

# **Summary of Scrutiny – For the Public Services Board**

---

## **What is Scrutiny?**

Scrutiny is the term given to the non-political process within the Council, whereby the decision makers (the Cabinet in the Council's case) are held to account for the decisions taken, whether they have been implemented effectively and whether they have resulted in improved services for people of Newport.

The underlying principle of Scrutiny arrangements is to ensure that the decision making process is open, accountable and transparent.

Scrutiny Committees do not have decision - making powers. In all cases the role of the Scrutiny Committee is to examine available options or consider how effectively an area is performing and then to make recommendations to the decision making body, whether that is the Council; the Cabinet, an Individual Cabinet Member or external partners.

Scrutiny Committees are usually conducted in public, and the public are welcome to attend and observe any formal meeting of the Committee.

The Scrutiny Committee can operate in a number of ways, depending what the issue is that they are looking into. The most common approaches are either to consider issues via a report at Committee meetings, or to set up a working group to look at an in-depth issue.

## **What does that mean for the Public Services Board (PSB)?**

All Councils have Scrutiny arrangements in place, and all Councils in Wales now have a statutory duty to extend their remit to scrutinise the PSB Partnership. The purpose of PSB overview and scrutiny is to take an overview of the PSB's overall effectiveness through democratic challenge.

PSB's are accountable to Scrutiny Committees in respect of how they work jointly to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of their area by contributing to the achievement of the wellbeing goals in accordance with the sustainable development principle.

Under the Act, Scrutiny has the power to:

- Review or scrutinise the decisions made or actions taken by the PSB;
- Reviewing or scrutinise the governance arrangements of the PSB;
- Acting as a consultee on key documents such as the Well-being Assessment and Well-being Plan;
- Monitoring progress on the PSBs implementation for the wellbeing plan and assessing the delivery of objectives.

In carrying out these roles, the Scrutiny Committee can require any statutory member of the Board to give evidence, the capacity in which they do so must relate to the exercise of joint functions conferred on them as a statutory member of the board. This does not preclude

## **Summary of Scrutiny – For the Public Services Board**

---

overview and scrutiny committees interviewing individual partners to assess their contribution to collaborative delivery.

The Scrutiny Committee will write to the PSB with any comments or recommendations based on the information it received, in the form of a letter. The Act also requires that any recommendations sent to the PSB must also be sent to the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales and the Auditor General for Wales.

In Newport a Partnership Committee has been established to oversee the work of the PSB, including delivery plans, wellbeing planning and performance monitoring. The Committee will also oversee the other external partnership arrangements. One Newport PSB's Terms of Reference acknowledge this and state that the Board will maintain a proactive and positive relationship with the Scrutiny Committee.

The Welsh Government has published [Guidance for Local Authority Scrutiny Committees on the scrutiny of PSBs](#). This guidance is helpful in explaining what this is intended to achieve and how O&S Committees can exercise their powers.

### **How will Scrutiny work in practice?**

- The Scrutiny Committee will develop its work programme for the year, and determine what it wishes to focus on. Given that this is the first year for this Committee, the Committee have chosen to focus on the statutory consultations initially, as they develop an understanding of what the PSB does. The work programme is shared with the PSB for information.
- The Committee will invite representatives from the PSB to attend Scrutiny Committee meetings where relevant items are on the agenda.
- Agendas, minutes and Summary of Business from the PSB meetings are sent to the Committee for information and also published [here](#).
- Representatives from the Scrutiny Committee may ask to observe PSB meetings where relevant items are being considered.
- When the Committee considers an item relating to the PSB at a meeting, the Committee will write to the PSB with the detail of what was discussed, along with any comments / recommendations the Committee may have. This will also be sent to the Commissioner as required within the Act.

### **Contacts / further details**

Elizabeth Blayney – Senior Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Meryl Lawrence – Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Email [scrutiny@newport.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@newport.gov.uk)