

Annual Report of the Council's Five Scrutiny Committees

Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees: 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 scrutiny. This report covers meetings since July 2023.

1.2. Members of the Council are reminded that:

- All Members have been invited to attend meetings of the five 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 five Scrutiny Committees met 33 times over the period of July 2023 to May 2024. In addition there were 5 workshops and informal meetings.

The committees received a total of 23 public questions on a variety of topics and made 41 recommendations to Executive and Full Council.

Each committee had a standing agenda item for the Work Programme to enable members to comment on and suggest topics for items to come to the committee

3. Meetings in 2023-2024

3.1. Scrutiny – Children and Families

Scrutiny – Children and Families met 8 times over the stated period, including a joint meeting with Adults and Health. Members considered a broad range of topics at meetings, as seen in the summary table below.

Meeting Date	Topic
12.07.23	22/23 Budget outturn position and 23/24 emerging issues Academisation Finance Policy and Procedure Update on Homes and Horizons Partnership Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing in Somerset Somerset Youth Justice Partnership Board Plan 2023-2024 Home to School Transport Task and Finish Group – Interim update
13.09.23	23/24 Children’s Services Budget Monitoring Education Modelling – Frome – Next Steps Regional Adoption Agency External Placements Task and Finish Group – response from Executive on recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group Learning from the West Somerset Opportunity Area
25.10.23 – joint meeting with Scrutiny Committee – Adults and Health	Dentistry and children and young people’s access to dentistry and child oral health improvement Preparing for Adulthood Somerset approach to reducing smoking and youth vaping
15.11.23	Children’s Services – Budget Monitoring Update on Children’s Transformation Programme / Business Plan Education Finance – consultation Standing Panel for Education Standards – update from Panel Chair
12.12.23	2023/24 Children’s Services – Budget Monitoring Education, Health and Care Assessment and Plan 2022-2023 Progress Update Connect Somerset Children’s Services Transformation Priorities 2023-2026
10.01.24	Sufficiency Strategy for children looked after and care leavers – 2023-28 2023/24 Children’s Services – Budget Monitoring Update on short break provision (respite) Education Place Planning
13.03.24	Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing in Somerset 2023/24 Children’s Services – Budget Monitoring

	DSG Deficit Management Plan (DMP) Understanding Elective Home Education Update from the Education Standards Standing Panel Report back from committee members on Children's Services Transformation Priorities/Areas
15.05.24	Update on Short Break Provision/Action Plan Education for Life – Progress on Years 2-5 Update on DBS checks for Councillors Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic

Over the period, they received public questions on four topics:

- SEND support and EHCPs
- Transition to Adulthood – 16-18 year olds with SEND
- Preparing for Adulthood
- Dentistry

They made four recommendations, all regarding the approach to youth vaping.

3.2. Meeting 12 July 2023

22/23 Budget outturn position and 23/24 emerging issues

The committee received an update on the budget position, and raised concerns about the accumulated schools deficit and school transport overspends.

Academisation Finance Policy and Procedure

The committee received a presentation outlining the proposed changes to academisation finance policy and procedure ahead of consideration by Executive. The committee had no negative comments on the report and suggested that the table in Appendix 1 needed to be updated.

Update on Homes and Horizons Partnership

The committee received a presentation on the progress of the Homes and Horizons Strategic Partnership. The committee requested further work on engagement with the community and the need to move forward with DfE. They also requested data on the outcomes for children in placement.

Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing in Somerset

The committee received a detailed presentation on this topic, which included the national and local context and the commissioning priorities. They requested more detail and an updated position regarding the trauma-informed coordinator role

and the network of trauma informed champions and other mental health staffing matters. They requested a further update in six months time.

Somerset Youth Justice Partnership Board Plan 2023-24

The committee received a report and presentation on the annual Youth Justice Plan to be signed off by Full Council, which highlighted past achievements and future opportunities, priorities, challenges, and risks. The committee highlighted the value of prevention and turnaround work in schools and queried the data on knife crime.

Home to School Transport Task and Finish Group – Interim Update

The committee received an update on the Transport Review, the findings and recommendations, and the plan to develop a transformation programme to address the review recommendations.

3.3. Meeting 13 September 2023

2023/24 Children’s Services – Budget Monitoring

The committee received a presentation on the 23/24 budget position as at the end of July 2023. The committee requested more information regarding EHCPs, IMPOWER early intervention, and more information and detail in the budget position.

Education Modelling – Frome – next steps

The committee received a presentation that provided an update on the ongoing work and discussions about education structures in the Frome area. The committee asked about the involvement of governors and families, the drivers behind the work, and whether the approach was planned to be used for any other areas such as Minehead.

Regional Adoption Agency

The committee considered a report regarding the proposed changes to the Regional Adoption Agency (Adopt South West). The paper sought the Committees’ views on the request from Cornwall Council to join, the revised funding formula, and the timescale for phasing in any agreed change. The committee was generally supportive of the proposal.

External Placements Task and Finish Group – response from Executive on recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group

The committee received the update and noted it.

Learning from the West Somerset Opportunity Area

The committee received a presentation on this topic. Members highlighted the challenges of the rurality of Minehead, transport costs, and low pay, and the impact that has had on efforts to tackle disadvantage in the West Somerset Opportunity Area.

3.4. Meeting 25 October 2023 – Joint with Adults and Health Scrutiny

Dentistry and children and young people's access to dentistry and child oral health improvement

The committee received a presentation on the provision of NHS Dental Services in Somerset and a position statement on child oral health improvement. The committee asked about funding allocation, the targeted work on oral health in early years settings, the capacity within schools to support this, the triage service, and the collaboration with the SEND service. The vice-chair requested that a briefing be provided to cover these topics and that an update be provided in 4-6 months.

Preparing for Adulthood

The committee received a presentation on preparing for adulthood, covering the key principles of transition planning and how they align with the ASC and SEND strategies. The committee highlighted the need for 'lived experience' volunteers, youth support in the Martock area, and welcomed the collaborative work around this.

Somerset approach to reducing smoking and youth vaping

The committee received a presentation on the Somerset approach to reducing smoking and youth vaping. The committee asked what work is being done with retailers, asked for more detail about the evidence and data around youth vaping, and raised concerns about the marketing of vapes to children and young people.

The committee agreed unanimously to write to the Executive with four recommendations regarding youth vaping.

1. The Committee asked that the current Government consultation be shared with all members who are encouraged to complete and promote locally in their divisions.

2. The Committee asked that the Licensing Committee be asked to review and action stronger enforcement of the sale of these devices in line with the current legal position.
3. The Committee asked that the 'Quit tool not cool tool' slogan, as highlighted by the presentation be supported and promoted in the Council.

The Committee requested that Council take a position with regard to seeking government to work at increasing legislation around electronic cigarettes, that included but not conclusive:- a ban of the use of single use devices with exception of use to support stopping smoking, a ban on child targeting (advertising and packaging), an introduction of plain packaging that would include a health warning, an introduction of an increasing age ban on sales of these devices in line with the change made to cigarette sales.

3.5. Meeting 15 November 2023

2023/24 Children's Services – Budget Monitoring

The committee received a presentation on the budget position as at month 5 and a verbal update on the month 6 position, which highlighted the key pressures and drivers. The committee sought clarification on the DSG budget reporting, LA maintained schools revenue budgets and reserves, and the difference between SEND school transport and mainstream school transport.

Update on Children's Transformation Programme / Business Plan

The committee received a presentation on this topic, identifying the priorities and the strategies underpinning them. The committee commented that the key theme is prevention, and the need to incorporating housing, housing allocation, and school allocation, as well as the need to increase awareness. The chair asked that committee members think about which of the four areas/strategies they would be interested in gaining a better understanding of as they would be able to volunteer to participate in meetings with officers at the next meeting.

Education Finance – consultation

The committee received a presentation on the consultation how Education Finance can meet education funding challenges in Somerset. It was clarified that further consultation would take place before any further changes were made.

Standing Panel for Education Standards – update from Panel Chair

The committee received an update on the first introductory meeting held in October, and that the panel would recommend items or data for the committee to discuss. The committee noted the update.

3.6. Meeting 12 December 2023

2023/24 Children's Services - Budget Monitoring

The committee received a presentation on budget monitoring, which focused on Home to School transport (mainstream and SEN), the Dedicated Schools Grant, and in particular the High Needs forecast deficit position. A discussion followed around the trends in numbers of residential and unregistered placements, the difference between statutory and non-statutory spending for Home to School transport and concern about the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit and the statutory override function. There was also a discussion around the Delivering Better Value programme, but it is too early to see the difference made by this programme in the figures.

Education, Health and Care Assessment and Plan 2022-2023 - Progress Update

The committee received a report and presentation on Education Health and Care Assessment and Plans. It detailed statistics on the number of assessments requested, carried out, and the number of plans issued and refused as a result of these assessments. It highlighted the pressure the service is facing alongside the difficulties meeting statutory timescales with regard to annual reviews, particularly as the number of EHCPs is increasing. It explained the changes and improvements in the service to address these pressures. The committee discussed the number of EHC assessments refused, the increase in SEND and number of EHCPs in schools, and whether there was staff capacity for the increase in EHCPs and the reviews required. The committee noted the update and the activities underway to support improvements.

Connect Somerset

The committee received a presentation on this topic explaining the approach to collaborative working and delivering early help. The committee raised how the model was going to be spread across the county and geographic boundaries, how people would be kept informed and updated, and whether it would create additional pressures on schools. They were informed that it would not, as the model focuses on working with what support is already available.

Children's Services Transformation Priorities 2023-2026

Following the discussion of the priorities at the previous meeting, the chair invited volunteers to focus on each of the priorities in order to enable better

understanding.

3.7. Meeting 10 January 2024

At this meeting there were changes to the makeup of the committee, with Cllr Pauline Ham and Cllr Marcus Kravis appointed to replace Cllr Caroline Ellis and Cllr Jenny Kenton. Co-opted Member Mrs Eileen Tipper also stood down from her role.

Sufficiency Strategy for Children Looked After and Care Leavers

The committee received a presentation on the Sufficiency Strategy, explaining that sufficiency means ensuring there are enough high quality homes for children in care and care leavers. There were several key areas, including increasing in-house provision for the most complex needs, supporting children at risk of going into care to stay at home, increasing the number of homes for children, improving choice and matching homes to children, and reducing cost.

The committee discussed: the need to find the right quality home for children and young people; one of the key areas is around preventing children and young people from coming into care in first instance; foster care recruitment, which is a national as well as a Somerset challenge; highlighted the increase in the number of children with complex needs; housing issues and work with providers; fostering data to provided.

2023/24 Children's Services - Budget Monitoring

The committee received a presentation on the Children's Services Month 7 Budget Monitoring Position.

The committee highlighted the High Needs Deficit and the concern around this debt currently being underwritten by the government, but that is planned to end in 2026. They discussed the national context and the current plans in place to reduce this deficit. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Deficit Management Plan will be coming to this Scrutiny Committee in March.

Update on Short Break Provision (Respite)

The committee received a presentation which outlined short break provision, the statutory guidance around it, the resources, gaps, and opportunities, and the plans for the future. They explained the recent 'sprint' identifying issues in the service and that an action plan was being developed in January to redesign the process of accessing the provision. A discussion followed on the cost implications, the involvement of micro-providers, and the need to have a joined-up working. It was agreed that the action plan would be shared with the committee and an update provided in May.

Education Place Planning

The committee received a presentation on Education Place Planning, which provided an overview of statutory duties, the Somerset context, projection modelling, education growth and challenges, local first approach, developer contributions, extended / expanded childcare offer and expansion of wrap around provision. A discussion followed around the data and projections, ensuring education gets the funding it needs, and the various challenges in providing wrap around care. The committee noted the update.

3.8. Meeting 13 March 2024

Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing in Somerset

The Committee received a presentation with a focus on system wide support for children and young people who self-injure.

2023/24 Children's Services – Budget Monitoring

The Committee received a presentation on the 2023/24 budget position – month 10. This focussed on external placements monitoring and forecasting, CLA key cost drivers and the 23/24 DSG budget monitoring (High Needs, home to school transport and SEND transport).

DSG Deficit Management Plan

The Committee received a presentation on the High Needs Block and SEND and the refreshed DSG Deficit Management Plan, outlining the actions to mitigate overspending and the DMP.

At the end of the discussion, a member training session on the DSG Deficit Management Planning was suggested and considered.

Understanding Elective Home Education

The Committee received a presentation to inform them on the issues around Elective Home Education.

The presentation set out the Council's approach and responsibilities to EHE children and their families, the current data set for EHE in Somerset and specifically Frome as an 'area in focus' due to its high number EHE children, and the changes to government guidance and legislation in the pipeline including mandatory registers of children not in school, guidance around what is considered to be a 'suitable education', more support for EHE families and guidance on Local Authority schools attendance orders.

Update from Education Standards Standing Panel

The Committee received a verbal update from the Chair of the Panel, Cllr Evie Potts-Jones and members were invited to attend the meetings of this sub-committee.

Report back from committee members on Children's Services Transformation Priorities/Areas

The committee received verbal updates from members of the Committee on the Children's Services Transformation priorities / areas:

- Education for Life Strategy
- Children Looked After (CLA) Transformation
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy
- Connect Somerset

3.9. Meeting 15 May 2024

The agenda for the Scrutiny Committee – Children and Families meeting on the 15 May is as follows:

- Work Programme (standing item)
- Update on short break provision / action plan
- Education for Life – Progress on Years 2-5
- Update on DBS checks for Councillors
- Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic

3.10. Scrutiny Committee – Climate and Place

Scrutiny – Climate and Place met 6 times over the stated period. Members considered a broad range of topics at meetings, as seen in the summary table below.

Date	Topic
19.07.23	Future Transport Climate, Sustainability, and Environment – Next Steps Staplegrove Housing Infrastructure Fund Mendip Local Plan – variation to order of 16 December 2022 Scrutiny Call-ins update
20.09.23	Somerset Energy Plan – Task and Finish Group Award of contracts for highways services Budget Monitoring Update Approach to Local Plan and Statement of Community Involvement

18.10.23 – Member Briefing	Water Quality in Somerset
22.11.23	Externally funded Regeneration Projects LEP Integration UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund Decision to award a contract for the provision of the Park and Ride Service in Taunton Climate and Place Budget Monitoring Position Month 5
17.01.24	Economy, Employment and Planning: Level 2 Devolution Deal Position Statement Somerset Rivers Authority: Draft Strategy and Flood Action Plan 2024-2034 Waste Services: Flex Collect Update
20.03.24	Annual report on the Trading Standards Service Section 19 Reports from 2020-2022 Flood Events Somerset Energy Investment Plan – Report of the Task and Finish Group 2023-24 Budget Monitoring Report – Month 10
26.04.23 – Water Quality in Somerset	Overview of the nutrient pollution problem on the Somerset Levels and Moors designated sites Citizen Scientist research from river catchments and the Ramsar sites How is the water level controlled on the Somerset Levels and Moors? Wessex Water improvements driving phosphate reduction on the Somerset Levels and Moors The contribution of agricultural pollution to the nutrient problem on the Somerset Levels and Moors – in terms of scale and the known unknowns

Over the period, they received public questions on six topics:

- Traffic and road safety
- Yeovil bus depot (three times)
- Highways services
- Glastonbury Festival traffic management
- Full council meeting venue
- Bus services

They made 11 recommendations, regarding:

- Planning policies regarding consultation
- Planning policies regarding climate change (two recommendations)

- Planning policies regarding flood defence planning for listed building
- Planning policies regarding energy efficiency in listed buildings
- Water quality (five recommendations)

Scrutiny Committee – Climate and Place has also had several Task and Finish Groups over this period, including the Local Transport Plan, the Somerset Energy Plan, and a proposed group on Water Quality.

3.11. Meeting 19 July 2023

Future Transport

The committee received a presentation on the process of developing a Local Plan and a Local Transport Plan, set to be in place by 2025. The committee highlighted the importance of communication and explanation to the public, the need for public transport and cycling infrastructure, the need for cross-party support on climate change action, and the need to look at alternative fuels for council vehicles, particularly the recycling fleet.

They resolved to set a up a Local Transport Plan Task and Finish Group.

Staplegrove Housing Infrastructure Fund

The committee considered a report on this topic that would be going to the Executive, detailing the two separate phases of development for 1500 houses on the allocated site. The committee acknowledged the work needed to bring the project to fruition, particularly as progress on the Staplegrove East site had stalled due to no developer being on board. They noted the recommendations to the executive.

Mendip Local Plan – variation to order of 16 December 2022

The committee received details of a report taken to the Executive following a judicial review of the Mendip Local Plan. They noted the actions taken by the Executive following the judicial review.

Scrutiny Call-ins

The committee received a verbal update on a call-in request regarding Review of Parking Fees and Charges considered by the Executive in June. The chair requested detailed information from the relevant council officers, and concluded that while he understood the concerns the details contained were sufficient to not warrant the matter being called back to Scrutiny.

3.12. Meeting 20 September 2023

Somerset Energy Plan – Task and Finish Group

The committee considered the request to set up a Task and Finish Group on this topic to take a fairly high level approach to the subject. Members of the committee volunteered to participate.

Award of contracts for highways services

The committee considered a report on the five highways related contract. They request detail on pot-hole repair and further information about decarbonising highways maintenance and the ambition of maximising income and improving the network.

Budget Monitoring Update

The committee received an update on the budget monitoring position as of the end of July 2023. The committee looked at the areas of overspend in Waste, Highways, and Economy and Planning, and the key risks and future issues, including contract inflation, the impact of the cost of living crisis, staff vacancy levels, and climate change.

Approach to Local Plan and Statement of Community Involvement

The committee received a presentation on this topic, which explained how the Statement of Community Involvement was a high-level document setting out engagement and consultation on planning matters and the determination of planning applications. Members sought clarification on the statutory requirements and the need to review the Community Infrastructure Levy charging system. The committee felt climate change policies should be a priority and there was a need for a separate Climate Change Development Plan Document.

The committee resolved to recommend to the Executive:

1. That under the Pre-Applicant stage, paragraph 3.10 of the Statement of Community Involvement should be amended to encourage applicants to consult with their neighbours.
2. That the Council should continue to serve both site notices and adjacent neighbour notifications and that the wording of 3.24 of the Statement of Community Involvement be amended to reflect this. The wording of the recommendation to the Executive to be delegated to the Executive Director – Climate and Place in consultation with the Chair and circulated to the Committee.
3. That a Climate Change Development Plan Document be created to

advance the Council's climate emergency objectives, in particular zero carbon energy standards, new developments and renewable energy generation siting. To be separate from the Local Plan and to an earlier time scale to reflect the climate emergency declaration

3.13. Meeting 22 November 2023

Externally Funded Regeneration Projects

The committee received a presentation on this topic. They discussed the Yeovil refresh, options for Council offices, the Bridgwater Tidal barrier, and where the funding for regeneration was concentrated in built-up areas and the need to not lose sight of rural areas. They also raised concerns about loss of skills and knowledge within the council.

LEP Integration

The committee received a report on Local Enterprise Partnerships. They requested more detail on the benefits to Somerset, and highlighted the lack of funding as government support for these reduced and requested further work on governance around this.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund

The committee received a report that provided an update on this topic. The committee raised concerns about the difficulties experienced accessing funds, and more information was requested about governance processes for these funds. They highlighted particular areas of deprivation and some rural towns being neglected. The committee recognised the need for a member's workshop on these funds and economic development across Somerset.

Decision to award a contract for the provision of the Park and Ride Service in Taunton

The committee received a report on this decision, and considered whether there was an opportunity to introduce electric buses on this route and if there was funding available. The committee considered and noted the recommendations being put to Executive in December 2023.

Climate and Place Budget Monitoring Position Month 5

The committee received a presentation on this topic. They questioned the causes of the £800k climate overspend and whether the information provided was full or part year impacts. They also discussed the budget of the cycle path going into

Minehead, the integration of two building control teams, the climate change and adverse weather costs to highways, and the statutory obligations to respond to flooding.

3.14. Meeting 17 January 2024

Economy, Employment, and Planning: Level 2 Devolution Deal Position Statement

The committee received an update report on the Level 2 Devolution Deal following the 2023 Autumn Statement Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities announcement on a change in the pace of devolution to accelerate the level 2 deals, which presents an opportunity for Somerset to start a national devolution journey. A brief discussion followed, and members noted the update.

Somerset Rivers Authority – Draft Strategy and Flood Action Plan 2024-2034

The committee received a presentation to accompany the draft Strategy and Flood Action Plan 24-34, the draft SRA Memorandum of Understanding and Constitution, and the draft of the SRA Funding Executive Key decision due to be considered by the Executive on 6th March 2024. Members asked about the role of the SRA, partnership working, specific schemes and project milestones, and questioned exactly how the SRA is funded. It was concluded that a summary of how the SRA is funded would be shared with the committee after the meeting, and the officer thanked the committee for the discussion and feedback.

Waste Services: Flex Collect Update

The committee received an update report on the Flexible plastics trial that was delivered to 3600 properties around Frome during May 2023. The trial included communications, engagement with residents and provided participants with a blue, transparent bags to present flexible plastics alongside the existing recycling service. The trial yielded impressive results and The Council has in-principal agreement to extend the trial to 20,000 properties in the East of the County from spring/summer 2024. Members sought clarity on the types of materials included in the trial, and there was a request for further information regarding the ways in which those materials are processed and repurposed by the end user. Members noted the update.

3.15. Meeting 20 March 2024

Annual report on the Trading Standards Service

The Committee received the annual report of the Trading Standards Service for information. Members were advised that specific case details of open/pending investigations could not be disclosed, but there was a discussion around some key issues such as pet food sampling, identity fraud/online/telephone scams, and the light touch approach to enforcement of the recent ban on single use plastics.

Section 19 Reports from 2020-2022 Flood Events

The Committee received a presentation to summarise the findings of the outstanding S19 reports. During the discussion, concerns were raised regarding the difficulties in applying for planning permission to install flood defences on listed buildings, agricultural issues leading to increased flood risk such as maize and potato growing, the need for a common-sense, case by case approach to flood prevention, particularly on small scale investigations where decision making can be taken at a more localised level.

The Committee resolved to recommend that the Somerset Council Planning Service review its policies and advice to residents regarding the application of flood defence mechanisms to listed buildings.

Preliminary Report Section 19s 2023 Flood Event

The Committee noted the reports and were advised that these preliminary reports set out the methodology for the full Section 19 Flood Investigation Report.

The committee were reassured that in terms of workforce planning, the flood investigation team at Somerset Council is in a stronger position than it has been in recent years, and that this would result in a faster turnaround for S19 Flood Investigation Reports going forward.

Somerset Energy Investment Plan – Report of the Task and Finish Group

The Committee received the report from the Task and Finish Group. They unanimously agreed to accept the recommendations as set out in the report, which included appraisal for solar and wind power installations at ten council sites, a land use framework to underpin the development of Local Plan policies on renewable energy generation, support for local hubs to develop local skills for low carbon heating and retrofitting installations, implementing a Net Zero Heat Village trial, and council engagement with the new Regional Energy Strategic Planner to influence investment in the electricity network, as well as recommendations to continue ongoing decarbonisation, policy planning, and travel infrastructure work.

In addition to this, the Committee resolved to recommend that the Planning

Service reports back to the committee on the efficacy of providing a supplementary planning document on how we approach energy efficiency developments in listed buildings and a policy like BCS14 'Heat Hierarchy' at Bristol City Council.

2023-24 Budget Monitoring Report – Month 10

The Committee received the update on the Climate and Place month 10 budget position, noting the £7 million underspend. There was a query concerning the use of drawback funds from the Connecting Devon and Somerset underspend, and a request for more information on this from the Service Director Economy, Employment and Planning.

3.16. Meeting 26 April 2024 – Water Quality in Somerset

The committee undertook a detailed meeting on the issue.

They resolved to make the following recommendations:

1. Immediately remove the 20% buffer included in the Somerset calculator.
2. Conduct a speedy review of the huge inconsistency between what Dr Clegg said, echoed by Wessex Water and what the calculator says with how much of the river borne phosphorus enters the Somerset Levels and Moors, as that calculator is what informs developers as to how much phosphate we are requiring them to offset.
3. Conduct an urgent review of the entire nutrient neutrality policy in light of the legal advice we have received, which makes it clear that headroom exists and that it could be used in the mitigation of new housing development.
4. The Climate and Place to set up a Task and Finish Group which will report back to the Committee on a tight timescale to set out the options available to the Council once it is in possession of the correct data.
5. The Council looks to work on a Land Use Strategy as part of a Local Plan.

3.17. Scrutiny Committee – Communities

Scrutiny – Communities met 6 times over the stated period. Members considered a broad range of topics at meetings, as seen in the summary table below.

Date	Topic
09.08.23	Recommissioning of 16+ Housing/Supported Accommodation Somerset Council Service Introduction: Customer Services

	Annual Approval as sol shareholder of Homes in Sedgemoor
28.09.23 – Member briefing	Octagon Theatre Redevelopment
11.10.23	CCTV Service update Homefinder Somerset – verbal update and discussion Budget Monitoring Update – Community Services
13.12.23	Community Services Budget Monitoring Update Glastonbury Festival Scrutiny Report 2023 Rough Sleeping Initiative Overview 2023-24 HRA Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report – Month 6
14.02.24	Community Services Budget Monitoring Update Open Spaces Briefing Growth/New Housing Review of Street Cleansing and Groundcare Operations (restricted)
10.04.24	Glastonbury Festival Verbal Update Devolution of Services Verbal Update Community Services Budget Monitoring (Month 10) Taxi Fares – Tables 2024 Octagon Theatre – Capital Programme

Over the period, they received public questions on six topics:

- Housing and homelessness team and staff training
- Housing policy
- Planning approval breaches
- Glastonbury festival traffic management
- Glastonbury festival noise regulation
- Taxi fares (two speakers)

They made one recommendation, on the topic of taxi fares.

3.18. Meeting 9 August 2023

Recommissioning of 16+ Housing/Supported Accommodation

Members of the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee were invited to attend the meeting for this agenda item. The committee received a presentation on this

topic. They discussed Pathways to Independence, the role of multi-agencies, the provision and range of accommodation, the links between 16+ housing and provision through Homefinder, and the timescales and progress of people through the pathway.

Somerset Council Service Introduction: Customer Services

The committee received a presentation on this topic and discussed comparison and benchmarking with other Unitary Councils, data collection, digital inclusion, quality assurance and face to face customer opportunities.

Annual Approval as sole shareholder of Homes in Sedgemoor

The committee received a verbal update on this topic and noted it.

3.19. Meeting 11 October 2023

CCTV Service Update

The committee received a presentation on the CCTV service, including the income it generates. Members were invited to visit the control hub in Bridgwater House. During the discussion they looked at the costs of the service, the use of CCTV in retail, the statutory duties around the service, and where the service is planning to expand.

Homefinder Somerset – verbal update and discussion

The committee received a verbal update on this, highlighting how many people were registered and how there were up to 170 bids for a property. The committee discussed property succession, rent arrears, and those who were unable to use the bidding system.

Budget Monitoring Update – Community Services

The committee received an update on the current budget position, including the Housing Revenue Account, and the risks and opportunities around it. The committee raised the risks around homelessness and the cost of temporary housing, what other housing models could be explored for that purpose, and what proportion of Right to Buy Receipts are retained by the council.

3.20. Meeting 13 December 2023

Community Services Budget Monitoring Update

The committee received a presentation on the current budget position, the overall council budget, and the particular challenges of bringing the previous councils into a unitary budget. A discussion followed including how to deal with budget anomalies, how to prepare for the following year's budget with the projected figures, the impact of the financial control boards and how that can be measured, concerns about the pressure on town and parish councils, and whether councillors could be informed of specific areas of savings in order to keep working with communities.

Glastonbury Festival Scrutiny Report

The committee received a report that covered the statutory functions provided by the council for Glastonbury Festival: Licensing, Food Safety, Structural Safety, Nuisance Prevention. Public Health, Civil Contingencies, Highways and Environmental Health are also involved. The recommendations were for continuous improvement and there were two particular areas: developing further measures to address noise, and crowd distribution and communication for crowd flows. A discussion followed around the cost to the council, the fees and business rates recouped from the festival, noise pollution, and the issue of external campsites and their licensing. The chair requested further updates on the engagement with Glastonbury Festival.

2023 Rough Sleeping Initiative Overview

The committee received a presentation that provided statistics and context around rough sleeping and detailed the Prevention approach and how the new Housing and Rough Sleeping strategy was being developed. A discussion followed, including officers clarifying and detailing specific areas of the policy and approach to rough sleeping, and how the team was working now that it was under a unitary authority.

2023-24 HRA Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report - Month 6 (Qtr2)

The committee received a report and presentation detailing the forecast overspend and how it will be financed. A discussion followed on the impact of the pandemic, the increase in repairs, and the HRA funding being subject to the same spending board requirement as the rest of the council.

3.21. Meeting 14 February 2024

Community Services Budget Monitoring Update

The Committee received a presentation on the Month 9 budget position. The

Committee raised questions around which areas of the budget were demand driven, like rough sleeping, and what would be the result of an increase in demand. They also inquired as to which budget headlines were statutory and which weren't, and what would happen if the council isn't able to fund statutory services that are reliant on government grants. Because these are demand driven, there would be an overspend as a result of that. Some elements of income generation like crematorium services are also demand-driven, so they are difficult to predict how that will impact the budget.

Open Spaces Briefing

The Committee received a presentation on open spaces, detailing the amount, the different types, and how their maintenance was organised.

Areas of concern were raised around the current status of mapping these spaces, particularly as some of them are preparing to be devolved to town and parish councils. The development of a public mapping system is a project that is being worked on across multiple directorates, and the Committee asked to be kept updated on this. There were also questions raised about playground equipment that had broken down and who was responsible for or able to replace it, as well as funding from new housing developments.

The Committee also requested better communication with the public regarding the maintenance of open spaces and working with the public to support tree planting in order to improve the 50% rate of tree loss. The future of open spaces under a Section 114 notice being issued was also raised.

Growth/New Housing

The Committee received a presentation on the demand and supply for housing, the challenges around affordable housing delivery, and the local pressures.

During the discussion the councillors raised concerns around Right to Buy, the challenges of working with developers, the rough sleeping budget, and the high number of people on the waiting list. They also discussed pop up housing and the amount of land available for these projects.

Review of Street Cleansing and Groundcare Operations

The Committee received a report on this confidential item and discussed it in a private session.

3.22. Meeting 10 April 2024

Glastonbury Festival Verbal Update

The committee received an update on the change in approach to managing Glastonbury Festival and monitoring the licensing conditions. The committee asked for details on the work done on site, the costs, the risks and mitigations for the efficiency changes. They discussed the possibility for a joint committee with Climate and Place as a post-Glastonbury 'wash up' session to bring together the work done by Regulatory and Operations and Highways.

Devolution of Services Verbal Update

The committee received an update on the current progress of devolution based on the pilot carried out with Bridgwater Town Council. They discussed what was included, how the statutory functions would be managed, the service level agreements, and the learning for future devolution work.

Community Services Budget Monitoring (Month 10)

The committee received a report on the financial position at the end of January. They discussed the underspend and the risks around Housing.

Taxi Fares – Tables 2024

The committee received a report on the process and modelling of the new taxi fares table, bringing the four tables from districts together. They discussed the implications of the new table for taxi drivers and those who rely on taxis for transport.

The committee resolved to recommend that the Executive Committee looks at all the factors that determine taxi driver incomes, the total impact on income of the proposed changes and at comparisons across rural authorities with regard to day/time pricing and days charged at time and a half when coming to a decision.

Octagon Theatre – Capital Programme

The committee received a report on the revised plan for the Octagon Theatre ahead of it being added to the capital programme. They discussed the changes from the original plan, the risks of the project, the timeframe, and the current maintenance costs. It was agreed that it would return to the committee in August ahead of the full business case going to DCMS in September.

3.23. Scrutiny Committee – Corporate and Resources

Scrutiny – Corporate and Resources met 10 times over the stated period.

Members considered a broad range of topics at meetings, as seen in the summary table below.

Date	Topic
06.07.23	Introduction to Strategic Asset Management at Somerset Council Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27
08.08.23	Commercial Investment Budget Monitoring Report Quarter 1 Local Communities Network Update
07.09.23	Draft Assets Disposals Policy Property Rationalisation Council Business Plan Budget Update Consolidated 2022/2023 Outturn
29.09.23	Commercial Investment Update (Restricted)
09.11.23	Council Tax Reduction and Exceptional Hardship Scheme for 2024/25 2023/24 Budget Monitoring Report – Month 5 Financial Strategy Update
05.12.23	2023/24 Budget Monitoring Report – Month 6 – End of September 2023 2023/24 General Fund Capital Budget Monitoring Report – Month 6 – End of September 2023 2023/24 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring as at Quarter 2 (30 September 2023) 2024/25 General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Update Framework for Asset and/or Service Devolution
04.01.24	Financial Budget Update Month 7 Somerset Council Reserves Amalgamation Business System for Finance Implementation Review Property Maintenance and Compliance Report Surplus Assets Review Commercial Asset and Realisation Task and Finish Group Report
31.01.24 – Workshop	Medium Term Financial Plan
02.02.24	2024/25 General Fund Revenue Budget, HRA Revenue Budget and Capital Budgets
07.03.24	Delivering Economic Growth via Gravity Enterprise Zone Developing the approach to Transformation 2023/24 Budget Monitoring Report Month 10

	Property Rationalisation Programme
25.04.24	Review of Terms of Reference for Local Community Networks Review of Scrutiny Committees

Over this period, the committee received one public question, on the topic of bus services. The committee also had a Task and Finish Group for Commercial Asset and Realisation over this period, and will begin a Task and Finish Group for Local Community Networks.

They made 23 recommendations: 22 recommendations on the Budget, and one regarding Asset Disposal.

3.24. Meeting 6 July 2023

Introduction to Strategic Asset Management at Somerset Council

The committee received a presentation on this topic. They discussed the decarbonisation of properties, the use by other organisations of Somerset Council buildings, the staff restructure, whether assets were correctly registered with the Land Registry, and investment and commercial assets. It was agreed that the committee would have a pro-active role in the programme.

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27

The committee received a presentation on this topic ahead of it going to Executive. It was suggested that members may set up Task and Finish groups to focus on specific areas to target actions for the budget.

3.25. Meeting 8 August 2023

Commercial Investment

The committee received a presentation on this topic, including a summary of the assets held, areas of risk, and asset management delivery. The committee requested further information on areas such as net income and different types of borrowing the former district councils had taken out. They were informed that there would be further work and investigation of the investments through Treasury Management and that all areas would be looked at in detail within the Task and Finish Groups.

The committee resolved to set up a Commercial Investment Task and Finish Group.

Budget Monitoring Report Quarter 1

The committee received a report on the Quarter 1 Budget monitoring, the first budget report as the new authority. The committee discussed the 17 key areas and were informed that short term actions regarding the budget were a priority. The committee were notified they would receive monthly budget monitoring reports in the future so that targets/actions can be scrutinised.

Local Communities Network Update

The committee received an update on this topic, and were supportive of LCNs and what they had achieved so far. They expressed concern about staff still needing to be appointed to the team.

3.26. Meeting 7 September 2023

Draft Asset Disposal Policy

The committee received a presentation on this item, explaining the policy and its context. Members discussed property valuations, properties being sold under market value, and the need for ward councillors to be involved in assets considered for sale. They requested more information on the full details of Somerset Council's estate and assets being considered for sale, however they were informed that some of this information would be commercially sensitive.

Property Rationalisation

The committee received a presentation on the programme to rationalise property, highlighting how working had changed post-Covid, the oversupply of office spaces in Somerset, the phased nature of the programme, and the evidence-based decision-making process. Members discussed the potential sale of Petters Way in Yeovil, the long-term planning for Yeovil regeneration, and prioritising decarbonisation.

Council Business Plan

The committee received a presentation on the business plan, a strategic document that sits within the overarching council plan. They discussed the feedback already received and the approach for further feedback, the deliverability of the plan, financial stability, and how it fit into the council's larger vision.

Budget Update

The committee received a report on this topic. During the discussion, the likelihood of a Section 114 Notice was raised. It was requested that members receive more training on MTFP.

Consolidated 2022/23 Outturn

The discussion for this item was interlinked with the previous item, and no further comments were raised.

3.27. Meeting 29 September 2023

Commercial Investment Update

The committee received a report on this confidential item and discussed it in private session.

3.28. Meeting 9 November 2023

Council Tax Reduction and Exceptional Hardship Scheme for 2024/25

The committee received a presentation on this item, which would be considered at Executive in December. There were no major changes proposed for the scheme. During the discussion, members raised relief for those who had flooded, the funding for hardship, the Equalities Impact Assessment, and signposting for residents.

2023/24 Budget Monitoring Report – Month 5

The committee received a report on this topic, highlighting the significant variances in the current financial year. The committee expressed concern about savings in the LGR business case that had not been delivered. They were informed of the budget variances in Adult Social Care and Childrens Services and the drivers of those. The committee noted the recommendations made to the Executive.

Financial Strategy Update

The committee received a report on this topic. The committee encouraged further awareness from local MPs, ministers, and the secretary of state to request government action. They highlighted the longer-term problem of the low council tax base, and they were informed of the need to set a balanced budget in 2024 or issue a Section 114 Notice.

3.29. Meeting 5 December 2023

2023/24 Budget Monitoring Report - Month 6 - End of September 2023

The committee received a report and presentation which went into detail on the current position and the emergency actions put in place. A discussion followed where more details were requested on membership of the control board, breaking down the particular pressures in Adults and Childrens social care, how the control boards would impact services devolved to town and parish councils, the progress of the capitalisation programme with central government, funding from Connecting Devon and Somerset, additional council tax on second homes, and outstanding uncollected council tax debts.

2023/24 General Fund Capital Budget Monitoring Report - Month 6 - End of September 2023

The committee received the report and presentation. During the discussion, the impact on the construction industry and highways was considered, as well as the difficulty predicting capital spend and if there could be quarterly breakdowns of this spending, the deliverability of the Octagon Project and the options available to the Octagon board with the DCMS funding, the ongoing engagement with the government, which capital projects were going to be stopped or delayed, and the rules around changes to capital projects.

2023/24 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring as at Quarter 2 (30 September 2023)

The committee received a report and presentation. During the discussion, committee members identified the increase in cost pressures for void properties and responsive repairs, and discussed the details of the leaving well scheme, the impact of the pay award being larger than budget, the capital spend projections for future years, £5m awarded for the North Taunton Woolaway Project, a request for fire safety works, reserves remaining high and how general reserves would be used to manage the current overspend, and the local rent policy of a rent cap at 7%.

2024/25 General Fund Revenue Budget and Capital Programme update

The committee received the report and presentation that detailed the approach to DLUHC and the legal requirements of engaging with the business sector. It was estimated that £36 million of earmarked reserves could be freed up, and an update would be provided at a later date, as well as news on the finance settlement from Government. Ongoing work around the budget gap for 24/25 had seen it reduce from £100m to £87m. The committee requested clarity over the previous reserves and which reserves were being reduced to balance the budget, and the risk analysis of this process was detailed. The development of budget options was ranked based on priority and deliverability, and there is a contingency of approximately 2% of budget. Savings and staffing cost profiles would continue into next year, incorporating existing staffing restructures. There remained a complex picture, and residents of Somerset would be consulted and

increased engagement as the situation develops.

Framework for Asset and/or Service Devolution

The committee received a report on the framework for devolution. During the discussion, comments were raised around priority levels and effective communication with Town and Parish Councils, and there was a request for more information on rationale, priority, and timescales for each asset. Regular engagement with town and parish councils is a key part of the process, but concerns were raised that there wouldn't be enough provision for towns and parishes who couldn't take services on, and the importance of equity of provision was highlighted as an area that needed to be monitored. Particular issues around highways and flooding were raised, with a detailed response to come following the meeting. Members also highlighted the risks around devolution with Parish and Town councils potentially being unprepared and unsupported, and whether assets could be returned if they were no longer viable. There is ongoing work with SALC to support the sector in taking on assets and services and advice given to parishes on setting their precept. Better communication was requested, and members were assured they would still be consulted on with regard to asset and devolution deals.

3.30. Meeting 4 January 2024

Financial Budget Update Month 7

The committee received a report which highlighted the still outstanding overspend for Children and Adult Services and the areas where the spend was reducing, leading to a reduction in the overall budget gap. It detailed the actions taken so far to address the budget position. During the discussion, the members made comments on better communication with the public on the overspend and the measures being taken, as well as a request to better investigate and track income streams, comments on the effectiveness of panels in scrutinising costs within Adults and Childrens placements, the ownership of any homes service users were placed in, inflation affecting care home placement costs and the large impact that was having on the overspend, a request for more reporting on Housing and Homelessness, and a concern about a lack of explanation around removal of Reserves lines.

The committee requested further training on budget areas and clarification in relation to fees and charges, and noted the recommendations going forward to the Executive Committee.

Somerset Council Reserves Amalgamation

The committee received a breakdown of the Reserves, with detail on reserves transferred from districts and County on vesting day, what the earmarked funds were and the breakdowns of those funds. The committee was assured there would

be more clarity on these funds in the future, and requested an in depth analysis on reserves, particularly those ring-fenced for certain projects, and more information provided on deleted lines of reserves and the services to be transferred to Town and Parish councils and the resulting impacts on any precepts set by those councils.

Business System for Finance Implementation Review

The committee received an update on the implementation of MS Dynamics and plans for future development. Thus far the implementation has been delivered on time and under budget. The members requested future updates to include tracking liabilities such as S106 monies or CIL payments, and integration and innovation benefits including Power BI, Copilot, and automation. It was noted that the second phase (HR and Payroll) was on hold due to the financial emergency.

Property Maintenance and Compliance Report

The committee received a presentation on Building Maintenance and Compliance, and how they were currently managed by the legacy Facilities Management/Property Teams responsible for the respective areas, who are working together to align processes and transfer systems to ensure consistent compliance and reporting. Members requested reporting on EV, DDA accessibility, and energy efficiency/performance of building owned by Somerset Council. The committee noted that certain teams worked with other partners and contractors, and that there would be changes to structures and resources and some of these would be managed in-house once a maintenance programme had been carried out to collate the necessary data. This process would be gradual and there are vacancies within teams. The committee looked forward to an update on these plans.

Surplus Assets Review

The committee received a report on the progress of surplus assets, confirming the approval of the Policy for Disposal of Assets. The proposed disposals were subject to further consultation with councillors and parish/town councils. The estimated values of capital receipts potentially deliverable before 31 March 2025 was noted, with the target for disposals of £15-20m, feeding into the MTFP. There is an Asset Management Group undertaking the review of other land and property assets. The committee noted that there are a number of issues to take into account, including planning/phosphates, use of buildings and land parcels. It also noted the needed resources and vacant posts.

Commercial Asset and Realisation Task and Finish Group Report

The committee received a report on the work of the Task and Finish Group, which included both Councillors and Officers, and scrutinised the asset portfolio, the factors driving disposal value, and the work being undertaken to prepare for sale.

The committee recommended to the Executive Committee that they support the acquisition of specialised external advisors to progress sales, and recommended a comprehensive Disposal Strategy to clarify the specific aims and leeway for deferring certain proposals.

3.31. Informal Members Workshop – MTFP – 31 January 2024

Members of all Scrutiny Committees and Executive Lead Members were invited to attend this informal workshop.

This workshop examined the budget proposals by each directorate in detail, in order to develop key lines of enquiry ahead of the Corporate and Resources Scrutiny on 2nd February, 2024.

3.32. Meeting 2 February 2024

Following the workshop, this meeting was an opportunity for councillors to scrutinise and give feedback on the budget proposals for 2024/25 in a public meeting. It followed the same format as the workshop.

Following the debate, a number of recommendations were resolved to go to Executive. Full detail on this can be found in the Scrutiny report to the Executive meeting on 7 February:

- For the overall budget, 3 recommendations were made
- For Communities services, 4 recommendations were made
- For Adults Services, 1 recommendation was made regarding 6 budget proposals
- For Children’s Services, 3 recommendations were made
- For Climate and Place, 5 recommendations were made
- For Strategy, Workforce, and Localities, 6 recommendations were made

3.33. Meeting 7 March 2024

Delivering Economic Growth via Gravity Enterprise Zone

The Committee received a report and presentation on the first of a series of decisions associated with the planned occupation of a large part of the Gravity Site near Bridgwater by Agratas to build the UKs largest gigafactory on the site.

During the discussion, concerns about travel, housing, and infrastructure were raised, as well as how governance for the plans would work, incorporating parishes and local colleges. The Committee looks forward to further updates on the project.

Developing the approach to Transformation

The Committee received a report on the Council-wide transformation programme and what Scrutiny's role would be in this.

During the discussion, members highlighted the risk of capacity issues and losing quality members of staff and how performance would be impacted. They raised concerns about LCNs, the impact on staff, and whether staff for devolved services would be transferred via TUPE. They were disappointed to not have been involved earlier in the process, and it was noted that there would be a plan agreed with Chair and Vice-Chair of each Committee to plan a way forward.

The Committee resolved to agree the recommendations detailed in the report and requested regular member briefings and that a joint programme of meetings and working groups be set up to assist with the scrutiny of this programme.

2023/2024 Budget Monitoring Report Month 10

The Committee received a presentation and report on the Month 10 Budget Monitoring.

The Committee noted the report and the change in scheduling that would allow them to consider issues before they came to Executive, and requested a report on corporate performance.

Property Rationalisation Programme

The Committee received a presentation and a report on the key decision on this proposed programme, asking for their recommendations prior to it going to Executive Committee.

Members discussed the proposals and confirmed support for the sale of Petters Way, the West Somerset properties sale, requested confirmation of Maintenance costs and the suitability of the current offices and properties, with options for future use. They resolved that they supported the transfer of services, works to properties, and the sale of C Block, County Hall, Taunton.

3.34. Meeting 25 April 2024

Review of Terms of Reference for Local Community Networks

The committee received a report on this topic and made a number of suggestions and amendments to the Terms of Reference for Local Community Networks. It was also agreed that a Task and Finish Group would be set up.

Review of Scrutiny Committees

The committee received a report on the review of Scrutiny Committees. They agreed the recommendations in the report, and requested that it be put to Executive for their views before going to Full Council.

3.35. Scrutiny Committee – Adults and Health

Scrutiny – Adults and Health met 7 times over the stated period, including the joint meeting with Children and Families on 25 October 2023. Members considered a broad range of topics at meetings, as seen in the summary table below.

Meeting Date	Topic
21.07.23 - Workshop	Mental Health Workshop
03.08.23	Mental Health Workshop – Update Primary Care Strategy Adult Social Care Budget Report Adult Social Care Assurance Report Healthy Weston
12.09.23	Adult Social Care Budget Report Recovering Access to Primary Care Safeguarding Adults – Annual Report
05.10.23	Adult Social Care Performance Report Budget Report, and Winter Planning Integrated Care Board (ICB) Performance Report NHS Dentistry Report
07.12.23	Crime and Disorder Overview Report Adult Social Care Transformation Programme Stroke Service – Results of Consultation
08.02.24	Healthy Weston Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 23/24 Budget Monitoring Report Month 9
01.03.24 – Member Engagement Session	The future of hyper acute and acute stroke services in Somerset
04.04.24	23/24 Budget Monitoring – Month 10 – End of January 2024 'My Life, My Future': Adult Social Care Transformation Programme Update Adult Social Care: Performance Report

Over the period, they received public questions on 2 topics:

- Dentistry
- Closure of Yeovil Hyper Acute Stroke Unit (three times)

They made 2 recommendations, regarding the closure of Yeovil Hyper Acute Stroke Unit and the capacity for the necessary digital platform for the Adult Social Care transformation programme

3.36. Meeting 3 August 2023

Mental health Workshop

The chair of the committee gave a verbal update on the workshop on the 21 July 2023. It was requested that this be added to the work programme for the committee so that further scrutiny can take place. Concerns were raised about the closure of St Andrews and the use of bed spaces at Yeovil. It was proposed that the committee receive information on the effects on services across Somerset, particularly in Yeovil.

Primary Care Strategy

The committee received a presentation on the Primary Care Strategy with the 17 problems to address and a broad strategic framework for sustainable improvement. During the discussion, councillors raised the need to integrate services and access, with public transport and digital exclusion, the need to be proactive, the need to use the Local Plan to predict pressure, and concerns around dentistry and General Practice.

Adult Social Care Budget Report

The committee received a presentation on this topic which showed an overspend of £15.5m. The committee noted the report.

Adult Social Care Assurance Report

The committee received a presentation which included the Adult Social Care Strategy 2023-2026. The committee noted the report and congratulated Adult Services for the work being undertaken.

Healthy Weston

The chair provided an update following a meeting with the Chief Executive of

Weston Hospital. It was noted that in February 2024 a report would come to the committee on the business case for care.

3.37. Meeting 23 September 2023

Adult Social Care Budget Report

The committee received a report covering the period up to the end of June 2023, showing an overspend of £12.1m. The committee asked for clarifications on the terminology, what the high costs were attributed to, and if there could be clearer detail on statutory and discretionary provision.

Recovering Access to Primary Care

The committee received a presentation on the local implementation of the national recovery plan Access to Primary Care. The committee asked what was being done locally to attract and retain experienced GPs, and requested data on 'hot spots' and the age profile of the existing GP cohort. They also asked for detail on quality measures and key performance indicators, and the timeframe for improvements.

Safeguarding Adults – Annual Report

The committee received a report from the Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board, a statutory body established by the Care Act 2014. The committee asked for the priorities for the forthcoming year and supported these and invited the presenter to attend the Joint Scrutiny meeting in October. The committee stated they would welcome further training on Safeguarding Adults for all councillors.

3.38. Meeting 07 December 2023

Crime and Disorder Overview Report

The committee received a presentation which covered the approach to community safety, the public health approach to violence, and an overview of statistics and activities around violent and serious crime. They discussed the details of the Safer Somerset Partnership and the wide ranging organisations involved in work around this, as well as breaking down the statistics and how they compared to other areas in the country.

Adult Social Care Budget Monitoring Month 5

The committee received a presentation on the current budgetary position, a breakdown of spending, in-year mitigations and the Medium Term Financial Plan. The committee questioned the service on whether the checks and balances for provision of care were creating an additional cost and burden, and whether the

increased reliance on VCSE would create pressures elsewhere in the system. Committee members were invited to attend an Enhanced Peer Forum to better understand the process.

Adult Social Care Transformation Programme

The committee received a presentation on the methods of transformation, progress, savings so far, and the projected savings. A discussion followed on the work being done with hospital discharges and the impact of the financial emergency on the transformation programme. It was agreed that there would be a quarterly update on the progress of the transformation programme.

Stroke Service - Results of Consultation

The committee received a report on the stroke service proposal and consultation process. This was an area that had received public interest, with both PQTs on this day relating to this topic, and an impassioned debate was had on the details of the proposal, the consultation, and the decision-making process.

At the conclusion of this discussion, the committee resolved it was not the best proposal for the people of Somerset, and the committee should write to the Executive to inform them. Further correspondence with the ICB on this topic followed over December and January as they moved towards making a decision at the end of January.

3.39. Meeting 7 February 2024

Healthy Weston

The Committee received a presentation detailing the overall vision for Weston, the successes they had already achieved, particularly in hospital improvements, and the next phase of Healthy Weston. One area that showed marked improvement was recruitment and retention at Weston General Hospital. The chair thanked the officers for their presentation and requested a further update once there was more work completed on the surgical hub and public engagement with the project.

Annual Report of the Director of Public Health

The Committee received a presentation on the upcoming Annual Report of the Director of Public Health, prior to it going to Executive Committee. The theme for this report was 'homes and health', and 'neighbourhood', highlighting how homes provide a strong essential foundation for good health and resilient communities can support people to live healthy independent lives.

During the discussion, it was highlighted how difficult it is for councillors to tackle

an issue as complex as housing, and the need for joined up work between various groups to create a holistic approach. The possibility of a workshop involving Housing, Social Care, and Public Health was raised. Issues around transport planning not joining up with housing planning, meaning people found it difficult to access healthcare, were also raised.

23/24 Budget Monitoring Report Month 9

The Committee received a presentation and a report that provided the overview on the current position in the whole council and Adult Services specifically, highlighting the pressures and mitigations in the service. This included ongoing work to support and stabilise the market of care providers, such as through supporting international recruitment.

The Committee sought a closer look at workforce, and the possibility of a workshop on the social care workforce was raised. The importance of working jointly with the VCSE sector and placing people with local care providers were both highlighted. Members also scrutinised the future direction of travel towards more care being provided in homes and the impact of that on the system as a whole, as well as the people receiving care.

3.40. Meeting 4 April 2024

Budget Monitoring Report – Month 10 – End of January 2024

The committee received a report and presentation on the financial position, identifying the key drivers of the overspend and the in-year mitigations taken. The committee raised concerns about overdue reviews, the nature of the demand-led budget, challenges regarding international recruitment, moving care home residents, intermediate care, and the need for accessible housing.

‘My Life, My Future’: Adult Social Care Transformation Programme Update

The committee received a presentation which looked at the progress in the first seven months on this programme, with a focus on Learning Disabilities and Preparing for Adulthood. They highlighted concerns about staffing, particularly with regard to the data workstream, and whether services users care time was being ‘squeezed’.

The Committee resolved to write to the Executive Committee to request assurance that the digital platform that ASC require to deliver this function of our data that Microsoft are working on with us is resourced and ready at an appropriate timescale, and that we have the capability to address this.

Adult Social Care Performance Report

The committee received a presentation on key performance measures within Adult Social Care. The committee were informed of how lower performing care providers were supported, and asked for information in a further report about outcomes from the contact centre, outcomes from hospital discharge, and trends in audits. They discussed quality audits, overdue assessments, hospital discharge pathways.

Adult Social Care Assurance Update

The committee received a presentation based on the initial feedback from the LGA Peer Review recently undertaken. The committee highlighted the importance of not relying on websites due to digital exclusion, and requested a full member briefing on the report. Prior to that, it was agreed that the full report would be brought to a Scrutiny – Adults and Health focus group in May.

4. Consultations undertaken

- 4.1.** The Committees invite and welcome all councillors, the press, and the public to attend and contribute to its meetings.

5. Implications

- 5.1.** 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 Committees, please contact the author of this report.

6. Background papers

- 6.1.** Further information about the five Scrutiny Committees 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