
Overview

The scrutiny function provides the opportunity for greater transparency in decision making, policy review and development. Scrutiny may involve services provided by the local authority and/or those provided by external organisations. For scrutiny to be effective, all key stakeholders should be actively involved in identifying witnesses and other evidence, exploring evidence and reaching conclusions. The scrutiny officer has a key role in enabling the scrutiny process, particularly by supporting key stakeholders at every stage in the scrutiny, in particular by facilitating consensus and helping those involved to reach evidence-based conclusions. The term 'stakeholders' in this unit refers primarily to elected members but may also include for example other council departments, members of the community and external partner bodies.

Target Group

This unit is appropriate for officers working on scrutiny activities in local government.

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Performance criteria

You must be able to:

- P1 provide support for key stakeholders which helps them:
 - P1.1 identify which issues to explore
 - P1.2 identify the type of evidence needed
 - P1.3 commission internal and external research
 - P1.4 agree the witnesses to give evidence
- P2 ensure that the choice of evidence, research and witnesses shows imagination, innovation and good use of existing contacts and other resources
- P3 provide support for witnesses which is thorough, fair and consistent
- P4 provide support for key stakeholders which helps them:
 - P4.1 agree the outcomes they require from each meeting
 - P4.2 treat witnesses fairly and with respect
 - P4.3 make best use of the time and evidence available
 - P4.4 interpret the evidence provided
 - P4.5 reach defensible conclusions based on the evidence provided
 - P4.6 reach consensus
 - P4.7 achieve the outcomes agreed for the scrutiny to schedule and within budget
- P5 produce a full and accurate record of meetings according to organisational and legal requirements
- P6 ensure your report:
 - P6.1 is articulate and well-structured
 - P6.2 is written in an agreed style
 - P6.3 provides clear conclusions and recommendations with supporting evidence
 - P6.4 is 'signed-off' by all key stakeholders and recommendations are directed to the appropriate decision makers
 - P6.5 is communicated and disseminated to relevant stakeholders and the public
- P7 develop an evaluation of the scrutiny project against agreed outcomes and plans which identifies lessons for the future
- P8 evaluate the longer-term impact of the scrutiny and its recommendations

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Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

- K1 the role of scrutiny in the democratic process (as B37)
- K2 legislation, regulations, guidelines and codes of practice relevant to the scrutiny process
- K3 best practice in managing scrutiny activities
- K4 the importance of facilitation in your role
- K5 the importance of building relationships with key stakeholders, building trust and involvement and 'leading upwards'
- K6 how to enable constructive challenge
- K7 your roles and key responsibilities when managing a scrutiny process
- K8 principles, processes, tools and techniques for managing scrutiny processes
- K9 the types and quality of evidence required for effective scrutiny
- K10 how to commission internal and external research
- K11 the processes and procedures for identifying and involving witnesses in the scrutiny activity
- K12 how to work effectively with stakeholders during the scrutiny activity to help them achieve agreed outcomes
- K13 how to produce scrutiny reports
- K14 procedures for disseminating scrutiny reports
- K15 how to evaluate scrutiny processes and learn lessons for the future
- K16 general organisational policies, practices and activities that may affect the scrutiny process

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Additional Information

Scope/range related to performance criteria

This unit covers the following types of scrutiny activities:

1. review
2. budget scrutiny
3. performance management
4. specialist areas (for example, diversity)
5. call-in
6. external scrutiny
7. pre-decision scrutiny
8. where others have the duty to consult

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Behaviours

You must show that you work in the following way

- 1 you address multiple demands without losing focus and energy
- 2 you recognise changes in circumstances promptly and adjust plans and activities accordingly
- 3 you generate and recognise imaginative and innovative solutions
- 4 you show patience and perseverance
- 5 you make time available to support others
- 6 you encourage and support others to take decisions autonomously
- 7 you identify clearly the value and benefits to people of a proposed course of action
- 8 you show sensitivity to stakeholders' needs and interests and manage these effectively
- 9 you identify people's information needs
- 10 you identify and adopt media and styles appropriate to different people and situations
- 11 you present information clearly, concisely, accurately and in ways that promote understanding
- 12 you focus personal attention on specific details that are critical to achieving successful results
- 13 you take personal responsibility for making things happen
- 14 you show integrity, fairness and consistency
- 15 you model behaviour that shows respect, helpfulness and consideration
- 16 you encourage and welcome feedback from others and use this feedback constructively
- 17 you reflect regularly on your own and others' experiences and use these to inform future action

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Links to other NOS

- 1 A51 Take effective decisions
- 2 C11 Manage your own resources and professional development
- 3 C22 Maintain and develop effective working relationships in local government
- 4 C32 Facilitate the implementation of local government legislation, regulations and procedures

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