

## **Appendix 1**

### **Scrutiny Committee Operating Principles 2025/26**

#### **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. Any changes to the schedule must be agreed by the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy.
2. All public addresses and councillor contributions will be directed through the Chair but follow the rules within the Council's Constitution. Public addresses will be limited to five minutes each.
3. The Scrutiny Committee will hold the Cabinet and Corporate Leadership Team 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 Working Groups and Review Groups**

5. The Scrutiny Committee will set Standing Working Groups and Review Groups each year to consider selected issues in more detail.
6. Standing Working Groups 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 Working Group meetings will be held in private and virtually. Due to capacity constraints, hybrid meetings will not be possible.
9. Standing Working Groups and Review Group Chairs will be accountable to the Scrutiny Committee and can be from any political group. Working Group 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 Working Groups 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. Any additional meetings of the Working Groups need to be approved by the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy to ensure capacity of the Scrutiny and Governance Advisor and the Committee and Member Services team.
11. The Scrutiny Committee will commission and scope the work of Standing Working Groups and Review Groups and therefore has final agreement on their

recommendations. For any recommendations due at Shareholder and Joint Venture Group, delegated authority to the Scrutiny and Governance Advisor, in consultation with the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, to endorse and forward Working Group recommendations to these meetings.

12. In any given year, the organisation ordinarily has capacity to support either:
  - a) 2 Standing Working Groups and 3 Review Groups; or
  - b) 3 Standing Working Groups and 2 Review Groups
13. Substitutions will be allowed on Standing Working Groups or Review Groups.
14. Chairs of Standing Working Groups and Review Groups will report back to the Committee on progress and outcomes. They may 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.

### **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 Working Groups and Review Groups will be set by the Scrutiny Committee and drawn from all non-executive members. Political groups will be asked to nominate members to any such groups for agreement by the Committee.
18. Standing Working Groups 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: up to one member from each political group.
19. Where a political group does not wish to take-up its allocation of a seat on a Standing Working Group 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 Working Group 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 and Governance Advisor, 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 Working Groups 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 Director of Law, Governance and Strategy 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 [acscrutiny@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:acscrutiny@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 Working Groups 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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