

## **Effective Questioning Skills for Members** **Key Points from the Session**

The following key points were raised during the training session for the consideration of Overview and Scrutiny Members:

- It is important to prepare in advance of interviewing any expert witness.
- A pre-meeting, well in advance of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting, can be a useful way to prepare in order to scrutinise particular items effectively.
- In order to prepare Members should consider the following:
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  - Read the background papers!
  - Background information about the service area/policy/strategy/report writer.
  - Consider whether benchmarking, involving comparing performance figures to performance at another local authority, might be appropriate.
  - Consider whether comparative data for previous years might be useful.
  - Determine whether an FOI request could help to obtain useful information.
  - Identify what questions should be asked and who should ask the questions.
  - Ask the Democratic Services Officers to provide assistance with gathering evidence.
  - Contact relevant Officers for further information or clarification on any confusing points in advance of the meeting.
  - Make sure you bring all paperwork gathered as background papers, not just the agenda pack, to the meeting.
- Consider the different types of questions that can be proposed and whether questions are appropriate in particular circumstances (please refer to the guide to different type of questions provided during the training session for further information).
- Don't ask more questions than necessary! This can be exhausting for all concerned and may detract from the impact you are trying to have.
- Don't combine questions into one as this can be confusing and difficult to follow. Instead, make questions structured so that all points can be clearly addressed.
- Don't precede a question with a lengthy statement. This can be confusing and lacks focus.