects- because consultation here is more the word that scientific research- its about understanding your local community etc- building a relationship with the local community- rather than to carry out an scientific piece of research. That's not to say we ignore the need for any consultation ideas to be objective and real- but focus is probably understanding the local need. – explain theoretical debate.
- Do we have the relevant expertise to carry out research? Are we well informed enough? Do we know where we can get hold relevant info that is needed?
- What are the barriers to consultation and involvement – see slide 8&9-
- Research support available – what we have on offer– community consultation, research and intelligence, research scrutiny, Research Forum.
- consultation forums- e.g. community forum, taras, business? Older peoples forum, youth ed forum etc, – list different ways- need to keep refreshing- but there are ways to get certain views.
- Consultation Diary
- Research techniques- use of existing research, home –jobby's!
- 3 phases of consultation-
  - 1) preparation,
  - 2) Execution
  - 3) Evaluation

Be imaginative – there is a wide range of consultation- and ways to gather evidence

- Commissioning research out examples **Case studies of other boroughs.**
- Need to balance research costs in relation to results-what is the rationale for carrying out consultation.
  - Different types of research- do we need expensive study or can we use alternative methods
  - What are the different types offer– and what do they cost (make this information avail for members in their training)#
- Member training-
  - what is research
  - Why do we need to consult- see slide 3 notes
  - Consultation and research – what are the differences
  - Why is it important to be objective

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- What involvement should members have? - With support of officers- can apply varying degree of involvement. Members need to be involved enough for the results to be meaningful enough.
- How can the Members take part – the balance between member involvement and objectivity
- Advantages and disadvantages to external contacts- why it might be less relevant for scrutiny- building a relationship with the local public- consultation is an important part of that – two way process-that's why feed-back is important and constant engagement.
- Check Nicola's research checklist- handy for members



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Training
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- Training for members is very important – because essentially the work is being carried out for them- so they need all the support mechanisms to equip them to carry out that function effectively.
- Training for members- research

Training for members – scrutiny- use case studies

- Training for Members, officers- scrutiny process/ ways of working- Who needs training, what kind?
  - Members
  - Officers- training/guidance on writing scrutiny reports- from stats to basic committee report.
  - Executive
  - Wider council Heads and officers

Public

Consultation with Members on what training they would like

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- Cost – Budget- what are the potential costs for running a project-give examples of projects we have carried out!
  - Officer time
  - Research
  - Advertising
  - Dissemination of information – seminars?? Etc add more
- Scrutiny Budgets- what Is the allocated budget for individual jobs- e.g.- research, advertising, training.

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### Setting the work Programme (linked to consultation and participation)- Protocol

*'at the outset, scrutiny committees need a work programme that relates to the priorities of the council, reflects the concerns of local people and is achievable. To be effective, scrutiny committees must focus attention where they can make a real difference'.*

*'The best arrangements and action plans are devised to suit local situations. – this involves looking at scrutiny of executive decisions, review of service delivery, evidence gathering, utilising officer support and public involvement'.*

- How do we decide what goes on the work programme- what is fed into this process- councillors, executive, officers- HOS, individual departments, community forums/area committees chairs. – Issues raised in local media- news paper letters columns- Idea – could ask for requests then- Members can decide together with their own ideas what should go in.
- –Coordination of the executive and scrutiny work programme.
- See note from article- ' at the outset scrutiny committees need a work programme that relates to the priorities of the council, reflects the concerns of the local people and is achievable. To be effective Scrutiny committees must focus attention where they can make a real difference'.
- The remit of scrutiny- outside the remit of scrutiny. (Linked to what goes into the scrutiny work programme)

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**Protocol for running scrutiny topics - build on existing 5 stages of scrutiny**

- Well thought out terms of reference
- plans for method of inquiry
- timescales
- officer support
- reporting mechanisms
- Protocol for running scrutiny topics
- What determines what is looked at with individual scrutiny topics- Protocol-officer input
  - Research and relevant information – gathered before a scrutiny takes place, specialist areas – to give them ideas on what they might want to look into. ***‘ Scrutiny committees must take control of their own agendas, specifying their requirements in advance. This is most important in relation to information: they must not just accept info they are given. They need the right information – not too much-not too little. They need to give thought to different sources of relevant information: performance data, previous reviews, other stakeholders and authorities, frontline staff, appeals to the public. They also need to think about the different kinds of information – service data; user surveys, personal testimony, and research’.***

Questionnaire to be sent out to officers involved for suggestions about relevant issues and relevant contacts

Questionnaire to members to complete before coming to the first scoping meeting to think about what they would like to investigate – send with this any relevant info/ background papers for that topic area- to assist them

Officer pre- meeting

- Have a discussion first about this area- to get people thinking then do the scoping- have a separate meeting for scoping.
- Checklist to identify relevant work across the council and with outside agencies, e.g. best value reviews, existing internal and external research, Vision 2010, community strategy/ plan, councillors, relevant local issues that might impact or have

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relevance to this project, things that have been raised in the local media, suggestions from surgeries, possible areas that Members may be interested in etc.

- Check relevant indicators- BVP and compare- performance over past years and projected future years and also comparison to other boroughs.
- Checklist of stakeholders- generic and whether they are relevant, e.g., business, community, Luton forum/assembly, police, which department etc.
- Relevant Performance – data to be submitted to each scrutiny-indicators. And comparisons to other boroughs

The scoping stage- protocol for scoping – this section needs to be firmed up. **‘they need clarity about what exactly they are setting out to do’.**

- Possibility the scoping meeting is run separate from main committee meeting.
- **Setting up a form- expand on existing checklist – but this could be a form that is completed- could have a form that officers in relevant departments complete-for pre-meeting- relevant advice?!- Which list objectives..Etc- ask Members to complete form at the scoping stage-**
- Consideration of whether there is any likely impact of neighbouring or other borough- any relevant info from county council? Add to checklist
- Need to understand clearly what the panel are looking at
  - Is it assessing performance of a service or;
  - Is it relating to the public etc?
- Need to decide what scrutiny will cover and what it won't cover. Small manageable areas? E.g. researching vulnerable groups we need to decide what areas will be included, is elderly, young, disabled, does it include children in care? – need to look also at how we can successfully draw this information out from discussion- what is the best way- spider diagram of everything on a board and then cross of certain areas- or ask members are there any particular questions that they would like to see answered by the end of the review- methods of extracting useful and firm parameters for project?
- Consider whether comparisons- need to be made about how other boroughs are working- identifying best practice – add to checklist

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- Executive- avoid overlap? Speak to Geoff – also relevant issues- for executive portfolio holder to bring to scrutiny. – Coordinate Executive and Scrutiny work programmes.
- Need to make sure there is no overlap – if best value are doing it already-then should scrutiny be looking at it too? What aspect should scrutiny take on board- look at monitoring delivery of best value action plan- meeting targets?
- Check capacity to carry out work that you have scoped –
  - Legal capacity- do you have the technical capabilities to scrutinise this topic- do you have the resources to bring in expertise- or do you have officer resources that can commit to such a project
  - Officer capacity- Do you have officer capacity to carry out the project
  - Budget – inter-relates to others- what are the envisages costs- do you have the capacity- can you team up with any other section/org?
  - Research capacity?

If you do not have the capacity- need to consider – how best a project might be effectively delivered? Or if indeed it is feasible.

- Planning of a scrutiny topic
- Evidence (see research and consultation)
  - Check list of regular evidence/ witnesses
  - Different ways of reporting evidence from witnesses
    - Come to meetings
    - E-mail relevant info
    - In writing
    - Provide reports
- How is evidence recorded
- How is evidence reported
- Report writing template
- Realistic timescales – for stages
- At stage 4 – need to start looking at next topic.

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- Protocol for project managers
  - Providing relevant information
  - Setting up officer meetings
  - Setting up pre-briefing meetings
  - Work through checklist of to-do's before project has started.
  - Set realistic time-scales
  - Let officers know what support is available – what officers from scrutiny and committee services are there for and what they and what support they can offer.

Relevant Performance – data to be submitted to each scrutiny-indicators. And comparisons to other boroughs

- Monitoring
  - Best Value
  - Performance stats- two members are responsible for paying particular attention to performance stats- -all members of committee get report – if relevant will be raised at meetings
- Officers also to monitor performance statistics.

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- Monitoring and Evaluation – measuring progress
  - Evaluation of witnesses- fill in scrutiny form- look at form – this could also go to officers
  - Questionnaire to officers that have taken part in Scrutiny- what they think – how can the process be improved?
  - Evaluation of individual projects
  - Evaluation of the process
    - Look at positives and probs- already encountered- encountered by other boroughs
- **Internal survey – members and officers- about scrutiny – and feed this into the guide and advertising.**



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- Communication/press and pr ((linked to consultation and participation)
  - Scrutiny News letter
  - Scrutiny Handbook- See Newham
  - Local papers-
    - Articles
    - Advertising of meetings
  - Website – what's on the website- is this sufficient – how can we improve this?
  - Leaflets
    - For the public
    - For witnesses (also applicable to witnesses)
  - A standard article on what- a) new reports b) what new reviews are going on in the council- put a little section in Herald and Post regularly.
  - Advertising- innovative ways- targeted also- e.g. business through chamber, public sector orgs or colleges, etc.
  - Improving understanding involvement of departments in scrutiny internally.-
    - Letting officers know that if they deem it relevant that they can approach topics to scrutiny. –
    - Advertise the guide internally-training for officers.
    - Advertise the work programme internally.
  - What other mechanisms for advertising are there? Radio
  - Advertising the work programme
  - Newsletter for Members- or include that in wider – scrutiny newsletter
  - What is the advertising budget

- **Scrutiny discussion forum**

**Presentation/ feedback to Members on scrutiny courses that we have attended- this report incorporates information from courses I have attended**

**Maybe presentation of courses- or useful pointers picked up –if Members are interested- could do occasional sessions- and debate following- in a social fashion- within scrutinty- included althoughs that take part- add to communications**

**DRAFT****Witnesses- procedure**

- Leaflets
- Witnesses- evidence gathering- is always best for this to be carried out within the meeting- clogs up meeting. Where relevant there is a case for witness evidence to be carried out separately by Members and reported committee meetings.
- Seating of witnesses at committee meetings. Witnesses not sitting across (on trial –position) but maybe next to the director – Beds c.c example.
- Protocol- how are witnesses managed?- for calling witnesses to give evidence- from invitation- pre- meeting briefing, how to question and gather evidence once they are here, to record their details for future reference- build up contacts bank, to send out thank you letters, how to record evidence that is submitted.
- Will witnesses return- is this a friendly experience- will they pass on information to other relevant contacts.
- How to make witnesses more effective
  - Standard letter to explain
    - Scrutiny
    - The project
    - Who is involved
    - What info we are looking for
    - How this information can be presented/ recorded
    - What is best for them
- How to make witness stage less formal
- What obstacles are there or what factors might discourage people from attending meetings or taking part.
- Witnesses need to be made to feel part of the process and not on trial?!
- Officers- training/guidance on writing scrutiny reports- from stats to basic committee report. Internal and external- what kind of presentations do witnesses do

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- General administration and set up of the meetings –  
***A good scrutiny meeting will look different from the old committees. Discussions are open and challenging, its often difficult to tell what party members belong to, or even who council officers are. They also bring a range of outside people, - local interest groups or academics, , say – to present evidence. Those that don't work effectively will still have members passively taking info they are offered- the agenda may even be still set by the chief officer.***
  - e.g. agenda's- are they easy to follow, are they based on the old fashioned system?
  - Amount of issues on any one agenda.
  - Minutes,
  - Room layout.
  - Location of meeting

Guidelines of chairing a meeting-Possible Member training on chairing meetings

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Best Practice- learning from others.

- Other Boroughs- examples- case studies- ways of working. (Hartlepool – best practice) Invite other Boroughs to give presentation- on how Scrutiny is run- ‘taking a look at ourselves’- ‘challenging ourselves’ –set against the 4 c’s of best value- ???
  - What are the different committee systems –e.g. beds c.c opposition led
  - What are the different support systems? E.g. scrutiny offices etc.

Training and guidance available- Birmingham INLOGOV, IdeA- (appendices-tool kit)

Case studies- best practice – see audit commission report

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Others

Secondees- bringing people in from the council to work on projects

**N.B Send this out for comments to Members and officers- relevant to Scrutiny- has it thoroughly raised all issues?**

**Build on – Geoff’s existing guide**

**Relevant reports – report back to scrutiny board**

**IdeA**

**Audit Commision**

**ODPM**

**Article- cllr hussain**

**Strengthen the role of the scrutiny board in keeping an overview of the individual committees as recommended at yesterday’s meeting.**