

Training Proposal for Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

What is the overall aim of the learning?

To prepare all councillors to successfully contribute to the scrutiny process in select committees and task groups.

What is the outcome that we expect this learning to achieve?

To ensure that councillors work together in a non-politicised way to effectively challenge and review subject matter.

Background

28 Councillors had a 30 minute introduction to scrutiny given by Paul Kelly as part of the induction programme on 8/9 May 2013 (one in Chippenham and one in Salisbury).

28 Councillors (not all same as above) had a half day session on Scrutiny training with Paul Kelly on 16th May 2013.

9 Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee members and 3 officers had a half day training session in October which was delivered by Charles Jack of Gateway training to a brief given by the Council's Scrutiny Team. This was not well received by all who attended. It included content on: appreciative inquiry, communication-types of questions, non-verbal cues, and transactional analysis, and also how people react at meetings.

Understanding the need

In discussions at the Management Committee on 5 November about refining further training requirements, an initial approach was made by Paul Kelly (Overview and Scrutiny Manager) to the Council's Learning and Development Team to support this work; this was followed up by meeting with Paul and the chair and vice-chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Simon Killane and Roy While. We had a full discussion on the background to the request and the options for moving forward on this. In order to establish more clearly what happened previously and ascertain the type of training needed we asked the members of the management committee to give us some feedback. Unfortunately we only had three responses. They each said the training was too long and ineffective. They recommended that 50% of the workshop should be focused on the scrutiny process and there should be less emphasis on personal skills.

We also discussed the training with the Councillor Development Group who considered that it was important to include some emphasis on constructive criticism and how to get the most out of people. It was also suggested that the training should

ensure that people concentrate on overview which is about good policies and processes as this is often overlooked.

Research into other options

Following the negative feedback on the previous training we then looked at other options offered by training providers already delivering workshops on communicating and working together better, SW councils and SE councils, RADA and Centre for Public Scrutiny.

Recommendation

A three hour workshop covering 60% scrutiny concept and process and 40 % developing and improving communication skills and techniques.

OBJECTIVES

- To develop an understanding of the concept of scrutiny and its role in the democratic process in relation to executive powers
- To identify key skills, behaviours and approaches which will promote effective scrutiny
- To explore how to structure good investigations and basic research methods

CONTENT

Where Overview and Scrutiny (OS) fits in

- The constitutional fit, the political management fit, the cultural fit
- Core principles in the context of how the council manages and operates OS arrangements
- Developing effective working relationships with the executive/policy making function and other parts of the local government framework. New legal provisions

The OS function in context

- Relationships with the executive/policy making function
- Acting on behalf of and with the local community
- Partner scrutiny – what it means and how it operates
- The degree of influence for this non-decision making role – developing influence and making a difference
- Leadership and management of the function

Developing OS skills

- Gain new information through effective questioning techniques
- Hidden messages and clues
- Techniques to check and build understanding
- Active listening techniques
- Managing contributions and participation through effective chairing

Also use some of the time for interactive discussion work using case studies from WC or others where scrutiny has successfully influenced the outcome and work

through scenarios in groups of 5 (these could be chosen at random or to reflect political balance).

Recommendation for training provider

We recommend using a training provider from the SW Councils pool called Ann Reeder who has experience of working with councils on scrutiny issues. Paul Kelly has spoken with her to discuss the training to ensure the development activity meets our needs and reflects Wiltshire's context. She has offered to observe an overview and scrutiny meeting in the New Year to gain a greater understanding. At this stage she is holding some time available in the last week of March for the workshop.

Cost

The cost is £495 + VAT + travel.

For the training to be viable we would need to have a minimum of 10 councillors attending with a maximum of up to 15. The most preferred time for councillor training appears to be daytime and we would suggest a half day of either morning or afternoon. The most popular venue is Trowbridge. We would recommend running one session initially using Ann Reeder and then repeating a second session later if the demand is there as all non-executive councillors would potentially benefit from the training.

Background of Ann Reeder of [Frontline Consulting](#)

Ann established Frontline Consulting to support councillors in their frontline roles and to respond to changes in the public sector.

She has been an active ward councillor, a cabinet member with a portfolio covering consultation and local democracy, and in the leadership of the council. Ann also has experience in a minority administration on a hung council, and in addition spent two years in opposition. She has been on the board of a regeneration project, chaired a town centre partnership and was an environmental lead.

Ann focuses on governance issues on councils, having had practical experience on the working group that introduced new structures in her authority, and having worked in both the committee system and the executive scrutiny split. She therefore is well placed to support changes arising from the Localism Act 2011. She specialises in community engagement and overview and scrutiny, having conducted reviews across the country.

Ann also is an Expert Adviser and Regional Advocate for the South West with the Centre for Public Scrutiny, a Tutor with South West Councils and a Consultant with the Local Government Information Unit. She has worked with the IDeA (now LG Improvement and Development) and Local Government Leadership (formerly the Leadership Centre for Local Government)

Options for dates and venues

One in County Hall Trowbridge at the end of March for up to 15 people

Repeat once or twice in the same or in a different venue (either Chippenham or Salisbury) from June onwards depending on demand.

Promoting and advertising the workshop

- Add to the Elected Wire as one of a list of councillor workshops
- Add to the list of workshops available for councillors on The Wire.

Further Options for advertising

- Send a targeted email from Simon Killane and Roy While to the 75 councillors who are eligible to attend inviting them to participate.
- Write to the management committee inviting them to recommend the workshop to their select committees.
- Send a calendar invite with the details of the event to the 39 who are on the select committees.
- Additionally a further incentive could be that anyone who wants to be part of the scrutiny process will need to have attended this training?

Judith Cooper

Organisation Development Lead, Organisational Development and Learning Service