

T&W LOGO

PHOTOS

# SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09

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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2008/09 annual report on the operation of scrutiny in Telford & Wrekin.

The following pages set out briefly both the local and national context within which scrutiny operates in Telford & Wrekin, summarises the main activities of scrutiny over the last 12 months and looks forward to the planned scrutiny work in 2009/10.

We also focus on how you can make suggestions to scrutiny for future reviews and there is a suggestions form at the back of this report that you can fill in and send to us.

We hope you find the content interesting and informative and welcome your suggestions for topics for future scrutiny reviews.

Cllr. Derek White  
Chairman of the Scrutiny Leadership Board

## THE PURPOSE OF SCRUTINY

The concept of scrutiny in local authorities was formally introduced by the Local Government Act 2000. There are 54 elected members on Telford & Wrekin Council, but just 8 of these make up a Cabinet which is the main decision making body of the Council. This places a lot of responsibility with a small number of elected members.

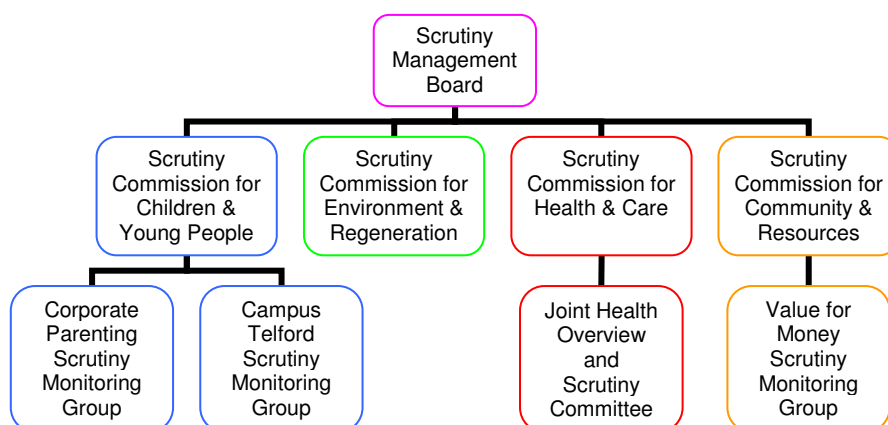
Scrutiny is a way for other members of the Council who are not Cabinet Members to monitor, review and, where necessary, challenge the decisions, policies and services of the Cabinet to make sure that people in Telford & Wrekin are getting the best services possible within the resources available to the Council. Scrutiny can look at any Council service, and can also look at services provided by organisations other than the Council where they impact on local people.

The Centre of Public Scrutiny has identified four key principles that underpin effective scrutiny:

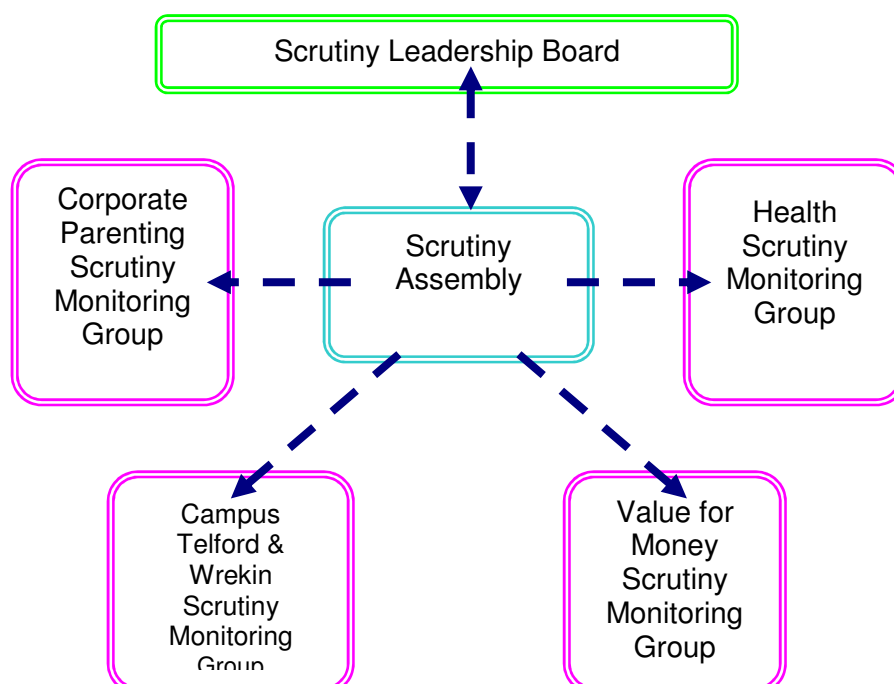
- Effective scrutiny should be a “critical friend to Council executives, external authorities and agencies. It should challenge policy development and decision making in a robust, constructive and purposeful way while developing a partnership with external agencies and authorities;
- Effective scrutiny should reflect the voice and concerns of the public and its communities. It should ensure an ongoing dialogue with the public and diverse communities where the public voice is heard and responded to. It should have open and transparent processes with public access to information.
- Effective scrutiny should take the lead and own the scrutiny process on behalf of the public. It should be independent from the executive, legitimised by the Council and should have adequate public representation and political balance that is representative of the current political groups involved.
- Effective scrutiny should make an impact on the delivery of public services. It should promote community well-being and improve the quality of life, providing co-ordinated and strategic reviews of policy and service performance in line with strategic objectives.

## SCRUTINY AT TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

The scrutiny function at Telford & Wrekin underwent a re-structure in January 2009 as a result of a review of scrutiny arrangements, undertaken by the then Scrutiny Management Board. The former structure included a Scrutiny Management Board which was made up of 4 Scrutiny Chairman and 4 Vice Chairman. Its role was to scrutinise cross cutting issues, review and improve the way scrutiny operated and to hear call-ins. In addition there were four Scrutiny Commissions reflecting the departmental structure of the Council plus four scrutiny sub groups which focused on particular key issues for the Council.



Following the review, the scrutiny structure was changed to align with the Council Priorities and to emphasise the need for scrutiny members to scrutinise external services as well as those the Council provides. It also allowed members to scrutinise services across all priority areas.



The **Scrutiny Leadership Board** is made up of 6 members and is politically balanced. All 6 members are appointed for a 2 year period. The Chairman is an opposition group member appointed by the opposition group members on the Scrutiny Leadership Board for a 2 year period. Collectively, the Scrutiny Leadership Board is responsible for scrutiny of the Council's overarching objective of Transforming Telford & Wrekin. Each scrutiny lead member takes responsibility for one of the Council's other Community Priorities.

The main tasks of the Scrutiny Leadership Board are to have overall responsibility for ensuring scrutiny is effective, to plan, approve and oversee delivery of the scrutiny work programme and to undertake reviews of strategic issues. The Scrutiny Leadership Board also considers call-ins, councillor calls for action and referrals of issues to consider as part of the work programme.

The **Scrutiny Assembly** consists of all members who are not a member of the Cabinet or a Cabinet Assistant. The Mayor cannot be a member of the Scrutiny Assembly but may attend and participate in any meetings if he or she wishes. All other members and scrutiny co-optees of the Council will be a member of the Scrutiny Assembly.

The Scrutiny Assembly holds three main meetings each municipal year, but the majority of scrutiny work is undertaken outside of the formal Scrutiny Assembly meetings by way of a range of flexible working arrangements which are described later in this report:

- Standing sub-groups
- Spotlight reviews
- In-depth reviews
- Special Interest meetings.

**Standing Sub-groups** are dedicated to specific service areas or issues and enable members to build up a good knowledge base from which to scrutinise, and enable in-depth scrutiny of these issues. The members of each sub-group decide their own work programme. We have four standing sub-groups of the Scrutiny Leadership Board which look in detail at particular key issues:

- Corporate Parenting
- Campus Telford
- Value for Money
- Health Monitoring

All scrutiny assembly members are invited to take part in a work programme event which will seek to capture and prioritise the issues members wish to investigate over the coming twelve months for the 2009/10 work programme. This took place in January 2009 and is described in detail under section “looking forward to 2009/10” later in this report. Once these issues have been agreed upon, they can be undertaken in one of the three ways set out below.

**Special Interest meetings** are one-of meetings that give scrutiny members the opportunity to receive information and ask questions on a particular issue or service area. They will be called for work programme items which have not scored in the top 12 and therefore are not subject to in-depth review. A Lead Scrutiny Member may also call a Special Interest meeting for issues that arise during the year that were not on the original scrutiny work programme.

**Spotlight Reviews** are short reviews with a maximum of 2 meetings in addition to the meeting to agree terms of reference. The second meeting is select committee style with all witnesses that members wish to speak to invited to participate. The third meeting is to discuss conclusions and recommendations. If further details are identified, these will be referred to Scrutiny Leadership Board for possible inclusion in the scrutiny work programme.

**In-depth Reviews** are detailed reviews that are likely to take a number of months to complete and are used for more complex issues where we might have to talk to a wide range of people and do other research such as finding out what other Councils do, or surveying the public. In-depth reviews take a lot of time to complete so we only undertake a small number in any one year. Generally the Scrutiny Leadership Board members will take the lead on those reviews that fall within their priority remit.

## CO-OPTEEES

The Scrutiny Leadership Board has the ability to invite members of the public to participate in scrutiny activities as co-optees. This has the added benefits of providing a lay person's view on services and brings additional expertise in other professional fields /careers to strengthen the effectiveness of the scrutiny process.

From the beginning of scrutiny's inception we have included statutory co-optees in the scrutiny process to consider education matters: two parent governors and two diocesan representatives on the Scrutiny Commission for Children & Young People. In addition we appointed 2 health co-optees following the extension of scrutiny powers to look at health matters to our Scrutiny Commission for Health & Care and we also appointed Head Teacher co-optees representing secondary and primary schools.

However, following a review of the benefits of co-option it was agreed by the Scrutiny Management Board in February 2008 to recruit more co-optees to take part in other parts of scrutiny activity. Following a very successful recruitment campaign in March 2008 we recruited a further 9 co-optees, bringing the total number of co-optees to 14. Some of the co-opted members represent particular groups, for example, older people, parent governors and the Young People's Forum. Other co-opted members do not represent any particular group but bring with them particular experience or knowledge.

Except for the 4 statutory co-opted members on the Scrutiny Commission for Children & Young People, who have voting rights for educational matters only, co-opted members do not have voting rights.

We are fortunate to have some very knowledgeable and dedicated members of the public as co-optees which has further strengthened the scrutiny function at Telford & Wrekin.



## THE DEVELOPING ROLE OF SCRUTINY

Scrutiny was introduced as a concept in 2000, and the role has been developing ever since. In 2003, legislation was introduced that widened scrutiny powers to enable elected members to scrutinise and hold to account NHS Trusts that provided services to local residents. The scope and purpose of the scrutiny role continues to evolve and in April 2009 two key pieces of legislation designed to further enhance its effectiveness were implemented.

The provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the Police and Justice Act 2006 recognise that the growing emphasis on joint delivery of services between local authorities and other public agencies that will be assessed by the new Comprehensive Area Assessment inspection, need to be matched by effective scrutiny of partnership arrangements. The outward facing role of scrutiny, already well established in the field of healthcare, has therefore been further enhanced by powers to require relevant information from partner agencies responsible for local improvement targets under the Local Area Agreement; these same agencies are now also required to have regard to, and respond to, scrutiny reports and recommendations. Similarly, Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships are now required to co-operate with Local Authority scrutiny and to respond and have regard to scrutiny reports and recommendations on relevant issues on community safety. The Scrutiny Leadership Board have considered how to take forward these additional scrutiny activities and will be including them in it's work plan for the coming year.

The legislation also introduces a process called Councillor Call for Action, which allows ward councillors who have a local concern that they have been unable to resolve, to refer it for consideration by the Scrutiny Leadership Board. The Scrutiny Leadership Board has approved a process for managing councillor calls for action which will go to Council Constitution Committee and Full Council for approval in September 2009.

Further legislation is currently being considered by Parliament; The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill specify an enhanced role for scrutiny to receive petitions and to hold officers to account as part of a national petitions scheme. It also requires every unitary authority to ensure that scrutiny is properly resourced and to designate a scrutiny officer, whose role will be to oversee scrutiny support arrangements and champion scrutiny in the organisation.

## WHAT HAPPENED IN 2008/09?

### Scrutiny Management/Leadership Board

The issues that we looked at in our meetings over the past year were:

- Review of co-optee arrangements
- Chairman and Vice Chairman Appraisals
- City Region
- “Communities in Control – real power, real people” consultation
- Scrutiny Member Survey
- Transforming Telford
- Changes to the scrutiny structure
- Review of the Council’s Constitution
- Introduction of Councillor Call for Action
- The Credit Crunch Advice Centre

The **Scrutiny Assembly** held its first meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> January to discuss possible areas for scrutiny to investigate during 2009/10. The event attracted a high turnout of both elected members and co-optees and we received very positive feedback.

The second meeting was held on 19<sup>th</sup> May in workshop format to scrutinise the performance of the Council against each of its community priorities for 2008/09 and to look ahead at the coming year. Again the event was well received with good feedback on how we could improve the process next year.

**Call-in** is a way for members of the Council to suspend a key decision, made by the Cabinet or by senior officers under delegated powers, until it has been considered by the Scrutiny Leadership Board. Once a decision has been published, members have 3 working days to submit a call-in form. This must be signed by at least 5 members of the Council. The Scrutiny Leadership Board then meets to hear both sides of the debate and decide whether the original decision should stand, or whether to refer the matter back to the decision taker with a recommendation to change the decision.

There have been no call-ins during 2008/09.

## **Scrutiny Commission for Children & Young People**

The issues that we looked at in our meetings during 2008/09 were:

- School OFSTED Inspection Reports
- Southall School – OFSTED Action Plan
- R:Evolution
- The Joint Area Review Inspection
- Raising the profile of Children & Young People
- School Performance Data 2008
- Enhanced Youth Inspection
- Update on Youth Services

### **INDEPTH REVIEWS**

#### **School Travel Review**

We have focussed on one in-depth review, looking at 3 main areas:

1. How the Council and schools encourage pupils to travel actively to school, to reduce reliance on cars
2. Whether there is potential to implement a Yellow School Bus scheme in Telford & Wrekin
3. The Education Transport Policy.

As part of the review, we asked for the views of schools and visited a couple of those that replied. We also met with officers in the Council. We also looked at what other Councils do and made a visit to Staffordshire County Council to see their yellow bus service.

The Scrutiny Commission had two sub-groups which looked at key areas of children's services; Corporate Parenting and Campus Telford, further details of the work of these groups are provided in later sections of this report.

## **Scrutiny Commission for Environment & Regeneration**

The issues that we looked at in our formal Commission meetings during 2008/09 were:

- Waste Disposal
- Borough Towns Initiative
- Telford Town Centre Development

### **IN-DEPTH REVIEWS**

#### **Traffic Management in Conservation Areas**

This review started with a case study of the Local Safety Scheme that was installed in Newport High Street in 2005. We widened the scope of the review to look at the consultation and design process for putting traffic management schemes into our historic market towns, considering how the design of a traffic scheme can be made to fit with the appearance of the town, and how local residents must be involved in designing traffic systems that will work.

The review included a visit to Newport to examine the local Safety Scheme, and meetings with a number of local organisations like the Chamber of Commerce and the Civic Society. We also met with a number of Council officers and received written views from Newport Town Council and the Newport Regeneration Partnership.

#### **Bus Services**

The main objectives of this review were:

- To address immediate and future issues of reliability and quality of provision, and to improve the bus services in Telford & Wrekin
- To review the Quality Bus Partnership between the Council and Arriva
- To identify the needs of Telford & Wrekin with regard to bus services and assess whether the current provision meets these needs
- To change perceptions of the bus services and increase bus patronage.

The review included meetings with Arriva, The Bus User Group, Senior Citizens Transport Group, Young Peoples Forum and the Disability Forum as well as Council officers, transport officers from Shropshire Council and National Express West Midlands.

## **Scrutiny Commission for Health & Care**

As well as scrutinising Council services, we have a specific role in scrutiny of the NHS and they consult us when they are proposing big changes to the services they provide. The issues that we covered in our Commission meetings during 2008/09 were:

- National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE)
- Adaptations to the Home for Disabled People
- World Class Commissioning
- Update on Developing a Health and Healthcare Strategy for Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin
- Obesity

## **IN-DEPTH REVIEWS**

### **Housing and Homelessness**

We have focussed our time on a large review of Housing and Homelessness. A number of Councillors have had residents raise issues about the availability of social and affordable housing, and also of homelessness. Coupled with this, the recent credit crunch and ensuing downturn in the economy has highlighted the issues around homelessness. The particular areas that we have looked at are:

- The Choose Your Home choice based lettings scheme;
- Assessing the extent of housing needs and homelessness;
- Investigating the barriers and opportunities in the supply of housing, and considering solutions to this;
- The eligibility criteria for accessing housing support for different groups within the community.

This review has included many meetings with a wide range of organisations including: Citizen's Advice Bureau, all of the major Registered Social Landlords operating in Telford & Wrekin, the local representative of the National Landlords Association, The Homes and Communities Agency. The review group also visited local voluntary organisations offering services to the homeless like STAY, KIP, YMCA, Stars Project and Mark's Pit Stop. The group also undertook shadowing of Housing Needs Officers and met with some of the young residents at the YMCA in Wellington.

## **Scrutiny Commission for Community & Resources**

The issues that we considered during 2008/09 were:

- Update on Procurement
- General Update on Customer Strategy and Business Transformation
- Update on Taxi Action Plan
- Beyond Excellence Through People
- Demonstration of Delta electronic tendering system
- Presentation on West Mercia Supplies
- Use of CCTV
- Update on the Employee Survey 2007

## **IN-DEPTH REVIEWS**

### **Section 106 agreements**

As part of new developments, the Council can negotiate funding from developers under Section 106 agreements. This funding is agreed for specific work that results from the development e.g. a play area for the housing estate, or maintenance of the highway around the development.

Our aim in carrying out this review was to evaluate how effectively the resources secured through Section 106 agreements are secured, managed and utilised.

### **Procurement**

It was agreed by members to undertake an in-depth review of this area because they were concerned that the Council does not have the right model to be able to make the efficiency savings that will be needed as it moves into the future.

Members had three main objectives for the review:

- Evaluate the balance between centralized procurement and devolved procurement;
- evaluate whether the Council's procurement processes provide value for money;
- to make recommendations on the Council's procurement process to improve value for money.

Information for this review came from a number of sources, including: meetings with officers in the Central Procurement Unit and staff responsible for buying in the portfolios, with procurement managers at Staffordshire County Council and Warwickshire County Council and meetings with a Procurement expert witness and a consultant about Sustainable Procurement

## Corporate Parenting Scrutiny Monitoring Group

This group looks at issues related to children who are in care. Children come into care for many different reasons, and the Council and Councillors then become their “corporate” parent. This group monitors the services these children received, with one underlying question in mind.....“Would this be good enough for **my** child?”

We have meetings with Council officers to hear about the work they are doing, and we also meet 4 times a year with children and young people in the care system so that we can hear about the services directly from the people that use them.

The issues considered by the group during 2008/09 were:

- Rights and Representations Annual Report
- Statutory Reviews Action Plan
- Regulation 33 visits
- Placements Strategy
- Church Street Residential Children’s Home
- Review of Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding arrangements
- Feedback from working group on Statutory Reviews
- OFSTED report – Looked After Children good practice in schools
- Feedback from outcomes based accountability workshop
- Education Champion Role
- Update on Care Council
- Laming Audit
- Foster Care update
- Children and Young People’s Plan 2008/09
- Leading improvements for Looked After Children (LILAC) report
- Annual Complaints Report
- Annual Performance Report
- Joint Area Review feedback

In the group’s meetings with children & young people in the care system the following issues were discussed:

- How can the Council help me achieve my hopes and dreams?
- Foster Care
- Health issues
- Children In Care Reviews

## **Campus Telford and Wrekin Scrutiny Monitoring Group**

This group monitors the Campus Telford & Wrekin project which will see significant amounts invested into modernising schools across the borough. The group meet as needed to discuss key milestones in the project and to make comments and recommendations back to the project board, based on their observations.

The issues considered by the group during 2008/09 were:

At each meeting the group receive updates on standing items specifically on the project process:

- Project progress
- Position on project costs
- Communication with key stakeholders
- Management of risks

In addition the following items were also discussed and considered:

- Outline business case
- Gateway Report
- Post 16 consultation
- Presentation on role of the 4ps (local government's partnership and project delivery specialist) In Building Schools for the Future
- Developing the vision in the School Strategy for Change into a design that works
- Integration of ICT



## Value for Money Scrutiny Monitoring Group

The Value for Money Scrutiny Monitoring Group fulfils two important scrutiny tasks. It is the main mechanism by which the Cabinet formally consults scrutiny on their budget proposals, and allows non-executive members full access to all Council financial data. It also monitors the service and financial performance of Council services through regular review of performance monitoring reports and other necessary information. The group meets monthly with officers from across the Council portfolios to discuss services in detail.

The issues considered by the group during 2008/09 were:

- Value for Money update on “cost outliers”
- New performance management system
- End of year performance 2007/08
- Financial outturn 2007/08
- Telford & Wrekin services contract
- Corporate Value for Money Self Assessment
- Telford Services contract – recycling
- Service & Financial Planning monitoring 2008/09 - quarterly
- Performance monitoring 2008/09 – quarterly
- Value for Money business unit self assessments: on Open spaces, Benefit Administration, Street Cleansing and Special Educational Needs.
- Borough Towns Initiative
- Local Area Agreement
- Performance management – progress against the new performance management framework in 2008/09
- Service & Financial Planning 2009/10 to 2011/12 – draft budget strategy
- Investments and savings in the Adult & Consumer Care portfolio
- A simple guide to Treasury Management
- Roads, footpaths and lighting – investment proposals
- Concessionary travel
- Housing and Council Tax Benefit overspend – B&B provision
- Children & Families Overspend
- Priority Plan: “maintaining a high quality, attractive and sustainable environment”

## Health Monitoring Scrutiny Group

This group monitors the performance of adult social care services in the Telford & Wrekin area. The group is also the main mechanism for scrutinising the NHS under the Health & Social Care Act 2001.

The issues considered by the group during 2008/09 were:

- Update on Prevention of Alcohol Misuse and Harm Reduction Strategy
- World Class Commissioning
- Healthcare Commission Annual Health Check 2008/09
- Foundation Trust status for West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust

Scrutiny members from Telford & Wrekin Council and Shropshire County Council sit on the **Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee**. The committee considers health issues or consultations that cut across the boundaries of the two local authorities. The 6 Telford & Wrekin scrutiny members from the Health Scrutiny Monitoring Group also sit on this committee.

The issues considered by the committee during 2008/09 were:

- Developing Health & Health Care – this is a county-wide project considering how acute hospital services can be reconfigured to meet the requirements of the EU Working Time Directive. Work has been ongoing during 2008/09 with the Committee receiving frequent updates on progress. Statutory public consultation on preliminary options for re-configuration is expected in autumn 2009.
- Shelton Hospital redevelopment - the committee is also responsible for scrutinising the ongoing project to reconfigure mental health services in the County to provide a modern facility to replace Shelton Hospital, and provide more community based services. The Committee has received quarterly updates from the project Director on progress and an outline business case is expected in the first quarter of 2010.

## LOOKING FORWARD TO 2009/10

The scrutiny work programme for 2009/10 consists of the following:

### In depth reviews

- Waste Management including bulk collection
- Helping residents access benefits
- Cluster arrangements and locality working
- Child Protection & Child Protection Plans
- Palliative Care Services for Children & Young People and Adults
- Developing future skills for business
- Extended schools and healthy communities
- Bringing together health-related agencies
- Highways infrastructure
- Services to young people outside school
- Accessibility for people with disabilities / older people / people with mobility issues
- Keeping elected members informed

### Special Interest Meetings (provided at least 3 members volunteer)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security for Victims of Domestic Abuse</li> <li>• Supporting Local Businesses</li> <li>• Customer Contact Centre</li> <li>• Development Projects</li> <li>• Supply and drainage of water to Telford and Wrekin</li> <li>• Young people with mental health problems</li> <li>• Sustainable and balanced developments</li> <li>• Planning applications and the role of Parish/Town Councils</li> <li>• Advertising and road signage.</li> <li>• The transition of disabled children into adult services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equality &amp; Diversity Policy</li> <li>• Music lessons/specialist teaching provision in schools</li> <li>• Co-ordination of CCTV across T&amp;W</li> <li>• Council complaints procedure</li> <li>• Employee travel to work</li> <li>• Inconsistencies in young people paying adult prices</li> <li>• Bringing together people of different age groups and cultural backgrounds</li> <li>• Accommodation for tourism</li> <li>• Providing reassurance through positive media</li> <li>• Car parking enforcement.</li> <li>• Transport for Tourism</li> </ul>
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A spotlight review is planned for adoption of roads and green space on un-adopted estates.

## CONTACTS

To find out more about scrutiny, take a look at our web pages:

[www.telford.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.telford.gov.uk/scrutiny)

You can find meeting dates and agendas for scrutiny meetings on the Council website under Council and Democracy. Or you can call Democratic Services on 01952 383211.

If you would like to contact a member of the Scrutiny team, our contact details and areas of responsibility are below:

### **Ken Clarke – Head of Finance & Audit**

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**YOUR  
SUGGESTIONS  
FOR  
SCRUTINY**

If you have any ideas of areas of Council services that we could look at please let us know. Maybe you think a Council service is not providing you and your friends and neighbours with the service you require, or perhaps you have had recurring problems with one of the services. You might think that there is a gap in the services the Council is providing, and want scrutiny to look at what could be done to fill the gap.

You can let us know by filling in the section below, detach it and post to the FREEPOST address below.

Please bear in mind that scrutiny doesn't deal with individual requests for service or complaints. If you have a request for service, e.g. a pot hole on your road or a fault with a street light, these should be reported to the relevant Council department. The main Switchboard number at Telford & Wrekin Council is 01952 380000. If you wish to make a complaint, you should send this first to the people responsible for the service that you are dissatisfied with – this could be by phone, in writing, by email or by filling in the form on the Council's website.

**The issue I think scrutiny should look at is:**

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**I think the problems with this service are:**

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.....

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**Send to:**

**Scrutiny Services**  
FREEPOST RRHJ-TZJL-CTKY  
PO Box 215  
Telford  
TF3 4LF

