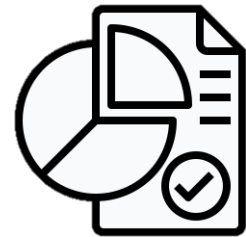
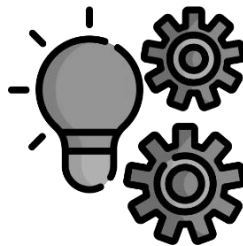




## Policy and Performance Improvement Committee Operational Guidance



This document is guidance for members of Newark and Sherwood District Council's Policy and Performance Improvement Committee as well as officers, residents, tenants and partners who may engage with the Policy and Performance Improvement Committee. This is not part of the constitution but a document laying out the ways of working associated with this Committee.

The aim of this guidance is to create a clear and succinct summary of how the Policy and Performance Improvement Committee operates. This guidance includes;

- An overview of the Policy and Performance Improvement Committee,
- The process for working groups,
- Detail on how topics are raised and added to the work programme,
- Best practice for approaching the work of Policy and Performance Improvement, and
- The reporting associated with the Committee.

This guidance is an internal document to be shared with members, officers, partners and named residents or tenants as required. This guidance was developed by officers based on national guidance and good practice, and in consultation with other local authorities, and thus it is based on best practice.

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## Purpose of the Policy and Performance Improvement Committee

The Policy and Performance Improvement Committee (PPI) fulfils the 'scrutiny' function required in the cabinet model as well as serving an integral role in improving the work of the Council through outcome focused challenge and development of strategies and policies.

The Policy and Performance Improvement Committee fulfils the statutory function of 'scrutiny' which is defined by statutory guidance as having "statutory powers to scrutinise decisions the Cabinet is planning to take, those it plans to implement, and those that have already been taken/implemented. Recommendations following scrutiny enable improvements to be made to policies and how they are implemented. Overview and scrutiny committees can also play a valuable role in developing policy."

The Committee has a Chair and Vice Chair, who are appointed by Full Council, alongside 15 members which reflect the political proportions of the Council. Members of cabinet cannot be on PPI but they may be invited to speak to specific items. PPI is an open meeting, meaning public and press can attend, and the Committee meets at least four times a year. However, where more detailed work is required, such as the development of a policy or the detailed review of a pilot, a working group is set-up to undertake this work. Working groups meet in private to conduct the review and develop recommendations which return to PPI for decision. PPI itself is not a decision-making body. It makes recommendations that are taken to the appropriate Portfolio Holder, Cabinet or Committee for decision.

The Policy and Performance Improvement Committee;

- Holds Cabinet to account as a critical friend,
- Develops strategies, corporate documents and key policies,
- Undertakes in-depth reviews,
- Reviews performance and makes recommendations on improving performance,
- Scrutinises the budget,
- Reviews the performance of key partners,
- Undertakes statutory performance reviews, such as the review of the community safety partnership,
- Considers topics raised by members, and
- Is responsible for the creation of a call-in sub-committee. If you want to understand more about this process please refer to the procedure in the constitution.

You can read more on the statutory role of scrutiny here: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/overview-and-scrutiny-statutory-guidance-for-councils-and-combined-authorities](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overview-and-scrutiny-statutory-guidance-for-councils-and-combined-authorities)

## The Work Programme

The Policy and Performance Improvement Committee sets its own work programme. Full Council and Cabinet can request that an item is considered but PPI have control over whether it is added to the programme. There are six main ways for an item to be added to the work programme;

1. PPI receive some standing items, such as quarterly performance, which is a standard part of the work programme.
2. PPI may choose to look at items referred from Cabinet or Full Council.
3. PPI have a role in the development of key policies and strategies. They will identify these documents in consultation with officers or through pre-scrutiny of the Cabinet agenda.
4. PPI may choose to look at a specific issue, decision or topic, such as the review of a pilot, progress of a key project or an area where performance is not as expected, by adding a review to the work programme. This can be done after a decision has been made or PPI may choose to feed into the decision making by reviewing the topic before a decision is made to sure a decision is well made.
5. Any member can submit a topic for consideration, where it meets set criteria. The topic will be assessed by the PPI Chair and brought to PPI for adding to the work programme if appropriate.
6. Any member can utilise the 'last resort' procedure to raise a topic with PPI as a point of last resort. The details of this process are within the constitution.

## The Principles of Policy and Performance Improvement Committee

- Be clear
- Be productive
- Keep it strategic
- Maintain an holistic view of the issue or topic
- Question and challenge constructively
- Engage regularly with officers and the Cabinet in building the work programme
- Maintain a clear role and focus
- Manage disagreement fairly, proportionately and productively
- Involve non PPI members in scrutiny work (through working groups)
- Communicate the role and value of the committee
- Maintain awareness of upcoming changes and decisions
- Set a realistic work programme

## What to Expect

The PPI Committee is a place for challenge, discussion and debate so as well as receiving written reports committee members can also expect discussion papers and presentations, from both officers and partners. Any member can attend PPI committee and speak to an item at the discretion of the chair. There will also be public involvement in PPI via specific consultation with the public and recommendations from the Tenant Engagement Board (please see the terms of reference within the constitution for further information).

The committee will discuss any inputs provided, using constructive questioning, with the aim of develop a recommendation/s for change. This recommendation/s will then be referred to the appropriate party for decision. This may be a Portfolio Holder, Cabinet, another Committee, Full Council or a key partner.

## Working Groups

A working group can only be set-up if the work it would undertake will improve the quality of life of local residents and/or enable value for money of local services. A working group might develop a policy or strategy, undertake a piece of development work such as shaping a bid or undertake a review of an area experiencing poor performance.

The work programme of PPI is extensive so not every topic or issue considered will be turned into a working group. A working group will only be created where the work can have impact as defined above. Finally, the creation of working groups must be considerate of officer resource. For example, if several large working groups are already underway an additional group cannot be created until one closes, and working groups cannot all focus on one service area.

Every working group will have a chair who is part of the PPI committee, to enable reporting back. A working group can have 3 to 9 members (including the chair) and membership can be drawn from PPI and other non-executive members. The membership of the working group is at the discretion of the PPI Chair.

### Step 1: Set up a Working Group

The PPI Committee find that a topic needs further work, and they move to create a working group. The Committee pick a chair from the PPI members and other PPI members can request to join the group.

### Step 2: Scoping

An officer lead is assigned to the working group from the Transformation team. If it is a specific/specialist review a subject lead will also be assigned to support the working group. The officers will work with the PPI chair and working group chair to develop a 'RID' (Review Initiation Document). This defines the scope and objectives of the review. The RID will include;

- The source of the review
- A summary of the review
- The intended objectives/outcomes
- Scope of the work
- List of the members of the group
- Outline a timescale for the work
- Key stakeholders

#### Step 3: Advertise the group

The draft RID is circulated to all members and expressions of interest are gathered by the PPI Democratic Services lead. The PPI Chair decides the final membership of the group, and the first meeting is arranged.

#### Step 4: Evidence gathering

At the first meeting working group members will finalise the RID and generate 'key questions' that they will seek to answer as part of the work. These questions will be asked to all subject experts. At the first meeting the subject lead or Transformation lead will present an overview of the topic to provide initial insights and data. This might include; performance data, statistics, service use figures, customer feedback and officer insight. Members may then wish to request further work such as;

- undertaking consultation through surveys, workshops or focus groups
- carrying out site visits
- requesting additional data and reports
- asking for stakeholders or partners to attend a future working group

#### Step 5: Further work

The working group will meet up to six times to consider the evidence and data provided to them. If they need to meet more than six times they are classified as long running and need to provide an update to the PPI to show their progress to date and outline when they are expecting to complete their work.

#### Step 6: Final report

Once the work has been completed the transformation lead will create a report summarising the work carried out and outlining the recommendations from the working group. Where relevant these recommendations should be agreed with the relevant stakeholders. The report is taken to the next PPI meeting (agenda allowing) where it is presented by the working group chair. If the PPI committee endorses the recommendations they will be referred on to the appropriate person/body for decision.

#### Step 7: Implementation

The Transformation lead will undertake a review close to capture the value of the work undertaken, gather any outstanding actions/issues/questions and reflect on lessons learnt. This report is an internal document and is used by officers to track actions from any agreed recommendations and evaluate and assess the impact of the working group.

## Raising a Topic with PPI

Any member can ask that a topic is considered by PPI. However, the PPI Committee has a finite amount of resources so cannot look at every topic suggested, as such they will only look at topics that have the potential to improve the quality of life of residents or achieve greater value for money across at least 2 wards.

A member wishing to raise a topic must complete a 'Topic Request Form.' This form will be considered by officers who will add further information as required. The form will then be reviewed by the PPI Chair and Vice Chair who will classify the request as one of the following;

- Recommend for discussion as an agenda item at PPI,
- Recommend for further exploration as a PPI working group,
- The topic is not considered as it is covered within an existing work stream or upcoming review, or was recently considered in another work stream, or
- The topic is not considered as the committee cannot add adequate value.

The form, alongside the Chair and Vice Chair recommendation, will be taken for decision to the next appropriate PPI meeting. Members should make the following considerations when reviewing the request;

- The resourcing requirement for officers and members,
- The timescale required to achieve the desired outcome, for example, if a delay caused by a review would detrimentally impact residents,
- To what extent the Council could influence, shape or change the particular issue,
- The level of benefit/s that could potentially be derived from the review,
- Any potential risks of the topic, for example, negative impacts caused by the review,
- If the issue is being addressed elsewhere,
- If the issue has already been considered recently,
- If the issue is of a legal matter,
- If the issue is of a complaint investigation,
- If the issue is a staffing matter, and
- If there are alternative more appropriate ways to address the issue.

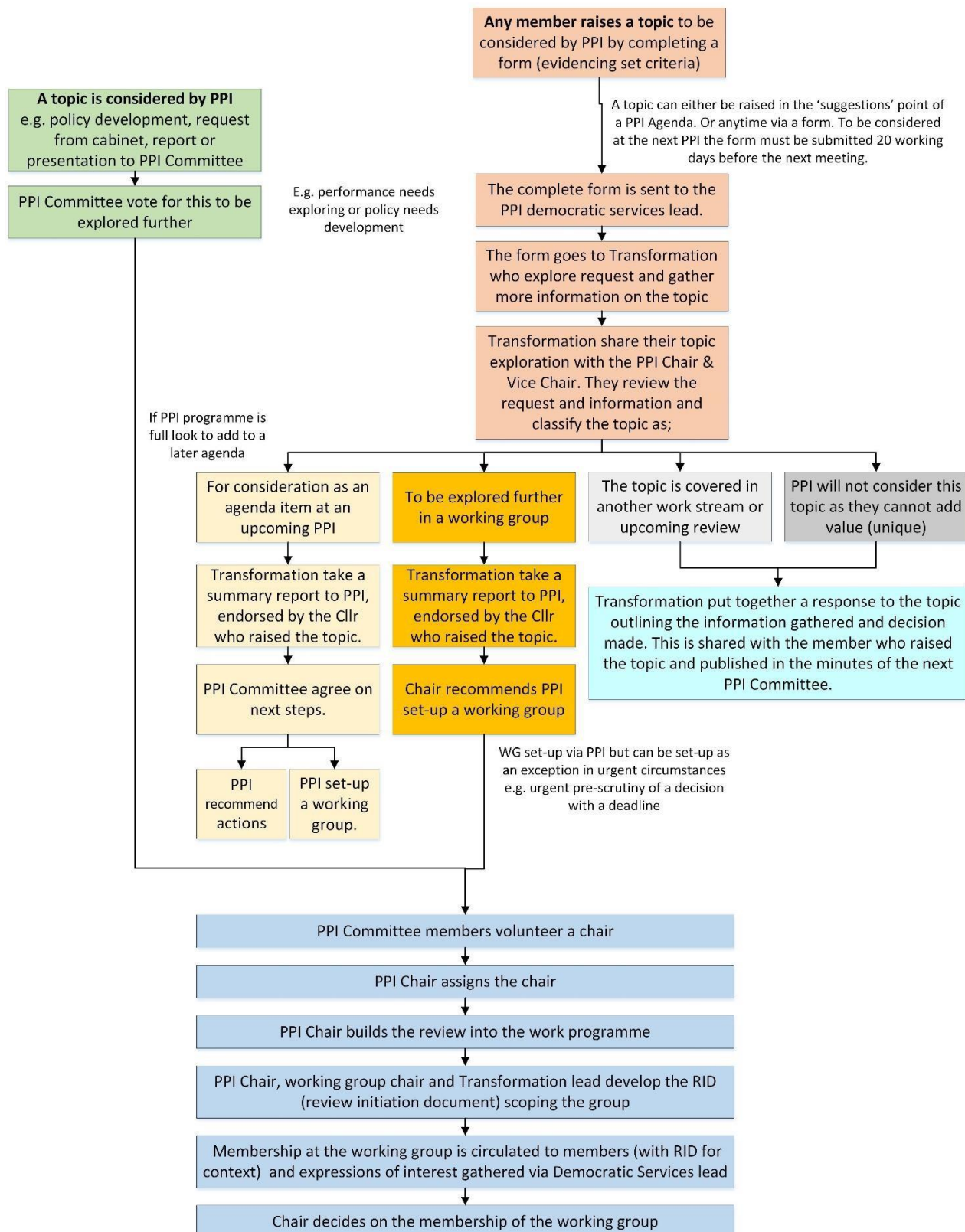
All of these considerations should be captured on the request form to ensure that members are able to make an informed decision.

## The Process of Raising a Topic with PPI

This diagram summarises the processes outlined above;

### Process for Raising Topics at PPI

There are two ways that topics can be raised via Policy and Performance Improvement Committee...



### Example Topics

Below are some examples to show the topics that PPI could consider;

Topic in scope	Topic out of scope
The availability and coverage of broadband across NSDC community centres and publically accessible buildings	<p>The availability and coverage of broadband across households in the district</p> <p><i>Likely out of scope as this would likely require input from external organisations and NSDC have limited ability to influence</i></p>
The suitability of the proposed road infrastructure changes as a part of the levelling up funding	<p>The suitability of the current rail infrastructure and how changes could be made for improvements</p> <p><i>Likely out of scope as this would likely require input from external organisations and we would have limited ability to influence</i></p>
To assess if the average response times across council services were adequate and meet residents needs	<p>To assess if the average response times across emergency public services were adequate and meet resident needs</p> <p><i>Likely out of scope as this would likely require input from external organisations and we would have limited ability to influence</i></p>
To review and monitor the recovery from Covid-19 in terms of the Newark and Sherwood local economy, local employment and how the authority can ensure the recovery is speedily and efficient	<p>To review and monitor the recovery from Covid-19 in terms of the national economy, resident health, death rates, changes to behaviours, health and safety changes and future plans for global pandemics.</p> <p><i>Likely out of scope as this would likely require input from external organisations and we would have limited ability to influence from a national picture. This would also be a significant piece of work for an unknown gain.</i></p>
To review the root causes of underperformance in a particular service at the council and what changes could be made to ensure these performance indicators meet future targets	<p>To review the root causes of an officers underperformance at the council and what changes could be made to ensure this individual meets their targets</p> <p><i>Likely out of scope as this would be addressed elsewhere and the resource required from members and transformation leads wouldn't be of benefit</i></p>
To review resident engagement in the three wards that had the lowest response rate in the resident survey	<p>To review resident engagement in a particular ward</p> <p><i>Likely out of scope as this isn't backed up by a reason and would only be of benefit to one ward</i></p>



## Best Practice for approaching Policy and Performance Improvement

This section outlines some best practice for members of the PPI Committee;

- Plan questions in advance and remember to have follow up questions identified based on what the answer is likely to be.
- Change your questioning technique to the scenario and outcome you want to achieve.
- Allow periods of silence for the recipient to expand or think. This may at times feel awkward but when used can be very effective.
- Plan in advance what information you want to know/request.
- Make sure your questions are clear and easy to answer so officers and partners feel at ease.
- Practice active listening.

### Effective questioning

#### **Open Questions**

An open question is a question that starts with “how”, “what”, “when”, “where”, “who” or “why” and cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no”. Open questions are mainly beneficial when you want to know a lot of information on a particular topic. Closed questions are more beneficial when you want to know specific facts or a confirmation. Before using open questions, avoid stacking questions where possible. This means asking two or more open questions at once, as the individual is likely to only respond to the final question or not provide much detail around each.

#### **Funnel Questioning**

The funnel approach process is laid out below and supports deeper questioning. The process does not need to be rigid. The types of questions can be asked at any time to allow for fluid and effective questioning.

##### **1. Ask Open Questions**

Start with open questions about the subject as this will provide you with an enhanced understanding and allow you to drill down into the detail where needed.

##### **2. Ask Probing Questions**

These are the questions which will allow you to delve deeper into the answers to your open questions, allowing you to find out the reasons behind those answers.

##### **3. Ask Closing Questions**

Asking closed questions allows you to confirm both your own and the presenters understanding of what has been discussed and established.

#### **Tell, Explain, Describe (TED) Questions**

This approach is more of an instruction than a question. Some examples of TED questioning would be;

- Tell me more
- Explain the situation to me
- Describe that to me

This type of questioning allows you to understand the individual’s thoughts, feelings and needs without the risk of generating a different answer than what they may have provided previously. An example of this is; “a colleague has told me you want to discuss a problem you have faced at work” as “tell me what happened” may invoke an answer that is more driven about what has happened.

Further questioning advice can be found in the [LGA Councillors Workbook on Scrutiny](#).

### Developing strong recommendations

It is vital to ensure the recommendations;

- are informed by the most appropriate and most recent evidence/data,

- reflect the views and experiences of both those being advised to take action and the people who might be affected by that action,
- have taken into consideration all possible options and the associated implications,
- follow the SMART principles aka recommendations (where possible) should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound, and
- are developed in partnership with council officers and partners.

## Reporting

There are two reports generated in association with the PPI Committee;

### **A Monthly Update**

This monthly report is an internal document created by Transformation available to all members updating on the progress of the PPI work groups including information such as the number of working groups active, their status and expected timeline.

### **An Annual Report**

The Policy and Performance Improvement annual report is a public document, endorsed by the committee, released after the close of each financial year. It summarises the work done by the committee over the last year and shows how the work of PPI has impacted upon residents by evidencing the benefits realised by each review/piece of work undertaken.

## Key Contacts

PPI Chair

PPI Vice Chair

Democratic services lead officer

SLT liaison: Director of Customer Services & Organisational Development  
Transformation and Service Improvement Manager

[Councillor Mike Pringle](#)

[Councillor Neil Ross](#)

[Helen Brandham](#)

[Deborah Johnson](#)

[Carl Burns](#)

## Appendix One: Topic Request Form

Available on Mod.Gov or by contacting the Democratic Services lead for PPI. To be considered at the next PPI Committee the form must be submitted 20 working days before the next meeting.

<b>Topic Request Form</b>		
Please complete the first section of this form to request that a topic is considered by the Policy and Performance Improvement Committee. Please send the completed form to Helen Brandham		
<b>Section 1: Member Request</b>		
<b>Proposed topic</b>		
<b>I would like to understand</b> (key lines of enquiry)		
<b>I think this topic should be considered because</b>	Please outline here why you think this topics needs consideration. For example, you may have identified an area of poor performance or be relaying several concerns from residents. Please remember a topic will not be considered unless it has the potential to improve the quality of life of residents or achieve greater value for money across at least 2 wards.	
(if applicable) <b>High level evidence supporting the reason for consideration</b>		
<b>Proposed by</b> (name of member)		Ward: Party:
<b>Seconded by</b> (name of member)		Ward: Party:
<b>Date form is submitted</b>		
<b>Section 2: Officer Recommendation</b>		
<b>Officer comment</b>	Any relevant information on this topic. Including what it relates to (legal issue, complaint, staffing issue etc.), any power/ influence the council has, any relevant upcoming or ongoing work and an officer insight into the value of considering the topic.	
<b>Officer recommendation</b>	Do/Don't undertake a review	
<b>Officer name</b>		Role:
<b>Date information added</b>		
<b>Section 3: PPI Chair Recommendation</b>		
<b>PPI Chair comment</b>		
<b>PPI Chair recommendation</b>	Do/Don't undertake a review	
<b>Date information added</b>		Role:
<b>Next step</b>	Completed form to be taken to PPI on [DATE]	