

## Scrutiny Management Board 27 November 2023

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Scrutiny Training Programme 2023</b>
<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Ben Smith,</b> Head of Democratic Services/Statutory Scrutiny Officer <a href="mailto:ben.smith@northnorthants.gov.uk">ben.smith@northnorthants.gov.uk</a>

<b>Are there public sector equality duty implications?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972</b>	

### List of Appendices

#### **Appendix A – 2023 Scrutiny Training Undertaken with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny**

##### **1. Purpose of Report**

---

- 1.1. For Scrutiny Management Board to consider the outcome of the recent training programme undertaken with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS).

##### **2. Executive Summary**

---

- 2.1. The Scrutiny Management Board has within its terms of reference responsibility for overseeing the co-ordination of scrutiny members' learning and development.
- 2.2. A programme of scrutiny training was provided during September and October 2023 targeting different skills and groups of scrutiny members. This report summarises the training undertaken and invites Scrutiny Management Board to consider any further learning and development that should be undertaken at this stage.

### 3. Recommendations

---

- 3.1. It is recommended that the Scrutiny Management Board:-
- (a) Notes the recent programme of training undertaken;
  - (b) Considers any further learning and development that it may wish to recommend be undertaken at this stage.
- 3.2. *(Reason for Recommendations – To meet the Constitutional requirements for the Scrutiny Management Board to demonstrate its strategic responsibility for the Scrutiny function, its overall responsibility for the direction and management of Scrutiny, and to fulfil its obligation to overseeing the co-ordination of scrutiny members' learning and development.)*
- 3.3. *(Alternative Options Considered – Not to undertake or review the undertaking of effective training for scrutiny members - however this would not demonstrate the Board's strategic responsibility, or provide the necessary skills to develop the ability of members to provide effective scrutiny of the Council's processes.)*

### 4. Report Background

---

- 4.1. From May 2021 the Council operated with two scrutiny committees:-
- the Scrutiny Commission being an overarching body scrutinising the majority of departmental and external scrutiny areas and able to commission task and finish groups, and
  - the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee which scrutinised and monitored the finances and performance of the Council.
- 4.2. It was recognised during 2022 that the quantity of work required to be undertaken exceeded existing capacity and that there was a need to review scrutiny arrangements at both member and officer level. In particular, it was recognised that scrutiny's role in relation to other public service providers required enhancement and that a more outward focussed scrutiny was needed.
- 4.3. At the meeting of full Council on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2023 it was agreed to establish four new Scrutiny Committees, namely the Scrutiny Management Board to oversee the strategic direction of scrutiny and consider Executive call-ins, and a Corporate Scrutiny Committee, Health Scrutiny Committee and Place and Environment Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.4. Recognising the increased numbers of members now participating in Scrutiny, together with an increased focus on scrutiny of external partners, it

was considered timely to provide a comprehensive scrutiny training programme, and as such the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny were engaged to provide training in the following areas:-

- The Essentials of Effective Strategic Scrutiny
- Questioning and Listening – Essential skills for Scrutiny Cllrs
- Chairing and Leading Scrutiny Committees
- Council Finance, Budget and Commercial Scrutiny
- Children’s Services and Safeguarding
- Health & Social Care Scrutiny (*to be undertaken 29 November 2023*)

4.5. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny is a social purpose consultancy and national centre of expertise. Its purpose is to help organisations achieve their outcomes through improved governance and scrutiny. Further details of the scrutiny training undertaken, targeted groups of members and attendance figures are detailed in Appendix A to this report.

## **5. Issues and Choices**

---

- 5.1. Scrutiny Management Board is invited to consider the benefits it feels were derived from the recent programme of training and to consider any other measures of learning and development that may be appropriate to be programmed in at the current time.
- 5.2. For those members unable to attend the afore-mentioned scrutiny training there is a further opportunity to attend some bite-sized scrutiny sessions undertaken jointly by East Midlands Councils and the CfGS, details of which have been circulated to all members of the Council. These sessions, running from the end of November 2023 to mid-January 2024 include:-
- Understanding Local Government Finance;
  - Scoping and Managing Scrutiny Reviews;
  - Questioning Skills for Elected Members.
- 5.3. Scrutiny Management Board may wish to further promote these sessions and encourage scrutiny colleagues who have not yet received training to attend.
- 5.4. Particular feedback was also received at the Council Finance, Budget and Commercial Scrutiny training session regarding scrutiny of performance at the Council and the use and interpretation of performance indicators. Scrutiny Management Board may also wish to consider requesting additional training in this regard, in order to develop understanding in this area.

## **6. Next Steps**

---

- 6.1. Should Scrutiny Management Board consider further instances of Scrutiny training for the current municipal year, it will need to be borne in mind that

there is a limited member training budget, and liaison with the Head of Democratic Services/Statutory Scrutiny Officer on what level of training can be provided.

## **7. Implications (including financial implications)**

---

### **7.1. Resources and Financial**

- 7.1.1. Scrutiny training is variously supported by Democratic Services Officers, other officers of the Council, and external providers where necessary. With any scrutiny training provided in-house there will be a resource impact from an officer perspective. Where external training is provided, there will be an impact on the member training budget.
- 7.1.2. Scrutiny training to date during 2023/24 has been met from the existing member training budget. Scrutiny may make recommendations for further training that will be considered on a case by case basis, within the parameters of the budget available.

### **7.2. Legal and Governance**

- 7.2.1. The Local Government Act 2000 introduced a requirement to have an overview and scrutiny committee. The principal power of a scrutiny committee is to influence the policies and decisions made by the council and other organisations involved in delivering public services. The Scrutiny Management Board or the three scrutiny committees are not decision making but have the power to gather evidence and make recommendations based upon its findings. It is important that scrutiny members are trained and able to carry out this work to the best of their ability.

### **7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans**

- 7.3.1. The work of Scrutiny assists with the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan.

### **7.4. Risk**

- 7.4.1. Failure to ensure an effective scrutiny function can lead to governance not being as robust. Failure to workplan would not be in line with statutory guidance and may lead to resources being allocated to matters which do not have an impact on the organisation and North Northamptonshire.

### **7.5. Consultation**

- 7.5.1. None specific, although informal engagement has taken place with partners around items to be included on the workplan, and will continue throughout the municipal year.

7.6. **Consideration by the Executive**

7.6.1. None.

7.7. **Equality Implications**

7.7.1. None specific to this report.

7.8. **Climate Impact**

7.8.1. None specific to this report.

7.9. **Community Impact**

7.9.1. None specific to this report.

7.10. **Crime and Disorder Impact**

7.10.1. None specific to this report.

**8. Background Papers**

---

8.1. [Scrutiny Procedure Rules – Part 7.1 of the Council's Constitution](#)