

Scrutiny Induction 2026

Scrutiny Team

Welcome! The purpose of today is to:



Provide a brief introduction to Overview and Scrutiny, why do we have it and what is it for



To answer any questions, you may have



To introduce Overview and Scrutiny at Essex County Council



To explain the next steps

Section 1 – Practicalities of Scrutiny Meetings

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------|---|-----------------|
| 1 | Agendas | 6 | Pre Meetings |
| 2 | Meetings | 7 | Webcasting |
| 3 | Apologies and Subs | 8 | Exempt Items |
| 4 | Officer Support | 9 | Matters Arising |
| 5 | Chairs and Vice-Chairs | | |

Agendas

- Agendas are published 5 clear days before the meeting (generally 8 calendar days)
- They are available on each Committee's [CMIS page](#)
- They are emailed to members of the committee once they have been published
- The first page contains information about accessing the meeting
- The contents then outlines the items for consideration
- Standard items at every meeting include:
 - Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest
 - Minutes of the previous meeting
 - Questions from the public
 - Work Programme
 - Date of the next meeting
 - Urgent Business



Meetings

- Held monthly, with a break in August
- Generally held on a Thursday, with a start time of around 10/10.30
- Usually held in Committee Room 1
- Arrive in good time
- Members of the committee will sit in the 'U' shaped tables and witnesses will sit in the straight tables at the front.
- The SDSO will sit next to the Chair
- The Chair leads the meeting



Apologies and Substitutions

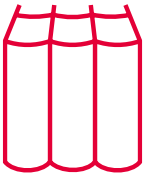
- If you cannot attend a meeting of your scrutiny committee, please let us know
- We will report your apologies at the meeting
- Reported on your CMIS profile as 'sent apologies' rather than 'absent'
- If possible, arrange a substitute



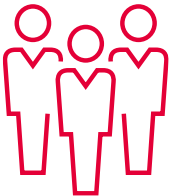
Officer Support



Each Committee receives support from an SDSO and DSO



Preparation of reports, minutes and agenda packs



Streaming meetings on YouTube



Organise pre meetings



Support the Chair and Vice-Chairs



Supporting Members

Chairs and Vice-Chairs

- Nominated and agreed at Full Council (Chairman)
- Attend catch up meetings with the relevant Cabinet and Officers
- Lead Pre Meetings for committee Members
- Chair formal meetings
- Attend meetings of the Scrutiny Board
- Work closely with Democratic Services
- Vice-Chairs will step in to Chair the meeting if the Chairman is not available

Pre Meetings

- Generally held online a day or two before the formal meeting
- Attended by members of the committee, any substitutes, and Democratic Services
- Led by the Chair
- Can identify key lines of enquiry or any further information required

Catch Up Meetings

- Attended by Chair, Vice Chairs, Cabinet Member, Relevant Officers and Democratic Services

Broadcasting



All formal meetings
are streamed on
[YouTube](#)



There are
microphones in the
ceiling in CR1



Streaming stops if
there are exempt
items being
discussed

Exempt Items

- Rare at Scrutiny meetings
- Discussing anything that falls under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972
- Would form 'Part 2' of the agenda, and would be made clear to Members before and during the meeting
- Livestreaming would stop and any members of the press or public would be asked to leave the room



Matters Arising

- Matters arising are requests made by members during the formal meeting for further information
- Members are encouraged to focus on making recommendations rather than requesting lots of additional information
- Matters arising are recorded by SDSOs and a list of them can be found on the Members' Portal
- The SDSO will send these over to the relevant officers and once a response has been received this will be shared with members.

Section 2 – Principles of Scrutiny

1 Leader and Cabinet Model

4 Structure of Scrutiny in ECC

2 What Scrutiny is and isn't

5 Key Scrutiny Relationships

3 Importance of Scrutiny

6 Key Scrutiny Skills

Leader and Cabinet model – Scrutiny is a key part

Must designate a statutory scrutiny officer

Requirement to have at least one scrutiny committee

Committees cannot have any 'executive members' on them

Must be politically proportionate

Can co-opt members from outside the authority

Can appoint sub-committees to discharge functions

Executive members and officers are requested to attend

Can make recommendations on 'matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area'

Scrutiny does not...

- ☐ Consider minor matters or individual concerns that are not of wider significance to the community
- ☐ Look at individual complaints that should be addressed through the Council's Complaints Procedure
- ☐ Deal with matters that are subject to legal proceedings, or disciplinary or grievance matters
- ☐ Consider matters that are clearly party political in nature



What is scrutiny?

- ☐ Provides constructive 'critical friend' challenge
- ☐ Amplifies the voice and concerns of the public
- ☐ Is led by independent people who take responsibility for their role
- ☐ Drives improvement in public services



Broadly, scrutiny can be described as...

Formal business such as agreeing reports and recommendations, considering the work programme, call ins and petitions;

Individual reviews where the prime focus of activity is the gathering and consideration of evidence

Information or knowledge sharing to develop understanding of the way that services work or are provided.

This activity is delivered via formal committee meetings that are open to the public, Task and Finish Groups, and a range of other methods such as call in, briefings, workshops, site visits and questionnaires.

Why do scrutiny?

Highlight
'neglected'
issues

Approaches
from a
different
perspective/'
across the
system'

Bring an
independent
viewpoint

Bring a
layman's
approach

Often in
public which
can be
reassuring

Utilise
Members'
community
leadership
role

Recommend
ations to
make a
difference

Committee Remits

Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee

- Strategic direction, policies and priorities of Cabinet and Council
- Financial position
- Support services
- Council's role as an employer
- Essex companies

Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee

- Economy of Essex, economic development
- Highways and transportation
- Libraries
- Planning
- Waste and recycling
- Environmental services

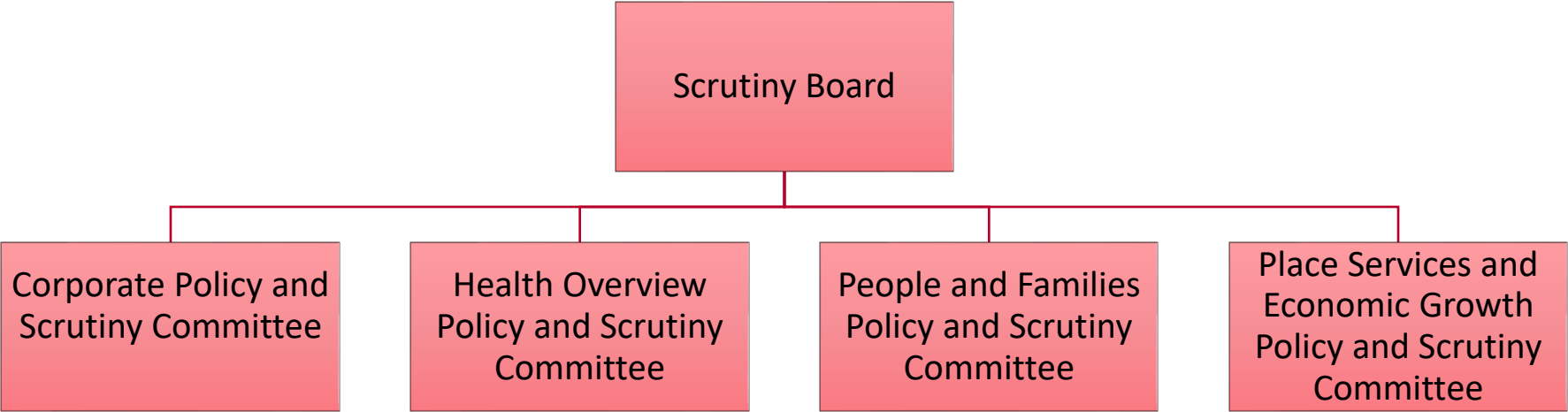
People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee

- Education
- Children's Services
- Youth Services
- Adult Social Care
- Sport and physical activity

Health Overview Policy and Scrutiny Committee

- Planning, provision and operation of health services in the County of Essex
- Primary, secondary and tertiary care

Scrutiny structure in Essex



Committees with a scrutiny remit	Essex Police, Fire and Crime Panel
	Audit Governance and Standards Committee

Scrutiny relationships



Scrutiny skills include...

Questioning
- asking the
right
questions
without
appearing
aggressive

Listening -
actively
listen to the
information
being put
forward

Chairing
skills – for
both formal
committees
and Task and
Finish
Groups

Analytical
skills -
interpreting
and
balancing
information
to reach
conclusions

Team
working –
effectively
working with
Members
from other
political
groups to
achieve a
common
goal

Project
Planning –
selecting
topics
according to
priorities,
resources
and
timescales

Recommendations

Why do we make recommendations?

- To add value to decision making
- To improve outcomes for residents
- To influence decisions before they are finalised
- To provide a constructive challenge to the Executive
- To identify risks, gaps, unintended consequences
- To promote transparency and accountability
- To encourage new approaches and innovation

Key Considerations

- Is it evidence based?
- Is it within the Council's powers?
- Is it realistic and deliverable?
- Does it add value?
- Is it clearly directed to the right audience?
- Is there committee consensus?

What is a good recommendation?

- Clear and specific
- Action-focused
- Evidence-based
- Realistic and achievable
- Time-bound

Powers and following up

- Not legally binding but highly influential
- Made in public
- Based on evidence and cross-party input
- Can require a formal response
- Can inform Executive Decisions
- Responses and outcomes should be tracked and progress reviewed

Call-In

- Part of the Leader/Cabinet model (Local Government Act 2000) – provides checks and balances on executive decisions
- Temporarily pauses a decision for further review (does not compel decision-makers)
- Must be requested within 3 working days of decision publication
- Can be initiated by:
 - A member of the relevant scrutiny committee
 - Any four councillors
 - The local member (in consultation with the Monitoring Officer)
- Process:
 - Informal resolution meeting will be offered
 - If unresolved → formal scrutiny committee within 10 working days
- Possible outcomes:
 - No further action
 - Recommendations back to the Cabinet Member
 - Referral to Full Council

Scrutiny Examples

- PAF – People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee
- SEND - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- EHCA - Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment
- EP - Education Psychologist

Committee specific induction sessions

Health Overview Policy and Scrutiny Committee – 25 June

People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee – 1 July

Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee – 10 July

Place Services and Economic Growth – 16 July

Questions

Useful links

[Overview and Scrutiny Handbook](#)

[Scrutiny Activity Report](#)

[Essex Police Fire and Crime Panel Guidance](#)

[Centre for Governance and Scrutiny](#)

[Local Government Association](#)

This information is issued by:
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 **Essex_CC**

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The information contained in this document
can be translated, and/or made available in
alternative formats, on request.

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