

Overview and Scrutiny

Overview and scrutiny is an important part of local government and is at the heart of a councillor's role as an elected representative. In this section you will find details about the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and their work, including the current Task & Finish Groups, and find out how you can become involved.

Scrutiny Aims

The aim of Overview and Scrutiny is to make decision-making processes more transparent, accountable, and inclusive and to improve services for people by being responsive to their needs. For scrutiny to be effective, the process must be open, fair, constructive, and positive. The aim is to challenge decisions so improvements can be made, not to apportion blame when things go wrong.

The scrutiny process should be inclusive and should aim to ensure that all those who wish to contribute - whether as councillors, officers, co-optees, specialists or members of the public giving evidence - feel valued and are able to speak freely and openly.

Overall, Overview and Scrutiny is about making a difference and improving the lives of the people who live and work in Copeland.

Scrutiny FAQs

1. How does Overview and Scrutiny work?

In Copeland, there is only one Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee is made up of 11 non-executive members appointed to reflect the political make-up of the Council. The Committee meet up every month and these meetings are open to the public.

The Committee also work in more informal ways, for example by holding workshops, going on site visits or looking at a topic in-depth by a small group of Members (sometimes called a Scrutiny Review but most commonly referred to in Copeland as a Task & Finish Group). The Committee also have an informal meeting once a month to discuss issues ahead of the next meeting. The Committee set their own work programme and produce an annual report on their activities.

2. How can you get involved?

There are several ways that you can get involved in the work of Overview and Scrutiny.

You could:

- Attend a meeting
- Suggest a topic for a Task & Finish Group
- Submit evidence to a Task & Finish Group

Attend a meeting

Members of the public are welcome to attend Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings to hear evidence and the discussions of Committee Members.

Suggest a topic for a scrutiny review

If you are concerned about an issue which is not being discussed by the Council or you have an idea for a detailed piece of work, please email scrutiny@copeland.gov.uk with the details of the idea and what you would like to see the achieved from this piece of work.

Submit evidence to a Task & Finish Group

You may be involved in the scrutiny process by giving evidence to the Committee or a Task and Finish Group on a particular issue. You may also be involved in a survey or public consultation event.

In all these cases, please contact us and we will talk to the Chair of the relevant Committee or Group.

3. Scrutiny – Who to Contact

You can contact the Scrutiny Officer by

- E-mail: scrutiny@copeland.gov.uk

- Telephone: 01946 598454

- By post:

Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny)

Electoral and Democratic Services

Copeland Borough Council

Market Hall, Market Place

Whitehaven

CA28 7JG

4. Subject Reviews

Subject reviews provide the opportunity to carry out in depth analysis of particularly challenging or problematic issues affecting the Council and the community. This work is usually carried out by a small group of Members who are referred to as a Task and Finish Group.

By its nature, a subject review will entail a good deal of work which can last several months. The Task and Finish Group can employ different ways of working to learn about a subject. For example, they can go on site visits, carry out mystery shopping and hold informal meetings. Often the main meetings in a subject review are “evidence sessions” – in these the Task & Finish Group will ask detailed questions of expert witnesses who they have invited specially.

At the end of the subject review, the Task and Finish Group will produce a report detailing their findings and will usually make several recommendations. These recommendations are presented to the Council’s Executive and any other agencies affected. Actions on the recommendations are monitored by the scrutiny committee to see if they have been put into practice and what improvements in service have been achieved.

Completed Subject Reviews

Please contact the Scrutiny Officer for the final reports of subject reviews:

- Recycling (2017 & 2021)
- Accessible Information Policy
- Cemetery Management
- Child Poverty

- Voluntary Living Wage
- Unacceptable Behaviour Policy
- Paperless
- Town Vision and Spatial Framework

5. Current Task & Finish Groups

There are a number of Task & Finish Groups that have been set up for 2021/22 that have either just started, are about to start, or will be starting later in the year. These are:

- Health & Wellbeing North Copeland
- Health & Wellbeing South Copeland
- Social Media Policy Review
- Effective Digital Engagement
- Housing

There are also two working groups:

- Budget Monitoring
- Budget Development Analysis

If you would like to provide any evidence to any of these Task & Finish Groups, would like to suggest a topic, or would like more information on the subjects being discussed, please contact the Scrutiny Officer using the contact information provided in Q3 above.

6. Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agendas, Minutes and Reports

Details of the Committee can be found [here](#).

Meeting Dates, Agendas, Minutes and Reports for the Committee can be found [here](#).

7. Executive Forward Plan & Decisions

Details of the Executive Decisions can be found [here](#).

Details of the Executive Forward Plan can be found [here](#).

8. Useful Links

[Allerdale Borough Council – Overview and Scrutiny](#)

[Carlisle City Council – Overview and Scrutiny](#)