

## **Committee:** Overview and Scrutiny Commission

**Date:** 6 July 2017

**Subject:** Analysis of the Annual Member Scrutiny Survey 2017

Lead officer: Julia Regan, Head of Democracy Services

Lead Member: Councillor Peter Southgate, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission

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### **Recommendations:**

- A. That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission considers the findings arising from the 2017 Member Survey.
  - B. That the Overview and Scrutiny Commission agrees the proposed actions to be taken forward to improve the effectiveness of scrutiny (actions run throughout the report and are listed in Appendix 3).
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## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. For the Overview and Scrutiny Commission to consider the findings from the 2017 Member Survey and the proposed actions to be taken forward to improve the scrutiny function.

## **2. DETAILS**

### **Background**

- 2.1. Each year the scrutiny team carries out a survey to collect the views of Merton councillors and co-opted scrutiny members about how scrutiny is working - where things work well, where things don't work quite so well, and how they can be improved. The survey also evaluates the effectiveness of the scrutiny function as a whole and with the different workstreams that make up overview and scrutiny.

### **Key findings**

- 2.2. Overall, the results from this year's survey are very positive for scrutiny at Merton:
- 2.3. Overall effectiveness: The target set for member satisfaction with the overall effectiveness of the scrutiny function was almost met, with a rating of 74% against a target of 75%. This is a significant improvement from 65% in the previous year and if the 7% of 'don't know' responses are excluded, the result of 80% would have exceeded the target.
- 2.4. The number of respondents that regard scrutiny as neither effective nor ineffective has been more than halved to 14% for 2016/17. Reducing the 30% of respondents that last year regarded scrutiny as neither effective nor ineffective was an important aspiration which has been met.
- 2.5. Task groups: Task group work was once again rated as the most effective aspect of scrutiny with a rise from 57% to 82% in the effectiveness rating received. This is also illustrated in positive verbatim comments and constructive feedback.

- 2.6. Scrutiny team: The level of satisfaction with the support provided by the scrutiny team constituted the highest level of satisfaction since 2011. This year 98% of respondents are satisfied (up from 95% in the previous year), with 65% describing the support provided as excellent.
- 2.7. Satisfaction with scrutiny: Members were also invited to rate different aspects of the scrutiny team's work. These results were positive and improved in all aspects from 2015/16 with no respondents selecting 'completely dissatisfied' with any aspect of the scrutiny team's work.
- 2.8. Methodology: Questions this year gave respondents a 'don't know' response option. This was a recommendation of last year's survey in order to give a wider range of responses and ensure that all questions are answered rather than skipped. This has resulted in a higher number of surveys completed in their entirety.

### **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1. Whilst there is no statutory requirement to undertake an annual member survey, the findings enable members' satisfaction with the scrutiny process at Merton to be measured against agreed annual targets and actions to be taken to improve the scrutiny process year on year.

### **4. CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 4.1. The member survey is conducted for a minimum of three weeks each year. In the last two years it has been conducted during March and April so that views could be taken following completion of the budget scrutiny process. Prior to that it was carried out during February/March.

### **5. TIMETABLE**

- 5.1. The member survey was undertaken in March and April 2017 and is being reported to the Commission in July so that identified actions can be incorporated into its 2017/18 work programme.

### **6. FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. None directly relating to the member survey itself. However, some actions arising from the findings of the survey year on year may have resource implications which need to be taken into consideration. The cost of this would be met from existing budgets.

### **7. LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. None relating to this report.

### **8. HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. It is a fundamental aim of the scrutiny process to ensure that there is full and equal access to the democratic process through public involvement and engagement. The findings of the member survey are reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission which is open to the public.

### **9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. None relating to this report.

### **10. RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. None relating to this report.

**11. APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**

- 11.1. Appendix 1: Member Survey 2017 – methodology, analysis and detailed findings
- 11.2. Appendix 2: Verbatim comments from Members
- 11.3. Appendix 3: List of proposed action points

## Member Survey 2017

### 1. Methodology

- 1.1. The survey was initially conducted online using a bespoke (and free) online survey tool. Towards the deadline for completion it was distributed in paper format in order to capture additional responses.
- 1.2. Over half of respondents completed the survey in the online format, this enabled well thought-out and lengthier feedback to the questions asked. However, there is the possibility that a small number of members might have completed the survey twice, both online and in paper format, resulting in some duplicate responses. It is not possible to be precise about this number given the survey is anonymous.
- 1.3. This risk of duplication will be given consideration for next year's annual survey, and we will look at support to get more surveys completed online and better messaging to prevent duplication. Offline responses have been entered onto the online system in order to make analysis easier and more robust. However, as with any data entry, there is a risk of error and next year we will seek to increase online completion to minimise this.
- 1.4. Action points:
  - The scrutiny team will continue to improve both the content and delivery of the survey to maximise completion online and reduce the potential for inputting errors and duplicate responses.
  - Alongside the use of quantitative methods, the scrutiny team will use qualitative methods to explore the findings more fully. A number of in-depth interviews will be conducted immediately after the survey period.

### 2. Five point scale

- 2.1. In 2015/16 the opportunity was taken to test use of a five point response scale which is the market research industry standard. This gave respondents the opportunity to indicate that they neither agree nor disagree with the statements made in the survey in order to adequately capture their views. This was rolled out to all questions in this year's survey.
- 2.2. The addition of a neutral midpoint option has resulted in an increased number of fully completed questionnaires.
- 2.3. Last year, the change to a five point response scale made it difficult to achieve a direct comparison with previous results. This year, having continued with this approach, we have begun to again build trend data and can start to make direct comparisons between this year's and last year's results.

### 3. Analysis

- 3.1. Unlike the previous year, the responses of councillors and co-opted members were not split out and reported separately. This was considered necessary in 2015/16 to allow us to specifically focus on responses from co-opted members and to separately address the points that they had made.

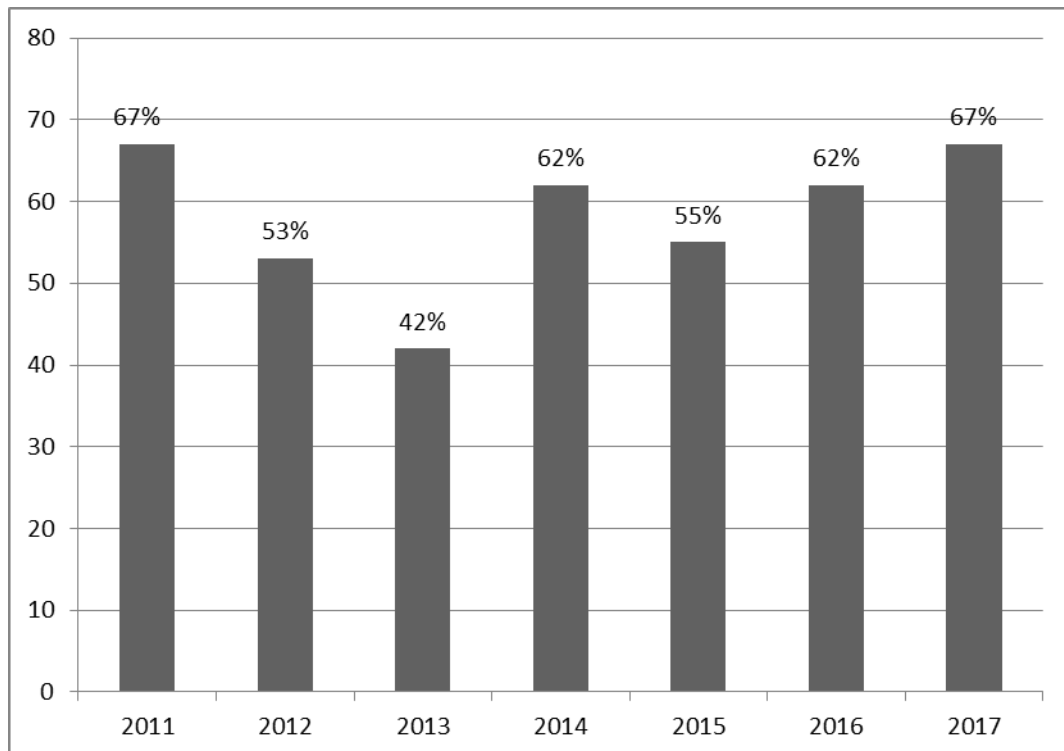
#### 4. Survey respondents

4.1. The 2017 member survey was sent out to sixty councillors and four co-opted members. A fifth co-opted member, newly in post, was excluded.

#### 5. Response rate

5.1. The survey was completed by forty one councillors and two co-opted members, giving an overall response rate of 67%. This is an improvement of 5% on last year (62%) and is the joint highest response rate achieved since 2011.

**Diagram 1: Member survey response rate**



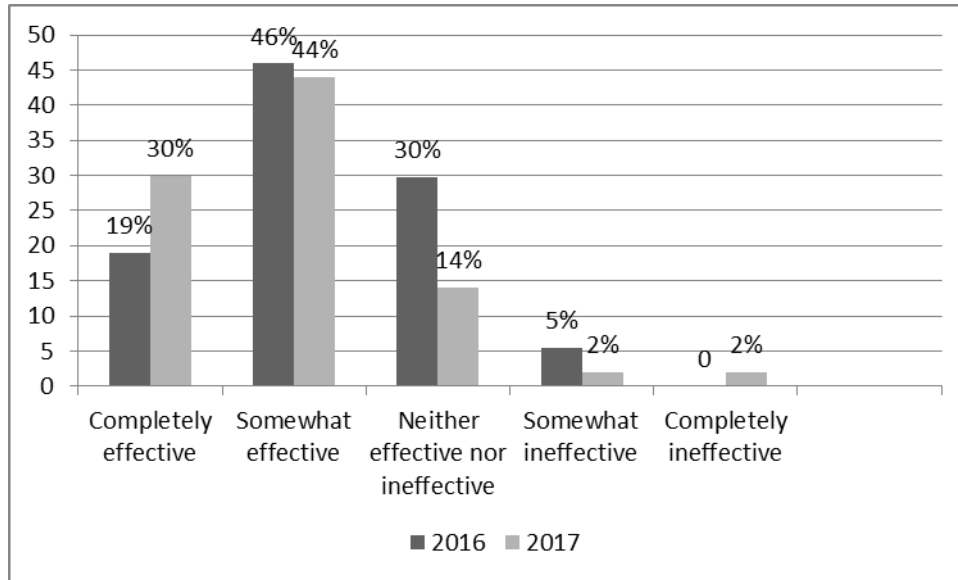
5.2. The majority of respondents have been actively involved in the scrutiny process over the past year:

- 25 are members of the Overview Scrutiny Commission or a scrutiny panel
- 9 are “other non-executive members”
- 7 are Cabinet Members
- 2 are co-opted members
- 47% respondents have sat on a Task Group
- 40% have attended a scrutiny meeting as a visiting member to observe/make a contribution
- 7 respondents have had no involvement with scrutiny this year (nonetheless, their contribution is welcome).

## 6. Effectiveness of the scrutiny function

6.1. The survey asked respondents to consider the overall effectiveness of scrutiny. A comparison with last year's results is illustrated below:

**Diagram 2: The overall effectiveness of scrutiny in 2015/16 and 2016/2017**



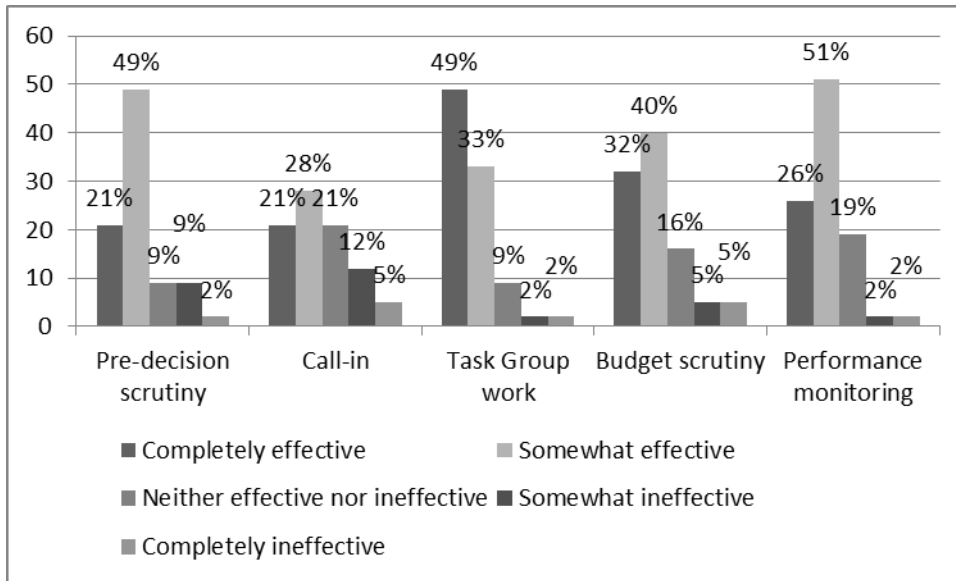
6.2. Respondents' positive perception of the overall effectiveness of overview and scrutiny has increased from last year; up from 65% to 74% (so the third of respondents who said scrutiny was neither effective nor ineffective last year, has reduced by half). A very small percentage (4%) view scrutiny's effectiveness negatively (somewhat ineffective or completely ineffective).

6.3. Additionally, some verbatim comments express concerns about the influence of party politics on scrutiny:

Still need to try and take politics out of the scrutiny process - could be a really usefully tool to hold the administration to account but so often fails.

The usefulness of scrutiny would improve if members felt more able to engage in a proper debate. Even if, sadly, voting seems to go along strict party lines (data on this point would be interesting) at least there could be more engagement with some of the topics.

**Diagram 3: The effectiveness of the different aspects of scrutiny in 2016/2017**



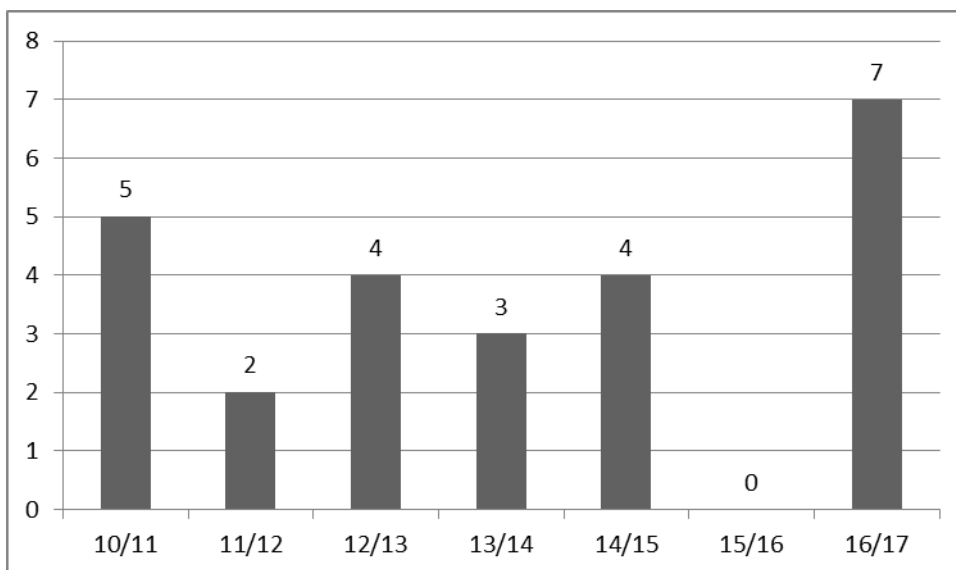
**7. Pre-decision scrutiny**

7.1. This year pre-decision scrutiny received a 70% effectiveness rating which is a 19% improvement from 51% in 2015/16. Only one respondent rated it 'not effective at all'. There were 9% of respondents who answered 'don't know' (an option which was not available in the previous year).

**8. Call-ins**

8.1. The effectiveness of call-in is still rated the lowest of any aspect of scrutiny's work. However, this is significantly improved on last year's performance. Just under half of all respondents (49%) view call-ins positively (either completely or somewhat effective) compared to just over a third last year (35%). This is probably explained by there being seven call-ins during 2016/2017 compared to none the previous year.

**Diagram 4: The number of call-ins each year for the last seven municipal years**



8.2. It is worth noting that of those that viewed the performance of call-ins positively, 21% regard them as completely effective. Those that regard call-ins as completely ineffective remains low, increasing marginally from 3% to 5% on last year. However, 28% still regard call-ins as neither effective nor ineffective.

## **9. Task groups**

9.1. Task group work was once again rated the most effective element of scrutiny with a rise from 57% to 82% effectiveness rating (a combination of completely and somewhat effective). Along with pre-decision scrutiny, this aspect of scrutiny's work received the lowest number of members responding that they are undecided (neither effective nor ineffective).

9.2. As a result, there was a notable decrease in the number that reported task groups as somewhat ineffective: down from 27% last year to 2%.

9.3. This indicates that members continue to find task groups a productive and effective way to contribute to policy development and have a tangible impact on decision making. This is reflected in verbatim comments:

The Task Groups are very good and enable in depth discussion on potential policy direction.

Task Group recommendations have been welcomed and acted on by Public Health and CCG.

9.4. Respondents also offered constructive feedback on task groups:

Also important that recommendations are followed up on a regular basis and implemented.

My only comment on Task Groups is it would be helpful for officers/Cabinet Members to have early sight of recommendations. When I met with a task group chair it was clear some changes would be required for us to be able to accept the report, but the chair and officer were reluctant as the report had already been finalised.

## **10. Budget scrutiny**

10.1. The effectiveness of budget scrutiny is deemed high, increasing from 57% to a 73% effectiveness rating (combining completely and somewhat effective). This is reflected in verbatim comments:

Recommendations on the budget in the Sustainable Communities Panel this year were listened to.

The Panels have been effective during budget discussions and the workshops.

Scrutiny comments during budget process taken on board.



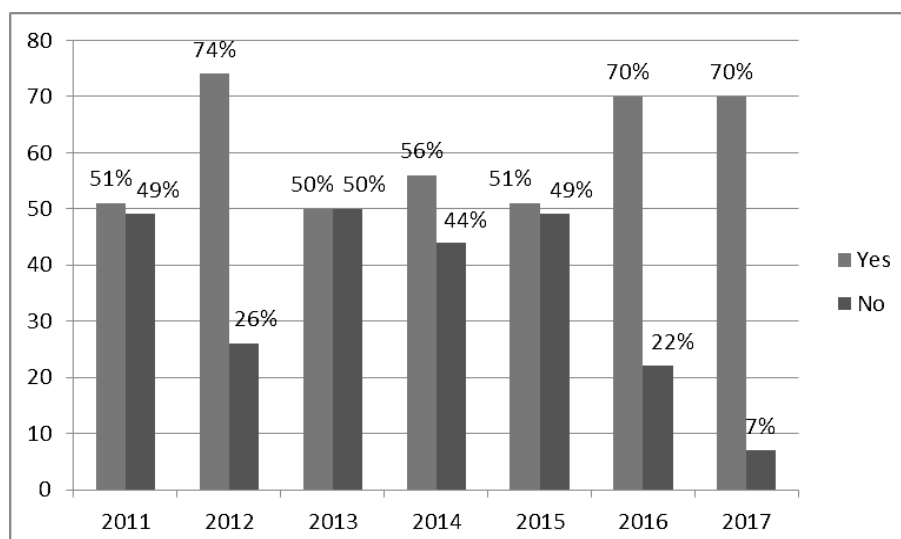
## 11. Performance monitoring

- 11.1. The effectiveness of performance monitoring has increased from 49% in 2015/16 to 76% in 2016/17 (combining completely and somewhat effective).
- 11.2. As a result, the third of members (35%) in 2015/2016 who stated that performance monitoring is neither effective nor ineffective has significantly reduced this year to 18%.
- 11.3. The approach to performance monitoring has differed over the past two to three years. Previously there was a performance lead for each Panel and the Commission who scrutinised a standard set of performance indicators prior to the meeting and drew Members' attention to any areas of concern.
- 11.4. Last year this was changed to allow the Panels to adopt a more tailored approach – Sustainable Communities reviewed a set basket of indicators at each meeting, and the Healthier Communities Panel reviewed performance as part of agenda items where relevant. The Commission received crime data at each meeting attended by the Borough Commander and delegated detailed quarterly financial monitoring to the Financial Monitoring Task Group.
- 11.5. For 2016/17 the Children and Young People's Panel (CYP) has reinstated a performance monitoring lead. This year 32% of respondents (thirteen people) were from the Children and Young People's Panel. Interestingly, all but one of the CYP respondents were positive about performance monitoring this year. The change in approach seems to have been well liked by CYP Panel members.

## 12. Scrutiny Agendas/Workload

- 12.1. 70% of respondents agreed that Commission/Panel agendas are the correct length and 35% strongly agreed. This meets the target set for the scrutiny team, and marks a strongly improving trend over the past two years.

**Diagram 5: Are Commission/Panel agendas the correct length?**



### **13. Development of the Commission/Panel Work Programmes**

- 13.1. This year 77 % (down from 86% in 2015/16) agreed that they have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Commission/Panel work programmes.
- 13.2. We have looked at the two respondents who said they didn't have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Commission and/or Panel work programmes. One was a non executive member and the second was a member of the Sustainable Communities Panel. Not surprisingly, those who 'neither agree nor disagree' or 'don't know' tend to be Cabinet Members or non-executive members who are less involved in the topic selection process.
- 13.3. Action point: The scrutiny team will explore what more can be done to ensure all members have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Commission/Panel work programmes.

### **14. Scrutiny impact on decision making by the Cabinet**

- 14.1. This year councillors feel decision-making by the Cabinet has been influenced by comments from the Commission and Panels; 72% (with 30% strongly) for the Commission and 59% (with 18% strongly) for the Panels. This gives an average rating of 66% of members agreeing scrutiny has had a positive impact on decision making by the Cabinet. This is an improvement on last year's rating and continues a three year positive trend.
- 14.2. Whilst the Commission is considered more influential than the Panel, this was not elaborated on in verbatim comments. Some respondents did take the opportunity to give examples of where there has been impact on Cabinet decision making:

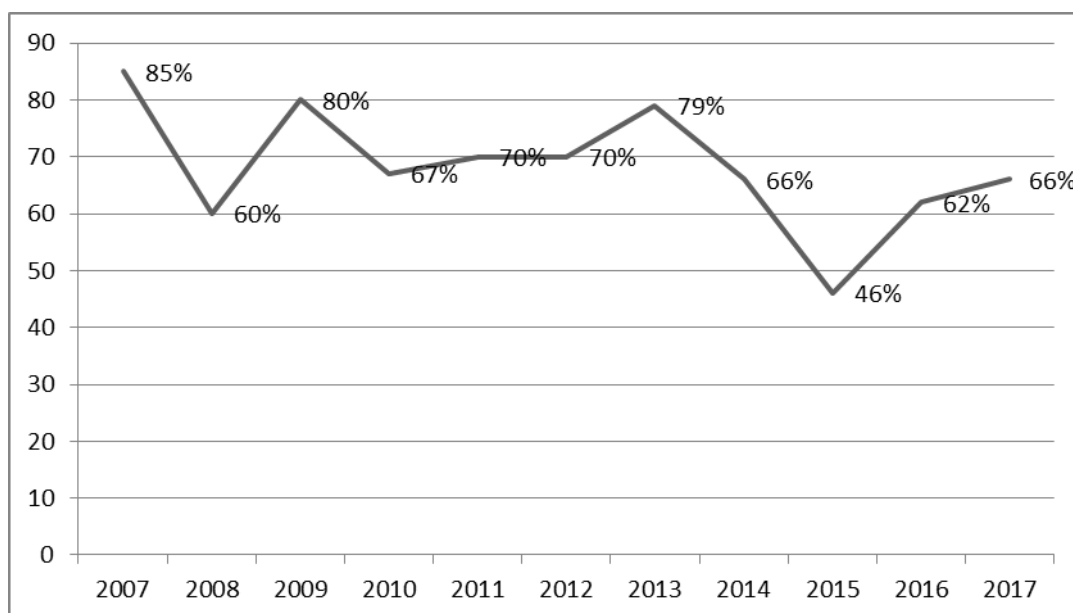
Cabinet continues to be responsive to suggestions from scrutiny when reviewing the budget.

Recommendations on the budget in the Sustainable Communities Panel this year were listened to.

Introduction of Housing Company as suggested by the Task Group on commercialisation.

I do feel that officers are made aware of views from backbench member which do not necessarily concur with cabinet members

**Diagram 6: Has scrutiny had an impact on Cabinet decision making?  
(% saying it has had a positive impact)**



14.3. Respondents were also offered the opportunity to give examples of where the Commission and/or Panels have had a demonstrable impact (other than on Cabinet decision-making):

I like involving Scrutiny. Doing so makes you think things through better. So, for instance, the annual Libraries report and the annual Adult Education report give pause to review what's to be said about what's been done, and in so doing highlights areas for change, before scrutiny is even reached.

By deep dive investigations of particular council services eg. Community transport, the Financial Monitoring Task Group (FMTG) has encouraged better financial reporting standards and improved performance.

Health scrutiny produced good reports on dementia and on diabetes in the South Asian Community. They also did a good job scrutinising and questioning the CCG re-commissioning the GP surgery and walk in centre at the Wilson Hospital.

## 15. Better organisation

**Diagram 7: In what ways do you think the Commission/Panel business might be better organised? 2016/17**

More use of external experts to provide context and challenge	57%
Cross-party pre-meetings to agree lines of questioning for some agenda items	46%
Commission/Panels to be more selective when setting agendas	44%
Guidance provided on possible questions to be asked at meetings	44%
Background policy guidance provided	41%
Councillors supported to conduct their own individual reviews	38%
More meetings to accommodate all the items	18%

15.1. Over half (57%) of respondents would like to see more use of external experts to provide context and challenge and 47% would like to see cross-party pre-meetings to agree lines of questioning for some agenda items.

15.2. In 2016, 43% of councillors indicated their interest in conducting their own reviews, compared to 32% this year. An action in response to this last year was to provide support to one councillor to trial an individual rapporteur scrutiny.

### 15.3. Action points

- The scrutiny team will evaluate the individual rapporteur scrutiny model and assess how its potential could be expanded. If appropriate, the team will continue to explore a range of opportunities that support Members to conduct in-depth rapporteur scrutiny reviews which make effective use of the time available.
- The scrutiny team will, as part of the work programme process, explore with chairs and vice chairs the use of external experts, cross-party pre meetings where appropriate to agree lines of questioning and support with identifying potential questions for witnesses

## 16. Quality of evidence presented to overview and scrutiny

16.1. The majority of respondents (73%) said that the evidence presented to overview and scrutiny has been good and meets the needs of the session. This is slightly down on last year (78% and from the year before at 85%) but still comparable to rates in previous years.

16.2. A possible explanation for this decrease is that the question was framed differently than previously. This year respondents had the option of answering with 'don't know' or 'neither agree nor disagree', with five people stating the former and four people stating the latter option. This might give a more accurate reflection of members' views even if it makes direct comparison with previous years more difficult.

16.3. Members made some recommendations on the quality of evidence in their verbatim comments:

Some reports long and have so much information I need a longer lead up time to read them.

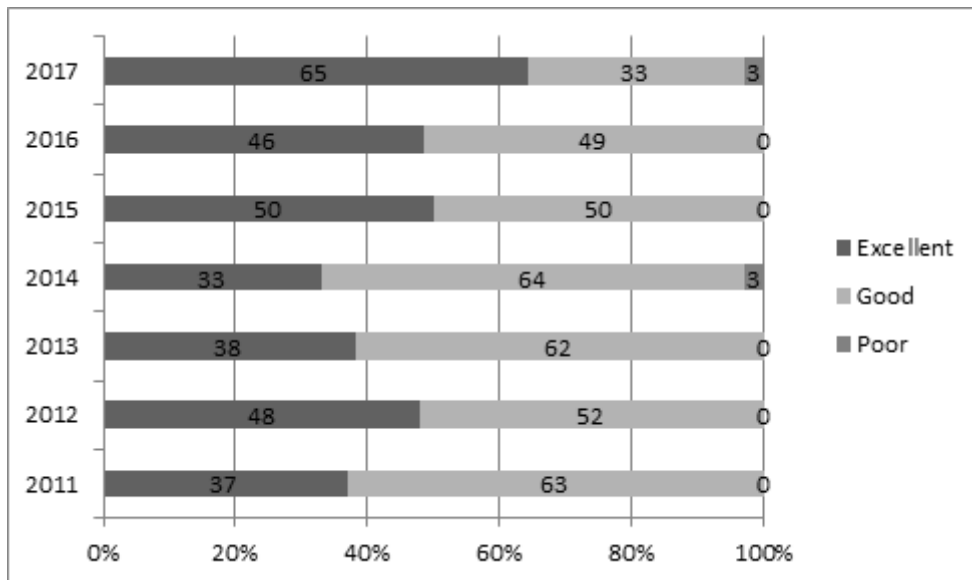
Clearer papers which focus on the main points but give fair presentations and unbiased views.

16.4. Action point: The scrutiny team will work with officers to understand what could be done to improve the quality and presentation of evidence provided to scrutiny meetings.

**17. Support from the Scrutiny Team**

17.1. Satisfaction with the service remained extremely positive and respondents gave the team a satisfaction rating of 98%. This is the highest rating received since 2011, with 65% of respondents rating the support provided as excellent (this is the highest ever received by some margin). A further 33% rate the team as good with one person describing the team as poor.

**Diagram 8: Satisfaction with scrutiny team**



17.2. Members were also invited to rate different aspects of the scrutiny team’s work. These results were positive and improved in all aspects from last year:

- Speed= 77% (up from 73%)
- Quality of response= 82% (up from 68%)
- Quality of email=80% (up from 76%)
- Quality of verbal= 87% (up from 78%)
- Quality of task group=87% (up from 76%)

17.3. There were no responses of ‘completely dissatisfied’ with any aspect of the scrutiny team’s work. This was reflected in the verbatim comments:

In comparison with other London boroughs, we have one of the best scrutiny teams in London

The Scrutiny Team are really excellent. We're very lucky to have them here in Merton. The advice they provide is extremely high-quality and their knowledge great.

I think the scrutiny team does a good job, Very good support, and there is always someone at the end of the phone to clarify any comments or concerns asked.

## 18. Members' training and development needs

18.1. The skills and knowledge which members bring to the overview and scrutiny process are crucial to its effectiveness, so the survey asked what scrutiny related training and development opportunities they would like to have provided in the coming year.

18.2. Based on those who responded, there is a reasonable level of demand for all the core training and development areas specified in the questionnaire:

**Diagram 9: Demand for member training**

How to monitor performance and interpret data	15 members
Chairing and agenda management	14 members
Questioning skills	12 members
Finance/budget scrutiny	12 members

18.3. Respondents were also given the opportunity to comment on any other support or training they required:

Updates on all areas regularly, I know this is not often practical as members have many other commitments and dates very often make this difficult in the short or medium time scale.

18.4. However, fourteen out of the forty-three respondents made no response to these core training opportunities.

18.5. Action points:

- That the Head of Democracy Services will, in discussion with HR (which has responsibility for Member development and training), ensure that appropriate training sessions are offered on all the areas identified by the survey during the municipal year.
- The Head of Democracy Services will ensure the promotion of member training opportunities in a timely way to maximise the take-up.

**List of verbatim comments from respondents**

**Q6: Please give examples of where Cabinet decision-making has been influenced during the 2016/2017 municipal year by comments from the Commission and/or Panels.**

**Members of the scrutiny Commission or Panels:**

- Cabinet continues to be responsive to suggestions from scrutiny when reviewing the budget.
- Scrutiny comments during budget process taken on board. Pity that Pre-decision scrutiny of diesel surcharge which put forward a range of views to Cabinet resulted in no change to Cabinet decision.
- New secondary school.
- We got only 1 meek savings proposal sent from Sustainable Communities to the commission, though we got some agreed savings brought forward.
- Areas within the Budget, for a start.
- Given the Labour majority there is never any chance of having a proper scrutiny unless the balance on committees is equal or the chair is prepared to take on board other views and understand issues the opposition parties raise
- Both. The ability to disagree with Cabinet members and officers and get changes not necessarily in policy but attitude in forming items to take members with them, this is not necessarily quantifiable but I do believe it does happen
- Air quality task group
- Budget (slightly)
- Introduction of Housing Company as suggested by the Task Group on commercialisation.

**Co-opted Members:**

- Adult social care.

**Other non-executive Members:**

- CYP understood why the commission had to make the decision they took, however, support in finding other sources to maintain delivery services to CYP.

**Cabinet Members:**

- The budget.
- The only one I am aware of where a decision has been overtly influenced was the reversal of cutting planning letters. I don't feel Councillor's representations on ASC contributed towards the decision to levy the precept and allocate growth to the budget.
- Areas within the Budget, for a start.

**Q7: Please give examples of where the Commission and/or Panels have had a demonstrable impact (other than on Cabinet decision-making).**

**Members of the scrutiny Commission or Panels:**

- In task groups, the commercialisation task group came up with good ideas. The health committee got a diabetes recommendation through. Sustainable communities has been good at grilling CHMP on housing and regen concerns.
- Task group recommendations have been welcomed and acted upon by CCG and Public Health

- I do feel that officers are made aware of views from backbench member which do not necessarily concur with cabinet members
- By deep dive investigations of particular council services eg. community transport, the Financial Monitoring Task Group (FMTG) has encouraged better financial reporting standards and improved performance
- Budget scrutiny
- Task groups can provide useful detail examination on important issues. Also important that recommendations are followed up on a regular basis and implemented.
- Finance Task Group
- Recommendations on the budget in the Sustainable Communities Panel this year were listened to.

#### **Co-opted members:**

- Council tax rise.
- only negative impact like the Diesel levy

#### **Other non-executive Members:**

- By engaging with other agencies who has an interest in delivering services in support within remit.
- The Panels have been effective during budget discussions and the workshops.

#### **Cabinet Members:**

- I like involving Scrutiny. Doing so makes you think things through better. So, for instance, the annual Libraries report and the annual Adult Education report give pause to review what's to be said about what's been done, and in so doing highlights areas for change, before scrutiny is even reached.
- Input on the equality strategy on meeting our objectives on the action plan.
- Regeneration
- Health scrutiny produced good reports on dementia and on diabetes in the South Asian Community. They also did a good job scrutinising and questioning the CCG re-commissioning the GP surgery and walk in centre at the Wilson Hospital.

#### **Q9: In what ways do you think the Commission/Panels might be better organised (other).**

##### **Members of the scrutiny Commission or Panels:**

- Be more like government select committees when we challenge and scrutinise external bodies.
- Cross-party pre-meetings to agree lines of questioning for some agenda items
- No items should be requested to be put on the agendas less than 5/6 days before the meeting. Certainly not on the night
- Tighter chairing of meetings. Should aim to finish 9:00 latest with guillotine 9:15 unless a vote to extend
- In some cases more data so that we can have more meaningful discussions. For example, if trends of an entire service are shown in aggregate there is no way of understanding the performance in separate sections. The recent review of last year's performance of MAE is a case in point
- Need to ensure that officers can support councillors conducting their own reviews but have set amount of officer time.
- Labour need to stop dictating. It's a complete waste of time and anti-democratic.



**Other non-executive Members:**

- Select one or two items to discuss at Panel, other wise time could be extended without a positive outcome.
- Scrutiny was better in the day that scrutiny officers advised members on questions to ask.

**Cabinet Members:**

- More intelligent timing of meetings. Although this would be a real pain, getting meetings at the time where predecision scrutiny is needed to make a decision would be so much more time-effective, and much cheaper, than trying to time decision-making so it fits in with the scrutiny timetable.
- I think more support for Cllrs general would be useful. In my experience, some Cllrs are more comfortable with questioning officers/Cabinet Members/external experts than others. Some support would improve the quality of questions/discussions.

**Q10: What training do you need to support you in being part of overview and scrutiny? Other, please specify:****Members of the scrutiny Commission or Panels:**

- Updates on all areas regularly, I know this is not often practical as members have many other commitments and dates very often make this difficult in the short or medium time scale.
- Clearer papers which focus on the main points but give fair presentations and unbiased views.

**Co-opted Members:**

- Chairing and agenda management.

**Other non-executive Members:**

- I am very much interested in Public Speaking Skills training, because I believe this will develop my ability and confidence more.

**Cabinet Members:**

- Perhaps some extra budget training. Also training on our role as an employer.

**Q12: Please use this box to provide any comments on the support offered by the scrutiny team.****Members of the scrutiny Commission or Panels:**

- In comparison with other London boroughs, we have one of the best scrutiny teams in London
- I think the scrutiny team does a good job.
- Some reports long and have so much information I need a longer lead up time to read them. more time before
- Team good. Labour Cllrs awful.
- The Scrutiny Team are really excellent. We're very lucky to have them here in Merton. The advice they provide is extremely high-quality and their knowledge great.

**Co-opted members:**

They take question and analyse it in order to reflect a good outcome.

**Other non-executive Members:**

- And there is always someone at the end of the phone to clarify any comments or concerns asked.
- Very good support
- Really appreciate support.

**Cabinet Members:**

- My only comment on Task Groups is it would be helpful for officers/Cabinet Members to have early sight of recommendations. When I met with a task group chair it was clear some changes would be required for us to be able to accept the report, but the chair and officer were reluctant as the report had already been finalised.

**Q13: Do you have any suggestions for issues/themes that you would like to see explored as part of the overview and scrutiny work programme in 2016/17?****Members of the scrutiny commission or panels:**

- Proper review of cycling/walking options and how to improve this to encourage modal shift.
- Scrutiny of ANPR and traffic enforcement across the borough.
- Scrutiny of Veolia now that it is outsourced.
- Scrutiny of the diesel tax and measures to proactively help car type shift and measures to Improve air quality (i.e. follow up on whatever the current task group recommends).
- Think there should be a cross party task group review on how the Council intends to spend the additional Government funding for Adult Social Care.
- Air quality and pollution from diesel vehicles is rising fast up the agenda of residents' concerns. I know we already have a task group addressing this, but it needs to continue to keep pace with a fast changing legislative environment.  
The "bigger picture" for the Commission is how the devolution of business rates will affect us, and how we can maximise its potential when it happens.
- Further work on climate change.
- First aid training for pupils/students even at a basic level in all schools.
- Review of white papers as they are issued to discuss potential impacts on the council.
- Regular reviews of the Merton Property Company.
- Social Housing eligibility criteria for women in DV shelters (who are often moved deliberately out of their area and lose local association).
- Male domestic violence.
- Homophobic hate crime.
- It would be pointless to support anything.

**Co-opted Members:**

- Housing.

**Non executive members:**

- I would like "Sickle Cell disease and Thalassaemia" explore as part of Task Group and Health and Scrutiny work programme 2017/2018.
- Veolia Contract monitoring.
- The implications of the SLW partnership for rubbish collection and green spaces, requires monitoring to ensure Merton residents are very well catered for by this change.
- Housing is an issue.
- First aid training for pupils/students even at a basic level in all schools.

**Cabinet Members:**

- Housing should be looked at across all of the groups and then presented back to O&S Panel.  
Mental Health CYP specific.  
Domestic Violence and Abuse.
- I still want to see scrutiny look at promoting tourism within our Borough, with particular emphasis on the theatre offer, but extending across the borough. I'd also like it to look at ways to further encourage the Tech industry in Merton.
- Business rates proposals by Govt.
- Detailed scrutiny of the STP would be useful. To date it has been slightly ad hoc as the document was being drawn up in private - now it is a public document the panel should play a part in scrutinising it.

**Q14: Please use this box for any further comments/suggestions you have about the overview and scrutiny function, including how it can be improved.****Members of the scrutiny Commission or Panels:**

- I believe the panel should receive the recorded minutes soon after that Panel meeting instead of shortly before the next meeting.
- Really comprehensive support from Stella and Julia.
- Support and advice from officers on this panel has been superb.
- Scrutiny can only be as good as residents' willingness to perceive it as a channel for democratic engagement with the council, and members' recognition of it as a means of influencing change for the benefit of residents.
- The usefulness of scrutiny would improve if members felt more able to engage in a proper debate. Even if, sadly, voting seems to go along strict party lines (data on this point would be interesting) at least there could be more engagement with some of the topics. Agenda items need to be presented in a way that encourages debate on key issues so that we get to the facts that matter, we can identify not just successes but where improvements are needed and we can debate problems and solutions.
- At times I think scrutiny does not work because not enough focus is given by members on panels to act like the government select committees, unfortunately the Labour members on panels are just mouthpieces of the administration and have no backbone and just try to silence discussion and not be helpful. Maybe a review of how committee members are appointed needs reviewing. Occasionally it has worked well, especially when we scrutinised CHMP.
- It needs to be more objective and less subjective, otherwise it is frustrating and disheartening
- Scrutiny process is ok as a way for cllr to stay informed but it does not meaningfully impact the decision making process.
- Still need to try and take politics out of the scrutiny process - could be a really useful tool to hold the administration to account but so often fails.
- Chairs have been good.
- My only concern is about all the Cllrs reading the papers in advance of the meeting. I'm not sure they do this and the level of questions and as such scrutiny suffers as a result. Not sure what can be done about this.
- I believe that scrutiny would benefit from being involved more in target setting. Perhaps a task group analysis and suggesting. Training on how targets are set and criteria etc.
- Dreadful. Nearly as bad as full council meetings. Let's have some democracy.

**Other non-executive Members:**

- The Scrutiny function is important in providing not only cross party work but hopefully checks and balances.
- The Task Groups are very good and enable in depth discussion on potential policy direction.
- More training should be made available.
- I haven't sat on a scrutiny panel for a long time, so don't feel qualified to comment on how they operate now. I have sat on the Borough Plan Advisory Panel for many years, but that is not in the options to comment on. Also, it operates in a different way to the other panels. Support and advice from officers on this panel has been superb.

**Cabinet Members:**

- As a cabinet member, I'd really like to see a more even challenge across the Parties and across the board. The Opposition tends towards party politics and obstructionism, and the ruling party tends towards defensiveness and silence. We could do better.
- Keep up the good work.

**List of proposed action points**

1. The scrutiny team will continue to improve both the content and delivery of the survey to maximise completion online and reduce the potential for inputting errors and duplicate responses.
2. Alongside the use of quantitative methods, the scrutiny team will use qualitative methods to explore the findings more fully. A number of in-depth interviews will be conducted immediately after the survey period
3. The scrutiny team will explore what more can be done to ensure all members have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Commission/Panel work programmes.
4. The scrutiny team will evaluate the individual rapporteur scrutiny model and assess how its potential could be expanded. If appropriate, the team will continue to explore a range of opportunities that support Members to conduct in-depth rapporteur scrutiny reviews which make effective use of the time available.
5. The scrutiny team will, as part of the work programme process, explore with chairs and vice chairs the use of external experts, cross-party pre meetings where appropriate to agree lines of questioning and support with identifying potential questions for witnesses
6. The scrutiny team will work with officers to understand what could be done to improve the quality and presentation of evidence provided to scrutiny meetings..
7. That the Head of Democracy Services will, in discussion with HR (which has responsibility for Member development and training) ensure that appropriate training sessions are offered on all the areas identified by the survey during the municipal year.
8. The Head of Democracy Services will ensure the promotion of member training opportunities in a timely way to maximise the take-up.

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