



North Tyneside Council

Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordination & Finance Committee

Tuesday, 2 July 2024

Wednesday, 10 July 2024 0.02 Chamber – Quadrant, The Silverlink North, Cobalt Business Park, North Tyneside, NE27 0BY commencing at 6.00 pm.

Agenda Item	Page
7. Highways / Transport Task and Finish work	3 – 10
The Director of Regeneration and Economic Development and Head of Highways and Transportation will attend to provide an update on progress made.	
(Documentation to follow)	
9. Update – CfGS Review (2023)	11 – 40
To provide the committee with an update on progress with implementation of the good practice guidance highlighted by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) in their previous review (March 2023).	
(To Follow)	

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**Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordination & Finance
Committee**

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Councillor Brian Burdis
Councillor Davey Drummond
Councillor Martin Murphy
Councillor Pat Oliver
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Councillor Andy Newman
Councillor Bruce Pickard
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Ms Fiona Burton
Mr Stephen Fallon
Rev Michael Vine

Meeting: Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordination & Finance Committee

Date: 10th July 2024

Title: Highways Delivery – Task and Finish Group

Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of Report

The Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordination & Finance Committee (O&S) has agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group and this report contains an initial draft terms of reference (ToR) for the current committee members to give feedback upon. The current committee would prefer that work begins soon after confirmation of the membership of the committee following the Local government election that same month.

The group will also take into consideration the proposed transfer of the engineering service back into the management of North Tyneside Council to gain a greater understanding of the operational environment, the challenges faced and to establish any opportunities to enhance future delivery of the highways function.

2. Introduction

The objective of the Task and Finish Group is to gain a greater understanding of how the strategic partnership operates with reference to a review of working practices within the highway delivery function taking into account national, regional and local policies with particular regard to:

- The North East Transport Plan and its integration with devolved transport powers, and how this can be used to support delivery of the highways function.
- The Council's Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP), the overall condition of the network and the allocation of resources aligned with legislative and corporate policy aims and objectives. This will assist in

identifying potential opportunities to reshape strategic highways delivery when the engineering service is back under the management of the Council, with recommendations to the Mayor and Cabinet.

- The City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS) is available through the new combined authority. The Council would like to set key policy and priority objectives aligned to the HAMP to maximise all opportunities for additional investment into our highways infrastructure.

Attention should also be given to the delivery of the highways function and a deeper, clearer evaluation of the KPIs and PIs to discuss if these are the correct metrics to benchmark service delivery, during the remainder of the partnership. This will be achieved with reference to the statutory duty aligned to highways and any national codes of practice used to provide assurances that delivery meets the basic duty to maintain the highway network safely.

The group is to concentrate on specific aspects of the highways delivery partnership and to write a report detailing observations and recommendations for consideration by the Mayor and Cabinet in the future delivery of the service when it returns back to the management of the Council. The report will reference national and regional policy objectives and how they align with the Council's own policy priorities, including

- Policies and procedures for the monitoring and repair of highway assets.
- The role that communications and engagement play in the delivery of all highways functions.
- Developing a narrative that covers the whole transport network for the Borough, provides clear, transparent communications and appropriate engagement.
- The legislative framework for the delivery of the highways function.
- How the partnership adheres to the Well-managed Highway Infrastructure: A National Code of Practice for the effective asset management of highway infrastructure.
- Understanding the structure of the partnership and relevant roles and responsibilities of staff.
- Developing an understanding of what constitutes an actionable defect, the risk-based approach to inspections and the prioritising of repair categories into P1, P2 and P3.
- Developing an understanding of how repairs are undertaken with regard to flexible and modular paving, the materials used and expected lifespans of the repair.

- Developing an understanding of how reports are triaged, and repairs allocated to the relevant gangs.
- Understanding how Key Performance Indicators are monitored and reported on and whether they could be improved.
- Identifying strengths and weaknesses in the recording and monitoring system.
- To consider Community and resident voices / views and the perception of repair completion.
- Compare highway asset management delivery with a neighbouring Council.
- Identify any gaps in delivery outside the statutory duty to maintain the network that could be considered to enhance future service delivery.

3. Details

- **Method**

It is proposed to hold a number of focused days of Scrutiny to consider the issue. There will be input required from the local authority and Capita officers and an officer from Durham County Council. There is potential for visits to the Killingworth depot and to observe live repair and maintenance works at various locations, coupled with a visit to Durham County Council to observe their repair and maintenance processes. Members will consider other input and material as they develop the Task and Finish Group.

- **Reporting**

The Task and Finish Group will report to the full Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee. And, should the Committee agree, onward to Cabinet and the Mayor with details of recommendations to be considered to improve future delivery of the highways function following the transfer back of the engineering function to the Council's management in 2025.

- **Timescales**

The aim is to supply the July committee with an update on its progress and to complete the study and report to the committee by 9 October 2024 meeting.

- **Membership**

A cross party membership, open to all Members, of six representatives.

Paul Watson, Mark Newlands – North Tyneside Council

Harry Wearing, Head of Communications and Marketing

Vicki Nixon, Head of Engagement, Participation and Advocacy

Nick Preston – Capita.

Paul Anderson – Durham County Council.

Durham County Council are currently the only Council in the UK with the ISO55001 Highways Asset Management accreditation and were approached to assist in this process and have agreed to help where necessary.

4. Next Steps

- Once agreed the ToR will be circulated to all existing members of O&S.
- Democratic Services will take names of currently elected members interested in the Task & Finish group and use these as the basis for the membership.
- Agree a scope and strategic direction for the Task & Finish group to work to.

DRAFT Terms of Reference
Overview and Scrutiny
Highways Delivery Sub-Group

1. Name of the group

Overview and Scrutiny – Highways Delivery Sub-Group (HDSG)

2. Introduction

Following a recent meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee it was agreed to set up a sub-group to review the delivery of the highways function.

In light of the prospective return of the Capita engineering function back under the management of North Tyneside Council, the sub-group will also have the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the operational environment, the challenges faced and the potential opportunities to meet the statutory duty of maintaining our highway network.

3. Membership

3.1. Elected Members

The HDSG shall consist of a minimum of XXX elected members (Named)

3.2. Council Officers

Paul Watson, Mark Newlands – North Tyneside Council

3.3. Strategic Partner Staff

Nick Preston – Capita.

3.4 External Officer Support

Paul Anderson – Durham County Council, Strategic Highways Manager

4. Purpose/Objectives of the Sub-Group

The objective of the HDSG is to get a greater understanding of how the strategic partnership operates, in advance of engineering services returning to Council, with reference to a review of working practices, defect repairs, recording and evaluation of performance in respect of the delivery of the highways function.

The group is to concentrate on specific aspects of the highways delivery partnership and to report back with a report detailing observations and recommendations at a later Overview and Scrutiny meeting to be confirmed.

To undertake this task the HDSG will gather information in relation to:

- Policies and procedures for the monitoring and repair of highway assets.
- The legislative framework for the delivery of the highways function
- How the partnership adheres to the Well-managed Highway Infrastructure: A National Code of Practice for the effective asset management of highway infrastructure
- Understanding the structure of the partnership and relevant roles and responsibilities of staff.
- Developing an understanding of what constitutes an actionable defect, the risk-based approach to inspections and the prioritising of repair categories into P1, P2 and P3.
- Developing an understanding of how repairs are undertaken with regard to flexible and modular paving, the materials used and expected lifespans of the repair.
- Developing an understanding of how reports are triaged, and repairs allocated to the relevant gangs.
- Understanding how Key Performance Indicators are monitored and reported on and whether they could be improved.
- Identifying strengths and weaknesses in the recording and monitoring system.

Upon completion of this review to prepare a report for consideration by O&S with a series of recommendations/observations for the Council to review.

5. Working Methods

Face to face meetings, site visits and MS Teams meetings.

Opportunity to undertake a site visit to Durham County Council as one of our LA7 highway authority partners, to observe working practices and delivery of highway maintenance.

6. Timescales/Plan and Timeline

Meetings shall take place at the agreed frequencies of the membership of the HDSG.

All meetings will be minuted and an agreed recording and reporting format will be determined.

Meeting dates are to be confirmed and will need to feed into the work plan of the current Overview and Scrutiny programme.

Given the return of the engineering service back to North Tyneside Council control in early 2025, it is proposed that the meetings are concluded by October 2024 to allow for a report to be prepared for the relevant Cabinet meeting.

7. Reporting

The HDSG will produce a final report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee detailing any observations and recommendations for consideration by North Tyneside Council.

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Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination and Finance Committee

Date: 10 July 2024

Title: Progress Update – Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Review
(March 2023)

Author: Allison Mitchell, Head of Governance

Service: Governance

Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report explains the findings from and good practice recommendations made by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS), initially reported in March 2023, following a review of Scrutiny undertaken by that body in 2022/23. The report also provides an update on significant progress made in implementing these good practice recommendations and suggestions for future areas of development.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is recommended to:
- (a) Note the findings from the CfGS Review, previously reported to and considered by the former Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee in March 2023, set out at **Appendix A**
 - (b) Note the progress made in implementing the good practice recommendations, also summarised in **Appendix A** and set out in paragraph 3.4;
 - (c) Agree that the areas set out in paragraph 3.5 will continue to be a focus for Scrutiny's development in 2024/25 and beyond.

3. Introduction

Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) – Scrutiny Improvement Review

- 3.1 The Authority's Scrutiny arrangements were reviewed by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) in 2023/24. The CfGS is a national body which specialises in promoting governance excellence within local authorities. The findings from the CfGS Review were reported in full to the (then) Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee in March 2023.
- 3.2 The full text of the CfGS Review Report is included in the table set out in **Appendix A** to this report. Progress made in implementing the good practice recommendations is also set out in that table.
- 3.3 The CfGS Review found that 'Scrutiny has the conditions for success' in North Tyneside. The report highlighted a shared understanding from members and officers of the importance of Scrutiny in good governance, and an understanding of the value that can be added to decision making by Scrutiny. The CfGS also commended the support of the Elected Mayor and Chief Executive to the Scrutiny process, in addition to the professional approach to Scrutiny which was found to be in evidence across members and supporting officers.
- 3.4 Since the report was received and considered in March 2023, the following improvements have been made in response to the review:
- **The Scrutiny structure has been reviewed** – with eight former committees being reorganised into a main Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination and Finance Committee and five Sub-Committees. This new Scrutiny committee framework was agreed by Annual Council in May 2023, and implemented immediately
 - **Better alignment with Core Corporate Plans** – the new Scrutiny committee framework reflects the agreed Council Plan themes and enables more direct focus on respective policy areas
 - **Development of the Scrutiny Work Programme** – this is led by the Scrutiny committees, with a menu of supporting intelligence to aid this decision-making provided by senior officers and Cabinet members
 - **Cabinet Member engagement** – a link Cabinet Member (or Cabinet Members) has been identified in respect of each Scrutiny committee / sub-committee. This is demonstrated at **Annex 1**. Cabinet members have met throughout 2023/24 with the Chairs of committees and

supporting officers, and attended meetings of the respective committees, which will continue throughout 2024/25

- **Strategic input from chief officers** – a lead Senior Leadership Team officer has been nominated to act as the lead for each Scrutiny committee, ensuring that all strategic information required by each Committee is made available
- **Additional Officer Support to Scrutiny** has been strengthened by dedicated resources within the Governance Service, and the designation of the Head of Governance as Statutory Scrutiny Officer.

3.5 There are some areas which should remain a focus for Scrutiny in the coming year. These include:

- **A ‘fewer but better’ approach when choosing Scrutiny Topics** – it is essential that Scrutiny focuses on fewer topics of greatest strategic value. Concentrating on fewer topics contributes to high quality scrutiny. This should be considered by each Scrutiny Committee when considering its work programme
- **Scrutiny Focus and Adding Value** – this can be developed further by making sure that:
 - specific objectives to be achieved by each piece of Scrutiny work are identified
 - outcomes that each piece of Scrutiny work is intended to achieve, with regard to core policy and decision-making, are identified in order that Scrutiny can hold itself to account on whether it has achieved its stated aims
 - we have fewer information reports
 - we clarify the aims and objectives intended to be achieved, when Cabinet members and officers are invited to attend meetings of Scrutiny, to ensure that attendance is focused
 - we make (and monitor) recommendations as a matter of course
- **Alternative formats of Scrutiny** – the CfGS advocated for the value of Task and Finish group working, and two Task and Finish Groups were established in 2023/24. The CfGS also recommended that other forms of specific, single-issue scrutiny are considered to help focus on key issues, such as Spotlight Sessions (one item scrutiny meetings) and Inquiry Days (one day, longer scrutiny sessions to involve interest groups and evidence providers). This should be assessed when considering the work programme for each committee

- **Co-opted members** – play a unique role in Scrutiny. We should develop our approach to supporting co-opted members in the Scrutiny process.

3.6 Senior officers, including specialist officers within the Governance Service, look forward to working with all Scrutiny committees in the coming year to embed the areas of good practice which have already been implemented and identify other areas of continued improvement focus.

4. Appendices

Appendix A: Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) Scrutiny Improvement Review (March 2023) – Update on Recommendations / Progress as at June 2024

Annex I: Link Cabinet Members and Lead Senior Leadership Team Officers (Scrutiny) 2024/25

Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) – Scrutiny Improvement Review (March 2023)
Update on Recommendations / Progress as at June 2024

Centre for Governance & Scrutiny – Scrutiny Review Report (March 2023)	Update as at June 2024
<p>1. Scrutiny has the conditions for success</p> <p>The conditions for successful scrutiny are clearly present at North Tyneside; there is a shared understanding from Members and Officers that good governance involves scrutiny, and when used effectively, scrutiny can add value to decision-making. All of those interviewed believed that improvements are needed to make scrutiny more effective and to add greater value.</p> <p>Members recognise the benefits of change and improvement and this presents a good opportunity for the Council to refresh the way in which scrutiny operates. Change could aim to elevate the status of scrutiny, so that it is recognised as a strategic function and is used as a resource to support continuous council improvement.</p> <p>It is also important to note that this review has the support of the Mayor and Chief Executive, who both expressed a strong desire to support scrutiny and confirm that its role is central to open,</p>	<p>The areas of good practice highlighted by the CfGS have continued to be present in North Tyneside throughout 2023/24 and currently.</p>

transparent decision-making and accountability in the council. We therefore would stress that this confirmation and buy-in at the most senior political and officer level is crucial to improvement and therefore highly valued.

Our review identified a number of positive indicators for scrutiny, most notably; the positive attitude and commitment of Members and Officers, the mature cross-party working in the scrutiny context, the overall capacity and range of experience of Members as well as the strong belief that more could be achieved. The council has a strong cohort of committed councillors across the council and is therefore in a good position to progress. There were other positive behaviours and practices which this report will also highlight.

The commitment of Members and Officers to this review and the ambition to drive improvement in scrutiny was further indicated by virtually complete attendance of those who were invited to meet with the CfGS review team. We appreciated this high level of participation and everyone's constructive contributions in interviews and discussions. The review team were impressed by this high level of commitment.

We therefore commend the Council and its Members and Officers for their professional approach to scrutiny and to this improvement review.

Centre for Governance & Scrutiny – Scrutiny Review Report (March 2023)	Update as at June 2024
<p>2. Officer support and organisational culture</p> <p>We were reassured by the Council’s senior leadership team’s commitment to properly supporting scrutiny. Our conversations with Members were positive about the assistance they received from Officers who support scrutiny and were overall satisfied that support meets their basic needs. However, we suggest that support and expertise is not consistent and therefore within the Council’s resource constraints, ways to strengthen this should be explored.</p> <p>Scrutiny mainly operated in space that was generally free from adversarial political activity and was largely collegiate. The Council’s ability to effectively carry out day to day business, as well as to confidently plan for the future, rests on the strength of organisational culture. This includes but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutual respect between Members – within the context of robust political debate and disagreement, and Members respecting Officers as professionals; • Members and Officers understanding their mutual roles and responsibilities – in the most basic sense, that Councillors lead on strategy and overall direction, while Officers lead on delivery and implementation. 	<p><i><u>Strengthening support and expertise</u></i></p> <p>Since the time of the CfGS Review, a dedicated Head of Governance post has been created (which formally discharges the role of Statutory Scrutiny Officer) in addition to a dedicated Manager of Democratic Services post. These roles have significantly strengthened the support available to Scrutiny. Resourcing is regularly reviewed.</p> <p>The commitment of the Elected Mayor, Chief Executive, and Senior Leadership Team to Scrutiny continues.</p> <p><i><u>Earlier engagement of Cabinet Members</u></i></p> <p>For 2023/24 a link Cabinet member and lead SLT officer were identified to support the main Overview & Scrutiny Co-ordination and Finance Committee, and all Scrutiny sub-committees. This has continued into 2024/25, and is demonstrated at Annex 1. Regular meetings with, and attendance of, Cabinet members and SLT officers at Scrutiny meetings has taken place throughout 2023/24.</p>

These cultural aspects above are present at North Tyneside, but more could be done to engage earlier with Cabinet Members to help shape and improve through early constructive challenge. Furthermore, there is a real opportunity for Scrutiny to be better aligned with core corporate plans of the council.

We would also like to note that we felt that additional senior, specialist officer support would provide greater capacity for scrutiny to develop. The previous longstanding statutory scrutiny officer retired from the Authority in December 2021, and at the time of our onsite work, a replacement had not yet been appointed.

Better alignment of Scrutiny with Core Corporate Plans of the Council

In May 2023 Annual Council agreed a reorganisation of the Scrutiny structure. Scrutiny is now delivered via the main Overview & Scrutiny Finance and Co-ordination Committee and 5 Sub-Committees reflecting the five themes in the Our North Tyneside Plan.

Centre for Governance & Scrutiny – Scrutiny Review Report (March 2023)	Update as at June 2024
<p>3. Clarity on scrutiny’s role and responsibilities</p> <p>Scrutiny’s overall role is; to hold the Mayor and Cabinet (Executive) to account, to carry out policy development, contribute to improved decision-making, and channel the voice of the public. A good scrutiny function is one that provides robust, effective challenge. But equally, is recognised and valued as a positive influencer of policy and key decision-making through constructive challenge, positive enquiry, and quality insight.</p> <p>Through our evidence gathering, Members involved in scrutiny could articulate the role that scrutiny should play in being an integral part of the council’s governance structure and contributing to the council’s budgetary and policy making function. However, some Members seemed to be unclear on how exactly scrutiny should be holding the Mayor and Cabinet to account. We heard that meetings could spend a lot of time focusing on officer presentations and less time in discussion and scrutiny mode.</p> <p>In practice, the strategic challenge of Cabinet Members needs to be strengthened. Within meetings, we found that scrutiny tends to focus on Officers and Officer reports. Arrangements could be enhanced to facilitate an exploration of current policy with</p>	<p><i>Focus of Scrutiny</i></p> <p>We have sought to sharpen Scrutiny’s focus through 2023/24, with Cabinet members and SLT officers attending Scrutiny meetings and providing information to the Scrutiny process. In addition, Scrutiny members have been invited to submit questions in advance of consideration of a given topic in order that Cabinet members and senior officers can ensure that the requested information is available, ready for scrutiny and discussion.</p> <p>This is an area however that must continue to be developed. For example, as well as selecting strategic topics, we need to become better at setting out specific objectives for each piece of Scrutiny, and intended outcomes with regard to the scrutiny of core policy and decision making. This will also assist a focus of each Committee on scrutinising (and help to move further away from information sharing). As set out above, Cabinet members have attended meetings of Scrutiny and are participated actively in the Scrutiny process.</p>

Cabinet members, or decisions where Scrutiny can play a valuable role in shaping and improving.

It is essential that scrutiny meetings do not become classrooms for learning and information up-dates, but remain focused on the scrutiny task, challenge, and improvement.

Scrutiny needs to recognise its role and responsibility in holding the Mayor and Cabinet Members to account, ensuring questions are directed to the relevant Cabinet Member and are linked to clear priorities. Scrutiny's success is measured by the impact it has on positively shaping and improving policy and key decisions.

The Mayor and Cabinet and Scrutiny both want to see more emphasis on shaping policy, challenging, and holding to account. Therefore, Scrutiny will need earlier access to and involvement with the core policy and decision-making activities of the Executive. Our discussions concluded that the Mayor, Cabinet Members and Scrutiny all recognise and agree that greater collaboration and engagement would be strongly beneficial.

In our conversations, we heard a lack of shared understanding about the roles and responsibilities of co-opted members of scrutiny. The council's constitution lays this out and so bringing all relevant people's understanding to the same point would be useful.

Co-opted Members

We would benefit by undertaking targeted training in respect of co-opted members of Scrutiny, and developing the specific and unique perspectives which co-opted members can bring to the Scrutiny process.

Centre for Governance & Scrutiny – Scrutiny Review Report (March 2023)	Update as at June 2024
<p>We recommend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clearer focus on democratic accountability – Scrutiny of the Mayor and Cabinet Members should form a key part of the work plan, and the Mayor and Cabinet Members regularly attending scrutiny to answer questions on items falling within their portfolio responsibilities is vital. • More emphasis on scrutiny as a vital part of Council business and governance – With clear council-wide ownership and understanding of its important role in improving policy and holding to account. • A shared understanding of the role and responsibilities of co-opted members – With the relevant section of the council’s constitution being refreshed if necessary. 	<p>The Elected Mayor and Cabinet have attended relevant meetings of Scrutiny, and answered questions of the Committee (see above). Also as set out above, a link Cabinet member has been identified in respect of every Scrutiny committee, to provides information requested by each committee.</p> <p>There is lead SLT officer for each Scrutiny Committee, underlying the Council-wide ownership of the scrutiny process.</p> <p>As set out above, during 2024/25 we need to further develop the support to co-opted members in the Scrutiny process.</p>

Centre for Governance & Scrutiny – Scrutiny Review Report (March 2023)	Update as at June 2024
<p>4. Collaborative approach to scrutiny</p> <p>Scrutiny is the forum for the evidence-based discussion about issues affecting local people where challenge is welcomed and encouraged. Members told us that they felt that adversarial politics was not a strong feature of Scrutiny, although there are instances of where politics can turn up.</p> <p>In any democratic institution, there will be differences of opinion and disagreement about policy and decisions – this should be recognised as normal and regarded as democratic exchange and policy differentiation. However, if Scrutiny encounters become too politically charged or adversarial this can diminish mutual trust and respect and lead to defensive and negative outcomes, rather than resulting in creative and useful exchanges.</p> <p>We heard that proactive engagement between Scrutiny and the Executive could be improved both before and during Scrutiny meetings.</p> <p>There is also mixed level of engagement from those who sit on Scrutiny, with some Members showing minimal levels of involvement within committee meetings. Engagement, contributions, and challenge from all Members of Scrutiny is essential if individual Members wish to have an influence on</p>	<p><i><u>Proactive engagement between Scrutiny and the Executive</u></i> A link Cabinet member has been nominated to support every Scrutiny committee, reflecting the portfolio area for which the Cabinet member is responsible.</p> <p>The Elected Mayor has brought an annual report to OSCFC, and attended to discuss and answer questions on this, and Cabinet members have also attended during the year to answer questions relevant to their respective portfolios.</p> <p><i><u>Engagement of Scrutiny Members</u></i> A high level of engagement has been demonstrated throughout the year.</p>

<p>shaping decisions, and if Scrutiny is to fulfil its role in being a space for cross-party inquiry. This not only requires attendance, but background preparation for the meeting.</p>	
<p>We recommend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developing regular communication and information sharing so that Scrutiny can be a resource that can inform Executive decision making. This could be achieved through holding triangulation meetings between Scrutiny Chairs, Cabinet Members, and relevant Directors to consider future issues and the part which scrutiny could play in testing and shaping these forward plans. It would also present an opportunity to share and discuss opportunities to involve scrutiny as an improvement asset. ▪ Cross-party working could be further strengthened at North Tyneside. There was a broad agreement that all Members have a duty to uphold their responsibilities as a scrutineer, attend meetings and work towards a shared goal in their committee. Members should consider what further work is necessary to address working relationships. 	<p>Regular meetings of Scrutiny Chairs, Cabinet members and SLT members have taken place throughout 2023/24. This is intended to continue and further develop in 2024/25.</p>

Centre for Governance & Scrutiny – Scrutiny Review Report (March 2023)	Update as at June 2024
<p>5. Scrutiny’s focus and workplan</p> <p>There is a recognition that Scrutiny at North Tyneside needs to focus on more strategic issues, where it can have influence, and that Scrutiny should input into the decision-making process at an earlier stage than it does currently.</p> <p>Scrutiny has a tendency to be more retrospective, rather than forward looking. It is important that scrutiny carries out reviews and assesses performance, but there is a missed opportunity for it to add value to council policy and strategy through greater emphasis on the big challenges and opportunities ahead for the Borough.</p> <p>The Council’s corporate plan should direct Scrutiny’s focus, but business does not always seem to be aligned with either the Council’s overall priorities, the 3-month rolling programme of Elected Mayor and Cabinet decisions or with pressing corporate performance or risks and challenges – when topics are reviewed the focus can lean towards operational rather than strategic or outcome focused.</p> <p>Task and finish style working was cited as some of the most successful examples of scrutiny by Members, where it has</p>	<p><i>A focus on strategic issues</i></p> <p>A ‘menu’ of strategic issues falling within the remit of each Scrutiny committee was developed at the outset of 2023/24, utilising policy knowledge of the link Cabinet member and lead SLT officer for each Committee.</p> <p><i>The importance of setting strategic objectives</i></p> <p>The strategic focus of Scrutiny could however be further enhanced by setting clearer, focused objectives for each scrutiny policy topic selected. This would provide valuable additional focus on the outcomes hoped to be achieved from the Scrutiny process, and help Cabinet members and officers ensure that they provide targeted and specific evidence to support the Scrutiny process.</p> <p><i>Task and Finish working</i></p> <p>A Task and Finish Group (looking at Emergency Care and Urgent Treatment in North Tyneside) took place during 2023/24 and delivered a detailed report to Cabinet. This was a substantial piece of work for the members who volunteered. Evidence based recommendations were made by the Task and Finish Group, accepted by OSCFC and Cabinet and have been acted upon since. A Task and</p>

selected key issues to scrutinise and to explore. These could be further improved if Scrutiny focused on making compelling, quality recommendations based on its activity.

Regarding budget and finance scrutiny, this is an area that councils often ponder – when and how should scrutiny be involved in the budget process. Officers reported to us that in North Tyneside Council there is a laid out approach to budget scrutiny in the Constitution undertaken by the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee, but members involved in the various scrutiny panels did not report being involved in this scrutiny, something they would welcome more. In high performing councils, budget proposals come before the relevant scrutiny committees thereby ensuring that those members most familiar with that area of the councils work can add value to the scrutiny process.

The Finance Scrutiny panel was reported to us as though it is a detailed budget monitoring committee, focusing on the past rather than plans for the future. We see the value added in other councils by looking at future, emerging and potential future risk issues – scrutinising the pressures, risks assumptions and budget gaps at a much earlier stage. This means that Scrutiny may need to refocus its attention on the future challenges and operating environment of the council. It may also mean that scrutiny will need more support, officer time, development, and information to equip it for this task.

Finish Group of the Family Friendly Sub Committee is also underway.

Budget Scrutiny

Budget scrutiny continues to be a major strand of Scrutiny activity and is actively supported by the Director of Resources and Head of Finance. Finance is now within the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination and Finance Committee, in the new Scrutiny structure agreed in May 2024.

Scrutiny Member Involvement in Work Planning

Members have led work-planning during 2023/24. Work planning has been set as an agenda item at each meeting of Scrutiny throughout 2023/24 and this practice will continue into 2024/25. All Scrutiny members have been invited to contribute to the Scrutiny work programme and to the setting of questioning to be asked as part of Scrutiny work topics.

Flexibility of the Work Plan

The work plan of each Scrutiny committee has been regularly flexed throughout the year, according to emerging matters.

Work planning is key to ensuring Scrutiny stays focussed on strategic issues where it can make an impact, whilst making the best use of time and resources. From our conversations we noted that many Members felt that they have little opportunity to influence work plans, and the way that issues are prioritised. North Tyneside's Scrutiny function may need to consider how it organises its work plans in a way that is led by all Members of the committees in order to have ownership over committee activity.

It is important to emphasise that work planning is an ongoing process and not just a one-off event. Whilst a workshop will help identify priorities and provide structure to work for the months ahead, there will need to be flexibility in the work plan and time set aside to regularly revisit the relevance of topics in meetings as the local context changes.

Centre for Governance & Scrutiny – Scrutiny Review Report (March 2023)	Update as at June 2024
<p>We recommend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review the process for developing work plans for each scrutiny committee – Engaging Members, Officers, partners, and the public to prioritise the topics for review. This process should be led by Members of the Committees and could include a selection criteria to identify appropriate topics for the work plan. We would recommend bringing discussion of the work plan to the beginning of meetings, so emerging or changing priorities can benefit from considered discussion. ▪ A review of the current approach to financial scrutiny and MTFS/ budget scrutiny – and the scrutiny of commercial arrangements. We have produced guidance on financial scrutiny with CIPFA, setting out scrutiny activity to complement the Council’s annual financial cycle. The guide suggests ways to move budget and finance scrutiny forward by different approaches, moving beyond the review of regular financial performance scorecards. 	<p><i>Developing work plans</i></p> <p>The process has developed during 2023/24. A menu of topics, reflecting the policy environment, has been compiled with the input of Cabinet members and SLT leads for consideration by each Committee. When determining its work programme, it is hoped that this information will be helpful to each Committee however it should be noted that the work programme is decided by the Committee itself. The development of selection criteria will be considered further during 2024/25.</p> <p><i>Finance Scrutiny</i></p> <p>This aspect of scrutiny continues to develop with the support of the Director of Resources and Head of Finance.</p>

Centre for Governance & Scrutiny – Scrutiny Review Report (March 2023)	Update as at June 2024
<p>We recommend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review the process for developing work plans for each scrutiny committee – Engaging Members, Officers, partners, and the public to prioritise the topics for review. This process should be led by Members of the Committees and could include a selection criteria to identify appropriate topics for the work plan. We would recommend bringing discussion of the work plan to the beginning of meetings, so emerging or changing priorities can benefit from considered discussion. ▪ A review of the current approach to financial scrutiny and MTFS/ budget scrutiny – and the scrutiny of commercial arrangements. We have produced guidance on financial scrutiny with CIPFA, setting out scrutiny activity to complement the Council’s annual financial cycle. The guide suggests ways to move budget and finance scrutiny forward by different approaches, moving beyond the review of regular financial performance scorecards. 	<p>See above</p> <p>See above</p>

Centre for Governance & Scrutiny – Scrutiny Review Report (March 2023)	Update as at June 2024
<p>6. Scrutiny committee structure and scheduling</p> <p>Increasingly councils are working with fewer scrutiny committees, even large councils like North Tyneside. The current relatively large committee structure may be a factor when considering improvement. More committees do not necessarily offer high output, value, or productivity.</p> <p>There is evidence that when scrutiny focuses on fewer things of greater importance, more is achieved. The ‘less is more’ maxim can readily be found in quality scrutiny.</p> <p>We suggest that fewer committees with more members may offer more scope for concentrated scrutiny activity both in committee, in task and finish activity and other set-piece activity. Additional tasks for lead Members of scrutiny could be found in chairing task groups etc and larger committees may offer more and broader member experience.</p> <p>In high performing councils we have worked with, we have seen different committee structures work well. There isn’t “one size fits all” but we have seen committee remits aligned with cabinet portfolios (typically a couple of portfolios per committee), aligned with council directorates (possibly People, Place, Corporate) and North Tyneside Council could choose a structure that fits its priorities and its aims.</p>	<p><u><i>Fewer Scrutiny Committees</i></u></p> <p>In May 2023 Annual Council agreed a revised Scrutiny structure and a move from eight scrutiny committees to six – the main Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordination and Finance Committee, and five sub-committees reflecting the five themes in the Council Plan.</p> <p><u><i>‘Fewer but Better’</i></u></p> <p>The importance of focusing on fewer items, of major strategic importance, has been discussed in each Committee and included in the Scrutiny work programme reports.</p> <p><u><i>Task and Finish Working</i></u></p> <p>See description above.</p> <p><u><i>Scoping objective setting</i></u></p> <p>This is an important areas for further development and should be a key area of focus for Scrutiny in 2024/25.</p>

We would like to raise the opportunity to obtain greater value from task and finish groups or alternative formats of scrutiny.

We were told about several successful examples of task and finish group work. Scrutiny could benefit from further use of task and finish groups or spotlight events where single issues of major importance to the Council or community can be considered and explored in greater detail. This can add significant impact and quality to scrutiny activity. But T&F must be clearly scoped, resourced, time-limited and with clear objectives to be useful and effective.

Task and finish style working is often where scrutiny can do its best work by focussing on a single issue and drilling down to provide clear analysis to inform policy making. North Tyneside councillors get this, but in practice the scoping and delivery of task and finish can suffer from unclear objective setting and 'mission drift'.

We suggest that additional thought and planning is given to scoping, objective setting, inclusion of the Executive and timescales. Other forms of specific, single-issue scrutiny can be considered as useful to the way North Tyneside focuses on key issues. These can include; Spotlight Sessions (1 item scrutiny meetings) and Inquiry days (1 day longer scrutiny to involve interest groups and evidence providers).

Centre for Governance & Scrutiny – Scrutiny Review Report (March 2023)	Update as at June 2024
<p>We recommend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A review of the scrutiny committee structure – with a view to consolidating the work of scrutiny into fewer committees with a coordination committee to bring together Chairs/Vice Chairs. ▪ Consider extending the use of task and finish group work – or alternative scrutiny arrangements – To ensure the most effective use of time and resources and to deliver maximum impact. 	<p>This took place and was concluded in May 2023. Annual Council agreed a new Scrutiny structure in May 2023.</p> <p>Two Task and Finish Groups (one led by OSCFC and one from Family Friendly Sub Committee) took place in 2023/24. It is a useful recommendation from the CfGS and will continue to be considered and applied as required in 2024/25.</p>
<p>7. Scrutiny’s output and impact</p> <p>Overall, the general view is that Scrutiny does a good job. However, when asked more specifically about Scrutiny’s output and impact, most Members and Officers found it difficult to point to consistent work that has made a real difference, or tracking recommendations that have been accepted and implemented.</p> <p>Substantive items were considered by Scrutiny committees, but the conclusion of the discussion did not always have an articulated outcome or recommendation. Otherwise, Scrutiny business could be seen as solely for the purpose of obtaining</p>	<p><i>Avoidance of agenda management by officers</i></p> <p>We have worked hard during 2023/24 to avoid this. Instead, menus of potential policy topics have been compiled utilising the policy awareness of Cabinet members and SLT leads. Scrutiny committees have been invited to consider this menu of topics as one intelligence source, but Scrutiny Committees are free to consider and set their own Work Programmes.</p>

information or to obtain updates. The practice of reports being presented 'to note', or inviting speakers only to share information, should be avoided.

Committee agendas can become overburdened and even cluttered with too many items, particularly items that scrutiny can add little value or are for information. Scrutiny should not be viewed as an approval process.

We observed and were advised by Members that agendas can be overly managed by officers which may also contribute to large agendas.

Scrutiny must be clear in its purpose to add value to the issue or subject being considered. If scrutiny cannot add value, then arguably the subject should not reach the agenda. As a matter of general principle, items for information or updates could be shared with Members as briefing notes outside of committee, leaving more capacity for constructive activity.

An effective scrutiny function should be able to review recommendations in six- or twelve-months' time to see that the outcomes have made a difference or added value. Improving systems to monitor the Executive's response and implementation of recommendations that have been accepted will help track scrutiny's outcomes and Councillors' perceptions on the effectiveness of work.

Adding Value

This is an area that should be considered further in 2024/25 and would be a useful tool when prioritising the Scrutiny work programme and setting objectives.

Making and Reviewing Recommendations

This should be a further area of focus in 2024/25.

Clarity of aims and objectives – when Cabinet Members and Officers are invited to attend

This has been introduced and will develop further in 2024/25.

When members of the Executive and senior Officers are asked to attend, Scrutiny Committees would benefit from being clear about what the aims and objectives are of the session (including clarity over the content of any reports and presentations).

Through our recommendation of establishing pre-meetings in the next section, this can also improve Scrutiny's impact by allowing the space to create a shared understanding and trying to discuss beforehand what recommendations the committee might make on the day, and how the Executive might respond to them.

In carrying out 'external' scrutiny work, it is important to ensure that scrutiny has a clear focus on objectives and is able to influence outcomes concerning the topic discussed.

Centre for Governance & Scrutiny – Scrutiny Review Report (March 2023)	Update as at June 2024
<p>We recommend:</p> <p>Changing the way that information is provided to scrutiny Members for oversight – Cut back on the number of items coming to scrutiny solely for information, and consider how information on the following matters could be shared with councillors on a monthly basis outside of committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance, finance and risk information for council services and those operated by partners; • Information about complaints handling; • The schedule of key decisions; • Details of any major council consultation carried out and their results, and consultations proposed to be carried out; • Information on external oversight – data produced by the external auditor and any form of inspection to which council services might be subject. <p>Reviewing how the recommendations are made and how impact is measured – This could include putting a ‘recommendations monitoring report’ at the beginning of agendas to orientate scrutiny towards outcomes-focused meetings, alongside an emphasis on finding strong recommendations from questioning, to present to the Executive as improvement or challenge proposals.</p>	<p><i><u>Fewer Information Reports</u></i></p> <p>There has been worthwhile progress with different Scrutiny techniques, including the development of questions (by Committee members) in advance of Scrutiny meetings, allowing the Scrutiny process to be more direct and focused. However we must continue to monitor ‘information’ reports and the use of presentations. The setting of detailed objectives, discussed above – and being clear on the strategic outcomes which are intended to be gained from the Scrutiny process – will also aid in making quality recommendations. Information has been circulated for information to Committee members, for information, outside the Committee environment.</p> <p><i><u>Recommendations Monitoring</u></i></p> <p>We need to focus on developing high quality recommendations, where recommendations are appropriate, and monitoring these as we move forward through 2024/25.</p>

Centre for Governance & Scrutiny – Scrutiny Review Report (March 2023)	Update as at June 2024
<p>8. Chairing, member development and meeting preparation</p> <p>Scrutiny’s success is dependent on the right Members, with the right capabilities and attributes, leading and managing the scrutiny function. Scrutiny Chairs have a vital task in leading the committee, ensuring that it builds and maintains strong relationships with the Executive, Officers and relevant external partners.</p> <p>Chairs can also lead on setting the working culture of scrutiny, helping it to set and uphold high standards of behaviour, engagement and debate, ensuring good cross-party working. The lack of opposition Members involved in scrutiny chairing roles was raised as an issue in our evidence gathering. Although there is no single ‘right’ approach to selecting chairs – the emphasis ought to be on selecting chairs based on skill set and capability and providing ongoing training and support.</p> <p>Scrutiny provides an excellent opportunity to support Members in getting an in-depth understanding of issues across the Council’s services. To get the most out of scrutiny, Members need a clear sense of what is required of them as committee Members and the work involved which allows good scrutiny to happen.</p> <p>Many Members were unsure of how to achieve impactful scrutiny,</p>	<p><i><u>Scrutiny Chairing</u></i></p> <p>All Scrutiny chairs have worked hard in preparing for meetings of their Committees, and developing their knowledge and understanding of Scrutiny. Chairs have sought to be inclusive with all Committee members in inviting topics for consideration, for example.</p> <p><i><u>Scrutiny Member Development and Training</u></i></p> <p>Dedicated Scrutiny training has been booked and offered to all Scrutiny Committee members, and Committee Chairs, with the first session taking place in June 2024. Two further sessions are scheduled in 2023, in addition to specific Chairs’ training.</p>

some were also open about a lack of understanding about the specific areas they are asked to scrutinise. Members felt that more briefings to provide them with core knowledge, especially on more complex or technical issues would be welcome and equip them better as scrutineers.

We heard that the quality of questioning in scrutiny varies; in some instances, it is forensic and probing, but it is often more general and exploratory and sometimes superficial. North Tyneside is clearly committed to Member development, and training was raised by some Members who were clearly aware of the gaps in their knowledge and understanding.

From the recordings of committee meetings there is little evidence of co-ordinated questions or Members acting as a team with clear lines of inquiry. Pre-meetings could allow Members to give voice to their objectives for meetings and allow mutual motivations to be understood and questioning strategies to be agreed. It is likely that differences will remain and will in some cases be significant, but the airing of these differences will make it easier for Members to understand where consensus is possible.

Centre for Governance & Scrutiny – Scrutiny Review Report (March 2023)	Update as at June 2024
<p>We recommend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More skills development support is offered for the key roles of Chair and Vice-Chair – To provide them with the confidence they need in leading the scrutiny function. ▪ Consider mandatory scrutiny development and training for all committee members – To develop a common understanding of what “good” scrutiny practice looks like. ▪ Providing additional briefing or expert involvement as required – To assist scrutiny members in becoming more capable to develop questioning strategies that will deliver high-impact and value-adding scrutiny. ▪ Cross-party pre-meetings for scrutiny committees should be established – With a specific focus on identifying priorities and Members working together to develop lines of enquiry so that recommendations are more likely. 	<p>See above – dedicated training for Scrutiny Chairs has been arranged early in 2024/25.</p> <p>Whilst not mandatory, Scrutiny training has been procured with three separate sessions (with different content) scheduled for Scrutiny members for 2024.</p> <p>Additional briefings, and information from subject matter experts, has been made available during 2023/24.</p> <p>Cross party pre-meetings have not been introduced, but this can be explored further in 2024/25.</p>

Centre for Governance & Scrutiny – Scrutiny Review Report (March 2023)	Update as at June 2024
<p>9. Public engagement</p> <p>Scrutiny should explore and experiment with ways to allow greater access, openness and involvement with the public. This could include scrutiny going on more site visits in the community, inviting the public to offer ideas for work plans, and greater use of social media channels for resident input and communicating the progress and impact of scrutiny work.</p>	<p>This is an area to be explored further in 2024/25.</p>

Scrutiny Support Arrangements

Overview and Scrutiny Coordination and Finance Committee

Chair – Cllr Jim Montague **Deputy Chair** – Cllr Charlie Gray

SLT Lead – Jackie Laughton & Jon Ritchie

Link Cabinet Members – Cllr Carl Johnson & Cllr Anthony McMullen

THRIVING Sub Committee

Chair
Cllr Bruce Pickard

Deputy Chair
Cllr Rebecca O’Keefe

SLT Lead
John Sparkes

Link Cabinet Members
Cllr Carl Johnson

- Subject**
- Regeneration & Master Plans
 - Good Quality Jobs
 - Skills
 - Vibrant Cultural & Sporting activities
 - Destination of choice for visitors
 - Derelict properties
 - Review purchases & contracts for goods & services

FAMILY FRIENDLY Sub Committee

Chair
Cllr Pat Oliver

Deputy Chair
Cllr Linda Darke

SLT Lead
Julie Firth

Link Cabinet Members
Cllr Peter Earley
Cllr Steven Phillips

- Subject**
- All Children have access to high-quality education
 - Great place for family life
 - All Children & young people have the best start in life

CARING Sub Committee

Chair
Cllr Jane Shaw

Deputy Chair
Cllr James Webster

SLT Lead
Eleanor Binks

Link Cabinet Members
Cllr Janet Hunter
Cllr Karen Clark

- Subject**
- Great care to all who need it
 - Cared for, protected & supported
 - Improve working conditions of care workers
 - Support local community groups, carers & young carers
 - Reduce inequalities & eliminate discrimination

SECURE Sub Committee

Chair
Cllr Andy Newman

Deputy Chair
Tricia Neira

SLT Lead
Peter Mennell

Link Cabinet Member
Cllr John Harrison

- Subject**
- 5000 Affordable Homes
 - Invest in roads and pavements
 - Council Tax Support Scheme
 - Tackle health and socio-economic inequalities
 - Tackle crime & anti-social behaviour

GREEN Sub Committee

Chair
Cllr Martin Murphy

Deputy Chair
Cllr Tracy Hallway

SLT Lead
Sam Dand

Link Cabinet Members
Cllr Sandra Graham
Cllr Hannah Johnson

- Subject**
- Carbon Net Zero
 - Help low income households to install low carbon heating
 - Waste
 - Environment
 - Safe walking and cycling

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