



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN BIRMINGHAM – GETTING INVOLVED

Local backbench Councillors from the three political parties (Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat) sit on Scrutiny Committees and investigate issues of importance to Birmingham. They look at decisions and ways of working to make sure that they are fair, are value for money and deliver the best possible outcomes for Birmingham.

There are a number of Scrutiny Committees, each looking at a different theme or area of work. For more information on the different Scrutiny Committees, please visit www.birmingham.gov.uk/scrutiny.

Scrutiny Committees often set up Inquiry Groups to look at an issue in detail, based on the area of responsibility they have. These Inquiries vary in their extent and duration and will usually involve an Inquiry Group taking evidence and then presenting a report to City Council (all 120 local Councillors), or directly to Cabinet Members.

Submitting Written Evidence to Scrutiny Inquiries

When a Scrutiny Committee picks a topic to investigate, it will encourage written submissions from the public, organisations, businesses and other interested parties. Written evidence is particularly welcomed by Councillors as the outcome of the work will often depend on the quality of the evidence submitted.

Councillors may choose to publicise a general 'call for evidence' and in addition may contact organisations directly to ask for their support.

A number of questions or key lines of enquiry will be published, to highlight the areas the Inquiry Group are particularly interested in. Other information, such as the length of the Inquiry, the Councillor leading it and the Office's contact details will also be made available.

What Information to Include in a Written Submission

If you would like to submit a written statement for a particular Inquiry there are some general guidelines we would ask you to follow.

Written evidence should consist of a short statement, accompanied by a covering letter.

The covering letter should include:

- The name and contact details of the person or organisation submitting the evidence;
- Any request that the Inquiry treats the whole or part of the written submission as confidential. This should be stated clearly in order for the Inquiry Members to take this into consideration.



The written statement should ideally:

- Include a brief introduction about the individual or organisation submitting the evidence;
- Have numbered paragraphs so that the Inquiry Group can refer to parts of the submission easily;
- Include any factual information which might be useful to the Inquiry;
- Include any recommendations for the City Council which could be usefully considered;
- Not comment on matters which are currently before a court of law;

How to Send your Written Submission to Scrutiny

Inquiry Groups prefer to receive written submissions in an electronic format, preferably Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format. They also accept submissions by post. Your submission should be sent to the Scrutiny Office by the deadline stated for the Inquiry.

Postal address: The Scrutiny Office, Council House, Victoria Square, Birmingham, B1 1BB.

Email address: Iram.Choudry@birmingham.gov.uk

What Happens to your Written Submission

Written submissions will be collected and presented to the Inquiry group members to support their discussions and help the group to ask questions in their oral evidence gathering sessions.

The majority of Scrutiny Inquiries are held in public, so written submissions are likely to be used as public evidence, unless you specify a reason why it should be kept private. Public evidence which is used in the Inquiry is published on the City Council's website, www.birmingham.gov.uk/democracy.

The combination of written and oral evidence will help the Inquiry Group to come to some conclusions at the end of its investigation. The group will then produce a final report which may contain some recommendations for change.

The Scrutiny Office will keep those who submitted evidence up to date with the Inquiry's progress and the final public report will be made available.

If you would like to discuss how you might be involved in a Scrutiny Inquiry or to find out more generally how Scrutiny Committees and Inquiries work you should contact the Scrutiny Office in the first instance. The Scrutiny Office will be in position to answer general questions about Committees or put you in touch with the staff supporting Inquiries who will be able to respond to specific questions you have.