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FULL COUNCIL REPORT

Date Written	11 th June 2015
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Service Area	Democratic Services
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
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Annual Scrutiny Report - 2014 / 2015

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT: To apprise Council and other interest parties of the role of the Scrutiny Committees, and their work during the 2014/15 municipal year.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Each year the Council's Scrutiny Committees produce an Annual Report. This report includes a retrospective insight into the work undertaken by each of the Council's Scrutiny Committees during the municipal year.
- 1.2 Scrutiny (as Overview and Scrutiny is more commonly known) is a Councillor-led statutory function and was introduced by the Local Government Act 2000. In a nutshell Scrutiny acts as the Council 'watchdog' or critical friend and helps to develop policy, improve service performance and holds the Executive (Cabinet) to account for its decisions.
- 1.3 Scrutiny is a way of achieving open and democratic accountability for the provision of public services. The aim of scrutiny is to improve public services and quality of life for local residents. Its main value is in holding the Council and other service providers to account, rigorously monitoring performance and informing and influencing the actions of the Council and its partners.
- 1.4 All local authorities operating a Cabinet and Scrutiny model have a Cabinet (Executive) made up of the Leader of the Council and up to nine other members (*At MTCBC it is the Leader plus six other members*). All executive decisions (i.e. those needed to implement the Policy Framework and Budget approved by the Council) are taken by the Cabinet. Scrutiny unlike Cabinet is not a decision making body, but rather an influencing body, and makes recommendations to Cabinet (or Council) when necessary.

1.5 The Centre for Public Scrutiny¹ (CfPS) has established four principles of good scrutiny and these are to;

- **Effective Scrutiny should be a ‘critical friend’ to decision makers, external authorities and agencies.** It should challenge policy development and decision making in a robust, constructive and purposeful way while developing a partnership with external agencies and authorities.
- **Effective Scrutiny should reflect the voice and concerns of the public and its communities.** It should ensure an ongoing dialogue with the public and represent and engage diverse communities to ensure that their voice is heard and responded to. It should have open and transparent processes with public access to information.
- **Effective Scrutiny should be carried out by “independent minded governors” who take the lead and own the Scrutiny process on behalf of the public.** It should be independent from decision makers, impartial and active, engaging constructively with the executive, officers and advisers. It should champion the value of good scrutiny and facilitate measured deliberation and consensus building with the aim of supporting public accountability and community leadership.
- **Effective Scrutiny should drive improvement and make an impact on the delivery of public services.** It should aim to promote community well-being and quality of life, providing strategic quality assurance and co-ordinated reviews of service performance, policies, plans and budgets.

1.6 Based on these four principles, a number of key functions make up the core business of scrutiny and ideally scrutiny work should aim for a balance between these different roles. These key functions of scrutiny include:-

- **Policy Review & Policy Development** - Policy review involves the in-depth scrutinising of existing council policies to examine intended policy outcomes and whether these outcomes are being achieved. In addition to reviewing existing policies and services, scrutiny has a role in developing and making recommendations for new policy. This is often at the request of the executive or full council but may also be a response to any third party request or under scrutiny’s own initiative.
- **Holding decision-makers to account** - For the quality and appropriateness of decisions; or the performance of the council against local and national standards; and for the improvement of individual services and departments. Scrutiny does not have the power to instruct decision-makers. However it can “call-in” a decision that has been taken but not yet implemented and put forward arguments for the executive to reconsider.

¹ The Centre for Public Scrutiny promotes the value of scrutiny and accountability in modern and effective government and supports non-executives in their scrutiny role. Founder members (LGA, CIPFA and LGiU)

- **Performance Monitoring** - Performance management is used as a tool to drive continuous improvement and improve efficiency in all service areas. The scrutiny committee's role is to ensure that they provide challenge and support; ensure that cabinet portfolio members and officers are focusing on priorities; and identify and ask the right appropriate questions.
- **External Scrutiny** - The Local Government Act 2000 gives scrutiny committees the power to examine and make recommendations on matters which are not the responsibility of the local authority but which nevertheless affect the local authority's area or its inhabitants.

2.0 SCRUTINY COMMITTEES AND MEMBERSHIP












2.1 All non-executive (non-Cabinet) Councillors are eligible for membership of the scrutiny committees.

2.2 The Council has four Scrutiny Committees. These are:-

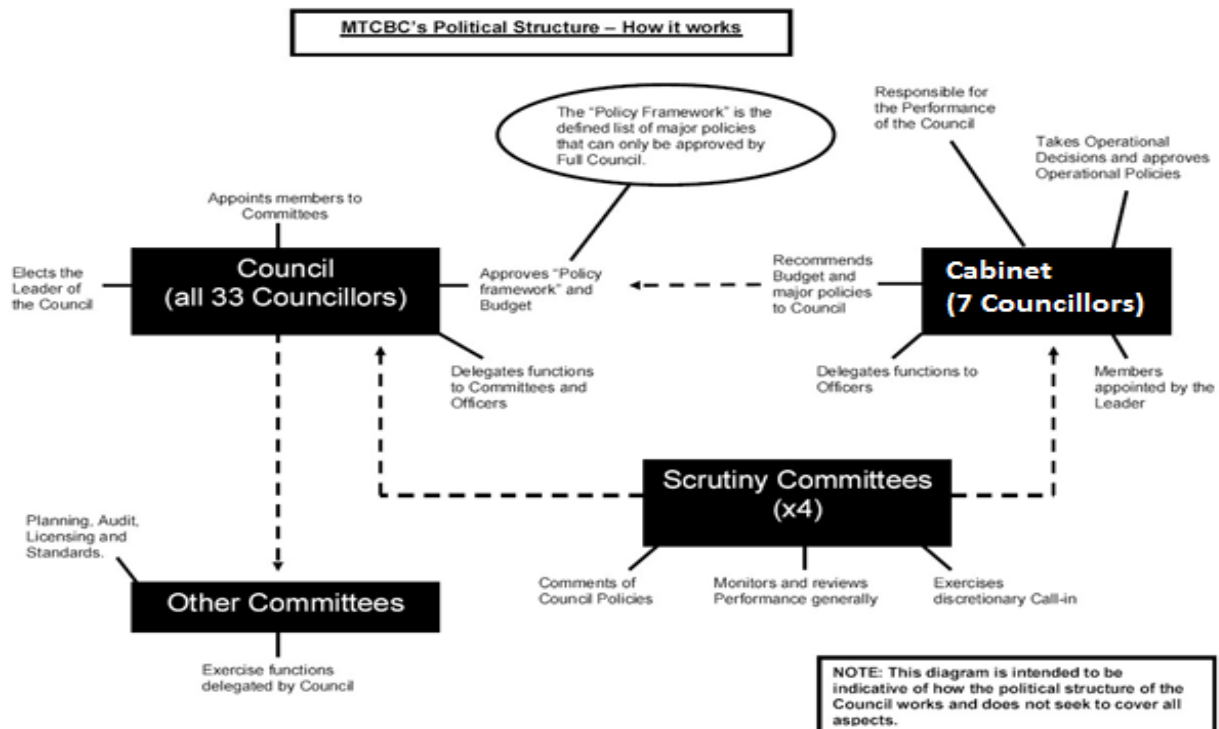
- The Chief Executives Scrutiny Committee*
- The Customer Services Scrutiny Committee
- The Schools Scrutiny Committee
- The Social Services & Social Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

*The Chief Executives Scrutiny Committee also undertakes the role of the Authority's Crime and Disorder Committee; and also has the responsibility of scrutinising the Merthyr Tydfil Local Service Board.

2.3 Each scrutiny committee has seven Councillors. Joining Councillors on the scrutiny committees are co-opted members who provide invaluable assistance to the work of the scrutiny committees and the Council as a whole. The membership of each committee is shown below (as per 30th April 2015).

Chief Executives (Also the "Crime & Disorder Committee") (2.00pm start)								<u>Co-opted Members</u> Vacant Mrs Alison Harris Mrs. Nicola Mahoney	Public – non voting Public – non voting Voluntary Sector – non voting
Customer Services (2.00pm start)								<u>Co-opted Members</u> Vacant Mr Robert Holdaway Mr Brian Lewis	Public – non voting Public – non voting Voluntary Sector – non voting
Schools (4.00pm start)								<u>Co-opted Members</u> Mr David Lewis Vacant Mr Alan Rees Mrs Teresa Bradley Vacant Vacant Mrs Maureen Harris	Gov. Rep MTGA (Non voting) Public (non voting) Public (non voting) Voluntary Sector (non voting) Parent Gov - Sec./Special (voting) Parent Gov – Primary (voting) Diocesan Rep. (voting)
Social Services & Social Regeneration (3.30pm start)								<u>Co-opted Members</u> Vacant Mr Christopher Brazier Vacant	Public – non voting Public – non voting Voluntary Sector – non voting

- 2.4 Each committee has one Voluntary Sector Co-opted member as nominated by Volunteer Action Merthyr Tydfil (VAMT). There are also two publicly appointed co-opted members per scrutiny committee. The Schools Scrutiny Committee also appoints a Merthyr Tydfil Governors Association representative, Parent Governor Representatives and Church Representatives.
- 2.5 The diagram below shows how scrutiny “fits into” the political structure at Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council



3.0 **WORK UNDERTAKEN BY THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES FOR THE PERIOD MAY 2014 TO APRIL 2015**

- 3.1 **The Chief Executives Scrutiny Committee.** (Also undertakes the role of the Crime and Disorder Committee and includes scrutiny of the Local Service Board within its remit). The Committee is currently looking at / has looked at the following issues:-

- LAESCYP - Corporate Requirements Progress Report 2013
- A Review and Evaluation of Member Scrutiny 2013-14
- Merthyr Tydfil Local Service Board Annual SIP review
- MTCBC Sickness Absence Management
- Community Safety Update - priorities, performance and key challenges
- Estyn Inspection -Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) Recommendation 7 update
- Self-Evaluation and Service Challenge Process
- Corporate Plan 2013-17 Quarter 4 Progress Report
- Performance Monitoring using Report Cards
- Education Matters - Lessons Learned
- WAO - Statutory Recommendation and Proposals for Improvement

- Merthyr Tydfil Local Service Board Update
- Task & Finish Group - Annual Performance Report
- Consultation and Engagement
- Defining Success for 2017
- Transformational Change Programme
- Cwm Taf Joint Engagement Strategy
- Scrutiny of the Local Service Board – Development of Partnership Structure and Arrangements
- Budget Monitoring 2014/15 - Mid Year Position
- Self-Evaluation and Service Challenge Process
- Annual Self-Evaluation Review – Summary Statement
- Local performance data for Community Safety
- Budget Proposals 2015/16 to 2017/18
- Estyn feedback from monitoring visit
- Performance Update - Q1 & Q2 Corporate Plan & the Outcome Agreement
- LAESCYP PIAP Annual Impact Update
- Equality, Welsh Language and Armed Forces Covenant update
- Auditor General's Annual Improvement Report 2013/14
- Corporate Plan Performance Report, Quarter 3 update
- Review of Merthyr Tydfil Local Service Board's Information Strategy 2014/15
- Defining Success for 2017 – Performance
- A Review and Evaluation of Member Scrutiny 2014-15

3.2 **Customer Services Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee is currently looking at / has looked at the following issues:-

- A Review and Evaluation of Member Scrutiny 2013-14
- Budget Implications of Alternative Service Delivery (ASD) Model of Working
- MTCBC Waste Services update
- Welsh Public Library Standards
- Performance Monitoring 2013/14 (Q3) - Responses from Directorate
- Waste Services Update
- Leisure Trust and ASD - Update on current position
- Self-Evaluation and Service Challenge Process
- Performance Monitoring using Report Cards
- Corporate Plan 2013-17 Quarter 4 Progress Report
- Parking Overview - update on current position and issues
- Housing Services Update (Strategic Housing, Housing Solutions & Homelessness)
- Economic Regeneration - An Overview
- One Stop Shop - Progress & Future
- Strategic Plans Overview ahead of the WAO Corporate Assessment
- Heolgerrig Traffic Calming - An Update
- Defining Success for 2017
- Transformational Change Programme
- Performance Monitoring Update
- Budget Monitoring 2014/15 - Mid Year Position
- Waste Services Communication Plan (Draft)
- Destination Merthyr Tydfil Presentation
- Self-Evaluation and Service Challenge Process

- Budget Proposals 2015/16 to 2017/18
- Corporate Plan Performance Report, Mid-year Update
- Alternative Service Delivery Model update
- Leisure Trust update
- Libraries update
- Corporate Plan Performance Report, Quarter 3 update
- Corporate Asset Management Plan
- Defining Success For 2017 - Top Performing
- A Review and Evaluation of Member Scrutiny 2014-15

3.3 **Schools Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee is currently looking at / has looked at the following issues:-

- Heolgerrig Community School; and Human Resources Department Support to Schools
- Task & Finish Group Update (Learning for Life)
- A Review and Evaluation of Member Scrutiny
- Reducing Young People not in Education Employment Training (NEETs)
- Lessons Learned – Heolgerrig Community School and Pen-Y-Dre High School
- Post Inspection Action Plan Progress Report
- Schools Categorisation
- Early Years & Childcare Partnership Pre School Strategy
- Annual Report on School Governing Bodies
- Self-Evaluation and Service Challenge Process
- Corporate Plan 2013-17 Quarter 4 Progress Report
- Education Matters - Lessons Learned
- Analysis of results from Foundation Phase to Key Stage 4
- Outcomes of the review of the provision for pupils with ALN and the provision for the inclusion of all pupils in the County Borough
- Defining Success for 2017
- Transformational Change Programme
- Schools Budget Update
- Self-Evaluation and Service Challenge Process
- LAESCYP Key Question 1 Self-Evaluation
- School Inspection Outcomes 2013/14
- Inclusion and Wellbeing (Attendance)
- Nursery Education Proposal
- Budget Monitoring 2014/15 - Mid Year Position
- Categorisation of Schools 2014
- Corporate Plan Performance Report (Q1 & Q2)
- Budget Proposals 2015/16 to 2017/18
- St Aloysius RC Primary School attendance at meeting
- Key Stage 4 Standards 2013/14
- Performance of Vulnerable Learners
- Pupil Led Funding & School Balances / MTFPs
- LAESCYP Self-Evaluation - Key Question 2
- Service Level Agreement Review
- Corporate Plan Performance Report, Quarter 3 update
- Defining Success for 2017 – Performance

- A Review and Evaluation of Member Scrutiny 2014-15
- Transformational Change Programme - An update
- Pupil Led Funding Review Update
- Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for Local Authority Services to Schools
- PIAP March 2015 - Recommendations 2 and 3

3.4 **Social Services & Social Regeneration Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee is currently looking at / has looked at the following issues:-

- A Review and Evaluation of Member Scrutiny 2013-14
- Draft Annual Report on Social Services 2013 / 2014
- Outcome of the Fostering Inspection 2013/2014
- National Scrutiny Developments
- Community Services Budget Recovery Plan 2014/2015
- Reducing Young People not in Education Employment Training (NEETs)
- Annual Report on Social Services 2013/2014
- Early Years & Childcare Partnership Pre School Strategy
- PIAP R7 - Youth Support Services
- Looked after children 2013/14
- Self-Evaluation and Service Challenge Process
- Performance Monitoring using Report Cards
- Corporate Plan 2013-17 Quarter 4 Progress Report
- Defining Success For 2017
- Transformational Change Programme
- Looked After Children Quarterly Report
- CSSIW inspection of Safeguarding and Care Planning for Looked After Children and Care Leavers
- Adult & Community Learning Impact of budgetary reductions.
- European Social Fund Cohesion
- Self-Evaluation and Service Challenge Process
- Budget Monitoring 2014/15 - Mid Year Position
- Feedback Letter - Estyn Monitoring Visit 6th to 8th October 2014
- Progress update against Post Inspection Action Plan
- Corporate Plan Performance Report, Mid-year Update
- Budget Proposals 2015/16 to 2017/18
- Communities First Update
- Corporate Plan Performance Report, Quarter 3 update
- Progress update following CSSIW inspection of Safeguarding and Care Planning for L.A.C. and Care Leavers
- Defining Success for 2017 – Performance
- A Review and Evaluation of Member Scrutiny 2014-15

3.5 **Joint Scrutiny Committee**

A joint scrutiny committee comprising members from the Schools Scrutiny Committee and the Social Services and Social Regeneration Scrutiny Committee undertook an investigation into Learning for Life - Basic Skills², and a report was submitted to Cabinet in April this year.

² Scrutiny Report: Learning for Life – Basic Skills. Submitted to Cabinet 22nd April 2015. Link to report <http://democracy.merthyr.gov.uk/documents/s28627/Committee%20Report.pdf>

The recommendations were accepted by Cabinet and Scrutiny will continue to monitor the delivery of the Early Years Strategy (pre-school 0 to 3 years); and the Adult Community Learning Partnership.

The Authority must continue to ensure that plans deliver improved outcomes and ensure the involvement of parents and carers in improving language, communication and basic skills for children and young people in the County Borough.

4.0 CHAIRPERSON COMMENTS

4.1 Chief Executives Scrutiny Committee

(Chair, Cllr Tom Lewis)



“Local Government continues to change at a dramatic rate with ever increasing pressures on budgets. This Authority has worked hard this year to help safeguard the services that matter the most to the public and the most vulnerable in our society, whilst recognising the drastically reduced finances within which the Council now has to operate.

In the face of declining budgets and the necessity of continued austerity for the Council, Scrutiny’s role in monitoring the transformation programme will continue to be undertaken in a way that provides a robust check and balance. The work of the Chief Executive’s Scrutiny Committee will include monitoring the corporate developments being led by the Chief Executive, particularly in relation to self-evaluation and value for money.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow committee members and officers for their support and guidance over the past 12 months.”

4.2 Customer Services Scrutiny Committee

(Chair, Cllr Darren Roberts)



“Over recent years Local Government has faced unprecedented cuts to budgets resulting in a reduction to the services that are provided to the good people of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough. Scrutiny has a very important part to play to ensure that we deliver these services at the best possible level and to ensure that we are getting value for money across the Directorats.

During the past twelve months, the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee has continued to develop its work programme that was set at the beginning of the municipal year, monitoring strategic plans and performance.

The work of the Scrutiny & Audit Chairs Liaison Group has helped consolidate the effectiveness of the existing scrutiny and audit committees, to identify

effective practice and to begin to share this between Directorates with cross-fertilisation of referrals and ideas.

It is important that the public are able to contribute to the work of Scrutiny and this is an area that we as scrutiny members need to encourage and develop. All the scrutiny committees welcome the involvement of residents, businesses and community groups in the County Borough in our scrutiny work.

May I take this opportunity to thank all members of the committee, Cabinet Colleagues, the officers and partners who have contributed to the work of the scrutiny committee throughout the year; can I also thank the Scrutiny and Democratic Services departments for the invaluable support and guidance."

4.3 **Schools Scrutiny Committee**

(Chair, Cllr Lisa Mytton)



"The schools scrutiny committee has continued to explore opportunities for more effective scrutiny in the past year. Sound advice, guidance and training has been utilised to help members use their skills in holding officers, cabinet members and schools to account. Our work programme focused on key areas of our schools development programmes, improving attendance and attainment in the borough as well as maintaining a sharp focus on the Post Inspection Action Plan and its progress.

We have had the opportunity to meet many School Heads and Chairs of Governors who have given a deeper insight into some of the challenges facing schools in the county borough and also allowing us to celebrate some of the highlights and success stories. Looking forward we are building a detailed, strong forward work programme and we will continue to support our Director and Chief Education Officer along with our schools in reaching their ambitious targets for the children of Merthyr Tydfil.

A stronger approach to collaborative scrutiny continues this year and effective progress is being made on joint work via the 'Scrutiny and Audit Chairs Liaison Group' including more ideas on engaging with members of the public, communities groups and external partners.

Once again my thanks to all members of this committee, officers and schools who have contributed over the last 12 months "

4.4 **Social Services & Social Regeneration Scrutiny Committee**

(Chair, Cllr Bill Smith)



"The Social Services and Social Regeneration Scrutiny Committee has had a busy year and committee members have been involved in a number of pieces of work as shown in this report.

Scrutiny will continue to contribute in a constructive way to support the Council in meeting the challenges that are being faced. A key achievement for the authority will be to maintain and deliver

improvements to services, whilst meeting the required savings targets.

I also chair the “Scrutiny and Audit Chair’s Liaison Group”, which has now been operating for just over 12 months. This is a very productive forum where the Chairs of the scrutiny committees and the Audit committee meet to discuss matters such as training requirements, crosscutting items, scrutiny development, work programme, to name a few. I hope that the Group will continue to develop.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who attended or contributed to this scrutiny committee over the past year. Input from members, representatives of organisations, and officers has been invaluable.”

5.0 A REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF MEMBER SCRUTINY 2013-14; AND SCRUTINY SURVEY 2015

Review and Evaluation of Member Scrutiny 2013-14

- 5.1 During 2013/14 a review of scrutiny was undertaken which presented a number of recommendations for the development and improvement in scrutiny practices. A follow up review³ was undertaken recently and a number of recommendations were accepted by Cabinet. The recommendations can be seen if you follow the link as per the reference at the bottom of the page.

Scrutiny Survey 2015

- 5.2 A survey was undertaken during April 2015 as a way further developing the scrutiny function at MTCBC. The results of the document can be found in the background papers documents.
- 5.3 The purpose of the survey was to provide an opportunity for Cabinet members, Scrutiny Councillors, Scrutiny Co-opted members and Senior Officers to comment on the scrutiny process; to help identify any strengths and areas for development; and assist in further improving and developing scrutiny.
- 5.4 Three separate surveys were sent out to the following:-
- **Scrutiny Councillors and Co-opted Members** (13 responses received out of 33 requests = 39% return)
 - **Non Scrutiny Councillors** (i.e. Cabinet members x7, and other Councillors who are not scrutiny committee members) (5 responses received out of 10 requests = 50% return)
 - **Senior Officers of the Council** (Heads of Service and above) (12 responses out of 30 requests = 40% return)

Some extracts, findings and comments from the surveys:-

³ “A Review and Evaluation of Member Scrutiny 2014-15 and Recommendations for 2015/16” – submitted to Cabinet 5th May 2015 <http://democracy.merthyr.gov.uk/documents/b5223/Additional%20Item%20-%20Review%20and%20Evaluation%20of%20Member%20Scrutiny%2006th-May-2015%2016.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=9>

5.4.1 **Scrutiny Councillors and Co-opted Members** (13 responses received out of 33 requests = 39% return)

- 12 (92.3%) say they understand the roles of scrutiny.
- 8 (61.5%) agree that the Scrutiny function is able to exert influence over the Cabinet/Directors and/or Senior Management.
- 12 (92.3%) agree that the Scrutiny Committee(s) they sit on has control and ownership of its work programme.
- 12 (92.3%) agree that the scrutiny function has improved over the past two years
- 9(69.2%) are satisfied with the amount and level of training that has been provided.
- 10(76.9%) feel that Scrutiny Committee agendas and work programmes reflect a workload that can realistically be carried out to a high standard
- No more than 1 respondent disagreed with any of the questions / statements in the survey.

What does MTCBC scrutiny do best? Responses include:-

- ...we are asking relevant questions and have a good understanding of how the Authority works. We are also asking for senior officers to come before the committee and give details about whatever issue are being reviewed.
- Hold the Cabinet and Directorate to account. Make sure the Council's priorities are met. Monitor budgets
- (scrutiny) allows for independent challenge to portfolio members and senior management
- reviewing council policy and performance and is always prepared to make difficult but positive observations and recommendations

What can MTCBC scrutiny do better? Responses include:-

- I think the other scrutiny committees should consider this (meet every 4 weeks). It would also allow more time to look at a subject in depth.
- Engage more with stakeholders and external organisations.
- More in depth training would provide members with the confidence on the parameters of challenge
- Although improved, the use of questioning to deepen the quality of answers provided

Are there any changes to the scrutiny function at MTCBC that you would suggest to ensure that scrutiny continually improves and develops, and importantly has a positive impact? Responses include:-

- I think that training is a good option to support continual improvement and would help us to look more strategically at the functions that will make the Council more sustainable for the near future; an example would be to look at what our policies are for supporting better methods of delivery of services which have community benefits.
- No, the introduction of webcasting is a move in the right direction so that questions and answers are noted.
- Regular meetings between scrutiny chairs to develop best practice.
- Better Attendance

- I think that, since the last election, the scrutiny function has developed beyond recognition. My suggestion is that we continue to develop along these lines

Both at MTCBC and indeed nationally, scrutiny could be better at engaging the public, and also making people more aware of the scrutiny process. How do you think the profile of scrutiny at MTCBC could be raised and residents encouraged to participate? Responses include:-

- I use Facebook to ask for public opinion , we have tried to utilise the contact magazine but maybe a notice in the local paper asking for ideas/suggestions etc may be more forthcoming
- Again I think it's about having direct contact with those receiving and involved with the service..
- We could as a committee better engage with VAMT and other Networks and Forums so that we have a better idea of the impact our work has on the community.
- More public consultation. Social media should be used more because the traditional methods of communicating are dying.
- Webcam scrutiny sessions to be publicised. Also scrutiny committees held in public venues so we go the community not rely on them coming to us. Use of webcam sessions shown to students to make tomorrow's electorate more aware of process.
- Open forum once a year to which the public could be invited to provide suggestions for work agenda, or some other mechanism.
- A raised profile should certainly be an aspiration, in my committee the school's themselves must be engaged.
- We have had ads in Contact etc but people difficult to engage

5.4.2 **Non Scrutiny Councillors (i.e. Cabinet members x7, and other Councillors not scrutiny committee members)** *(5 responses received out of 10 requests = 50% return)*

- 5(100%) say they understand the roles of scrutiny.
- 4(80.0%)I feel that the Scrutiny function is able to exert influence over the Cabinet/Directors and/or Senior Management.
- 4(80%) feel that Scrutiny function contributes to the delivery of Council Priorities.
- 5(100%) feel that Scrutiny is achieving positive outcomes for the people of the County Borough.
- 5(100%) feel that the scrutiny function has improved over the past two years

What does MTCBC scrutiny do best? Responses include:-

- The development of a forward work programme and the engagement of committee chairs together is a leap forward.
- Schools scrutiny is by far the best developed panel within the council. Questioning is more relevant and gets to the heart of the issues. This is because of the quality of reports from schools staff
- Challenge policies and decisions.
- Schools scrutiny is perhaps the more effective. It seems to be more focused than some of the others. They certainly hold the executive to account through searching questions.

What can MTCBC scrutiny do better? Responses include:-

- Training of individual members on having the confidence to ask questions. Perhaps training on reading papers with full understanding
- A far more consistent approach. Better quality information by Heads of Service's
- Attendance is poor and sometimes there are no questions
- Review how its work programme is set. Encourage more positive involvement in this by scrutiny chairs, and cabinet members. Consider more in depth work through setting up of ad hoc committees. Be more positive in holding some of the Cabinet members to account.

Are there any changes to the scrutiny function at MTCBC that you would suggest to ensure that scrutiny continually improves and develops, and importantly has a positive impact? Responses include:-

- Continuous training and development for members is essential
- Ensure good attendance? Increase member size?
- I believe that a thematic approach might be better but with only two years of this Council left I believe it would be unwise to make such a radical change at this time.
- Could consideration be given to one of the committees – possibly that dealing with governance - be the first among equals?
- The number of committees should always reflect the corporate structure for clarity. Currently just a glance at the structure will tell you which scrutiny committee is aligned to it

Both at MTCBC and indeed nationally, scrutiny could be better at engaging the public, and also making people more aware of the scrutiny process. How do you think the profile of scrutiny at MTCBC could be raised and residents encouraged to participate? Responses include:-

- Public engagement could form the basis of a good PhD. Sorry but it is a good topic for a working group
- No idea!
- I think the public in general don't understand how any committees of the council work. I don't think they know anything about scrutiny, what it does and that they could be involved. It would need a massive publicity exercise to improve this and I'm not sure how many people would read it/participate.
- This is difficult to answer. This is probably a corporate issues about the way the Council engages generally.
- Difficult. possibly webcasting is worth trying though I remain to be convinced many will watch keep plugging the scrutiny role in Contact magazine

5.4.3 Officers of the Council (12 responses out of 30 requests = 40% return)

- 12(92.3%) say they understand the roles of scrutiny.
- 6(46.2%)I feel that the Scrutiny function is able to exert influence over the Cabinet/Directors and/or Senior Management.
- 2(15.4%) don't feel that the Scrutiny function is able to exert influence over the Cabinet/Directors and/or Senior Management and their comments include:
Reports are agreed prior to Scrutiny so how can they influence decisions
Often Reports are agreed by Cabinet prior to Scrutiny. Decisions have already been made so how can Scrutiny exert influence over the Cabinet etc?

- 9(69.2%) feel that Scrutiny function contributes to the delivery of Council Priorities.
- 3(23.1%) feel that Scrutiny is achieving positive outcomes for the people of the County Borough.
- 4(30.8%) do not feel that Scrutiny is achieving positive outcomes for the people of the County Borough. A comment is:-
There doesn't appear to be any feedback or follow up to any questions raised. Questions often come across as scripted as there is no fluidity to the question and answer exchange.
- 7(53.8%) feel that the scrutiny function has improved over the past two years
- 4(30.8%) do not feel that scrutiny is operating effectively in the County Borough. Comments:-
I think there are too many committees and the Council lacks an overarching scrutiny. They are too service • focused as opposed outcomes focused

What does MTCBC scrutiny do best? Responses include:-

- Provide an opportunity for a topic to be analysed. Obtain a different perspective
Provide a forum to explain issues to councillors in more depth than a report does
- Provide challenge to the decision making process. Ensures that due process is adhered to.
- Provides a critical friend function within the council
- It provides a review and audit role but do not believe that that is its role.

What can MTCBC scrutiny do better? Responses include:-

- Change its structure to have fewer Scrutiny committees with more distinct responsibilities - remove overlap
- Restructure Scrutiny Committees Performance Appraise the Members Scrutiny and Members to engage in the functions and wider Council priorities - Improvement, Efficiencies etc.
- Standard of questioning.
- Understanding the links to the area scrutinised to corporate plan, budget, SIP. Tangible outcomes.
- Needs to have more in-depth knowledge of the issues and be prepared to ask more searching questions.
- Perhaps the members could ask more relevant questions

Are there any changes to the scrutiny function at MTCBC that you would suggest to ensure that scrutiny continually improves and develops, and importantly has a positive impact? Responses include:-

- I never know whether I should be in attendance or not on a regular basis. I'm not clear whether I only go when someone specifically tells me they are covering something that is part of my service plan or should go regularly
- Need to constantly support scrutiny to understand the agendas and linkage so that they can explore services performance and intended impacts more thoroughly.
- Focus on key issues. Make a link with Budget Board, Transformational Steering Group and Self-Evaluation.

Both at MTCBC and indeed nationally, scrutiny could be better at engaging the public, and also making people more aware of the scrutiny process. How do you

think the profile of scrutiny at MTCBC could be raised and residents encouraged to participate? Responses include:-

- Offer £20 for public attendance and participation to the first 10 people registered
- I think the committees themselves need to be more dynamic before you look to engage with the public or public perception may slide even further. Once committees are functioning as they should then perhaps incentives could be negotiated. Involving the youth cabinet to diversify the committee and bring a new angle to the discussions.
- Public engagement events. Holding the meetings at different places / times considering how public could contribute / access to raise questions.
- Maybe hold some meetings in CF venues?
- Defined communications strategy for scrutiny function - work with Corporate Communications
- Provide a mechanism where views can be captured

5.6 Some very good ideas and matters for further consideration have emanated from the surveys. We will continue to provide training events in order to develop the skills of Councillors and indeed officers. Public participation (see 7.0) below is poor and some good suggestions for public involvement has come out of the surveys.

5.7 It is important that all those involved in Scrutiny, indeed the Authority as a whole, consider the recommendations as per the scrutiny review; and also the results of the scrutiny survey in strengthening and taking the scrutiny function forward.

6.0 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMMES 2015/16

6.1 At the time of writing this report the 2015/16 scrutiny work programmes are being developed. The work programmes are aimed at ensuring scrutiny maintains a strategic and co-ordinated approach based on major areas of Council and partner organisations' activity.

6.2 The work programmes can be found by following this link:-
<http://www.merthyr.gov.uk/English/CouncilAndDemocracy/Performance/Pages/Scrutiny.aspx>

6.3 The selection of review topics for the work programmes takes account of what is of direct and significant interest to residents, and what would be timely, relevant, and likely to add value. Please note however that the work programmes will necessarily be subject to continual refinement and updating.

7.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT SCRUTINY

7.1 Whilst Scrutiny members, Cabinet members and Council officers contribute regularly to scrutiny activities, we also welcome public attendance and input at our meetings.

- 7.2 The involvement of local residents, community organisations and partners is an important part of the scrutiny process and scrutiny committees are committed to responding to the views and concerns of residents. We would like to encourage residents and organisations to attend and contribute to scrutiny work in securing the best possible public services. The intention is to make sure that we are dealing with the matters that are most important to the community and are delivering quality services.
- 7.3 The Constitution⁴ allows for members of the public to attend and speak at scrutiny meetings. With this in mind the Scrutiny & Audit Chairs Liaison Group has introduced a simple guide⁵ how this can work in practice. The guide provides details on how to for example to submit a written representation on an agenda item and the time limit for the member of public to put their case. This hopefully will allow members of the public the opportunity to tell Councillors directly about the things that concern them.
- 7.4 If members of the public feel that there is a topic that scrutiny should look at, they can let us know by completing a [Scrutiny Request Form](#) or by contacting the Scrutiny section on 01685 725464; or email scrutiny@merthyr.gov.uk

8.0 CHANGES TO SCRUTINY AT MTCBC

- 8.1 A review of the scrutiny structures has taken place and a report was submitted to Council on 17th June 2015. The changes to the scrutiny committee structure are as follows for 2015/16:-
- Chief Executive's Scrutiny Committee to be known as:
Governance, Performance, Business Change and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee
 - Schools Scrutiny Committee to be known as:
Learning and LAESCYP Scrutiny Committee
 - Social Services and Social Regeneration Scrutiny Committee to be known as:
Social Services Scrutiny Committee
 - Customer Services Scrutiny Committee to be known as:
Neighbourhood Services and Public Protection Scrutiny Committee
 - A new Scrutiny Committee to be established to be known as:
Regeneration, Planning and Countryside Scrutiny Committee
 - There will also be a **Joint Scrutiny Committee**, which will be chaired by the Chair of the Governance, Performance, Business Change and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee and will comprise all Members of the 5 scrutiny committees.

⁴ MTCBC Constitution - Citizens Rights 2.03.01 (c). **Participation.** Citizens have the right to participate in the Council's question time, speak at meetings of the Cabinet (when agended), and other Committees with the permission of the Chairperson and contribute to investigations by the Scrutiny Committees.

⁵ ["Scrutiny at MTCBC – Public Speaking Arrangements"](#)

9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

9.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

10.0 SINGLE INTEGRATED PLAN AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT SUMMARY

10.1 The Single Integrated Plan and Sustainability Impact Assessment has been completed. No recommendations other than that the report is for noting has been put forward. However Scrutiny does undertake investigations and reviews of Council Services and any reports submitted in those circumstances may impact upon the Corporate Plan and Single Integrated Plan and as such would require more assessment. No negative impacts have been identified.

11.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

11.1 No additional Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is required.

12.0 RECOMMENDATION(S) that

12.1 Council receives the report and notes its contents.

GARETH CHAPMAN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
<i>Title of Document(s)</i>	<i>Document(s) Date</i>	<i>Document Location</i>
As per any page references.		

Consultation has been undertaken with Executive Board in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.

