

Scrutiny Voluntary Co-optee Information Pack

What is Scrutiny?

Scrutiny was established by the Local Government Act 2000, to support efficient, transparent and accountable decision-making. Over the last few years, additional legislation has extended its remit and powers. Scrutiny is an important council function, which is led by elected councillors, who are responsible for:

- Monitoring the quality of services delivered by the Council and other local public sector organisations
- Carrying out reviews of issues, policies or services in areas where there are concerns or there is potential for improvement
- Contributing to policy proposals for decision by the Cabinet or other local organisations
- Holding the Cabinet to account for its policies and the decisions it takes
- Holding a range of Council partners to account for the services they provide to Kirklees residents

What powers does Scrutiny have?

Scrutiny does not make decisions, that is the role of the Cabinet, which is held to account for the decisions it takes, but, by making evidence-based recommendations, Scrutiny provides a powerful influence to decision and policy making.

Scrutiny has the statutory power to call for people and any papers relevant to their enquiries and to require a response to their recommendations.

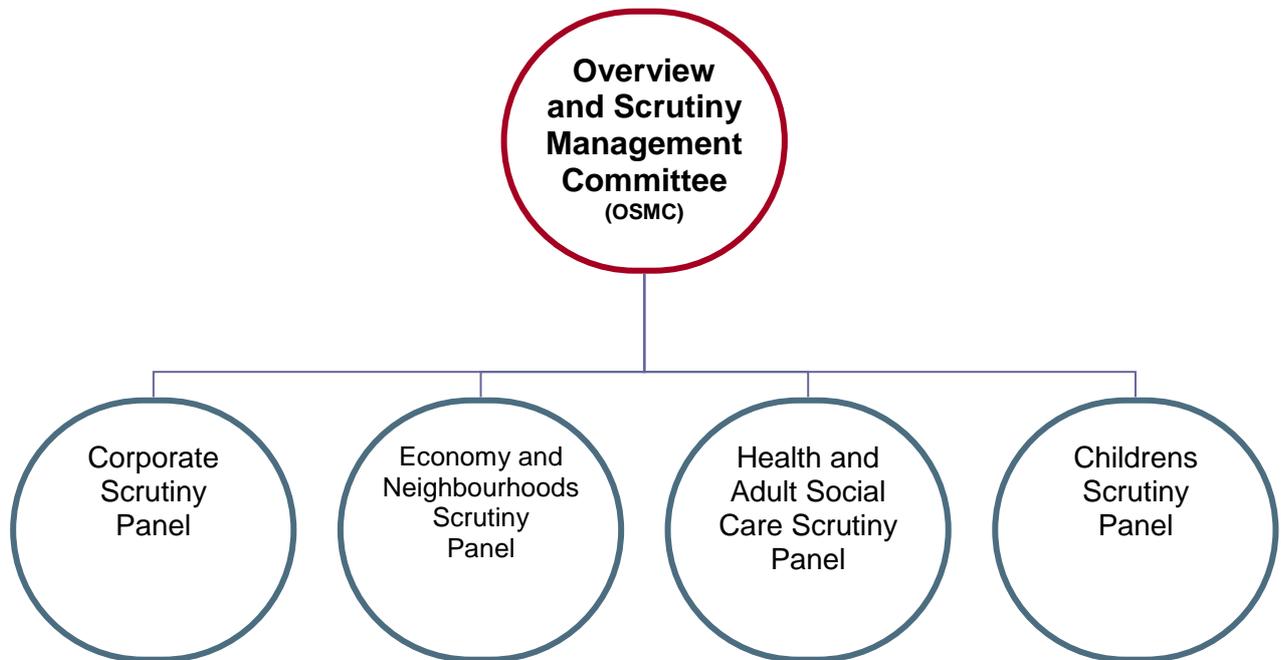
Who is involved and how does it work?

Scrutiny gives an important role to all councillors who do not hold a Cabinet position, and is undertaken by councillors and co-optees supported by officers from the Democracy Team.

In Kirklees, the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) is responsible for leading and managing the Scrutiny process. It co-ordinates all scrutiny work, both in terms of overview and in depth scrutiny work, and allocates the use of resources for priority pieces of work.

Current Scrutiny Structure in Kirklees

OSMC is made up of five elected councillors and includes a Chair, appointed by the Council and the Lead Members (Chairs) from the four Scrutiny Panels. The membership of each panel includes councillors from all political groups and a number of Voluntary and Statutory Co-optees.



Each of the four panels, has its own programme of work and in addition to being involved in panel work, councillors and co-optees have the opportunity to get involved in ad hoc panels which are established to provide in depth focus on specific issues.

Is scrutiny a political activity?

Scrutiny is a key part of the political process; however it is not '*party*' political and involves councillors across all of the political groups working together. When undertaking scrutiny, councillors 'leave their party politics at the door', to look objectively at the issue and agree conclusions and recommendations which are based on evidence and are in the best interest of Kirklees residents.

What is a Co-optee?

A co-optee is a member of the public, resident in Kirklees, with an interest in scrutinising decisions and policies that are being made by the Council and key partners including local health service providers and commissioners.

Can anyone apply to be a Voluntary Co-optee?

We want to encourage people from a wide range of backgrounds and experience to be Voluntary Co-optees. However, in order to ensure that the independence and integrity of Scrutiny is not compromised there are a small number of conditions that you must meet:

- You must be 18 years old or over
- You must live in Kirklees
- You must not be a current or recent (i.e. within the last 5 years) employee or member of Kirklees Council
- You must be able to commit about ½ a day a month – usually during the daytime – to scrutiny work
- You must not have a current outstanding complaint against the Council
- In the past 5 years, you must not have been offered advice from anyone from the Council concerning your conduct

When do the Panels meet?

The Scrutiny Panels meet approximately once a month and the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panels will meet as and when necessary, depending on the topic being reviewed. An Ad Hoc Panel is likely to meet more frequently but for a shorter period of time, eg every 2 weeks for a time limited period.

How does Scrutiny decide which issues to look at?

OSMC decide the issues they want to prioritise for scrutiny to review. Effective scrutiny takes time, commitment and effort so it is simply not possible to look at every issue.

When choosing issues to look at, Scrutiny takes into account a number of factors, including whether the issue:

- is a Council priority;
- is something that local people have been concerned about;
- is an area of poor performance
- is an area where Scrutiny can make a real difference (would recommendations result in improved services?)

Is there anything that Scrutiny cannot look at?

Scrutiny is not appropriate for considering individual complaints. The Panels are also not allowed to investigate regulatory or 'quasi-judicial' (decisions such as planning or licensing).

Will I be able to choose which Panel I sit on?

Successful applicants will be asked to express a preference on areas of specific interest relating to the panels and will have the opportunity to observe a Panel meeting. However, it will depend on where vacancies arise.

What skills and knowledge will I need?

- Effective communication skills, particularly listening and questioning skills
- The ability to look at issues from a broad perspective across Kirklees and beyond
- The ability to work as a team with other Panel members and council officers
- The ability to weigh up information to reach conclusions and recommend actions
- An interest in local matters
- The ability to listen with an open mind to the points of view of others
- The ability to not pre-judge outcomes or show bias, for example, party political bias

What would I be expected to do?

As a member of a Scrutiny Panel, you will be asked to:

- Attend Panel meetings when required, on average one panel meeting a month for half a day usually during the daytime
- Read papers and reports in preparation for Panel meetings
- Ask appropriate questions on issues at Panel meetings
- Assess the evidence and information provided at meetings to form views and opinions
- Contribute to the formulation of Panel recommendations.

Will I be paid?

Co-optees are voluntary positions, however you are able to claim for a number of expenses in connection with attending meetings:

- Car mileage
- Parking fees, with valid receipt
- Public transport costs (train or bus)

- Taxi fares (if you have a disability and cannot use a car or public transport, we will reimburse your taxi fare, with a valid receipt.)
- Childcare (if you have to pay someone to look after your child/children whilst attending a Scrutiny Panel, the Council will reimburse you. You will need to obtain a receipt from the person you pay and the person must not be a member of your household.)
- Cost of a support worker / carers (if you need support at a meeting, or for someone in your home whilst you attend the meeting, we will pay for these costs. You will need to provide a receipt.)

Still interested?

We would be very pleased to hear from you - please complete the application form and return it to the address below.

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