

# An invitation to scrutiny and audit chairs

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny and the Local Government Association are piloting a development programme this autumn aimed at enhancing dialogue and co-ordination between chairs of scrutiny committees and chairs of audit committees.

We are looking for a small number of chairs – with varying levels of experience – to participate. Participants who are scrutiny chairs should be the current chair of whichever committee takes a lead on corporate finance issues.

Development will focus on:

- Core duties: the regulatory and other duties held by audit committees and scrutiny committees and how these responsibilities intersect;
- Relationships: current experiences regarding member-member and member-officer relationships, and how those relationships can be improved;
- Skills: the skillsets needed to carry out chairing duties on scrutiny and audit – required knowledge on local government finance, and wider oversight skills;
- Support arrangements: experiences and expectations with regard to officer support, and how members can support each other.

Discussion of these factors – key to the effectiveness of the scrutiny and audit functions – will lead to two outcomes. The first is the development by participants of plans for their own ongoing self-directed learning and development. The second is development of ideas for changes to practice in their own authorities, and tactics to bring those changes about.

We plan to divide participants into two cohorts, each comprising about 20 people, with a roughly equal number of audit and scrutiny chairs in each.

The focus of the development work would be on a seminar taking place across a single day.

- Cohort 1 will carry out preparatory work remotely which will culminate in a day-long development session also taking place remotely on **26 November**.
- Cohort 2 will carry out preparatory work remotely which will culminate in a day-long development session taking place **in person** on **29 November** in central London.

Preparatory work will include a short remote preparatory session for participants the week before the main session.

We are not looking exclusively for “paired up” audit and scrutiny chairs from the same councils, but people putting forward their names might want to think about whether their experience would be enhanced if their opposite number takes part alongside them. The pilot is limited to local authorities in England.

**If you are interested** please e-mail Ed Hammond at the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny ([ed.hammond@cfgs.org.uk](mailto:ed.hammond@cfgs.org.uk)) by the end of the day on **3 October** with:

- Your name and authority
- The committee you chair and the amount of time you have been chairing it (including any previous relevant chairing experience)
- Some brief information about your experience to date, and your learning and development expectations
- Your preferred cohort (Cohort 1 for fully remote, Cohort 2 for remote prep but the in-person day-long session);
- A note from your council's chief finance officer and/or monitoring officer to the effect that you will be supported to take forward the learning and development outcomes, after the session.

If there are more applicants than available places, we will be selecting participants with a view to ensuring geographic balance and a balance of different experiences across both cohorts.

Following the session we will be writing up some of the issues arising in the form of a short publication – both to provide practical assistance to other audit and scrutiny chairs and to inform the design of a possible wider rollout of this development offer in 2025/26.

Please note: in the event that we are (significantly) oversubscribed for Cohort 1 and undersubscribed for Cohort 2, we reserve the right to run both cohorts fully remotely.

### **Timetable**

<b>3 October 2024</b>	Expressions of interest submitted
<b>7 October 2024</b>	Participants contacted to confirm their involvement, and to confirm in which cohort they have been placed
<b>11 October 2024</b>	Confirmation of dates of sessions, and the dates and times of other interactions (eg prep sessions)
<b>28 October 2024</b>	Participants invited to reflect on and share within their cohorts their expected learning and development outcomes
<b>w/c 4 November 2024</b>	Session plan and pre-work material circulated
<b>w/c 18 November 2024</b>	Remote preparatory sessions held
<b>w/c 25 November 2024</b>	Day-long development sessions held <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 26 November: remote session (Cohort 1)</li> <li>• 29 November: in-person session (Cohort 2)</li> </ul>
<b>w/c 2 December 2024</b>	Confirmation by participants of learning and development outcomes
<b>January / February 2025</b>	Production of guidance material for publication