

A practical guide to Scrutiny

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Vale of Glamorgan Council



a practical guide to

Scrutiny

for
MEMBERS OF
THE PUBLIC

VALE of GLAMORGAN



What is Scrutiny?

Cabinet and Scrutiny functions were created as a result of the Local Government Act 2000.

The Cabinet makes most of the Council's decisions.

Scrutiny Committees consist of Councillors who are not members of the Council's main decision making group, the Cabinet. Scrutiny Committees can examine all functions and responsibilities of the Council, look at issues affecting the wider community and assist the Cabinet in improving and developing services.

Scrutiny enables Members to influence decisions that are taken by the Cabinet and to ensure that the views and needs of local people are taken into account.

What are the aims of Scrutiny?

- To help to improve the Council's performance
- To help the Council to deliver services which are sensitive to local needs by involving local people
- To ensure that decision making is clear, transparent and accountable
- To engage service users and the wider community in decision making.

The Practical Guides Series

This is the fourth in a series of 6 Practical Guides for Scrutiny

The remaining Guides are :-

Guide 1: A Practical Guide to Scrutiny

Guide 2: Members' Guide to Scrutiny

Guide 3: Members' Guide to Effective Performance Management

Guide 5: A Guide for Witnesses attending Scrutiny Committees

Guide 6: A Guide for Officers attending Scrutiny Committees

Scrutiny Website:

http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/our_council/scrutiny/more_about_scrutiny.aspx

Council website:

www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Why is Scrutiny important ?

- Holds decision makers to account
- Challenges and improves performance
- Supports the achievement of value for money
- Challenges the way things are done
- Influences decision makers with evidence based recommendations
- Brings in the evidence and views of stakeholders, users and citizens
- Undertakes pre / post scrutiny of Cabinet proposals

Scrutiny Committees, as well as making suggestions for improvements, acknowledge good practice and performance.

Scrutiny in the Vale:

There are five Scrutiny Committees in the Vale :-

- **Corporate Performance and Resources** deals with internal working of the Council and its finances
- **Environment and Regeneration** deals with Waste Management, Highway Maintenance, Planning (but not matters such as planning applications), Transportation and Economic Development
- **Homes and Safe Communities** deals with Council Housing and related maintenance, Private Sector Housing, Community Safety and Crime and Disorder (including Youth Offending Services) and Shared Regulatory Services functions
- **Learning and Culture** deals with all School matters (which includes School Improvement, Post-16 Education, Community Education, Youth Services), the Library Service and Training
- **Healthy Living and Social Care** deals with Adult Services, such as Care Homes, Children and Young People Services (e.g. Adoption Service) and Healthy Living and Leisure

Can I attend a Scrutiny meeting and where are they held ?

All meetings are open to the public unless confidential matters are being discussed.

Meetings are held at the Civic Offices, but meetings are also held in venues such as schools, libraries and community centres to help engage service users and members of the public.

Dates and Times of Meetings

Meetings are normally held every four weeks and generally start at 6.00 p.m. Dates, venues and times of meetings are available on the Council's website:

http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/our_council/scrutiny/more_about_scrutiny/meetings.aspx

How can I obtain Agendas and Minutes of Scrutiny Committees?

All agendas and minutes of Scrutiny Committees as well as reports from Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups and Scrutiny Reviews, are available by following the links on the Council's website [www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk]. Copies of agendas and reports will also be available at the meetings themselves. Agendas are available at least 5 clear days prior to the meeting. Hard copies are also available for public inspection at the Civic Offices.

Healthy Living and Social Care
Gareth Davies
Tel: 01446 709249
E-Mail: gjdavies@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Homes and Safe Communities
Gareth Davies
Tel: 01446 709249
E-Mail: gjdavies@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Learning and Culture
Karen Bowen
Tel: 01446 709856
E-mail: kbowen@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

For more information on how Scrutiny works at the Vale of Glamorgan Council and for putting forward any items for discussion, please do not hesitate to contact:-

**Democratic and Scrutiny Services Section
The Vale of Glamorgan Council
Civic Offices
Holton Road
Barry
CF63 4RU
E-Mail: www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk**

or

The Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer who supports the relevant Committee:-

**Corporate Performance and Resources
Jeff Rees
Tel: 01446 709413
E-Mail: jerees@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk**

**Environment and Regeneration
Karen Bowen
Tel: 01446 709856
E-Mail: kbowen@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk**

How can I become involved in Scrutiny ?

- Scrutiny provides the opportunity for the public to become involved in the Councils activities. Members of the public can speak at Scrutiny Committees on items on the agenda with some exceptions. Alternatively, written representations can also be submitted (please refer to the public participations guide and procedure at [<http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Our%20Council/Scrutiny/Guidance/Scrutiny-Public-Participation-Guide.pdf>] for details on how to register to speak or submit written representations. Members of the public, including service users, can also be invited to attend Scrutiny Committees to assist Scrutiny Committee Members in their work by giving evidence and taking part in the discussion and consideration of topics.
- Should you wish to request a service area or matter be considered by a Scrutiny Committee, please complete the appropriate form which is available on the Council's website www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk or contact the Democratic and Scrutiny Services section. (See contact details on pages 8/9 of this guide)
- Should the Committee agree to consider the matter you will be advised of the process that will be undertaken and the date of the meeting.

What happens at the scrutiny meeting?

- It is important to note that Scrutiny Committee meetings are formal meetings of the Council.
- The Scrutiny Committee, or any Task and Finish Group it has appointed, can call “witnesses”, listen to statements made and also ask questions of those witnesses.
- All witnesses will be treated with courtesy and respect and all questions to witnesses are made in an orderly manner under the direction of the Chairman. It is also important to note that witnesses are under no obligation to respond to any questions.
- The number of speakers called upon will be limited as will the length of any speech. Community groups and other interested parties are encouraged to nominate a spokesperson to put forward evidence on their behalf. Speakers will be asked to make statements relevant to the topic under discussion, to avoid repetition, and not to ask questions.

- Members of the audience may also be invited to make written submissions within a specific deadline, whether they may have given oral evidence or not.

Staffing and Support

Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officers directly support their relevant Scrutiny Committees by providing advice and guidance during meetings, assisting Committees in choosing topics and undertaking research for their work programmes.

Service Directors and senior officers can also be called upon to provide input e.g. during preparation of the Scrutiny Committees' Work Programmes and in presenting written reports and recommendations.