

Chapter 4 – Policy and Scrutiny

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE POLICY AND SCRUTINY PROCESS AND THE COMMITTEES

1.1. SCRUTINY AT WESTMINSTER – VISION AND PURPOSE

Scrutiny is a vital function to promote transparency and accountability. On behalf of Westminster’s communities and stakeholders, local non-Executive Councillors will endeavour to ensure services in the city not only meet people’s needs but enhance lived experiences by:

1. Championing the best possible outcomes for communities and stakeholders.
2. Holding the Council, its partner organisations and external bodies to account for decisions taken and the impacts on our communities.
3. Examining Council priorities, actively engaging in policy development and offering constructive challenge prior to decisions being taken.
4. Working strategically across the city to focus our efforts on policy and service areas where scrutiny can make the biggest impact.
5. Demonstrating integrity and commitment by adhering to the Nolan Principles of Public Life.

1.2. SCOPE AND FUNCTIONS OF POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The Council has appointed the Policy and Scrutiny Committees set out in the left-hand column of the table below to discharge the functions conferred by section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 or regulations under section 32 of the Local Government Act 2000 in relation to the matters broadly set out in the right-hand column of the same table. Detailed terms of reference for the Policy and Scrutiny Committees are set out separately in this Constitution.

COMMITTEE	SCOPE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	To provide overall leadership to the Policy and Scrutiny function. To scrutinise cross-cutting or corporate areas of policy and/or service delivery and to approve the annual report of Policy and Scrutiny activity. Within this, to act as the statutory committee responsible for scrutinising decisions made to combat crime and disorder.
CLIMATE ACTION, ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	To lead Policy and Scrutiny work relating to the work of the Council and others in the City to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tackle the climate emergency• Keep the City clean• Provide sustainable transport options and green space

HOUSING AND REGENERATION POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	<p>To lead Policy and Scrutiny work relating to the work of the Council and others in the City to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver exceptional housing services to tenants and lessees • Tackle rough sleeping • Build more affordable homes, including through regeneration and associated programmes • Build more homes • Regenerate places and areas of the City, including through place-shaping schemes
VULNERABLE ADULTS, HEALTH AND COMMUNITIES POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	<p>To lead Policy and Scrutiny work relating to the work of the council and others in the City to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguard and support vulnerable adults • Drive improvements in public health • Provide community safety services • Support the voluntary and community sector • Provide health services, including acting as the statutory committee responsible for health scrutiny
YOUNG PEOPLE, LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	<p>To lead Policy and Scrutiny work relating to the work of the Council and others in the City to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguard children and young people • Provide education, learning and skills development services and opportunities both at school age and beyond • Provide support for people to find and sustain work • Provide library services • Provide leisure services

1.3. GENERAL ROLE

Within their terms of reference, Policy and Scrutiny Committees may:

- (i) review and/or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's functions;
- (ii) make reports and/or recommendations to the Full Council and/or the Executive and/or any policy, joint or area committee in connection with the discharge of any functions;
- (iii) consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants;
- (iv) question and gather evidence from any person (with their consent);
- (v) establish Sub-Committees or Task Groups in line with the provisions set out in Section 2 of this Chapter;
- (vi) consider any Councillor Calls for Action referred by a Ward Member to the Committee; and

- (vii) exercise the right to call-in for decisions made but not yet implemented by the Executive.

1.4. SPECIFIC FUNCTIONS

(1) Policy development (“pre-decision scrutiny”). Policy and Scrutiny Committees may:

- (i) undertake ‘pre-decision scrutiny’ in areas which will assist the Council and the Executive in key areas of policy or service development – this should be with the agreement of the Executive but there may be a small number of extraordinary circumstances where such agreement is either not appropriate or possible;
- (ii) investigate areas and issues of emerging concern in the City with a view to making recommendations to the Executive on how to respond to these;
- (iii) conduct research, community and other engagement in the analysis of policy issues and possible options; and
- (iv) liaise with other external organisations operating in the area, whether national, regional or local, to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working.

(2) Review (“post-decision scrutiny”). Policy and Scrutiny committees may:

- (i) review and scrutinise decisions made by the Executive and/or committees and Council officers, and the impact of these decisions, both in relation to individual decisions as well as the aggregated impact of multiple decisions;
- (ii) take a strategic approach to reviewing organisational performance against policy objectives or in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects – operational and individual service performance management is the responsibility of the Audit and Performance Committee;
- (iii) upon referral by the Audit and Performance Committee, undertake in-depth reviews into individual areas of service performance which are high risk, of significant public or reputational interest or otherwise warrant more detailed consideration to resolve issues; and
- (iv) review and scrutinise the decisions and performance of other organisations operating in the City and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the Policy and Scrutiny Committee and local people about their activities and performance.

1.5. PROCEEDINGS OF POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Policy and Scrutiny Committees will conduct their proceedings in accordance with the Policy and Scrutiny Procedure Rules and, so far as relevant, the Committee and Sub-Committee Procedure Rules set out in Chapter 5 of this Constitution.