
SCRUTINY – ESTABLISHMENT OF A PANEL FOR THE REVIEW 2024-25

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The objective of the report is to provide the Audit and Scrutiny Committee (the Committee) with an update arising from the recent change in administration, outline the potential options in order to increase resilience within the Committee for undertaking scrutiny reviews, and to ask the Committee to identify a Panel. In addition, to take forward the review of Complaints in the context of the Scrutiny Manual and Framework as part of the Committee's scrutiny role for 2024-25.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Audit and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:
- 2.1.2 Establish a Panel for the agreed scrutiny review relating to the Council's complaints process. (The previous arrangements agreed by the Committee, in terms of identifying the Chair to lead the review, have been superseded by the change of Administration and composition of Members within the Audit and Scrutiny Committee).
- 2.1.3 In the event that the Committee are minded to proceed with this approach, appoint a Panel Chair and three further Members to form a Scrutiny Panel for the review, which will commence within financial year 2024-25. It is suggested that this would consist of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee and a further two members to be identified. (This approach would allow a basis for the wider development of skills within the Committee to undertake and participate in future scrutiny reviews).
- 2.1.4 In support to the Membership of the Panel, the former Chair of the Committee, Martin Caldwell, will provide mentoring support to the new Panel in order to build up experience and skills in undertaking scrutiny work. Officer support will be provided as required.

3. DETAIL

- 3.1 The development of the scrutiny function has progressed successfully, and in the new format, a total of three reviews have been undertaken. The Committee have found such reviews helpful in discharging their role in relation to scrutiny and the Committee agreed in March 2024 that one review would be undertaken in 2024-25 and a review of Complaints would be taken forward as the preferred choice which would be of benefit to the Council. It is also important to balance the Committee's work in relation to scrutiny with its primary duty, which is to seek the successful delivery of the agreed Internal Audit Plan.

- 3.2 The change of Administration within the Council, and the composition of the Council's Committees has resulted in changes within the make up of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee, together with a new Chair and Vice-Chair. Experience within the Committee to undertake scrutiny review is now limited. In order to build experience and facilitate mentorship of the Chair and Vice-Chair, in respect of leading such scrutiny reviews, it is proposed that the former independent Chair, Martin Caldwell support the Panel Chair and Vice-Chair by facilitating this scrutiny review. This would provide members with the appropriate skills and experience to confidently undertake such reviews going forward. A significant amount of staff resource can be expended on scrutiny reviews. As a section we need to balance this work with available staff resources to keep within the allocated resource envelope to complete the scrutiny review without affecting the core primary function of undertaking the approved Internal Audit Plan for 2024-25.

Approach to Scrutiny previously agreed by the Committee– Context and Background

- 3.3 In order to provide further context to the development of 'scrutiny reviews'; a Development Session was held to establish the process to be adopted by the Committee to identify and prioritise potential scrutiny topics and of the overall approach adopted to scrutiny reviews which has been a combination of panel reviews and 'scrutiny lite' where relevant officers have been asked to present at Committee or at Development Sessions on topics of interest to the Committee.
- 3.4 In particular the Chief Internal Auditor (the CIA) asked the Committee to consider some key questions. These, and the Committee responses, are summarised in the table below.

3.5

Question	Committee Response
Should Scrutiny topics originate from all members and senior officers or from Committee members?	There needs to be a degree of flexibility to change topics and to be able to react quickly to an ever changing environment. It is for the Committee to determine scrutiny topics.
If topics originate from the committee should this be via discussions at Committee or development sessions?	We may need to meet as a Committee more often however these could be less formal meetings and held virtually. Further thought can be given to this as to some extent it will depend on the number of emerging topics to be considered for scrutiny.
Do we still need an annual scrutiny plan or should topics for scrutiny 'emerge' as the year goes by?	We don't need a plan we should allow items to emerge.
Do we still need the detailed prioritisation process?	The prioritisation process is there as a tool if we need it but we don't need to use to assess every scrutiny topic.

Do we have the right balance between 'full blown' panel approach vs Scrutiny Lite?	There has been value in having the full panels but these are resource intensive and we should look to make use of a scrutiny lite approach where appropriate. Once a topic is decided then the Committee can decide what the best Scrutiny approach to adopt is.
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- 3.6 The CIA has reviewed and updated, where identified, the Scrutiny Framework and Manual in 2023/24 and will do so on an annual basis in order that the approach to scrutiny work is both focused, appropriate and reflects the best approach taking cognisance of the Committee's views.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The recent changes at Chair and Vice-Chair level have resulted in a gap in experience of leading and undertaking scrutiny reviews. To improve resilience, knowledge and experience within the Committee to undertake and lead scrutiny reviews, the Committee should accept the offer of mentoring and overview from an experienced person in order to facilitate the next review along with support from officers.

5 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Policy – None
- 5.2 Financial – None
- 5.3 Legal – None
- 5.4 HR – None
- 5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty – None
- 5.5.1 Equalities – protected characteristics – None
- 5.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – None
- 5.5.3 Islands – None
- 5.6 Climate Change – None
- 5.7 Risk – None
- 5.8 Customer Service – None
- 5.9 The Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – None

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