Making Scrutiny Work

24 January 2024
Michael Guest

1

Objectives

- Consider the **latest context for Scrutiny**
- How to **set up and organise** a resident scrutiny panel
- What **support and resources** it should receive
- The **objectives and purpose** of scrutiny
- How to **choose** what to scrutinise
- **Methods** that can be used in a scrutiny
- How to work with the **landlord body**
- How to **source good practice** for the service being scrutinised
- The principles of producing an **effective report**
- How to ensure a rigorous and robust set of **conclusions**
- How to develop **recommendations** from those conclusions
- How to ensure the recommendations are **implemented**

2

	Programme
10.00	Welcome and introductions
	Latest context to Scrutiny. Presentation and whole group discussion
	What would we say the ***objectives*** of *Resident Scrutiny* should be? – Group discussion and feedback
	Let's get started! **Setting up** and **support** we'll need. Presentation and whole group discussion
	How do we **choose** what to Scrutinise? Group discussion and feedback
	How do we **choose** what to Scrutinise? Some thoughts to add to yours. Presentation
	Break
	Methods that can be used. Presentation and whole group discussion
	What have **we found to work best**? Paired discussion and feedback
	Working with the **landlord body** – Presentation and whole group discussion
12.30	Break
1.15	**Finding good practice** to support your Scrutiny. Presentation and whole group discussion
	Reaching robust conclusions. Where teamwork comes into action. Presentation and whole group discussion
	Break
	Shape of the report – Presentation and whole group discussion
	We have our conclusions – **What and how to recommend** – Presentation and whole group discussion
	Ensuring implementation – Presentation and whole group discussion
3.00	Close

3

Latest context to Scrutiny

4

Latest context to Scrutiny

- The Social Housing White Paper: "The Charter For Social Housing Residents" (Nov 2020)
- Building Safety Act 2022
- A new approach to Complaints Resolution
- Decent Homes Plus
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 – Return of Consumer Regulation, inc. Tenant Satisfaction Measures - TSMs

Latest context to Scrutiny

The Social Housing White Paper: "The Charter For Social Housing Residents" (Nov 2020)

1. To be **safe** in your home
2. To **know** how your **landlord is performing**
3. To have your **complaints** dealt with **promptly and fairly**
4. To be **treated with respect**, backed by a **strong consumer regulator for tenants**
5. To have your **voice heard by your landlord**
6. To have a **good quality home** and **neighbourhood** to live in
7. To be supported to take your **first step to ownership**

Latest context to Scrutiny ...(cont'd)

A return to consumer regulation and inspection

The charter proposes "a similar level of regulatory oversight of both the consumer and economic standards". The approach to **consumer regulation** will be "proactive, proportionate, outcome focused and risk-based"

What would we say the *objectives* of *Resident Scrutiny* should be?

Discussion and feedback

What would we say the *objectives* of *resident scrutiny* should be?

Perhaps summed up in one sentence?

To hold our landlord to account

...for

- The **services** that we receive
- How our landlord body is **run**
- **Value for Money** achieved
- **Resident satisfaction** achieved
- **Progress and improvements** to be made

Let's get started!

Setting up and support we will need

Let's get started – setting up and support we will need

Setting up:

- **Publicity** for new residents
- **Existing** involved residents – but **distinguish scrutiny role**
- **Define** what **scrutiny** is, why it is being carried out
- **Role descriptions** and **protocols**
- **Support** – see next slide
- **Avoid over formality** – i.e., a 'committee', agendas and minutes
- **Enable a range of views**
- **Enable a range of contributions** taking into account things like people's other commitments, geography of the area
- Make it **realistic, achievable… attractive**

Let's get started – setting up and support we will need …(cont'd)

Support:

- Accommodation
- IT
- Communication
- Administration
- Transport
- Organisation and logistics
- 'Sponsor'
- Independent advice
- Corporate 'buy in'

Further context

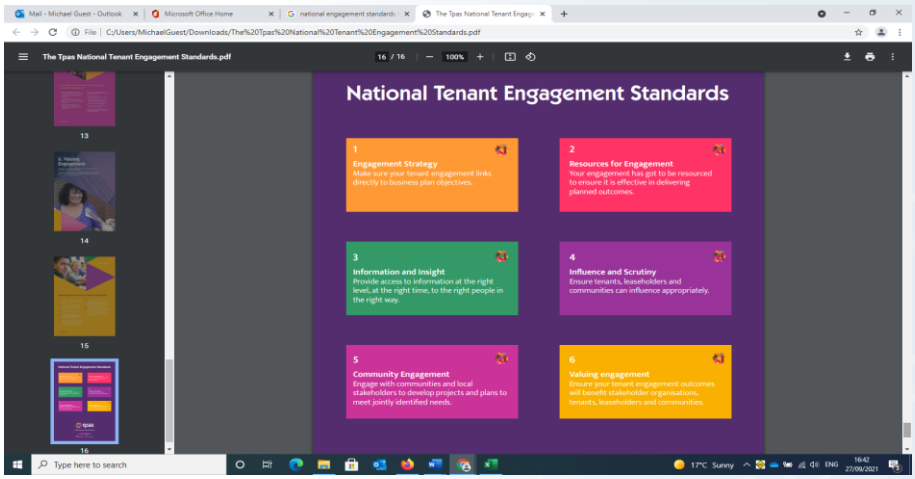
- Meeting (at least) the **Regulatory** requirement
- **Tenant Empowerment and Involvement** Standard
  - Customer choice and complaints
  - Involvement and Empowerment
    - **Including enabling effective Scrutiny**
  - Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants
- Current consultation on a revised **Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard**

Together with Tenants – National Housing Federation – 20 October 2020

A **four-point plan**

- A new requirement in the National Housing Federation Code of Governance for **boards to be accountable to their residents**
- A new **Together with Tenants charter**
- **Resident oversight and reporting** of progress against the charter
- Giving residents **a stronger collective voice** with the regulator

National Tenant Engagement Standards - Tpas



How do we choose what to Scrutinise?

Discussion and feedback

How do we choose what to scrutinise? Some thoughts to add to yours

17

How do we choose what to scrutinise? Some thoughts to add to yours

- Looking at **KPIs/TSMs**, benchmarking and other performance data – what are the less well performing areas?
- **Resident satisfaction** feedback – Including **TSMs** again
- Reports from **other parts of the resident involvement** arrangements
- Either **general or local** arrangements
- **Beware of 'anecdotal evidence',** but can't be ruled out
- Coinciding with **internal matters**, such as policy reviews
- **Suggestions** from management
- **Previous** scrutinies
- Consider **timing**
- Consider **achievability and relevance**

18

Scoping

- We've decided what to Scrutinise
- How do we define what we mean?
- *Scoping*
- What to include, not include
- Acts as our discipline during the Scrutiny – make realistic and achievable

Methods that can be used

Presentation and whole group discussion

Methods include:

- Call for **documents**
- Resident **inspection**
- **Mystery shopping**
- Engaging with other residents
- Resident **surveys**
- **Focus groups**
- **Briefings**
- **Interviews** of staff and others (e.g., contractors) – asking the right questions
- Benchmarking, good practice and peer **review**
- Meeting with **external agencies**
- Meeting with **good practice** advisors
- **Performance**, satisfaction (including TSMs) and complaints data

What have we found to work best?

Discussion and feedback

Working with the landlord body

23

Working with the landlord body

- **Agree** the purpose and principles
- **Prepare** – leadership may be committed to scrutiny, but are operational staff?
- Present the **mutual benefit**
- Ensure **appropriate behaviour**, based upon protocols that you have agreed
- These include **not seeking 'favour'** through being involved in scrutiny
- Or showing **wrong 'attitude'**
- Also include appropriate **respect for confidentiality**
- Scrutiny is about a **service, function**... not individual staff members
- Have an internal **'sponsor'**
- Develop and maintain **trust**
- No surprises
- Round table

24

Finding good practice to support your scrutiny

25

Finding good practice to support your scrutiny

- HQN
- Chartered Institute of Housing
- National Housing Federation
- Local Government Association
- London Councils
- Local and other universities and colleges
- Your own networks, peer groups
- Literature research – the range of journals, etc
- Web research
- Independent Advisor

26

Reaching robust conclusions

27

The importance of teamwork

- All equal
- Lead role
- Contributions
- Specialist areas
- Group Decision Making
- Constructive challenge
- How to deal with greater knowledge of a team member

28

Reaching robust conclusions

- **Fundamental** to a scrutiny report
- Conclusions must have been **rigorously arrived at**
- Although others can disagree with them, your **evidenced based** conclusions should **not be undermined**
- So, ***evidence based***
- No **undue influence** from one or so members of the team
- Challenged and tested by **all members of the team**

Reaching robust conclusions ...(cont'd)

- This is an exercise in **team decision making**
- Employ the method of **team consensus** in reaching its decision
- Must be agreed to some extent by **each team member** before it becomes part of the team's decision
- **Consensus** is difficult to reach
- Approach the task on the **basis of logic**
- Avoid changing your mind **only in order to reach agreement** and avoid conflict
- Support only solutions with which you are able to agree somewhat at least

Reaching robust conclusions ...(cont'd)

- **Avoid 'conflict reducing' techniques** such as a majority vote, averaging or trading in reaching decisions
- View **differences of opinion as helpful** rather than a hindrance in decision-making
- View **initial agreement** as **suspect**

Reaching robust conclusions – some other factors

- Develop the team's own **self confidence**
- Achieved via, for example, **training**
- Also, taking time out from scrutiny for **team development**
- Get to **know each other**
- Develop **trust and respect**
- It's okay to **ask for help outside the team**, e.g., Independent Advisor
- But they are **your conclusions**

Shape of the report

33

Shape of the report

1. **Introduction** – including ***scope*** of the scrutiny
2. **Context** of the service (or function)
3. **Process** followed by the scrutiny (methods). Including scrutiny support
4. **Findings** – factual, no opinions or conclusions at this stage
5. **Conclusions** – all linked to evidence ('evidence based')
6. **Recommendations** – all linked to conclusions
7. **Appendices** (if and as appropriate, maybe authoritative sources)

34

We have our conclusions

What and how to **recommend**

35

What and how to recommend

- All **arise from** an (evidence based) **conclusion**
- But **not** one recommendation for each conclusion
- **More limited number,** make **achievable** for the housing organisation
- **Reasonable**
- **SMART**
- Such make it easy for the managers to **'mirror'** in their **action plan**
- Discuss with the whole report at a **'round table'**
- Some may be **negotiable,** e.g., '**round table'**
- But **do not be deflected** from your evidence and conclusions
- What you really, reasonably, would **want to see happen. Improvement**

36

Round table

- No surprises
- Role of 'round table'
- What is it for?
- What happens there?

37

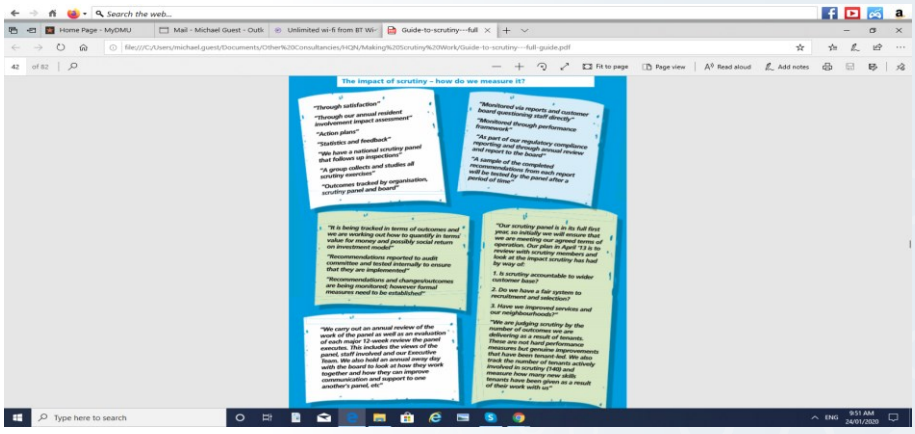
Ensuring implementation

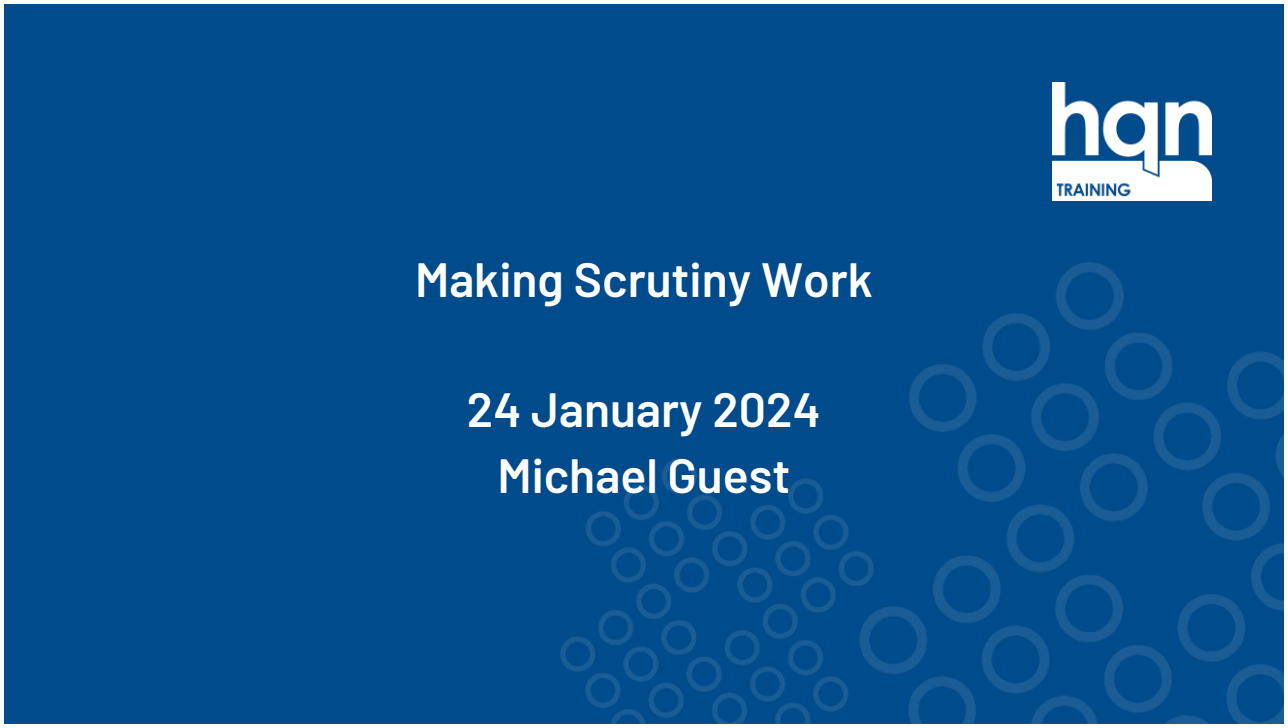
38

Ensuring implementation

- Report into the ***governance* level** of the organisation
- That is, board, board committee for a Housing Association
- **Action** plan
- **Monitor** – tenant monitoring arrangements
- **Monitor** – management
- **Monitor** – governance
- Agreed process for **dealing with slippage** and/or non implementation
- **Follow up** scrutinies

Measuring the Impact – Guide to Scrutiny, HQN




hqn
TRAINING
Making Scrutiny Work
24 January 2024
Michael Guest

41