

Scrutiny Committee Operating Principles 2023/24

Meeting Arrangements

1. At least 10 Committee meetings will be scheduled each year to match the Cabinet meeting cycle. This is to enable pre-decision scrutiny of decisions to be taken at the next Cabinet meeting.
2. All public addresses and councillor contributions will be directed through the Chair. Public addresses will be limited to five minutes each.
3. The Scrutiny Committee will hold the Cabinet and Senior Officers to account publicly at committee meetings.
4. The Chair will report regularly to Council on the work of the Scrutiny Committee. The Committee may also produce an annual report.

Standing Panels and Review Groups

5. The Scrutiny Committee will set Standing Panels and Review Groups each year to consider selected issues in more detail.
6. Standing Panels will hold meetings throughout the year, and consider quarterly performance reports, executive decisions and other issues within their remit.
7. Review Groups will be formed to undertake issue led and time bound 'task and finish' reviews of specific issues, before concluding their work with a report and recommendations, usually to the Cabinet.
8. Review Group and Standing Panel meetings will be held in public or private as the meeting business dictates. Review Group and Standing Panel meetings will be held virtually, unless there is a compelling need to hold an in-person meeting.
9. Standing Panel and Review Group Chairs will be accountable to the Scrutiny Committee and can be from any political group. Panel Chairs will be elected at the first meeting of the Committee in the municipal year. Review Group Chairs will be elected by the Committee when the groups are established.
10. Standing Panels will meet approximately 5 times each year. Review Groups will meet as often as is required for them to conclude their work. The Scrutiny Committee will oversee the work of Review Groups to ensure they do not overrun unduly.
11. The Scrutiny Committee will commission and scope the work of Standing Panels and Review Groups and therefore has final agreement on their recommendations. There may be occasions where this is not possible and standing panel reports will go directly to the Cabinet.
12. In any given year, the organisation ordinarily has capacity to support either:
 - a) 2 Standing Panels and 3 Review Groups; or
 - b) 3 Standing Panels and 2 Review Groups
13. No substitutions will be allowed on Standing Panels or Review Groups. This is to provide continuity of membership given the focused nature of their work.

14. Chairs of Standing Panels and Review Groups will report back to the Committee on progress and outcomes. They will also be invited to present their reports and recommendations to the Cabinet.
15. The quorum for standing panels and review groups shall be two councillors for panels of four, and three councillors for panels of six.

Political Balance

16. The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee must be a member of the opposition, and the Vice-Chair can be from any political group.
17. The membership of Standing Panels and Review Groups will be set by the Scrutiny Committee and drawn from all non-executive members. Group secretaries will be asked to nominate members to any such groups for agreement by the Committee.
18. Standing Panels and Review Groups are not required to reflect the Council's make up, but the Committee will use the following cross-party principle guide for appointment:

4 members: 1 Labour, 1 Lib Dem, 1 Green, 1 Oxford Socialist Independents
6 members: 2 Labour, 1 Lib Dem, 1 Green, 1 Oxford Socialist Independents, 1 Independent Group
19. Where a political group does not wish to take-up its allocation of a seat on a Standing Panel or Review Group, it will first be offered to political groups that would not normally have a seat allocation through the cross-party principle guide for appointment to Standing Panels and Review Groups – the seat will be offered to those political groups in priority order based on strongest entitlement to a seat as per political proportionality calculations. Should there be no take-up of the seat after offering to other political groups, the Committee will decide what to do.
20. Where two or more political groups have the same entitlement to a seat on a Standing Panel or Review Group as per political proportionality calculations, but where there are not enough available seats to allocate to all of those political groups, the Committee will decide what to do.

The Scrutiny Work Plan

21. The [Work Plan](#) will consist of a number of issues for consideration informed by consultation with all councillors and senior officers. Guidance criteria for prioritising work will be provided by the Scrutiny Officer, but the Committee is responsible for agreeing its Work Plan.
22. The Work Plan will be reviewed at every meeting and adjusted to reflect the wishes of the Committee and take account of changes to the [Forward Plan](#) of executive decisions.
23. Items will be taken forward as resources allow, and the Committee must provide officers with sufficient notice and guidance on what they are requesting to consider, mindful of the impact on resources and the constraints of the organisation. The Scrutiny Committee and its Panels will provide as much

notice as is possible when commissioning reports from council officers (minimum 8 weeks).

24. The management of the Work Plan will be with the whole Committee, with the Chair and Vice-Chair taking an organisational role between meetings.
25. Any councillor can put an item on the Scrutiny Committee agenda if they write to the Head of Law and Governance at least 10 working days before the meeting and the item is relevant to the Scrutiny Committee. All Councillor Calls for Action and Call-Ins will be considered at a public meeting of the Committee.
26. Members of the public can also suggest a topic for the Work Plan. Suggestions can be submitted in person or via email democraticservices@oxford.gov.uk.

Co-option

27. At the discretion of the Committee, residents and other specialists may be co-opted as non-voting members of the Committee, Standing Panels and Review Groups, as the subject matter dictates for a period ending no later than the day of the first meeting of the next council year. The Committee may discontinue an appointment at any time.

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