



TRAFFORD COUNCIL

AGENDA PAPERS MARKED 'TO FOLLOW' FOR SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday, 16 March 2022

Time: 6.30 p.m.

Place: Committee Rooms 2 & 3, Trafford Town Hall, Talbot Road, Stretford
M32 0TH

AGENDA	PART I	Pages
5. ACM CLADDING		1 - 2
To consider a report from Trafford Housing Trust.		
9. SCRUTINY REVIEW		3 - 36
To consider the attached report.		

SARA TODD
Chief Executive

Membership of the Committee

Councillors D. Acton (Chair), R. Chilton (Vice-Chair), J.M. Axford, D. Butt, G. Carter, L. Dagnall, M. Mirza, J.D. Newgrosh, K. Procter, R. Thompson, B.G. Winstanley and D. Western (ex-Officio).

Further Information

For help, advice and information about this meeting please contact:

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Scrutiny Committee - Wednesday, 16 March 2022

This agenda was issued on **Thursday, 10 March 2022** by the Legal and Democratic Services Section, Trafford Council, Trafford Town Hall; Talbot Road, Stretford, Manchester, M32 0TH

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Fire Safety Works: Update to Scrutiny Committee – March 2022

Cladding Programme Dates:

Building	Current Status	Site Clearance
Princess Court	Complete: Awaiting BC sign off	March 2022
Empress Court	Complete: Awaiting BC sign off	March 2022
Grafton Court	Complete: Awaiting BC sign off	March 2022
Pickford Court	Complete: Awaiting BC sign off	March 2022
Clifford Court	Delayed: Currently at floor 8 awaiting panel delivery	Est April/May2022

Factors contributing to delays:

Four of the five tower blocks were remediated with new cladding panels and completed prior to Christmas 2021. Panels for the last block Clifford court, were delivered, however the colour batch was incorrect. We are presently awaiting approval from our appointed specialists on the contractor's proposal to install fully compliant temporary panels until delivery of correct panels, which are expected in May. If approved the block should complete early April with all scaffold removed. The contractor would then re attend and replace the small number of panels in May.

Customers

Customers and their safety continue to be at the heart of what we do and why we do it. We have and will continue to regularly engage with and update our customers during and following this programme of work.

During the pandemic the High-Rise Living Panel has continued to meet on a virtual platform, and we also met residents of HRRBs at our Involved Customer Conference earlier this month. We expect to resurrect face to face HRLP meetings, with any being able to also attend virtually, to accommodate our customers preferences, a choice they can make at an individual level, and we will support their choices.

We continue to: -

- Issue update letters to customers with on progress and anticipated completions
- issue weekly works activities update on the notice boards and LCD screens in the tower's foyers.
- respond to individuals' enquiries, concerns, and complaints.
- have THT staff and our representatives regularly on-site.
- provide support to individual customers on a case-by-case basis.
- keep in mind the unavoidable disruption that these essential fire safety works create.

- progress completion dates with our principal contractor who share the objective of completing the works safely and as swiftly as practicable.

Sprinklers- We have included retrospective water suppression systems in our proposed Asset Investment plan, which will be considered as part of our overall business plans. The outcomes of which will become the subject of future customer consultation

Additional Building & Fire Safety initiatives: The following summarises the various initiatives we have / are rolling out across all our homes: -

- Progressing the set up sub-forums to support the High-Rise Living Forum to progress specific issues of interest to our customers
- Consulted on options regarding support for individual customers – quiet working / reading space / mental health support
- Recognised by Dame Judith Hackett's, Industry Safety Steer Group regarding our approach to resident engagement and recognised as a sector leader in the building safety space, providing provides advice and guidance to other housing providers, promoting the sharing of best practice across multiple organisations through our best practice group
- Introduced a Building & Fire Safety Customer Engagement plan
- Produced and issued a new Fire Safety booklet for customers
- Successfully had our BS9997 accreditation certificate renewed earlier this year, underpinned by our Fire Risk Management System
- Embarked on a comprehensive programme of remediation works and mitigation measures including: -
 - Roll out of additional mobility scooter stores
 - Roll out of additional domestic waste / recycling waste bin stores
 - Fire compartmentation works
 - Fire door replacements
 - Fire alarm upgrades
 - Replacement of High-Pressure Laminate
 - Replacement of Ecodecking
 - Fire door inspection regime in place
 - Communal Area inspection regime in place to manage items left in communal areas / means of escape / access routes for emergency services
- Established open relationships and have a Primary Authority Partnership agreement with GMFRS

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 16th March 2022
Report for: Decision
Report of: Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Report Title:

Scrutiny Review Outcomes Report
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Summary:

<p>This report provides a summary of the work undertaken by the Scrutiny Review Panel including: areas reviewed; areas of success and areas of potential improvement; and details of proposed improvements which are currently being considered by Members.</p> <p>It should be noted that the scrutiny function review undertaken by the Scrutiny Review Panel and of the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, has highlighted that Scrutiny function at Trafford is effective and that proposed changes are around process and procedure, rather than fundamental changes.</p>

Recommendations:

<p>That the Scrutiny Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i) Notes the work of the Scrutiny Review Panel;ii) Agrees the proposals as detailed in the report; andiii) Recommends approval of the proposals to the Executive and Council.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: John Addison
Background Papers: N/A

Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities	The purpose of scrutiny is ultimately to improve the lives of local people through improved public services. To justify the resources allocated to scrutiny it is important to be able to demonstrate that scrutiny work adds value and makes a difference to local people.
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	<p>Effective scrutiny can be demonstrated if it fulfils one or more of the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it meets the objectives set out by the scrutiny committee • feedback from the public shows that they think there has been the service improvement they desired • the work has helped to achieve corporate or partnership priorities • there is a return on investment, demonstrating scrutiny's impact and outcomes in financial terms.
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	N/A
Financial	Note potential financial implications detailed in section 7 of the report.
Legal Implications:	<p>In accordance with the Local Government Act 2000 and Localism Act 2011, authorities are required to have a mechanism by which the Executive can be held to account via a transparent and robust scrutiny function.</p> <p>The review of the Council's scrutiny function was important to ensure that we have an effective scrutiny framework which adds value to the Council's outputs.</p>
Equality/Diversity Implications	N/A
Sustainability Implications	N/A
Carbon Reduction	N/A
Resource Implications e.g. Staffing / ICT / Assets	The resource implications are detailed in the report.
Risk Management Implications	N/A
Health & Wellbeing Implications	N/A
Health and Safety Implications	N/A

1.0 Background

- 1.1 In November 2018, following the submission of a report from the cross-party constitutional working group, Full Council agreed changes to the Constitution in order to increase openness, transparency and public engagement in a number of governance areas. This work included recommendations to review the Council's Scrutiny function with a view to identifying any areas for improvement.
- 1.2 In July 2021 a cross party scrutiny review panel was established for the purpose of: reviewing the Council's current scrutiny arrangements; considering evidence gathered; and to make recommendations as to how the scrutiny arrangements could be improved. In addition to the internal review the Council engaged the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny to provide an external viewpoint on scrutiny in Trafford.
- 1.3 The review took place over the course of the 2021/22 municipal year with an intention that recommendations are made to annual Council in May 2022 to be implemented for the 2022/23 municipal year.

2.0 The Review Panel

- 2.1 The Review Panel consists of 11 members, including at least one representative from each of the Council's four political groups. The members of the panel are;

Councillor Acton
Councillor Chilton
Councillor D Western
Councillor Dillon
Councillor Axford
Councillor Dagnall
Councillor Hartley
Councillor Jerrome
Councillor Barclay
Councillor Blackburn
Councillor Newgrosh

3.0 Areas of success and areas of potential improvement

- 3.1 The first part of the review consisted of the Review Panel Members completing the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny self-assessment tool and the creation of a survey on the effectiveness of Scrutiny in Trafford for Members, Executive Members, and Officers. The feedback from this exercise highlighted areas where Scrutiny performed well and potential areas for improvement within the current process.
- 3.2 The potential areas for improvement identified fell into five themes detailed below:

Information – Issues were identified around the information provided to Scrutiny. This included: Scrutiny Members feeling they lacked knowledge to scrutinise topics successfully; a lack of general information on how the Council functioned

and Scrutiny's role within the governance structure; and a lack of information made available to Councillors on the work and priorities of the Executive. It was also felt that there was a lack of information made available to Scrutiny from objective external viewpoints, which made Committee's reliant upon Officer reports and views.

Communication – Issues were raised around both internal and external communications. With regards to internal communications Members and Officers reported a disconnect between Scrutiny and the other areas of Council business. Communications were also felt to be poor between the Executive and Scrutiny and vice-versa with Councillors from both groups stating that they often were unaware of the work of the other. External communication issues were identified around a lack of public engagement.

Work programming – Issues related to the current work programming of the Committee's included: Members not feeling they had opportunity to influence the work programme; Members not knowing how the agenda setting for meetings was conducted; and a lack of involvement of Executive Members and Senior Officers in the creation of the work programme.

Methodology – The feedback received showed that: there were issues around the frequency and length of meetings; there was a lack of opportunity for pre-decision scrutiny; and whilst task and finish groups were seen as a good tool for scrutiny to utilise but it was felt that there was no standardised process in place to ensure they added value. Members also felt that there was not enough accountability built within the Scrutiny function with recommendations often being made, but little or no feedback received on the impact of the recommendations.

Resources – Many of the issues raised, such as the lack of meetings, tied directly to the limited resources available to support the Scrutiny function. This was also felt with regards to the information Scrutiny received and training offered to Scrutiny Members.

4.0 Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Review

- 4.1 The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny conducted an in-depth review of Trafford's Scrutiny function. The review included the appraisal of Scrutiny agendas, minutes, reports, and meetings available through webcasting. In addition to this documentation the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny met with elected Members and Officers including; the Council Leader and Executive Members, Group Leaders, Scrutiny Chairs, Members of the Scrutiny Committees, the Council's Senior Leadership Team, and Officers supporting scrutiny to ascertain their views of Scrutiny and how Trafford's Scrutiny function performed.
- 4.2 At the beginning of the review, Members in the main were happy with Scrutiny at Trafford. They felt support by CLT, engaged by the Executive and supported by Officers.

- 4.3 Following the conclusion of the review the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny produced a detailed report (Appendix 1) identifying the strengths and weaknesses in Trafford’s Scrutiny Function. The report contains a list of recommendations of how Scrutiny can be improved within Trafford. Ian Parry who was the lead author presented the report, its findings, and recommendations to Trafford’s Corporate Leadership Team on the 5th January and the Scrutiny Review Panel on the 17th January.
- 4.4 Radically changing Scrutiny was not something Members felt was required, but that scrutiny needed to continually evolve. The work of the Review Panel has focused on improving Scrutiny in the near term to deliver effective change within appropriate resources.
- 4.5 However, the Review Panel did consider issues such as increased Scrutiny work resulting from an augmentation in scrutiny committees, task and finish groups and collaborative working.

5.0 Outcomes

5.1 The Review Panel was pleased that the areas it considered needing improvement correlated with what the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny also identified. To aid with the creation of recommendations, suggestions from Members and CFGS have been broken down into themes for improvement and aligned as outlined in the table below.

Review panel suggestions	CFGS suggestions
Have a more strategic focus on topic selection;	A clearer focus on democratic accountability - Scrutiny of Executive Members should form a key part of the work plan, and Executive Members regularly attending scrutiny to answer questions on items falling within their portfolio responsibilities is vital. Alongside this, we also recommend inviting the Leader to attend scrutiny on a quarterly basis to present an integrated finance and performance report.
More planning of work programme linking with the forward plan and deciding in advance which decisions will have follow up review after implementation;	
Greater involvement of Executive Members in the work programming process;	
Review panel suggestions	CFGS suggestions
Large support for pre-decision Scrutiny	More emphasis on scrutiny as a vital part of Council business and governance - With clear council-wide
Have a more clearly defined purpose;	

Have clear mechanisms for monitoring actions and achievements;	ownership and understanding of its important role in improving policy and holding to account.
Review panel suggestions	CFGS suggestions
Clearer work programming;	Review the process for developing work plans for each scrutiny committee - Engaging Members, Officers, partners and the public to prioritise the topics for review. This process should be led by Members of the Committees and could include a selection criterion to identify appropriate topics for the work plan. We would recommend bringing discussion of the work plan to the beginning of meetings, so emerging or changing priorities can benefit from considered discussion.
Look to influence rather than asking for information;	
Have more Scrutiny with focused Committees able to challenge Executive Decisions;	
Review agendas and ensure they meet corporate priorities;	
For Agenda setting to be done in advance for the year;	
Review panel suggestions	CFGS suggestions
More focused remit of Committees to enable them to drill down into areas;	Developing regular communication and information sharing so that Scrutiny can be a resource that can inform Executive decision making. This could be achieved through holding triangulation meetings between Scrutiny Chairs, Executive Members and relevant Directors to consider future issues and the part which scrutiny could play in testing and shaping these forward plans. It would also present an opportunity to share and discuss opportunities to involve scrutiny as an improvement asset.
Scrutiny should be more responsive and results orientated;	
To have a document which covers all Scrutiny's processes	
Review panel suggestions	CFGS suggestions
To have more focused agendas;	Changing the way that information is provided to scrutiny Members for oversight - Cut back on the number of items coming to scrutiny solely for information, and consider how information on the following matters
To have less presentations that are more focused.	
Need to have access to information from a wide variety of sources	

<p>More cross working with other organisations;</p>	<p>could be shared with councillors on a monthly basis outside of committee:</p>
<p>Should review relationship with other groups and boards to see how they can work together to achieve their aims. For Committees to receive briefings and to be made aware of what is being considered by other Committees and Boards (e.g.: Health Scrutiny and Health and Wellbeing Board).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Performance, finance and risk information for council services and those operated by partners; 2) Information about complaints handling; 3) The schedule of key decisions; 4) Details of any major council consultation carried out and their results, and consultations proposed to be carried out; 5) Information on external oversight – data produced by the external auditor and any form of inspection to which council services might be subject.
<p>Review panel suggestions</p>	<p>CFGS suggestions</p>
<p>Wider Membership so all Political Groups represented, perhaps as non-voting co-optees.</p>	<p>Cross-party working could be further strengthened at Trafford. There was a broad agreement that all Members have a duty to uphold their responsibilities as a scrutineer, attend meetings and work towards a shared goal in their committee. Members should consider what further work is necessary to address working relationships.</p>
<p>More collaboration among Councillors in choosing what to Scrutinise;</p>	
<p>Scrutiny Members to expect to have extra work as part of being on the Committee;</p>	

Review panel suggestions	CFGS suggestions
Scrutiny to have a role in the Council's Public Consultation Process – Perhaps through a sub-Committee;	Scrutiny should explore and experiment with ways to allow greater access, openness and involvement with the public. This could include scrutiny going on more site visits in the community, inviting the public to offer ideas for work plans, and greater use of social media channels for resident input and communicating the progress and impact of scrutiny work.
Review panel suggestions	CFGS suggestions
All different types of Scrutiny should be utilised with the right style being picked depending on the topic to be scrutinised.	Consider extending the use of task and finish group work – or alternative scrutiny arrangements – To ensure the most effective use of time and resources and to deliver maximum impact.
The amount of time required by Members for Task and Finish work is clear from the outset;	
Review panel suggestions	CFGS suggestions
<p>To have records of issues discussed to be held along with a brief summary of;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) who proposed each topic for consideration b) evidence for and speakers heard c) decision to proceed or not briefly justified d) who was the report presented to and what was the immediate outcome e) some test cases returned to and reviewed to consider short term and long-term impact 	<p>Reviewing how the recommendations are made and how impact is measured – This could include putting a 'recommendations monitoring report' at the beginning of agendas to orientate scrutiny towards outcomes-focused meetings, alongside an emphasis on finding strong recommendations from questioning to present to Executive as improvement or challenge proposals.</p>

Review panel suggestions	CFGS suggestions
Provide improved training for members;	Consider mandatory scrutiny development and training for all committee members - To develop a common understanding of what “good” scrutiny practice looks like.
Review panel suggestions	CFGS suggestions
Handbook for Scrutiny Members to give them a good basic level of understanding of how the Council operates;	Providing additional briefing or expert involvement as required - To assist scrutiny members in becoming more capable to develop questioning strategies that will deliver high impact and value-adding scrutiny.
Review panel suggestions	CFGS suggestions
Meet more often but have shorter meetings;	Cross-party pre-meetings for scrutiny committees should be established - With a specific focus on identifying priorities and Members working together to develop lines of enquiry so that recommendations are more likely.
Conducting deep dives into fewer areas rather than shallow review of many topics;	
Review panel suggestions	CFGS suggestions
More specialised officer support;	

Have additional resources so officers can provide stronger support to Scrutiny Members;	That additional dedicated, specialist officer support would provide greater capacity for scrutiny to develop and would recommend that this is considered further. Our view is that scrutiny could grow and deliver greater value if this specialist scrutiny support was available. An officer with specific knowledge and experience could be a real advantage.
Review panel suggestions	CFGS suggestions
More Training for Scrutiny Members	More skills development support is offered for the key roles of Chair and Vice-Chair.
Review panel suggestions	CFGS suggestions
	A review of the current approach to financial scrutiny, MTFS/ budget scrutiny and the scrutiny of commercial arrangements. We have produced guidance on financial scrutiny with CIPFA1, setting out scrutiny activity to complement the Council’s annual financial cycle. The guide suggests ways to move budget and finance scrutiny beyond set-piece scrutiny ‘events and quarterly financial performance scorecards being reported to committee.

6.0 Improvement Proposals to improve Scrutiny at Trafford

6.1 The following table: lists proposals to address the areas for improvement identified in the table above; links to the themes Members felt required attention; and provides an outline for when changes should be made.

Proposal to improve	Theme area of improvement	When
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<p>That the Leader be invited to the first meeting of the main Scrutiny Committee at the beginning of each municipal year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Communication • Work programming 	<p>Municipal Year 2022-23</p>
<p>That an informal meeting between each Scrutiny Committee and the relevant Executive Members take place between Annual Council and 10 days before the first meeting of the respective Scrutiny meeting to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak to the Executive Member(s) and Officers about their priorities for the coming municipal year, • Discuss the current Forward Plan and Council Risk Register, • Provide details of any major Council consultation to be carried out and their results, as well as consultations proposed to be carried out; <p>Hear any suggestions for topics from the Executive and Officers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Communication • Work programming • Methodology 	<p>Municipal Year 2022-23</p>
<p>That the relevant Executive Members be given a standing invite to each Scrutiny Meeting to either seek Scrutiny views on a matter or raise areas of potential scrutiny.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Communication • Work programming • Methodology 	<p>Municipal Year 2022-23</p>
<p>That each Scrutiny Committee select between 3 and 5 work programme items per municipal year depending on resources required for each topic from the selection form/criteria.</p> <p>This will be done at the start of the municipal year (before late July). With additional space available within the work programme to handle hot topics that arise during the course of the year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Work programming • Methodology 	<p>Municipal Year 2022-23</p>
<p>Each topic suggestion for inclusion on a committee's work Programme is to be considered against a topic selection form/criteria (Example attached as Appendix 2), with the results presented to the Chair and Vice Chair for sign off.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Work programming • Methodology 	<p>Municipal Year 2022-23</p>

<p>That each topic selected for Scrutiny will have a topic resource identifier form filled in. This form will outline the terms of reference for the topic, identify what resource/method of scrutiny is required and key stake holders etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Work programming • Methodology 	<p>Municipal Year 2022-23.</p>
<p>That Scrutiny will work with the Executive Members and Officers at the start of the municipal year to identify areas for improvement or where Scrutiny can add value through pre-decision Scrutiny.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Work programming • Methodology 	<p>Municipal Year 2022-23</p>
<p>That a report should be provided to CLT and the Executive once scrutiny work programmes have been agreed at the start of each municipal year, highlighting a timeframe for items, and any resources/assistance required from the wider council to assist Scrutiny.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Work programming 	<p>Municipal Year 2022-23</p>
<p>That Scrutiny topics relevant to each portfolio should be tracked by DMT's.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Work programming 	<p>Municipal Year 2022-23</p>
<p>That all topics/work programme items proposed for scrutiny are to have a clear purpose and not to just seek information or receive an update. But be based on community concern, known issues or improvement required. (These will be in the topic selection form/Criteria)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work programming • Methodology 	<p>Municipal Year 2022-23</p>
<p>That relevant Officers and/or Executive Members be invited to Agenda setting meetings to discuss with the Chair and Vice Chair requests for information and how it will be presented to the Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>Agenda setting meetings for Scrutiny Meetings should be set at the start of the municipal year and shared with relevant partners if they will be required to attend.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Work programming 	<p>Municipal Year 2022-23</p>
<p>That at the conclusion of a scrutiny topic, recommendations are submitted to the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Methodology 	<p>Municipal Year 2022-23</p>

<p>Executive in a reasonable time period (not to wait to the end of the municipal year) and;</p> <p>At the time recommendations are submitted to the Executive, a date when the Committee wishes to receive a response by should also be included. This should be no more than 6 months after being considered by the Executive.</p>		
<p>That at the conclusion of the municipal year but before purdah (if applicable that year), a Scrutiny Review will be held by the Chair of the main Scrutiny Committee and the Statutory Scrutiny Officer. This review will be held in the evening and open to all Members and Chief Officers, to review the effectiveness of the scrutiny year, highlight its achievements/good practices, success of recommendations and consider areas for continued improvement.</p> <p>This meeting will be included on the Committee timetable agreed by Annual Council.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Methodology 	<p>Municipal Year 2022-23</p>
<p>That a Scrutiny Toolkit be written and provided to all Members and Chief officers that outlines the role, remit and powers of Scrutiny.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Communication • Work programming • Methodology • Resources 	<p>Municipal Year 2023-24</p>
<p>That the Council's website for Scrutiny be refreshed, encourage public participation and that it updates monthly with on overview of the work the Committees are undertaking and progress that is being made. Also, greater use of the Council's social media to obtain resident input and communicating the progress and impact of scrutiny work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Communication • Work programming • Methodology 	<p>Late Summer 2022.</p>
<p>That all Scrutiny Committees have political representation from all parties on the Council and if any Committee due to Proportionality does not, then an invitation from the relevant chair to the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methodology 	<p>Municipal Year 2022-23.</p>

Group Leader be made offering a place of one non-voting Member.		
That each topic selected for Scrutiny will have a topic resource identifier form filled in. This form will outline the terms of reference for the topic, identify what resource are required and key stake holders etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Work programming • Methodology 	Municipal Year 2022-23.
That each meeting of Scrutiny should have a work programme report as part of its Agenda. This report should outline the work of the committee for the municipal year, timeframes, method of scrutiny etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Communication • Work programming • Methodology 	Municipal Year 2022-23.

6.2 If the above proposals are approved by Council, the process for Scrutiny would be as outline in Appendix 3.

7.0 More Scrutiny and Support

7.1 The review identified that some Members were not clear on the support available to them in order to conduct Scrutiny Topics within the Council. The Governance Team currently supports the Councils Scrutiny function with two Officers offering a third of their time.

7.2 In supporting the Scrutiny function, the Governance Team currently:

- Work with the Chair and Vice Chair to manage the annual work programme;
- Provide support for Scrutiny Members, including providing advice on scrutiny in line with statutory guidance and best practice, and producing briefing papers, background materials, key lines of enquiry, arranging seminars etc.;
- Carry out and commission qualitative and quantitative research to support topics including data gathering and analysis, case studies and examples of good practice to inform the scrutiny process;
- Source external experts to contribute information to agenda items at formal meetings and to working groups;
- Support working groups, including managing the project plan; drafting terms of reference; providing advice on virtual and remote techniques to gather evidence and engage with stakeholders during the health emergency, and drafting reports in consultation with the chair;
- Promote Scrutiny across the Council and externally, including production of reports and publicity to show what has changed as a result.
- Co-ordinate and administer agenda planning meetings with the Chair, Vice Chair, Scrutiny and Senior Officers in advance of committee meetings. This will include advising Officers and partner agencies of the information required;

- Administer the committee meetings including sending out agenda papers to Councillors;
- Produce the minutes of the meeting and update the action and recommendations trackers;
- Provide governance support to working groups and conferences including arranging venues and providing administrative support.

7.3 The review identified that there is currently limited support for the scrutiny function due to limited officer resource. An increase in resources to increase officer support made available to scrutiny was recommended by both the Review Panel and the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny as being necessary to help improve the Scrutiny function within the Council.

7.4 It was identified that additional dedicated, specialist officer support would provide greater capacity for scrutiny to develop and would recommend that this is considered further. The view being that scrutiny could grow and deliver greater value if this specialist scrutiny support was available and that an officer with specific knowledge and experience could be a real advantage.

7.5 Notwithstanding the resource recommendations, it is proposed that the changes detailed in section 6 of the report would be supported by the existing resource in the Governance Team.

7.6 Both the review by Members and from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny identified that task and finish groups at Trafford had been successful. Members recognised that more scrutiny was required, be it through more Task and Finish groups, or through the identification of more Scrutiny Committees to support the existing three meetings.

7.8 Whilst the proposed changes detailed in section 6 will be supported by existing resources within the Governance Team, those resources will need to be kept under review throughout 2022/23 to ensure that the improvements can be successfully progressed as proposed. In accordance with the review recommendations, any additional growth or development of or support for the scrutiny function, above what is proposed in section 6, would likely result in a requirement to increase officer resource made available to support scrutiny. In such an instance, a budget to increase resource levels would need to be secured.

8.0 Evolving Scrutiny

8.1 The Review Panel will meet in the new municipal year towards the end of 2022 to consider how Scrutiny is progressing, see if the changes have made the perceived impact and if future changes to Scrutiny are required. The Review Panel will make any suggested changes to the first Annual Review of Scrutiny in 2023.

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Final Report



Mrs Sara Todd
Chief Executive
Trafford Council

Dear Mrs Todd,

Short Scrutiny Improvement Review – CfGS consultancy support

I am writing to thank you for inviting the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) to carry out an evaluation of Trafford Council's scrutiny function. This letter provides feedback on our review findings and offers suggestions on how the Council could develop its scrutiny process.

As part of this feedback stage, we would like to facilitate a workshop with Members and Officers to reflect on this review and to discuss options for improvement.

Background

Trafford Council commissioned CfGS to advise and support a Member Review Panel, and Members and Officers, in the review of the Council's scrutiny function. The aim is to ensure that scrutiny is effective in delivering accountability, improving policy and decision making, and makes a quality contribution in the delivery of Council plans and overall improvement.

The Council has not undertaken a comprehensive review of its scrutiny arrangements for some time and wants to check and test that scrutiny meets the Council's high expectations of democratic accountability, and that decision-making and scrutiny is effective and impactful.

Trafford's current scrutiny arrangement consists of an overarching Scrutiny Committee, plus a Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and a Health Scrutiny Committee.

CfGS undertook a review of these scrutiny arrangements, involving evidence gathering online through conversations with Members and Officers during November 2021. In addition, we observed recordings of scrutiny meetings and reviewed key documents on the Council's website.

CfGS met with elected Members and Officers, including the Council Leader and Executive Members, Group Leaders, Scrutiny Chairs, Members of the Scrutiny Committees, the Council's senior leadership team and officers supporting scrutiny.

The review was conducted by:

- Ian Parry – Head of Consultancy, Centre for Governance and Scrutiny
- Kate Grigg – Senior Research Officer, Centre for Governance and Scrutiny

The findings and recommendations presented in this letter are intended to advise the Council and the Member Review Panel on strengthening the quality of scrutiny activities, increasing the impact of its outputs, and through its Members to develop a strong and shared understanding of the role and capability of the scrutiny function.

Summary of findings

1. Scrutiny has the conditions for success

The conditions for successful scrutiny are clearly present at Trafford; there is a shared understanding from Members and Officers that good governance involves scrutiny, and when used effectively scrutiny can add value to decision-making. All of those interviewed believed that improvements are needed to make scrutiny more effective and to add greater value.

Given that Members recognise the benefits of change and improvement, this presents a good opportunity for the Council to refresh the way in which scrutiny operates. Change could aim to elevate scrutiny so that it is recognised as a strategic function and is used as a resource for corporate improvement.

Our review identified a number of positive indicators for scrutiny, most notably; the positive attitude and commitment of Members and Officers, the mature cross-party working in the scrutiny context, the overall capacity and range of experience of Members as well as the strong belief that more could be achieved. There were other positive behaviours and practices which this report will also highlight. We therefore commend the Council and its Members for their professional approach to scrutiny.

2. Officer support and organisational culture

We were assured that the Council's senior leadership team are committed to supporting scrutiny. Through our conversations, Members were very positive about the assistance they received from Officers who support scrutiny and were highly complimentary about the quality of Officer support within the Council's resource constraints.

Organisational culture was also identified as foundational in improving the quality of scrutiny, and it was noted that scrutiny mainly operated in space that was generally free from adversarial political activity and was largely collegiate. The Council's ability to effectively carry out day to day business, as well as to confidently plan for the future, rests on the strength of organisational culture. This includes but is not limited to:

- Mutual respect between Members – within the context of robust political debate and disagreement, and Members respecting Officers as professionals;
- Members and Officers understanding their mutual roles and responsibilities – in the most basic sense, that Councillors lead on strategy and overall direction, while Officers lead on delivery and implementation.

These cultural aspects above are present at Trafford, but more could be done to engage earlier with Executive members to help shape and improve through early constructive challenge. Furthermore, there is a real opportunity for Scrutiny to be better aligned with core corporate plans of the council.

We would also like to note that we felt that additional dedicated, specialist officer support would provide greater capacity for scrutiny to develop and would recommend that this is considered further. Our view is that scrutiny could grow and deliver greater value if this specialist scrutiny support was available. An officer with specific knowledge and experience could be a real advantage. We acknowledge that the ongoing review of the Governance Services' structure may offer an opportunity to explore this further.

3. Clarity on scrutiny's role and responsibilities

Scrutiny's overall role is to hold the Executive to account, to carry out policy development, contribute to improved decision-making, and channel the voice of the public. A good scrutiny function is one that provides not only effective challenge but is recognised and valued as a body that positively influences policy development.

Through our evidence gathering, Members involved in scrutiny could articulate the role that scrutiny should play in being an integral part of the council's governance structure and contributing to the council's budgetary and policy making function. However, some Members seemed to be unclear on how exactly scrutiny should be holding the Executive to account. We heard that meetings could spend a lot of time focusing on officer presentations and less time in discussion and scrutiny mode.

In practice the strategic challenge of Executive Members needs to be strengthened. Within meetings we found that scrutiny tends to focus on Officers and Officer reports - where Executive Members are involved in scrutiny meetings this can be light touch rather than an exploration of current policy, or decisions where Scrutiny can play a valuable role in shaping and improving.

Scrutiny needs to recognise its role and responsibility in holding Executive Members to account, ensuring questions are directed to the relevant portfolio holder and are linked to clear priorities. Scrutiny's success is measured by the impact it has on positively shaping and improving policy and key decisions.

The Executive and Scrutiny both want more emphasis on shaping policy, challenging and holding to account. Therefore Scrutiny will need earlier access to and involvement with the core policy and decision-making activities of the Executive. Our discussions concluded that the Leader, Executive Members and Scrutiny all recognise and agree that greater collaboration and engagement would be strongly beneficial.

We recommend:

- **A clearer focus on democratic accountability** - Scrutiny of Executive Members should form a key part of the work plan, and Executive Members regularly attending scrutiny to answer questions on items falling within their portfolio responsibilities is vital. Alongside this, we also recommend inviting the Leader to attend scrutiny on a quarterly basis to present an integrated finance and performance report.
- **More emphasis on scrutiny as a vital part of Council business and governance** - With clear council-wide ownership and understanding of its important role in improving policy and holding to account.

4. Collaborative approach to scrutiny

Scrutiny is the forum for the evidence-based discussion about issues affecting local people where challenge is welcomed and encouraged. Members told us that they felt that politics was not a strong feature of Scrutiny, although there are instances of where politics can feature.

In any democratic institution, there will be differences of opinion and disagreement about policy and decisions - this should be accepted. However, if Scrutiny encounters become too politically charged or adversarial this can diminish mutual trust and respect and lead to defensive and negative outcomes, rather than resulting in creative and useful exchanges.

We heard that proactive engagement between Scrutiny and the Executive could be improved both before and during Scrutiny meetings.

There is also mixed level of engagement from those who sit on Scrutiny, with some Members showing minimal levels of involvement within committee meetings. Engagement, contributions and challenge from all Members of Scrutiny is essential if individuals Members wish to have an influence on shaping decisions, and if Scrutiny is to fulfil its role in being a space for cross-party inquiry. This not only requires attendance, but background preparation for the meeting.

We recommend:

- **Developing regular communication and information sharing so that Scrutiny can be a resource that can inform Executive decision making.** This could be achieved through holding triangulation meetings between Scrutiny Chairs, Executive Members and relevant Directors to consider future issues and the part which scrutiny could play in testing and shaping these forward plans. It would also present an opportunity to share and discuss opportunities to involve scrutiny as an improvement asset.
- **Cross-party working could be further strengthened at Trafford.** There was a broad agreement that all Members have a duty to uphold their responsibilities as a scrutineer, attend meetings and work towards a shared goal in their committee. Members should consider what further work is necessary to address working relationships.

5. Scrutiny's focus and workplan

There is a recognition that Scrutiny at Trafford needs to focus on more strategic issues, where it can have influence, and that Scrutiny should input into the decision-making process at an earlier stage than it does currently.

Scrutiny has a tendency to be more retrospective, rather than forward looking. It is important that scrutiny carries out reviews and assess performance, but there is a missed opportunity for it to add value to council policy and strategy through greater emphasis on the big challenges and opportunities ahead for the Borough.

The Council's corporate plan should direct Scrutiny's focus, but business does not always seem to be aligned with either the Council's overall priorities, the 3-month rolling programme of Executive decisions or with pressing performance or risks - when topics are reviewed the focus tends to be operational rather than strategic or outcome focused.

There is also an opportunity to hold the Council Leader to account for the delivery of the Council plan and integrated performance and financial position of the council. We believe this would also be welcomed by the Leader as part of his duties to the council.

Task and finish style working was cited as some of the most successful examples of scrutiny by Members, where it has selected key issues to scrutinise and to explore. These could be further improved if Scrutiny focused on making compelling, quality recommendations based on its activity.

There is also some good work by Scrutiny in advance of the budget. Through 3 structured sessions it is able to explore budget issues in greater detail. This can be further built upon for greater impact if Members are able to construct more probing and challenging lines of enquiry. This will take further pre-planning and Officer input to assist Members in building core knowledge.

Finance scrutiny also tends to spend time looking at reviewing budgets rather than future, emerging and potential future risk issues. It may need to refocus its attention on the future challenges and operating environment of the council.

Work planning is key to ensuring Scrutiny stays focussed on strategic issues where it can make an impact, whilst making the best use of time and resources. From our conversations we noted that many Members felt that they have little opportunity to influence work plans, and the way that issues are prioritised. Trafford's Scrutiny function may need to consider how it organises its work plans in a way that is led by all Members of the committees in order to have ownership over committee activity.

It is important to emphasise that work planning is an ongoing process and not just a one-off event. Whilst a workshop will help identify priorities and provide structure to work for the months ahead, there will need to be flexibility in the work plan and time set aside to regularly revisit the relevance of topics in meetings as the local context changes.

We recommend:

- **Review the process for developing work plans for each scrutiny committee -** Engaging Members, Officers, partners and the public to prioritise the topics for review. This process should be led by Members of the Committees and could include a selection criteria to identify appropriate topics for the work plan. We would recommend bringing discussion of the work plan to the beginning of meetings, so emerging or changing priorities can benefit from considered discussion.
- **A review of the current approach to financial scrutiny, MTFS/ budget scrutiny and the scrutiny of commercial arrangements.** We have produced guidance on financial scrutiny with CIPFA¹, setting out scrutiny activity to complement the Council's annual financial cycle. The guide suggests ways to move budget and finance scrutiny beyond set-piece scrutiny 'events' and quarterly financial performance scorecards being reported to committee.

6. Scrutiny committee structure and scheduling

We found no major Member concerns about the current structure of Scrutiny, although we heard comments about an additional committee. Our view is that more committees would not necessarily generate more quality output or offer additional value, although it would potentially increase activity and need for more resources.

Instead, we would like to raise the opportunity to obtain greater value from task and finish groups or alternative formats of scrutiny.

We were told about several successful examples of task and finish group work. Scrutiny could benefit from further use of task and finish groups or spotlight events where single issues of major importance to the Council or community can be considered and explored in greater detail. This can add significant impact and quality to scrutiny activity. But T&F must be clearly scoped, resourced, time-limited and with clear objectives to be useful and effective.

¹ CfGS & CIPFA (2020) 'Financial scrutiny, practice guide' - https://www.cfgs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Financial-scrutiny-practice-guide_proof3.pdf

Task and finish style working is often where scrutiny can do its best work by focussing on a single issue and drilling down to provide clear analysis to inform policy making. Trafford councillors get this, but in practice the scoping and delivery of task and finish can suffer from unclear objective setting and 'mission drift'.

We suggest that additional thought and planning is given to scoping, objective setting, inclusion of the Executive and timescales. Other forms of specific, single-issue scrutiny can be considered as useful to the way Trafford focuses on key issues. These can include; Spotlight Sessions (1 item scrutiny meetings) and Inquiry days (1day longer scrutiny to involve interest groups and evidence providers).

We recommend:

- **Consider extending the use of task and finish group work – or alternative scrutiny arrangements** – To ensure the most effective use of time and resources and to deliver maximum impact.

7. Scrutiny's output and impact

Overall, the general view is that Scrutiny does a good job. However when asked more specifically about Scrutiny's output and impact most Members and Officers found it difficult to point to consistent work that has made a real difference, or tracking recommendations that have been accepted and implemented.

Substantive items considered by Scrutiny committees the conclusion of the discussion did not always have an articulated outcome or recommendation. Otherwise, Scrutiny business could be seen as solely for the purpose of obtaining information or to obtain updates. The practice of reports being presented 'to note', or inviting speakers only to share information, should be avoided.

Scrutiny must be clear in its purpose and to add value no value to the issue or subject being considered. If scrutiny can't add value, then arguably the subject should not reach the agenda. As a matter of general principle, items for information or updates could be shared with Members as briefing notes outside of committee, leaving more capacity for constructive activity.

An effective scrutiny function should be able to review recommendations in 6- or 12-months' time to see that the outcomes have made a difference or added value. Improving systems to monitor the Executive's response and implementation of recommendations that have been accepted will help track scrutiny's outcomes and Councillors' perceptions on the effectiveness of work.

When members of the Executive and senior Officers are asked to attend, Scrutiny Committees would benefit from being clear about what the aims and objectives are of the session (including clarity over the content of any reports and presentations). Through our recommendation of establishing pre-meetings in the next section, this can also improve Scrutiny's impact by allowing the space to create a shared understanding and trying to discuss beforehand what recommendations the committee might make on the day, and how the Executive might respond to them.

In carrying out 'external' scrutiny work, it is important to ensure that scrutiny has a clear focus on objectives and is able to influence outcomes concerning the topic discussed.

We recommend:

- **Changing the way that information is provided to scrutiny Members for oversight -** Cut back on the number of items coming to scrutiny solely for information, and consider how information on the following matters could be shared with councillors on a monthly basis outside of committee:
 - Performance, finance and risk information for council services and those operated by partners;
 - Information about complaints handling;
 - The schedule of key decisions;
 - Details of any major council consultation carried out and their results, and consultations proposed to be carried out;
 - Information on external oversight – data produced by the external auditor and any form of inspection to which council services might be subject.

- **Reviewing how the recommendations are made and how impact is measured** – This could include putting a ‘recommendations monitoring report’ at the beginning of agendas to orientate scrutiny towards outcomes-focused meetings, alongside an emphasis on finding strong recommendations from questioning to present to Executive as improvement or challenge proposals.

8. Chairing, member development and meeting preparation

Scrutiny’s success is dependent on the right Members, with the right capabilities and attributes, leading and managing the scrutiny function. Scrutiny Chairs have a vital task in leading the committee, ensuring that it builds and maintains strong relationships with the Executive, Officers and relevant external partners.

Chairs can also lead on setting the working culture of scrutiny, helping it to set and uphold high standards of behaviour, engagement and debate, ensuring good cross-party working. The lack of opposition Members involved in scrutiny chairing roles was raised as an issue in our evidence gathering. Although there is no single ‘right’ approach to selecting chairs - the emphasis ought to be on selecting chairs based on skill set and capability and providing ongoing training and support.

Scrutiny provides an excellent opportunity to support Members in getting an in-depth understanding of issues across the Council’s services. To get the most out of scrutiny, Members need a clear sense of what is required of them as committee Members and the work involved which allows good scrutiny to happen.

Many Members were unsure of how to achieve impactful scrutiny, some were also open about a lack of understanding about the specific areas they are asked to scrutinise. Members felt that more briefings to provide them with core knowledge, especially on more complex or technical issues would be welcome and equip them better as scrutineers.

We heard that the quality of questioning in scrutiny varies; in some instances, it is forensic and probing, but it is often more general and exploratory and sometimes superficial. Trafford is clearly committed to Member development, and training was raised by some Members who were clearly aware of the gaps in their knowledge and understanding.

From the recordings of committee meetings there is little evidence of co-ordinated questions or Members acting as a team with clear lines of inquiry. Pre-meetings could allow Members to give voice to their objectives for meetings and allow mutual motivations to be understood and questioning strategies to be agreed. It is likely that differences will remain and will in some cases

be significant, but the airing of these differences will make it easier for Members to understand where consensus is possible.

We recommend:

- **More skills development support is offered for the key roles of Chair and Vice-Chair** – To provide them with the confidence they need in leading the scrutiny function.
- **Consider mandatory scrutiny development and training for all committee members -** To develop a common understanding of what “good” scrutiny practice looks like.
- **Providing additional briefing or expert involvement as required -** To assist scrutiny members in becoming more capable to develop questioning strategies that will deliver high-impact and value-adding scrutiny.
- **Cross-party pre-meetings for scrutiny committees should be established -** With a specific focus on identifying priorities and Members working together to develop lines of enquiry so that recommendations are more likely.

9. Public engagement

Scrutiny should explore and experiment with ways to allow greater access, openness and involvement with the public. This could include scrutiny going on more site visits in the community, inviting the public to offer ideas for work plans, and greater use of social media channels for resident input and communicating the progress and impact of scrutiny work.

Thank you and acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Chairs, Members of the Scrutiny Committees, Executive Members and Officers who took part in interviews for their time, insights and open views.

Yours sincerely,

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DRAFT Trafford SCRUTINY TOPIC ASSESSMENT - SELECTION CRITERIA

1.0 Defining Scrutiny Topics

For every item on the work programme / new referral, it should be clear:

- What is the issue / activity / project under consideration?
 1. A brief outline of the matter being referred / the question being asked -
What is Scrutiny being asked to do?
 2. e.g. undertake a full review of the subject? Investigate / interrogate different policy options? Be consulted on final proposals before decision making? Monitor outcomes / implementation?
- What are the reasons for / expected benefits of involving Scrutiny in this matter?
- Is there a specific deadline for this piece of work?

1.1 Topic Selection Criteria

The topic should meet at least one of the following:

- Improvements for local people likely.
- Community/Corporate priority area.
- Key issue for the public.
- Poor performing service.
- High level of dissatisfaction.

2.0 Topic Rejection Criteria

The topic should not meet any of the following:

- The issue is already being addressed / being examined elsewhere and change is imminent
- The topic would be better addressed elsewhere (and will be referred there)
- Scrutiny involvement would have limited / no impact upon outcomes
- The topic may be sub-judice or prejudicial to the Council's interest
- The topic is too broad to make a review realistic
- New legislation or guidance relating to the topic is expected within the next year
- The topic area is currently subject to inspection or has recently undergone substantial change
- Simply for information.

3.0 Scoring

Each topic is scored for Importance and Impact on a scale of 1-4 using a scoring guide. (Scoring Topic Assessment Template attached for information).

Importance – how well a topic fits with the Council’s key aims and priorities.

Impact – likely potential impact of outcomes from a scrutiny investigation of the topic in terms of community benefit.

4.0 **Scoring Guide**

Importance

- 1 Some evidence that the topic is linked to the Council’s key aims and priorities but only indirectly.
- 2 Good evidence linking topic to Council’s aims but not to Council’s current priorities.
- 3 Good evidence linking topic to Council’s key aims and priorities.
- 4 Strong evidence linking topic to Council’s key aims and priorities.

Impact

- 1 Minor potential benefits or benefits affecting only one ward/customer/client group
- 2 Minor potential benefits affecting two or more wards/customer/client groups or, moderate potential benefits affecting only one ward/customer/client group.
- 3 Moderate potential benefits affecting more than one ward/customer/client group, or Substantial potential benefits affecting one or more ward/customer/client group.
- 4 Substantial potential benefits community wide or for a significant proportion or section of the community.

Appendix

- 2 Scrutiny Topic Assessment Template

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SCRUTINY TOPIC ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

SCRUTINY TOPIC SELECTION ASSESSMENT

TOPIC:	
SUGGESTED BY:	DATE:

STEP 1: REJECTION CRITERIA MUST NOT MEET ANY OF THESE:		STEP 2: SELECTION CRITERIA MUST MEET ONE OF THESE:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Already being addressed		<input type="checkbox"/> Improvements for local people likely	
<input type="checkbox"/> Matter subjudice or prejudicial to Council's interests		<input type="checkbox"/> Community Strategy/Corporate priority area	
<input type="checkbox"/> Specific case falling within complaints procedure		<input type="checkbox"/> Key issue for public	
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual disciplinary or grievance matter		<input type="checkbox"/> Poor performing service	
<input type="checkbox"/> Unlikely to result in improvements for local people		<input type="checkbox"/> High level of dissatisfaction	
Select	Reject	Select	Reject

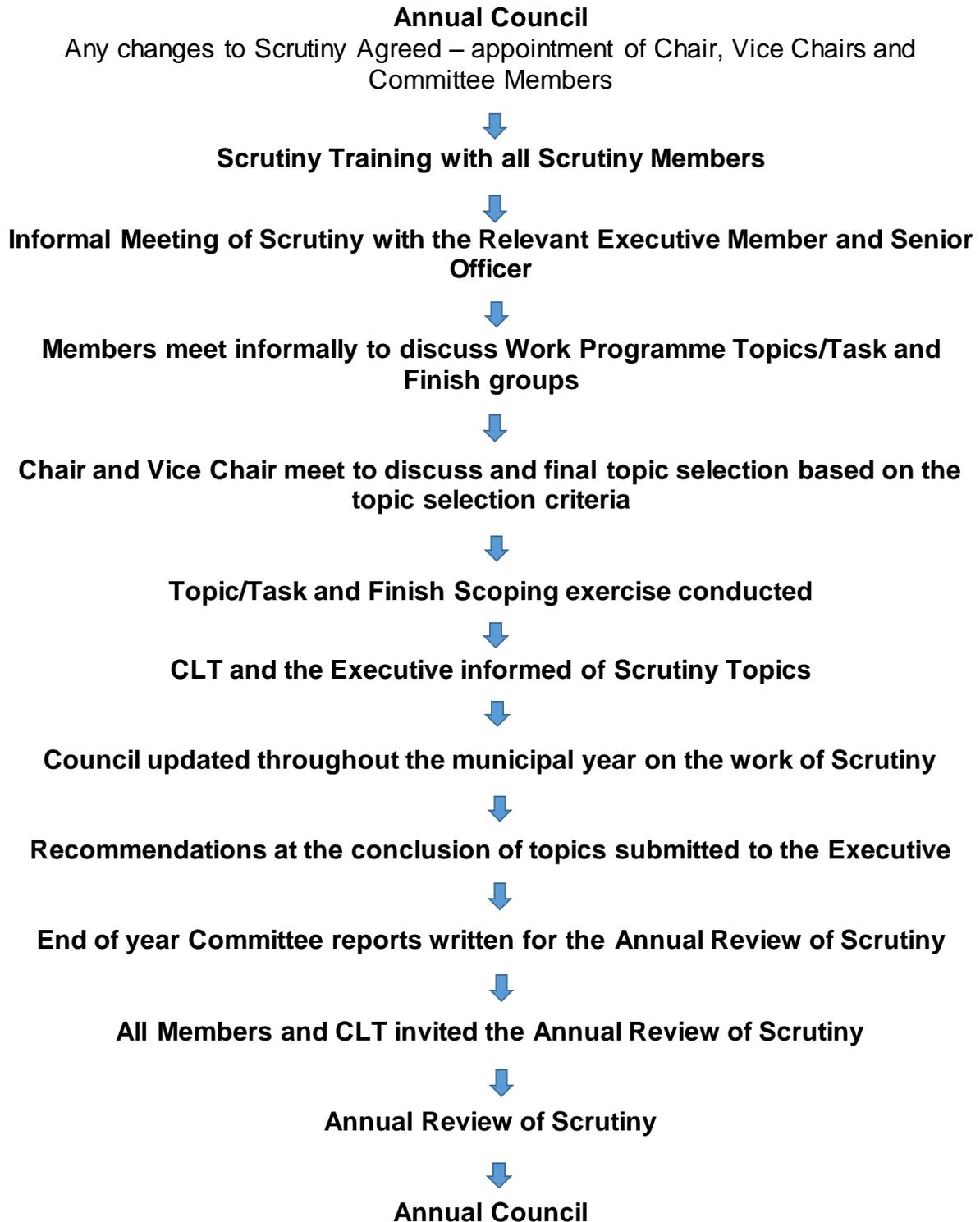
STEP 3: PRIORITISE			
SCORING GUIDE			
IMPORTANCE SCORE INDICATOR		IMPACT SCORE INDICATOR	
Score 0	No evidence that topic is related to the Council's key aims and priorities. Reject	Score 0	No potential benefits likely to result. Reject
1	Some evidence that topic linked to the Council's key aims and priorities but only indirectly.	1	Minor potential benefits or benefits affecting only one ward/customer/client group
2	Good evidence linking topic to Council's key aims but not to Council's current priorities	2	Minor potential benefits affecting two or more wards/customer/client groups or, Moderate potential benefits affecting one ward/customer/client group.
3	Good evidence linking topic to Council's key aims and priorities	3	Moderate potential benefits affecting more than one ward/customer/client group or, Substantial potential benefits affecting one or more ward/customer/client groups
4	Strong evidence linking topic to Council's key aims and priorities	4	Substantial potential benefits community wide or for a significant proportion or section of the community.
See attached for Council's key aims and priorities			

Outcome:
Date:

Topic priority guide			
Score 1-4	Reject topic		
Score 5-6	Possible topic for scrutiny		
Score 7-8	Priority topic for scrutiny		
Outcome:	<input type="checkbox"/> Select	<input type="checkbox"/> Reserve List	<input type="checkbox"/> Reject

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Scrutiny Work Flow



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