Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Introduction

This action plan outlines improvement activity for BCP Council's Overview and Scrutiny function. This activity has been identified as appropriate to bring O&S practices to the level outlined in the Government's Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities

The actions also address recommendations arising from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities' (DLUHC) external assurance review and Best Value Notice, issued on the 3 August as well as the Chief Executive's own internal assurance review conducted in Spring and updated in Summer 2023. The resulting Assurance Review Action Plan has been established by the Council to respond to these recommendations.

Guidance Note

This action plan follows the themes of the statutory guidance which are categorised as follows:

• Culture • Resourcing • Selecting Committee Members • Power to Access Information • Planning Work • Evidence Sessions

All relevant paragraphs of the guidance have been included within the action plan, to aid reader's understanding of why actions have been identified. Please note that where actions are similar (eg. reflecting different aspects of councillor training required) they remain split into separate actions to demonstrate how these will uphold the statutory guidance. It should be noted that for this reason the action plan is highly detailed and serves as an operational tool to progress actions as well as for reporting on progress.

Actions are grouped and action leads identified as per the coding set out in the key below. Where actions are duplicated, the update is provided against the first arising action. A RAG rating is used to show progress against actions along with a commentary, with the latest updates provided in blue text.

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Key		
Code Description	**Action Lead**	**Code**
Member Training – induction and refresher	Democratic Services Team	MT1
Member Training – Chairs		MT2
Member Training – ongoing programme of training		MT3
Officer Training		OT1
Role Descriptions for O&S leads		RD1
Chairs' Meetings		CM1
Work Selection and Scoping		WS1
Community Insight		CI1
Web Presence		WP1
Working Methods		WM1
Terms of Reference for O&S Committees		TOR1
Constitution Review		CR1
Library of O&S Resources		L1
Protocol and Tool Development		P1
Annual Reporting on O&S		AR1
Resourcing		R1
Communications		COM1
Corporate Management Team Action	Corporate Management Team	CMT1
Cabinet Action	Cabinet	C1
Chief Executive/ Leader Action	Chief Executive/ Leader	CL1
Supporting Children's Services O&S	Democratic Services Team	CS1
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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Culture				
Scrutiny is Member Led				
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.	1a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – O&S in BCP is Member led	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	1b	Role descriptions to be developed for Councillors in leading O&S roles to clarify expectations for this role Not started. Completion likely to be delayed to Autumn 2024.	Autumn 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.	Complete	CM1
Scrutiny is understood and recognised across the organisation				
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.	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.	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	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 Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.	Winter 2023	OT1

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Scrutiny draws on community insight and selects topics of community relevance				
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.	3a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Councillors bring community insight to their scrutiny work	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	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. O&S scrutiny request forms ask councillors to outline the value to be added to BCP Council, the area or its inhabitants of a proposed scrutiny topic. Use of this form is becoming embedded by councillors and is being used as part of annual work programming. O&S work programmes now include more work balanced towards the impact on BCP residents. O&S Board has selected resident impact as a lens by which to plan and approach its work. Officers will continue to encourage selection of O&S topics that have tangible benefit to residents and monitor work programmes.	Complete, monitor long-term.	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. O&S Board and Environment & Place O&S have now planned annual work programmes based on councillor suggestions generated by issues of significance to communities.	Complete, monitor long-term and revisit in annual work programming for all committees.	CI1

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		Greater use of subject experts and community insight have been included in O&S since May 2023. Examples include a subject expert on the Safety Valve programme, developer input to Local Plan discussions and regular Healthwatch contributions at HASC O&S Committee. The terms of reference of the Environment & Place O&S Committee was amended by Council in September 2023, to include additional insight on sustainability matters in the form of two non-voting member independent members. Recruitment to these positions is in process. Use of community insight and evidence could be developed further still and officers will encourage at the scoping stage of forthcoming work.		
	3d	Develop O&S web pages to clarify public role in O&S, ways to engage and improve ease of access for topic suggestion. Not started.	Autumn 2024	WP1
Scrutiny has a clear role and focus				
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	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') HASC O&S and Children's Services O&S Committees planned work for the 2023/24 municipal year but did not agree a role or priority focus. These committees would benefit from establishing a more defined lens or communicable focus for the 2024/25 work programmes. The O&S Board and Environment & Place O&S Committee engaged in action/ learning workshops to plan their work programmes for 23/24. These were led by CfGS and based on	Autumn 2023	WS1

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		good practice. Both committees established a lens and a scrutiny framework to more clearly refine and communicate their role and areas of priority. This approach to be rolled and maintained by all O&S committees in future work programming.		
	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. • 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. O&S Committees have received targeted training and support throughout the year to assist in this aim. There has been significant progress in reducing the level of Cabinet pre-decision scrutiny across committees, which previously dominated some work programmes. Committees are planning more manageable work programmes. Three additional O&S meetings were called during 23/24 to accommodate arising issues. All committees would benefit from reducing update items reported to committee, which usually generate limited substantive recommendations. Analysis of 23/24 work outputs across all committees show an overbalance of this type of work, with this taking up the majority of work for 4 out of 5 committees operating in this period. This is taking up time that could be used for other value-added scrutiny.	Autumn 2023	WM1

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		Good practice is for all information based reports to be received in other formats. Greater use could be made of other methods, such as rapporteurs, to maintain overview of information otherwise reported into committee. This approach will continue to be encouraged across all committees.		
	4c	Develop user friendly terms of reference documents for each O&S committee based on split of responsibility set out in constitution. Updated terms of reference are now circulated with the forward plan paper for each O&S Committee.	Complete	TOR1
There is a clear distinction between scrutiny and audit				
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	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 A&G Chair has been invited to attend meetings during 2024/25.	Complete	CM1
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.	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 HASC O&S has developed a data toolkit, which gathers oversight information in a digestible format for O&S members. This to be rolled out to all committees to include whistleblowing information.	Spring/ Summer 2024	L1

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The relationship between scrutiny and the executive is effective				
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.	7a	Portfolio Holders attend O&S meetings when requested, or send deputies Attendance of Portfolio Holders at O&S when requested is now well established and will continue to be encouraged.	Complete, monitor long-term.	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. Populating the Cabinet Forward Plan is a work in progress, with priorities currently identified approximately 3 months ahead. The Leader has committed to populating the plan 6 months ahead. The O&S Specialist met with CMB in November 2023 to outline the implications on O&S of Forward Planning by the Cabinet. Although the Cabinet Forward Plan is still in development, other activities have taken place which will support O&S/ executive work to be effective: Quarterly meetings between the Leader, Chief Executive, Statutory Scrutiny Officer and O&S Chairs are planned and will allow opportunity for discussion of O&S engagement in forthcoming policy work. Delivery plans attached to the refreshed Corporate Strategy set out the policy and decision making plans for the council for the forthcoming 2 years. This will assist O&S planning and consideration of this document as a horizon scanning tool is being encouraged with all committees.	Immediate and ongoing request to Cabinet	C1

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	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). Officers regularly encourage this action.	Complete, monitor long-term.	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. Development of role descriptions has been delayed, however, lead O&S members are encouraged on a regular basis to develop informal working arrangements with relevant Portfolio Holders. Completion of role descriptions likely to be delayed to Autumn 2024.	Autumn 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. Changes were made to O&S Committees by Council in September 2023. New lines of accountability are identified in updated terms of reference documents, providing clarity on lines of accountability. These are circulated with each O&S agenda.	Complete	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.	Complete, monitor annually through	AR1

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		Changes were made to O&S committee remits in September 2023. No further changes suggested in 2024 annual report.	annual report process.	
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	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, monitor long-term.	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. The message was reinforced in training and the CEx has had written confirmation from every Group Leader that the party whip, or similar, will not be applied around the Overview and Scrutiny functions.	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	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 of any appropriate Constitution changes to set out this good practice - prior to May 2024 O&S Chairs elections. Since May 2023 all O&S Committees have appointed a Chair, and in most cases, a Vice-Chair, from outside of the Administration. O&S Board has confirmed a wish to include this advice within the constitution. Package of work to review constitution to strengthen areas around O&S has not yet started and will be progressed as resources allow.	Spring 2024	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.	Autumn 2023	RD1

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		Development of role descriptions has been delayed, however, some O&S Chairs have established pre-meetings successfully, and officers continue to encourage these. Completion of role descriptions likely to be delayed to Autumn 2024.		
	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. Chairing skills training provided in Summer 2023 induction. O&S leadership training provided via LGA workshops in Feb 2024. LGA leadership training to be offered to all new O&S chairs, as and when changes in positions occur.	Complete, monitor long-term.	MT2
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	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.	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	9c	Scrutiny committees to be asked to consider appropriate invitees when scoping a piece of work and to consider where more value may be added by an officer/ scrutiny session as opposed to a Cabinet member scrutiny Appropriate invitees are considered in the planning stage for all O&S work. Since May 2023 there has been a noticeable shift in emphasis within the Council, with officers being invited to contribute on specific issues at scrutiny as appropriate. The range of inquiry from councillors to both portfolio holders and officers is much improved and this will continue to be encouraged.	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1

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Managing disagreement				
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.	10	Executive members and O&S Chairs group to consider the value for BCP in preparing an executive – scrutiny protocol. O&S Chairs have discussed executive – scrutiny protocol and asked to review further information on the benefits. Agreement in place for quarterly meetings between Leader, Chief Executive and O&S Chairs to share information and address any barriers to effective scrutiny. To be scheduled following Chairmanship elections of Summer 2024. The value of preparing an executive – scrutiny protocol to be raised through this group.	Winter 2023	C1/ CM1
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.	11	Use of call-in be monitored and reflected within annual report to Council. Call-in use analysed and included in 2024 annual report.	Complete, monitor annually through annual report process.	AR1
Ensuring impartial advice from officers				
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	12	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – The importance of impartial advice to O&S Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.	Winter 2023	OT1

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particular role in ensuring that timely, relevant and high-quality advice is provided to scrutiny.				
Communicating scrutiny's role and purpose to the wider authority				
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.	13	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – The identity of those providing officer support to O&S. Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.	Winter 2023	OT1
Maintaining the interest of full Council in the work of the scrutiny committee				
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.	14a	Report annually to Council on the work of scrutiny, and progress on actions to improve scrutiny. Annual report to be received by committees in Sep/ Oct 2024 (delayed owing to pre-election period).	Complete, repeat annually.	AR1
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.	14b	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – The appropriate route for recommendations to full Council or Cabinet	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	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. Package of work to review constitution to strengthen areas around O&S has not yet started and will be progressed as resources allow.	Spring 2024	CR1

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Communicating scrutiny's role to the public				
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. This will usually require engagement early on in the work programming process	15a	Consideration be given to the promotion of outcomes via Communications Team at the scoping stage of O&S work. Some O&S activity relating to high profile decisions is already promoted by the Communications Team. Greater use could be made of promotion opportunities to raise the profile of O&S work. Resources have not been available for a comprehensive approach to this through annual work programming. Consideration of this will instead be encouraged on an ongoing basis at the scoping stage for all O&S work, as resources allow.	In annual work programming for O&S Committees – Autumn 2023	COM1
	15b	O&S webpage development - See action 3d above. Not started	Autumn 2024	WP1
Ensuring scrutiny members are supported in having an independent mindset				
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. *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.*	16a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – The importance of an independent mind-set to O&S	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	16b	O&S Chairs are supported by Officers to identify and plan for contentious issues through Chairs briefings. Chairs are well supported by officers in regular briefings to scope and plan the level of interest anticipated in O&S work and any necessary adjustments. Briefings were held for all meetings in 23/24 municipal year and will be planned for all meetings in 24/25.	Complete, monitor long-term	WS1

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	16c	Establish calendar of meeting dates for O&S chairs to include- monitoring the independence of O&S Calendar of meetings planned for 2024	Complete	CM1
Resourcing scrutiny				
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. *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.* *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 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*	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. Resources to support O&S are stretched. The Democratic Services team provides direct officer support to the O&S function. There has been no increase in officer resource to support the increase in O&S meeting numbers agreed by Council in September 2023. The Democratic Services structure was designed to support the service approved by the Shadow Authority which anticipated 22 O&S meetings per year with a larger Democratic Services team to support this. Since the establishment of BCP Council, the officer support available to O&S has not been adequate for the level of O&S meetings held by the council, which, through many changes to the O&S committee structure, have predominantly been above the level anticipated by the Shadow Authority. In 2021 the service budget was reduced by 14.9% to support the corporate budget pressures. Following the most recent changes to the O&S structure the service is now considered to be operating above maximum capacity. Taking into account the increased meetings and reduction in manpower resources, the ratio of meetings per equivalent officer FTE to provide	Resource monitoring completed in 23/24. To be continued on same basis, ongoing.	R1/ CMT1

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		support has increased by over 28%. This is excluding any additional special meetings called by committees. This has an impact on the level of support that can be provided to the O&S function and the resulting outputs. Resourcing implications set out above were highlighted to CMB and Council in September 2023 when a decision was taken to increase the overall number of O&S meetings. A bid for additional staff to support the increase in O&S meeting numbers was not approved. Resource pressures caused delay to strategic actions in 2023, such as work programming, and limited the amount of support that could be provided to scoping and supporting effective scrutiny. The highest level of substantive recommendations generated by an O&S committee in 2023/24 was 33%. The lowest level was 0%. These levels should be higher to demonstrate that value is being added by the O&S function. There will continue to be a risk that scrutiny cannot be supported to plan effective work with meaningful outputs without sufficient resources. The level of resources available to support O&S will continue to be monitored through the O&S Chairs group, O&S Board and the annual reporting process to Council.		
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	18a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Use of resource, and effective wider authority engagement in O&S	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1

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ways in which the wider authority engages with those who carry out the scrutiny function (both members and officers).	18b	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – Use of resource, and effective wider authority engagement in O&S Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.	Winter 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 All committees are asked to take account of resources when considering requests for work, especially commissioned work such as working groups and additional meetings. 2 working groups were held during 23/24 and 3 additional meetings called. It was fortunate that not all committees commissioned working groups during this time as overall resource to support the function was limited by the increase in committee meetings, agreed by council in September 2023. O&S Board and Environment & Place O&S Committee in particular have adapted practices to work within resources available with more manageable committee agendas, meeting duration and greater level of member led work taking place outside of committee. All committees would benefit from retaining clear capacity within their annual work programmes to ensure space exists to respond to arising issues throughout the year without exceeding resource. Mechanisms are in place to monitor resource availability, including through this action plan, and on a regular basis through Chairs and Vice Chairs meetings. Officers will continue to provide guidance to support an O&S function that is as effective as possible within the resources available.	Complete in 23/24 – continue to monitor long-term.	R1

Relevant Extract from: **Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53)** **Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58)** **DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)**	**ID**	**Action for BCP Council with updates** **(Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)**	**RAG and timescales**	**Code**
	18d	Establish calendar of meeting dates for O&S chairs to include- monitoring the total level of resource available across the O&S function Calendar of meetings planned for 2024.	Complete	CM1
Statutory scrutiny officers				
Combined authorities, upper and single tier authorities are required to designate a statutory scrutiny officer, someone whose role is to: *• promote the role of the authority's scrutiny committee;* *• provide support to the scrutiny committee and its members; and* *• provide support and guidance to members and officers relating to the functions of the scrutiny committee.*	19a	Statutory scrutiny officer is appointed and sits within the Democratic Services Team.	Complete	R1
	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. Package of work to review constitution to strengthen areas around O&S has not yet started and will be progressed as resources allow.	Winter 2023	CR1
	19c	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – The role of the statutory scrutiny officer, to increase visibility	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	19d	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – The role of the statutory scrutiny officer, to increase visibility. Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.	Winter 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.	Complete	CMT1

Relevant Extract from: Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
		Statutory Scrutiny Officer met with CMB in November 2023 and agreed quarterly reporting of O&S Forward Plans through CMB, and encouraged directorates to consider potential O&S engagement in all significant forthcoming decisions. Quarterly meetings of Council Leader, Chief Executive, Statutory Scrutiny Officer and O&S Chairs has been agreed by all parties. This will also assist with planning for scrutiny engagement in significant forthcoming decisions.		
Officer resource models				
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.	20	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – The importance of impartial advice to O&S. Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.	Winter 2023	OT1
Selecting Committee Members				
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. *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.*	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.	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Relevant Extract from: **Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53)** **Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58)** **DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)**	**ID**	**Action for BCP Council with updates** **(Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)**	**RAG and timescales**	**Code**
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) *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.*	21b	A programme of ongoing scrutiny skills training to be developed for delivery to O&S Councillors throughout municipal year 2023/24. Following induction training, a range of development opportunities have been provided to councillors through the LGA, the South West Scrutiny Network and the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. This has included skills development around work planning, finance scrutiny, chairing, O&S leadership and scrutinising data & performance. Arising opportunities free training through scrutiny networks will continue to be promoted to O&S councillors and additional bespoke training planned according to need and budget availability. O&S Chairs meetings retain training as a standard item on agendas, to review arising training needs.	Complete, monitor long-term	MT3
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. *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.*	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. Constitution identifies that Executive lead members cannot sit on O&S.	Complete	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. Package of work to review constitution to strengthen areas around O&S has not yet started and will be progressed as resources allow.	Winter 2023	CR1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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Selecting a chair				
The Chair plays a leadership role on a scrutiny committee as they are largely responsible for establishing its profile, influence and ways of working. *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 to lead and build a sense of teamwork and consensus among committee members.*	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	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	23b	O&S Chairing skills training to be delivered to include - leadership skills. Chairing skills training provided in Summer 2023 induction. O&S leadership training provided via LGA workshops in Feb 2024. LGA leadership training to be offered to all new O&S chairs, as and when changes in positions occur.	Complete, monitor long-term	MT2
Given their pre-eminent role on the scrutiny committee, it is strongly recommended that the Chair not preside over scrutiny of their relatives	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. Package of work to review constitution to strengthen areas around O&S has not yet started and will be progressed as resources allow.	Winter 2023	CR1
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.	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'	See relevant action above.	CR1
The role of the chair				
Chairs should pay special attention to the need to guard the committee's independence. Importantly, however, they should take	26	O&S Chairing skills training to be delivered to include – independence of O&S, and the need to avoid de facto opposition role.	Complete, monitor long-term	MT2

Relevant Extract from: Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
care to avoid the committee being, and being viewed as, a de facto opposition to the executive.		Chairing skills training provided in Summer 2023 induction. O&S leadership training provided via LGA workshops in Feb 2024. LGA leadership training to be offered to all new O&S chairs, as and when changes in positions occur.		
Training for committee members				
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. *When deciding on training requirements for committee members, authorities should consider taking advantage of opportunities offered by external providers in the sector.*	27a	See action 2a above - new Councillor and refresher training on statutory powers of O&S	See relevant action above.	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. Some questioning skills training was incorporated into O&S induction training. O&S Chairs meetings retain training as a standard item on agendas, to review arising training needs. Currently, Chairs have not indicated a pressing need for additional questioning skills training. Arising opportunities for free training through scrutiny networks will continue to be promoted to O&S councillors and additional bespoke training planned according to need and budget availability.	Complete, monitor long-term	MT3
	27c	Training to be delivered by external facilitators as appropriate and according to budget available. A mix of in-house support and external facilitators have been used in training and development to date to provide additional O&S expertise and insight to specific training areas as appropriate. This approach will continue to be used according to need and budget availability.	Complete, monitor long-term.	MT3

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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: *• 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* *• Technical advisers – depending on the subject matter, independent local experts might exist who can provide advice and assistance in evaluating evidence*	28a	Facility to use external experts by O&S is already set out in constitution at Article 6, Rule 6.6.	Complete	CR1
	28b	Consideration be given to the appropriate use of external experts at the scoping stage of O&S work. Greater use of subject experts and community insight have been included in O&S since May 2023. Examples include a subject expert on the Safety Valve programme, developer input to Local Plan discussions and regular Healthwatch contributions at HASC O&S Committee. The terms of reference of the Environment & Place O&S Committee was amended by Council in September 2023, to include additional insight on sustainability matters in the form of two non-voting member independent members. Recruitment to these positions is in process. Use of community insight and evidence could be developed further still and officers will continue to encourage at the scoping stage of forthcoming work.	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1
Powers to Access Information				
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. *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*	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

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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. *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.*	29b	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – enhanced rights of O&S in relation to access to information	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
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.	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. Some committees maintain oversight of key information on a regular basis, but this is determined by committee and not currently available to committees in a standard accessible format. HASC O&S has developed a data toolkit, which gathers oversight information in a digestible format for O&S members. This has been welcomed by O&S members as an effective way to provide horizon scanning information to members allowing 'self-serve' and minimising impact on wider committee resources. This approach to be rolled out to all committees as resources allow.	Spring/ Summer 24	L1

Relevant Extract from: Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
	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. LGA training opportunities in February and March 2024 on 'Data and Managing Council Performance' was promoted to all councillors. Arising opportunities free training through scrutiny networks will continue to be promoted to O&S councillors and additional bespoke training planned according to need and budget availability.	Complete, monitor long-term	MT3
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. *Regulations already stipulate a timeframe for executives to comply with requests from a scrutiny member. When agreeing to such requests, authorities should:* *• consider whether seeking clarification from the information requester could help better target the request; and* *• Ensure the information is supplied in a format appropriate to the recipient's needs.*	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. During 23/24, where matters were scrutinised that were not already the subject of a report (eg. Cabinet report), scoping meetings were arranged between Chairs and report authors to clarify requirements. O&S Chairs engaged committee members to seek input into this. This process has been strengthened by the development of a Key Lines of Enquiry proforma, for completion for all new scrutiny items. This captures key questions and data requests and is being rolled out to all committees, providing a clearer audit trail for both committees and information providers. HASC O&S completed a working group on data and produced a Data Toolkit to capture its findings. This includes clear	Complete – monitor long-term	WS1

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		guidance on a standard data request for HASC O&S committee reports - a process that can be mirrored by the other committees.		
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.	32	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – Default position of sharing information with O&S Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.	Winter 2023	OT1
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	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.	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	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. Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.	Winter 2023	OT1
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.	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, monitor long-term.	WS1
	34c	Portfolio Holders attend O&S meetings in response to requests, or send deputies. Attendance of Portfolio Holders at O&S when requested is now well established and will continue to be encouraged.	Complete, monitor long-term.	C1

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	34d	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Requirement of Cabinet members and officers to attend scrutiny when requested	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	34e	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – Requirement of Cabinet members and officers to attend scrutiny when requested. Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.	Winter 2023	OT1
Seeking information from external organisations				
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	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 Some committees maintain oversight of key information on a regular basis, but this is determined by committee and not currently available to committees in a standard accessible format. HASC O&S has developed a data toolkit, which gathers oversight information in a digestible format for O&S members. This has been welcomed by O&S members as an effective way to provide horizon scanning information to members allowing 'self-serve' and minimising impact on wider committee resources. This approach to be rolled out to all committees as resources allow.	Spring/ Summer 24	L1
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:	36a	Guidelines for scrutinising external organisations is already included within the Council's Constitution at O&S Procedure Rule 10.	Complete	CR1

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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; *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;* *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* *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.*	36b	Develop a user-friendly protocol to assist committees with approaching, preparing for and scrutinising external organisations. Not started. To be progressed as resources allow.	Summer 2024	P1

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Following 'the Council Pound'				
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. *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*	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 Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.	Winter 2023	OT1
Planning Work				
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.	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. All O&S committees completed annual work programming in 2023/24, basing suggestions on a variety of relevant sources. To be repeated annually.	Complete, monitor long-term.	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. All committees are asked to take account of resources when considering requests for work, especially commissioned work such as working groups and additional meetings. 2 working groups were held during 23/24 and 3 additional meetings called. It was fortunate that not all committees commissioned working groups during this time as overall resource to support	Complete to varying levels of effectiveness in 23/24. Stronger approach to this to be encouraged in 24/25,	R1

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		the function was limited by the increase in committee meetings, agreed by council in September 2023. O&S Board and Environment & Place O&S Committee in particular have adapted practices to work within resources available with more manageable committee agendas, meeting duration and greater level of member led work taking place outside of committee. All committees would benefit from retaining clear capacity within their annual work programmes to ensure space exists to respond to arising issues without exceeding resource. Mechanisms are in place to monitor resource availability, including through this action plan, and on a regular basis through Chairs and Vice Chairs meetings. Officers will continue to provide guidance to support an O&S function that is as effective as possible within the resources available.	with ongoing monitoring.	
	38c	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Effective O&S Work programming and best use of resources	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	38d	Feedback is gathered on O&S outputs and a tool developed to measure the success of O&S. Not started. To be progressed as resources allow.	Summer 2024	P1
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.	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 Board, supported by O&S Chairs. This is set out in the Constitution.	Complete	CR1

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	39b	Establish calendar of meeting dates for O&S chairs to include collective leadership monitoring of O&S resource Calendar of meetings planned for 2024	Autumn 2023	CM1
Being clear about scrutiny's role				
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. *Different overall roles could include having a focus on risk, the authority's finances, or on the way the authority works with its partners.* *Applying this focus does not mean that certain subjects are 'off limits'. It is more about looking at topics and deciding whether their relative importance justifies the positive impact scrutiny's further involvement could bring.*	40	See actions 4a, b and c above – O&S 'focus', working methods and terms of reference.	See relevant actions above	WS1/ WM1/ TOR1
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.	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. Committees are well supported by senior officers in their selection of topics on a meeting-by-meeting basis with potential	Complete, monitor long -term	WS1

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		areas for value-added scrutiny identified by officers through service based training at first meetings of all committees and in annual work programming. The O&S Board and Environment & Place O&S Committee engaged in action/ learning workshops to plan their work programmes in 2023/24. These were led by CfGS and based on good practice. Both committees developed a lens and framework in liaison with the statutory scrutiny officer, which clearly identifies their role and mechanisms for engaging with the wider organisation on policy development and decisions. This will assist with communicating and championing the role of scrutiny to stakeholders. This approach to be used by all committees in future work programming. All committees would benefit from regularly assessing the value that has been added by their work, to inform future work planning.		
	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. All annual work programmes have been developed and are shared with each O&S committee agenda. Mechanisms are in place for promoting scrutiny priorities within the organisation: CMB has agreed to receive all O&S work programmes on a quarterly basis. The Leader and Chief Executive of the council have agreed to hold quarterly meetings with all O&S chairs to promote effective information sharing between O&S and executive to provide a mechanism for overcoming any barriers to effective working between the two.	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1

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		O&S lead members are regularly encouraged to form effective informal relationships with cabinet members for information sharing purposes.		
Who to speak to				
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: • *The public -* *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* *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.* • *The authority's partners –* *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:*	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	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	42b	See 3C above – use of community insight in O&S work	See relevant action above.	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 communications team in Spring 2024 to gather public insight to inform future annual work programming in Summer 2024. Not started.	Spring 2024	COM1
	42d	See 35 above: 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	See relevant action above.	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.	Complete, encourage greater engagement	C1

Relevant Extract from: Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
o Public sector partners (like the NHS and community safety partners, over which scrutiny has specific legal powers); *o Voluntary sector partners;* *o Contractors and commissioning partners (including partners in joint ventures and authority-owned companies);* *o In parished areas, town, community and parish councils;* *o Neighbouring principal councils (both in two-tier and unitary areas);* *o Cross-authority bodies and organisations, such as Local Enterprise Partnerships; and* *o Others with a stake and interest in the local area – large local employers, for example.* • *The executive –* *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 the best opportunities to influence the authority's wider work.*		All Portfolio Holders were asked to contribute O&S annual work planning by providing information on forthcoming priorities to enable O&S to plan work that can align and add value. Responses to this request varied and would benefit from becoming a more widely promoted and embedded practice in the next round of annual work programming.	in next round of annual work-programming.	
	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	See relevant action above.	C1
	42g	See 7d 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.	See relevant action above.	RD1
Information sources				
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: *• Performance information from across the authority and its partners;* *• Finance and risk information from across the authority and its partners;*	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.	See relevant action above.	L1

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• *Corporate complaints information, and aggregated information from political groups about the subject matter of members' surgeries;* • *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* • *Reports and recommendations issued by relevant ombudsmen, especially the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.* *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*				
	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. The presumption for information shared with O&S to be public is already an embedded practice, with appropriate consideration given on an arising basis to O&S requests for non-public information.	Complete, monitor long-term.	L1
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.	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. O&S Committees have received targeted training and support throughout the year to assist in this aim. O&S Board have made use of the member-led rapporteur model in work on Blue Badge waiting times. Other committees have agreed information which can be circulated outside of meetings to free up committee time and/or have held informal briefings for information only items. This approach could be significantly strengthened further across all committees. Analysis of 23/24 work outputs across all committees show an overbalance of monitoring/update reports, with this taking up the majority of work for 4 out of 5 committees operating in this period. This is taking up time that could be used for other value-added scrutiny.	In annual work programming for O&S Committees – Autumn 2023	WM1

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		Greater use could be made of other methods, such as rapporteurs, to maintain overview of information otherwise reported into committee. This approach will continue to be encouraged across all committees. Being more greatly aligned to a performance and oversight role, Children's Services and HASC O&S Committees would particularly benefit from an ongoing rigorous approach to committee agenda planning, to ensure that all information sharing items are received in other ways. Officers will continue to support this approach.		
Shortlisting topics				
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: *• Do we understand the benefits scrutiny would bring to this issue?* *• How could we best carry out work on this subject?* *• What would be the best outcome of this work?* *• How would this work engage with the activity of the executive and other decision-makers, including partners?*	45a	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. – In annual work programming for O&S Committees and ongoing, during work programming discussions at each meeting. The use of the 'scrutiny request form' is embedded for councillor requests. It is not currently used for requests to consider other items such as Cabinet items or officer proposed items. O&S Chairs have confirmed that they do not feel a documented process for officer or cabinet requests is necessary. Careful consideration of the likely benefits of all intended work prior to commencement, regardless of origin, will continue to be encouraged by officers that support O&S.	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1

Relevant Extract from: **Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53)** **Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58)** **DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)**	**ID**	**Action for BCP Council with updates** **(Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)**	**RAG and timescales**	**Code**
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. *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.*	45b	Review 'scrutiny request form' and update as appropriate to incorporate all suggested areas referenced in O&S guidance. Not started. To be progressed as resources allow.	Autumn 2023	P1
	45c	See 18c above: 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	See relevant action above.	R1
Carrying out work				
Selected topics can be scrutinised in several ways, including: ***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;* *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;* *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;*	46a	Methods of carrying out O&S work are set out within the Constitution at Article 6, Rule 6.9.	Complete	CR1
	46b	Support committees to actively consider diverse ways of working other than committee reports to secure most effective outputs. O&S ways of working were considered through O&S work planning activity for all committees. Officers also encourage consideration of diverse ways of working on an ongoing basis as work programmes are revised.	Complete, monitor long-term	WM1
	46c	Review and develop task and finish/ working group scoping document, protocol and joint working group protocol Not started. To be progressed as resources allow.	Summer 2024	P1

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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 *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.*				
Evidence sessions				
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. *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.*	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. Some committees invited evidence into scrutiny from additional sources during 23/24 but evidence sessions were not widely used. Initial plans are in place for a joint O&S housing related inquiry day to take evidence from a variety of sources, during 24/25. Planning and conducting evidence sessions is resource intensive and support is limited to support this owing to the high volume of committee meetings planned for O&S and associated core work. The approach will therefore continue to be promoted as an effective form of scrutiny to be taken up as resources allow.	Action will progress as resources allow.	WM1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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How to plan				
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.	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	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
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. *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.*	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 Chairing skills training provided in Summer 2023 induction. O&S leadership training provided via LGA workshops in Feb 2024. LGA leadership training to be offered to all new O&S chairs, as and when changes in positions occur.	Complete, monitor long-term.	MT2
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, unless the session is part of a wider inquiry, enough evidence should have been gathered to allow the chair to set a clear direction.	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 work items to ensure Chairs can provide transparent summary of discussions. Chairing skills training provided in Summer 2023 induction. O&S leadership training provided via LGA workshops in Feb 2024. LGA leadership training to be offered to all new O&S chairs, as and when changes in positions occur.	Complete, monitor long-term	MT2

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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				
Developing recommendations				
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. *The drafting of reports is usually, but not always, carried out by officers, directed by members.*	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. Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.	Winter 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. This is included as standard within scoping documents for O&S working groups. Wider piece of work to review protocols (46c) not yet started. To be progressed as resources allow.	Immediate, as arising (WS1/R1) Protocol review Summer 2024 (P1)	WS1/R1/ P1
Authorities draft reports and recommendations in a number of ways, but there are normally three stages: *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;* *ii. The development of those findings, which will set out some areas on which recommendations might be made; and* *iii. the drafting of the full report.* *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.*	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.	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1

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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.				
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	53	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – The role of executive member consultation during draft reporting stages.	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
Chief Executive's Assurance Review, June 2023 – recommendations and comments relating to O&S				
In a No Overall Control council it is useful to ensure there is an opportunity to elect a Chair from outside of the administration to each Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to ensure appropriate scrutiny and holding the Executive to account. *Opposition councillors have recently been given a majority of positions on the principal Overview and Scrutiny committees as a result of changes in the political balance calculations. Opposition councillors appear to be content to keep Conservative councillors as Chairs for the Committees where they are already in place, for the remainder of this Council term.*	54a	Since May 2023 all O&S Committees have appointed a Chair, and in most cases, a Vice-Chair from outside of the Administration.	Complete – monitor long term.	CL1
	54b	Action relating to potential constitutional changes to clarify the good practice of opposition chairs outlined at 8c above.	See relevant action above.	CR1
Overview and scrutiny committees are to be encouraged to take evidence and contributions from officers as well as portfolio holders, to ensure a more informed basis to O&S recommendations. *There is still a marked reluctance amongst the broader overview and scrutiny committees to ask questions directly of officers and*	55	Multiple actions relating to O&S powers to question, skills training, and planning of evidence sessions are outlined above. These will all assist with encouraging evidence and contributions from officers as well as portfolio holders, to increase the effectiveness of scrutiny sessions. See 9a, 9b, 9c, 27b and 48 above.	See relevant actions above	See relevant actions above

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there are regular comments that leading councillors do not give clear answers to questions, but other councillors do not seek that clarity from officers, which they could. *Since June there has been a noticeable shift in emphasis within the Council, with officers being invited to contribute on specific issues in Cabinet and this need needs to be extended to O&S committees* *Continue to encourage full participation and clarity of answers in all meetings, and incorporate into training for Overview and Scrutiny committee members.*				
Overview and scrutiny committees should continue to increase their focus on policy development and engagement rather than pre-Cabinet scrutiny.	56a	Update text lifted from Assurance Review Action Plan: Prior to the May 2023 elections there was little movement in the focus of the two new Overview and Scrutiny committees (Place and Corporate & Community) that replaced O&S Board, with an ongoing focus on pre-Cabinet scrutiny. At the end of 23/24 this had changed to a maximum level of 53% of items being within the pre-decision scrutiny category for O&S Board, with all other committees at a lower level. Since the elections the administration sought to restructure Overview and Scrutiny, to establish a closer link to the Cabinet cycle for one O&S Committee but keeping the other 3 committees removed from the Cabinet cycle. This was implemented in September 2023. The policy development role for O&S was incorporated into training for Overview and Scrutiny committee members, to foster a wider role for Overview and Scrutiny committees, underpinned by officer encouragement. O&S forward plans now show a more balanced mix of work, an example of this is a	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1

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		recent O&S investigation into blue badge waiting times with a view to establishing necessary policy changes. Officers should encourage, raise awareness and provide training on an ongoing basis to ensure that the O&S function focuses on a balance of work including policy development. CMB has agreed to regularly receive O&S work plans to provide opportunity to encourage policy development, and the Scrutiny Officer encourages regular communication with O&S chairs to assist in identifying these opportunities. The changes to the O&S structure introduced ability for the Environment and Place O&S Committee to appoint two independent members establishing an opportunity to scrutinise from a fresh perspective. To give a wider set of input the O&S Board has also taken evidence from other organisations, including two representatives of the private development industry when considering the draft Local Plan. Three workshops were held with CfGS support to develop work programming approaches to include more proactive scrutiny work. The E&P O&S Committee and O&S Board have developed a framework for how they will approach and include a balance of pre-decision, proactive and reactive scrutiny into their work plans. .		
	56b	Ongoing support to promote a balance of O&S work is identified through multiple actions above. Encouraging an effective balance of scrutiny work involves many factors including effective engagement with Cabinet and senior officers to ensure O&S understanding of forthcoming	See relevant actions above	See relevant actions above

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		priorities; training; work planning actions and monitoring and reporting on scrutiny outputs to ensure Council ownership of the balance of O&S work. These actions will embed a practice of selecting topics which generate meaningful outcomes and balance policy engagement with pre-Cabinet scrutiny. See actions 1c, 4b,7b,7c,7d, 14a, 38c, 38d, 41, 42e, 43a, 45a above.		
Overview and scrutiny committees should consider putting more focus into corporate performance reporting, challenging the executive to ensure that improvement plans are having an effect and improving the services that are missing their targets. *There is an opportunity to strengthen the focus of O&S on performance management, through the overview and scrutiny committees.* *Incorporate into training for Overview and Scrutiny committee members and monitor agendas, encouraging Overview and Scrutiny Committees to focus on performance management information.*	57	See 30a and 30b above relating to the provision of performance management information and associated training.	See relevant actions above	See relevant actions above
Need to ensure the party whip is not applied to O&S functions. This message needs to be reinforced and the situation monitored. *There has been no recent evidence of the party whip being applied to O&S functions, but this needs to be monitored. A positive statement will be sought from Group Leaders.*	58	Actions relating to training, chairing and monitoring the independence of O&S are set out above. See 8b, 8d,8e, 16a and 16c and 26 above.	See relevant actions above	See relevant actions above

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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DLUHC External Assurance Review of BCP Council, August 2023 – recommendations and comments relating to O&S				
The Council reviews the Transformation programme and agrees a realistic and deliverable programme by October 2023. The Council sets up effective mechanisms for Member oversight and monitoring of the delivery of the programme by June 2023	59	O&S to consider and establish its role in this member oversight and monitoring. A mechanism for O&S oversight has been established. The O&S Board Chair and Vice Chair are members of the cross-party councillor working group now established to monitor the Transformation Programme. This provides a mechanism for O&S to maintain oversight of assurances or concerns relating to the programme with red flags able to be raised to committee by exception. When available, Cabinet reports monitoring the Transformation Programme are also received by the O&S Board.	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1
The Council establishes a sound budget setting process and begins preparations for the 2024/25 budget as soon as possible after the local government elections and has proposals drafted for a sustainable MTFP and three-year budget by the end of September 2023	60	O&S to consider and establish its role in the budget setting process The O&S Board monitors any areas of risk and concern within the MTFP through regular reporting at committee. The 2024/25 budget was considered by the O&S Board in January 2024 with invitation to other O&S Chairs to contribute on budget matters relating to services within their committee remit. Early plans are in place for a more active role for O&S in the budget setting process for 2025/26, with input through the year as the budget develops. This is in line with refreshed guidance on good practice from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. This has been discussed with O&S Chairs, relevant portfolio holders and senior officers and there is good support to this approach. This will be advanced throughout 2024/25, as permitted by resources available.	In annual work programming for O&S Committees – Autumn 2023	WS1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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The Council, with the active leadership of the respective group leaders, uses the opportunity of a new Council to reset the Member / Member and Member / officer culture and relationships. The new Council must use the support offered by the LGA and set up a comprehensive programme of Member induction and an on-going programme of Member training. The induction programme should be in place by June 2023 and the ongoing programme by July 2023	61a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided. Complete. See all actions coded MT1 above.	See relevant actions above.	MT1
	61b	See 21b above - A programme of ongoing scrutiny skills training to be developed for delivery to O&S Councillors throughout municipal year 2023/24.	See relevant action above.	MT3
	61c	See 23b above – O&S Chairing and leadership skills support to be provided.	See relevant action above.	MT2
	61d	LGA training opportunities to be taken up. The LGA has been widely engaged to provide support to O&S since May 2023. This includes Leadership Academy training, in-house delivery of support for O&S work programming and promotion of LGA online training courses to councillors.	Complete. Continue to take up opportunities on an ongoing basis.	WS1
The Council puts in place a regular annual cycle for the business plans, mid-year reviews and year end reviews of all its companies to be reported to the appropriate scrutiny and decision-making bodies. This should be in place by June 2023 to begin the 2024/25 process	62	O&S to consider and establish its role in this review process. This has not yet been established. To be revisited with O&S Board Chair.	In annual work programming for O&S Committees – Autumn 2023	WS1
The Council has four scrutiny committees – Corporate and Community; Children's Services; Health and Adult Social Care, and Place. Scrutiny has focused rather heavily on pre scrutiny of Cabinet decisions rather than having a broader focus or looking at policy development. I was told by a range of people that politics has got in the way of effective scrutiny. When scrutiny has looked at wider issues the feedback has been more positive – I was told of	63	See 56a and 56b above.	See relevant actions above	See relevant actions above

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a good example of scrutiny inviting the Police and Crime Commissioner and neighbourhood watch representatives to a scrutiny committee. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny summarise scrutiny's role as providing a space to bring critical friend challenge and support to decision making; providing a way of challenging and supporting partner organisations; bringing issues that matter to local people and the local community into decision making; and surface issues that the Council should be engaging with but which are not yet part of formal decision making. *From what I have seen there is an opportunity at BCP – as there is with many other councils – to develop the scrutiny role along the lines above rather than simply to focus on pre-cabinet scrutiny. There is an opportunity with a new Council to ensure that Councillors have training and support to enable them to develop their role in overview and scrutiny. This should be built into the Member induction and ongoing training programme.*				
The DfE Advisor has commented that the Scrutiny Committee [Children's Services O&S] *and particularly its Chair (prior to the elections) have been engaged in a proper and appropriate way. The Chair of scrutiny prior to the elections has now been appointed as the Cabinet Member and therefore the Statutory Lead Member for Children's Services. Given the position of children's services the change in both the Cabinet Member and Scrutiny Chair roles will need careful management and both Members will need focussed support to discharge these key roles.*	64a	Work programming support provided summer 2023. Further support to be provided to complete annual work programming. All Children's Services O&S work planning now complete.	Complete in 23/24. To be repeated annually on ongoing basis.	CS1
	64b	Focussed support provided by service area lead to identify and provide relevant performance information to support the committee in its role. Service area lead for performance and governance has provided support to Children's O&S Chair and committee. This is well established and provided on an ongoing basis. Offer of regular meetings between Director of Children's Services to the Chair of Children's O&S Committee was made.	Offer of support completed in 23/24 – will continue to be offered with take-up monitored on an	CS1

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			ongoing basis.	
	64c	Ongoing training plan for the Committee in development. The committee held a training and development session to support work programme priorities and officers have supported ongoing information based training needs as arising. Offer of LGA training and support to full committee has been refreshed in summer 2024 and will be promoted to the committee by officers. A programme of briefing slots will be planned in for 2024/25 to be used as required. Along with other scrutiny network training opportunities, this should be drawn together in a documented package of development to ensure all necessary areas are covered.	Autumn 2023	CS1
	64d	Establish links with O&S Chairs in other authorities that have experience of similar improvement journey. Links established and provided to the Chair summer 2023.	Complete, monitor take-up of opportunities ongoing.	CS1
	64e	LGA development opportunities promoted to Chair. LGA hosted Children's Services Leadership training provided to Chair in Autumn 2023. This is in addition to the Chairing and leadership skills training identified at 61c and 61d above. Attendance at the National Children and Adult Services Conference was also supported in Autumn 2023 to provide learning and networking opportunities to chair. Offer of LGA training and support to full committee, including mentoring support for chair, has been refreshed in summer 2024 and will be promoted to the committee by officers.	Complete. Development opportunities will continue to be promoted and take-up monitored on ongoing basis.	CS1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24