

Chairman's Briefing Note

There is no detailed Council guidance in relation to the appropriateness or otherwise of questions at Scrutiny Committees. The *Constitution Article 6* contains some guidance as well as *The Royal Borough's Guide to Scrutiny*. The Council has also adopted the principles set out by the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

Scrutiny Questions should:

- Assist the Committee in its role as 'critical friend' when holding the Executive to account;
- Review Council policy, the way policies are implemented and their impact on local people;
- Scrutinise decisions before they are made and before they are implemented;
- Contribute to the development of policy by investigating issues of local concern and making recommendations to the Executive (and the Council's partners);
- Take an overview and keep an eye on the bigger picture / strategic issues (i.e. don't get lost in the detail);
- Be constructive and not judgemental;
- Follow key lines of enquiry and probe for further information where necessary;
- Challenge where necessary;
- Be clearly linked to the role and terms of reference of the committee.

Scrutiny questions should **not usually** be:

- Statements reflecting the member's views (i.e. they should be actual questions);
- Scrutinise non-key decisions made by officers under the scheme of delegation. Where necessary, such scrutiny should be confined to overall reviews of service performance.
- About casework or other issues that only affect one Ward (these should be sent to the appropriate Director);
- About an individual constituent or incident *unless* it is a specific example being used to demonstrate a systemic issue or failure;
- Political or party partisan.