

Capturing and Reporting the Impact of Scrutiny

Appendix B

Purpose

1. To advise Members of all Scrutiny Committees of the introduction of improved scrutiny processes and ensure unified cross committee understanding and approach.

Background

2. Scrutiny members recognise that the scrutiny function enriches the decision-making of the organisation. Whilst such understanding derives from engagement and contribution to scrutiny, the value and visibility of the function within the organisation would benefit from further embedding.
3. A task and finish inquiry of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee recently addressed the absence of a mechanism for capturing the impact of the work of all five scrutiny committees, and the value of the scrutiny function to the organisation resulting from the implementation of scrutiny recommendations.
4. A practical model has been developed that will collect data and evidence of scrutiny activity throughout the year and link with the Council's performance framework.
5. The model supports the Council in complying with the self-assessment requirements of the new Local Government & Elections (Wales) Bill by introducing service area self-assessment of the implementation of accepted scrutiny recommendations.

Capturing and recording scrutiny recommendations

6. Continual development of Scrutiny is a key objective for the Chairs of Scrutiny. Currently in pilot stage, the new model provides a framework and database on which a quantitative assessment of scrutiny's impact on council services can be captured and reported to Council annually.
7. Importantly, the model extends the governance arrangements currently in place for responding to the recommendations of a scrutiny inquiry, to those generated by scrutiny committees in correspondence.
8. If a committee agrees that a recommendation(s) has emerged out of the scrutiny of a topic then it will be captured by the scrutiny officer and stated clearly in the body of the Chairs letter to the Cabinet, and for the avoidance of doubt in bold at the end of the letter. All recommendations will then form part of formal impact monitoring during the year.
9. Currently a committee can expect a formal Cabinet response to recommendations following task group inquiries. This response is in the form of '*accept*', '*partially accept*' or '*not accepted*'.

In future the Cabinet will also formally respond to recommendations set out in correspondence following scrutiny committees as requiring monitoring.

10. Members are requested to be very clear in making their recommendations for capture by scrutiny officers during discussion at the Way Forward following a scrutiny committee. Wherever possible recommendations should be '**SMART**' (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely). Whilst recommendations may not routinely emerge from monthly meetings, any ambiguity over whether a recommendation will be monitored as part of the scrutiny and performance impact assessment database must be avoided.
11. The model will capture quantitative impact by introducing the concept of '*substantiveness*' as a key measure in determining the level of influence or *impact* that recommendations have on corporate policy.
12. If a recommendation is '*not accepted*' then it will not be reflected in the service area action plan and cannot therefore be included in the impact assessment. Only *accepted* and *partially accepted* recommendations will be reported on.
13. Working together with the Corporate Performance Team, a pilot application of the model is underway. As of January 2021 all scrutiny recommendations generated by a committee or a task group are being monitored. The Cabinet and service areas have arrangements in place to track and report on the implementation of accepted scrutiny recommendations for presentation to all scrutiny committees 6 monthly.

Way Forward

14. Scrutiny members are advised that a unified approach to capturing and reporting on the impact of scrutiny will be delivered by:
 - Recording, tracking and reporting on the implementation of accepted scrutiny recommendations generated from both committee correspondence and task group inquiries.
 - Producing a single Scrutiny Annual Report for the 2020-21 municipal year, replacing the existing individual scrutiny committee annual reports, agreed by all five scrutiny committees. The report will focus on the outcomes that have been achieved and encourage public participation and engagement with Scrutiny. It is anticipated that the new Scrutiny Annual Report will be presented in draft, for approval, to all Scrutiny Committees at their June meetings, prior to being submitted to Council.