

AGENDA ITEM

**REPORT TO EXECUTIVE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

23 JANUARY 2007

**REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF
LAW AND DEMOCRACY**

REVIEW OF SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION ARRANGEMENTS

SUMMARY

To present Member and officer feedback following the review of the Council's new scrutiny co-ordination arrangements and identify the key issues emerging.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Executive Scrutiny Committee are asked to comment on the key issues which would form the basis of an improvement plan.

DETAIL

Review Methodology

1. Views on the implementation of the new arrangements were sought from Members and Officers through the Centre for Public Scrutiny's self evaluation framework. The framework is based on the principles set out in the "Good Scrutiny Guide". The following approach was adopted:

- A survey sent to all Members and added Members (30 questionnaires were returned)
- Discussion Groups were held for:
 - CMT
 - Executive Scrutiny Committee (including all Chairs and Vice Chairs)
 - Cabinet Members
 - Link Officers and Scrutiny Officers

In addition, in view of the low attendance levels at some Select Committee meetings, the opportunity was taken to include a section to seek views from Members on the problems associated with attending Meetings and what would help to improve attendance.

Feedback

2. A summary of the quantitative feedback to the questionnaire is attached at Appendix 1 and feedback from the Focus Group sessions is attached at Appendix 2.

Key Themes

Key themes emerging are summarised below:

What we are doing well

Provide Critical Friend Challenge

- Improved communications
- Improved dialogue throughout review process between Scrutiny/Cabinet/Officers
- Developing good relationships with external partners

Reflect the Voice and Concerns of the Public

- Use Viewpoint well
- Examples of innovative approaches to engaging community during the review process

Take the Lead and Own the Scrutiny Process

- Thorough planning and scoping of reviews
- Dedicated officer support

Make an Impact on Service Delivery

- Topics in line with Corporate Priorities
- Monitoring Procedures have been introduced
- Links with upcoming inspections

Areas for Development

- Need to ensure greater independent challenge (e.g. co-option of expert witnesses)
- Need to build confidence in the process

- Need greater promotion/ raise profile of scrutiny (e.g. through Stockton News)
- Clarify publicity protocols
- Need to actively seek suggestions from the public and partner agencies for work programme
- Use MORI information to held Select topics
- Consider developing area based scrutiny

- Need to engage all Scrutiny Members (not just Chairs/Vice Chairs)
- Need commitment from all scrutiny Members (and officers) to invest time in the process
- Consider giving Members different roles/tasks to recognise different skills
- Promote use of task and finish groups
- Agree questioning plans before the meeting (will also provide clearer brief for witnesses)
- Smarter work programmes (mustn't duplicate other work/ has to add value/stronger business case justifications)
- Dedicated scrutiny budget

- Robust monitoring
- Need to consider how to use the Forward Plan
- Embed implementation of scrutiny recommendations into service planning

Next Steps

3. There will be further officer consideration of the feedback and an improvement plan will be drafted also taking into account the implications of legislative changes. The improvement plan will be subject to approval by Members' Advisory Panel and Executive Scrutiny Committee.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4. There are no direct financial or legal implications identified at this stage.

RISK ASSESSMENT

5. The review is intended to assess the effectiveness of the new scrutiny co-ordination arrangements in Stockton and make appropriate recommendations for improvements.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

6. Service Delivery (Enhance Local Democracy).

CONSULTATION

7. It is the intention to draw up an improvement plan to address the issues raised in the review. The improvement plan will be subject to approval by Members' Advisory Panel and Executive Scrutiny Committee.

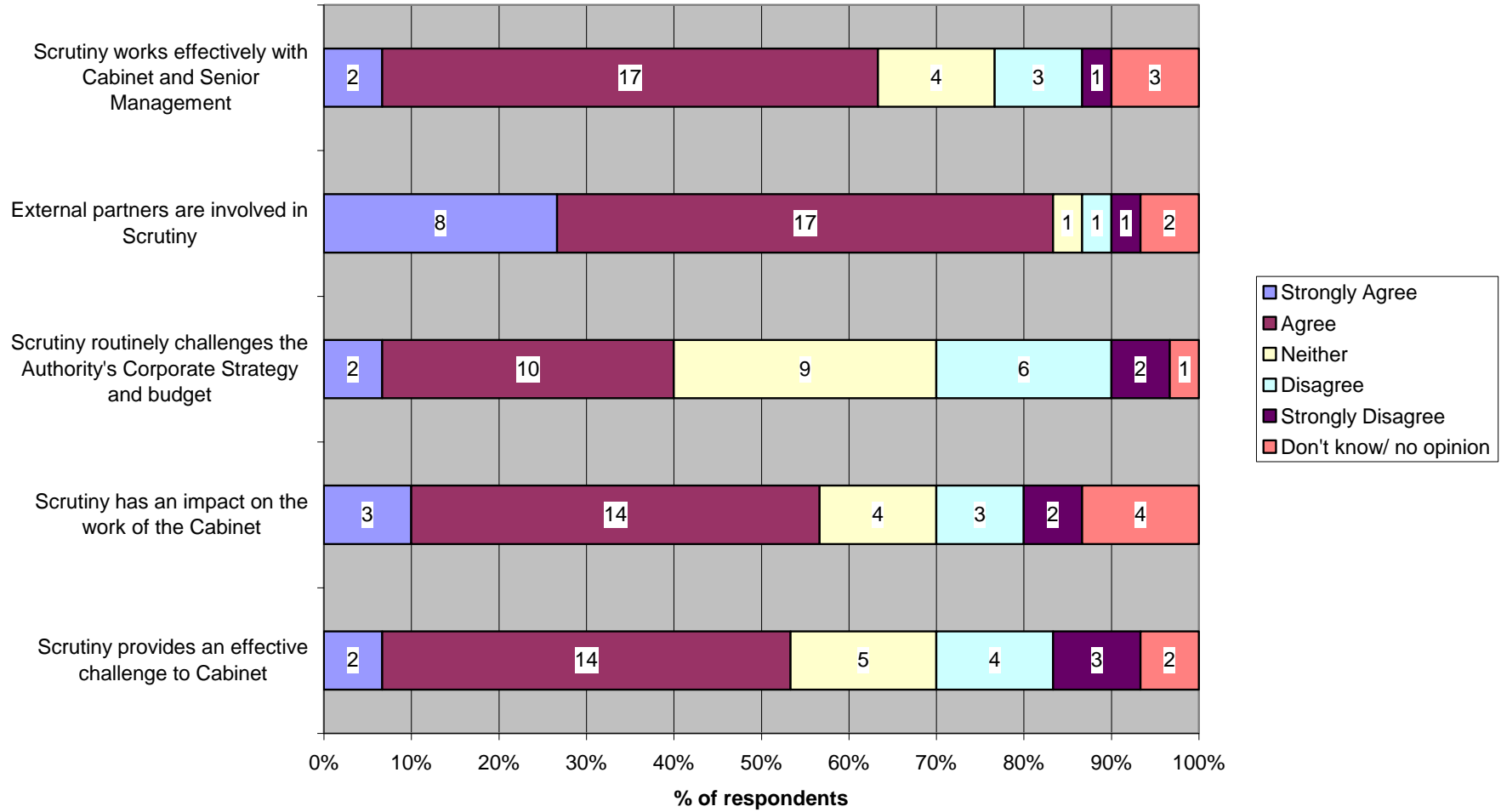
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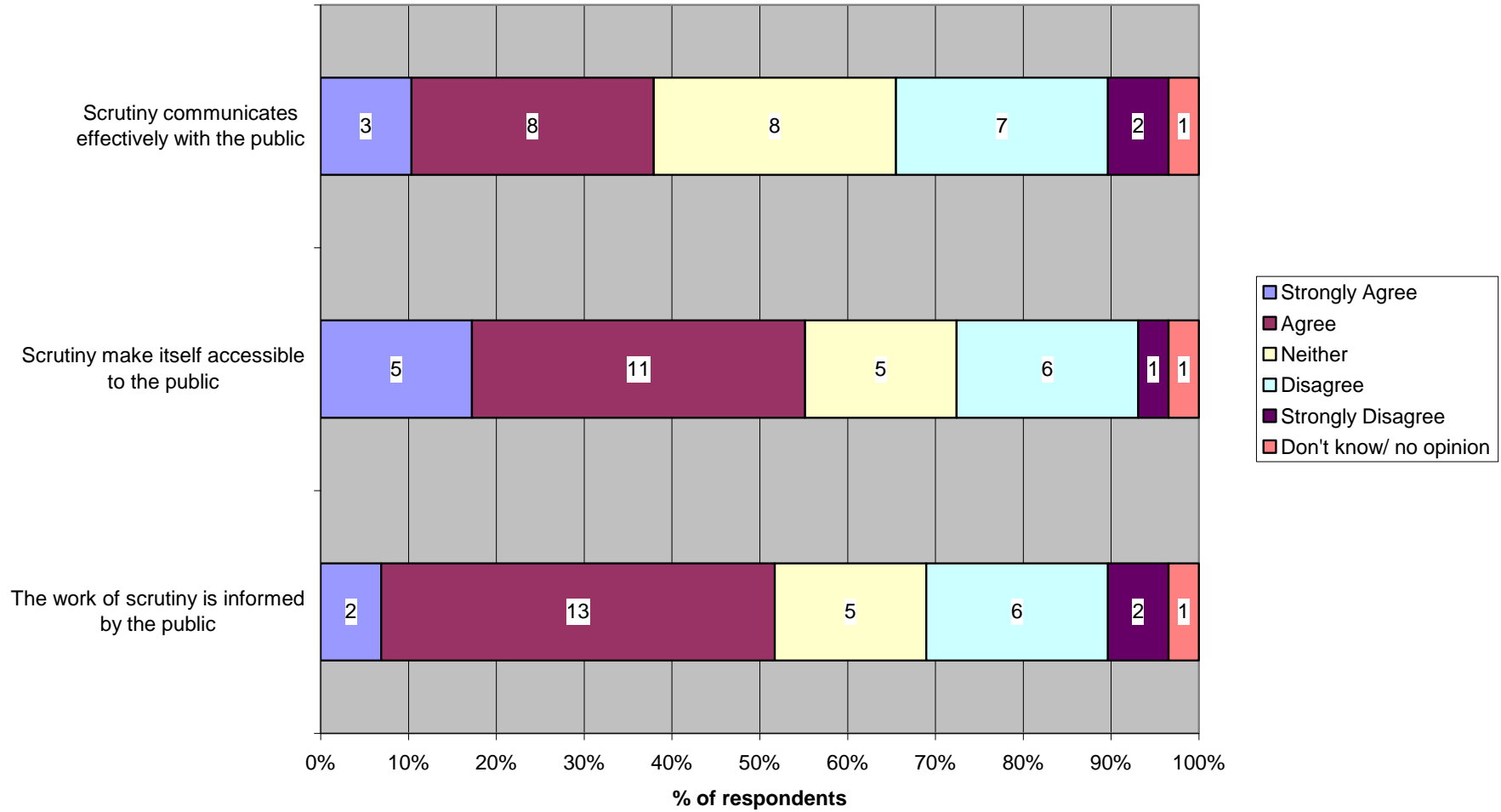
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<u>Background Papers:</u>	Questionnaire and Focus Group Responses from Members and Officers
<u>Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:</u>	Not Ward Specific
<u>Property Implications:</u>	None

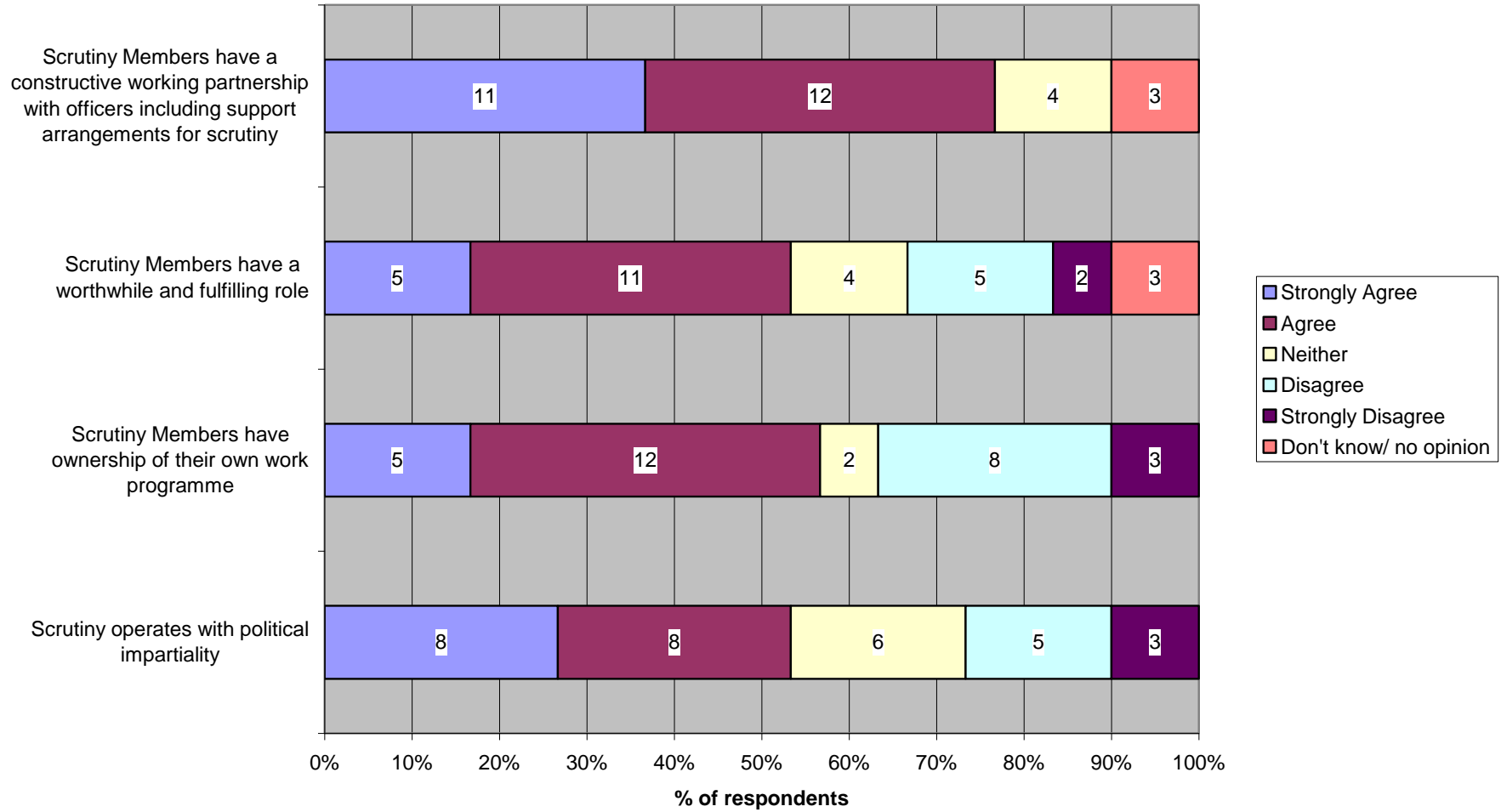
Does scrutiny provide a 'critical friend' challenge?



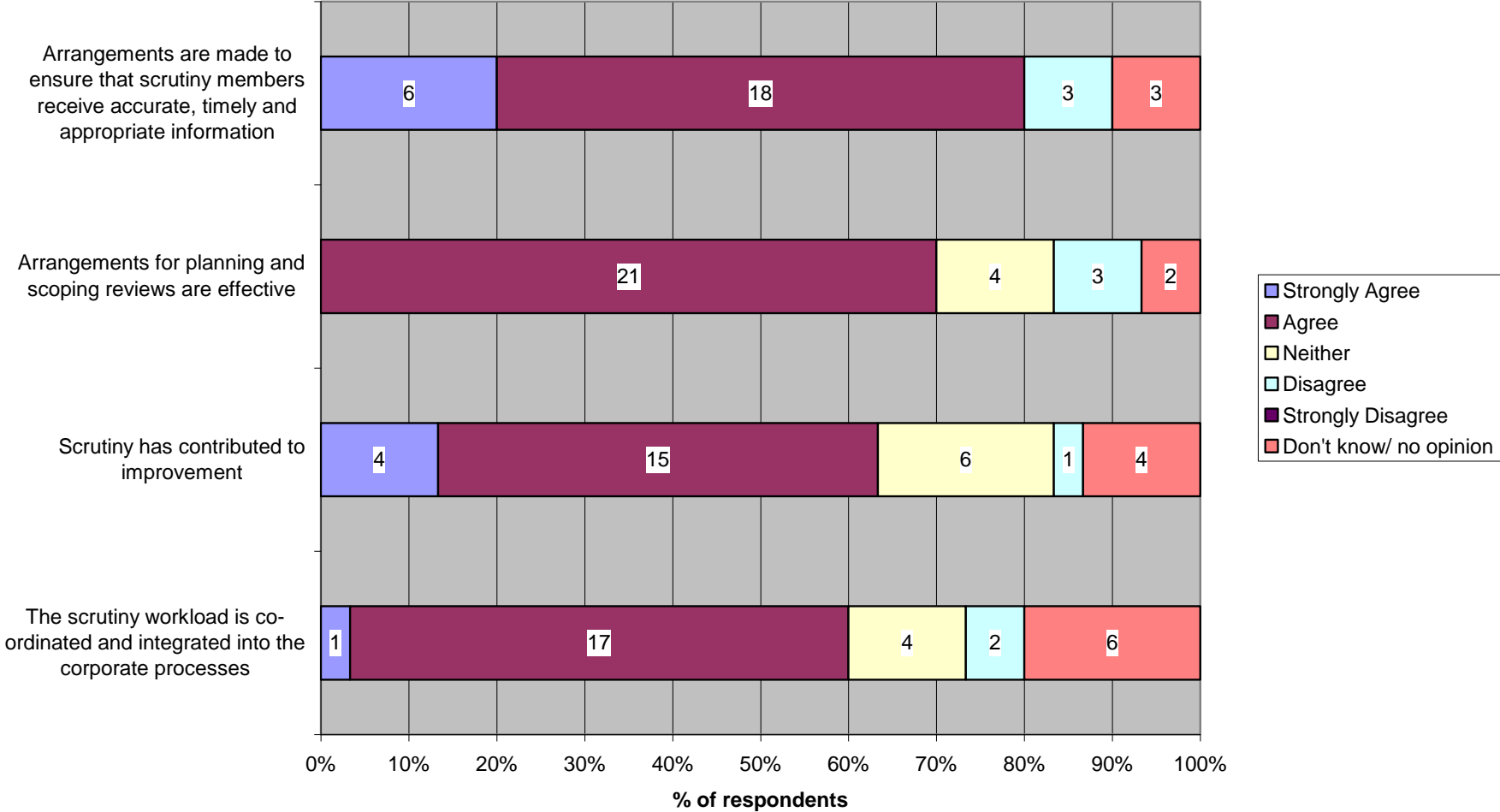
Does scrutiny reflect the voice and concerns of the public and its communities?



Does scrutiny take the lead and own the scrutiny process?



Does scrutiny have an impact on service delivery?



Problems associated with attending meetings

