

## **Report of the five Scrutiny Committees**

Scrutiny Chairs: Councillor Gill Slocombe, Councillor Gwil Wren, Councillor Martin Dimery, Councillor Leigh Redman, Councillor Bob Filmer

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### **1. Summary**

**1.1.** The Scrutiny Committees are required by the Constitution to provide Full Council with a summary progress report and outcomes of their meetings. This report covers meetings since April 2023.

**1.2.** Members of the Council are reminded that:

- all Members have been invited to attend meetings of the three Scrutiny Committees and to contribute freely on any agenda item;
- any Member could propose a topic for inclusion on the Scrutiny Work Programme.
- any Member can be asked by the Committee to contribute information and evidence and to participate in specific scrutiny reviews.

### **2. Background**

**2.1.** The 5 Scrutiny Committees met a total of 19 times over the stated period, including one Joint Scrutiny Committee between Adults and Health and Children and Families.

#### **2.2. Scrutiny – Adults and Health**

Scrutiny Adults and Health met five times for the period of April to November 2023, including the joint Scrutiny Committee with Children and Families.

We discussed a variety of topics, proposed by members and lead officers as areas of interest for the work programme. Of note for their public engagement and

emotive discussions were the following topics:

- Suicide prevention strategy
- Stroke services
- Dentistry

Other matters discussed included:

- Adult Social Care Transformation Programme
- Budget monitoring
- Annual reports on safeguarding adults and public health
- Primary care strategy
- Integrated Care Board Performance

Questions of more detail were often raised in this committee, for example asking for specific quality KPIs for Primary Care, as well as a list of 'hotspots' within the county where access to primary care is difficult or likely to become difficult in the near future.

### **2.3. Scrutiny – Children and Families**

Scrutiny – Children and Families met five times for the period of April to November 2023, including the joint Scrutiny Committee with Children and Families.

We discussed a variety of topics, proposed by members and lead officers as areas of interest for the work programme. There was considerable public engagement on the following topics:

- Children with SEND
- Preparing for adulthood

Other matters discussed included:

- Academisation
- Youth vaping
- Children's mental health
- Children's social care

At the joint Scrutiny Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> October, the committee unanimously agreed to take further actions on Youth Vaping, writing to the executive to request: the current government consultation be shared with members, the licensing committee be asked to review and action stronger enforcement regarding sale of the devices, the '*Quit tool not cool tool*' slogan be promoted, and that the council take a position to work with the government to increase legislation around electronic cigarettes.

## **2.4. Scrutiny – Climate and Place**

Scrutiny – Climate and Place met four times for the period of April to November 2023, plus an additional informal members' briefing on the topic of water quality and phosphate levels. Each of the meetings had a standing agenda item of a forward plan to enable members and officers to suggest topics appropriate for scrutiny.

There were several recurring themes of discussion for this committee:

- Water quality and phosphate levels
- Public transport
- Sustainability and green growth

Issues of public transport and road safety were areas which received public engagement, with several members of the public submitting questions for the committee. At the 19<sup>th</sup> July Scrutiny Committee, members agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group on the Local Transport Plan.

There were several other areas where the Climate and Place Scrutiny Committee resolved to commission a Task and Finish Group: The Somerset Wide Energy Plan, Climate Strategy Refresh, and Public Transport Communications and Engagement.

## **2.5. Scrutiny – Communities**

Scrutiny – Communities met three times for the period of April to November 2023. Each of the meetings had a standing agenda item of a forward plan to enable members and officers to suggest topics appropriate for scrutiny.

Housing was a key recurring theme for this committee, scrutinising areas of housing such as

- Homefinder
- Supported accommodation

As well as questions from the public on training for housing officers and housing application policies.

Other topics discussed included:

- CCTV
- Customer Services
- Budget monitoring

## **2.6. Scrutiny – Corporate and Resources**

Scrutiny – Corporate and Resources met 6 times for the period of April to November 2023. Each of the meetings had a standing agenda item of a forward plan to enable members and officers to suggest topics appropriate for scrutiny.

Topics discussed included:

- Commercial investment
- Property Rationalisation
- Assets Disposal Policy
- Council Tax Reduction and Exceptional Hardship Scheme

The Corporate and Resources Committee also commissioned a Task and Finish Group on the topic of Disposal of the Commercial Investment Portfolio.

## **3. Consultations undertaken**

- 3.1.** The Committee invites all councillors to attend and contribute to its meetings.
- 3.2.** The Scrutiny Manager has also met with the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs on a monthly basis to identify best practice, joint scrutiny opportunities and address challenges. These meetings have proved useful and the Chair and Vice of Audit Committee are now also invited to attend.

## **4. Implications**

- 4.1.** The Committees consider carefully and often ask for further information about the implications as outlined in the reports considered at its meetings.

For further details of the reports considered by the Committee, please contact the author of this report.

## **5. Background papers**

- 5.1.** Further information about the Committee including dates of meetings and agendas and reports from previous meetings, are available via the Council's website.

**Note** For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author