

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Key		
Code	Description	Action Lead
	Member Training – induction and refresher	Democratic Services Team
	Member Training – Chairs	
	Member Training – ongoing programme of training	
	Officer Training	
	Role Descriptions for O&S leads	
	Chairs' Meetings	
	Work Selection and Scoping	
	Community Insight	
	Web Presence	
	Working Methods	
	Terms of Reference for O&S Committees	
	Constitution Review	
	Library of O&S Resources	
	Protocol and Tool Development	
	Annual Reporting on O&S	
	Resourcing	
	Communications	
	Corporate Management Team Action	Corporate Management Team
	Cabinet Action	Cabinet
RAG Rating		
	Significant delay likely to affect action completion	
	Some delay likely to affect action completion	
	Action on track to complete as planned	
	Action completed	

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Relevant Extract from Statutory Guidance on O&S	ID	Action for BCP Council	RAG and timescales	Code
Culture				
Scrutiny is Member Led				
<i>The prevailing organisational culture, behaviours and attitudes of an authority will largely determine whether its scrutiny function succeeds or fails. While everyone in an authority can play a role in creating an environment conducive to effective scrutiny, it is important that this is led and owned by members, given their role in setting and maintaining the culture of an authority.</i>	1a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – O&S in BCP is Member led	Summer 2023	MT1
	1b	Role descriptions to be developed for Councillors in leading O&S roles to clarify expectations for this role	Summer 2023	RD1
	1c	Establish calendar of meeting dates for O&S chairs for collective leadership and oversight of the effectiveness of the O&S function.	Summer 2023	CM1
Scrutiny is understood and recognised across the organisation				
<i>Recognising scrutiny's legal and democratic legitimacy – all members and officers should recognise and appreciate the importance and legitimacy the scrutiny function is afforded by the law. It was created to act as a check and balance on the executive and is a statutory requirement for all authorities operating executive arrangements and for combined authorities.</i>	2a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Background and statutory powers of O&S, to raise the profile and importance of the scrutiny function within the organisation	Summer 2023	MT1
	2b	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – Background and statutory powers of O&S, to raise the profile and importance of the scrutiny function within the organisation	Autumn 2023	OT1
Scrutiny draws on community insight and selects topics of community relevance				
<i>Councillors have a unique legitimacy derived from their being democratically elected. The insights that they can bring by having this close connection to local people are part of what gives scrutiny its value.</i>	3a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Councillors bring community insight to their scrutiny work	Summer 2023	MT1

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	3b	Strengthen O&S work selection criteria, as set out in the constitution, to include consideration of the impact and value to the public when selecting work programme topics. Review for use in annual work programming for O&S Committees	Summer 2023	WS1
	3c	Use is made of community insight through the selection of work topics that are driven by community need, evidence sessions, use of subject experts and data providing the view of residents and community groups.	In annual work programming for O&S Committees - Summer 2023	CI1
	3d	Develop O&S web pages to clarify public role in O&S, ways to engage and improve ease of access for topic suggestion	Spring 2024	WP1
Scrutiny has a clear role and focus				
<i>Identifying a clear role and focus – authorities should take steps to ensure scrutiny has a clear role and focus within the organisation, i.e. a niche within which it can clearly demonstrate it adds value. Therefore, prioritisation is necessary to ensure the scrutiny function concentrates on delivering work that is of genuine value and relevance to the work of the wider authority – this is one of the most challenging parts of scrutiny, and a critical element to get right if it is to be recognised as a strategic function of the authority</i>	4a	Scrutiny committees agree a clear communicable role or focus for the year when planning their work programme in order to assist in topic selection and in ensuring that stakeholders can anticipate which topics are likely to be of interest to scrutiny, and plan accordingly for engagement. This may be in the form of a 'lens' (eg. risk) through which to scrutinise topics, or a key priority or set of priorities for a committee (eg. 'budget' or 'ofsted improvement plan')	In annual work programming for O&S Committees – Summer 2023	WS1

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	4b	Committees carefully consider the type and balance of work undertaken to ensure that work aims can be met within the meeting capacity available. This will require a determined focus to undertake work in diverse ways eg. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> receiving information based reports outside of meetings, establishing O&S rapporteurs (topic champions) to maintain oversight of an issue and report back to committee on exceptions reducing the level of Cabinet decision scrutiny to free up capacity for more overview work. 	In annual work programming for O&S Committees – Summer 2023	WM1
	4c	Develop user friendly terms of reference documents for each O&S committee based on split of responsibility set out in constitution.	Summer 2023	TOR1
<i>There is a clear distinction between scrutiny and audit</i>				
<i>Authorities should ensure a clear division of responsibilities between the scrutiny function and the audit function. While it is appropriate for scrutiny to pay due regard to the authority's financial position, this will need to happen in the context of the formal audit role. The authority's section 151 officer should advise scrutiny on how to manage this dynamic</i>	5a	Division of responsibility already established within the Articles of the Constitution.	Complete	CR1
	5b	A&G chair invitation to be scheduled into annual programme of O&S Chairs meetings	Summer 2023	CM1
<i>While scrutiny has no role in the investigation or oversight of the authority's whistleblowing arrangements, the findings of independent whistleblowing investigations might be of interest to scrutiny committees as they consider their wider implications.</i>	6	Develop a library of O&S oversight information, provided in an online format for Councillors to access independently, to include – The findings of independent whistleblowing investigations	Winter 23/ Spring 24	L1

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<i>The relationship between scrutiny and the executive is effective</i>				
<i>Ensuring early and regular engagement between the executive and scrutiny – authorities should ensure early and regular discussion takes place between scrutiny and the executive, especially regarding the latter's future work programme.</i>	7a	Portfolio Holders attend O&S meetings when requested, or send deputies	Immediate and ongoing request to Cabinet	C1
	7b	The Cabinet Forward Plan is regularly updated with sufficient notice of forthcoming priorities to enable O&S to engage effectively at an early stage in policy shaping	Immediate and ongoing request to Cabinet	C1
	7c	The Constitution sets out that it is good practice for there to be regular, informal dialogue between O&S leads and Portfolio Holders in order that O&S can understand developing Cabinet priorities, discuss and assess the value that Overview and Scrutiny can provide and contribute in a timely way to policy development (O&S Procedure Rule 8.3).	Complete	CR1
	7d	Role descriptions to be developed for Councillors in leading O&S roles to clarify expectation that scrutiny chairs establish informal working arrangements with relevant Portfolio Holders.	Summer 2023	RD1
	7e	Lines of accountability between scrutiny committees and Portfolio Holders were agreed by Council in April 2022- review after election when any change to Cabinet portfolios are known and document these in a more granular way than is captured within the constitution to aid transparency.	Summer 2023	TOR1
	7f	Maintain a review of the Portfolio/ O&S Committee alignment to ensure that it is fit for purpose, with amendments to be suggested via O&S annual report to Council, as required.	Summer 2024	AR1

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<i>The executive should not try to exercise control over the work of the scrutiny committee. This could be direct, e.g. by purporting to 'order' scrutiny to look at, or not look at, certain issues, or indirect, e.g. through the use of the whip or as a tool of political patronage, and the committee itself should remember its statutory purpose when carrying out its work. All members and officers should consider the role the scrutiny committee plays to be that of a 'critical friend' not a de facto 'opposition'. Scrutiny chairs have a particular role to play in establishing the profile and nature of their committee</i>	8a	O&S considers work requested by Cabinet or Council using the criteria written into the constitution - Criteria already exists in constitution and is used to assess requests.	Complete	WS1
	8b	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – All Political Groups be reminded of the incompatibility of the whip with O&S, and the forms that this may take.	Summer 2023	MT1
	8c	O&S chairs to be opposition members, where practicable, to reduce risk of executive control being exercised over O&S – referral to Constitution Review Working Group for consideration prior to May 2024 O&S Chairs elections.	Autumn/ Winter 2023	CR1
	8d	Role descriptions to be developed for Councillors in leading roles to clarify expectation that scrutiny chairs establish informal committee pre-meetings, to assist the committee in working towards its aims and taking a cross-party approach to scrutiny.	Summer 2023	RD1
	8e	O&S Chairing skills training to be delivered to include the benefit of pre-meetings, and management of political dynamics in scrutiny to avoid a de facto opposition approach.	Autumn 2023	MT2
<i>The chair of the scrutiny committee should determine the nature and extent of an executive member's participation in a scrutiny committee meeting, and in any informal scrutiny task group meeting</i>	9a	Clarity of O&S powers in determining attendees and participation already written into constitution at O&S Procedure Rule 9.1	Complete	CR1
	9b	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Clarity of scrutiny's powers in determining attendees and participation in O&S.	Summer 2023	MT1
	9c	Scrutiny committees to be asked to consider appropriate invitees when scoping a piece of work and to consider where	Summer 2023	WS1

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		more value may be added by an officer/ scrutiny session as opposed to a Cabinet member scrutiny – In annual work programming for O&S Committees and ongoing, during work programming discussions at each meeting.		
Managing disagreement				
<i>Effective scrutiny involves looking at issues that can be politically contentious. It is therefore inevitable that, at times, an executive will disagree with the findings or recommendations of a scrutiny committee. It is the job of both the executive and scrutiny to work together to reduce the risk of this happening, and authorities should take steps to predict, identify and act on disagreement. One way in which this can be done is via an 'executive-scrutiny protocol' which can help define the relationship between the two and mitigate any differences of opinion before they manifest themselves in unhelpful and unproductive ways. The benefit of this approach is that it provides a framework for disagreement and debate, and a way to manage it when it happens. Often, the value of such a protocol lies in the dialogue that underpins its preparation. It is important that these protocols are reviewed on a regular basis.</i>	10	Executive members and O&S Chairs group to consider the value for BCP in preparing an executive – scrutiny protocol	Autumn 2023	C1/CM1
<i>Scrutiny committees do have the power to 'call in' decisions, i.e. ask the executive to reconsider them before they are implemented, but should not view it as a substitute for early involvement in the decision-making process or as a party-political tool.</i>	11	Use of call-in be monitored and reflected within annual report to Council.	Summer 2024	AR1
Ensuring impartial advice from officers				
<i>Authorities, particularly senior officers, should ensure all officers are free to provide impartial advice to scrutiny committees. This is fundamental to effective scrutiny. Of particular importance is the role played by 'statutory officers' – the monitoring officer, the section 151 officer and the head of paid service, and where relevant the statutory scrutiny officer. These individuals have a particular role in ensuring that timely, relevant and high-quality advice is provided to scrutiny.</i>	12	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – The importance of impartial advice to O&S	Autumn 2023	OT1

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Communicating scrutiny's role and purpose to the wider authority				
<i>The scrutiny function can often lack support and recognition within an authority because there is a lack of awareness among both members and officers about the specific role it plays, which individuals are involved and its relevance to the authority's wider work. Authorities should, therefore, take steps to ensure all members and officers are made aware of the role the scrutiny committee plays in the organisation, its value and the outcomes it can deliver, the powers it has, its membership and, if appropriate, the identity of those providing officer support.</i>	13	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – The identity of those providing officer support to O&S. See also Action 2b above	Autumn 2023	OT1
Maintaining the interest of full Council in the work of the scrutiny committee				
<i>Part of communicating scrutiny's role and purpose to the wider authority should happen through the formal, public role of full Council – particularly given that scrutiny will undertake valuable work to highlight challenging issues that an authority will be facing and subjects that will be a focus of full Council's work. Authorities should therefore take steps to ensure full Council is informed of the work the scrutiny committee is doing.</i>	14a	Report annually to Council on the work of scrutiny, and progress on actions to improve scrutiny	Summer 2023	AR1
<i>One way in which this can be done is by reports and recommendations being submitted to full Council rather than solely to the executive. Scrutiny should decide when it would be appropriate to submit reports for wider debate in this way, taking into account the relevance of reports to full Council business, as well as full Council's capacity to consider and respond in a timely manner. Such reports would supplement the annual report to full Council on scrutiny's activities and raise awareness of ongoing work.</i>	14b	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – The appropriate route for recommendations to full Council or Cabinet	Summer 2023	MT1
	14c	Consideration be given to any amendments required to constitution to clarify reporting routes from O&S - referral to Constitution Review Working Group for consideration.	Autumn/ Winter 2023	CR1
Communicating scrutiny's role to the public				
<i>Authorities should ensure scrutiny has a profile in the wider community. Consideration should be given to how and when to engage the authority's communications officers, and any other relevant channels, to understand how to get that message across.</i>	15a	Consideration be given to the promotion of outcomes via Communications Team at the scoping stage of O&S work	In annual work programming for O&S Committees	COM1

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<i>This will usually require engagement early on in the work programming process</i>			– Summer 2023	
	15b	O&S webpage development - See action 3b above	Spring 2024	WP1
Ensuring scrutiny members are supported in having an independent mindset				
<p><i>Formal committee meetings provide a vital opportunity for scrutiny members to question the executive and officers. Inevitably, some committee members will come from the same political party as a member they are scrutinising and might well have a long-standing personal, or familial, relationship with them.</i></p> <p><i>Scrutiny members should bear in mind, however, that adopting an independent mind-set is fundamental to carrying out their work effectively. In practice, this is likely to require scrutiny chairs working proactively to identify any potentially contentious issues and plan how to manage them.</i></p>	16a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – The importance of an independent mind-set to O&S	Summer 2023	MT1
	16b	O&S Chairs are supported by Officers to identify and plan for contentious issues through Chairs briefings.	Summer 2023 and ongoing	WS1
	16c	Establish calendar of meeting dates for O&S chairs to include-monitoring the independence of O&S	June/July 2023	CM1
Resourcing scrutiny				
<p><i>The resource an authority allocates to the scrutiny function plays a pivotal role in determining how successful that function is and therefore the value it can add to the work of the authority.</i></p> <p><i>Ultimately it is up to each authority to decide on the resource it provides, but every authority should recognise that creating and sustaining an effective scrutiny function requires them to allocate resources to it.</i></p> <p><i>When deciding on the level of resource to allocate to the scrutiny function, the factors an authority should consider include: • Scrutiny's legal powers and responsibilities; • The particular role and remit scrutiny will play in the authority; • The training requirements of scrutiny members and support officers, particularly the support needed to ask effective questions of the executive and</i></p>	17	Consideration be given to the level of officer resource available to support scrutiny and that this is appropriate to ensure effective outputs that add value to the organisation – discussion with O&S chairs group, with views to be passed to Corporate Management Team.	Autumn/ Winter 2023	R1/ CMT1

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<i>other key partners, and make effective recommendations; • The need for ad hoc external support where expertise does not exist in the council; • Effectively-resourced scrutiny has been shown to add value to the work of authorities, improving their ability to meet the needs of local people; and • Effectively-resourced scrutiny can help policy formulation and so minimise the need for call-in of executive decisions</i>				
<i>Authorities should also recognise that support for scrutiny committees, task groups and other activities is not solely about budgets and provision of officer time, although these are clearly extremely important elements. Effective support is also about the ways in which the wider authority engages with those who carry out the scrutiny function (both members and officers).</i>	18a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Use of resource, and effective wider authority engagement in O&S	Summer 2023	MT1
	18b	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – Use of resource, and effective wider authority engagement in O&S	Autumn 2023	OT1
	18c	As required by the constitution, all requests for O&S committees to undertake work are considered by Committees against the current resource levels available to support the request	In annual work programming for O&S Committees – Summer 2023	R1
	18d	Establish calendar of meeting dates for O&S chairs to include-monitoring the total level of resource available across the O&S function	Summer 2023	CM1
Statutory scrutiny officers				
<i>Combined authorities, upper and single tier authorities are required to designate a statutory scrutiny officer, someone whose role is to:</i> • <i>promote the role of the authority's scrutiny committee;</i> • <i>provide support to the scrutiny committee and its members; and</i>	19a	Statutory scrutiny officer is appointed and sits within the Democratic Services Team.	Complete	R1

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<p>• <i>provide support and guidance to members and officers relating to the functions of the scrutiny committee.</i></p>	19b	The Statutory Scrutiny Officer role is set out in the constitution to aid authority wide understanding - referral to Constitution Review Working Group for consideration.	Autumn/ Winter 2023	CR1
	19c	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – The role of the statutory scrutiny officer, to increase visibility	Summer 2023	MT1
	19d	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – The role of the statutory scrutiny officer, to increase visibility	Autumn 2023	OT1
	19e	Consider the interface of the statutory scrutiny officer role with Corporate Management Team to ensure that planning for engagement with scrutiny can be considered for significant forthcoming decisions	Autumn 2023	CMT1
Officer resource models				
<p><i>Authorities should ensure that, whatever model they employ, officers tasked with providing scrutiny support are able to provide impartial advice. This might require consideration of the need to build safeguards into the way that support is provided. The nature of these safeguards will differ according to the specific role scrutiny plays in the organisation.</i></p>	20	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – The importance of impartial advice to O&S	Autumn 2023	OT2
Selecting Committee Members				
<p><i>Selecting the right members to serve on scrutiny committees is essential if those committees are to function effectively. Where a committee is made up of members who have the necessary skills and commitment, it is far more likely to be taken seriously by the wider authority.</i></p> <p><i>When selecting individual members to serve on scrutiny committees, an authority should consider a member's experience, expertise, interests, ability to act impartially, ability to work as part of a group, and capacity to serve.</i></p>	21a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Appropriate selection of committee members, in order that this can be taken account of by political groups when establishing their committee representation.	Summer 2023	MT1

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<p><i>Authorities should not take into account a member's perceived level of support for or opposition to a particular political party (notwithstanding the wider legal requirement for proportionality)</i></p> <p><i>Members invariably have different skill-sets. What an authority must consider when forming a committee is that, as a group, it possesses the requisite expertise, commitment and ability to act impartially to fulfil its functions.</i></p>	21b	A programme of ongoing scrutiny skills training to be developed for delivery to O&S Councillors throughout municipal year 2023/24.	Summer 2023 – May 2024	MT3
<p><i>Authorities are reminded that members of the executive cannot be members of a scrutiny committee. Authorities should take care to ensure that, as a minimum, members holding less formal executive positions, e.g. as Cabinet assistants, do not sit on scrutinising committees looking at portfolios to which those roles relate.</i></p> <p><i>Authorities should articulate in their constitutions how conflicts of interest, including familial links between executive and scrutiny responsibilities should be managed, including where members stand down from the executive and move to a scrutiny role, and vice-versa.</i></p>	22a	Review Constitution rules for clarity on the principle of Executive lead members sitting on O&S referral to Constitution Review Working Group for consideration.	Autumn/ Winter 2023	CR1
	22b	Review constitution to consider providing further clarity on how to manage conflicts of interest, including when Councillors move between roles - referral to Constitution Review Working Group for consideration.	Autumn/ Winter 2023	CR1
Selecting a chair				
<p><i>The Chair plays a leadership role on a scrutiny committee as they are largely responsible for establishing its profile, influence and ways of working.</i></p> <p><i>The attributes authorities should and should not take into account when selecting individual committee members also apply to the selection of the Chair, but the Chair should also possess the ability</i></p>	23a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Appropriate selection of committee chairs, in order that this can be taken account of by political groups when establishing their proposed chair nominees	Summer 2023	MT1

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<i>to lead and build a sense of teamwork and consensus among committee members.</i>	23b	O&S Chaining skills training to be delivered to include - leadership skills.	Summer/ Autumn 2023	MT2
<i>Given their pre-eminent role on the scrutiny committee, it is strongly recommended that the Chair not preside over scrutiny of their relatives</i>	24	Review constitution to consider providing further clarity on the Chair not presiding over scrutiny of relatives- referral to Constitution Review Working Group for consideration.	Autumn/ Winter 2023	CR1
<i>The method for selecting a Chair is for each authority to decide for itself, however every authority should consider taking a vote by secret ballot.</i>	25a	Secret ballot method vote for Chair and Vice Chair is already in place within constitution at Meeting Procedure Rule 19.	Complete	CR1
	25b	See 8c above 'opposition chairs'	Autumn/ Winter 2023	CR1
The role of the chair				
<i>Chairs should pay special attention to the need to guard the committee's independence. Importantly, however, they should take care to avoid the committee being, and being viewed as, a de facto opposition to the executive.</i>	26	O&S Chaining skills training to be delivered to include – independence of O&S, and the need to avoid de facto opposition role.	Summer/ Autumn 2023	MT2
Training for committee members				
<i>Authorities should ensure committee members are offered induction when they take up their role and ongoing training so they can carry out their responsibilities effectively. Authorities should pay attention to the need to ensure committee members are aware of their legal powers, and how to prepare for and ask relevant questions at scrutiny sessions.</i> <i>When deciding on training requirements for committee members, authorities should consider taking advantage of opportunities offered by external providers in the sector.</i>	27a	See action 2a above - new Councillor and refresher training on statutory powers of O&S	Summer 2023	MT1
	27b	A programme of ongoing scrutiny skills training to be developed for delivery to O&S Councillors throughout municipal year 2023/24, to include – questioning skills training.	Summer 2023 – May 2024	MT3

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	27c	Training to be delivered by external facilitators as appropriate and according to budget available	Summer 2023 – May 2024	MT3
<p><i>While members and their support officers will often have significant local insight and an understanding of local people and their needs, the provision of outside expertise can be invaluable. There are two principal ways to procure this:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Co-option – formal co-option is provided for in legislation. Authorities must establish a co-option scheme to determine how individuals will be co-opted onto committees; and</i> • <i>Technical advisers – depending on the subject matter, independent local experts might exist who can provide advice and assistance in evaluating evidence</i> 	28a	Facility to use external experts by O&S is already set out in constitution at Article 6, Rule 6.6.	Complete	CR1
	28b	<p>Consideration be given to the appropriate use of external experts at the scoping stage of O&S work.</p> <p>– In annual work programming for O&S Committees and ongoing, during work programming discussions at each meeting.</p>	Summer 2023	WS1
Powers to Access Information				
<p><i>A scrutiny committee needs access to relevant information the authority holds, and to receive it in good time, if it is to do its job effectively.</i></p> <p><i>This need is recognised in law, with members of scrutiny committees enjoying powers to access information. In particular, regulations give enhanced powers to a scrutiny member to access exempt or confidential information. This is in addition to existing rights for councillors to have access to information to perform their duties, including common law rights to request information and rights to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.</i></p> <p><i>When considering what information scrutiny needs in order to carry out its work, scrutiny members and the executive should consider scrutiny's role and the legal rights that committees and their individual members have, as well as their need to receive timely and accurate information to carry out their duties effectively.</i></p>	29a	Enhanced rights of O&S in relation to access to information are already set out in Constitution at Access to Information Procedure Rule 24.	Complete	CR1
	29b	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – enhanced rights of O&S in relation to access to information	Summer 2023	MT1

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<p><i>Scrutiny members should have access to a regularly available source of key information about the management of the authority – particularly on performance, management and risk. Where this information exists, and scrutiny members are given support to understand it, the potential for what officers might consider unfocused and unproductive requests is reduced as members will be able to frame their requests from a more informed position.</i></p>	30a	Develop a library of O&S oversight information, provided in an online format for Councillors to access independently, to include - Performance, Management, Finance, Risk, Complaints, Business Cases and Ombudsman information. This will assist in 'horizon scanning' to enhance the effectiveness of O&S work planning.	Winter 23/ Spring 24	L1
	30b	A programme of ongoing scrutiny skills training to be developed for delivery to O&S Councillors throughout municipal year 2023/24, to include – Interpretation performance, management and risk information, and its application to O&S work programming.	Summer 2023 – May 2024	MT3
<p><i>Officers should speak to scrutiny members to ensure they understand the reasons why information is needed, thereby making the authority better able to provide information that is relevant and timely, as well as ensuring that the authority complies with legal requirements.</i></p> <p><i>Regulations already stipulate a timeframe for executives to comply with requests from a scrutiny member. When agreeing to such requests, authorities should:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• consider whether seeking clarification from the information requester could help better target the request; and</i> <i>• Ensure the information is supplied in a format appropriate to the recipient's needs.</i> 	31	Support scrutiny committees to be clear in identifying information needs and to scope larger pieces of work effectively so that information expectations can be met by officers and executive members. – In annual work programming for O&S Committees and ongoing, during work programming discussions at each meeting.	Summer 2023	WS1
<p><i>While each request for information should be judged on its individual merits, authorities should adopt a default position of sharing the information they hold, on request, with scrutiny committee members.</i></p>	32	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – Default position of sharing information with O&S	Autumn 2023	OT1

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<i>The law recognises that there might be instances where it is legitimate for an authority to withhold information and places a requirement on the executive to provide the scrutiny committee with a written statement setting out its reasons for that decision. However, members of the executive and senior officers should take particular care to avoid refusing requests, or limiting the information they provide, for reasons of party political or reputational expediency. Before an authority takes a decision not to share information it holds, it should give serious consideration to whether that information could be shared in closed session</i>	33a	Situations where information may be withheld from O&S, and actions to communicate this, are already set out in the Constitution at Access to Information Procedure Rule 24.	Complete	CR1
	33b	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Default position of sharing information with O&S, and situations where information may be withheld.	Summer 2023	MT1
	33c	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – Default position of sharing information with O&S, and situations where information may be withheld.	Autumn 2023	OT1
<i>Committees should be aware of their legal power to require members of the executive and officers to attend before them to answer questions. It is the duty of members and officers to comply with such requests.</i>	34a	Requirement for Cabinet members and officers to attend O&S when requested is already set out in constitution at O&S Procedure Rule 9.	Complete	CR1
	34b	Identification of attendees and formal requests to Cabinet and officers to attend is required by the constitution and an embedded practice.	Complete	WS1
	34c	Portfolio Holders attend O&S meetings in response to requests, or send deputies.	Ongoing request to Cabinet	C1
	34d	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Requirement of Cabinet members and officers to attend scrutiny when requested	Summer 2023	MT1
	34e	Officer refresher training to be provided to include –	Autumn 2023	OT1

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Relevant Extract from Statutory Guidance on O&S	ID	Action for BCP Council	RAG and timescales	Code
		Requirement of Cabinet members and officers to attend scrutiny when requested		
Seeking information from external organisations				
<i>Scrutiny members should also consider the need to supplement any authority-held information they receive with information and intelligence that might be available from other sources, and should note in particular their statutory powers to access information from certain external organisations</i>	35	Develop a library of O&S oversight information, provided in an online format for Councillors to access independently, to include - Information from external organisations, as appropriate, to support individual work items and annual work programming	Winter 23/ Spring 24	L1
<i>When asking an external organisation to provide documentation or appear before it, and where that organisation is not legally obliged to do either, scrutiny committees should consider the following:</i> <i>a) The need to explain the purpose of scrutiny – the organisation being approached might have little or no awareness of the committee's work, or of an authority's scrutiny function more generally, and so might be reluctant to comply with any request;</i> <i>b) The benefits of an informal approach – individuals from external organisations can have fixed perceptions of what an evidence session entails and may be unwilling to subject themselves to detailed public scrutiny if they believe it could reflect badly on them or their employer. Making an informal approach can help reassure an organisation of the aims of the committee, the type of information being sought and the manner in which the evidence session would be conducted;</i> <i>c) How to encourage compliance with the request – scrutiny committees will want to frame their approach on a case by case basis. For contentious issues, committees might want to emphasise the opportunity their request gives the organisation to 'set the record straight' in a public setting; and</i>	36a	Guidelines for scrutinising external organisations is already included within the Council's Constitution at O&S Procedure Rule 10.	Complete	CR1
	36b	Develop a user friendly protocol to assist committees with approaching, preparing for and scrutinising external organisations.	Spring 2024	P1

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Relevant Extract from Statutory Guidance on O&S	ID	Action for BCP Council	RAG and timescales	Code
<i>d) Who to approach – a committee might instinctively want to ask the Chief Executive or Managing Director of an organisation to appear at an evidence session, however it could be more beneficial to engage front-line staff when seeking operational-level detail rather than senior executives who might only be able to talk in more general terms. When making a request to a specific individual, the committee should consider the type of information it is seeking, the nature of the organisation in question and the authority's pre-existing relationship with it.</i>				
Following 'the Council Pound'				
<p><i>Scrutiny committees will often have a keen interest in 'following the council pound', i.e. scrutinising organisations that receive public funding to deliver goods and services.</i></p> <p><i>Authorities should recognise the legitimacy of this interest and, where relevant, consider the need to provide assistance to scrutiny members and their support staff to obtain information from organisations the council has contracted to deliver services. In particular, when agreeing contracts with these bodies, authorities should consider whether it would be appropriate to include a requirement for them to supply information to or appear before scrutiny committees</i></p>	37	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – Support to scrutiny committees in respect of scrutinising organisations that receive public funding to deliver goods and services	Autumn 2023	OT1
Planning Work				
<p><i>Effective scrutiny should have a defined impact on the ground, with the committee making recommendations that will make a tangible difference to the work of the authority. To have this kind of impact, scrutiny committees need to plan their work programme, i.e. draw up a long-term agenda and consider making it flexible enough to accommodate any urgent, short-term issues that might arise during the year.</i></p>	38a	O&S committees agree a work programme annually drawing ideas from relevant sources, that enables reports to be prepared and brought to the committee in a timely way.	In annual work programming for O&S Committees – Summer 2023	WS1
	38b	Work programmes are based on realistic assessment of resources available to O&S, also retaining capacity for some arising issues to be accommodated.	In annual work programming for O&S	R1

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Relevant Extract from Statutory Guidance on O&S	ID	Action for BCP Council	RAG and timescales	Code
			Committees – Summer 2023	
	38c	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Effective O&S Work programming and best use of resources	Summer 2023	MT1
	38d	Feedback is gathered on O&S outputs and a tool developed to measure the success of O&S.	Spring 2024	P1
<i>Authorities with multiple scrutiny committees sometimes have a separate work programme for each committee. Where this happens, consideration should be given to how to co-ordinate the various committees' work to make best use of the total resources available.</i>	39a	Each O&S committee may establish separate work plans, with responsibility for monitoring use of resource across all work plans sitting with O&S Chairs. This is set out in the Constitution at O&S Procedure Rules 2 and 3.	Complete	CR1
	39b	Establish calendar of meeting dates for O&S chairs to include collective leadership monitoring of O&S resource	Summer 2023	CM1
Being clear about scrutiny's role				
<p><i>Scrutiny works best when it has a clear role and function. This provides focus and direction. While scrutiny has the power to look at anything which affects 'the area, or the area's inhabitants', authorities will often find it difficult to support a scrutiny function that carries out generalised oversight across the wide range of issues experienced by local people, particularly in the context of partnership working. Prioritisation is necessary, which means that there might be things that, despite being important, scrutiny will not be able to look at.</i></p> <p><i>Different overall roles could include having a focus on risk, the authority's finances, or on the way the authority works with its partners.</i></p> <p><i>Applying this focus does not mean that certain subjects are 'off limits'. It is more about looking at topics and deciding whether their</i></p>	40	See actions 4a, b and c above – O&S 'focus', working methods and terms of reference.	Summer 2023	WS1/ WM1/ TOR1

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Relevant Extract from Statutory Guidance on O&S	ID	Action for BCP Council	RAG and timescales	Code
<i>relative importance justifies the positive impact scrutiny's further involvement could bring.</i>				
<i>When thinking about scrutiny's focus, members should be supported by key senior officers. The statutory scrutiny officer, if an authority has one, will need to take a leading role in supporting members to clarify the role and function of scrutiny, and championing that role once agreed.</i>	41a	Senior officers and the statutory scrutiny officer support committees in selecting priorities that are of relevance and can add value to the organisation. – In annual work programming for O&S Committees and ongoing, during work programming discussions at each meeting.	Summer 2023	WS1
	41b	Statutory scrutiny officer to ensure that scrutiny priorities are promoted to Executive members and the wider officer corps via Corporate Management Board and information sharing with Cabinet members.	Following annual work programming – Summer 2023	WS1
Who to speak to				
<i>Evidence will need to be gathered to inform the work programming process. This will ensure that it looks at the right topics, in the right way and at the right time. Gathering evidence requires conversations with:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The public -</i> <i>It is likely that formal 'consultation' with the public on the scrutiny work programme will be ineffective. Asking individual scrutiny members to have conversations with individuals and groups in their own local areas can work better. Insights gained from the public through individual pieces of scrutiny work can be fed back into the work programming process. Listening to and participating in conversations in places where local people come together, including in online forums, can help authorities engage people on their own terms and yield more positive results</i>	42a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Sources of input to annual work programming, to include community insight to their scrutiny work, partner information and Cabinet forthcoming priorities	Summer 2023	MT1
	42b	See 3C above – use of community insight in O&S work	In annual work programming for O&S Committees - Summer 2023	CI1
	42c	Statutory scrutiny officer to work with communications team to establish how scrutiny can promote its work priorities and gather public insight. To include proactive work with	Spring 2024	COM1

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Relevant Extract from Statutory Guidance on O&S	ID	Action for BCP Council	RAG and timescales	Code
<p><i>Authorities should consider how their communications officers can help scrutiny engage with the public, and how wider internal expertise and local knowledge from both members and officers might make a contribution.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The authority's partners –</i> <i>relationships with other partners should not be limited to evidence-gathering to support individual reviews or agenda items. A range of partners are likely to have insights that will prove useful:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>o Public sector partners (like the NHS and community safety partners, over which scrutiny has specific legal powers);</i> <i>o Voluntary sector partners;</i> <i>o Contractors and commissioning partners (including partners in joint ventures and authority-owned companies);</i> <i>o In parished areas, town, community and parish councils;</i> <i>o Neighbouring principal councils (both in two-tier and unitary areas);</i> <i>o Cross-authority bodies and organisations, such as Local Enterprise Partnerships; and</i> <i>o Others with a stake and interest in the local area – large local employers, for example.</i> <i>The executive –</i> <i>a principal partner in discussions on the work programme should be the executive (and senior officers). The executive should not direct scrutiny's work, but conversations will help scrutiny members better understand how their work can be designed to align with</i> 		communications team in Spring 2024 to gather public insight to inform future annual work programming in Summer 2024.		
	42d	<p>See 35 above:</p> <p>Develop a library of O&S oversight information, provided in an online format for Councillors to access independently, to include -</p> <p>Information from external organisations, as appropriate, to support individual work items and annual work programming</p>	Winter 23/ Spring 24	L1
	42e	Cabinet is asked to provide input to annual O&S work programming to indicate forthcoming areas of work where O&S can add value.	In annual work programming for O&S Committees – Summer 2023	C1

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Relevant Extract from Statutory Guidance on O&S	ID	Action for BCP Council	RAG and timescales	Code
<i>the best opportunities to influence the authority's wider work.</i>	42f	See 7b above: The Cabinet Forward Plan is regularly updated with sufficient notice of forthcoming priorities to enable O&S to engage effectively at an early stage in policy shaping	Ongoing request to Cabinet	C1
	42g	See 7c above: Role descriptions to be developed for Councillors in leading O&S roles to clarify expectation that scrutiny chairs establish informal working arrangements with relevant Portfolio Holders to ensure scrutiny can be informed of Cabinet priorities in a timely way.	Summer 2023	RD1
Information sources				
<p><i>Scrutiny will need access to relevant information to inform its work programme. The type of information will depend on the specific role and function scrutiny plays within the authority, but might include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• Performance information from across the authority and its partners;</i> <i>• Finance and risk information from across the authority and its partners;</i> <i>• Corporate complaints information, and aggregated information from political groups about the subject matter of members' surgeries;</i> <i>• Business cases and options appraisals (and other planning information) for forthcoming major decisions. This information will be of particular use for pre -decision scrutiny; and</i> <i>• Reports and recommendations issued by relevant ombudsmen, especially the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.</i> <p><i>As committees can meet in closed session, commercial confidentiality should not preclude the sharing of information. Authorities should note, however, that the default for meetings should be that they are held in public</i></p>	43a	See 30a above: Develop a library of O&S oversight information, provided in an online format for Councillors to access independently, to include - Performance, Management, Finance, Risk, Complaints, Business Cases and Ombudsman information. This will assist in 'horizon scanning' to enhance the effectiveness of O&S work planning.	Winter 23/ Spring 24	L1
	43b	Presumption is made that library of information for O&S Councillors is public, with non public information shared in appropriate alternative environment to ensure Councillors can remain informed.	Winter 23/ Spring 24	L1

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<i>Scrutiny members should consider keeping this information under regular review. It is likely to be easier to do this outside committee, rather than bringing such information to committee 'to note', or to provide an update, as a matter of course.</i>	44	Support committees to work in more diverse ways to maintain oversight of key information, including circulating information outside of meetings and the use of rapporteurs or champions for particular topics. This will free up committee resource for value added scrutiny.	In annual work programming for O&S Committees – Summer 2023	WM1
Shortlisting topics				
<p><i>Approaches to shortlisting topics should reflect scrutiny's overall role in the authority. This will require the development of bespoke, local solutions, however when considering whether an item should be included in the work programme, the kind of questions a scrutiny committee should consider might include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do we understand the benefits scrutiny would bring to this issue?</i> • <i>How could we best carry out work on this subject?</i> • <i>What would be the best outcome of this work?</i> • <i>How would this work engage with the activity of the executive and other decision-makers, including partners?</i> 	45a	<p>Extend the use of the 'scrutiny request form' already in place for commissioned items, to encourage consideration of the value to be added by all reports, such as scrutiny's consideration of Cabinet pre-decision items and officer proposed items.</p> <p>– In annual work programming for O&S Committees and ongoing, during work programming discussions at each meeting.</p>	Summer 2023	WS1
<i>Some authorities use scoring systems to evaluate and rank work programme proposals. If these are used to provoke discussion and debate, based on evidence, about what priorities should be, they can be a useful tool. Others take a looser approach. Whichever method is adopted, a committee should be able to justify how and why a decision has been taken to include certain issues and not others.</i>				
	45b	Review 'scrutiny request form' and update as appropriate to incorporate all suggested areas referenced in O&S guidance.	Summer 2023	P1
<i>Scrutiny members should accept that shortlisting can be difficult; scrutiny committees have finite resources and deciding how these are best allocated is tough. They should understand that, if work programming is robust and effective, there might well be issues that they want to look at that nonetheless are not selected.</i>	45c	<p>See 18c above:</p> <p>As required by the constitution, all requests for O&S work are considered by Committees against the current resource levels available to support the request</p>	Immediate, as arising, and in annual work programming for O&S Committees – Summer 2023	R1

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Relevant Extract from Statutory Guidance on O&S	ID	Action for BCP Council	RAG and timescales	Code
Carrying out work				
Selected topics can be scrutinised in several ways, including:	46a	Methods of carrying out O&S work are set out within the Constitution at Article 6, Rule 6.9.	Complete	CR1
<p><i>a) As a single item on a committee agenda – this often presents a limited opportunity for effective scrutiny, but may be appropriate for some issues or where the committee wants to maintain a formal watching brief over a given issue;</i></p> <p><i>b) At a single meeting – which could be a committee meeting or something less formal. This can provide an opportunity to have a single public meeting about a given subject, or to have a meeting at which evidence is taken from a number of witnesses;</i></p> <p><i>c) At a task and finish review of two or three meetings – short, sharp scrutiny review are likely to be most effective even for complex topics. Properly focused, they ensure members can swiftly reach conclusions and make recommendations, perhaps over the course of a couple of months or less;</i></p> <p><i>d) Via a longer-term task and finish review – the ‘traditional’ task and finish model – with perhaps six or seven meetings spread over a number of months – is still appropriate when scrutiny needs to dig into a complex topic in significant detail. However, the resource implications of such work, and its length, can make it unattractive for all but the most complex matters; and</i></p> <p><i>e) By establishing a ‘standing panel’ – this falls short of establishing a whole new committee but may reflect a necessity to keep a watching brief over a critical local issue, especially where members feel they need to convene regularly to carry out that oversight. Again, the resource implications of this approach means that it will be rarely used</i></p>	46b	Support committees to actively consider diverse ways of working other than committee reports to secure most effective outputs	In annual work programming for O&S Committees – Summer 2023	WM1
	46c	Review and develop task and finish/ working group scoping document, protocol and joint working group protocol	Spring 2024	P1

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Relevant Extract from Statutory Guidance on O&S	ID	Action for BCP Council	RAG and timescales	Code
Evidence sessions				
<p><i>Evidence sessions are a key way in which scrutiny committees inform their work. They might happen at formal committee, in less formal 'task and finish' groups or at standalone sessions.</i></p> <p><i>Good preparation is a vital part of conducting effective evidence sessions. Members should have a clear idea of what the committee hopes to get out of each session and appreciate that success will depend on their ability to work together on the day.</i></p>	47	Consider the appropriateness of conducting evidence sessions to scrutinise particular topics when planning annual work programmes. These will need proactive planning to ensure that sufficient resource can be made available to support effective sessions.	In annual work programming for O&S Committees – Summer 2023	WM1
How to plan				
<p><i>Effective planning does not necessarily involve a large number of pre-meetings, the development of complex scopes or the drafting of questioning plans. It is more often about setting overall objectives and then considering what type of questions (and the way in which they are asked) can best elicit the information the committee is seeking. This applies as much to individual agenda items as it does for longer evidence sessions – there should always be consideration in advance of what scrutiny is trying to get out of a particular evidence session.</i></p>	48	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Evidence led approach to O&S, and how to conduct an effective evidence session	Summer 2023	MT1
<p><i>Chairs play a vital role in leading discussions on objective-setting and ensuring all members are aware of the specific role each will play during the evidence session.</i></p> <p><i>As far as possible there should be consensus among scrutiny members about the objective of an evidence session before it starts. It is important to recognise that members have different perspectives on certain issues, and so might not share the objectives for a session that are ultimately adopted. Where this happens, the Chair will need to be aware of this divergence of views and bear it in mind when planning the evidence session.</i></p>	49	O&S Chairing skills training to be delivered to include how to plan for and lead evidence sessions, establish aims and manage different objectives from committee members	Summer/ Autumn 2023	MT2
<p><i>Effective planning should mean that at the end of a session it is relatively straightforward for the chair to draw together themes and highlight the key findings. It is unlikely that the committee will be able to develop and agree recommendations immediately, but,</i></p>	50	O&S Chairing skills training to be delivered to include how to draw together themes and highlight key findings at the end of evidence sessions – this approach to be extended to all O&S	Summer/ Autumn 2023	MT2

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<p><i>unless the session is part of a wider inquiry, enough evidence should have been gathered to allow the chair to set a clear direction.</i></p> <p><i>After an evidence session, the committee might wish to hold a short 'wash-up' meeting to review whether their objectives were met and lessons could be learned for future sessions</i></p>		work items to ensure Chairs can provide transparent summary of discussions.		
Developing recommendations				
<p><i>The development and agreement of recommendations is often an iterative process. It will usually be appropriate for this to be done only by members, assisted by co-optees where relevant. When deciding on recommendations, however, members should have due regard to advice received from officers, particularly the Monitoring Officer.</i></p> <p><i>The drafting of reports is usually, but not always, carried out by officers, directed by members.</i></p>	51a	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – Officers to provide timely, transparent advice to committees in all areas of O&S work, as appropriate.	Autumn 2023	OT1
	51b	For longer pieces of O&S work, a lead officer to be identified at the scoping stage who will support report drafting - include this within relevant protocols listed at 46c above.	Immediate, as arising (WS1/R1) Protocol review Spring 2024 (P1)	WS1/R1/P1
<p><i>Authorities draft reports and recommendations in a number of ways, but there are normally three stages:</i></p> <p><i>i. the development of a 'heads of report' – a document setting out general findings that members can then discuss as they consider the overall structure and focus of the report and its recommendations;</i></p> <p><i>ii. The development of those findings, which will set out some areas on which recommendations might be made; and</i></p> <p><i>iii. the drafting of the full report.</i></p> <p><i>Recommendations should be evidence-based and SMART, i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timed. Where appropriate, committees may wish to consider sharing them in draft with interested parties.</i></p>	52	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Consideration of appropriate recommendations and reporting route for O&S work, to include consideration of what SMART recommendations may look like. Consideration of this to take place at the scoping stage of O&S work, to ensure scope is clear enough and to provide an indication of the value that is likely to be added by the work undertaken.	Summer 2023	MT1

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Relevant Extract from Statutory Guidance on O&S	ID	Action for BCP Council	RAG and timescales	Code
<i>Committees should bear in mind that often six to eight recommendations are sufficient to enable the authority to focus its response, although there may be specific circumstances in which more might be appropriate.</i>				
<i>Sharing draft recommendations with executive members should not provide an opportunity for them to revise or block recommendations before they are made. It should, however, provide an opportunity for errors to be identified and corrected, and for a more general sense-check</i>	53	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – The role of executive member consultation during draft reporting stages.	Summer 2023	MT1