

Working in Hackney Scrutiny Commission

Overview and Scrutiny was introduced following [Local Government Act 2000](#). Local authority Overview and Scrutiny has been strengthened down the years through a variety of legislations. These include:

- The Police and Justice Act 2006
- The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
- The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009
- Health and Social Care Act 2012.

Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) in local authorities is the process for holding the Executive to account, ensuring transparency in decision making and encouraging engagement by residents in the way local services are provided.

Traditionally this focused solely on the operations of the council, either through pre-decision scrutiny (where scrutiny committees review the production of formal plans and strategies etc) or reactive reviews that look at the impact and performance of any existing council service. Increasingly the role of elected Members through Overview and Scrutiny focuses on decisions taken not just by the council but by local partners as well, across the whole range of services in the public, private and voluntary sectors. The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) – the national body for scrutiny - devised the following four principles for Effective Overview and Scrutiny.

1. **Provide challenge** to policy makers and decision makers in the role of a 'critical friend'.
2. **Enable** the voice and concerns of the public
3. Be carried out by '**independent minded governors**' who lead and own the scrutiny role
4. **Drive improvement** in public services locally.

Membership of O&S commissions is politically proportionate. Scrutiny is non-adversarial¹ and non-partisan². The role of scrutiny is to be a "Critical friend" challenging decision makers within LBH as well as external agencies.

¹ Non-adversarial means there is a spirit of co-operation, a passive stance, the parties are willing to reach a mutually satisfying resolution to a problem. There is persuasion rather than coercion.

² not partisan means not affiliated to, influenced by, or supporting any one political party

REMIT

The Commission scrutinises the provision of services covering the prosperity of the borough and development, in particular economic development, employment and large scale schemes.

Title	Scope	Key partners and local organisations
Working in Hackney Scrutiny Commission	<p>Employment and Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment and training opportunities • Ways into Work • Apprenticeships • Libraries element of Public Realm • Adult learning element of Education and Schools • Voluntary sector <p>Regeneration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting Town Centres • Supporting Business • Macro economic development. <p>Public Realm (Strategic transport business licensing and planning)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p>Hackney Council directorates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executives Directorate • Neighbourhoods and Housing Directorate <p>Partnerships: Economic and Development Partnership Board</p>

CABINET MEMBERS AND CABINET MEMBER QUESTION TIME

The Commission's remit covers the following Cabinet Member's portfolios:

- **Cllr Guy Nicholson, Cabinet member for planning, business and investment.** Councillor Guy Nicholson has lead responsibility for: planning, performance and policy, economic development, strategic infrastructure development, town centres, Olympics legacy, markets, licensing policy (working with chair of licensing) and culture.
- **Councillor Carole Williams, Cabinet member for employment, skills and human resource.** Cllr Williams has lead responsibility for: employment strategy and partnerships, ways into work, apprenticeships, human resources and organisational development, trade unions, adult Learning, post 18 skills and equalities.

- **Cllr Feryal Demirci, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet member for health, social care, transport and parks.** Cllr Demirci has lead responsibility for: adult social care, older people, supporting people, health and wellbeing board, public health and the relationship with the wider NHS, health devolution and integrated commissioning, mental health, public realm and streetscene, strategic and local transport, liveable neighbourhoods, parks, clean air and tackling pollution, parking control

In the municipal year the Commission holds question time sessions with the Cabinet and Senior Officers to ask questions about performance and decision-making within the Council related to their portfolio areas. The Cabinet Members are asked to come and answer questions on 3 pre-agreed areas. This is similar to Select Committee operations in the House of Commons, same format. All Cabinet Members and the Mayor have to attend at least one of these a year.

Last year WiH held 2 cabinet question time sessions with Cllr Nicholson and Cllr Williams.

For Cllr Nicholson the session covered:

- Economic Strategy
- Evaluation, measures and identification of success
- Balance of job types and benefits of large corporate organisations moving into the borough.
- Key commitments and deliverables by May 2018.

For Cllr Williams the session covered:

- Jobs strategy and the assessment of success
- Evaluation, measures and identification of success
- Key commitments and deliverables by May 2018.

RECENT REVIEW

The Commission's time is mainly taken up with its review and the Commission usually carries out one major review each year. Once the review report is agreed it is sent to Cabinet for an 'Executive Response' and this goes on the Cabinet Agenda. Some scrutiny reports and their responses are also debated at Full Council.

When reviews are completed there is a system of recommendation trackers whereby officers are required to come back after 6 months to demonstrate the progress made and to provide updates on the implementation of the recommendations from the review.

The Working in Hackney Scrutiny Commission was established last year and completed its first review ***The Future of the World of Work and Skills in Hackney.***

This review set out to explore trends in the changing labour market, the changing skills system and how it all impacts on London's economy. The Commission wanted to examine the impact that macro level changes will have locally and to

identify the policies and practices that will help overcome the challenges. In the review the Commission looked at the support which will be needed within the current Skills system to enable local residents to progress and change careers if they wish.

Attempting to look five years ahead the Commission explored the changes in demand in the labour market the trend resulting in changes such as Brexit, climate change and our ageing population. The review examined the nature of employment, the likely changes in the business environment, workforce and the nature of work itself. What the impact will be of automation and robotics and its impact on supply. This review focused on the employment trends that were amplified in Hackney.

SITE VISITS AND OTHER APPROACHES TO EVIDENCE GATHERING

The commission meetings are just one way in which the commission collects evidence for its in-depth reviews. Members also go on site visits and use other formats such as focus groups or observing groups or activity. The latter is more appropriate if Members are speaking to service users on sensitive issues which would be difficult for them to discuss in an open committee. The notes recorded from external site visits are placed in the agendas.

OTHER DISCUSSION ITEMS IN 2017/18

In the Commission's first year they decided to hold a series of thematic discussions in 2017/18.

- For the thematic discussions and engagement with local businesses the commission started the year with a discussion about the council's current approach to economic and community development.
- A discussion about the employment and skills service focused on the vision of those services.
- The employment support and the integration of employment support initiatives discussion covered the employment support available for people who are not job-ready and how the different employment support initiatives in the borough worked together or could work together better.
- The local economic assessment update was a presentation outlining the most recent data for Hackney covering population, work and the economy.
- There were two Cabinet Member Question Time Sessions with the Cabinet Member for Planning, Business and Investment and the Cabinet Member for Employment Skills and Human Resources.
- The update from the Economic and Community Development Board took a new approach and used the first update session to provide some 'critical friend' challenge to the development phase of the new *Economic Development Strategy*. This was carried out via a Workshop format, breaking into groups to analyse sections of the emerging strategy document.

LIFECYCLE OF A REVIEW – A BRIEF GUIDE

The schematic below shows the processes involved in the completion of a typical scrutiny review.

