

### Summary of evidence and Proposed Scrutiny Improvement Plan

Culture				
Desired Outcome Characteristics	Survey / evidence findings	Proposed Action	Key Actions for change	Action By
<p>Effective relationship between scrutiny, the Executive and officers</p> <p>Openness, transparency and honesty</p> <p>Being confident and brave</p> <p>Knowledgeable</p> <p>Understand function of scrutiny and subject matters</p>	<p>Review findings – what you told us</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some cabinet members feel ‘under-scrutinised’</li> <li>• Scrutiny tends to look at operational detail, rather than shaping strategy and policy/decisions</li> <li>• Too few examples of scrutiny having impact – it can be single dimensional</li> <li>• Scrutiny can be seen as unhelpful or disruptive, rather than constructive</li> <li>• Members are in favour of change and improvement</li> <li>• Member behaviours are polite, positive and challenging</li> </ul> <p>Member survey – main findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent understanding of role and purpose, eg: holding to account, influence policy, challenge decisions-accountability, public voice, investigative, improving and value adding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce a Scrutiny Mission Statement</li> <li>• Introduce a scrutiny and executive protocol clarifying expectations and the working relationship between the executive and scrutiny</li> <li>• Introduce a scrutiny and officer protocol clarifying expectations and the working relationship between scrutiny and officers;</li> <li>• Creation of a job role for the following members:-               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Scrutiny Chairs</li> <li>➢ Vice Chairs</li> <li>➢ Scrutiny members</li> <li>➢ Co-optees</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Job roles to outline               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Accountability</li> <li>➢ Purpose</li> <li>➢ Activities</li> <li>➢ Values</li> <li>➢ expectations of members of the Committee,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>R1. Create a Scrutiny Mission Statement setting out the purpose and key role of scrutiny</p> <p>R2. Develop a suite of protocols to develop effective relationships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ executive–scrutiny protocol</li> <li>○ scrutiny - officer protocol</li> <li>○ social media – facebook, twitter, newsletters etc.</li> </ul> <p>R3. Develop communication and engagement processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ social media – facebook, twitter, newsletters etc.</li> <li>○ the scrutiny webpage</li> <li>○ partner meetings to be scheduled</li> <li>○ develop engagement mechanisms.</li> </ul>	<p>Director – Law &amp; Gov/Dem Services</p> <p>Director – Law &amp; Gov/Dem Services/Communications Team</p> <p>Director – Law and Gov/Dem Services</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• But when asked how well this is achieved there was a 50/50 split – not sure its effective?</li> <li>• Mixed views about who is mostly held to account - Over 50% said that scrutiny mainly held officers to account – 42% said Leader/Cabinet – 32% said Cabinet with officer support</li> <li>• Overall 93% said that scrutiny is an important part of the democratic process at Sandwell Council</li> <li>• Free text comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Parity of esteem</li> <li>○ More openness and transparency of decision making process</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>including performance management issues, attendance at meeting, reading of papers in advance, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote and raise awareness of the function and work of scrutiny via a dedicated scrutiny page, newsletters, at Council meetings, social media platforms, etc</li> <li>• Develop a mechanism for feedback, suggestions and continuous improvement as part of the scrutiny process</li> <li>• Raising awareness and understanding through training of Councillor Call for Action, call-ins, pre-decision scrutiny</li> <li>• More informed, effective officer, partner and stakeholder briefings/discussions, etc</li> <li>• Produce handbook for scrutiny members</li> <li>• Annual report to Council to include the impact made by scrutiny</li> </ul>	<p>R4. Develop guides and tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ scrutiny member handbook, guides and a framework</li> <li>○ scrutiny guide for officers.</li> <li>○ training and awareness for report writers.</li> <li>○ partner meetings to be scheduled</li> <li>○ Develop engagement mechanisms.</li> <li>○ Develop a mechanism for feedback, suggestions and continuous improvement as part of the scrutiny process</li> </ul> <p>• R5. Develop scrutiny elements of the Member Development Programme (MDP); create a scrutiny member development plan, in line with the MDP to reflect the outcomes of the review. Review the induction programme to strengthen scrutiny function.</p>	<p>Director – Law and Gov/Dem Services/Civic &amp; Member Services</p> <p>Director – Law and Gov/Dem Services</p>
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			R6. Develop job role descriptions for Chair, VC, scrutiny member and co-opted member.	
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Relationships				
Desired Outcome Characteristics	Survey / evidence findings	Proposed Action	Key Actions for change	Action By
<p>Having and building trust. Executive value scrutiny. Opportunity to develop and nurture strong, healthy working relationships with members, officers, the public, partners, stakeholders, etc. Critical friend. Strong understanding and working relationship between the Chair, Vice Chair and scrutiny members. Being alive to role and opportunities of others to shaping scrutiny. Scrutiny confidently holding</p>	<p>Review findings – what you told us</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No formal communication process</li> <li>• Cabinet members not invited to scrutiny</li> <li>• Too much holding officers to account</li> <li>• There are regular meetings between scrutiny chairs and corporate officers</li> </ul> <p>Member survey – main findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does scrutiny influence policy – 62% said yes (often or sometimes) 38% said no (rarely or never)</li> <li>• The overall relationship between Scrutiny and Executive – 48% said positive 51% said negative</li> <li>• There is generally a good relationship between Scrutiny and Officers 86% said it was very well or fairly well supported</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See protocols reference under Culture above</li> <li>• See creation of jobs roles as referenced above</li> <li>• Revised terms of reference for scrutiny that clearly defines the expectation and role of scrutiny committees, i.e. being a critical friend</li> <li>• Proactively inviting other views at scrutiny meetings and enable the committee to be flexible and agile</li> <li>• Explore with Centre for Public Scrutiny and Local Government Association peer support and mentoring</li> <li>• Annual Summit to enable healthy working relationships</li> <li>• More effective scrutiny workshops at the local level (seeking the public voice)</li> <li>• Regular scheduled meetings between scrutiny members, Town Leads, the executive and other stakeholders to</li> </ul>	<p>R2 above: Develop executive–scrutiny / scrutiny - officer protocols</p> <p>R7. Arrange briefing meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ quarterly with officers, chairs &amp; executive;</li> <li>○ Arrange regular agenda and briefing meetings with officers;</li> <li>○ Set bi-annual meetings to engage Executive and Scrutiny Chairs and discuss key priorities.</li> </ul> <p>R8. Scrutiny to report to Council – constitutional change</p>	<p>Director – Law &amp; Gov/Dem Services</p>

<p>the executive to account.</p> <p>Collaborative working and sharing of knowledge across the Council, the public and stakeholders.</p>	<p>free text comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More engagement from Cabinet members and greater attendance</li><li>• More public engagement and community-based activity</li><li>• Greater involvement from partners</li><li>• Improve attitudes to scrutiny across council</li><li>• Reporting back from scrutiny on scrutiny recommendations</li><li>• Usefulness of scrutiny questions at Cabinet</li></ul>	<p>promote the work of scrutiny and raise awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create an information management system to enable information to be readily accessed by scrutiny</li></ul>		
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Work Programme				
Desired Outcome Characteristics	Survey / evidence findings	Proposed Action	Key Actions for change	Action By
<p>Ambitious            Aligned to Vison 2030 and Council priorities            Joined up            Exciting            Adds value            Well-informed            Strong, clear objectives            Policy development, performance monitoring, holding to account, supporting effective decision-making            Autonomous            Timely, relevant and achievable            Aligned to resources available</p>	<p>Review findings – what you told us</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be single dimensional (only scrutinising from reports)</li> <li>• Pre-decision or policy-shaping scrutiny not sufficiently understood or used</li> <li>• Work-programmes not joined-up with council plan and mission</li> <li>• In-puts to scrutiny not clearly integrated : forward cabinet plan, community concerns, partners etc</li> <li>• Tries to take on too much – prioritisation is a challenge</li> <li>• Objective setting is not clear</li> <li>• Not clear if or how prioritisation tool is used.</li> <li>• Unclear justification for many items on work programme</li> </ul> <p>Member survey – main findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is in control of the work programme?</li> <li>• 31% say members of scrutiny – 37% say members with officer advice – 3% say officers lead it –</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a clear timetable for setting the work programme</li> <li>• Create a protocol that clearly defines how the work programme will be devised and who is able to influence and/or determines it which also includes               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Clear templates that enable scrutiny items to be identified, understood, evaluated and with a clear timescale                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Identification of resources as part of the template</li> <li>❖ Template will ask outcome being sought (linked to Vision 2030)</li> <li>❖ Provide clear detail</li> <li>❖ Anticipated resources required and which scrutiny mechanism to utilise</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>R9. Review work programming arrangements and develop a work programming protocol</p>	<p>Director – Law &amp; Gov/            Dem Services</p>

	<p>Almost a 3rd said don't know</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the work programme focused on the right priorities?</li> <li>• 45% said that it was – but 48% said that it was mainly not well focused – 7% said it was not</li> <li>• What sources of information does scrutiny use in developing its work programme?</li> <li>• 48% said it was reliant on officer information – 3% public views – 10% external witnesses – 10 % use of council data</li> <li>• Only 10% said council plan and priorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ SMART objectives and recommendations</li> <li>➤ Clear criteria to determine the work programme which includes a prioritisation exercise/mechanism</li> </ul>		
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<b>Structure</b>				
<b>Desired Outcome Characteristics</b>	<b>Survey / evidence findings</b>	<b>Proposed Action</b>	<b>Key Actions for change</b>	<b>Action By</b>
<p>Clear</p> <p>Flexible</p> <p>Aligned to the Vision 2030 and council core responsibilities</p> <p>Promotes and facilitates the desired culture, relationships and work programme</p>	<p>Review findings – what you told us</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet meets monthly. Scrutiny meets 3-monthly (difficult to align and have impact)</li> <li>• Possible need for higher meeting frequency</li> <li>• Need for a forum for Cabinet and Scrutiny to meet and share plans and ideas</li> <li>• Members open to ideas for better scrutiny structure</li> </ul> <p>Member survey – main findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No specific survey questions, but some free text comments:</li> <li>• Not enough committees – 4 insufficient</li> <li>• More public and partner involvement</li> </ul>	<p>Clarity of roles and remit (member job roles, scrutiny procedure rules)</p> <p>Proposed structures attached</p>	<p>R10. Agree the scrutiny structure.</p> <p>R11. Review and make constitutional change where necessary including scrutiny procedure rules.</p> <p>R12. Review resource and support for the scrutiny function.</p> <p>R6. Develop job role descriptions for Chair, VC, scrutiny member and co-opted member.</p>	<p>Council</p> <p>Director – Law &amp; Gov/Dem Services</p>

<b>Support</b>				
<b>Desired Outcome Characteristics</b>	<b>Survey / evidence findings</b>	<b>Proposed Action</b>	<b>Key Actions for change</b>	<b>Action By</b>
<p>Effective development plan for members</p> <p>Enabling</p> <p>Focussed</p> <p>Inclusive</p> <p>Bespoke</p> <p>Clearly defined officer support being aligned to the work programme</p> <p>Working smart</p>	<p>Development plan</p> <p>Review findings – what you told us</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve member skills and development for Chairs</li> <li>• Possible need for officer training on scrutiny</li> <li>• Work programming unstructured and does not align to corporate priorities</li> <li>• Using member insight – in policy shaping</li> <li>• Goal setting – scrutiny vision – mission</li> <li>• Operating manual</li> <li>• Focus and prioritisation</li> </ul> <p>Member survey – main findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall members seem satisfied with their personal training development in scrutiny:</li> <li>• 72% said they were somewhat or very satisfied, with 27% suggesting they were not satisfied</li> <li>• Free text comments:</li> <li>• Scrutiny needs more zeal and motivation</li> <li>• Greater understanding of priorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a development plan to enable appropriate skills and knowledge and addresses member aspirations</li> <li>• Have more focussed induction and training and development plan for scrutiny members to enable them to effectively carry out their role</li> <li>• Personal Development Plans to ensure that coaching and mentoring for scrutiny members is included</li> <li>• Create an overview and scrutiny guidance book to support members</li> <li>• Tailor council resources through a resource analysis to determine the type and level of resources to help achieve defined and agreed work programme</li> </ul>	<p>R2 - R12 above</p> <p>R13. Continue close working with the LGA and CfGS to share best practice across the country and to encourage members to attend other authorities overview and scrutiny committees</p>	<p>Director – Law &amp; Gov/ Dem Services/Civic &amp; Member Services</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members and chairs need greater level of skills</li> <li>• Scrutiny needs to select subjects which add value</li> <li>• Members seem to like more agile working</li> </ul>			
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### Agile Working

Desired Outcome Characteristics	Survey / evidence findings	Proposed Action	Key Actions for change	Action By
<p>Agile working should be embedded in everything scrutiny does and how it operates:</p> <p>Culture Relationships Work programme Structure Support</p>	<p>Agile working</p> <p>Review findings – what you told us</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members show appetite to be more experimental with scrutiny to test what works</li> <li>• Members are interested in learning from other councils</li> <li>• There is an interest in the use of co-opted independent specialists</li> <li>• This is interest in more community-based scrutiny and holding scrutiny in other locations in the Borough</li> </ul> <p>Member survey – main findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillors agreed that different, agile ways of using scrutiny could work</li> <li>• Time-fixed sub-committees, Task and Finish Groups, Inquiry Days all received over 90% approval</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agile working should be embedded in everything scrutiny does and how it operates:</li> <li>• Changing the culture</li> <li>• Building and maintaining working relationships, confidence and knowledge in the</li> <li>• Making the work programme flexible to find the right mechanism or approach to carry out scrutiny.</li> <li>• Structure – building in mechanisms to enable scrutiny to look at a topic in depth and through different lenses/ perspectives.</li> <li>• Support – building skills, knowledge and relationships to strengthen confidence and trust in the scrutiny function.</li> </ul>	<p>R14. Develop mechanisms and identify opportunities to include time-fixed sub-committees, task and finish groups and inquiry days in the work programme.</p>	<p>Director – Law &amp; Gov/ Dem Services</p>

