

APPENDIX 3.1

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

GUIDE FOR INTERNAL WITNESSES



East Ayrshire
COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION

The Governance and Scrutiny Committee is a body which non-Cabinet Members can hold the Cabinet, as a decision-making body of the Council, to account. The aim of the Governance and Scrutiny process is to improve the Council's policies and ensure that services are performing well. The role of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee also extends to reviewing partnership work in delivery of local services.

GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY IN EAST AYRSHIRE

East Ayrshire Council has established a single Committee that carries out the Governance and Scrutiny role. The Governance and Scrutiny membership reflects the political balance of the full Council. Presently, the Committee has 11 Members: 5 Scottish National Party Members; 5 Scottish Labour Party Members; and 1 Scottish Conservative and Unionist Member. No Cabinet Members can be members of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee and the Chair of the Committee is a member of an Opposition party. Meetings of the Committee are open to members of the public subject to access to information provisions.

Each year, the Governance and Scrutiny Committee will determine a programme of reviews from topics received from a wide range of sources including Elected Members, the Cabinet, Council, and Officers.

GIVING EVIDENCE

In respect of the call-in process

Elected Members who have activated the call-in process will be required to explain their call-in requests and answer any questions.

The appropriate Cabinet portfolio Member and Senior Officer(s) will require to outline the reasons for the Cabinet's decision and answer any questions.

In terms of a Review

The Governance and Scrutiny Committee will invite Officers to attend Committee meetings and give evidence about an issue that they are believed to be an expert in, which the Committee is currently reviewing. If invited, Officers from Head of Service level and above will be required to attend; however, if deemed more appropriate a Head of Service may delegate the responsibility to one of their staff. In some cases the Committee will prepare a list of questions in advance, although Officers should not expect the Committee to restrict itself to those questions.

Although the prospect of being involved in the review process might appear daunting, it should be remembered that Officers are invited for their advice and expertise to help the Committee review a specific subject, not to be scrutinised by the Committee personally. Officers do not have to answer any questions that they feel unhappy with and it is fine for Officers to admit if they do not know the answer to a question.

Guidance and advice to those attending Review Meetings will be available from the Council's Governance and Scrutiny Support Officers. To ensure that Officers can prepare thoroughly for meetings the Support Team will aim to provide:

- the project plan for the review;
- timescales and deadlines for the review process;
- advice in regards to the purpose of the review;
- some pre-determined questions that Members would like to raise; and
- the Agenda and supporting documents for the meeting.

In the event that appropriate Officer attendance is not possible, the Committee may require the provision of written responses.

PRESENTING EVIDENCE TO THE COMMITTEE

Officers will occasionally be asked to provide an oral presentation to the Committee on a specific subject area; any request to make a presentation will be specified by the Lead Officer. If making an oral presentation, Officers are encouraged to provide a summary of their presentation in writing in time for circulation with Agenda papers. Providing a summary of the presentation will assist Committee Members to prepare for the meeting and ensures that the meeting will be more productive.

When preparing for a presentation at the Governance and Scrutiny Committee meeting please ensure that:

- you have read all the papers for the Committee meeting that you have been sent;
- any written information you provide is concise and factually accurate;
- any written information refers to the area under review as identified in the project plan;
- any abbreviations or technical terms are explained;
- any information provided includes suggestions for recommendations for change where appropriate;
- you are prepared to honestly express your views; and
- your views represent those of your Department.

Officers should note that the meetings of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee are held in public and information will not be withheld unless it is specified as being confidential in terms of the access to information arrangements.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

When undertaking a review, the Governance and Scrutiny Committee will require as much information as possible in order that they can make fully evidenced based recommendations. Whilst specific research and consultation will be commissioned by the Committee when necessary, it is recognised that most of the required information will already exist in the Council. Accordingly, the Governance and Scrutiny Committee will, through the Governance and Scrutiny Support Team, request Officers to provide all the information that relates to the specific objections of the review. With the exception of confidential information such documents should always be provided.

Requested information should be submitted to the Governance and Scrutiny Support Team in sufficient time for Committee deadlines, although it would be helpful if the information is provided as soon as possible after the request.

AFTER THE MEETING

Following each meeting of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee, the Governance and Scrutiny Support Team will circulate the Minutes of the meeting to all of the Officers that attended.

Once the draft final report of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee which outlines its recommendations, has been produced it will be circulated to all Officers involved in the review for comment. The Chair of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee and the Lead Officer will review any comments and make changes to the report if necessary. Governance and Scrutiny final reports will be considered by the Cabinet or where appropriate the Council.