

Scrutiny Improvement Plan – ACTION PLAN 2024/2025

Action Plan			
Organisational commitment and clarity of purpose			
Recommendations	Detailed action	When	Outcome/Comments
Recommendation 1 – Review terms of reference of the three committees to ensure they operate in a complementary manner	Conduct a review of the terms of reference of the Scrutiny Committee, Overview Committee and Housing Review Board including frequency of meetings.	December 2024	Democratic Services Manager to undertake a review of the ToR's. Consultation with relevant scrutiny committee Chairs and Vice Chairs and committees as part of this process. The relevant Portfolio Holder and ELT to also be consulted. Constitution Working Group is currently reviewing the Constitution and any changes to the ToR's will be fed into that work, with a view to submitting an updated document by December 2024.
Resources required			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To arrange a meeting with overview and scrutiny chairs to review the terms of reference of each committee and to take update terms of reference to a consultative workshop with overview and scrutiny committees to seek feedback. This process will be supported by the Democratic Services Officers who currently support the three committees. 2. To submit the terms of reference to the Constitution Working Group to consider the feedback. This work can be supported within existing resources. 			
Recommendation 2 - That consideration is given to providing a short term investment to the scrutiny function to ensure that the actions and recommendations arising from this	To provide a dedicated Scrutiny Officer role to support the overview and scrutiny committees. This role to be initially for a temporary period of up to 12 months (Post to be 30 hours per week) and the	September 2024	Democratic Services Manager to review the current structure of the team to provide scrutiny support along with support to other committees, forums and

<p>report can be implemented and that 'added value' scrutiny can take place</p>	<p>effectiveness of the support will be reviewed. In the short term, support for scrutiny will continue to be provided by DSO's currently providing secretariat support to committee meetings.</p>		<p>panels, including developing a new structure to deliver this.</p>
<p>Resources required</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To request a dedicated Scrutiny Officer role to provide the resources required to support the overview and scrutiny function. 2. The Democratic Services Officers currently supporting the three overview and scrutiny committees will require some training to ensure they can provide support until a dedicated Scrutiny Officer is recruited. 3. To carry out a review of the Democratic Services Team structure to provide support to scrutiny committees and work allocations. 4. To arranged training is available from the Association of Democratic Services Officers and can be met within existing training budget (circa. £300). The DSO's are all members of the Association of Democratic Services Officers which provide useful support, guidance and training opportunities. Any further training opportunities will be identified through the PERS process. 5. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny also offer support for officers and it is proposed that the DSO's providing support to the overview and scrutiny function sign up to receive newsletters and information from the CfGS. 			
<p>Members leading and fostering good relationships</p>			
<p>Recommendation 3 - assign a senior officer to provide expertise and advice to guide and support each of the respective Chairs and to retain oversight of the function, work programmes and help ensure that they work within their terms of reference and within the scrutiny protocol.</p>	<p>Assignment of ELT/SLT to each committee already implemented Scrutiny Committee – MW Overview Committee – SD Housing Review Board – TH This will need to be reviewed in light of the recent changes to the ELT/SLT structure.</p>	<p>August 2024</p>	<p>The assignment of ELT/SLT to each committee is currently being reviewed following recent changes to the structure and the appointment of the new Chief Executive.</p>
	<p>Set up a quarterly Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group meeting (Chair & Vice Chair of each committee and relevant Portfolio Holder) to keep</p>	<p>August 2024</p>	<p>Democratic Services Manager – set up quarterly meetings of the co-ordinating group to review work programme and keep</p>

	function of committee and work programmes under review.		function of committee under review.
Resources required To arrange quarterly meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Co Ordinating Group meetings can be supported by the three Democratic Services Officers currently providing support to the committees and can be met from within existing budgets.			
Recommendation 4 – provide learning and development opportunities for all Elected Members to include the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning skills • Scoping and Managing In-depth scrutiny • Making recommendations • Access and use of information and work programming 	Work with the Member Development Working Group to develop a programme of ongoing training and development opportunities for scrutiny members Continuously identify training needs and agree how those needs may be met To have the opportunity to attend LGA and CfGS events and workshops Encourage Groups to maximise the continuity of their committee membership year on year	September 2024	Democratic Services Manager to submit a request to the Member Development Working Group to develop an ongoing training and development programme for overview and scrutiny members. This will include identifying any resources available from LGA, CfGS and external training providers.
Resources required Any training identified can be delivered from within the existing member training budget. Where the Member Development Working Group identify any additional training needs these will be assessed and an additional budget request will be submitted for consideration if required.			
An in depth look at the scrutiny protocol and terms of reference for the committees, focusing on expectations, behaviours, and garnering ongoing support for participation.	Co-ordination group to review the Scrutiny Protocol annually to ensure its effectiveness. Add the Scrutiny Protocol to the Council's Constitution.	October 2024	Democratic Services Manager to arrange a session with each of the overview and scrutiny committees to work through the protocol and the implications for the committees. The Scrutiny Committee took place in the first session in May 2024 and further sessions will be arranged with

			the other two committees in September 2024.
Resources required To timetable a session for each committee to receive a detailed run through of the protocol which can be met from within existing budget/resources.			
Prioritising work and using evidence well			
Recommendation 5 - That the approach to work programming for scrutiny is redesigned so that the work programme is anchored by long term strategic issues for East Devon.	To set up and hold quarterly meetings between the three committees (Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group, comprising Chair and Vice Chair of each committee and relevant Portfolio Holder, supported by ELT representative and Democratic Services)	From September 2024 onwards	Democratic Services Manager to arrange a quarterly meeting to take place between the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the three overview and scrutiny committees, as well as the relevant portfolio Holder. Review of Scrutiny form also to be completed.
Capacity to conduct in-depth scrutiny outside of the formal meetings	Support required from within existing service areas dependent on the nature of the work identified by the three committees	From September 2024 onwards	Availability of resources to be considered as part of the work programme and taken into account as part of the work programming for each committee. We need to ensure it aligns with officer capacity and supports and aligns with Council Plan objectives and priorities.
Regular collaboration with scrutiny Chairs which might involve routine sharing of work programmes for committees or possibly the consideration of the development of a single work programme for the entire function which is agreed annually	Each committee to produce a focused Work Programme which is aligned to the Council's corporate priorities and Key Decision Document.	From September 2024	Democratic Services Manager to arrange quarterly meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordinating group.

<p>Regular collaboration with scrutiny chairs which might involve chairs to collectively decide on member suggestions on proposal forms for what goes on the work programme – based on clear criteria that members themselves agree – process should look and feel challenging. Forward Plan could also go to this meeting for discussion (summaries of Portfolio Holder reports could go here too)</p>	<p>Hold regular quarterly meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordinating group to consider what items go onto the work programme. Chair of Audit & Governance Committee to be invited annually to discuss that committees work programme and any links to overview and scrutiny work programme. Forward Plan of key decisions to be reported to the group.</p>	<p>From September 2024</p>	<p>As above</p>
<p>Planned space on the work programme for detailed scrutiny of forthcoming decisions in a way that is planned in advance – for most complex / contentious issues – allowing for managed and proportionate political debate</p>	<p>Work with ELT/SLT, senior officers and Chairs and Vice Chairs to achieve this.</p>	<p>From September 2024</p>	<p>As above – Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group to oversee this activity.</p>
<p>Use insight from the public (ward work, corporate complaints) to inform work programming – in a proportionate way</p>	<p>Investigate a process for engagement with the public on the work of scrutiny and forthcoming items</p>	<p>December 2024</p>	<p>Democratic Services Manager to work with the Communications Team, Corporate Lead (Performance), Portfolio Holder Democracy, Transparency and Communications and Portfolio Holder Council and Corporate Communication to identify a process to ensure public views, corporate complaints and ward work can be used to deliver and support work programming.</p>

<p>Proactively share Forward Plan with members outside of committee; signpost members to background reports where necessary.</p>	<p>Currently all councillors receive the Forward Plan on a monthly basis.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Continue existing practice of circulating Forward Plan to all councillors. Forward Plan currently reviewed by each overview and scrutiny committee. Arrangements in place for Forward Plan to be reported to Cabinet meetings on a quarterly basis to ensure it is accurate and relevant. Promote the Forward Plan through the Councillors weekly newsletter.</p>
<p>Organise separate All- member briefings for members on forthcoming / high profile things which are for information rather than taking up space on the formal agenda.</p>	<p>Introduce a timetable of all member briefings to take place on a bi monthly basis to allow high profile topics to be presented</p>	<p>From September 2024</p>	<p>Democratic Services Manager – a series of calendar dates has been arranged for Cabinet Briefings and All Member Briefings on forthcoming topics, working with ELT to identify what areas will be covered.</p>
<p>Continue with production of regular Portfolio Holder reports but integrate this better into work programming.</p>	<p>Through a Overview & Scrutiny co-ordinating group the regular Portfolio Holder reports can be better programmed into the work programme of each committee.</p>	<p>December 2024</p>	<p>Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordinating group to undertake a review of effectiveness of Portfolio Holder reports and a process to ensure the most appropriate way of doing this. The review will investigate the process in place at other local authorities.</p>
<p>Resources required</p> <p>1. Arrangements to set up meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group, including support to the group can be met from within existing budgets and resources. The Co Ordinating Group would be supported by the Scrutiny Officer.</p>			

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Additional officer support from within other service areas will be dependent on the topics that overview and scrutiny are dealing with. 3. For future overview and scrutiny reviews a scoping document will be produced in consultation with the relevant service area to ensure resources are available including a realistic timeline for the delivery of that work. This work would be supported by the Scrutiny Officer with backfilling provided from the three Democratic Services Officers. 4. Hold a member workshop for each committee to review work programme, scoping documents. This activity will be supported by the Scrutiny Officer. 5. To invite the Chair of the Audit & Governance to the Overview & Scrutiny Co Ordinating Group on an annual basis to discuss work programming and how their (A&G) work links to overview and scrutiny. 6. Review the scrutiny request form to ensure long term strategic issues are considered. 			
<p>Recommendation 6 - Consideration of cross-party pre-meetings being held before the meeting and led in a way that helps committee members prepare for scrutiny sessions by reviewing the key lines of enquiry and coordinating their questioning approaches.</p>	<p>Develop a timetable of cross party pre-meetings to ensure each committee prepares for each scrutiny session and agreeing their questioning approaches. Also ensuring that sufficient training provided (see action above).</p>	<p>September 2024 onwards</p>	<p>Democratic Services Manager to put arrangements in place to review the meeting preparation timetables to incorporate cross party pre meetings before each overview & scrutiny committee.</p>
<p>Resources required Democratic Services Team to identify a timetable of meetings.</p>			
<p>Recommendation 7 - Provide development support and training for Officers across the Council to build, refresh and enhance their knowledge and understanding of the role, purpose, and powers of scrutiny. This should also include the approach to report writing and presenting and answering questions at committee meetings.</p>	<p>A new report template will be launched in July 2024 for all committees which provide further information to assist the overview & scrutiny committees. Training to be provided to officers in June. Briefing session with Cabinet and Councillors to take place in June/July 2024.</p>	<p>From June 2024</p>	<p>Democratic Services Manager to discuss an approach to staff training to promote and enhance knowledge of staff in the role, purpose and powers of scrutiny. This will also include the recently approved Scrutiny Protocol and a training session on this will take place in September/October 2024.</p> <p>A new report template will be launched from July/August 2024, including briefings/training with</p>

			ELT/SLT, Cabinet and councillors. A meeting with Democratic Services and HR has already taken place to explore this approach.
Resources required 1. Working with HR to develop a programme of training and development for officers. 2. Arrange officer workshop/briefing sessions to deliver training on new template (session booked in June 2024 for officers and further sessions for Cabinet and Councillors).			
Having an impact			
Recommendation 8 - a process is designed and implemented that tracks recommendations made and impact arising and that this is communicated back to all Elected Members.	The council is currently reviewing its approach to managing and tracking actions and those from overview and scrutiny committees should be included in this. Use of Councillor weekly newsletter to promote and communicate overview & scrutiny outcomes and success.	October 2024	Democratic Services Manager to investigate a process for tracing motions using Issue Manager(MOD.GOV) or a similar system. Once the work to identify the most appropriate system has been completed a resource bid will be submitted identifying resources required. Members weekly Newsletter to be used to communicate scrutiny outcomes and successes.
Resources required Investigations currently underway to identify the resources and system required to ensure the Council effectively monitors and tracks actions arising from all committees.			