



Corporate Overview Group

Tuesday, 6 September 2022

Scrutiny Witness Guide

Report of the Director – Finance and Corporate Services

1. Purpose of report

To present the draft Scrutiny Witness Guide for discussion and approval.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that the Corporate Overview Group approves the Scrutiny Witness Guide at Appendix One.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. The Guide has been developed to draw attention to the provisions outlined in the Council's Constitution in relation to expert witnesses and Councillors contributing to scrutiny. It also sets the standard for involving witnesses in scrutiny to ensure that the different scrutiny groups are following the same procedures and the processes are transparent and easy for witnesses to follow.
- 3.2. This report gives members of the Corporate Overview Group the opportunity to discuss the draft Scrutiny Witness Guide before approval for use.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. In February 2020, the Corporate Overview Group discussed the options for increasing public involvement in scrutiny. It was concluded that adequate provisions existed within the Council's Constitution to enable witnesses to be called if required to inform the debate on a particular topic.
- 4.2. In 2021, the Scrutiny Matrix, the Council's mechanism for identifying and deciding which topics to put onto scrutiny Work Programmes, was updated to include a prompt for Officers and Councillors to consider whether hearing from expert witnesses may be beneficial.
- 4.3. It was also decided that it may be helpful to hear from the Councillor who submitted the item for scrutiny either at Corporate Overview Group, to better understand their motivations and concerns, or at the scrutiny group at which their submitted topic is to be discussed, to set the scene and highlight their concerns in person.

- 4.4. There has also been a desire expressed by members of the Corporate Overview Group to guide expert witnesses (RBC officers as well as those from other organisations) to be more focused in the information presented to scrutiny (usually in the form of a presentation) and for a balance to be maintained between information and debate.
- 4.5. The Scrutiny Witness Guide outlines how scrutiny works at Rushcliffe, who can speak at scrutiny meetings (and for how long), the nature of their involvement and what external speakers can expect both by way of support in advance of and during the meeting.
- 4.6. These alterations to the way scrutiny works are all in line with the provisions laid out in the Council's Constitution.

5. Risks and Uncertainties

There are no risks and uncertainties contained within this recommendation. The Scrutiny Witness Guide is a short, user friendly document which pulls together existing provisions within the Council's Constitution with the aim of improving the accessibility, and quality, of public engagement in scrutiny.

6. Implications

6.1. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications contained within the recommendations of this report. Expert witnesses give their time free of charge.

6.2. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications contained within the recommendations of this report.

6.3. Equalities Implications

There are no equalities implications contained within the recommendations of this report.

6.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

There are no Section 17 implications contained within the recommendations of this report.

7. Link to Corporate Priorities

Quality of Life	
Efficient Services	The use of the Scrutiny Witness Guide will increase transparency at scrutiny leading to better quality scrutiny through the involvement of expert witnesses. The outcome of better scrutiny will be more efficient Council services and there may also be improvements in other corporate priorities depending on the topic being scrutinised.
Sustainable Growth	
The Environment	

8. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that the Corporate Overview Group approves the Scrutiny Witness Guide at Appendix One.

For more information contact:	Charlotte Caven-Atack Service Manager – Corporate Services 0115 914 8278 ccaven-atack@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	
List of appendices:	Appendix One – Draft Scrutiny Witness Guide