

# Positive challenge to improve



<http://new.devon.gov.uk/democracy/committee-meetings/scrutiny-committees/>

Read our blog:

<http://beta.devon.gov.uk/scrutiny/>

Contact the scrutiny team:

[Scrutiny@devon.gov.uk](mailto:Scrutiny@devon.gov.uk)

Designed and produced by the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Secretariat

## How does it work?

### Scrutiny Committee meetings

Committees meet approximately 5 times a year in public.

### Task Groups/Spotlight Review

Are a more informal style of working; in line with the select committee model. They enable in-depth consideration of a service or issue, with a report and recommendations back to committee.

### Call in

To challenge a decision made by the Cabinet, or a Cabinet Member, a special committee meeting will be held to examine the decision and may ask that the Cabinet reconsiders.

## What does scrutiny review?

Scrutiny committees are independent of Cabinet and each committee determines its own work programme.

To do this, scrutiny needs to consider:

- ⇒ If the subject is of public concern?
- ⇒ Has the law or government policy changed?
- ⇒ Is there a concern with performance or spend?
- ⇒ Is it a local priority?
- ⇒ Can scrutiny add value by looking at the issue?

## What is scrutiny?

Scrutiny is based on the parliamentary select committee model of governance. This is where groups of MPs hold inquiries into issues and make recommendations. Scrutiny is the main activity for most Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet. It works to the common aim of improving services for the local community.

All scrutiny committees are held in public and will have a formal agenda and minutes. Any members of the public or any organisation can come and sit in during a scrutiny meeting – or watch the live webcast.

It is best practice to only look at a few issues at a time. These topics could be cabinet decisions, service reviews or policy development.

*Scrutiny does not make decisions; it uses evidence to make recommendations to the Cabinet to request change.*

### What is my role in scrutiny?

**Councillors work with a variety of people to improve services.**

**Expert Witnesses** are invited to give information to the Committee or task group; these may be service users, academics, businesses, service providers, other councils or anyone who can help shape the outcome of the review.

**Members of the public** have a right to attend committee meetings and can always watch the live webcast. Views and opinions may also be sought by the committee outside the formal meetings in a variety of other ways.

**Officers** may be asked to present information to a committee or task group. This will be to inform councillors about how the service currently works and to help contribute ideas for future improvement.

Anyone can suggest a topic for scrutiny to review by contacting the scrutiny officers.



# Scrutiny Pocket Guide



# The four principles of Good Scrutiny

## 1. Provides critical friend challenge to policy and decision-makers

- \* Constructive, robust and purposeful challenge
- \* Non-aggressive to create optimum conditions for investigative evidence based process

## 2. Enables the voice and concerns of the public

- \* Meetings are conducted in public and webcast
- \* Using different ways of hearing the voice of the public

## 3. Carried out by independent minded councillors

- \* Councillors actively engage in the scrutiny function to drive improvement
- \* Areas are reviewed in an a-political atmosphere

## 4. Drives Improvement

- \* Promotes community well-being
- \* Strategic review of corporate policies, plans, performance and budgets