

APPENDIX C

CfGS – Scrutiny Review Recommendations – Suggested Response

Area	CfGS Recommendations	Suggested Response
Member development	We recommend further ‘refresher’ scrutiny training, with an update on scrutiny essentials, as well as a specific focus on good questioning skills and chairing skills. Since the use of call-in has increased it might be appropriate to include in the scrutiny refresher training to ensure understanding of its purpose. For some Members, a more bespoke approach through coaching, mentoring or one-to-one training may be more effective to achieve the standards desired by Members and the Council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme of training / development for non-executive councillors • Ongoing training and development for Chairs / Vice Chairs of Scrutiny
Clarity on scrutiny’s role and responsibilities	Our conversations suggest a need for more clarity on how scrutiny’s role is undertaken in a cross-party manner. This is about developing a shared understanding of the particular and unique way for scrutiny to add value to council governance. On a strategic level, there needs to be more of an emphasis on seeing scrutiny as a vital part of council business and governance, with clear ownership regarding its important role in improving policy and holding to account.	
Collaborative approach to scrutiny	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. This is an aspect that needs further emphasis.	
Scrutiny – Executive relationship	SMDC may consider reviewing the Executive-Scrutiny protocol to outline and reaffirm expectations, and to improve communication and co-ordination between scrutiny and the Executive. An Executive-Scrutiny protocol should deal with the practical workings of scrutiny as well as the cultural dynamics. It might also be useful for feedback on scrutiny’s recommendations to be formalised within the protocol, in order for the panels to monitor the progress of their output.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Executive / Scrutiny Protocol
Scrutiny’s focus	<p>For scrutiny to be more strategic there needs to be change from both scrutiny and the Executive. If the Council wants more emphasis on shaping policy, challenging and holding to account, then scrutiny will need earlier access to and involvement with the core policy and decision-making activities of the Executive.</p> <p>We noted that scrutiny could be more involved in the budget process, and at an earlier stage for any meaningful input. Scrutinising the Council’s finances, including the medium-term financial plan, monitoring financial and operational performance, together with commercial partnerships and other external arrangements does not seem to be sufficiently explored.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Overview & Scrutiny Programming Group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cabinet / O & S Panel Chairs / Opposition Group Leaders ○ Consider Cabinet Work Programme and agree forward plan of scrutiny work
Work programming	We recommend an annual process for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual scrutiny workshop to

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	<p>developing the work programme across all of the scrutiny committees, engaging Members, Officers, partners and the public to prioritise the topics for review. This will help avoid duplication and ensure that Members' work in scrutiny makes the most effective contribution possible on the most important issues to the district. Work programming could take place through a Member workshop, where a shortlist of priority topics for the next 12 months are identified according to a selection criteria, discussed on their merit for scrutiny, and voted on.</p>	<p>confirm work programmes</p>
	<p>Currently the work programme is the last item on the agenda at scrutiny meetings, we would recommend bringing it to the beginning, so it can benefit from more considered discussion rather than being subject to the inevitable end of meeting fatigue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reorder agendas
<p>Meeting preparation</p>	<p>SMDC should consider introducing pre-meetings before formal committee between all scrutiny Members to provide the space to set common objectives and possibly to reach consensus on lines of enquiry and questioning strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop approach with Chairs of Panels
<p>Committee structure and timetabling</p>	<p>We would advise SMDC to review the number of committees. The Health Scrutiny Panel often deals with matters outside the Council's responsibility and duplication with County Council health scrutiny was reported. Merging the Health Panel with the Communities Panel is one option, as there appears to be significant crossover between the two, this would enable Officer and Member resources to be more focussed.</p> <p>The 19 Members sitting on each panel is also a very high number to enable effective scrutiny and provide opportunities for everyone to engage. A reduction in committee Membership should also be considered.</p> <p>In terms of both the number of committees and frequency of meetings at SMDC, there are clear advantages of having fewer committees which meet on a more regular basis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review number of Overview & Scrutiny Panels • Consider structure of Panels and potential to create sub-groups to focus on specific areas of work • Explore and experiment with ways to allow greater public access, openness and involvement