

Bridgend County Borough Council

Overview and Scrutiny Assessment using the Characteristics of Good Scrutiny 2015-16

“Better Outcomes”

Democratic accountability drives improvement in public services.

ENVIRONMENT

Overview & scrutiny has a clearly defined and valued role in the council's improvement and governance arrangements.

1. The role of executive members and senior officers in contributing to Scrutiny is clearly defined in the Bridgend County Borough Council Constitution which states:

Any Overview and Scrutiny Committee or sub-committee may scrutinise and review decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any Council functions. As well as reviewing documentation, fulfilling the scrutiny role may require (subject to the operation of the Member and Officer Codes of Conduct) the Leader and any (other) member of the Cabinet, the Head of Paid Service and/or any senior officer to attend before it to explain in relation to matters within their remit:

 - (i) any particular decision or series of decisions; and/or
 - (ii) the extent to which the actions taken implement Council policy; and/or
 - (iii) the performance of their respective department / directorate portfolio and those persons shall attend if so required.
2. In addition to the ordinary Scrutiny Committees there are a small number of Research and Evaluation Panels which are undertaken by Members. At a time of increasing demand for services, public sector reform and the challenging financial outlook, one of these is the Budget Research and Evaluation Panel (BREP) which runs throughout the year. The role of the BREP is to assist in delivering financial transparency and accountability of the draft budget proposals and the Corporate Priorities. This enables Elected Members to have the opportunity to engage in the development of Council policies and shape the delivery of services.
3. During this period the Future Generations and Wellbeing Act required the replacement of the Local Services Board (LSB) with the Public Service Board (PSB). The scrutiny structure was revised to reflect this legislative change and a Public Service Board Overview and Scrutiny Panel was created to oversee the work of the Public Service Board.
4. Corporate Director, Head of Service and Cabinet Member involvement has been embedded throughout the Overview and Scrutiny process, including attendance at pre-agenda meetings where the subject, focus, content and timescale for individual items of the forward work programme (FWP) are agreed. The Corporate Directors and Heads of Service are also involved in the report approval process, and are required to sign off the final version of the report.

5. Any conclusions, recommendations or requests for further information are fed back to Corporate Directors, Cabinet Members and Heads of Service for responses as necessary.
6. Recommendations to Cabinet are either presented directly to Cabinet or are incorporated into Directorate Reports where they inform Cabinet in their decision making.
7. Following a meeting where the PSB Scrutiny Panel received a report on projects, work streams, actions and the next steps to develop outcome indicators, the Panel made several recommendations. One of these was that each project under each programme Board should use the same proforma template for reporting on their performance to ensure consistency and effective monitoring. Members further recommended that work be undertaken to incorporate key measurable targets within the proforma in order to evidence outcomes and success. The Panel highlighted that without consistent performance monitoring approaches using measurable targets, there is a risk of objectives and real results not being achieved. This could lead to gaps in provision and no evidence available for public accountability.
8. These recommendations will be presented to PSB 28 November 2016 and copied to the Welsh Minister, the Commissioner and the Auditor General for Wales. The future work of the PSB Overview and Scrutiny Panel will include having sight of and input into the Assessment of Local Wellbeing and the Strategic Needs Assessment.

Overview & scrutiny has the dedicated officer support it needs from officers who are able to undertake independent research effectively, and provides councillors with high-quality analysis, advice and training.

9. Bridgend County Borough Council has for many years had dedicated Scrutiny Officer support. Although the number of Scrutiny Officers has reduced in recent years, the quality of their work and the personal dedication to achieve positive outcomes for Scrutiny, the Authority and the residents of the County Borough remains unwavering.
10. Scrutiny Officers proactively keep up to date with the most current information on a national and local level to enable them to support and advise Members effectively. This is done through independent research, such as in the case of recent changes introduced by Welsh Government through the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and the Future Generations and Wellbeing Act, the latter of which brought in statutory powers for scrutiny of Public Service Boards.
11. Training is also carried out using external providers. For example, Scrutiny Officers and a Scrutiny Chair attended External Training: **Scrutiny in Challenging Times** run by INLOGOV, Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO), which looked at the increasing expectations and demands placed on overview and scrutiny against decreasing resources.
12. Scrutiny Officers from Bridgend are keen to work with Scrutiny Officers from across Wales to develop best practice. With the removal of funding for the CfPS (Wales) the **Scrutiny Officer Network** is no longer supported by the Welsh Local

Government Association. Officers from Bridgend and other Local Authorities requested that the Welsh Government facilitate future meetings of the network in order to continue the development of scrutiny across Wales. A tentative agreement was made by the Welsh Government to support this network.

13. This proactive approach ensures that the Authority has the benefit of regional and national input. This ensures that the Scrutiny team is able to feedback lessons learned and develop best practice into the Scrutiny process. Officers are able to use the experience to help to support colleagues in improving and developing the type of information used as a basis for decision making.
14. Scrutiny Officers continuously raise awareness of the need and importance of considering comparisons with other local authorities to identify best practice and to monitor our performance from a national perspective. Scrutiny Officers often carry out research to assist this and ensure that where this information is available it is included in the Officers' report to Committee. Scrutiny Officers supported the Partnerships and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee in formulating a recommendation as part of their consideration of the Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) Collaborative Project. The Committee recommended that Bridgend consider expanding their out of hours service to provide services similar to other Local Authorities in the SRS. During the Corporate Resources and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee's deliberation of the Disabled Facilities Grants for Children and Adults, Members questioned where we as a Local Authority compared with other Local Authorities in Wales on the number of days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant.
15. A number of Research and Evaluation Panel (REP) meetings have taken place, for example the **Budget REP, the Member and School Engagement Panel and the Public Service Board (formerly LSB) Scrutiny Panel**. This requires intensive organisation, preparation and support by Scrutiny Officers as well as detailed research prior to meetings and development of suggested areas of enquiry to assist and advice Members in their questioning.
16. Support and Training for Members – The Member Development Programme provides a series of events for all Elected Members which supports their Scrutiny role. Examples of these from the last 12 months have been Council Briefings on Child Sexual Exploitation, City Deal and Waste. From Council briefings Scrutiny Members have identified some of these items as priorities for their FWPs such as monitoring the impact of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act and the progress of City Deal.
17. There has also been a recognised need to be flexible in the methods by which Members receive information and training. Examples of this include the subject of Sickness Absence where resource issues has meant that a REP would not be possible, therefore detailed information that would have been provided through the REP has been amended for appropriate consideration in full Committee. Similarly, in the case of recent changes to the Authority's responsibilities in respect of the Secure Estate; the Adult Social Care (ASC) Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report on this within a Committee meeting whilst the Children & Young People (CYP) Overview and Scrutiny Committee determined to receive a briefing session on this topic outside of the Committee. Both methods provided Members with the opportunity to discuss, ask questions and gain an in depth understanding of

the impact of the changes in relation to Adults and Children but through different approaches which better suited their own Forward Work Programme (FWP) and needs.

18. Committee Support – Scrutiny Officers organise and attend pre-meetings with Chairs to provide an opportunity to discuss detailed analysis of reports to identify areas of focus for the Committee and ensuring best use of time during Committee meetings. Between these meetings and the Committee meeting the Scrutiny team work closely with all parties to ensure that requests for information for Scrutiny reports are clear and are understood. Report authors are identified at the start of the process to enable Scrutiny Officers to liaise with them in ensuring that the emphasis of the report remains as requested and that the format of the report is accessible and clear. Working more closely with authors of reports has been a key focus over the last twelve months to ensure information provided to the Committees is as accurate and full as possible. Some examples of this have been in the checking of data provided in draft reports; through checks made by Officers, anomalies and incomplete information has been rectified in time to provide to the Committee.
19. Support and advice is further extended upon with all the Committee Members during the meeting where detailed advice is provided as part of a pre-discussion and summing up process at the beginning and end of every meeting.

PRACTICE

Overview & scrutiny inquiries are non-political, methodologically sound and incorporate a wide range of evidence and perspectives.

20. The BCBC Constitution requires that the Scrutiny Committees and the appointment of Chairpersons be politically balanced and therefore this mirrors the make-up of Council. However, Members put aside their political differences to ensure that all outcomes from Scrutiny are in the best interest of the Authority and its constituents.
21. Every Committee and Research and Evaluation Panel investigation has flexible but clear terms of reference.
22. BREP has cross party membership and considers contentious issues at the early stages of development which Members approach with confidentiality and objectivity, irrespective of political allegiances.
23. Officers also use the following sources in order to identify items for inclusion on the Scrutiny FWP:
 - *Committee Requests for Scrutiny from previous FWPs;*
 - *Committee conclusions and recommendations 2015-16*
 - *Wales Audit Office Corporate Assessment Report 2015: Bridgend County Borough Council*
 - *Wales Audit Office Annual Improvement report 2014-15: Bridgend County Borough Council*
 - *Corporate Plan*
 - *Directorate Business Plans;*
 - *Performance Reports to Scrutiny Committees;*

- *Annual business planning and budget setting process.*

24. The Scrutiny Committees have a finite capacity to consider the volume of topics that are generated. During development of the FWP this year the Scrutiny Committees held informal workshops providing the opportunity to review the past twelve months and consider what worked in Scrutiny and what could be improved. Members then prioritised a draft list of items along with details of information to be requested for their individual annual FWPs which were shared with Directors and Cabinet Members for additional input and suggestion for appropriate scheduling. The draft FWPs were then presented to the individual Scrutiny Committees at their first meeting following the Annual Meeting of Council for final amendment and approval. The top 12 topics are scheduled into its 6 committee meetings with the non-priority topics being listed for information.
25. The current FWP is presented at each committee meeting for review to ensure that topics for consideration are relevant and timely. Items are then prioritised to allow scrutiny to remain current and provide an element of flexibility in considering priority topics. During the consideration of its FWP each committee is able to identify suitable invitees who can provide first-hand account or evidence in respect of the subject matter.
26. Areas or subjects where representation from all Committees and Directorates is appropriate are identified and planned for collaborative committees to ensure the best approach is used. For example, this approach is used for the Corporate Resources and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee when considering items such as the Performance and Financial Monitoring for the whole Authority and the Corporate Plan.
27. The Scrutiny Chairpersons have a monthly meeting where they review the FWP and ensure that topics are not duplicated and possible additional items for inclusion on the FWP are identified. They also consider the best courses of action for scrutiny to deliver the outcomes it requires.

IMPACT

Overview & scrutiny regularly engages in evidence based challenge of decision makers and service providers.

28. As a matter of course, Scrutiny Committees require Cabinet Members and Corporate Directors to attend Committee meetings, as well as pre-agenda meetings where discussions over the detail in the forward work programme take place between Cabinet members, Officers and the Scrutiny Chair.
29. Overview and Scrutiny regularly engages with and holds to account partners and associates of the Authority responsible for providing and supporting service delivery.
30. Examples of this include meetings of the **Member and School Engagement Panel** where Headteachers and Chairs of Governors of individual schools are invited to meet with the Panel based on set criterion and are then held to account on their performance and improvement. This provides an opportunity to identify good

practice, which can then be communicated and replicated in other schools in the County Borough.

31. Further examples include scrutiny of **HALO**, our service provider contracted for the management and provision of Leisure Services. There is also ongoing communication and engagement with the **Central South Consortium**, to monitor the quality and provision of service and ensure the needs of service users are met as agreed.

Overview & scrutiny provides viable and well evidenced solutions to recognised problems.

32. Overview and Scrutiny Committees carry out pre-decision scrutiny where they have provided views on options for service delivery, often linked to a direct decision of Cabinet. Examples of this include:

- Care Home Commissioning Strategy
Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee received the draft regional Western Bay Care Homes Commissioning Strategy for Older People where the Committee were provided the opportunity to comment on the document as part of the consultation process. The Committee made several robust recommendations which comprised matters raised over nursing staffing issues reported for care homes and Members commented that this needed addressing as a priority. The Committee also requested that these concerns be fed back to the Western Bay Group as Members felt that this was not just a Health Board issue and that partners within Western Bay should be addressing this together. The Committee are awaiting responses and Cabinet Report is scheduled for January 2017.
- Waste Services
Scrutiny received a report setting out options for future Waste Service Provision in the County Borough. Members were asked to provide comments on the options to be considered for service provision, resulting in recommendations to Cabinet which will inform the way forward and be monitored by the Committee.

33. Recommendations made and accepted by Cabinet provide a good indication that Executive Members and Officers recognise the value of Scrutiny as a constructive check and balance to decision making.

34. Recommendations are also made directly to Officers, an example of this being in relation to those made by the ASC Scrutiny Committee on improved access to information and support regarding mental health and wellbeing in schools for all teachers and other staff. The aim of this was to try to increase the information shared with a broader range of staff, to ensure that people living with mental health issues encounter a consistent standard of support, regardless of who is working with and supporting them.

“Better decisions”
Democratic decision making is accountable, inclusive and robust.

ENVIRONMENT

Overview & scrutiny councillors have the training and development opportunities they need to undertake their role effectively

1. The Democratic Services Committee prioritises the Member Development Programme for all Elected Members. Topics identified as potential scrutiny topics can be included in the programme to provide a greater awareness of the subject matter and assist in the development of relevant Scrutiny recommendations and positive outcomes.
2. Members are also able to identify development opportunities in the Personal Development Reviews which when circulated to the Head of Democratic Services, can be included in individual or corporate member development plans.
3. In addition to this, Members also undertook a review of the BREP process. The purpose of this was to evaluate the effectiveness of BREP, to identify any potential improvement, establish how recommendations are taken forward and to provide evidence of the impact and outcomes from the work of the Panel. This led to the Panel having much more of a focus for the forthcoming year, agreeing to look at two or three ‘big ticket’ areas rather than the overall budget proposals, which could potentially be a duplication of the Committee’s remit. The Panel also agreed to take on a more advisory role, assisting Cabinet in its development of Budget proposals and working with them in collaborative role.

The process receives effective support from the council’s corporate management team who ensures that information provided to overview & scrutiny is of high quality and is provided in a timely and consistent manner.

4. The Corporate Management Board are fully supportive of the Scrutiny process and regularly participate in scrutiny pre-agenda meetings to assist providing information to support the scrutiny FWP items being considered.
5. Historically, there have been occasional issues with the provision of timely information and reports. This has led to the deferment of a report but it is accepted that all directorates have significant resourcing issues for the future, which exemplifies the need for consistent agenda planning to ensure that directorates are able to adequately support the scrutiny process.
6. Resourcing issues at times lead to reports being presented without sufficient detail and then additional workloads for the Service areas due the number of further information requests. Following the implementation of the Future Delivery of Effective Scrutiny report, it was identified that there was a need for Scrutiny Officers to take a more active and supportive role, in the production of service area reports

being presented to scrutiny committees. The intention was to improve the quality and timeliness of reports being presented to the committee, which would allow the committees to have a comprehensive report on the topic in order for them to make appropriate recommendations without the need for additional information or meetings. This has been successful through improved agenda planning with Scrutiny Committees identifying more detail in their report requests. This is then taken forward by Scrutiny Officers where additional background research is carried out and history of the Committee's deliberations are compiled with the Committee's needs into a detailed report request to Officers. The Community Resources & Improvement Scrutiny workshop identified this as a success in the reduction of the number of further information requests from their Committee.

7. Members also identified in their workshops the need for Officers to provide a response to all conclusions and comments from each Committee meeting, not just further information requests. In this way, Members wanted to ensure that there is a response from Officers to the Committee's conclusions and therefore clear outcomes from each Scrutiny meeting.

PRACTICE

Overview & scrutiny is councillor-led, takes into account the views of the public, partners and regulators, and balances the prioritisation of community concerns against issues of strategic risk and importance.

8. As well as determining their Annual Forward Work Programme and identifying items for future meetings, part of the ongoing Scrutiny forward work programme process now includes the provision to revisit the items at each meeting and consider the list of future potential items to reprioritise as the Committees feels appropriate. A recent example of this has been where the Corporate Resources and Improvement Committee rescheduled their items to account for the changing timetable for the Councils Business Plans in order that they still be able to scrutinise the draft plans and have input into them.
9. The Scrutiny reviews carried out this year were instigated by the Partnerships and Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee who requested to consider their remit in more detail in order to enhance their forward work programme and deliver more effective outcomes. This resulted in a greatly improved FWP, more interesting and engaging topics and assurance that the Committee is now meeting its requirements such as those under the Crime and Disorder legislation.
10. Embedded in the ongoing forward work programme process is the option for Committees to refer specific items to other Scrutiny Committees for consideration. For example, this occurs frequently in the Corporate Resources and Improvement Committee as a result of the Committee's monitoring of the Local Authorities financial and service performance. It is then for the relevant Scrutiny Committee to determine where this item would then sit in terms of priorities on their own forward work programme. A recent example of this has been in relation to the Community Resources & Improvement Committee's concerns over the rising figures of Looked After Children in the County Borough and asking the Children & Young People Committee to look further into this and the reasons why Bridgend has such a high figure. The Children and Young People Committee have then progressed this in their consideration of the 'Early help and Permanence Strategy and Action Plan'

and are progressing it still on their FWP in order that they can drill deeper into the subject.

11. BREP is proactively involved in developing future budget savings. They are able to bring their experience as Councillors in representing the views of their communities whilst realising the need for budget reductions within the Authority and assisting to managing any potential tensions between the two. During the review of BREP it was identified that in order to optimise the BREP process a closer working relationship with Cabinet was needed. It was proposed that the Cabinet Member for Resources be invited to attend all BREP meeting in the forthcoming year to provide a Cabinet perspective of budget issues and focus the work of the BREP.

Overview & scrutiny meetings and activities are well-planned, chaired effectively and make best use of the resources available to it.

12. As outlined in other headings there is a comprehensive forward work programme planning process which includes:

- Pre-Agenda meetings
- Detailed report requests
- A structured report approval system with set milestones for every stage e.g. Legal and Finance approval
- Dedicated time allocated for Scrutiny Officers to meet with Chairs prior to Committee meetings to both understand and agree the focus that the Chair and the Members may wish for the meeting.
- Pre-discussions in Committee meetings.

13. The Scrutiny Committee workshops added another level to the FWP planning process this year and assisted the Committees greatly in terms of reviewing the past year and identifying priorities for the forthcoming year.

14. The scrutiny Chairs are “seasoned” elected members with wealth of experience of chairing general meetings. Their skills have been a developed with the delivery of specific Scrutiny Chairs Training.

15. Whilst recognising the limited resources available the Scrutiny Committees are still keen to utilise different approaches to achieve the best outcome, The Member and School Engagement Panel, having previously invited Headteachers and Chairs of Governors (COG) to attend their meetings in the Civic Offices, decided to change their tact and instead visited a school who were in special measures to carry out their challenge role within the school itself. This proved a positive step for the Panel in that it facilitated more open and in depth discussions where the Panel were able to challenge the Headteacher and COG effectively and gain detailed answers and reassurance. It also enabled the Members to gain a greater understanding of the school and its situation through a more visual approach. The proposal will hopefully be taken forward for future MSEP meetings.

IMPACT

Decision makers give public account for themselves at overview & scrutiny committees for their portfolio responsibilities.

16. In accordance with the constitution, Scrutiny Committees require Cabinet Members and Corporate Directors to attend Committee meetings to give public account for themselves.
17. They also attend pre-agenda meetings where discussions over the detail in the forward work programme take place between Cabinet members, Officers and the Scrutiny Chair. This ensures that the content and focus for reports going to OVSC meetings are agreed and that requests for information to be included in the reports are understood by everyone.
18. Continuing changes to the Directorate remits led to a restructure of the Scrutiny Committees last year to make the Committees more thematic based whereby any future changes to the Directorates would not necessitate a change to the Scrutiny Committees. This has been successful and has meant that the recent change, for example to the Legal and Regulatory Services Directorate, to include a reallocation of service areas such as Housing has not affected the forward work programmes for the Scrutiny Committees. Thematic based Committees have however led to the overlapping of Cabinet Members and Corporate Directors in each Committee with the frequent requirement for more than one to attend the same Committee meeting for separate items. This consequently has made pre-agenda meetings difficult to facilitate with a number of Corporate Directors and Cabinet Members sometimes required to discuss the items for the next series of Committee meetings. Communication between Chairs, Cabinet members and Corporate Directors to consider the FWP is vital for an effective Scrutiny process and therefore it is recognised that a new system needs to be developed.
19. Establishing these clear, agreed guidelines enables Scrutiny Officers to advise report authors on the inclusion and presentation of relevant information, resulting in accessible reports which provide an accurate reflection of requests from Members.
20. Scrutiny Committees draw conclusions and also make recommendations to Officers as part of summing up at every committee meeting. Following the request from the Scrutiny Members to ask for responses to all conclusions from Officers and not just information requests, Officers have already started providing these in a consistent manner. For example:
 - Porthcawl Harbour
The Community, Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the operation of Porthcawl Harbour and Marina related services. Recommendations were made to Officers to include local Member representation on the Harbour Board to ensure a more robust decision making process and openness and transparency in the Authority. The Officers agreed to incorporate this recommendation when undertaking a wider review of Coastal Services.
 - Waste
The Community Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the progress made on the procurement for the provision of residual and recycling collection services at the Authorities Community Recycling Centres. The Committee made recommendations to Officers to encourage a more adequate recycling system that would encourage residents to recycle more items instead of sending items to landfill and hoped this would help

achieve the target towards zero waste set by Welsh Government. These recommendations will be incorporated into Cabinet report in November 2016.

21. Reports are also made directly to Cabinet containing recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee or recommendations are incorporated into Directorate Reports to Cabinet directly informing the decision making process, as in the case of the Corporate Plan.
22. Scrutiny Committees also ensure decisions are made with respect of current/new legislation – having reports on impact of legislation and then ensuring that this is taken into account in future decisions

“Better engagement”

The public is engaged in democratic debate about the current and future delivery of public services.

ENVIRONMENT

Overview & scrutiny is recognised by the executive and corporate management team as an important council mechanism for community engagement, and facilitates greater citizen involvement in governance.

1. The Bridgend County Borough Council Consultation and Engagement Toolkit was issued in August 2014 incorporates the Participation Cymru’s National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales, which have been adopted by the Council. The document helps to ensure that all consultation and engagement projects are consistent, robust and effective.
2. Section 62 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (the Measure) places a requirement on local authorities to make arrangements that enable all persons who live or work in the area to bring to the attention of the relevant overview and scrutiny committees their views on any matter under consideration by the committee. Section 62 also provides that an overview and scrutiny committee must take into account any views brought to its attention in accordance with arrangements under this section.
3. As such, the statutory guidance in relation to the Measure states that overview and scrutiny committees are expected to raise public awareness about their role and function. In response to the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, Members considered ways in which to promote public engagement in scrutiny in order to meet its statutory obligation, recognising that the resources required to implement and sustain any or all of these opportunities is likely to be limited and the most cost effective and efficient methods of engagement need to be prioritised and developed.
4. Areas that have been developed during this period include:
 - Webcasting
Democratic Services has been developing the use of webcasting to increase the openness and transparency of the decision making process.

A total of 5 scrutiny meetings were webcast in 2016 and as at 13 September 2016 were viewed as follows:

	Total	Unique
P&G	505	329
CYP	427	330
CEL	351	238
CRI	374	197
ASC	259	195
Totals	1916	1289

The average number of views per meeting is 383 (total) or 257 (unique).

5. Some technical issues were experienced with the webcasting system which has now been corrected. A plan to webcast future meetings of scrutiny has been developed and is hoped to include the following topics:

- Substance Misuse
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- City Deal
- Annual School Performance
- Schools Strategic Review
- Digital Transformation Programme
- Business Plans 2016/17
- New Extra Care Housing Schemes
- Bryn Y Cae

6. Scrutiny Webpages

Following discussions with the Marketing and Engagement Team it was identified that further work was needed on the webpages to encourage greater accessibility and interaction. The scrutiny page is not very easy to find without actively searching for the term 'scrutiny'. Further work has been undertaken to provide the scrutiny webpages with a higher profile which will enable easier access to the public.

7. The Scrutiny webpages have been developed for ease of reading and provide an opportunity for electronic submission of scrutiny request forms. This will enable the public to request topics for scrutiny consideration. It is planned that any suitable requests received will added to the relevant committee FWP for prioritisation.

8. Advertising the FWP

It is intended that Scrutiny FWP will be advertised on the BCBC website and updated regularly. Scrutiny Officers are keen to promote engagement with their Town or Community Council (TCCs) in accordance with the Bridgend Town and Community Councils Charter. FWPs have now been shared with TCCs through the Clerks quarterly meetings and will continue to be with updated versions throughout the year. Clerks have been requested to share the FWP with their Councillors and potentially:

- Attend Scrutiny meetings as invitees
- To submit written evidence on scrutiny topics
- Identify other topics for the FWP

9. It is also hoped that with a revitalised Scrutiny webpage, the Scrutiny FWPs will be regularly updated online and shared and promoted through the Authority's own social media.

PRACTICE

Overview & scrutiny is characterised by effective communication to raise awareness of, and encourage participation in democratic accountability

10. It is recognised that scrutiny needs to develop its ability to communicate effectively with the public and to raise awareness of, and encourage participation in democratic accountability
11. Engagement opportunities are being developed with Town & Councils and third sector organisations to invite individuals with specific experience to scrutiny meetings. This will provide scrutiny the opportunity to hear the views of others and gather evidence to make appropriate recommendations
12. The BCBC webpages have also been reviewed to raise awareness of the scrutiny process and encourage active public participation. The Scrutiny web pages will provide the public with information how to get involved in Scrutiny such as the role and remits of the Scrutiny Committees, how to suggest an item to be considered by a Scrutiny Committee and also how the public are able to attend Scrutiny Committee meetings. The pages will also include an online Scrutiny request form to encourage members of the public to contact easily
13. Engagement with the Youth of the County Borough has been raised as a priority for the Authority through the Youth Participation Strategy and Action Plan. Scrutiny is keen to support this and has already engaged the Youth Mayor, inviting him to attend the CYP Committee to assist with discussions. This development is set to continue with further engagement planned in the FWP of the CYP Committee, however there is enthusiasm for youth involvement in other Scrutiny Committees

Overview & scrutiny operates non-politically and deals effectively with sensitive political issues, tension and conflict.

14. Every Committee and Research and Evaluation Panel investigation has flexible but clear terms of reference. BREP has cross party membership. BREP considers contentious issues at the early stages of development which Members approach with confidentiality and objectivity, irrespective of political allegiances.

Overview & scrutiny builds trust and good relationships with a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders.

15. Following on from work undertaken last year, the Local Service Board Overview and Scrutiny Panel, made up from Members of the P&G Scrutiny Committee as well as several representatives from external partner organisations have continued to work together scrutinising the projects and work of the now Public Service Board. Due to the successes of the Panel and its previous work in assisting the LSB in streamlining its structure and improving efficiency of processes which has been recognised by LSB partners, the transfer to the PSB has been relatively smooth for both the Board and Scrutiny Panel. The Panel's well established relationship continues with the new draft Assessment of Local Wellbeing and the Strategic Needs Assessment.
16. Committees have also engaged with Registered Social Landlords, Headteachers and Chairs of Governors, as well as representatives from the Police, Health Board and Voluntary Sector.

17. Scrutiny Officers and Chairs have also explored avenues for establishing Joint Scrutiny with other Local Authorities for services under Western Bay, Shared Regulatory Services and Central South Consortium.

- Western Bay Joint Scrutiny has unfortunately been unable to progress as due to not all LAs wishing to sign up to the process.
- A series of options have been discussed for the development of joint scrutiny for the SRS. This is being led by the Vale of Glamorgan but until any revised arrangements are agreed the SRS will continue to be scrutinised as part of the remit of the P&G committee.
- In relation to Joint Scrutiny for the CSC, work was undertaken by the WLGA which Scrutiny Officers fed into, the results from which led to meetings being organised with the Chairs of each of the five LAs. This was then expanded to include Scrutiny Officers and plans are in place to progress coordinated working to avoid duplication or gaps in what each LA's Scrutiny Committees receive from the Consortium and to also enable a more regional perspective to be considered by Members, looking at the bigger picture.

IMPACT

Overview and scrutiny enables the 'voice' of local people and communities across the area to be heard as part of decision and policy-making processes.

18. Members are proactive in their constituent roles and bring their experience from this into Scrutiny Committees whilst ensuring that they avoid a colloquial approach.

19. Scrutiny challenges the Authority's consultation and engagement process and ensures findings from consultation and engagement activities are included in reports and are listened to, presented objectively used to directly inform decisions.

20. This has been key to the CYP O&S Committee's consideration of the Draft Participation Strategy for children and young people where the Committee made a series of comments and subsequently recommended the following changes to the Strategy for incorporation in the final text:

- a) That more information on other organisation involvement be incorporated into the strategy;
- b) That more examples of the 'How' aspect be incorporated into the strategy;
- c) That the strategy be more accessible and user friendly for children and young people;
- d) That the strategy recognise and evidence more the importance of engagement with other children and young people outside of the Youth Council and detail how this is going to take place.
- e) That the action plan be incorporated within the strategy to evidence how the work is being targeted, monitored and evaluated
- f) That the action plan be expanded for the whole Authority to incorporate other Directorates.

This meeting also included engagement with the Youth Mayor and early responses to the Committee's recommendations ensure that their suggestions are being actioned and incorporated into the Final Strategy.