Findings from the Scrutiny learning and development seminars on 23 October 2018

The two seminars focused on the report of the Scrutiny Working Group, responding to the peer challenge findings of November 2017. Development activity focused around a shared understanding of the role and value of scrutiny, work programming, project scoping and key lines of enquiry. The seminars concentrated on the new ways of working proposed for Selby and particular pieces of scrutiny and policy review activity
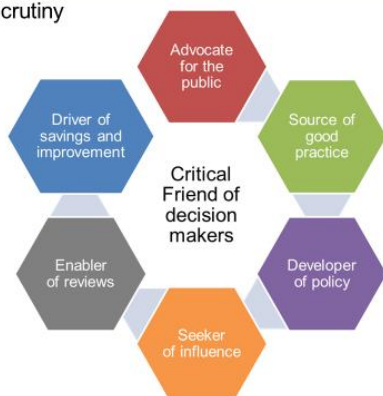
The focus for development was reflected in the following slide:

Scrutiny Review 2018

| Achieved	Planned
Role profiles for Chairs	Scrutiny review after elections on 2 May 2019
Quarterly liaison meetings between Executive and Chairs	Terms of reference for deep dives
Scrutiny training twice	Deep dives or scrutiny in a day
Dates shared of Executive to enable Scrutiny attendance	Engage more external partners, public and potential co-optees
Develop work planning at top of agenda and workshops	Develop communications and raise Scrutiny's profile
	Continuing role for the Scrutiny Working Group

The potential impact of and benefits from scrutiny were illustrated as below:

Roles of Scrutiny

- Advocate for the public
- Source of good practice
- Developer of policy
- Seeker of influence
- Enabler of reviews
- Driver of savings and improvement

Critical Friend of decision makers

Contribution of Scrutiny

- Fair and transparent decision making
- Political accountability as Critical Friend
- Strategic overview of policies, strategies and plans
- Input to policy development
- Gatherer of evidence and good practice
- Monitor of performance and budgets
- Reviewer of outcomes and impact
- A means to connect with residents
- An independent view on future challenges
- ... Of the Council, partners and anything affecting Selby
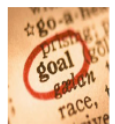
The focus for development as set out in the report follows including more deep dives:

"4. Review and improve scrutiny arrangements to ensure that there is healthy and adequate challenge within the Council to help with improvements.

We therefore recommend that you explore ways to provide support to the Scrutiny Committee to consider the benefits of aligning and coordinating its work plan with the Corporate Plan. This will enable it to scrutinise the delivery and impacts of the priorities of the Plan. It can do this by scrutinising work through commissions and deep-dives around key work programme areas, strategic priorities, and critical issues impacting on Selby district's citizens."

Corporate Peer Challenge

Work through commissions and deep-dives

- Develop Terms of Reference for 'deep dives' or 'scrutiny in a day' reviews
- Carry out Scrutiny activity around:
  - Planning enforcement
  - Housing
  - Anti-social behaviour
  - Safer Selby Hub
- Build capacity and support for this

Suggestions for what scrutiny needs to do differently were:

- Implement agreed changes that have not yet been introduced
- Raise scrutiny's profile
- Have more in-depth scrutiny reviews
- Build capacity for deep dives and scrutiny in a day inquiries by engaging more of the non-executive members. Only five of the 31 Selby District councillors are executive members, leaving 26 available for scrutiny and policy review activity; of these 14 are on either of the two committees, but the remaining 12 might be willing to participate in time limited deep dives, particularly on areas of interest to them
- Build capacity through seconding departmental officers to support time limited deep dives or scrutiny in a day inquiries, possibly assisting with career development of more junior officers, alongside the scrutiny support provided by democratic services
- Ensure scrutiny is responsive to urgent issues
- Make scrutiny more mobile, going to where people are who are affected by policies and services
- Develop the public interface having public questions and including open sessions at the committees
- Develop liaison between the chairs of the CEFs, Scrutiny and Policy Review, based on the successful model of increased liaison through quarterly meetings between the executive and scrutiny chairs
- Avoid duplication by checking which is the right forum for looking at an issue and getting the timing right eg budget will go to the executive, scrutiny and full council in sequence; audit will look at financial performance for a different purpose from the executive and scrutiny
- Ensure that scrutiny adds value through its work
- Share more information outside of meetings to avoid noting reports
- Replace top heavy reports with more accessible and quick to read reports with brief summaries
- Have induction on scrutiny for all members immediately after the next elections in May 2019
- Establish mentoring of members relating to their roles and membership of committees.

Work programming

Criteria and topic prioritisation will help the Committees to adopt realistic work programmes. These should have a corporate fit, have the potential for outcomes, will not duplicate other planned activity and be timely. Topics should reflect the Corporate Plan, have a financial impact, reflect the commissioning cycle and address residents' concerns. Areas on which to focus for work programming were suggested as follows:

Criteria should include reference to the commissioning cycle and timeliness of scrutiny on potential tenders and reletting of contracts; public concern; major financial impact; potential for invest to save and performance of external contracts.

Outstanding issues on which scrutiny has worked, but on which it was suggested that further work is needed, included:

- Community Centres (look at reports from Durham County Council and Northampton Borough Council, probably five years ago, for examples of the approach to scrutiny and outcomes from the reviews)
- Interventions in the two most deprived wards in Selby

Suggested additional topics for scrutiny were:

- Provision of a temporary travellers' site
- Flooding and water management
- Planning enforcement in terms of capacity, timescales, monitoring and follow up
- Parking, especially given the joint contract with Harrogate and some loss of income through the breakage or theft of parking machines
- Empty Homes Strategy

There are routine topics such as the work programme and its link to the Executive's Forward Plan and items for inclusion; performance monitoring; reports on contracts and services; and updates.

Project scoping

Project scopes were proposed for particular topics on the work programme that would be explored through challenge sessions, deep dives or scrutiny in a day. These would ensure there is an objective to the specific scrutiny activity, agree the approach including in relation to timings, completion date and inputs required, and outcomes that are sought. It would be important to alert the public and partners to the potential for submitting evidence.

An example was provided as below:

An example was used of a project scope on a review of provision of a temporary travellers' site. The scope covered:

|	
Objective	To provide a safe site for travelers for short term use and protect local residents
Terms of reference	To look at the potential site To consider amenities required To liaise with appropriate parties including travellers' representatives and local residents
Outputs	To satisfy Selby communities that the site would not impact on them To let travellers know that as long as they work with the Council and don't impact negatively on local communities, they have a safe place to be
Methodology	To identify the officer with responsibility To look at the work of other councils and similar provision To consider the costing of providing a site To prepare local communities for the site To look at enforcement powers if other sites are used illegally To liaise with a travellers' representative

Other areas for consideration included in respect of location, access, liaison with residents, facilities, cleansing and rubbish collections, comparison with other councils and liaison with their travellers' officer to identify appropriate contact within the traveller community

Questioning

Questioning strategies were identified as key to effective scrutiny. They enable diverse aspects of a topic to be explored, a wide range of witnesses including experts and service users to be involved and evidence to be gathered in a timely way.

Questioning in Scrutiny

- Enabling constructive challenge
- Reviewing decisions and budgets
- Reviewing performance and spend
- Assessing impact ... including public satisfaction
- Pinpointing key risks and action to address them
- Checking, testing, challenging, confirming information
- Gathering further evidence
- Seeking solutions
- Informing report and recommendations
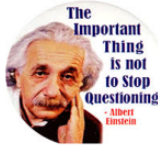
Developing questioning strategies

- Create the right environment
- Identify sources of evidence
- Explore the issue in its full breadth
- Draw up key lines of enquiry and prepare for session
- Enable contributions to inform research
- Seek hard to reach information as evidence
- Give others time to hear, understand ... and respond
- Chase outstanding or unanswered questions
- Summarise what you have heard to check understanding

Preparing well

- Understand your objectives
  - What exactly is the issue?
  - What is our value added focus?
  - Which outcomes are we seeking?
- Prepare for the questioning strategy
  - What are the Key Lines of Enquiry?
  - Share in advance for clarification or information
  - Which Member will lead on which area of questioning?
  - Which members are ready with relevant supplementaries?
- Promote sensitive and active listening by Members
- Be ready to capture key findings to inform follow up

Suggested questions for the challenge session with transport providers and strategists on 25 October were identified as follows.

These could be broken up into areas around extent of services, routes provided, timetabling, punctuality and reliability, financial matters including profitability and subsidies, accessibility.

Key lines of enquiry on transport matters in the district and the wider Leeds City Region

- What is the witnesses view of transport provision for people in Selby? (Open question to set the scene and enable the witnesses to talk at ease about a subject with which they are familiar)

- What challenges do they face in providing a service? (More focused follow up question to reflect the area in which the committee is interested)

- How profitable are the routes which they operate?
- How could you boost profitability to safeguard routes which are at risk? (supplementary)

- What are the employment levels from Selby district in the bus and/or train service you operate?

- How accessible are the services to the public?
- How will you address issues around access such as the lack of a lift at Selby railway station?
- What is the timescale for introducing a lift?

- How could you improve liaison and coordination across public transport?
- How much coordination of your timetables is undertaken in order to develop more integrated transport for the district?
- What can you do to improve integration at bus and train stations between the services?
- How will access to services on the high speed line improve?
- Are there plans better to integrate local services into the high speed line?
- How could you improve connections to work, school, leisure and skills?

- Having shared this information, how would you propose to follow up the discussion?

Suggestions for a communications strategy for scrutiny were:

- Greater public engagement including around what scrutiny is, what it is for, how to be involved and report backs on outcomes from scrutiny activity in which the public have participated

- Information sharing including invitations to attend, speak at and/or submit questions for major challenge sessions

- Scrutiny review of Council consultation, following on from the communications review

- Greater use of IT to engage the public including the use of social media by officers supporting scrutiny