

# Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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Rishi Sunak MP  
Minister for Local Government  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
Fry Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

23 July 2018

Dear Rishi,

## **RE: local authority overview and scrutiny committees**

Thank you for your letter of 18 July 2018, which followed the Westminster Hall debate on local authority overview and scrutiny committees held on 17 May 2018.

As I highlighted during the debate, the issue of what information is available to scrutiny committees is absolutely key. Too often, Councillors are told they cannot have access to information regarding services provided by external organisations due to alleged 'commercial confidentiality'. It of course entirely illogical that some Councillors have needed to use freedom of information requests to obtain information from their own local authorities. Democratic accountability requires elected officials to have full access to the information they need.

Similarly, the ability of scrutiny committees to scrutinise external bodies is something the Committee felt very strongly about and focused on considerably in our report. Scrutiny committees must be able to fully monitor and scrutinise all the services provided to residents.

We are encouraged, therefore, that you have agreed to look at these issues further and engage with individuals and organisations with practical experience of scrutiny to explore how the guidance should be changed in this respect.

Once the Government publishes its updated guidance later in the year, it may be helpful for you to appear before the Committee to discuss the changes you are proposing, or not proposing, to make to the guidance.



**Clive Betts MP**  
**Chair, Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee**