

# Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/24



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# Chair's Foreword

I'm pleased to present the annual report on Overview and Scrutiny in Lewisham. It gives a summary of the work undertaken by councillors across our Overview and Scrutiny Committee, select committees and task and finish groups. Through monitoring, evaluation and policy development, we champion the council's values of trustworthiness and accountability, offering independent oversight and constructive challenge.

As elected representatives, we are accountable to the public. In turn, we hold the council and its partners accountable on their behalf, helping to ensure that public good is at the heart of decision making. It is our close relationships with the communities we represent that gives us an understanding of how residents experience life in Lewisham. It is through this lens that we judge the council and its partners' performance and make recommendations in support of improved outcomes for residents.

At the same time, we have actively sought the direct input of residents, local experts, and national specialists. Our Children and Young People's Select Committee was joined by young people at each of its meetings, and the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny recognised our Housing Select Committee and Private Renter Sector Task and Finish Group for good practice in resident engagement.

Alongside 34 contributions from Mayor and Cabinet in scrutiny meetings, we saw participation from 103 independent experts, stakeholders and partners. Over the past year, we reviewed 116 items, including 31 pieces of policy development and pre-decision scrutiny, 59 pieces of performance monitoring and 31 information items.

In support of scrutiny, we have used a wide range of tools, from resident interviews and surveys to expert testimonies, site visits, and comprehensive desktop research – an overview of which is found in this report. This work wouldn't be possible without the dedication of the council's brilliant scrutiny officers.

They are the glue that holds everything together, and their professionalism and thoroughness ensures our scrutiny work is effective.

It is a challenging time for local government. Like many other councils, Lewisham Council faces significant pressures in funding services, recruiting staff, and meeting the growing demand for social and temporary housing. We are also tasked with improving the condition of our housing stock and tackling anti-social behaviour, all within tight budgetary constraints.

As the council and its partners navigate these challenges, scrutiny plays a crucial role as a critical friend; monitoring this work, promoting sound decision-making, and helping ensure they deliver the best possible outcomes for our community.



**Cllr Rudi Schmidt**  
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny

# About Overview and Scrutiny in Lewisham

Overview and scrutiny provides an independent ‘check and balance’ to the Council’s Mayor and Cabinet. It contributes, through that accountability and the evidence-based recommendations it makes, to the improvement of services for the benefit of residents.

At Lewisham Council, to conduct effective scrutiny, we:

- Prioritise
- Are independent
- Work collectively
- Engage with residents and service users
- Make recommendations which are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound

## New structure

Following a review of the constitution, a new Overview and Scrutiny Committee of ten members was established. This replaced the old Overview and Scrutiny Committee consisting of all non-executive members, which was felt to be unwieldy; and the Overview and Scrutiny Business Panel which dealt with call-in.

The new committee meets at least three times a year to agree the overall scrutiny work programme and scrutinise key strategic and cross-cutting matters. OSC (Call-in) meets as required to call-in Mayor and Cabinet decisions.

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Meets at least once a year and is ultimately responsible for overview and scrutiny
- Delegates work to other scrutiny bodies - six select committees and three task and finish groups, all of which are formally sub-committees of overview and scrutiny
- Co-ordinates the work programmes of select committees
- The six select committees draw up work programmes each year to hold the Mayor and senior officers to account for decisions, check performance, examine issues in depth, and make recommendations for policy development
- Responsibility for scrutinising health services and health issues sits with the Healthier Communities Select Committee, which makes suggestions to the local health trusts for action and improvements
- The Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee has responsibility for fulfilling the overview and scrutiny functions in relation to crime reduction and equality of opportunity
- Up to three time limited task and finish groups operate at any one time to investigate topical issues of concern
- Calls in decisions of Mayor and Cabinet



# Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees – 2023/24



Cllr Rudi Schmidt, Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Luke Sorba, Children and Young People Select Committee



Cllr Chris Best, Healthier Communities Select Committee



Cllr Stephen Penfold, Housing Select Committee



Cllr James Rathbone, Public Accounts Select Committee



Cllr Liam Shrivastava, Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee

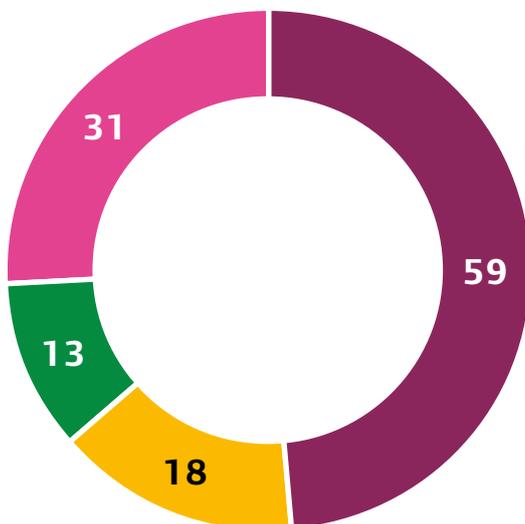


Cllr James Royston, Sustainable Development Select Committee

# Scrutiny Committees in Numbers



Formal scrutiny items by type\*



- Performance monitoring
- Pre-decision scrutiny
- Policy development
- For information only

\* some items fell within more than one category so are counted multiple times.

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

In 2023/24, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee focussed its scrutiny on a few key strategic matters. There were no call-ins in 2023/24.

## Creating a developer engagement protocol

In July 2023, Committee fed into a new, pre-application engagement ‘good practice guide’ and heard from a range of key stakeholders and expert witnesses, including the Director of Planning, the Head of Development Management, Developer representatives (from Landsec), Engagement representatives (from Terrapin) and resident campaign representatives (from Community Plan). The Committee made a range of recommendations focused on equalities and accessibility, empowering residents, and making engagement meaningful.

## Asset Management

In October 2023 the Committee fed into the development of a new asset management strategy aimed at maintaining operational assets; meeting statutory obligations; supporting corporate priorities; and effectively dealing with deteriorating assets. The Committee recommended that there should be a wider consideration of the value of land with its economic value, geographical location and social value all key considerations in the decision-making process for the development or disposals of assets. Members also recommended that the Council should consider adopting a wider acquisition strategy and a more ambitious investment partnership strategy. The Committee reiterated that equalities considerations should be part of all asset management decisions; and asked for clarity to be provided in relation to existing and potential plans for meeting Lewisham’s net zero ambition. Later in the year, the Committee requested that members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be notified of any disposals at the same time that the members representing the ward in which the property is situated, are informed.

## Taking a trauma-informed approach to delivering services

In the run-up to the meeting in March 2024, the Chair met a trauma informed coach, a provider of mental health and wellbeing support for marginalised and racialised communities, and the outgoing Chair of Lewisham’s Safeguarding Adults Board, and fed back to the Committee. At the meeting, the Committee heard from the Head of the Youth Justice Service, who was pioneering a trauma informed approach at Lewisham. Members recommended that the Council should establish a high-level, corporate level, trauma-informed approach to delivering its services, linked to the developing People and Organisational Development Strategy; that appropriate training be rolled out to all staff; that frontline services review the language they use in interactions with residents so that it is relatable, humane, inclusive, clear and transparent; and that the wellbeing of staff and elected members who regularly interact with residents experiencing distress or trauma or their effects be prioritised and supported.

## Thames Water

The Committee maintained a watching brief over Thames Water throughout the year, and in September 2023, following on from a scrutiny session in February 2023, hosted a briefing covering clean and wastewater initiatives. Thames Water commented that “In response to feedback received during this year’s Lewisham scrutiny, we are committed to fostering enhanced collaboration between us, the Councillors, and Officers of Lewisham Council. Our goal is clear: to facilitate open communication and keep councillors and officers well-informed about our ongoing initiatives and progress.” Thames Water attended a formal meeting in March 2024 to provide an update on the implementation of previous scrutiny recommendations. It was agreed that Thames Water should return to the Committee in a year’s time to address the implementation of three of the Committee’s previous recommendations with Lewisham-specific data.

# Children and Young People Select Committee Highlights



In 2023/24, the Children and Young People Select Committee considered nine substantive items.

## Education

During 2024/25, the Committee considered six education topics, including post-16 options, holistic school improvement, Tackling Race Inequality in Lewisham Schools and school place planning. Key themes included:

- The impact of the cost-of-living crisis on pupils, particularly ones in sixth form.
- School Ofsted ratings, place planning/ sufficiency, attendance, phonics development, academic results, governing body support and behaviour policies.
- The use of data to identify patterns in attendance and attainment and use them to develop bespoke interventions.
- The extent of racial inequality in education and the support being delivered to tackle inequality for Black Caribbean children.

The year culminated in a second item on holistic school improvement attended by primary and secondary school headteachers. Drawing on its formal scrutiny throughout the year and a site visit to leading primary school, the Committee discussed with its witnesses:

- The rapidly changing education landscape, particularly children and families increased needs

in a context of reduced financial and human resources.

- The importance of schools valuing holistic education.
- The broader role being fulfilled by schools.
- The positive collaboration between schools and between schools and the Council despite the increasingly fragmented education system.

## Children and young people's well-being and social care

### Children's social care improvement

Prior to children's services receiving its improved Ofsted grading of Good, the Committee reviewed children's social care improvement. Key findings were:

- Services were recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic: demand was levelling off (although remained higher than before the pandemic) and the workforce was stabilising (although it was relatively inexperienced).
- Caseloads were high but reasonable and strong management oversight was in place to support staff.
- Family Practitioners were being recruited to augment and add experience to the social care workforce.
- Two thirds of practice was believed by services be good. However, Early Help had further to improve than Social Care.
- Fewer children were subject to statutory interventions than previously.

### Emotional well-being and mental health

In June, the Committee considered the work being undertaken to increase service reach and access, particularly for certain underrepresented groups. It challenged assessment waiting times and reviewed the work being undertaken to address them, including the provision of more preventative support, and the support available to young people awaiting assessment.

# Housing Select Committee Highlights

In 2023/24, the Committee considered 15 substantive items.

## Co-optee proposals

In its efforts to further enhance resident engagement and participation, Committee looked at proposals for having co-optees. It agreed to temporarily implement the informal attendee approach to gauge its uptake and effectiveness, resulting in the appointment of two informal co-optees – one from Regenter B3 and one from Lewisham Council housing (formerly Lewisham Homes). It was also agreed to include a third informal co-optee to represent the private renters in the borough, and this will be progressed in 2024/25. Having resident representatives on the committee is invaluable, providing essential perspectives and ensuring community voices are heard.

## Repairs update from major housing providers

Since March 2023, the Committee has annually invited all major housing providers in the borough to provide updates on their repairs service and other key metrics.

The Committee is proud of the good working relationship it has established with the 5 major housing providers (Clarion, Hyde, LandQ, Peabody, Southern Housing), who presented to the Committee in both 2023 and 2024. At the 2024 meeting attended by those housing providers, the Committee recommended that a standardised pro-forma be developed for providers to submit requested data and statistics, to ensure consistency and comprehensive coverage across all submissions. It was felt this structured approach would enhance evidence-based scrutiny. Additionally, the Committee made a referral to the Mayor and Cabinet asking them to investigate whether the Council could insist at nomination stage that Ground 8 is not used against Lewisham nominees (Ground 8 is a mandatory ground for possession when a tenant has more than 8 weeks of rent arrears).

## Scrutiny activity around the transition of Lewisham Homes

Lewisham Homes coming back in-house was a key change in Lewisham's housing landscape in 2023. Ensuring a seamless transition was paramount for Lewisham residents impacted by the change, as well as former Lewisham Homes staff transitioning to the Council. The Committee dedicated a significant amount of time to the scrutiny of the preparatory work for this transition, ensuring all necessary measures were in place for an efficient transition. Post-transition, the Committee received additional follow-on updates focusing on key issues arising from the transition, such as staff morale and retention, resident engagement, IT issues and the quality of repairs service. Acting as a critical friend, the Committee played an important role in safeguarding the interests of all involved parties.



# Public Accounts Select Committee Highlights

In 2023/24, the Committee considered 14 substantive items.

## Financial monitoring and budget stabilisation

The Committee maintained its oversight of budget pressures and overspending in the context of the ongoing financial challenge facing local government nationally. The Committee expressed its concern about the value of high-cost placements in children's social care as well as the ongoing challenges facing the children and young people directorate in managing within its budget.

The Committee acted on behalf of all members of Overview and Scrutiny to review budget cuts proposals as part of the development and scrutiny of the Council's 2024-25 budget.

## Temporary accommodation pressures

The Committee reviewed the approach being taken by officers to manage pressures in the budget for temporary accommodation. Members welcomed the efforts being made to mitigate the expense of high-

cost placements – as part of a coordinated plan to contain rising pressures in the newly formed Housing Directorate.

## Social value

In November 2023, the Committee received the first annual report against the council's new social value policy, adopted in 2022.

It was reported that social value was being directed to the most in-need causes, creating investment and opportunities in Lewisham and helping the council to tackle inequalities, and that the total impact would be greater than reported.

Following discussions, the Committee referred to the Mayor and Cabinet recommendations that key social value targets be included in the council's corporate performance report and that future consideration be given to tracking the equalities and socio-economic background of business owners and operators applying for opportunities in Lewisham's supply chain (with a view to increasing the representation of marginalised groups).



# Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee Highlights

## Community safety

### Public Spaces Protection Order

In June, the Committee reviewed proposals for a borough-wide Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) placing restrictions on the consumption of alcohol, drugs and other psychoactive substances, unauthorised encampments, amplified music and speech and dogs. The Committee received written submissions from a range of stakeholders and experts and its meeting was attended by the relevant Cabinet Member, Safer Communities officers, Metropolitan Police Service officers and a Senior Legal Advisor from the charity Release. It referred to the Mayor and Cabinet a range of areas warranting further consideration before the PSPO was progressed, resulting in significant further work being undertaken before the PSPO was finalised and implemented.

### Safer Lewisham Plan and Serious Violence Duty

In January 2024, at a meeting at which all statutory community safety partners were represented, the Committee reviewed the implementation of the Safer Lewisham Plan and the needs assessment and emerging strategic themes developed by the Safer Lewisham Partnership in response to the Serious Violence Duty. The Safer Communities Service resultingly agreed to share information on victim support with voluntary, faith and community organisations and the Committee further recommended that the use of Domestic Violence Protection Orders and Notices be reviewed.

## Community services

In November 2023, the Committee reviewed the performance of the Library and Information Service, which it prepared for by visiting hub and community libraries across the borough. The Committee considered the post-pandemic recovery, performance and sustainability of the service, the relative benefits

of community library model, a forthcoming review of the service and the potential for income generation by the redeveloped Lewisham Library and other libraries.

At the same meeting, the Committee reviewed Local Assemblies and Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy, key localist initiatives for the borough which were found to vary in effectiveness from ward to ward.

## Equalities

In September 2023, the Committee consider a broad item on equalities, consisting of an update on the implementation of recommendations made by the



Committee following its 2020 in-depth review *How Lewisham Embeds Equalities Across its Service Provision*, the emerging findings and recommendations of an external review of the council's approach to equalities, a review of the council's Single Equalities Framework, and the draft response to the recommendations of the Lewisham Disabled People's Commission Report.

The Committee made six recommendations, including regarding the involvement of more junior staff in strategic discussions regarding EDI, the clarity and purposiveness of the council's equality objectives and prisms, the duration of a disability policy officer role, the integration of EDI considerations in staff appraisals and one-to-ones and the consideration of equalities when evaluating service performance.

In January 2024, the Committee reviewed equality, diversity and inclusion matters relating to the council's workforce.

# Sustainable Development Select Committee Highlights

In 2023/24, the Sustainable Development Select Committee considered 14 substantive items.

## Active travel

The Committee maintained its focus on the Council's plans for improving active travel.

At every meeting, the Committee scrutinised the approaches being taken to develop new infrastructure and to secure new project funding for walking, cycling and streetscape improvements. The Committee also scrutinised the measures being taken to manage the council's relationship with dockless bike hire providers. Members were keen to ensure that the provision of new services to residents was carefully balanced with the changes in the use of public space.

The Committee's intervention through the year supported the development of the council's forthcoming active travel strategy and ensured that the council commitment to make it easier and more pleasant to get about Lewisham by foot or bike remains at the forefront of work in this area.

## Climate emergency action plan

The Committee scrutinised the revised climate emergency action plan. This included the review and consolidation of a number of the previous actions in the plan to align with emerging policy and practise. The Committee's comments led to changes in the plan before it was submitted to Mayor and Cabinet for approval.



# Healthier Communities Select Committee Highlights

In 2023/24, the Committee considered 15 substantive items.

## Improving our Mental Health Provision - Early intervention, prevention and the physical estate

The Committee has consistently emphasised the critical need to replace or rebuild the Ladywell Unit, recognising it as a top priority for the council.

To inform its work in this area, the Committee visited the Ladywell Unit and received a report from South London and Maudsley's NHS Trust (SLaM) regarding the proposal to replace the Unit. Unfortunately, the Ladywell Strategic Outline Case was rejected by the New Hospitals Programme, and it was announced by the Government that no funding for major NHS capital projects would be available until 2030 at the earliest. However, SLaM began developing a new service model specification for adult community mental health services, with Lewisham being chosen as the preferred borough for a pilot program. Whilst the Committee was pleased with Lewisham's selection as the pilot site, it stressed that the demand for inpatient beds would persist even with the new service model. The Chair also wrote to NHS England on behalf of the Committee, urging them to consider allocating capital funding to support the rebuilding of the Ladywell Unit in Lewisham.

## Health and Wellbeing Charter

The was instrumental in developing Lewisham's Health and Wellbeing Charter, which aims to establish a set of shared values and principles to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for residents, patients, and service users. A key aspect of the Charter's development was co-production, ensuring that all stakeholders had a voice in shaping its content.

The Committee actively engaged with officers on this matter on multiple occasions – at its meetings

in June 2022, February 2023, June 2023 and September 2023 – and had its final discussion on the Charter at its meeting in March 2024, where a few minor revisions were proposed. Following these adjustments, the Charter was presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board for agreement.

## South-East London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee highlights

The South-East London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (SEL JHOSC) is responsible for reviewing and scrutinising any matter, including, when required, substantial reconfiguration proposals, relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services covering more than one local authority area within the South East London Integrated Care System (ICS) – the London Boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark. Councillor Best chaired the SEL JHOSC in 2023/24.

In November 2021, a new service specification for children's cancer Principal Treatment Centres (PTCs) and paediatric oncology shared units was published. The key change was a requirement for each specialist children's cancer PTC to be on the same site as a paediatric intensive care unit for 0-15-year-olds. The SEL JHOSC was informed that to be compliant with the nationally agreed service specification, the service changes were required, including relocation. In April 2023, the Committee decided that this was a substantial variation on which they would like to be formally consulted. Following this decision, NHS England engaged with SEL JHOSC on this service change proposal through various formal meetings and informal briefings. Following consideration of the evidence and information presented to it, the Committee sent its formal response to NHS England on the 9 February 2024.

# Task and Finish Groups 2023/24

## Improving Scrutiny Task and Finish Group

In the context of prior reviews and proposals for the development of Overview and Scrutiny in Lewisham, the Task and Finish Group set out to achieve consensus amongst members of the best way to consolidate good practice. The Group also reflected on the ways in which scrutiny members review information and how relationships with executive councillors and senior officers are managed.

The Group explored four themes: influence, collaboration, impact and effectiveness. It made 12 recommendations, which can be summarised as:

- There be a scrutiny summit at the beginning of each municipal year at which scrutiny members receive training, Cabinet Members set out their priorities for the year, select committee chairs give an overview of the effectiveness of their committees in the previous year and select committee work programmes and potential task and finish group topics discussed.
- The development of a high-level corporate strategy implementation programme be developed each year, which could inform scrutiny work-planning, be considered.
- For each scrutiny committee, there be an identified cabinet member and executive director to coordinate with and they meet at least quarterly with the relevant committee chair.
- Committees focus on the implementation of the corporate strategy, and hold informal briefings rather than use formal committee meetings to consider items that do not provide opportunity to influence.

- Consideration be given to ensuring that scrutiny resources and committee time is assigned appropriately in the context of the council's changing duties and structure and committee terms of reference be realigned with the council's corporate priorities and structure.
- Committees trial an additional informal, remote session at which they receive updates on matters there is little opportunity to directly influence.
- That two alternative scrutiny structures be considered in relation to maintaining the current structure: five select committees formally meeting six times per year, plus three task and finish groups; or six select committees meeting six times per year, plus two task and finish groups.

One of the Group's recommendations was piloted early – as Lewisham's first annual scrutiny summit was held in Spring 2024.

The report and recommendations can be read in full at the following link: [lewisham.gov.uk/-/media/0-mayor-and-council/overview-and-scrutiny/improving-scrutiny-task-and-finish-group-report.pdf](https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/-/media/0-mayor-and-council/overview-and-scrutiny/improving-scrutiny-task-and-finish-group-report.pdf)



# Private Rented Sector in Lewisham TFG

The Private Rented Sector (PRS) in London has seen a significant growth since the 1990s, with the number of private renters reaching approximately 2.7 million as of 2021 (Census, 2021). Lewisham's PRS has followed a similar trajectory, with the number of households dependent on the PRS nearly doubling over the last two decades, as noted in Lewisham Council's Housing Strategy 2020-26. This trend underscores the increasing importance of addressing issues within the PRS.

The Private Rented Sector in Lewisham Task and Finish Group (TFG) was established to explore how the Council could improve its services for, and communication with residents in the private rented sector (PRS). The TFG concentrated on identifying key challenges and assessing the support already available, with the goal of identifying areas for improvement. The group also examined good practices from other councils to inform potential service enhancements in Lewisham.

Between October 2023 to August 2024, the TFG carried out extensive research. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges

within the PRS, TFG members engaged directly with private renters and landlords in Lewisham through surveys and focus group sessions. They also collaborated with various tenant advocacy organisations and with the UK's largest landlord association, the NRLA (National Residential Landlords Association). The TFG also consulted with officers from other councils to learn from their experiences and good practice.

Drawing from this comprehensive research and stakeholder engagement, the TFG put forward a detailed set of recommendations aimed at increasing support for PRS residents and enhancing the Council's communication and engagement with the sector. Those recommendations were submitted to the Mayor and Cabinet on 23 October 2024.

The report and recommendations can be read at the following link: [lewisham.gov.uk/-/media/0-mayor-and-council/overview-and-scrutiny/private-rented-sector-in-lewisham-task-and-finish-group-report-202324.pdf](https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/-/media/0-mayor-and-council/overview-and-scrutiny/private-rented-sector-in-lewisham-task-and-finish-group-report-202324.pdf)



# Youth Provision Task and Finish Group

Since 2011, local authority youth services across the country have been significantly reduced due to the funding pressures faced by councils. In London, over £240 million was cut from youth services and over 30 youth centres shut. Meanwhile, Lewisham Council has continued to deliver and fund youth services.

Between September 2023 and July 2024, the Youth Provision Task and Finish Group collected evidence from local, regional and national stakeholders and experts. The Task and Finish Group collaborated with a simultaneous review of youth provision conducted by Children and Young People's services.

Key Task and Finish Group (TFG) findings and recommendations submitted to the Mayor and Cabinet in October 2023 related to the following themes:

- Providing strategic leadership and coordination to the borough's diverse ecosystem of youth providers.
- Methodically assessing young people's needs and the sufficiency of services, including through improved data collection, and ensuring resources are deployed to maximum effect.

- Capturing and publicising the youth offer beyond the services provided and commissioned by the council.
- The importance of sustaining open-access youth work, positioning it as the focal point of youth services and making it more accessible.
- How youth work should be planned and evaluated.
- The development of training and development opportunities and career pathways for youth workers.
- Supporting providers to maximise external funding opportunities, including private philanthropy.

The report and recommendations can be read at the following link: [lewisham.gov.uk/-/media/0-mayor-and-council/overview-and-scrutiny/youth-provision-task-and-finish-group-report-202324.pdf](https://www.lewisham.gov.uk/-/media/0-mayor-and-council/overview-and-scrutiny/youth-provision-task-and-finish-group-report-202324.pdf)



# Training for Scrutiny Members

At the start of 2023/24 Scrutiny members engaged in a range of learning and development opportunities to keep their skills refreshed, in addition to member development opportunities available to all councillors throughout the year. Training for scrutiny members included:

## A bespoke session for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny delivered a session to the newly formed Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC). This was a chance to consider what Members wanted scrutiny to achieve in Lewisham and how this might be done. It covered making sure that scrutiny has a meaningful impact - including selecting the right topics and scrutinising them at the right time, in the right way. It also covered statutory scrutiny and call-in.

## Chairing skills

The Local Government Information Unit (LGiU) facilitated a session for Chairs which covered their role, characteristics of a well-chaired meeting, how

to prepare effectively, the skills a chair needs, and adapting to different styles of meeting.

## Questioning skills

The LGiU trained members on asking effective questions. The session covered preparation; active listening (and reflection); encouraging mutual understanding; being constructive; different types of question; how to avoid common questioning mistakes; and examples of poor practice and good practice questions.

## Looking ahead

At the end of the 2023/24 municipal year, it was agreed that a scrutiny summit should be held at the start of each municipal year to refresh members' skills, review the previous year's work and work programme for the year ahead. The inaugural summit was held in May 2024 – more information on this will be provided in next year's ann



# Communicating Scrutiny Activity and Impact

A key priority in 2023/24 for the new Chair of Overview and Scrutiny was publicising scrutiny work and communicating its impact. However, the ability of the organisation to publicise the work of Overview and Scrutiny was inhibited by several periods of pre-election restrictions on publicity during the year.

Working with the communications team, scrutiny meetings and investigations were publicised via the website and social media channels and an eFlyer template created so scrutiny committees could promote upcoming sessions.

Successful campaigns included the promotion on the council's social media platforms and resident newsletters of two surveys conducted by the Private Rented Sector Task and Finish Group (one aimed at renters, the other at landlords) and a call for evidence by the Youth Provision Task and Finish Group, providing opportunity for any interested stakeholders to contribute to the reviews and enriching the evidence available to the reviews. The Private Rented Sector Task and Finish Group recruited participants for landlord and tenant focus groups from its survey respondents.

The Improving Scrutiny Task and Finish Group promoted its work to councillors and senior officers and provided opportunity for them to share their views regarding how scrutiny could be improved.

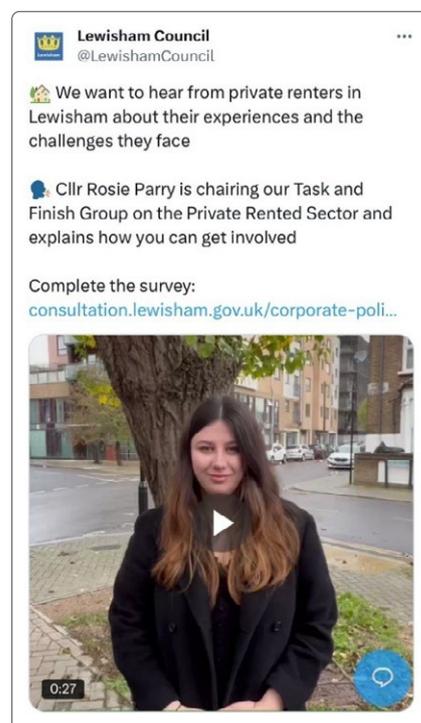
The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny published a good practice case study highlighting enhanced resident engagement regarding housing scrutiny, including the informal co-option of social housing leaseholders and tenants and a private renter to the Housing Select Committee and aforementioned evidence gathering undertaken by

the Private Rented Sector Task and Finish Group. The case study can be read here: [cfigs.org.uk/case-study/enhancing-resident-engagement-in-housing-scrutiny-in-lewisham/](https://cfigs.org.uk/case-study/enhancing-resident-engagement-in-housing-scrutiny-in-lewisham/)

The new Chair of Overview and Scrutiny provided regular written updates to all councillors regarding the work of the overview and scrutiny function throughout the year.

In line with a corporate drive to streamline the council's website, the service has restructured some of its website content, which it continues to maintain to communicate the role of overview and scrutiny and how residents can engage with it.

A key priority for next year will be creating a video explainer on scrutiny to help residents understand what scrutiny does and achieves, in addition to continuing the established practices set out above.





Lewisham

