

## **Report of the Scrutiny Committees**

Chair of Committees: Councillor Gill Slocombe, Scrutiny Committee – Adults and Health, Councillor Leigh Redman, Scrutiny – Children and Families, Councillor Martin Dimery, Scrutiny Committee – Climate and Place, Councillor Gwil Wren, Scrutiny Committee – Communities, Councillor Bob Filmer, Scrutiny Committee – Corporate and Resources

Local Members and Divisions affected: All.

## **Executive Summary**

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 2024.

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.

## **Issues for consideration**

That Full Council note the report.

Report Author: Max Perry, Democratic Services  
Contact Details: [Max.Perry@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Max.Perry@somerset.gov.uk)

## Main report and supporting information.



### Background and purpose of report

1. The five Scrutiny Committees met 5 times over the period of 1<sup>st</sup> July to 26<sup>th</sup> August.

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.

### 2. Scrutiny Committee – Adults and Health

Adults and Health met twice over this period.

#### Meeting 11<sup>th</sup> July 2024

- 23/24 Budget Outturn and 24/25 Month 2 Budget Monitoring

The committee received a report on this topic and discussed the long-term financial impacts of the changes in approach to the budget and the identified risk areas to the budget.

- CQC Report on Maternity Services in Somerset

The committee received a report on this topic, following the CQC inspection of Maternity Services in Somerset and the actions taken to improve the quality of the services. The committee discussed the preparation for the inspection, the improvements made to address systemic issues, the impact on staff morale, and how nationwide recruitment challenges had had an impact.

- Social Care Workforce

The committee received a presentation that addressed both the internal and external workforce, including the workforce strategy and the national context. The committee discussed private sector carers, particularly in homecare, working days lost and sickness levels, international staffing, social worker turnover, and engagement with sixth forms.

- Overdue Assessments/Reviews

The committee received a presentation on the backlog for Care Act Assessments/Reviews and explained the causes and the ongoing work to address the waiting times and risk assess those on the waiting list. The committee raised whether there could be efficiency savings made through better discharge planning and moving people through the system faster.

- Extra Care Housing Model

The committee received a presentation on the progress of the Extra Care Housing recommissioning, outlining the key proposals and implementation period. The committee discussed the positives of Extra Care Housing and requested more information on the details of the care provided and the schemes in Somerset.

- Consultation on Draft Somerset Suicide Prevention Strategy

The committee received a report detailing the structure of the strategy and how it was co-produced as well as the consultation process. The committee discussed the possible reasons for the above average rate of death by suicide in Somerset, how councillors can get involved in supporting people, the capacity of the team and the range of services available.

### **Meeting 15<sup>th</sup> August 2024**

- Somerset Strategic Drug and Alcohol Partnership (SSDAP) Annual Report

The committee received a report and presentation that provided detail on the work the partnership does in Somerset and provided information on the national context, the goals of the partnership, and the different workstreams and priorities. The committee discussed the concerns around the future of funding, the importance of data in this area, how the service supports people, and prevention work in schools.

- Due Regard to Equalities

The committee received a report explaining the public sector equality duty and reminding them of Scrutiny's role in that. The committee learned how to ask effective questions relating to equality.

- 24/25 Budget Monitoring Report – Month 3

The committee received a report detailing the projected underspend for 2024/25 in adults and that all savings in the MTFP were either achieved or on track. They discussed how increasing homecare would impact the budget, the overspend on equipment, forecasting, the risk due to legislation changes for international recruitment, and the potential for costs to increase.

- Crime and Disorder Overview Report

The committee received a presentation and report on the statutory responsibilities, partnership arrangements, the work around preventing crime and supporting victims of crime, and the challenges and risks. The committee raised that there may be a need for a dedicated joint Scrutiny Committee for a better understanding of this area and proposed a meeting on this topic with the chairs, vice-chairs, and one other member of the three relevant Scrutiny Committees (Adults and Health, Children and Families, and Communities).

### **3. Scrutiny Committee – Children and Families**

The committee met once over the period.

#### **Meeting 7<sup>th</sup> August 2024**

- Children’s Services – Budget Monitoring – Month 3

The committee received a presentation providing an update on the budget position for 24/25, with a forecast overspend of £5.4m. The committee raised queries regarding external placements and the details of different types of placements, including unregistered placements, and the budget-setting process and whether it is realistic. They also agreed to ask Executive to if there are any Council related blockers to the Homes and Horizons project that can be resolved.

- Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) of Somerset – Serious Youth Violence

The committee received a presentation and report on this topic, including the outcome of this inspection in the form of an ungraded letter. The headline findings for the area inspection were not positive, with criticism of partnership working and multi-agency practice. The committee discussed cross border partnership working, information sharing, quality assurance, and CAMHS resources and capacity.

- Equality Due Regard requirement for Scrutiny

The committee received a report explaining the public sector equality duty and reminding them of Scrutiny’s role in that. The committee discussed access to relevant training and raising awareness of those resources to members.

- School Transport Project

The committee received a presentation on the ongoing work and noted the successes and innovation around procurement and licensing. The committee discussed accessibility, costs, and safety, and appreciated the data provided regarding transport costs.

### **4. Scrutiny Committee – Climate and Place**

Climate and Place met once over the period.

#### **Meeting 25<sup>th</sup> July 2024**

- Bus Service Improvement Plan.

The committee received a report on the revised BSIP.

- Waste Services Update

The committee received a report on Waste Services updates regarding the Expansion of Flex Plastics trial and Suez contract negotiations.

- Climate and Place provisional outturn report

The committee received a report on the provisional outturn. The committee requested further information in regard to Accountable bodies – connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) 'clawback' of public subsidy.

## **5. Scrutiny Committee – Corporate and Resources**

Corporate and Resources met once over the period.

### **Meeting 24<sup>th</sup> July 2024**

- Budget Monitoring – 2023/24 Draft Outturn and 2024/25 Emerging Issues

The committee received a report on this topic. The committee requested further details on the savings expected and the capital programme. They also highlighted tracking liabilities, focusing on the overall budget, and raised queries about other specific areas such as Yeovil venues, Children Services, and staff pay.

- Improvement and Transform Programme Update

The committee received an update on the progress made on the Improvement and Transformation Programme, highlighting the milestones achieved recently. The committee discussed low engagement in the staff survey, risks relating to redundancy, the progress of the capitalisation programme, the impact on staff remaining with the authority, and overall resources. They were informed of the timelines for the remainder of the programme and that Service Standards will come through Scrutiny for consideration.

- Disposal of Non-Operational Assets

The committee received a report on the assets on the list for disposal. They discussed the general proposals for the different ways they would be disposed of, and then went into confidential session to discuss individual assets.

## **Key considerations for the Council**

### **Consultation and feedback**

6. None. Report for information only.

### **Financial and Risk Implications**

7. None. Report for information only.

### **Legal and Procurement Implications**

8. None. Report for information only.

## HR / Workforce Implications

9. None. Report for information only.

## Equalities Implications

10. None. Report for information only.

## Community Safety Implications

11. None. Report for information only.

## Climate Change and Sustainability Implications

12. None. Report for information only.

## Health and Safety Implications

13. None. Report for information only.

## Health and Wellbeing Implications

14. None. Report for information only.

## Social Value

15. None. Report for information only.

## Background Papers

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.

## Report assurance

	Officer Name	Date Completed
Legal & Governance Implications	David Clark	16/09/24
Finance & Procurement	Nicola Hix	16/09/24
Workforce (*)	n/a	n/a
Asset Management (*)	n/a	n/a
Executive Director	Alyn Jones	16/09/24
<b>Consulted:</b>	Councillor Name	
Relevant Scrutiny Chair(s)	All Scrutiny Chairs	Sent on 12/09/24