

OPTIONS FOR UNDERTAKING SCRUTINY REVIEWS

It is important to consider that Scrutiny Reviews should: -

- Be deliverable within a set timetable.
- Be sufficiently focused on a particular aspect of a service.
- Not duplicate other significant review activity.
- Not be related to a specific individual grievance or complaint.

Scrutiny Reviews should also (where possible): -

- Contribute to the overall objectives of the Council.
- Reflect community concerns.
- Lead to potential achievable outcomes or improvements for the people of South Cambridgeshire.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee will ultimately agree whether or not a Scrutiny Review on a particular issue will be held. It is strongly recommended that any initial requests for Scrutiny Reviews go through a scoping process facilitated by Democratic Services. This should provide the Committee with an indication as to whether the Scrutiny Review meets the above principles and which of the following formats would be suitable: -

Scrutiny Review by the Full Committee

There may be an issue that all Members of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee would like to be involved in scrutinising. Rather than allocating a small number of Members to conduct a Scrutiny Review outside of the Committee, such levels of interest could mean that the most appropriate way of reviewing an issue is at a full meeting of the Committee. This could be managed either by arranging a separate extraordinary meeting on the specific issue, or introducing a standing item on the issue over a specific number of Committee meetings.

Scrutiny Review by a Task and Finish Group

Task and Finish Groups are typically established when significant research and evidence gathering is necessary to assist in the production of a comprehensive report substantiating a set of recommendations to decision takers. An appropriate timetable would be agreed at the commencement of the Scrutiny Review, with most Task and Finish Groups aiming to have completed their reviews by 6 months. It is usual practice for Task and Finish Groups to meet at least once a month, therefore, they will be dependent on the number of Councillors available and willing to participate.

Scrutiny Review by an Informal Working Group

Informal Working Groups with relevant officers, Portfolio Holders or external parties are an effective means of undertaking Scrutiny Reviews that do not require significant research and evidence and can be completed in a much shorter timescale. Formal recommendations can still come out of a review carried out by Informal Working Groups, but a comprehensive report is usually unnecessary. This format also provides opportunities for Members to gain a better understanding of specific service areas.

Scrutiny Review by a Focus Group

A Focus Group could carry out a Scrutiny Review on any issue that requires an urgent response. It would take the shape of a significant fact-finding exercise, taking up one or two full days in an intensive session with very little research required and report its outcomes to relevant officers/Portfolio Holders.