

Centre for Public Scrutiny Strategy 2017-20 'Opening Governance'

Our purpose

The Centre for Public Scrutiny's (CfPS) purpose is to improve lives and places through effective governance and public scrutiny.

We are a national, independent charity with a long history of providing governance and scrutiny support to local government, alongside other public services and sectors.

CfPS exists to promote and support organisations to be more open to scrutiny and involve others in decision-making. To achieve this, governance frameworks need to work from an external, as well as internal, perspective.

Now, more than ever, we need trusted decisions. We believe that decisions are better made when they involve others, whether that's democratically elected representatives, those affected by the decisions or other key stakeholders, including employees and partners.

We work with a wide range of organisations, people and places to support them in developing a culture and ways of working which incorporate challenge, scrutiny and involvement. We also provide consultancy, training and policy support which gives people the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to design and deliver good governance.

What are our strategic aims?

CfPS will achieve its purpose by:

1. Making a positive difference by promoting the benefits and value of public scrutiny and good governance.
2. Supporting organisations and individuals to make their governance and scrutiny arrangements work more effectively from an internal and external perspective.
3. Working in partnership with others to achieve our purpose and increase our influence and impact.
4. Innovating in new areas to provide policy and practical support which helps improve governance and scrutiny.
5. Creating an environment in which our CfPS team (Trustees, staff and associates) can do their best work.
6. Raising our profile and diversifying our funding so that we can help improve more lives and places through effective governance and public scrutiny.

Public scrutiny of those accountable for decision-making improves the design, delivery and impact of services. It also acts as an important check and balance; fundamental to democracy and good governance. It is about openness and credibility, not bureaucracy and 'red tape'. Done well, it acts as the bridge between the governed and governing and should be an enabler to good decision-making and innovation. The best leaders understand and value the benefits this brings.

We strongly believe that people are key to success here, rather than structures or processes. This means having a clear focus on outcomes, impact, culture, skills and the best ways to involve and hear all people and communities. Good governance models facilitate this approach.

What strategic choices are we making?

Independence and quality are what sets us apart. As does our ability to apply our expertise to different organisations, scenarios and issues whilst navigating difficult and sensitive organisational and political contexts. We work with our clients and partners to fully understand them and their business to improve the value and impact of their governance and scrutiny arrangements.

In 2016/17, we reviewed our strategy reflecting the changing and challenging public services environment and our ambition to influence and impact on a broader range of sectors, on a broader range of issue.

To achieve our refreshed purpose of improving lives and places through effective public scrutiny and governance, we need to expand the scope of work to have a greater impact, to achieve this we need to diversify our funding stream and create a more sustainable business model.

This will see CfPS over the coming years move:

- **From** primarily delivering support and guidance to local government scrutiny **to** becoming more of a campaigning and consultancy organisation interested in governance and public scrutiny more widely.
- **From** working with local government **to** keeping local government at its core whilst also seeking to work with other public bodies (CCGs, Trusts, charities, etc.), the private sector and independent organisations such as housing associations.
- **From** relying on programme funding from Government bodies, or similar, **to** having a more sustainable diverse income streams to fund our work from consultancy and research grants.
- **From** being a small organisation **to** one which has the capacity and resilience to achieve our desired reach and impact.

To achieve our purpose, we will manage our work through an annual delivery plan which will see us:

- Continue to be the centre of excellence for all things related to public scrutiny in local government, as evidenced by increased take up of our advice and practical support.
- Provide advice and support to a wider range of organisations ensuring that we pass on learning to improve outcomes.

- Undertake more research to support the policy and practice of accountability, transparency and involvement.
- Campaign and raise awareness of the value and benefits of effective governance, scrutiny and involvement.
- Increase the income we receive from research, grants and providing consultancy support to organisations, partnerships and individuals where they match our purpose and values.

Everything we do will continue to be underpinned by our core values:

- **Outcome focused** – all our work is about improving people’s lives and places whilst providing good value for money.
- **Communicate compellingly** – we will communicate clearly, be open and honest, operate as one organisation, live our purpose/values, listen and respond to feedback.
- **Brave and driven** – we will be brave in taking a position, be creative in finding solutions, get voices heard, and challenge ourselves and others.
- **Trusted and valued** – we will be independent, evidence-led and focus on helping organisations achieve their goals.

How will we judge our success?

- We can evidence that we have made a positive difference in the organisations, places and with the people we work with.
- We can evidence that we have increased our influence by getting our voice heard on key issues relating to public scrutiny and governance.
- Staff feel that CfPS is a great place to work.
- We have grown and diversified our income.

The annual delivery plan will include specific performance and impact measures. Progress against this will be regularly reviewed by the CfPS Trustee Board.