



LJC BRIEFING:



Councillor Tim Barker is Chair of Shropshire Council's Lead Scrutiny Committee. Here he explains how you can help set the Scrutiny agenda

All of us have heard of - and perhaps listened to and watched on TV recently - sessions of Parliamentary Select Committees.

Although Shropshire Council isn't Parliament, it has its equivalent - Full Council - and has elected Councillors. It has a Cabinet and a Leader who run the administration of its affairs and regular meetings of all Councillors.

Unlike Parliament these meetings don't happen daily, so much of the debating and questioning goes on in other public meetings of various committees responsible for looking at aspects of the council's work.

Very importantly amongst these committees are five which are called 'Scrutiny Committees', these are the nearest thing we have to Select Committees and, although not the same they do have similar purposes.

These bodies carry out what is called 'scrutiny' of the Cabinet and the Executive's running of the council.

Their main role is to **drive improvement of our services** and those of our partners for the benefit of local people. They are made up of open-minded members of the council who provide a 'critical friend' challenge in the development of council policy and performance management. They can examine and ask for changes to decisions made by Cabinet. You'll find more information overleaf.

A very important part of what they do is to **listen to the views of local people**, either indirectly through the experiences and knowledge of council members, or directly by looking at what is said in the media or by asking people to say what they think.

My colleagues and I, have decided to ask anyone who is interested or has a view to use a new way of talking to us.

We are asking you to use our new Facebook page - called **Shape My Shropshire** - to let me and my colleagues know what you think about services, how we should change them, what we should do more of, or indeed anything else you want to say.

I can promise that we will deal with every issue or point you raise as quickly as we can, either by giving you a direct answer or by directing you to either another site or body if that would be better. Please give this a try - I look forward to seeing what you have to say. Search for 'Shape My Shropshire' next time you're on Facebook.



Scrutiny

Making a difference



What is Scrutiny?

It is a way of challenging and influencing the development of council policies, helping to improve and maintain performance and holding the Cabinet to account. Cabinet makes decisions. Scrutiny Committees make recommendations.

What does it do exactly?

Investigates services and their impact on lives of local people. Whilst Scrutiny Committees do not have the power to make decisions themselves, they influence decisions of the Cabinet – through reports of their work and recommendations.

Who does it?

Councillors who are not Members of Cabinet. There are five themed Committees with 10 councillors on each.

Enterprise
and Growth

Healthy
Communities

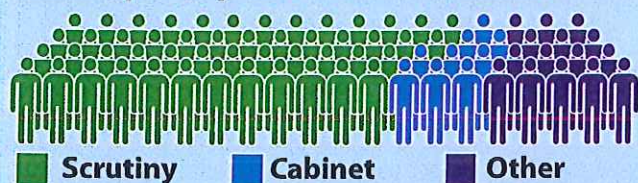
Performance
and Strategy

Protecting and
Enhancing our
Environment

Safe and
Confident
Communities

Scrutiny cannot
make decisions or
deal with individual
queries, concerns
or complaints

Out of a total of 74 councillors, 50 are involved in Scrutiny Committees and nine make up Shropshire Council's Cabinet.



How does it do it?

Task and finish groups – in depth reviews of issues relevant to local people.

Considering reports and questioning officers at Committee meetings.

Cabinet Members and Officers are required to attend to answer question and provide information

Invite witnesses and experts to share knowledge and experiences (this could be you).

Local Joint Committees look at local matters and can refer up to scrutiny.

Asking questions of those in power

- **Performance** – Are services fit for purpose and on budget?
- **Policies** – Do our Plans and Partners' plans support the needs of Shropshire people?
- **Call in** – Are the big decisions right for Shropshire people, through a 'call in' process.
- **Reviews** – New ideas and service improvements to meet current and future challenges.

Typical topics being discussed:

- Looking after vulnerable citizens
- Transport
- Looking after roads in winter
- Speeding Policies
- Tourism
- Council Spending and Financial Plans for the coming years
- Local health and wellbeing

How can you get involved?

Public question time at each meeting.

Suggesting topics for Scrutiny – are there issues affecting you and your community that you would like to see considered?

Attend meetings.

Provide information.

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Visit www.shropshire.gov.uk for more information about the work of scrutiny.