
Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee: Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22

Background

- 1** The Annual Scrutiny Report on activity during the previous year aims to promote effective scrutiny and identify areas of best practice or for development.
- 2** All scrutiny members contributed to the report, each committee holding an informal session for comments and an all-member session on programme planning in March provided an opportunity to see how well scrutiny is working and identify areas for development. The Scrutiny Annual Report, **attached at Appendix 1**, was endorsed by the Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee (PFSC) at its meeting on 17 June 2022.
- 3** Reporting scrutiny performance through County Council helps to raise the profile and benefits of strong scrutiny in line with statutory guidance which encourages all members to be aware of and engaged in scrutiny processes.

Discussion

- 4** PFSC assessed scrutiny activity during 2021/22 using the following indicators (agreed by the Governance Committee and the County Council in 2019):
 - Influence policy ideas or proposals before they are developed
 - Spend time on matters critical to service outcomes for residents
 - Provide meaningful challenge to the performance of services
 - Show the difference scrutiny makes to service outcomes for residents
- 5** The Report identifies areas that members felt had worked well and those needing improvement, as summarised below.

Worked well:

- Members building good relationships and developing ways of working together.
- The flexibility of being able to meet in person as well as virtually.
- Different ways of working, such as information sessions to increase understanding and the use of pre-meetings to help prepare debates.
- The range of issues covered and Cabinet Member engagement in work planning.
- Task and finish groups enabling flexibility and the ability to deep dive.
- More robust performance, budget and risk monitoring.

Areas for improvement:

- A clear 'Focus for Scrutiny' in reports to help steer questioning in meetings.
- A better balance between proactive and reactive scrutiny, with more and earlier involvement in policy development.
- More timely scrutiny input into the decision-making process and time for proper consideration of scrutiny recommendations.
- Use of external witnesses/external subject matter experts for a range of views.
- More visits to the services being scrutinised and more informal briefing sessions to help members build their knowledge.

6 A scrutiny development action plan is in place monitored and overseen by scrutiny committee chairmen, and the Annual Report lists actions taken. Actions for the future include:

- The development of an Executive-Scrutiny Protocol.
- A review of the Fire and Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee.
- Continuing to strengthen scrutiny input into monitoring performance against the Council's priorities.
- All scrutiny committees to ensure they are considering the impact of climate change in all matters.
- To better evidence the impact of scrutiny (including a system for tracking and monitoring scrutiny recommendations and a review of the scrutiny business planning checklist)
- Sharing scrutiny best practice by liaison with Surrey County Council.
- Opportunities to raise the profile of scrutiny.

Recommended

That the Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22, as attached at Appendix 1, be noted.

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Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22

Background papers

None