



Overview & Scrutiny Board

18th August 2026

Subject Heading:

SLT Lead:

Report Author and contact details:

Policy context:

Financial summary:

REPORT

Consideration of recommendations to achieve effective scrutiny for 2026/27

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The report deals with the statutory process of Overview and Scrutiny.

There is no significant financial impact from the statutory processes as these requirements are being met by existing budgets.

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Things that matter for residents

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy

Resources - A well run Council that delivers for People and Place X

SUMMARY

The Board is asked to review and agree which recommendations from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer's Annual Review of Scrutiny work undertaken and published on 17 March 2026, should either be referred to Cabinet for consideration, implemented operationally, or not implemented. The recommendations are intended to strengthen the effectiveness of scrutiny.

RECOMMENDATION

The Board considers the recommendations and agrees which should be referred to Cabinet for consideration, which operational recommendations should be implemented, any recommendations which should not be implemented and any new ones.

REPORT DETAIL

Background

1. Council scrutiny provides an independent check and balance on executive decision-making. Through evidence-based reviews and public, non-partisan questioning, it strengthens accountability and transparency, supports better policy development and helps improve public services.

2. Key contributions of scrutiny

- **Acting as a critical friend:** Scrutiny provides constructive challenge, rather than opposition for its own sake, to support continuous improvement.
- **Holding the Executive to account:** Non-Cabinet councillors examine the decisions, policies and actions of Cabinet and senior officers.
- **Improving policy and performance:** Through pre-decision scrutiny, committees review proposals before implementation to test whether they are robust and offer value for money.
- **Giving residents a voice:** Scrutiny brings public concerns into the Council's decision-making and reviews issues that directly affect local communities.
- **Scrutinising external partners:** Scrutiny may also examine the work of organisations such as the NHS, police and other bodies delivering services to residents.
- **Using call-in powers:** Scrutiny can temporarily pause an executive decision so that it can be reviewed and, where appropriate, changes recommended.

- **Establishing task and finish groups:** Small, time-limited groups can investigate specific or complex issues in depth and make focused recommendations.

3.Main Roles of Scrutiny Committees:

- **Policy Review & Development:** Reviewing existing policies to ensure effectiveness and proposing new ones.
- **Performance Monitoring:** Reviewing how well council services are performing against targets.
- **Budget Scrutiny:** Monitoring the council's financial position and value for money.
- **External Partnerships:** Scrutinising the impact of services delivered by third-party organisations

Effective Council Scrutiny

4.Effective scrutiny acts as a constructive critical friend to the executive, using evidence-based, non-political challenge to drive improvement. It focuses on residents' priorities, holds decision-makers to account and makes clear, practical recommendations that improve local services rather than simply reviewing reports. See the Local Government Association's [A councillor's workbook on scrutiny](#).

Annual Review of the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2025/26

5.At its meeting on 17 March 2026, the Board reviewed its 2025/26 work programme and effectiveness. The programme had focused on the Statutory Corporate Plan, the Council's financial position, and progress against the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Improvement and Transformation Plan and the CIPFA Financial Management Review, which supported the Council's exceptional financial support arrangements.

6.Drawing on findings from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's annual survey, Members identified proposals to strengthen scrutiny in 2026/27. These are set out in a table below, together with comments from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer to support consideration and decision-making.

7. The scrutiny board and sub-committees will decide which recommendations should be referred to Cabinet, implemented operationally or not progressed. Members may also propose further recommendations.

Progress on the 2025/26 Recommendations to Strengthen Scrutiny

8.Following a similar review in March 2025, Cabinet considered seven recommendations to improve scrutiny and approved five. One was not supported because the Council's Constitution already provided for it, while another was not supported because a statutory deadline was already in place which took precedent.

9.Recommendations from the March 2026 Annual Review to Strengthen Scrutiny in 2026/27

Members are asked to consider the recommendations below. Comments from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer are included to support discussion and decision-making.

Number	Recommendation	Comments
1	Length of tenure- is one-year sufficient to learn the roles?	Cabinet approval required
2	Working Protocol between Cabinet & Scrutiny	This is the central purpose of the protocol which has been drafted, shared and discussed ahead of Scrutiny meetings including at the training sessions. The protocol is a recognition of and respect for the respective roles of the Cabinet and Scrutiny in the good governance of the Council. If endorsed, the Protocol will be reviewed annually by Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Board and any changes must be agreed by both. Scrutiny and Cabinet endorsement is required
3	Timely training and support	This has been actioned, through induction, and externally provided training sessions In line with previous scrutiny Members feedback, this was undertaken prior to the first Scrutiny meetings of 26/27 commencing. The decision was taken to ensure that newly appointed scrutiny Members were appropriately trained and equipped to undertake their responsibilities effectively from the outset, thereby supporting the effective operation of the Council's scrutiny function and wider governance arrangements.
4	Pre-meet with new administration & scrutiny prior to scrutiny Meetings commencing	Meeting with Cabinet and Scrutiny Chairs and deputy Chairs held 1st July 2026/ Section 6.4 of the protocol provides for regular dialogue between Cabinet and Scrutiny
5	Focused work-planning and pre-meets	Part of every agenda and meeting.

6	Thematic key lines of enquiry	To be considered as part of work planning
7	Post-decision scrutiny: reviewing the impact a decision has had.	Every meeting will have a non-public short review of the meeting undertaken with an improvement focus
8	Focus on financial position	This will be considered as part of work planning and specific scrutiny e.g. budget and saving scrutiny, the special financial measures Improvement and Transformation Plan
9	Adoption of task and finish groups	These will be considered and determined by the Scrutiny Board and Committees as part of their work programming Section 5.3 of the protocol expressly refers to decisions to establish task and finish groups, including consideration of officer resources
10	Tracking of recommendations/implementation/actions agreed	This is two-fold: the recommendations to Cabinet and individual ones agreed by each Board and committee to ensure they are followed up on. The Draft Protocol Section 10 covers this element
11	More joint sub-committee scrutinies	This is part of work programming discussions
12	Provide access to relevant information and data	The constitution sets out the enhanced access afforded to Scrutiny Members
13	Engage more with stakeholders and the community	This is part of scrutiny work programming
14	Monitor the impact of policies and decisions	This would form part of any requested scrutiny review of specific policies and decisions within their remit-and would need very careful and explicit scoping. The protocol supports policy scrutiny and impact analysis of recommendations
15	Other?	To be identified as part of the first 2026/27 Scrutiny meetings

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks: None of this covering report.

Legal implications and risks: None of this covering report.

Human Resources implications and risks: None of this covering report.

Equalities implications and risks: None of this covering report.

Environmental and Climate Change implications and risks: None of this covering report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Self-Evaluation of Board's Work 2025/26 and Statutory Scrutiny Officer Presentation [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Overview & Scrutiny Board.](#)
[17/03/2026 19:00](#)