Appendix 2: 'TOPIC' Scoring Criteria for Scrutiny Work Plan Items

Criteria	Description	Scoring
Timely	Work plan prioritisation should take account of work in other areas, and avoid duplication. Key questions to ask include: Is now the best time to consider this issue? Are legislative or policy changes afoot? Is the issue due for inspection or auditing?	**Is it timely to consider this issue?** No - 0 / Somewhat - 1 / Yes - 2
Oxford Priority	Work plans should take account of the Council's overall vision for the area. Committee's should ensure that a good proportion of their work relates to the Council's plan and priorities. This is key in demonstrating how Scrutiny can add value to the Council.	**Is it a council priority?** No - 0 / Somewhat - 2 / Yes - 3
Public Interest	Councillor's representative roles are an essential feature of Scrutiny. They are the eyes and ears of the public, ensuring that services meet local needs. The interests of local people should therefore influence and guide the issues chosen for scrutiny.	**Is it of significant public Interest?** No - 0 / Somewhat - 2 / Yes - 3
Influence	Scrutiny Committees have varying levels of influence, depending on the issues they review. They are better placed to influence council services than external agencies. Will your input drive outcomes and change, or be unwelcome and lack impact?	**Can we have meaningful influence?** No - 0 / Somewhat - 1 / Yes - 2
Cost	Services or decisions which incur a high level of income, expenditure or savings should be prioritised. Effective scrutiny of financial matters is a cornerstone of good scrutiny, and significant spending plans should not go unscrutinised.	**Is the issue costly?** No - 0 / Somewhat - 1 / Yes - 2

The TOPIC scoring system has been developed to assist Scrutiny Committees in prioritising work plan items. Criteria led work planning has been advocated by national governance experts and organisations alike, premised on the objective prioritisation of items against pre-set criteria. TOPIC can be used as a reference guide for councillors in selecting items, or it can be rigidly applied as a scoring system. How strictly the criteria is applied will depend of the number of items suggested and the resources available.

Whilst the scoring system aspires to be objective, it cannot necessarily take account of the nuances and complexities of all issues, and Committees should use their best judgement in agreeing which items to take forward.

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