

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 2023 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](#) was 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
	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				
<i>The prevailing organisational culture, behaviours and attitudes of an authority will largely determine whether its scrutiny function succeeds or fails. While everyone in an authority can play a role in creating an environment conducive to effective scrutiny, it is important that this is led and owned by members, given their role in setting and maintaining the culture of an authority.</i>	1a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – O&S in BCP is Member led	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 <i>Action delayed and will be rescheduled for development in lead up to next council term.</i>	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				
<i>Recognising scrutiny's legal and democratic legitimacy – all members and officers should recognise and appreciate the importance and legitimacy the scrutiny function is afforded by the law. It was created to act as a check and balance on the executive and is a statutory requirement for all authorities operating executive arrangements and for combined authorities.</i>	2a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Background and statutory powers of O&S, to raise the profile and importance of the scrutiny function within the organisation.	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 <i>Provided to senior officers in Winter 2024/ Spring 2025. Training included a CfGS led workshop with scrutiny and executive members and had a focus on embedding a clear understanding of scrutiny fundamentals and developing a positive scrutiny culture with all stakeholders across the organisation.</i>	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	OT1

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
<i>Scrutiny draws on community insight and selects topics of community relevance</i>				
<i>Councillors have a unique legitimacy derived from their being democratically elected. The insights that they can bring by having this close connection to local people are part of what gives scrutiny its value.</i>	3a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Councillors bring community insight to their scrutiny work	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 by a proposed scrutiny topic. Use of this form is now embedded across the function and 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 and committee discussions regularly include resident impact as a scrutiny enquiry line. Officers will continue to encourage selection of O&S topics that have tangible benefit to residents.	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. Councillors regularly suggest scrutiny topics based on their community insight and there has been an increase in topics with a public focus, with some topics being generated through matters raised to Council through public representations.	Complete, monitor long-term and revisit in annual work programming for all committees.	CI1

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)		Officers will continue to maintain focus on community insight and evidence based scrutiny when assisting councillors in work planning and scoping.		
	3d	Develop O&S web pages to clarify public role in O&S, ways to engage and improve ease of access for topic suggestion. Action delayed and will be advanced as resources allow.	Autumn 2024	WP1
Scrutiny has a clear role and focus				
<i>Identifying a clear role and focus – authorities should take steps to ensure scrutiny has a clear role and focus within the organisation, i.e. a niche within which it can clearly demonstrate it adds value. Therefore, prioritisation is necessary to ensure the scrutiny function concentrates on delivering work that is of genuine value and relevance to the work of the wider authority – this is one of the most challenging parts of scrutiny, and a critical element to get right if it is to be recognised as a strategic function of the authority</i>	4a	Scrutiny committees agree a clear communicable role or focus for the year when planning their work programme in order to assist in topic selection and in ensuring that stakeholders can anticipate which topics are likely to be of interest to scrutiny, and plan accordingly for engagement. This may be in the form of a 'lens' (eg. risk) through which to scrutinise topics, or a key priority or set of priorities for a committee (eg. 'budget' or 'ofsted improvement plan') Three out of four O&S committees have agreed a lens for their topic selection and scrutiny approach. The Children's O&S Committee chose not to agree a lens. This will be revisited in future work planning activity to ensure the lenses remain fit for purpose.	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1
	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. Working methods have been diversified to make better use of meeting resource. Information based reporting is regularly	Complete, monitor long-term.	WM1

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)		received outside of meetings of through a series of regular informal briefings, now established for each committee. Pre-decision scrutiny levels fell in 2023/4 and have remained stable in 2024/25. There has been an increase in the use of rapporteurs and the approach will be further embedded in 2025/26. There were 2 additional meetings held in 2024/25 which demonstrates that committee based work is mainly keeping to meeting capacity. In 2024/25 meeting duration was long in some cases, resulting in loss of members and less effective scrutiny for some items of business. All committees would benefit from a continued consistent focus on prioritisation to keep to a maximum of 3 items per agenda.		
	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
<i>There is a clear distinction between scrutiny and audit</i>				
<i>Authorities should ensure a clear division of responsibilities between the scrutiny function and the audit function. While it is appropriate for scrutiny to pay due regard to the authority's financial position, this will need to happen in the context of the formal audit role. The authority's section 151 officer should advise scrutiny on how to manage this dynamic</i>	5a	Division of responsibility already established within the Articles of the Constitution.	Complete	CR1
	5b	A&G chair invitation to be scheduled into annual programme of O&S Chairs meetings A&G Chair & Vice Chair are now invited to O&S Chairs meetings as standard.	Complete	CM1
<i>While scrutiny has no role in the investigation or oversight of the authority's whistleblowing arrangements, the findings of independent whistleblowing investigations might be of interest to scrutiny committees as they consider their wider implications.</i>	6	Develop a library of O&S oversight information, provided in an online format for Councillors to access independently, to include – The findings of independent whistleblowing investigations HASC O&S Committee has developed a data toolkit, which gathers data and policy information in a digestible format for	Spring/ Summer 2024	L1

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
		O&S members. This to be rolled out to all committees to include whistleblowing information. Action nearing completion for Children's Svs O&S Committee and is delayed for other committees. Will be progressed according to resource availability.		
The relationship between scrutiny and the executive is effective				
<i>Ensuring early and regular engagement between the executive and scrutiny – authorities should ensure early and regular discussion takes place between scrutiny and the executive, especially regarding the latter's future work programme.</i>	7a	Portfolio Holders attend O&S meetings when requested, or send deputies 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. This request remains in place as the Cabinet Forward Plan population could be strengthened. This relies on officers registering planned decisions early. This would give O&S members sufficient time to seek further information on forthcoming issues and plan scrutiny more effectively.	Immediate and ongoing request to Cabinet	C1
	7c	The Constitution sets out that it is good practice for there to be regular, informal dialogue between O&S leads and Portfolio Holders in order that O&S can understand developing Cabinet priorities, discuss and assess the value that Overview and Scrutiny can provide and contribute in a timely way to policy development (O&S Procedure Rule 8.3). Officers regularly encourage this action and some Chairs now have regular meetings in place for this purpose.	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.	Autumn 2023	RD1

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)		Role description development has been delayed and will be rescheduled for completion in lead up to next council term, however lead O&S members are regularly encouraged to develop informal working arrangements with relevant Portfolio Holders and some now have regular meetings in place for this purpose.		
	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. Lines of accountability are identified between each area of responsibility under a Portfolio Holder and the relevant O&S committee. This document is 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. Changes are reported annually as standard in the O&S annual report where required.	Complete, monitor annually through annual report process.	AR1
<i>The executive should not try to exercise control over the work of the scrutiny committee. This could be direct, e.g. by purporting to 'order' scrutiny to look at, or not look at, certain issues, or indirect, e.g. through the use of the whip or as a tool of political patronage, and the committee itself should remember its statutory purpose when carrying out its work. All members and officers should consider the role the scrutiny committee plays to be that of a 'critical friend' not a de facto 'opposition'. Scrutiny chairs have a particular role to play in establishing the profile and nature of their committee</i>	8a	O&S considers work requested by Cabinet or Council using the criteria written into the constitution - Criteria already exists in constitution and is used to assess requests. A notable increase in requests from Cabinet and Council have been seen during 2024/25, demonstrating greater council-wide understanding of the role O&S can play in supporting the objectives of the council.	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.	Complete. Monitor the need for	MT1

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)		The message was reinforced in training and the CEx had written confirmation from every Group Leader in 2024 that the party whip, or similar, will not be applied around the Overview and Scrutiny functions.	refresher training.	
	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. Role description development has been delayed and will be rescheduled for completion in lead up to next council term, however some O&S Chairs have established pre-meetings successfully to develop a scrutiny 'team' mindset and move away from political party lines, and officers continue to encourage these.	Autumn 2023	RD1
	8e	O&S Chairing skills training to be delivered to include the benefit of pre-meetings, and management of political dynamics in scrutiny to avoid a de facto opposition approach. Chairing skills training provided in Summer 2023 induction. Higher level of training through LGA leadership courses has	Complete, monitor long-term.	MT2

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		been offered to all O&S chairs, including following chairmanship changes to ensure continuity of expertise.		
<i>The chair of the scrutiny committee should determine the nature and extent of an executive member's participation in a scrutiny committee meeting, and in any informal scrutiny task group meeting</i>	9a	Clarity of O&S powers in determining attendees and participation already written into constitution at O&S Procedure Rule 9.1	Complete	CR1
	9b	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Clarity of scrutiny's powers in determining attendees and participation in O&S.	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 and external witnesses being invited to contribute on specific issues at scrutiny as appropriate. The range of inquiry from councillors to both portfolio holders and officers is now more diverse and this will continue to be encouraged.	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1
Managing disagreement				
<i>Effective scrutiny involves looking at issues that can be politically contentious. It is therefore inevitable that, at times, an executive will disagree with the findings or recommendations of a scrutiny committee. It is the job of both the executive and scrutiny to work together to reduce the risk of this happening, and authorities should take steps to predict, identify and act on disagreement. One way in which this can be done is via an 'executive-scrutiny protocol' which can help define the relationship between the two and mitigate any differences of opinion before they manifest</i>	10	Executive members and O&S Chairs group to consider the value for BCP in preparing an executive – scrutiny protocol. Executive – scrutiny protocol in development following development session held with CfGS in 2025. Executive members and officers are now also invited into a series of meetings with O&S leads to give opportunity to discuss common aims and barriers to effective scrutiny.	Winter 2023	C1/ CM1

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<i>themselves in unhelpful and unproductive ways. The benefit of this approach is that it provides a framework for disagreement and debate, and a way to manage it when it happens. Often, the value of such a protocol lies in the dialogue that underpins its preparation. It is important that these protocols are reviewed on a regular basis.</i>				
<i>Scrutiny committees do have the power to 'call in' decisions, i.e. ask the executive to reconsider them before they are implemented, but should not view it as a substitute for early involvement in the decision-making process or as a party-political tool.</i>	11	Use of call-in be monitored and reflected within annual report to Council. Call-in frequency is now reflected in the O&S annual report as standard as a measure of governance health.	Complete, monitor annually through annual report process.	AR1
Ensuring impartial advice from officers				
<i>Authorities, particularly senior officers, should ensure all officers are free to provide impartial advice to scrutiny committees. This is fundamental to effective scrutiny. Of particular importance is the role played by 'statutory officers' – the monitoring officer, the section 151 officer and the head of paid service, and where relevant the statutory scrutiny officer. These individuals have a particular role in ensuring that timely, relevant and high-quality advice is provided to scrutiny.</i>	12	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – The importance of impartial advice to O&S Provided to senior officers in Winter 2024/ Spring 2025. Training included a CfGS led workshop with scrutiny and executive members and had a focus on embedding a clear understanding of scrutiny fundamentals and developing a positive scrutiny culture with all stakeholders across the organisation.	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	OT1
Communicating scrutiny's role and purpose to the wider authority				
<i>The scrutiny function can often lack support and recognition within an authority because there is a lack of awareness among both members and officers about the specific role it plays, which individuals are involved and its relevance to the authority's wider work. Authorities should, therefore, take steps to ensure all members and officers are made aware of the role the scrutiny committee plays in the organisation, its value and the outcomes it can deliver, the powers it has, its membership and, if appropriate, the identity of those providing officer support.</i>	13	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – The identity of those providing officer support to O&S. Provided to senior officers in Winter 2024/ Spring 2025. Training included a CfGS led workshop with scrutiny and executive members and had a focus on embedding a clear understanding of scrutiny fundamentals and developing a positive scrutiny culture with all stakeholders across the organisation.	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	OT1

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Maintaining the interest of full Council in the work of the scrutiny committee				
<i>Part of communicating scrutiny's role and purpose to the wider authority should happen through the formal, public role of full Council – particularly given that scrutiny will undertake valuable work to highlight challenging issues that an authority will be facing and subjects that will be a focus of full Council's work. Authorities should therefore take steps to ensure full Council is informed of the work the scrutiny committee is doing.</i>	14a	Report annually to Council on the work of scrutiny, and progress on actions to improve scrutiny. <i>Annual report is received by Council annually as standard. 2025 report has been delayed on account of resource availability and will report during winter 2025.</i>	Complete, repeat annually.	AR1
<i>One way in which this can be done is by reports and recommendations being submitted to full Council rather than solely to the executive. Scrutiny should decide when it would be appropriate to submit reports for wider debate in this way, taking into account the relevance of reports to full Council business, as well as full Council's capacity to consider and respond in a timely manner. Such reports would supplement the annual report to full Council on scrutiny's activities and raise awareness of ongoing work.</i>	14b	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – The appropriate route for recommendations to full Council or Cabinet	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. <i>Package of work to review constitution to strengthen areas around O&S has not yet started and will be progressed as resources allow.</i>	Spring 2024	CR1
Communicating scrutiny's role to the public				
<i>Authorities should ensure scrutiny has a profile in the wider community. Consideration should be given to how and when to engage the authority's communications officers, and any other relevant channels, to understand how to get that message across. This will usually require engagement early on in the work programming process</i>	15a	Consideration be given to the promotion of outcomes via Communications Team at the scoping stage of O&S work. <i>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.</i>	In annual work programming for O&S Committees – Autumn 2023	COM1

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	15b	O&S webpage development - See action 3d above.	See relevant action above.	See relevant action above.
Ensuring scrutiny members are supported in having an independent mindset				
<i>Formal committee meetings provide a vital opportunity for scrutiny members to question the executive and officers. Inevitably, some committee members will come from the same political party as a member they are scrutinising and might well have a long-standing personal, or familial, relationship with them.</i>	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
<i>Scrutiny members should bear in mind, however, that adopting an independent mind-set is fundamental to carrying out their work effectively. In practice, this is likely to require scrutiny chairs working proactively to identify any potentially contentious issues and plan how to manage them.</i>	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 meeting adjustments. Contentious issues such as Poole Park and CGR scrutiny - which included significant councillor and external interest - have been well managed by Chairs resulting in orderly meetings with good opportunity for additional input from interested parties.	Complete, monitor long-term	WS1
	16c	Establish calendar of meeting dates for O&S chairs to include-monitoring the independence of O&S Calendar of meetings planned for 2025/26.	Complete	CM1
Resourcing scrutiny				
<i>The resource an authority allocates to the scrutiny function plays a pivotal role in determining how successful that function is and therefore the value it can add to the work of the authority.</i> <i>Ultimately it is up to each authority to decide on the resource it provides, but every authority should recognise that creating and</i>	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 available to support Overview and Scrutiny are stretched and the level of O&S activity against officer	Resource monitoring completed in 23/24 and 2024/25, but requires careful	R1/ CMT1

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<i>sustaining an effective scrutiny function requires them to allocate resources to it.</i> <i>When deciding on the level of resource to allocate to the scrutiny function, the factors an authority should consider include: • Scrutiny's legal powers and responsibilities; • The particular role and remit scrutiny will play in the authority; • The training requirements of scrutiny members and support officers, particularly the support needed to ask effective questions of the executive and other key partners, and make effective recommendations; • The need for ad hoc external support where expertise does not exist in the council; • Effectively-resourced scrutiny has been shown to add value to the work of authorities, improving their ability to meet the needs of local people; and • Effectively-resourced scrutiny can help policy formulation and so minimise the need for call-in of executive decisions</i>		resource is significantly higher in BCP Council than some other comparative councils. This has been well documented in O&S annual reports to Council and CMB to raise awareness. The most significant pressures relate to previous and cumulative Council decisions to increase the number of O&S committees and meeting numbers over time, not matched by officer resource to support these. Accompanied by an increase in other committees also resourced by the same team (Democratic Services) the overall resource available to support Overview and Scrutiny work has reduced whilst the level of O&S activity has increased. The impact of this has been a slow rate of progression for planned work, delays to strategic O&S work (such as annual work programme activity), limited resource available to respond to arising issues throughout the year and the likelihood that O&S outcomes have been limited in value as planned work has not benefitted from effective levels of officer support. Proposals have been made to Council in the 2025 annual report to reduce concurrent working group numbers and promote a 'quality of quantity' approach to O&S work. The outcome and impact of any changes agreed will be monitored by the O&S Chairs group and through future annual reports to Council.	ongoing monitoring	
<i>Authorities should also recognise that support for scrutiny committees, task groups and other activities is not solely about budgets and provision of officer time, although these are clearly extremely important elements. Effective support is also about the</i>	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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<i>ways in which the wider authority engages with those who carry out the scrutiny function (both members and officers).</i>	18b	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – Use of resource, and effective wider authority engagement in O&S <i>Provided to senior officers in Winter 2024/ Spring 2025. Training included a CfGS led workshop with scrutiny and executive members and had a focus on embedding a clear understanding of scrutiny fundamentals and developing a positive scrutiny culture with all stakeholders across the organisation.</i>	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	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 <i>All committees are asked to take account of resources when considering requests for work, especially commissioned work such as working groups and additional meetings. Officer resource to support O&S work has been limited and has resulted in delays to topic progression. To address this, proposals have been made to Council in the 2025 annual report to reduce concurrent working group numbers and promote a 'quality of quantity' approach to O&S work. The outcome and impact of any changes agreed will be monitored by the O&S Chairs group and through future annual reports to Council.</i>	Complete in 23/24 – continue to monitor resource long-term.	R1
	18d	Establish calendar of meeting dates for O&S chairs to include-monitoring the total level of resource available across the O&S function <i>Calendar of meetings planned for 2025/26.</i>	Complete	CM1
Statutory scrutiny officers				
<i>Combined authorities, upper and single tier authorities are required to designate a statutory scrutiny officer, someone whose role is to:</i> <i>promote the role of the authority's scrutiny committee;</i> <i>provide support to the scrutiny committee and its members; and</i>	19a	Statutory scrutiny officer is appointed and sits within the Democratic Services Team.	Complete	R1

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64) <i>• provide support and guidance to members and officers relating to the functions of the scrutiny committee.</i>				
	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. <i>Package of work to review constitution to strengthen areas around O&S has not yet started and will be progressed as resources allow.</i>	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. <i>Provided to senior officers in Winter 2024/ Spring 2025. Training included a CfGS led workshop with scrutiny and executive members and had a focus on embedding a clear understanding of scrutiny fundamentals and developing a positive scrutiny culture with all stakeholders across the organisation.</i>	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	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. <i>O&S Specialist attends CMB as required to discuss key issues. Council Leader, Chief Executive, Sec 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer now invited into regular meetings with O&S Chairs to assist in identifying key issues to O&S.</i>	Complete	CMT1

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Officer resource models				
<i>Authorities should ensure that, whatever model they employ, officers tasked with providing scrutiny support are able to provide impartial advice. This might require consideration of the need to build safeguards into the way that support is provided. The nature of these safeguards will differ according to the specific role scrutiny plays in the organisation.</i>	20	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – The importance of impartial advice to O&S. Provided to senior officers in Winter 2024/ Spring 2025. Training included a CfGS led workshop with scrutiny and executive members and had a focus on embedding a clear understanding of scrutiny fundamentals and developing a positive scrutiny culture with all stakeholders across the organisation.	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	OT1
Selecting Committee Members				
<i>Selecting the right members to serve on scrutiny committees is essential if those committees are to function effectively. Where a committee is made up of members who have the necessary skills and commitment, it is far more likely to be taken seriously by the wider authority.</i>	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

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
<i>When selecting individual members to serve on scrutiny committees, an authority should consider a member's experience, expertise, interests, ability to act impartially, ability to work as part of a group, and capacity to serve.</i> <i>Authorities should not take into account a member's perceived level of support for or opposition to a particular political party (notwithstanding the wider legal requirement for proportionality)</i> <i>Members invariably have different skill-sets. What an authority must consider when forming a committee is that, as a group, it possesses the requisite expertise, commitment and ability to act impartially to fulfil its functions.</i>	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 bespoke in-house training to develop work programming and a collective understanding of a positive scrutiny culture. Online training opportunities are regularly promoted and taken up by councillors and O&S Chairs meetings have training as a standard item on agendas to review arising needs.	Complete, monitor long-term	MT3
<i>Authorities are reminded that members of the executive cannot be members of a scrutiny committee. Authorities should take care to ensure that, as a minimum, members holding less formal executive positions, e.g. as Cabinet assistants, do not sit on scrutinising committees looking at portfolios to which those roles relate.</i> <i>Authorities should articulate in their constitutions how conflicts of interest, including familial links between executive and scrutiny responsibilities should be managed, including where members stand down from the executive and move to a scrutiny role, and vice-versa.</i>	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

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Selecting a chair				
<i>The Chair plays a leadership role on a scrutiny committee as they are largely responsible for establishing its profile, influence and ways of working.</i> <i>The attributes authorities should and should not take into account when selecting individual committee members also apply to the selection of the Chair, but the Chair should also possess the ability to lead and build a sense of teamwork and consensus among committee members.</i>	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. Higher level of training through LGA leadership courses has been offered to all O&S chairs, including following chairmanship changes to ensure continuity of expertise.	Complete, monitor long-term	MT2
<i>Given their pre-eminent role on the scrutiny committee, it is strongly recommended that the Chair not preside over scrutiny of their relatives</i>	24	Review constitution to consider providing further clarity on the Chair not presiding over scrutiny of relatives- referral to Constitution Review Working Group for consideration. 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
<i>The method for selecting a Chair is for each authority to decide for itself, however every authority should consider taking a vote by secret ballot.</i>	25a	Secret ballot method vote for Chair and Vice Chair is already in place within constitution at Meeting Procedure Rule 19.	Complete	CR1
	25b	See 8c above 'opposition chairs'	See relevant action above.	CR1
The role of the chair				
<i>Chairs should pay special attention to the need to guard the committee's independence. Importantly, however, they should take care to avoid the committee being, and being viewed as, a de facto opposition to the executive.</i>	26	O&S Chairing skills training to be delivered to include – independence of O&S, and the need to avoid de facto opposition role. Chairing skills training provided in Summer 2023 induction. Higher level of training through LGA leadership courses has been offered to all O&S chairs, including following chairmanship changes to ensure continuity of expertise.	Complete, monitor long-term	MT2

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
Training for committee members <i>Authorities should ensure committee members are offered induction when they take up their role and ongoing training so they can carry out their responsibilities effectively. Authorities should pay attention to the need to ensure committee members are aware of their legal powers, and how to prepare for and ask relevant questions at scrutiny sessions.</i> <i>When deciding on training requirements for committee members, authorities should consider taking advantage of opportunities offered by external providers in the sector.</i>				
	27a	See action 2a above - new Councillor and refresher training on statutory powers of O&S	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. <i>Questioning skills training was incorporated into O&S induction training and refreshed through scrutiny culture development sessions and LGA training targeted at Children's O&S members.</i> <i>O&S Chairs keep training needs under review and additional training of this nature can be planned according to need and budget availability.</i>	Complete, monitor long-term	MT3
	27c	Training to be delivered by external facilitators as appropriate and according to budget available. <i>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.</i>	Complete, monitor long-term.	MT3
<i>While members and their support officers will often have significant local insight and an understanding of local people and their needs, the provision of outside expertise can be invaluable. There are two principal ways to procure this:</i> <i>• Co-option – formal co-option is provided for in legislation.</i> <i>Authorities must establish a co-option scheme to determine how individuals will be co-opted onto committees; and</i> <i>• Technical advisers – depending on the subject matter, independent local experts might exist who can provide advice and assistance in evaluating evidence</i>	28a	Facility to use external experts by O&S is already set out in constitution at Article 6, Rule 6.6.	Complete	CR1
	28b	Consideration be given to the appropriate use of external experts at the scoping stage of O&S work. <i>Greater use of subject experts and community insight have been included in O&S since May 2023.</i> <i>Examples include a subject expert on the Safety Valve programme, developer input to Local Plan discussions, regular</i>	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
		Healthwatch contributions at HASC O&S Committee, Chief Nurse input to Children's Svs O&S and expert insight from independent bodies on parish councils and charter trustees to CGR. The terms of reference of the Environment & Place O&S Committee were amended by Council in September 2023, to allow the inclusion of additional insight on sustainability matters in the form of two non-voting member independent members but this has not yet been taken up by the committee. Renewal of statutory Children's Services co-optees is in process. Use of community insight and evidence will continue to encourage at the scoping stage of forthcoming work.		
Powers to Access Information				
<i>A scrutiny committee needs access to relevant information the authority holds, and to receive it in good time, if it is to do its job effectively.</i>	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
<i>This need is recognised in law, with members of scrutiny committees enjoying powers to access information. In particular, regulations give enhanced powers to a scrutiny member to access exempt or confidential information. This is in addition to existing rights for councillors to have access to information to perform their duties, including common law rights to request information and rights to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.</i>	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
<i>When considering what information scrutiny needs in order to carry out its work, scrutiny members and the executive should consider scrutiny's role and the legal rights that committees and their individual members have, as well as their need to receive timely and accurate information to carry out their duties effectively.</i>				

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
<i>Scrutiny members should have access to a regularly available source of key information about the management of the authority – particularly on performance, management and risk. Where this information exists, and scrutiny members are given support to understand it, the potential for what officers might consider unfocused and unproductive requests is reduced as members will be able to frame their requests from a more informed position.</i>	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. Action to develop online library of resources not yet actioned and will progress as resources allow. Progress has been made towards sharing some of this information with O&S councillors regularly, such as through a HASC O&S data toolkit document that gathers much of the above data in one place, and through regular reporting of corporate performance information into O&S committees. Development of the online library will provide consistency of approach when completed.	Spring/ Summer 24	L1
	30b	A programme of ongoing scrutiny skills training to be developed for delivery to O&S Councillors throughout municipal year 2023/24, to include – Interpretation of 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. O&S Chairs keep training needs under review and additional training of this nature can be planned according to need and budget availability.	Complete, monitor long-term	MT3
<i>Officers should speak to scrutiny members to ensure they understand the reasons why information is needed, thereby making the authority better able to provide information that is relevant and timely, as well as ensuring that the authority complies with legal requirements.</i>	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.	Complete – monitor long-term	WS1

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64) <i>Regulations already stipulate a timeframe for executives to comply with requests from a scrutiny member. When agreeing to such requests, authorities should:</i> <i>• consider whether seeking clarification from the information requester could help better target the request; and</i> <i>• Ensure the information is supplied in a format appropriate to the recipient's needs.</i>		– In annual work programming for O&S Committees and ongoing, during work programming discussions at each meeting. Key Lines of Enquiry documents were introduced in 2023/24 and are now embedded across all committees. These capture key questions and data requests from committees for scrutiny topics, providing a clearer audit trail of the ask of scrutiny for both committees and information providers. In 2024, HASC O&S completed a working group on data and produced a Data Toolkit to capture its findings. This includes clear guidance on a standard data request for HASC O&S committee reports - a process that can be mirrored by the other committees. The Children's O&S has developed a similar toolkit throughout 2025 and will launch this soon.		
<i>While each request for information should be judged on its individual merits, authorities should adopt a default position of sharing the information they hold, on request, with scrutiny committee members.</i>	32	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – Default position of sharing information with O&S Provided to senior officers in Winter 2024/ Spring 2025. Training included a CfGS led workshop with scrutiny and executive members and had a focus on embedding a clear understanding of scrutiny fundamentals and developing a positive scrutiny culture with all stakeholders across the organisation.	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	OT1
<i>The law recognises that there might be instances where it is legitimate for an authority to withhold information and places a requirement on the executive to provide the scrutiny committee with a written statement setting out its reasons for that decision. However, members of the executive and senior officers should take particular care to avoid refusing requests, or limiting the information they provide, for reasons of party political or reputational expediency. Before an authority takes a decision not</i>	33a	Situations where information may be withheld from O&S, and actions to communicate this, are already set out in the Constitution at Access to Information Procedure Rule 24.	Complete	CR1
	33b	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Default position of sharing information with O&S, and situations where information may be withheld.	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
<i>to share information it holds, it should give serious consideration to whether that information could be shared in closed session</i>	33c	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – Default position of sharing information with O&S, and situations where information may be withheld. <i>Provided to senior officers in Winter 2024/ Spring 2025. Training included a CfGS led workshop with scrutiny and executive members and had a focus on embedding a clear understanding of scrutiny fundamentals and developing a positive scrutiny culture with all stakeholders across the organisation.</i>	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	OT1
<i>Committees should be aware of their legal power to require members of the executive and officers to attend before them to answer questions. It is the duty of members and officers to comply with such requests.</i>	34a	Requirement for Cabinet members and officers to attend O&S when requested is already set out in constitution at O&S Procedure Rule 9.	Complete	CR1
	34b	Identification of attendees and formal requests to Cabinet and officers to attend is required by the constitution and an embedded practice.	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1
	34c	Portfolio Holders attend O&S meetings in response to requests, or send deputies. <i>Attendance of Portfolio Holders at O&S when requested is now well established and will continue to be encouraged.</i>	Complete, monitor long-term.	C1
	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. <i>Provided to senior officers in Winter 2024/ Spring 2025. Training included a CfGS led workshop with scrutiny and executive members and had a focus on embedding a clear</i>	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	OT1

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
		understanding of scrutiny fundamentals and developing a positive scrutiny culture with all stakeholders across the organisation.		
Seeking information from external organisations				
<i>Scrutiny members should also consider the need to supplement any authority-held information they receive with information and intelligence that might be available from other sources, and should note in particular their statutory powers to access information from certain external organisations</i>	35	Develop a library of O&S oversight information, provided in an online format for Councillors to access independently, to include - Information from external organisations, as appropriate, to support individual work items and annual work programming Action to develop online library of resources not yet actioned and will progress as resources allow. Progress has been made towards sharing some of this information with O&S councillors regularly, such as through a HASC O&S data toolkit document that gathers much of the above data in one place, and through regular reporting of corporate performance information into O&S committees. Development of the online library will provide consistency of approach when completed.	Spring/ Summer 24	L1
<i>When asking an external organisation to provide documentation or appear before it, and where that organisation is not legally obliged to do either, scrutiny committees should consider the following:</i>	36a	Guidelines for scrutinising external organisations is already included within the Council's Constitution at O&S Procedure Rule 10.	Complete	CR1
<i>a) The need to explain the purpose of scrutiny – the organisation being approached might have little or no awareness of the committee's work, or of an authority's scrutiny function more generally, and so might be reluctant to comply with any request;</i> <i>b) The benefits of an informal approach – individuals from external organisations can have fixed perceptions of what an evidence session entails and may be unwilling to subject themselves to detailed public scrutiny if they believe it could reflect badly on them or their employer. Making an informal approach can help reassure</i>	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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<i>an organisation of the aims of the committee, the type of information being sought and the manner in which the evidence session would be conducted;</i> <i>c) How to encourage compliance with the request – scrutiny committees will want to frame their approach on a case by case basis. For contentious issues, committees might want to emphasise the opportunity their request gives the organisation to 'set the record straight' in a public setting; and</i> <i>d) Who to approach – a committee might instinctively want to ask the Chief Executive or Managing Director of an organisation to appear at an evidence session, however it could be more beneficial to engage front-line staff when seeking operational-level detail rather than senior executives who might only be able to talk in more general terms. When making a request to a specific individual, the committee should consider the type of information it is seeking, the nature of the organisation in question and the authority's pre-existing relationship with it.</i>				
Following 'the Council Pound'				
<i>Scrutiny committees will often have a keen interest in 'following the council pound', i.e. scrutinising organisations that receive public funding to deliver goods and services.</i> <i>Authorities should recognise the legitimacy of this interest and, where relevant, consider the need to provide assistance to scrutiny members and their support staff to obtain information from organisations the council has contracted to deliver services. In particular, when agreeing contracts with these bodies, authorities should consider whether it would be appropriate to include a requirement for them to supply information to or appear before scrutiny committees</i>	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 <i>Provided to senior officers in Winter 2024/ Spring 2025. Training included a CfGS led workshop with scrutiny and executive members and had a focus on embedding a clear understanding of scrutiny fundamentals and developing a positive scrutiny culture with all stakeholders across the organisation.</i>	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	OT1

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Planning Work				
<i>Effective scrutiny should have a defined impact on the ground, with the committee making recommendations that will make a tangible difference to the work of the authority. To have this kind of impact, scrutiny committees need to plan their work programme, i.e. draw up a long-term agenda and consider making it flexible enough to accommodate any urgent, short-term issues that might arise during the year.</i>	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. Work programming in 2025 has been delayed. Whilst annual programming is good practice, committees are able to plan on a rolling basis in the absence of an annual approach and will continue to do so until resources can be released to support this.	Completed in 2023/24, delayed in 2025.	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. Officer resource to support O&S work has been limited and has resulted in delays to topic progression. To address this, proposals have been made to Council in the 2025 annual report to reduce concurrent working group numbers and promote a 'quality of quantity' approach to O&S work. The outcome and impact of any changes agreed will be monitored by the O&S Chairs group and through future annual reports to Council. 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.	Monitor resource availability and impact of Council decision on work programme numbers.	R1
	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	MT1

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)			refresher training.	
	38d	Feedback is gathered on O&S outputs and a tool developed to measure the success of O&S. <i>Not started. This is identified as a key aim in the 2025 O&S annual report and will be progressed as resources allow.</i>	Summer 2024	P1
<i>Authorities with multiple scrutiny committees sometimes have a separate work programme for each committee. Where this happens, consideration should be given to how to co-ordinate the various committees' work to make best use of the total resources available.</i>	39a	Each O&S committee may establish separate work plans, with responsibility for monitoring use of resource across all work plans sitting with O&S Board, supported by O&S Chairs. This is set out in the Constitution. <i>Proposals have been made in the 2025 O&S annual report that controls on the use of O&S resource be strengthened via the O&S Chairs group. If agreed, changes will be made to the constitution to reflect that. these members will agree the priority order of in-depth work across all committees to more effectively manage resource.</i>	Complete	CR1
	39b	Establish calendar of meeting dates for O&S chairs to include collective leadership monitoring of O&S resource <i>Calendar of meetings planned for 2025/26.</i>	Autumn 2023	CM1
Being clear about scrutiny's role				
<i>Scrutiny works best when it has a clear role and function. This provides focus and direction. While scrutiny has the power to look at anything which affects 'the area, or the area's inhabitants', authorities will often find it difficult to support a scrutiny function that carries out generalised oversight across the wide range of issues experienced by local people, particularly in the context of partnership working. Prioritisation is necessary, which means that there might be things that, despite being important, scrutiny will not be able to look at.</i>	40	See actions 4a, b and c above – O&S 'focus', working methods and terms of reference.	See relevant actions above	WS1/ WM1/ TOR1

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<i>Different overall roles could include having a focus on risk, the authority's finances, or on the way the authority works with its partners.</i> <i>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.</i>				
<i>When thinking about scrutiny's focus, members should be supported by key senior officers. The statutory scrutiny officer, if an authority has one, will need to take a leading role in supporting members to clarify the role and function of scrutiny, and championing that role once agreed.</i>	41a	Senior officers and the statutory scrutiny officer support committees in selecting priorities that are of relevance and can add value to the organisation. – In annual work programming for O&S Committees and ongoing, during work programming discussions at each meeting. Senior officers provide good support to O&S in planning work. In 2025, the Chief Executive, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer have all proactively suggested topics and approaches for scrutiny. All senior officers are asked to provide topic suggestions as part of standard annual work programming methodology. The O&S Specialist and Democratic Services team provide support on scrutiny priorities on an ongoing basis. This support is balanced against other service priorities and so is limited by resource availability. Scrutiny outcomes could be strengthened if direct officer support could be provided to greater depth and more consistently provided, and will remain resource dependent. All committees would benefit from regularly assessing the value that has been added by their work, to inform future work planning.	Complete, monitor long-term	WS1

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	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 senior council officers are now invited into regular meetings with all O&S chairs to promote effective information sharing between O&S and executive. O&S lead members are regularly encouraged to form effective informal relationships with cabinet members for information sharing purposes.	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1
Who to speak to				
<i>Evidence will need to be gathered to inform the work programming process. This will ensure that it looks at the right topics, in the right way and at the right time. Gathering evidence requires conversations with:</i> <i>The public -</i> <i>It is likely that formal 'consultation' with the public on the scrutiny work programme will be ineffective. Asking individual scrutiny members to have conversations with individuals and groups in their own local areas can work better. Insights gained from the public through individual pieces of scrutiny work can be fed back into the work programming process. Listening to and participating in conversations in places where local people come together, including in online forums, can help authorities engage people on their own terms and yield more positive results</i>	42a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Sources of input to annual work programming, to include community insight to their scrutiny work, partner information and Cabinet forthcoming priorities	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, to be progressed as resources allow.	Spring 2024	COM1

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
<i>Authorities should consider how their communications officers can help scrutiny engage with the public, and how wider internal expertise and local knowledge from both members and officers might make a contribution.</i> <i>The authority's partners –</i> <i>relationships with other partners should not be limited to evidence-gathering to support individual reviews or agenda items. A range of partners are likely to have insights that will prove useful:</i> <i>o Public sector partners (like the NHS and community safety partners, over which scrutiny has specific legal powers);</i> <i>o Voluntary sector partners;</i> <i>o Contractors and commissioning partners (including partners in joint ventures and authority-owned companies);</i> <i>o In parished areas, town, community and parish councils;</i> <i>o Neighbouring principal councils (both in two-tier and unitary areas);</i> <i>o Cross-authority bodies and organisations, such as Local Enterprise Partnerships; and</i> <i>o Others with a stake and interest in the local area – large local employers, for example.</i> <i>The executive –</i> <i>a principal partner in discussions on the work programme should be the executive (and senior officers). The executive should not direct scrutiny's work, but conversations will help scrutiny members better understand how their work can be designed to align with</i>	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. <i>Cabinet are asked to provide ideas for annual work programming as standard, and have also contributed in-year ideas for scrutiny in 2024/25.</i>	Complete.	C1
	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

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<i>the best opportunities to influence the authority's wider work.</i>				
Information sources				
<i>Scrutiny will need access to relevant information to inform its work programme. The type of information will depend on the specific role and function scrutiny plays within the authority, but might include:</i> <i>• Performance information from across the authority and its partners;</i> <i>• Finance and risk information from across the authority and its partners;</i> <i>• Corporate complaints information, and aggregated information from political groups about the subject matter of members' surgeries;</i> <i>• Business cases and options appraisals (and other planning information) for forthcoming major decisions. This information will be of particular use for pre -decision scrutiny; and</i> <i>• Reports and recommendations issued by relevant ombudsmen, especially the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.</i> <i>As committees can meet in closed session, commercial confidentiality should not preclude the sharing of information. Authorities should note, however, that the default for meetings should be that they are held in public</i>	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
	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. <i>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.</i>	Complete, monitor long-term.	L1
<i>Scrutiny members should consider keeping this information under regular review. It is likely to be easier to do this outside committee, rather than bringing such information to committee 'to note', or to provide an update, as a matter of course.</i>	44	Support committees to work in more diverse ways to maintain oversight of key information, including circulating information outside of meetings and the use of rapporteurs or champions for particular topics. This will free up committee resource for value added scrutiny. <i>Working methods have now been diversified to make better use of meeting resource. Information based reporting is regularly received outside of meetings of through a series of regular informal briefings, now established for each committee. There</i>	In annual work programming for O&S Committees – Autumn 2023	WM1

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)		has been an increase in the use of rapporteurs and the approach will be further embedded in 2025/26. This action has not been marked as completed, as, although working methods have diversified, analysis of 24/25 work outputs across all committees show an overbalance of monitoring/update reports in HASC and Children's Services O&S. This is taking up time that could be used for other value-added scrutiny. These committees would benefit from an ongoing rigorous approach to committee agenda planning, to ensure monitoring work does not over balance agendas and committee time can be used to reach valuable outcomes. Officers will continue to support this approach.		
Shortlisting topics				
<i>Approaches to shortlisting topics should reflect scrutiny's overall role in the authority. This will require the development of bespoke, local solutions, however when considering whether an item should be included in the work programme, the kind of questions a scrutiny committee should consider might include:</i> <i>• Do we understand the benefits scrutiny would bring to this issue?</i> <i>• How could we best carry out work on this subject?</i> <i>• What would be the best outcome of this work?</i> <i>• How would this work engage with the activity of the executive and other decision-makers, including partners?</i>	45a	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

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<i>Some authorities use scoring systems to evaluate and rank work programme proposals. If these are used to provoke discussion and debate, based on evidence, about what priorities should be, they can be a useful tool. Others take a looser approach. Whichever method is adopted, a committee should be able to justify how and why a decision has been taken to include certain issues and not others.</i> <i>Scrutiny members should accept that shortlisting can be difficult; scrutiny committees have finite resources and deciding how these are best allocated is tough. They should understand that, if work programming is robust and effective, there might well be issues that they want to look at that nonetheless are not selected.</i>	45b	Review 'scrutiny request form' and update as appropriate to incorporate all suggested areas referenced in O&S guidance. <i>Not started. To be progressed as resources allow.</i>	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. <i>O&S working methods have diversified and now regularly include committee reporting, outside of committee briefings, rapporteurs and working groups. Diverse working methods will continue to be encouraged.</i>	Complete, monitor long-term	WM1
	46c	Review and develop task and finish/ working group scoping document, protocol and joint working group protocol <i>Not started. To be progressed as resources allow.</i>	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. An evidence based approach is encouraged on an ongoing basis and there has been a small increase in the inclusion of external invitees during meetings to bring insight. A larger scale evidence gathering topic on Van Life is planned for 2025/26. Planning and conducting evidence sessions is valuable but resource intensive. 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

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How to plan				
<i>Effective planning does not necessarily involve a large number of pre-meetings, the development of complex scopes or the drafting of questioning plans. It is more often about setting overall objectives and then considering what type of questions (and the way in which they are asked) can best elicit the information the committee is seeking. This applies as much to individual agenda items as it does for longer evidence sessions – there should always be consideration in advance of what scrutiny is trying to get out of a particular evidence session.</i>	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
<i>Chairs play a vital role in leading discussions on objective-setting and ensuring all members are aware of the specific role each will play during the evidence session.</i> <i>As far as possible there should be consensus among scrutiny members about the objective of an evidence session before it starts. It is important to recognise that members have different perspectives on certain issues, and so might not share the objectives for a session that are ultimately adopted. Where this happens, the Chair will need to be aware of this divergence of views and bear it in mind when planning the evidence session.</i>	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. Higher level of training through LGA leadership courses has been offered to all O&S chairs, including following chairmanship changes to ensure continuity of expertise.	Complete, monitor long-term.	MT2
<i>Effective planning should mean that at the end of a session it is relatively straightforward for the chair to draw together themes and highlight the key findings. It is unlikely that the committee will be able to develop and agree recommendations immediately, but, unless the session is part of a wider inquiry, enough evidence should have been gathered to allow the chair to set a clear direction.</i> <i>After an evidence session, the committee might wish to hold a short 'wash-up' meeting to review whether their objectives were met and lessons could be learned for future sessions</i>	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. Higher level of training through LGA leadership courses has been offered to all O&S chairs, including following chairmanship changes to ensure continuity of expertise.	Complete, monitor long-term	MT2

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Developing recommendations <i>The development and agreement of recommendations is often an iterative process. It will usually be appropriate for this to be done only by members, assisted by co-optees where relevant. When deciding on recommendations, however, members should have due regard to advice received from officers, particularly the Monitoring Officer.</i> <i>The drafting of reports is usually, but not always, carried out by officers, directed by members.</i>				
	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. <i>Provided to senior officers in Winter 2024/ Spring 2025. Training included a CfGS led workshop with scrutiny and executive members and had a focus on embedding a clear understanding of scrutiny fundamentals and developing a positive scrutiny culture with all stakeholders across the organisation.</i>	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	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. <i>This is included as standard within scoping documents for O&S working groups.</i> <i>Wider piece of work to review protocols (46c) not yet started. To be progressed as resources allow.</i>	Immediate, as arising (WS1/R1) Protocol review Summer 2024 (P1)	WS1/R1/P1
<i>Authorities draft reports and recommendations in a number of ways, but there are normally three stages:</i> <i>i. the development of a 'heads of report' – a document setting out general findings that members can then discuss as they consider the overall structure and focus of the report and its recommendations;</i> <i>ii. The development of those findings, which will set out some areas on which recommendations might be made; and</i> <i>iii. the drafting of the full report.</i> <i>Recommendations should be evidence-based and SMART, i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timed. Where</i>	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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<i>appropriate, committees may wish to consider sharing them in draft with interested parties.</i> <i>Committees should bear in mind that often six to eight recommendations are sufficient to enable the authority to focus its response, although there may be specific circumstances in which more might be appropriate.</i>				
<i>Sharing draft recommendations with executive members should not provide an opportunity for them to revise or block recommendations before they are made. It should, however, provide an opportunity for errors to be identified and corrected, and for a more general sense-check</i>	53	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – The role of executive member consultation during draft reporting stages.	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
Chief Executive's Assurance Review, June 2023 – recommendations and comments relating to O&S				
<i>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.</i>	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
<i>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.</i>	54b	Action relating to potential constitutional changes to clarify the good practice of opposition chairs outlined at 8c above.	See relevant action above.	CR1
<i>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.</i>	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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<i>There is still a marked reluctance amongst the broader overview and scrutiny committees to ask questions directly of officers and 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.</i> <i>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</i> <i>Continue to encourage full participation and clarity of answers in all meetings, and incorporate into training for Overview and Scrutiny committee members.</i>				
<i>Overview and scrutiny committees should continue to increase their focus on policy development and engagement rather than pre-Cabinet scrutiny.</i>	56a	Since May 2023 significant effort has gone into reducing pre-Cabinet scrutiny levels to achieve a more even balance with other types of scrutiny. Actions to encourage this included training and development, CMB engagement to identify early policy discussion items and ongoing officer support to assist in weighing up the benefits of scrutiny topics. In 2023/4 pre-decision levels of scrutiny across all committees reduced to 21% and remained stable in 2024/25 at 29%. There was greater emphasis on earlier policy discussion with items such as debates on Devolution in 2024 being an example of this. With ten political groups making up the Council, the organic drive for pre- Cabinet scrutiny is likely to remain and diverse scrutiny topics will continue to be encouraged by support officers to avoid overbalance.	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1

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	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 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.	See relevant actions above	See relevant actions above
<i>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.</i> <i>There is an opportunity to strengthen the focus of O&S on performance management, through the overview and scrutiny committees.</i> <i>Incorporate into training for Overview and Scrutiny committee members and monitor agendas, encouraging Overview and Scrutiny Committees to focus on performance management information.</i>	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
<i>Need to ensure the party whip is not applied to O&S functions. This message needs to be reinforced and the situation monitored.</i>	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

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<i>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.</i>				
DLUHC External Assurance Review of BCP Council, August 2023 – recommendations and comments relating to O&S				
<i>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</i>	59	O&S to consider and establish its role in this member oversight and monitoring. The O&S Board Chair and Vice Chair were members of the cross-party councillor working group to monitor the Transformation Programme, prior to its completion. This provided a mechanism for O&S to maintain oversight of and raise red flags to committee by exception. Cabinet reports were also selected for scrutiny to maintain oversight of key stages.	Complete, programme now concluded,	WS1
<i>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</i>	60	O&S to consider and establish its role in the budget setting process A comprehensive package of budget scrutiny has been established since 2023. The O&S Board leads budget monitoring and final budget setting debate and includes other O&S Chairs in this, whilst individual committees have requested their own areas of deep dive scrutiny on specific budget areas. Training has been provided to councillors to support them in this role. Additionally, to better influence the budget during development stage, budget working groups were established by scrutiny in 2024. This approach has been adapted to a 'Budget Conversation' day for 2025 and BCP Council has been recognised by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny as a council leader for this approach. Executive members have also welcomed and encouraged this approach which is a demonstration of a healthy working relationship between O&S and Cabinet. This proactive budget work is resource intensive	In annual work programming for O&S Committees – Autumn 2023	WS1

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		for officers across the council and those that support O&S directly, and the approach requires careful evaluation to assess the benefit vs resource input. Similar approaches will continue to be encouraged in the future, balanced against resources.		
<i>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</i>	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 for chairs, in-house delivery of support for O&S work programming, targeted children's services training for the Children's Svs O&S Committee, and promotion of LGA online training courses to councillors as arising.	Complete. Continue to take up opportunities on an ongoing basis.	WS1
<i>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</i>	62	O&S to consider and establish its role in this review process. Business plans are usually selected for scrutiny as standard, when available as Cabinet reports.	In annual work programming for O&S Committees – Autumn 2023	WS1
<i>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</i>	63	See 56a and 56b above.	See relevant actions above	See relevant

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<i>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 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.</i> <i>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.</i>				
<i>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.</i>	64a	Work programming support provided summer 2023. Further support to be provided to complete annual work programming. <i>Annual work programming delayed in 2025 but provided on a rolling meeting basis instead.</i>	Complete in 23/24, delayed in 2025.	CS1
	64b	Focussed support provided by service area lead to identify and provide relevant performance information to support the committee in its role. <i>Service area lead officer support provided to Children's O&S Chair and committee. This is well established and provided on an ongoing basis. Includes designated lead officer and meetings with the Executive Director and Portfolio Holder.</i>	Complete, monitor on ongoing basis.	CS1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Relevant Extract from:	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)		Children's Services have offered to expand this to include quarterly meetings with all lead directors in Children's Services to provide a comprehensive update to the Chair of scrutiny, with these meetings to be implemented in late 2025.		
	64c	Ongoing training plan for the Committee in development. The LGA provided a targeted skills and knowledge training programme to Children's Svs O&S Committee members in 2024/25. A programme of briefing slots is now established for the committee to provide information needed for the committee to undertake their role but which doesn't require active scrutiny. This accompanies other scrutiny network training opportunities available to councillors on an arising basis.	Complete, monitor skills training needs on an ongoing basis and particularly when there is significant membership change.	CS1
	64d	Establish links with O&S Chairs in other authorities that have experience of similar improvement journey. Mentoring links now established through LGA training programme.	Complete, monitor take-up of opportunities ongoing.	CS1
	64e	LGA development opportunities promoted to Chair. The LGA provided a targeted skills and knowledge training programme to Children's Svs O&S Committee members in 2024/25. Mentoring links for Chair now established through LGA training programme. LGA Leadership Academy delivered to previous Chair in 2023 and planned for current Chair on next available course.	Complete. Development opportunities will continue to be promoted and take-up monitored on ongoing basis.	CS1