



GUIDE TO SCRUTINY

- understand how Scrutiny operates in Cardiff



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This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

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Welcome

This guide outlines the work of our Scrutiny Committees, whether in formal committee meetings or informal inquiries and site visits.

The role of scrutiny is to look at issues that matter to Cardiff residents, challenge decision takers and drive improvement. If you live or work in Cardiff and wish to contribute to Scrutiny, please see our *'Guide to Public Participation in Scrutiny'*, available on the Scrutiny web pages.

Scrutiny Committees check and report on all areas of the Council's work, including partnership work. They monitor the Council's performance and investigate areas of concern. They also hold to account Council decision takers and examine proposed strategies and policies. Scrutiny Councillors ask questions, gather evidence, and report their observations and recommendations to Cabinet, which then formally responds, via a letter or a report.

Scrutiny Committees consider available Equality Impact Assessment reports to ensure that equalities considerations are taken into account. Scrutiny Committees pro-actively try to ensure that minority and under-represented groups are included in their work.

Background to Scrutiny

The Local Government Act 2000 required local authorities to set up new political management arrangements, replacing the previous Committee system with an 'Executive' - or 'Cabinet' - and an independent 'Scrutiny' function.

Scrutiny Members work together to implement the Centre for Public Scrutiny's principles of good scrutiny, which are:

- Provide 'critical friend' challenge to Executive policymakers and decision makers
- Enable the voice and concerns of the public to be heard
- Carried out by 'independent minded governors' who lead and own the scrutiny role, and
- Drive improvement in public services.

Welsh local authorities, the Wales Audit Office and the Centre for Public Scrutiny agreed three core outcomes that good scrutiny seeks to achieve. These are:

- Democratic accountability drives improvement in public services (Better Outcomes)
- Democratic decision making is accountable, inclusive, and robust (Better Decisions)
- The public is engaged in democratic debate about the current and future delivery of public services (Better Engagement).

There are several pieces of legislation shaping local authority scrutiny in Wales, as follows:

- Police & Justice Act 2006 and Regulations 2009 – requires the local authority to designate a Committee as a Crime and Disorder Committee, with responsibility for scrutinising the work of the Community Safety Partnership.
- Local Government Measures 2009 & 2011 – These state that Scrutiny has an important role in stimulating connections between different individuals and groups, and channeling community intelligence into the improvement processes of the Council and its partners.
- Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015 – requires the local authority to carry out scrutiny of the Public Service Board and for scrutiny to abide by the guiding principles of the Act itself.
- Local Government (Wales) Act 2021 – contains several areas that have an impact on scrutiny, including increased public engagement and participation, revised audit committees and enhanced levels of mandatory regional working.

How Does Scrutiny Work in Cardiff?

Cardiff Council has five scrutiny committees that have responsibility for scrutinising different areas of the Council and partnership working. These committees review and scrutinise decisions and actions taken by the Council's Cabinet in relation to the delivery of services, to improve the wellbeing of residents. They also shine a light on the effectiveness of local partnership working in which the Council plays a leading role.

It is important to be aware that the Scrutiny Committees do not deal with individual queries, concerns, or complaints.

Each Scrutiny Committee is made up of nine elected Members. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee additionally has four co-opted members, comprising two parent governor representatives, a Roman Catholic representative, and a Church in Wales representative. Both the Economy and Culture and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committees offer a seat to a representative of the Cardiff Youth Council, enabling young voices to challenge decision-making.

Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee

Works to improve the Council's services and policies in: Schools; Children's Social Services; Youth Services and Justice; and relevant support services, such as Education and Schools support services.

The Committee carries out the following partnership scrutiny: Central South Education Consortium; Valleys, Vale and Cardiff Regional Adoption Collaborative; Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee; and Cardiff and Vale Regional Safeguarding Board.

Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee

Works to improve the Council's services and policies in: Housing, Neighbourhood Renewal, Community Safety, Mental Health, Adult Community Services and Adult Social Care.

The Committee serves as the Council's Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee, reviewing actions taken by the Community Safety Partnership to address local issues of crime and disorder. The Committee also carries out partnership scrutiny of the Cardiff and Vale Regional Partnership Board and the Cardiff and Vale Regional Safeguarding Board.

Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee

Works to improve the Council's services and policies in: Economic Development, Regeneration, Parks, Allotments, Leisure, Sports, Libraries, Hubs, Culture, Events and Tourism.

The Committee monitors progress of the City Deal Delivery Programme, along with the Environmental Scrutiny Committee.

Environmental Scrutiny Committee

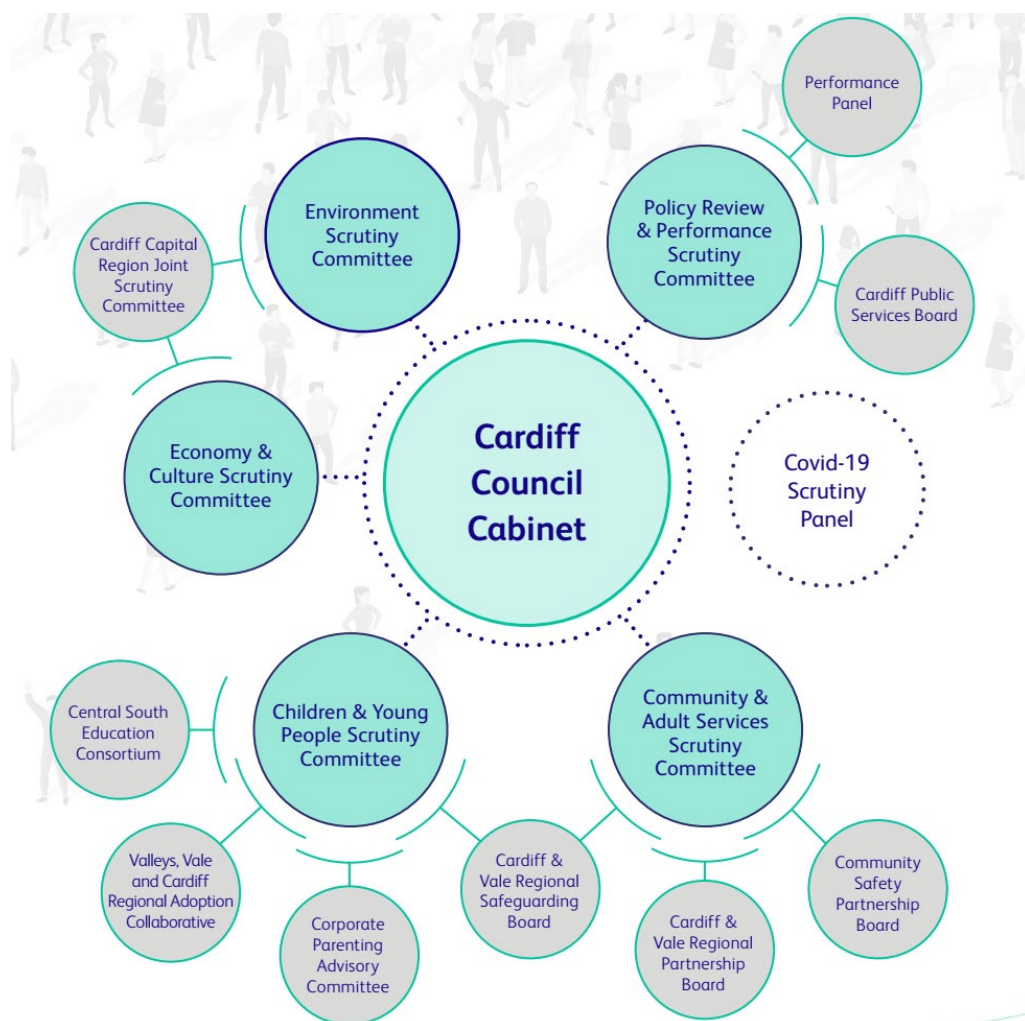
Works to improve the Council’s services and policies in: Environmental Sustainability, Waste Management, Planning, Environmental Health and Transportation.

The Committee monitors progress of the City Deal Delivery Programme, along with the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee.

Policy & Performance Review Scrutiny Committee

Works to improve Council services from the customer perspective, challenging back-office support services to ensure front facing services receive the support they require.

The Committee has responsibility for scrutinising the Cardiff Public Service Board.



Further details, including terms of reference and membership, are available at [Committee structure: City of Cardiff Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/structure/city-of-cardiff-council)

What Does Scrutiny Do?

Scrutiny Members contribute to the Council's democratic work by representing the interests of citizens and stakeholders in Cardiff and holding the Council's decision-making body to account. They help shape policy, check resources are used responsibly and, critically, ensure that those in power hear the citizen's voice.

Scrutiny Committees normally meet once a month; very occasionally, the Committee holds additional meetings, for example to deal with items 'Called-In'¹ by Members.

As well as attending committee meetings, Scrutiny Members can carry out the following range of scrutiny activities, if time and capacity allows:

- **Site visits** to meet frontline staff and/or to see facilities used e.g. recycling centre, harbour authority, hub.
- **Good Practice visits** to learn from other authorities or providers about how they deliver services.
- **Listening exercises** to hear from service users, carers, citizens and stakeholders
- **Performance panel** to help drive improvement in service delivery.
- **Budget monitoring panel** to help focus attention on savings required.
- **Task and Finish group work** which focuses in-depth on areas requiring attention.

Setting a Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Setting the work programme for the Scrutiny Committee is an important stage in the scrutiny process, as it identifies key topics for consideration in the coming year. Scrutiny Members meet to agree collectively the work they want the committee to undertake.

¹ Members can call-in an official decision if they think it has been made incorrectly. If their request is upheld, the relevant scrutiny committee meets to examine the decision and whether it should be referred back for reconsideration by Cabinet or Full Council.

Ideas for the work programme come from a wide range of sources including suggestions made by Members, senior managers, key stakeholders, and members of the public. Committees also look at audit, inspection and performance reports and key Council documents. Members prioritise topics and agree how these will be scrutinised.

If you would like to suggest a topic for scrutiny, please see the *'Guide to Public Participation in Scrutiny'*, available on our web pages, which sets out how to do this. You are able to suggest a topic throughout the year, as Members keep their work programme under constant review.

Further information, including the different types of scrutiny, is in **Appendix A**.

How Members scrutinise a topic

Scrutiny Committees carry out scrutiny both in formal, public Committee meetings and through informal, private meetings, such as performance and budget monitoring panels, deep dives and in-depth "Task and Finish" inquiries.

The work of the Committees includes talking to the public. Committees also gather evidence from relevant Cabinet Members, officers and organisations, and commission research to support their inquiries.

Members work together to scrutinise issues, sharing the skills, knowledge, and expertise that each Member brings to the Committee. They ask questions to learn from the witnesses, gather information, and validate information previously provided.

Questioning helps to identify how efficient and effective services are, how fair they are in providing access to all citizens, whether services are performing well, what the key risks are, and how they could be improved.

When Members have finished their scrutiny, they agree what comments, observations, and recommendations they wish to make. These are detailed either in a letter following a

committee meeting or, for more detailed scrutinies, via a report. These are sent to the Cabinet Member, senior officers, and any partner organisations responsible for the delivery of the area under review.

Scrutiny at a Committee Meeting

Committee meetings are an opportunity for Scrutiny Members to hear from a range of witnesses, ask questions, explore issues, and make recommendations. Committee meetings are normally held in public in County Hall or remotely and are webcast, unless they are considering exempt, confidential information. Webcasts can be viewed live, with a copy kept on the Council's website for 6 months [Home - Cardiff Council Webcasting \(public-i.tv\)](#)

The date and time of the meeting, as well as the agenda and meeting papers showing the items being considered at that meeting, are available on the Council's website six days before the committee meeting is held [Councillors and Meetings : City of Cardiff Council \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#). The formal Committee papers provide background information, details of the service or policy being considered and the key challenges facing the Authority in relation to that service or policy. Where appropriate, these may include benchmarking and good practice information.

The meetings are formal with an agenda, which starts with apologies, declarations of interest and the approval of minutes from previous meetings. These are followed by the main scrutiny items, with question-and-answer sessions with the witnesses invited to attend the meeting. Witnesses usually include the relevant Cabinet Members and senior officers as well as key stakeholders, such as partner organisations and service users' representatives.

Can I attend a Scrutiny Committee meeting?

All scrutiny committee meetings are normally open to the public and webcast, unless they are considering exempt, confidential information. All scrutiny committee meetings are formal meetings of the Council and follow the rules of the Council, as set out in the Council's Constitution. Whilst members of the public can attend to observe and listen to the debate, the public has no express right to speak in the meeting.

It is within the discretion of the Chair to determine any requests for public speaking at meetings. Please see the *'Guide to Public Participation in Scrutiny'*, available on our web pages, which sets out the process to be followed to request to speak to a Scrutiny Committee on a topic they are considering. It also sets out how the public can submit written evidence on a topic being considered by a Scrutiny Committee.

Scrutiny via a Task and Finish Group Inquiry

Scrutiny Committee Members use an assessment process, known as "PICK", to decide which issues and items under consideration best lend themselves to a task and finish inquiry during the year. For more information on the "PICK" assessment, please see **Appendix C**.

The terms of reference for an Inquiry are tightly scoped so that the Inquiry is achievable and useful. An Inquiry gathers evidence from a range of sources, including site visits, visits to other organisations, expert evidence, workshops, listening exercises and research, as well as the usual meetings with witnesses. Members identify key findings and develop recommendations for the Cabinet that are evidence based, and clearly link to the main messages arising from the key findings.

A final report is sent to the Cabinet and/or Council for its consideration, and the Cabinet responds within an agreed timescale. Scrutiny Committees monitor the implementation of their recommendations on a regular basis. This helps ensure that the recommendations are being acted on and implemented to the timescales identified and helps Scrutiny Committees to evaluate the impact the Inquiry has had. Scrutiny Committees may choose to revisit the topic or specific elements of the topic, if the impact is not as significant as it was expected to be, or progress is not satisfactory.

Scrutiny of Performance

Scrutiny has a key role to play in ensuring the Council has a strong performance management framework and culture. The various Committees scrutinise performance across areas that fall within their remit, to facilitate challenge and public discussion and drive improvement in service delivery. This covers Public Service Board and Community Safety Partnership areas as well as Council service areas, including those provided on a regional basis such as Regulatory Services and the Education Consortium.

Members receive copies of the relevant performance reports containing targets, results, and the direction of travel.

Members can scrutinise performance at Committee meetings or via a Performance Panel.

Members may decide to undertake a 'deep dive' into particular areas of concern, to highlight reasons for under-performance and to make recommendations to improve policy and practice.

Members normally hear from the relevant Cabinet Member and senior officers, who explain the actions taken to improve performance and emerging pressures on performance. Members can also hear from service users, carers, advocates, and relevant stakeholders about their experiences re service delivery and their ideas for improving outputs and outcomes. Members may also decide to look at benchmarking information to contextualise the Council's performance.

Partnership Scrutiny

Public Services Board

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 requires statutory partners to work together via a Public Services Board to improve economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being. The Act also requires Welsh local authorities to designate an overview and scrutiny committee as

the lead committee to scrutinise the Public Services Board (PSB). In Cardiff, this is the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee (PRAP).

The designated scrutiny committee has the powers to:

- review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken by the PSB including the draft well-being plan and annual report
- review or scrutinise the PSB's governance arrangements
- make reports or recommendations to the PSB with respect to the board's functions or governance arrangements
- consider such matters relating to the board as referred by Welsh Ministers and report to the Welsh Ministers accordingly
- require the PSB or its individual members to attend a meeting of the committee and provide it with explanations of such matters as it may specify.

Guidance provides that it is legitimate for all the scrutiny committees to scrutinise the work of PSBs on subjects that are relevant to its specific terms of reference. It is important however that the designated scrutiny committee takes an overview of the overall effectiveness of the Public Services Board.

Community Safety Partnerships

Local authorities are required by Sections 19 and 20 of the Police Justice Act 2006 to designate a scrutiny committee to scrutinise decisions made or action taken by the Community Safety Partnership to reduce crime and disorder. In Cardiff, this is the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee.

This scrutiny committee is required to make reports or recommendations to the local authority in connection with the discharge of these functions. The Committee must meet to consider crime and disorder functions as the committee considers appropriate, but no less than once per year.

Regional and Joint Scrutiny

The Local Government Measure (Wales) 2011 (section 58) provides that two or more local authorities can form joint overview and scrutiny committees (JOSC) to scrutinise the delivery of services by providers that cover more than one county, or to examine issues which cut across geographical boundaries.

In addition, local authorities can work together to develop alternative approaches to regional scrutiny, such as the regional scrutiny panel that coordinates the scrutiny of the South East Wales Educational Regional Consortium, thus avoiding duplication and gaps in scrutiny and making better use of existing resources.

Other emerging regional partnerships include the Shared Regulatory Services, which covers three local authorities, and the Cardiff City Region City Deal, which covers ten local authorities and has its own Scrutiny Committee consisting of scrutiny Members from all ten local authorities.

Making an Impact

Scrutiny is able to make an impact in several ways:

- Raising awareness of issues, bringing them onto the policy agenda
- Highlighting areas of under-performance or poor service delivery
- Recognising areas of good performance and excellent service delivery
- Ensuring citizens voices are heard
- Questioning policy direction
- Questioning resource allocations
- Investigating innovations and good practice.

Scrutiny's ability to have an influence on the decisions taken to develop and improve policies and services relies on how robust and practicable their recommendations are.

Recommendations need to be appropriate, achievable and add value.

Scrutiny Committees consider the response to their recommendations and regularly monitor the implementation of agreed recommendations. This ensures that recommendations are acted on and helps Committees to evaluate the impact their work has had. Scrutiny Committees may choose to revisit the topic or specific elements of the topic, if the impact is not as significant as it was expected to be, or progress is not satisfactory.

Appendix A – Different Types of Scrutiny

Scrutiny Work Programmes

Topics for Scrutiny Committee work programmes fall into six main categories:

Policy Development and Review – where a topic is identified for scrutiny because of changes to legislation/government guidance, or a policy is recognised as being in need of updating or reviewing locally.

Monitoring Performance and Progress - where the Committee undertakes monitoring of the Council's performance and progress in implementing previously agreed actions. Such topics are often identified during scrutiny of regular performance reports. A panel of the Committee can undertake this work.

Pre-decision scrutiny – where a topic on the Cabinet Forward Plan is considered by a Scrutiny Committee to inform the Cabinet's decisions by making evidence based recommendations.

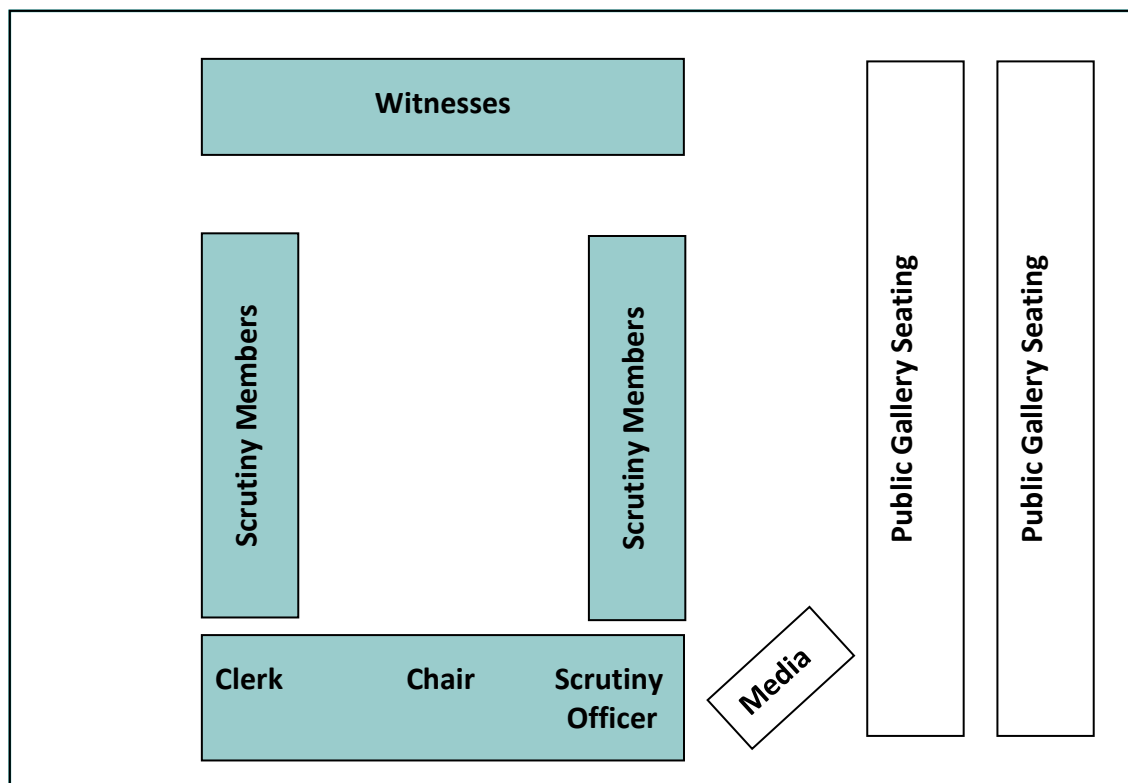
Call-ins – Where a Member invokes the Call-in procedure under the Council's constitution, to review a Cabinet decision prior to implementation.

Inquiries - the Scrutiny Committees identify a small number of key topics where they undertake a detailed examination of the topic over a period of time in private session, resulting in a formal report to the Cabinet or the Council. Inquiries usually involve receiving evidence from expert Council officers and external witnesses, and can often involve commissioning primary or secondary research, visiting similar services in other parts of the UK, and benchmarking Cardiff's performance against the performance of comparable authorities.

Short Scrutinies – the Scrutiny Committee can choose to undertake a short scrutiny. As opposed to a task and finish inquiry (which meets in private) short scrutiny takes place over a period of two or three consecutive Committee meetings in a public setting. Short scrutinies also often involve receiving evidence from external witnesses and occasionally commissioning primary or secondary research.

Appendix B – Formal Scrutiny Committee Room Layout

Where meetings are held in person, rather than remotely, the room is set out in a ‘horseshoe’ shape, as shown in the diagram below. If presentations are being given, a screen is provided behind the witnesses to display the slides.



Appendix C – PICK Assessment Criteria

Task and Finish Inquiries

Members use a “PICK” assessment to ensure issues are suitable for a task and finish inquiry. The assessment criteria identifies:

Public Interest

- The topic is of concern to the public
- It is a “high profile” topic for specific local communities
- This is an area where a lot of complaints are received and/or bad press
- The topic has been identified by members/officers as a key citizen issue

Impact

- The Scrutiny will lead to improvements for the people of Cardiff
- The Scrutiny will lead to increased value for money
- This could make a big difference to the way services are delivered
- This could make a big difference to the way resources are used

Council performance

- The topic does support the achievement of the corporate priorities
- The Council and/or other organisations are not performing well in this area
- Do we understand why our performance is poor compared to others
- We are performing well, but spending too much of our resources in this area

Keeping in Context

- There is new government guidance or legislation that will require a significant change to services and Scrutiny can positively influence change
- Has the issue been raised by the external auditor in the annual letter
- There are no inspections planned in the near future

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