

Meeting of the West Midlands Scrutiny Network 3rd October 2018

1. New Government Scrutiny Guidance- summary for members OSPB

The instigation for this is the Government's Select Committee review. The new Guidance is in the drafting stage.

Ministers have committed to refresh guidance by end of the year.

Ministry keen to see evidence and input re the Guidance

Thoughts in the room

- Scrutiny to report to full Council not Executive – favoured by Ministers, what would this mean, might it slow scrutiny down?
- Not enough Officer support to Scrutiny. Minister will say it is up to each LA.
- Access to information. The issue here seems to be it is as good as the question asked by Scrutiny.
- Scrutiny of External Bodies. This needs to be improved. Anything to strengthen would help.
- Chairing: opposition or leading party? Most favoured elected by committee itself.
- Items not yet in the public domain - on pink paper - commercial sensitivity. The private report test should always be applied. What harm will come from sharing. Harm is the only valid reasons so should be the starting point making everything in public domain if possible.

What should be in the new Scrutiny Guidance?

- Importance of performance exception reporting.
- Pre-decision scrutiny much more effective - earlier the better
- Budget - quarterly reporting
- Q and A for each item coming to Executive which has to be answered by Executive before Executive meeting.
- Greater powers to call in Contractors/LEP/Schools/Academies/ Areas of Health/Arm's length Trusts/Children's Trust Companies - anyone funded by public
 - Write into contracts that the contractor has to be willing to come before scrutiny - but caveats allowed re marketing strategy, pricing etc.
- Scrutiny - work - more members should do the work guided by a specialist officer
- Identify which member of the SLT is supporting scrutiny?

2. Discussion topics

1. How to publicise work done

2. **How to get /encourage public feeding in** : proactive invites as appropriate, variety of people is an indicator doing right - not just one group
3. **Need to webcast all panels**. Scrutiny should be in public domain. Public has a right to know what is behind decision making. Not right that Scrutiny cannot get information which can be obtained under Freedom of Information (FOI).
4. **Link to other authorities** Sharing work plans or actual Scrutiny topics being done. Check what is happening in West Midland Scrutiny. Health - we certainly should be looking wider seeing what is going across the Region.