

# Keeping a check on decision makers

About Scrutiny in Lambeth

July 2009

## Get involved in the decision making process!

### Overview & Scrutiny

Every council has a scrutiny process in place, which involves a committee or a number of committees made up of councillors. These committees hold the council's decision makers to account publicly.

The scrutiny function within Lambeth seeks to improve the council's services by focusing on the issues that matter most to our residents. It reviews the key services and policies – both of the council and external providers – to make sure they work in the community's best interests. It does this by:

- **engaging with local people and taking on their needs and views, and**
- **making recommendations for improvement on services and policy options, to the cabinet, full council, council officers and our partners.**



### About scrutiny committees

There are six scrutiny committees within Lambeth Council. They are:

- Overview and Scrutiny committee.
- Children and Young People's Scrutiny sub-committee.
- Environment and Community Safety scrutiny sub-committee.
- Finance scrutiny sub-committee.
- Housing scrutiny sub-committee
- Health and Adult Services scrutiny sub-committee

Cabinet members are not allowed to sit on scrutiny committees, as it is their decisions and policies that are likely to be reviewed.

Each committee reflects the political balance of the council, and some of the committees are chaired by members of the opposition.

Each committee has a chair and a vice chair. Councillors in these posts can change annually at the annual general meeting of the council.

Scrutiny committees meet at least six times per year. The committees are **non-decision-making** but can make recommendations to decision-makers.

Scrutiny is supported by a small team of officers within Lambeth Council. The team provides independent advice and support to councillors to enable them to undertake their work. This includes research, analysing data, report preparation and procedural advice.

## About scrutiny commissions

Each year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and sub-committees identify areas for consideration and review. For in-depth, single issue reviews, we establish scrutiny commissions. These commissions are made up of between three and five non-cabinet, cross-party councillors.

Scrutiny commissions can look into any part of the council's services, and in the past they have looked at topics such as parking, climate change, street patrols, budget overspends and asbestos safety.



## How you can get involved

There are a range of ways that you can get involved in the scrutiny function at Lambeth. The council encourages local residents and citizens to take advantage of these engagement methods.

### Ask a public notice question

Any Lambeth resident, business rate payer or local councillor can ask a question or raise an issue about council services. These questions need to be of a strategic or broader nature because scrutiny cannot deal with individual complaints.

Visit [www.lambeth.gov.uk/askapublicquestion](http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/askapublicquestion) to ask a question online. Once the question is received and processed, you will receive a written answer within 15 days. You may then attend the committee meeting to speak to the councillors and council officers directly. Your question may lead to an investigation or review of the issue you raise, and could be

very important for other people in the borough affected by the same issue.

### Suggest a commission or topic for scrutiny

Members involved in the scrutiny process are keen to investigate and review the issues that matter to the people of Lambeth.

If you feel there is something that you would like our scrutiny committees to investigate further then download and complete the scrutiny suggestion form from our website. Your suggestion will be considered by the committee as part of the work programming process undertaken at each meeting and may lead to an investigation or review of the issue you raise.

### Co-option

Lambeth Council can appoint up to three people as non-voting co-optees. Co-optees may also be appointed to commissions. If you would like to be considered as a co-optee for a particular commission or committee please contact the Scrutiny Team on the details below.

### Come to a committee meeting

All scrutiny committee and commission meetings are open to the public. Please check our calendar at [www.lambeth.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/scrutiny) or give us a call and we can give you the information over the phone.

## Contact the scrutiny team

**Email:** [scrutiny@lambeth.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@lambeth.gov.uk)

**Phone us:** 020 7926 2173

**Write to us:**

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