



Scrutiny Essentials

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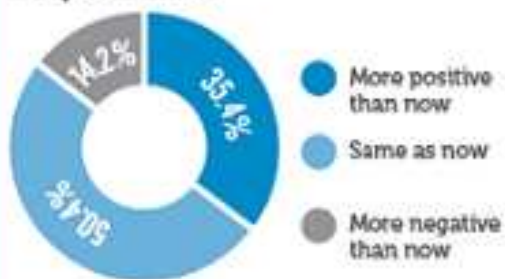
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About CfPS

- Established in 2003 to promote the value of scrutiny and accountability in good government. Now a small charity.
- Focuses on local government, wider public sector & now works with corporates
- Produces briefings, newsletters and publications
- Conducts research
- Provides advice and guidance
- Carries out training and reviews
- Holds a library of research and scrutiny reviews



Scrutiny - future outlook is positive



70% BELIEVE
SCRUTINY
MAKES AN IMPACT



20% MORE
rated their organisational
culture positively



79% PEOPLE

think that
party politics
affects
scrutiny

MOST IMPACTFUL SCRUTINY METHODS



LOCAL GOVERNMENT
SCRUTINY 2017/18
- A POSITIVE OUTLOOK?

CFPS

Centre for Public Scrutiny

This infographic is based on CFPS's annual
scrutiny perceptions survey

66% OF WORK PROGRAMMES
ARE FLEXIBLE AND
RESPONSIVE



83% of work
programmes are
member led



Confidence in
scrutiny's ability
to make an impact is



KEY SCRUTINY CONSTRAINTS

- 1 Lack of awareness of scrutiny benefits
- 2 Fitting in the breadth of work
- 3 Resources and funding
- 4 Officer support
- 5 Politics

Is the role of
SCRUTINY
understood?

68% ➔ YES
32% ➔ NO

77% OF COUNCILLORS
rely on officers for
information



*“No President
should fear public
scrutiny of his
program. For from
that scrutiny comes
understanding;
and from that
understanding
comes support or
opposition. And
both are necessary.”
John Kennedy*



Nolan Principles – conduct in public service

- **Selflessness** Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.
- **Integrity** Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- **Objectivity** In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
- **Accountability** Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- **Openness** Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands
- **Honesty** Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
- **Leadership** Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.



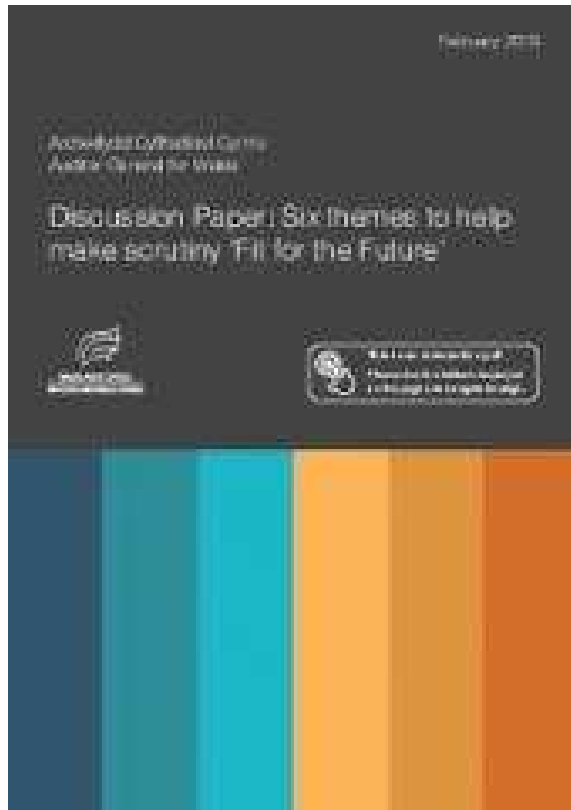
Six steps to better scrutiny in Wales

12 Feb 2019 - 12:00am

A discussion paper and checklist has been launched to help improve the way decision-makers are held to account



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU



Six steps to better scrutiny in Wales

Six steps have been identified to help make scrutiny 'fit for the future.'

Checklist for councillors:

- 1. Know your role**
- 2. Know your powers and what's 'possible' in scrutiny**
- 3. Know what you are trying to achieve**
- 4. Plan your scrutiny work to achieve your aims**
- 5. Design support arrangements to achieve your aims**
- 6. Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of scrutiny activity and make changes based on feedback**



www.alamy.com - BF4NKB

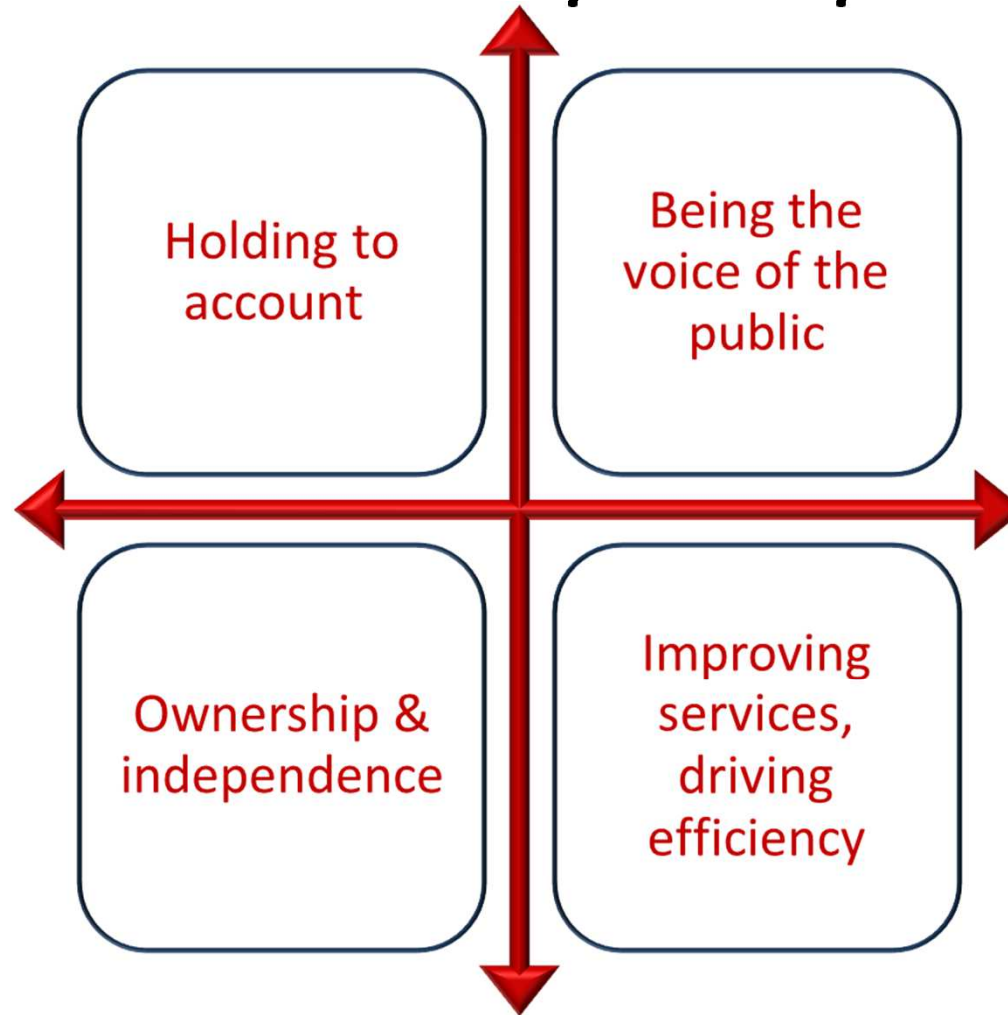


Weak scrutiny and disaster

Your thoughts

1. Why is scrutiny important in your council
2. The main purpose of scrutiny is.....
3. Our best piece of scrutiny this year was.....

The four principles



And what its not for.....



1. It's not a rubber stamp
2. It does not 'serve' the executive
3. It's not a political point-scoring forum
4. It's not the 'opposition'
5. It's not.....

Is there a common understanding of what scrutiny is for ?

Overview & Scrutiny

Powers and responsibilities

Any member of an O&S has the right to refer a relevant matter to the committee.
Except matters concerned with planning and licensing, or vexatious, discriminatory or
not reasonable to be

O&S committees may hold inquiries and produce reports

May require executive members and officers of the authority to appear before them

Individuals from outside the council can be invited, but not compelled to attend

O&S reports must receive a response from the council executive within two months

O&S committees cannot oblige either the executive, the council or external bodies to
act upon their findings



The Seven Scrutiny Superpowers

The power of transparency

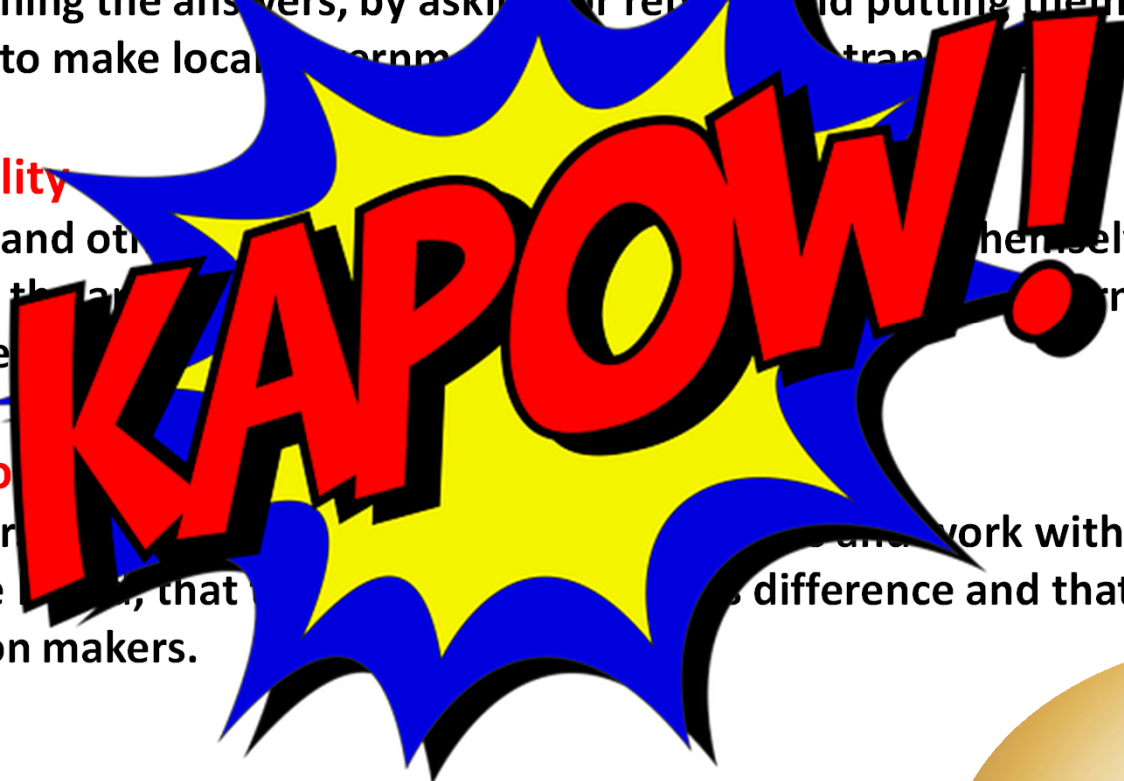
By asking questions and publishing the answers, by asking for reports and putting them in the public domain, scrutiny has the special ability to make local government more transparent.

The power of accountability

By requiring cabinet members and other senior officers to answer questions in public, by asking the questions that the public want the answers to, and by giving out criticism and praise, scrutiny is able to ensure that the public interest is always at the heart of decision making.

The power of participation

By inviting the public and other stakeholders to join in and work with councillors, scrutiny can ensure that people's voices are heard, that they make a difference and that the issues that matter to citizens are acted on by decision makers.



Scrutiny Superpowers



4. **The power of solutions**

By taking time to explore difficult and challenging issues in depth and talking to a wide range of people, scrutiny has the ability to find solutions to the most difficult policy problems.

5. **The power of calling -in**

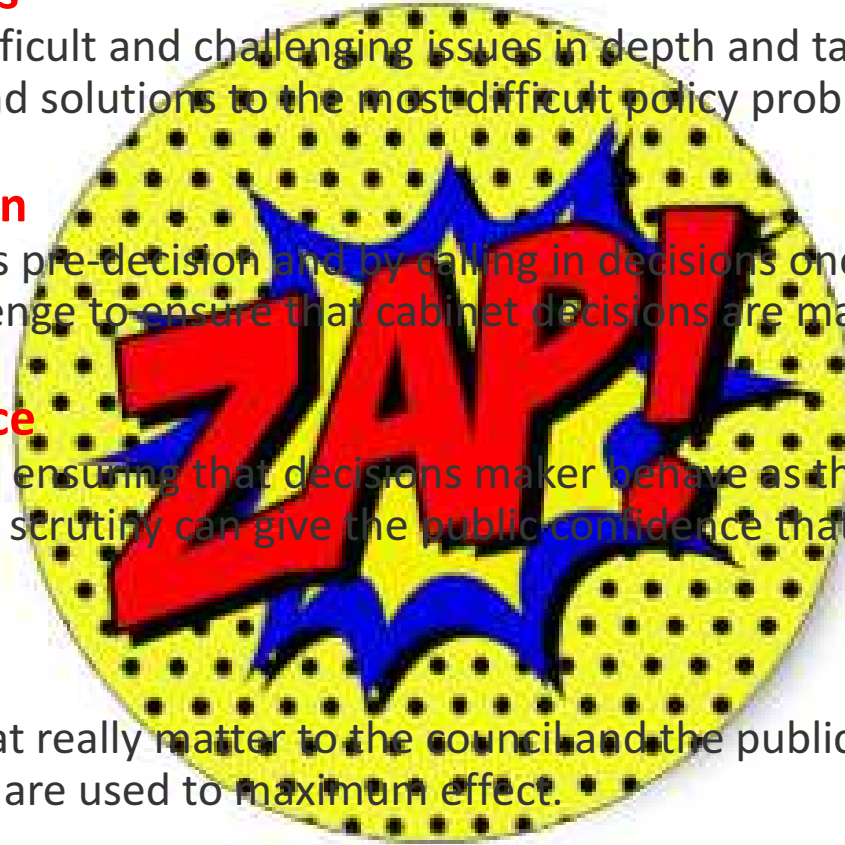
By looking at cabinet reports pre-decision and by calling in decisions once they have been made, scrutiny provides independent challenge to ensure that cabinet decisions are made as they should be.

6. **The power of assurance**

By acting as a watchdog and ensuring that decisions maker behave as they should and that services are delivered as they should be, scrutiny can give the public confidence that the local council operates with integrity.

7. **The power of capacity**

By working on the things that really matter to the council and the public, scrutiny can make sure that all of the resources of the council are used to maximum effect.



Scrutiny Superpowers



Last 12 months for scrutiny

Consider how scrutiny has performed over last year

What has worked / what didn't go so well / why ?

Has the focus been right – did you tackle the right issues ?

Does scrutiny

Has it been effective – have you held to account – shaped and advised ?

Or were you observers and not participants in the council's delivery plans ?

What about the public – how were their views considered and reflected ?

Good scrutiny characteristics

Your key skills as scrutiny members

- Curious minds
- Challenge is good – work on solid lines of enquiry
- Focus on outcomes – what difference will the change make to the resident?
- Focus on value – are the plans economic, efficient and effective?
- Focus on risk and ensuring that there is resilience – are you assured?
- Focus on the system and the organisational development – what needs to change to make this work?
- Focus on the performance and quality – how will you know its working?

Scrutiny independence and authority

- What are you scrutinising – managing the work programme
- Focus on the most important issues
- Not just about ‘holding to account’
- Shaping, advising and enquiring

O&S Area of focus

- Alignment with key council policies, plans and strategy
- Pre-scrutiny
- Review-Scrutiny
- External scrutiny - partners
- Internal Performance and delivery
- Contingency
- Sub committees
- Ad hoc investigations

Putting more in and get more out

- Do some of your own research
- Meet external stakeholders
- Talk to organisations
- Experience the 'front-end'
- Don't just read the report
- Be creative

Task and Finish

Why are T&Fs some of the best examples of scrutiny ?

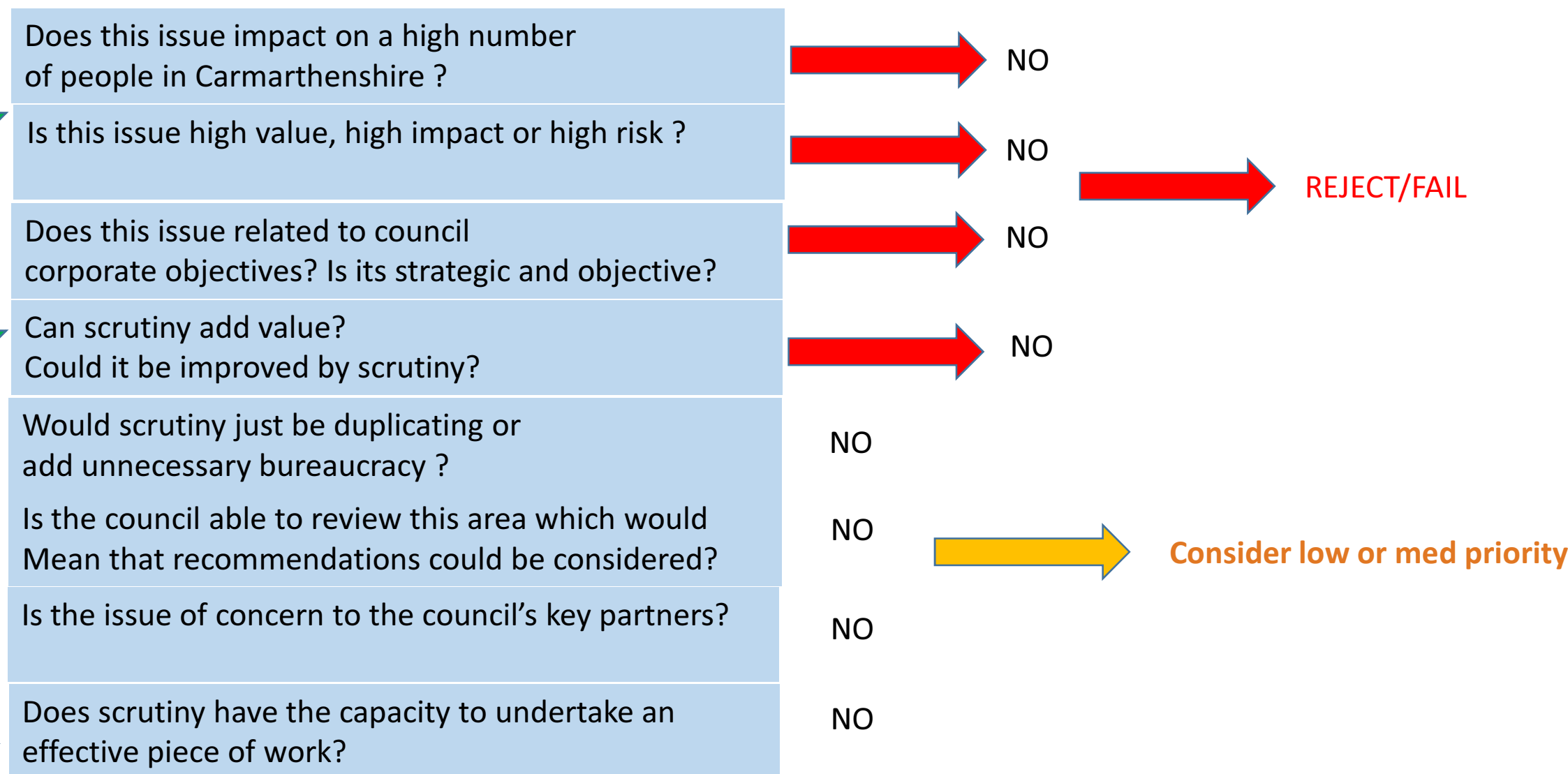
- Aims to take a closer and more detailed scrutiny approach – use appropriately
- Avoid trying to set or own policy – advisory
- Set objective and terms of reference - ringfence
- Set a plan and timescale
- Consider use of officer time and resources
- What's the payback ?
- Use findings effectively, where next

The challenge of getting voices heard

- Members
- Executive / officers
- Public
- Partners
- Stakeholders



Scrutiny programme gateways



UDE IN SCRUTINY PROGRAMME

Scrutiny programme priorities scoring

SCORE	IMPORTANCE TO PEOPLE	IMPACT or VALUE
1	People are concerned	Some impact, but manageable
2		
3		
4		
5	Of crucial importance to people	Will dramatically alter things

Scrutiny tools

IMPORTANCE

		IMPACT				
		0	1	2	3	4
IMPORTANCE	4	AMBER		GREEN		
	3	Possible topic for scrutiny but not a priority		Priority topic for scrutiny		
	2	Reject topic for scrutiny		Possible topic for scrutiny but not a priority		
	1	RED		AMBER		

Scrutiny outcomes – what do we want to achieve

- Greater transparency and accountability – shining a light
- Added challenge to improve decision
- Test suitability
- Generated ideas – recommendations
- Offer solutions – where weakness may exist
- Avoid unintended consequences – uncover weakness
- Provide public voice

Applying all of this in Carmarthenshire CC

Three questions to consider:

- Is there a shared understanding of the role of scrutiny across the Executive, Scrutiny Committees and officers?
- Think ahead to 12 months time – what would scrutiny success look like for you and your committee. What would you like to have achieved?
- What do you need to get there?

Lines of Enquiry and questioning skills

Closed Questions

Closed questions invite a short focused answer – yes/no

Q. Have you considered all the possible alternatives A. Yes

Closed questions are usually easy to answer – the choice is limited

Open Questions

By contrast, to closed questions, open questions allow for much longer responses and therefore potentially more creativity and information.

Q. What alternatives have you considered and what was considered important

A. More detail and information required

Lines of Enquiry and questioning skills

Remember that it is equally about listening

Lines of Enquiry and questioning skills

Recall Questions

Requires respondent to search memory

What was the income you planned last year from car park charges ?

Process Questions

Requires the respondent to consider, rationalise and process an answer

How will increased charges affect business in the town centre ?

Lines of Enquiry and questioning skills

Probing Questions

'Why do you think this is the case?'

'What does that mean?'

'What are your options for solving the problem?'

'Could you be more specific?'

'Who is involved? Who are the key stakeholders?'

'What needs addressing?'

'Is there an option that you have not yet considered?'

'How have you managed to put up with the situation to date?'

'How would an objective observer describe this situation?'

'What do you care most about in this situation?'

'What are your concerns?'

Lines of Enquiry and questioning skills

Leading Questions

Leading questions need to be used with care because they imply that there is a right answer to the question.

They are useful in situations where you want to try to influence people's thinking. For example:

'So wouldn't it have been better to...?'

'Don't you think we should have...?'

Lines of Enquiry and questioning skills

Hypothetical Questions

Hypothetical questions allow you to gauge how someone might act or what they think about a possible situation. They are effective in getting the person to think up and discuss new ideas or approaches to a problem. For example:

'What would you do if shoppers thought that price was too high and went elsewhere?'

'What would happen if retailers started to notice a big drop in their takings because of this?'

Lines of Enquiry and questioning skills

Using funnelling – taking a line of enquiry (check with chair first)

"Tell me about why you are planning to close this facility."

"What are the likely consequences for users?"

"Did you consider alternatives?"

"Will users have alternatives?"

"So what is this change actually going to deliver for residents?"

What can we all do ?

- Reflections
- Personal goals
- Questions