

Executive and Scrutiny Ethos Protocol

Protocol for how Executive and Scrutiny will work
together

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1. The Cumberland Values: Our Ethos

The Cumberland Plan, the council plan for 2023-27, identifies values that drive delivery of excellent public services:

- Be compassionate
- Be innovative
- Be empowering
- Be ambitious
- Be collaborative

Commitment to these values is reflected in the way that Members work together. This protocol establishes how the ethos for the relationship between Executive and Scrutiny Members aligns to the Cumberland values.

2. The Purpose of Scrutiny

The Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities (2019) recognises the importance of building an effective overview and scrutiny function and says that it should:

- Provide constructive 'critical friend' challenge;
- Amplify the voices and concerns of the public;
- Be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role; and
- Drive improvement in public services.

Scrutiny Committees do not have decision making powers; they consider strategically important issues and make recommendations to Executive.

We will **be empowering and ambitious**. We value the role that Scrutiny can play in delivering excellent public services and in addressing challenges that we may encounter as Cumberland Council develops. We will ensure that Scrutiny Members are empowered to offer critical challenge and operate independently. We will be ambitious to see scrutiny performing well, engaging early in policy development on key issues and offering Executive recommendations and challenge that provoke discussion. This will contribute to robust decisions, stronger policies and better services.

3. Scrutiny Powers

In legislation Scrutiny can:

- Require information from the council, which includes access to information that is confidential.

Scrutiny Members must treat information that they receive for scrutiny with care and respect the confidentiality of any private information or discussions.

Executive Members will ensure that Scrutiny is provided with the information that it requires in a timely manner.

- Require attendance from officers and councillors.
When Executive Members and Senior Officers are invited to attend Scrutiny to present an item within their remit, there is an expectation that they will attend. Scrutiny Committees will strive to workplan effectively and give reasonable notice to attendees of agenda items.
- Require responses to their recommendations.
Recommendations from Scrutiny to the Executive do not have to be complied with, but should be considered and a response to the recommendation provided that goes beyond “noting”.

We will **be collaborative**. Executive and Scrutiny collaboration will be stronger if scrutiny powers are widely understood and requests or recommendations from scrutiny are welcomed as evidence of good governance in action. Scrutiny be clear about the input that they require from Executive and Officers in order to ensure that reports and discussions support effective scrutiny.

The Scrutiny Development Plan will set out detail on how recommendations and responses between scrutiny and executive will be communicated and managed effectively.

4. Our Approach to Achieving Good Scrutiny

We will **be compassionate**. Scrutiny is an apolitical forum; political insights and perspective are welcomed, but we will not make political points or be influenced by party politics. Discussions in Scrutiny Committees may be robust and challenging due to subject matter or differences in opinion. But discussions will always be respectful, recognising the benefits of diversity.

Scrutiny Committees are responsible for setting their own workplans, this process will be transparent and will seek to engage with Executive and Senior Officers.

We will **be innovative**. We will seek to learn from good practice and expert advice in developing good scrutiny, with a commitment to continuous development. We will reflect and learn from experience. We will be creative and pro-active in developing a strong working relationship between Executive and Scrutiny Members.

5. How We Will Achieve Our Aspirations

The Cumberland Council Constitution sets out the legal and procedural aspects of the work between Executive and Scrutiny.

We have identified a number of tools that will be important in the achieving the relationship between Executive and Scrutiny that is set out in this protocol:

- Training – particularly for Scrutiny Members, but also for Executive Members and Senior Officers that support Scrutiny.
- Communication and engagement between Scrutiny, Executive and Senior Officers – promoting good organisational culture for effective scrutiny.
- Strategic focus for scrutiny – Scrutiny engages effectively with the biggest challenges and opportunities for the council.

The detail of how we use these tools is set out in our Scrutiny Development Plan.