

SCRUTINY AND THE MEDIA

Where it is appropriate, scrutiny work will be publicised by the Council's Corporate Communications team to help support the work of scrutiny and encourage local residents to get involved in Scrutiny and promoting the transparency of the Council's decision-making process.

Who speaks on behalf of Scrutiny

Media activity will be co-ordinated through the Corporate Communications team who will ensure that the appropriate scrutiny spokesperson, usually the relevant Chairman, is put forward.

Scrutiny Chairmen are the only official spokespeople on scrutiny issues, unless an alternative spokesperson is agreed by the Chairman of the relevant Scrutiny Committee in liaison with the Scrutiny Group Specialist and the Corporate Communications Manager or PR team leader.

Press releases and media statements for Scrutiny will be drafted by the Corporate Communications team with the scrutiny team and will be approved by the relevant Scrutiny Chairman and the Scrutiny Group Specialist. They will not be subject to vetting by Cabinet Members. Where a scrutiny report includes views expressed in minority reports which differ from the main report, any press releases and media statements will reflect the views of both the main report and minority reports.

Press releases or media statements may include a Cabinet member comment and, where this is the case, Corporate Communications will present factual information representing both the Scrutiny and Cabinet viewpoints fairly.

Corporate Communications will advise Scrutiny Chairs and, if required, provide media training.

The Scrutiny Group Specialist should be advised of any media enquiries received by scrutiny members to report to the Corporate Communications team who will offer guidance and help if required. Corporate Communications will also monitor responses.

Corporate Communications officers will not prepare press releases, deal with media enquiries or arrange media interviews in the following cases:

- If the press release or enquiry is political in any way
- If the information in the press release is deemed libellous or malicious and will inform the relevant Scrutiny Chair of the reasons for the decision.

Scrutiny meetings and media

Media are invited to attend all formal meetings of the Scrutiny Committees and the Scrutiny Assembly unless matters of an exempt nature are to be discussed. Meetings of informal working sub-groups will not normally be held in public.

Press releases will not be issued as a matter of course after scrutiny meetings but should report on significant decisions of a Scrutiny Committee on an issue which is of key public interest, where scrutiny has made a positive difference or to promote opportunities for public consultation.

Scrutiny Chairmen are responsible for selecting pieces of scrutiny work where they feel publicity would be beneficial and these will be agreed by Members at scrutiny committee meetings.

This protocol will be reviewed periodically by Scrutiny Members, the Scrutiny Team and Corporate Communications to ensure it is working effectively. Members will be notified of any proposed changes.

February 2012