

Single Day Inquiries / Single Issue Inquiries Briefing Note

What is a Scrutiny Inquiry Day: These are a mechanism for short single topic scrutiny, for use where a formal Panel meeting may not be effective or appropriate, or to review progress in an area which has already been the subject of scrutiny work.

The aim is to develop a greater understanding of an issue that involves many organisations (in addition to the Council) and then develop ways forward/recommendations in an inclusive manner, in a workshop-style setting.

In an inquiry like this, it is on-the-day assessment of findings, and development of conclusions and recommendations (in conjunction with other interested parties) that differs from a traditional “contributor session” in more complex OS reviews.

Systems and approaches

- Usually informal meeting with attendees invited from all relevant organisations.
- Good lead-in time needed (approx 3 months recommended)
- Preparation pack circulated prior to meeting, as a sound basic knowledge is assumed at the meeting.
- Issue assessed and recommendations made in one day.
- Days usually include: Presentation by key speaker, questions and answer session, break out groups discussing specific topics (sometimes note takers and facilitators required) followed by a plenary session.
- Anyone invited to attend is able to make proposals and amendments.

Purpose and benefits

- By drawing people from different organisations to discuss a single topic it helps focus minds, showing differing organisational objectives and how these can join up.
- Councillors hear a debate between experts and interested parties
- Councillors act as community leaders in developing joint recommendations, that may also relate to other organisations
- Greater “buy-in” to recommendations by other organisations
- Networking lunch break.
- Reduces timescales and proportional, more economical approach for some issues

Involvement of other organisations

- Helps the working relationship between organisations (including the Council), helping to understanding of the impact of decisions on other organisations.
- Councillors are able to spend a whole day hearing all the points of view and listen to many experts or organisations.
- Other organisations more likely to participate and sign up to outcomes of the day if have contributed to outcomes.

Other

Research was based on speaking with Bristol City Council and Cornwall County Council who are both users of the Single Day Inquiry approach

Both Councils stressed how well received this approach is, and that these days are gaining a reputation throughout both the Councils for being a very productive and worthwhile exercise.