

# Scrutiny Essentials

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# Welcome and Objectives

- To discuss the role of scrutiny and what this means for Stafford BC
  - Discuss scrutiny in practice:
    - Work programming
    - Different methods of conducting scrutiny
    - Questioning skills
  - To identify strengths and potential areas for development
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# Group discussion

## What is scrutiny?

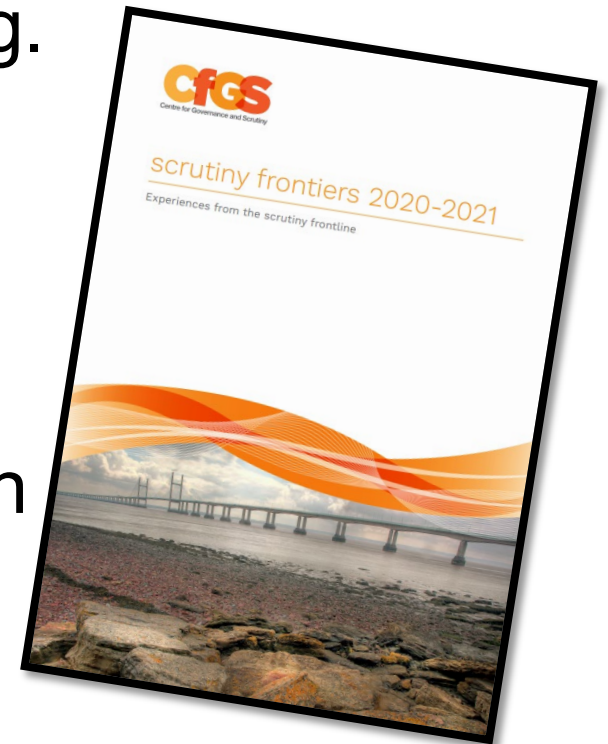
## What works well for us?

What in our culture & processes are we proud of?  
What good practice can we build upon?



# Background

- Local Government Act 2000
- Required to have ‘scrutiny’ to enable rest of council to scrutinise the executive e.g. decisions and policies
- Statutory Power and Duties
- Each Authority has developed its own structures and ways of doing things



# Scrutiny in Stafford

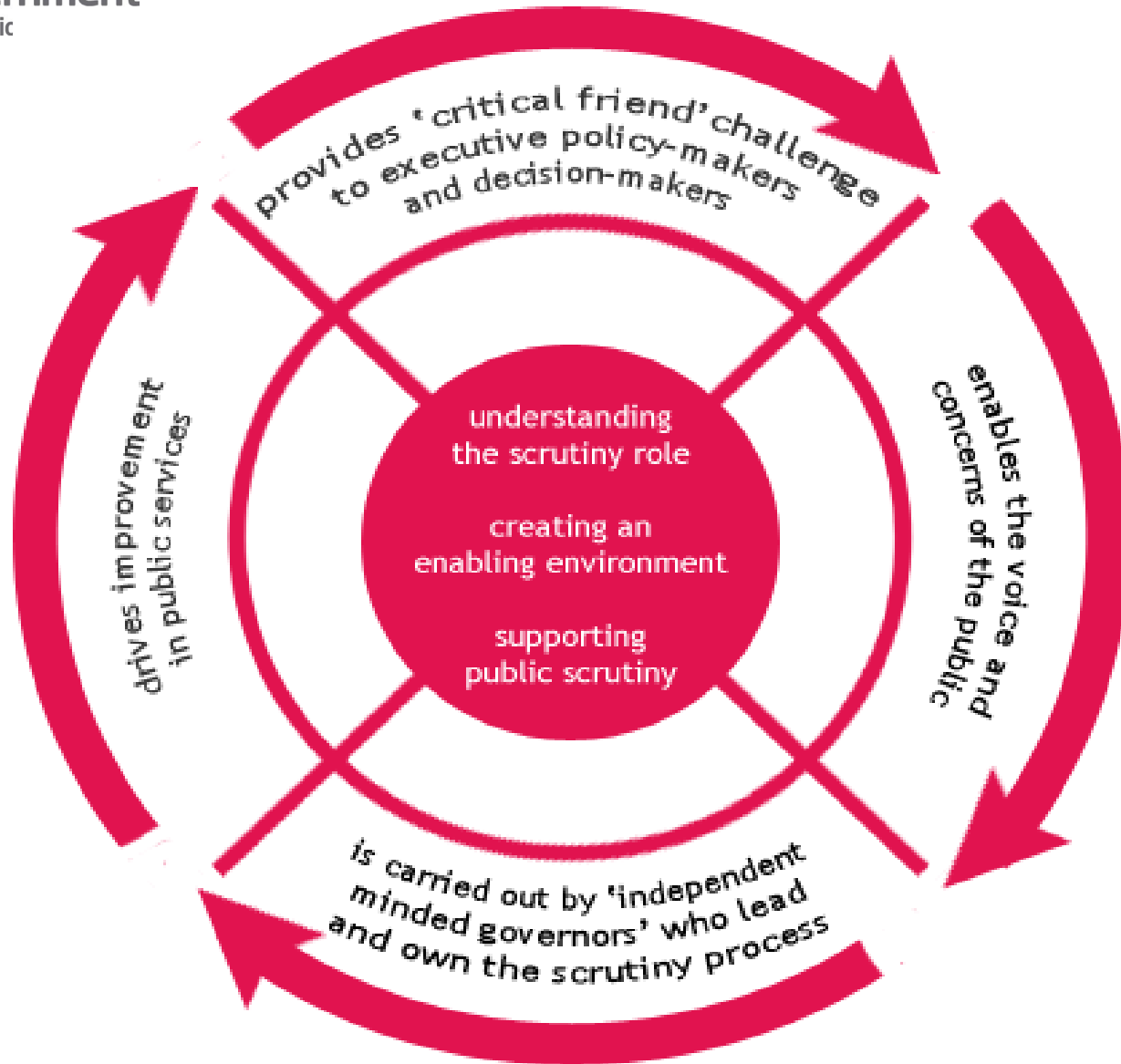
**Community  
Wellbeing  
Scrutiny  
Committee**

**Economic  
Development  
and Planning  
Scrutiny  
Committee**

**Resources  
Scrutiny  
Committee**

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# The 4 principles of effective scrutiny



# Scrutiny roles exercise

Examine the potential scrutiny roles and tasks listed on the handout

**Which are legitimate roles for overview & scrutiny and which are not?**

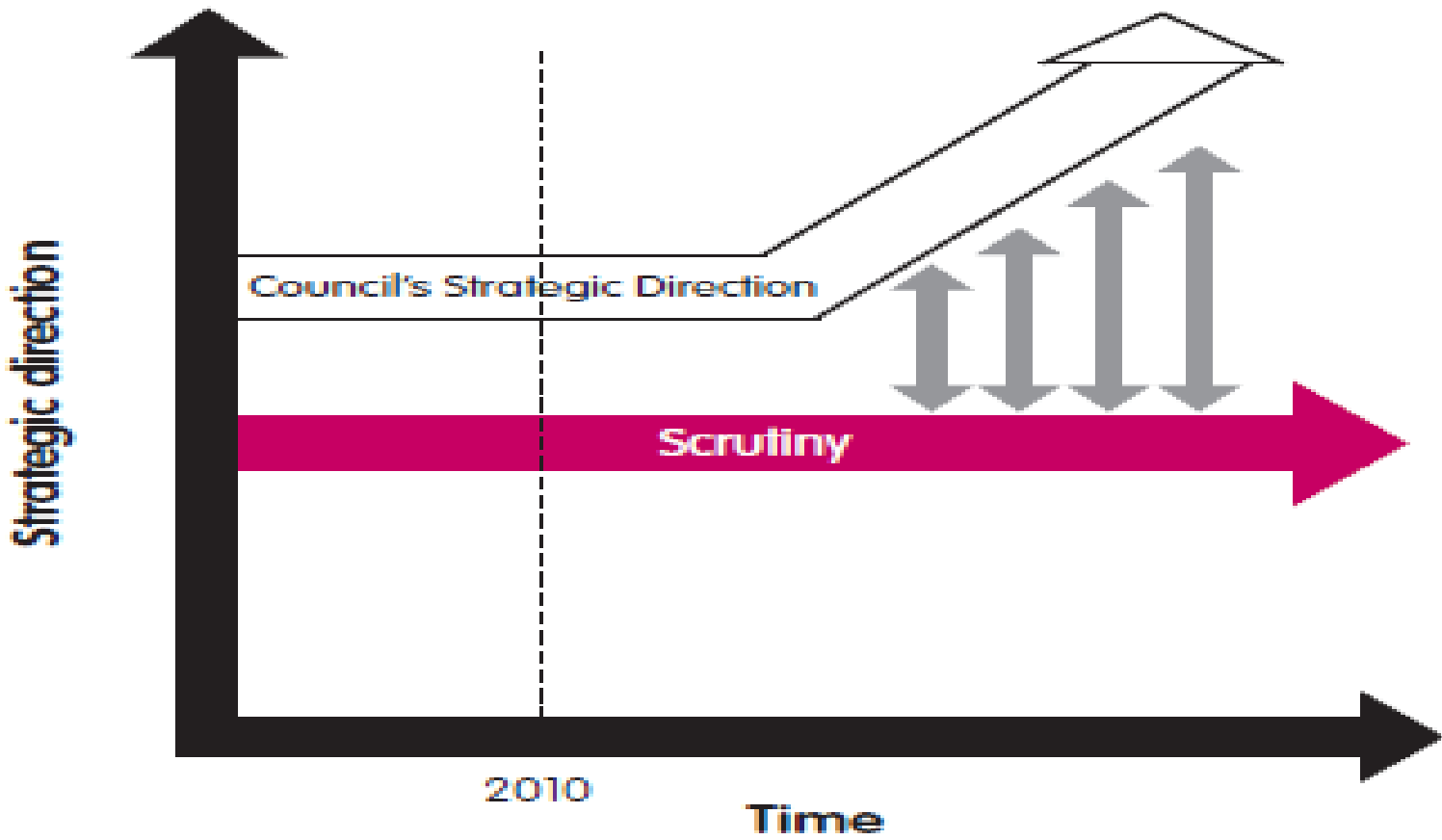
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# Roles for Overview & Scrutiny

- **Holding the Executive to Account – *internal challenge***
  - **Policy Review**
  - **Policy Development**
  - **Performance management**
  - **Partnership Scrutiny**
  - Ensuring Corporate priorities being met
  - Budget Scrutiny
  - Area Scrutiny
  - Role in monitoring/revising constitution
  - Engaging partner organisations
  - Engaging the public
  - Engaging the media
  - Providing satisfying roles for non-executive/'backbench councillors
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# Mind the Gap



# Scrutiny making a difference

“Improving lives of local people through improved public services”

- ✓ Feedback from the public shows that they think there has been service improvement
  - ✓ Work has helped achieve corporate or partnership priorities
  - ✓ Return on investment, demonstrating impact and outcomes in financial terms
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# The Work Programme

- Key management tool for scrutiny
  - Limited member and officer time
  - Certain items in the plan will need ‘lead in’ times
  - By taking a forward look, it’s possible to time scrutiny activity to coincide with or feed into key activities of the Council
  - Key vehicle for ensuring scrutiny is member–led
  - Organised well it will ensure balance across scrutiny roles
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# Work programme

Ensuring you're looking at the right priorities  
(mind the gap)

## Discussion:

- where would you get ideas for topics to scrutinise?
  - what criteria could you use to guide the prioritisation of scrutiny topics?
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# Prioritisation Criteria

- Potential impact for significant section(s) of the population
  - Matter of general public concern
  - Key deliverable of a strategic and/or partnership action plan
  - Key performance area where the council needs to improve
  - Legislative requirement
  - Corporate/service group priority (corporate plan issues)
  - Member gut instinct (member interest/skills)
  - Can add value to the topic area
  - Deliverability
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# In-depth reviews and other methods for conducting scrutiny

**Reports**

**Focus groups**

**Deep dive**

**Interviews**

**Site visit**

**Surveys**

**Private meetings**

**Peer review**

**Task Groups**

# Once the agenda is published



- **Research**
  - **Questions**
  - **Recommendations**
  - **Testing ideas out**
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# Different types of question

Open questions

**Deliberately seeks longer answers**

Probing questions

**Seeks further information in an investigative way**

Closed questions

**Requiring short, factual answers (e.g. “yes” or “no”)**

Clarifying questions

**Seeks to clarify a fact or opinion**

Opinion finding

**Asks for an opinion**

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# Example questions – good or bad?

1.	Did you achieve what you set out to do?
2.	Why are you not doing what you said you would in your plan?
3.	It's obvious that there's only one option here, don't you agree? Why did you include the other options? What did the public have to say?
4.	What will happen if you don't make the savings you're forecasting?
5.	What difference has the new legislation made to your day to day role?
6.	It's a right mess, isn't it?
7.	I'm really in favour of Option B, it seems to be the only sensible solution. What are your thoughts?
8.	You said that fire and rescue services have a role in improving public health. Can you tell us more about that?
9.	When will we be able to tell if the policy change has been a success?
10.	Why is this now feasible, when it was considered overambitious in the past?

# Evidence based recommendations

Is the recommendation SMART?

- Specific
  - Measurable
  - Achievable
  - Relevant
  - Timely
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# Next meeting

- Recommendations tracker

<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Recommendations Or Action</b>	<b>Who is the recommendation to? (e.g. Cabinet)</b>	<b>Response or review date</b>
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## Identifying Actions

What is one thing you will do  
as a result of attending this  
session?

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# Reflections, next steps and close

Contact details:

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