

Verbatim comments from members

Q9. In what ways do you think the Commission/Panel business might be better organised?

- Timed agenda items
- I believe there should be a general agreed approach to chairing that doesn't obscure questions in "banks" of three and that allows follow up questions
- Use of pre-meetings or even if not meetings, pre-meeting email discussion to highlight areas of interest.
- Effective cross party scrutiny training
- Code of conduct training
- Understanding and challenging financial information, particularly for the budget process
- Capital expenditure on large items should be given clear and separate scrutiny.

Q11. Please use this box for any further comments/suggestions you have about the overview and scrutiny function, including how it can be improved.

- More site visits to service providers to see services in action/ holding a scrutiny meeting at the site of a service provider.
- We need to entirely rethink scrutiny. Chairs and Vice chairs, like parliamentary select committees should be chosen by secret ballot of all members (other than those in the cabinet), maintaining proportionality but ensuring independence from either explicit or implicit executive influence (as recommended by Labour MP Clive Betts). At the moment, Chairs appear to see their role as confirming everything is working well and apply little if any analytical rigour or display any great independence of thought. Members of scrutiny need to leave their party credentials outside the committee room door and work together to scrutinise cabinet members (not officers) rather than score party political points.
- Scrutiny is not appreciated/accepted in my experience and seen as an attack rather constructive criticism. This obstructs progress and leads to missed opportunities.
- Chairs should be selected by Panel Members.
- Scrutiny Panels aligned with Directorates.
- We also need to revamp the entire workings of scrutiny and cabinet to dovetail with the new directorates and, as with government, have a cabinet member and scrutiny panel assigned to each directorate. At the moment neither scrutiny nor cabinet responsibilities align with one another nor the new directorates leading to blurred lines of communication and responsibility.

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