

efficiency | quality | accountability

# Elected Members Masterclass

27/ 01/10

The Performance Management &  
Scrutiny Challenge (1)

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# Scrutiny & The Elected Member's Roles

- Collectively you are the Council: All empowerment and accountability flows from you
- Your communities have chosen you to represent them, their areas and their interests
- Because of that, you can and should address issues across all local services

# What That Means....

- Substantial empowerment and accountability for performance of Council
- Collective empowerment and accountability: DM and scrutiny
- Community leadership: Leadership of place critical

# What It Does Not Mean....

- You decide everything: delegation
- You need to know everything about everything
- You micro manage the services: governance & management
- You are individually empowered to instruct officers

The ability to scrutinise is a critical role

# Defining Scrutiny

- To examine
- To question: hold to account
- To challenge
- To ensure decisions are implemented
- To seek an explanation
- To make clear....transparent

# So...What Are We Looking At?

- Proposals for policy & service development
- Proposals for spending & investment
- Implementation of decisions
- Performance of services or functions against outcomes
- Performance of partnerships; ALMOS & joint ventures
- Citizens experience/issues with services
- Risk, liability & sustainability
- Assessments from external scrutiny

## Who is Scrutinising Whom, For What Purpose

- Administration → opposition
- Officers → elected members
- Council services → service users
- Council services → auditors & inspectors
- Elected members → scrutinised by voters
  
- But focus on people vs focus on quality of decision & delivery

# Exercise

1. How satisfied are you with how scrutiny currently operates within your council?
2. What are the biggest challenges that you face in undertaking scrutiny within your council – how consistent are these issues with others in your group?
3. What could be done to improve how scrutiny currently operates within your council?

# Points

- No member could possibly scrutinise everything (committees, portfolios)
- Members could not do it for themselves (support, trust of officers)
- Members make decisions & scrutinise them (administrations, oppositions, cabinet ↔ assembly)
- Public accountability (1) – explanation; evidence; responsiveness
- Public accountability (2) – meeting statutory requirements including Best Value

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The Performance Management &  
Scrutiny Challenge (2): Scrutiny Models

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# The D.M & Scrutiny Process

- Post mortem model: After the fact; retrospective accountability; scrutiny follows decision making
- Continuous improvement model: Dynamic scrutiny across the policy development, decision making & implementation cycle

Scrutiny vs Audit

# The Conventional Model

- Administration & opposition
- Committee based: DM & scrutiny (balanced representation: chairs, convenors)
- Separate Audit Committee: BV as part of remit
- Periodic meetings for performance review
- Supported by: Efficiency scrutinies; BV reviews; M/O groups

# Issues

- Weak scrutiny of policy (but political groups etc)
- Limited scrutiny of performance: why beat yourself up?
- Marginalisation of opposition: balance
- Local ward end of scrutiny strongest but operational, not systematic

## Committees & Separate Scrutiny Committee

- Often 'audit & scrutiny'
- Led by opposition not administration but
- Workload, resourcing & support
- Party political advantage

## Cabinets & Executives

- Separation of DM & scrutiny: executive & 'assembly'
- Portfolio holders: rapid decision making
- Scrutiny or select committees: policy, implementation, performance
- All party 'backbencher' composition

# Issues

- Empowerment of executive: post-mortem scrutiny
- Assumes frontbench/backbench split not parties
- Support & resourcing for scrutiny: chief officers, advisors, etc.

# Potential Scrutiny Elements

- Audit committee
- Central scrutiny committee: Major decisions & developments; pre decision making
- Committees sitting quarterly as performance & improvement sub: committees
- M.M.W. Performance meeting: Open to public
- Cross cutting M/O groups: Service review; efficiency & productivity; asset management etc

# Key Points

- All models separate out decision making & scrutiny: political business process & cycle
- Scrutiny needs to happen at the right level & time to be effective, to add value
- Scrutiny is of decision & delivery of outcomes not people
- Scrutiny needs designed to reflect democratic balance

## Making Scrutiny Work

- Get the political business process right
- Responsibility not partisan advantage
- Good support for elected members

# The Political Business: Process

- ‘Pre: pre-agenda’: context, issues & broad options
- ‘Pre-agenda’: developed proposals & options: all party briefings
- Decision making: committee & council
- Scrutiny: basis for decisions, implementation, impact, value & propriety  
(NB. Audit/Scrutiny split)

‘No surprises’ principle

Support for members across process: planned & resourced

## Improving Scrutiny & Decision Making – The Pre Pre Agenda

- To agree context/ issues/ broad options that should be further developed
- Avoid wasting members/ officers time
- Give more in-depth understanding to members of the background to allow fuller scrutiny of developed proposals
- Open & restricted seminars/ party group briefings/ briefing portfolio holders

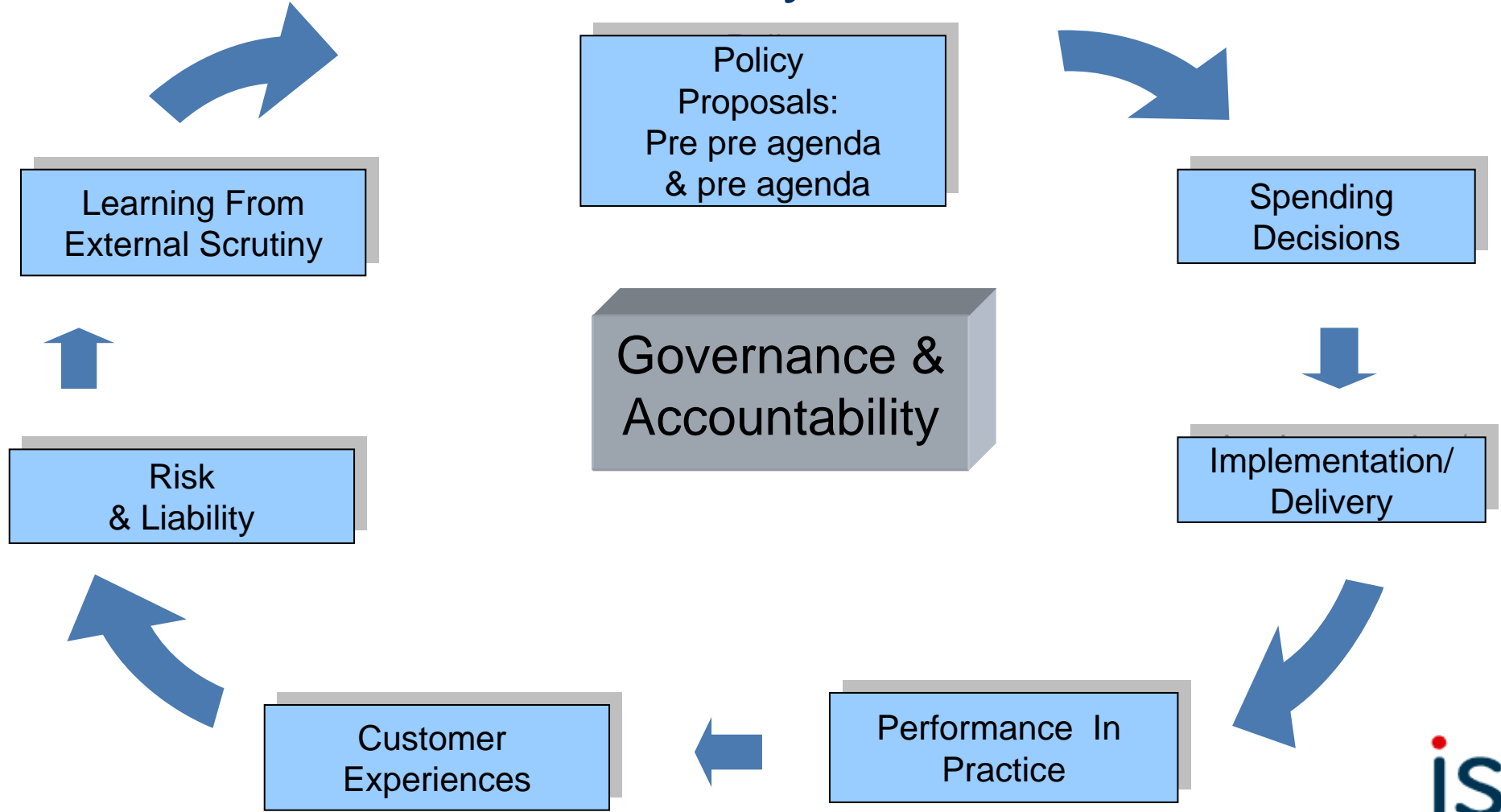
## The Pre Agenda

- Occurs once developed proposals exist
- To work well needs a good pre pre agenda stage
- Need to ensure members input is built in to proposals – legitimate democratic role
- Should have challenge & testing of proposals built in before they go further

# Mechanisms

- Inclusive and/or exclusive seminars
- Party group briefings
- M/O working groups, strategy or review groups
- Scope for factual clarification: Pre-agenda ↔ Council
- Demarcation of scrutiny roles: Committees; audit performance; MMW and improvement

# The Scrutiny Process



# End Points

- Scrutiny applies across the political process
- Different mechanisms at different levels are appropriate
- All members duty