

Date:	30 th November 2015
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Policy & Scrutiny Update
Report of:	Policy & Scrutiny Manager
Cabinet Member Portfolio	n/a (Westminster Scrutiny Commission)
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	City for All
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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Standards Committee has recommended that the Westminster Scrutiny Commission evaluates the outcomes of the Centre for Public Scrutiny development session on 30th September and considers whether Members require more bespoke training and development opportunities.

2. Key Matters for the Commission's Consideration

- 2.1 The Commission may wish to consider:
- Further training and development opportunities.
 - The further development of the Overview & Scrutiny function.

3. Background

Centre for Public Scrutiny - Development Session - Wednesday 30th September

- 3.1 The Chairman of the Westminster Scrutiny Commission commissioned the Local Government Association (The Centre for Public Scrutiny) to provide a session for Westminster Members on how to maximise the impact of the overview and scrutiny function. All non-Cabinet Councillors were invited to

attend and the event took place on Wednesday 30th September. Fifteen Members (including one co-opted Member) and four officers attended the session.

3.2 The facilitator first took Members and 4 Officers through a set of slides detailing successful case studies of overview and scrutiny across the country. Members and Officers were then asked to describe and clarify the format and operation of task groups at Westminster, to explore good practice. Attendees identified the following types of task group:

- **Pre-Decision Task Groups** – those that meet to input and influence strategies in development, prior to a decision being made by the Cabinet Member (e.g. Cycling Strategy Task Group, Highways and Transportation Contract Re-Let Task Group)
- **Research Task Groups** – where a group of Members meet, in person or virtually, to undertake a research project and report back to the Committee for endorsement (e.g. Sex Workers).
- **Single-Member Studies (SMS)** – where a Member is granted approval by a Committee Chairman to undertake research and report back to the Committee for endorsement (e.g. Party Drugs, Childhood Obesity)
- **Tri-Borough Task Groups** – where a group of Members (commissioned by a Chairman) meet from across the three Boroughs to undertake site visits or research on a shared concern (e.g. Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust)

3.3 Members and Officers said it would be useful to share the protocols, agreed last year by the Westminster Scrutiny Commission, in relation to Task Group / Single-Member Study operation (also attached here) relating to how Members can start an investigation within the Policy & Scrutiny function. This was sent via email to all Members following the session.

3.4 Members also requested information on questioning techniques, how to maintain successful external relationships and the powers that Policy & Scrutiny Committees have over external bodies under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. Members also asked about the suitability of Deputy Cabinet Members (DCMs) being on P&S Committees, but it was clarified that DCMs did not sit on P&S Committees which related to the same topic area as their DCM position.

3.5 The facilitator then outlined a methodology called '**return on investment**' scrutiny, which was designed to improve the quality of recommendations coming from overview and scrutiny functions. The facilitator organised group work for the Members and Officers to develop a potential scope for a 'return on investment' study of some of the items currently on the Westminster City Council P&S work programmes. Each group then reported back how each item could be considered using this methodology.

**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the
Background Papers please contact Mark Ewbank x2636
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