

**SCRUTINY FRAMEWORK AND MANUAL ANNUAL REVIEW**

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**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report presents the outcome of the annual review of the Council's Scrutiny Framework and Scrutiny Manual, originally approved in 2018. Over the past eight years, the Council's scrutiny arrangements have continued to evolve, informed by lessons learned, member and officer feedback, and ongoing reflection on how scrutiny can be delivered effectively and flexibly.
- 1.2 Key developments since 2018 include insights from the 2020 "Scrutiny – Lessons Learned" review, inputs from scrutiny panels and witnesses, and subsequent committee discussions on alternative or complementary scrutiny approaches. A development session in 2021 further reinforced the need for flexibility in topic selection, responsiveness to emerging issues, and a proportionate approach to scrutiny activity, including the use of lighter-touch methods where appropriate.
- 1.3 The 2026 annual review has identified only minor updates to the Scrutiny Manual and Scrutiny Framework. Changes primarily relate to updated dates, minor wording improvements, removal of a system name for cybersecurity reasons, and the updated committee membership composition following the 2022 local elections.
- 1.4 Overall, the Chief Internal Auditor has updated both documents to reflect these limited changes, ensuring they remain current and supportive of effective scrutiny practice.

## **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 This report concludes the annual review to determine whether any changes are required to the Council's Scrutiny Framework and Manual.

## **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To note the outcome of the annual review of the Scrutiny Framework and Manual (Appendix 1 & Appendix 2).

## **4.0 DETAIL**

- 4.1 In March 2018 the Committee approved the Council's Scrutiny Framework which incorporated the scrutiny prioritisation process. In June 2018 the Committee endorsed a Scrutiny Manual which provided more detailed guidance on how to carry out a scrutiny review.
- 4.2 In the eight years since those two governance documents were approved, we have continued to evolve our approach to scrutiny as we have reflected on what works well, where improvements can be made and alternative ways of performing scrutiny in addition to the current Scrutiny Panel approach.
- 4.3 In March 2020 the Committee considered a 'Scrutiny- Lessons Learned' report. The 'Lessons Learned' were those identified by:
- Scrutiny Panel members
  - Scrutiny Panel witnesses (both internal and external to the Council)
  - the Chief Internal Auditor (CIA and scrutiny officers)
- 4.4 The Lessons learned report also reflected on discussions that had been held during Committees about whether there were different ways that the Committee could perform scrutiny that would complement the Scrutiny Panel approach. For example by inviting council officers to brief the Committees on topics of specific interest.
- 4.5 In April 2021 a development session was held to discuss potential scrutiny topics for review and consider amendments to the scrutiny process.
- 4.6 The scrutiny topic identification, prioritisation and overall approach adopted at that time was outlined to the Committee. The Committee were asked to consider some key questions and the responses are summarised below:
- There needs to be a degree of flexibility to change topics and to be able to react quickly to an ever changing environment.
  - It is for the Committee to determine scrutiny topics.
  - Depending on the number of emerging topics, the Committee may need to meet more often, however these could be less formal and held virtually.
  - An annual Scrutiny Plan is not required, topics should be allowed to emerge.

- The prioritisation process is there as a tool if needed, but there is no need to assess every scrutiny topic.
- There has been value in having full panel meetings but these are resource intensive and scrutiny lite should be adopted where appropriate.

4.7 The Scrutiny Manual (Appendix 1) and Scrutiny Framework (Appendix 2) have been reviewed and a summary of minor changes have been noted within the tables below:

#### 4.8 Scrutiny Manual Changes

Page	Para	Summary of Change	Reason for Change
1	n/a	Change of date from 2025 to 2026	Change of date to reflect most recent review of the Manual
3	2	Change of Date from 2022 to 2026	Change of date to reflect most recent update of the Manual
5	12	Removal of system name	Remove reference to system used for storing information for cybersecurity reason
5	16	Minor update to wording	Additional wording added within brackets – “employees or”
8	Appendix 1	Change to composition of Committee Membership	The number of committee members was reduced from 7 to 6 in 2022 following the Local Election

#### 4.9 Scrutiny Framework Changes

Page	Para	Summary of change	Reason for Change
1	n/a	Change of date from 2025 to 2026	Change of date to reflect most recent review of the Framework

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 The CIA has updated the Scrutiny Framework and Scrutiny Manual to reflect minor changes that were identified as a result of the 2026 review.

## 6 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy – None
- 6.2 Financial – None
- 6.3 Legal – None
- 6.4 HR – None
- 6.5 Customer Service – None
- 6.6 Risk – None
- 6.7 Climate Change – None
- 6.8 Fairer Scotland Duty – None

- 6.9 Equalities – protected characteristics – None
- 6.10 Consumer duty – None
- 6.11 Islands Communities – None
- 6.12 Children’s rights and wellbeing – None

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## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1 - Scrutiny Manual**  
**Appendix 2 - Scrutiny Framework**