

Report To: County Council

Date of Meeting: 13 May 2014

Member Presenting: Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts

Report Authors: Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group/
Scrutiny Coordinator and Democratic Services Officer

Title: Annual Report of the Council's Scrutiny Committees

1. What is the report about?

The Scrutiny Committees' Annual Report to Council for 2013/14.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1 To present to Council the Scrutiny Committees' annual report on their activities during 2013/14.
- 2.2 To comply with Article 6.3.7 of the Council's Constitution which stipulates that scrutiny committees must report annually to full Council on their work and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Council considers the Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committees for 2013/14 and comments accordingly.

4. Report details.

- 4.1 The Constitution of Denbighshire County Council stipulates that the Authority's scrutiny committees will report annually on their activities during the year to County Council.
- 4.2 The Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group (SCVCG) wanted this year's Annual Report to follow the more concise format that was trialled last year as they felt that it gave readers a brief overview of the how scrutiny operates, the work committees do, and informed residents how they can participate in and contribute to the scrutiny process.
- 4.3 As well as containing a summary of each scrutiny committee's resolutions, this year's report concentrates on outlining scrutiny's work in challenging the Council's plans to deliver its corporate priorities by 2017. Scrutiny's objective in examining these policies and strategies in detail is to support the delivery of the seven corporate priorities and assist the Council to realise its aspiration on being close to the community.

4.4 As in recent years this year's Annual Report includes a form which enables the general public to suggest areas or services for scrutiny's consideration. The rationale behind this form is to try and generate public interest and improve residents' interaction with scrutiny in line with the Welsh Government expectations on local authorities to increase public engagement and interaction with their work. During the course of the last year a handful of residents did contact Denbighshire's scrutiny function suggesting items which in their view merited scrutiny. However, as the issues raised were mainly of a local nature they were resolved by other more appropriate methods. Nevertheless, as this form enables residents to draw matters to the Council's attention it has again been included in the Annual Report.

Wales Audit Office (WAO) Scrutiny Improvement Study

4.5 The final report following the national study undertaken by the Wales Audit Office (WAO) is still awaited. Once received the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group will consider its recommendations and determine whether any changes are required to the Authority's scrutiny practices based on the findings of the report.

Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

4.6 Similarly local authorities are waiting for the necessary powers to be confirmed enabling them to use the provisions contained in the Local Government (Wales) 2011 Measure to compel other public services providers to attend scrutiny when requested to do so. Until such time as the Order is made organisations that deliver public services to the County's residents can only be invited to engage with scrutiny committees. Nevertheless, it is pleasing to report that all those organisations invited to attend scrutiny in Denbighshire to date have willingly accepted the invitation.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

Effective scrutiny will assist the Council to deliver its corporate priorities in line with community needs and residents' wishes.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1 The publication of the Annual Report forms part of the regular committee reports despatch to county councillors and other recipients, therefore there are no additional costs entailed with its publication. The Annual Report will be distributed to Council outlets such as libraries, One Stop Shops, leisure centres and to town and community councils, with electronic versions sent to all school councils within the County. It will also be available on the Council's intranet and website.

6.2 Any costs incurred with respect to the new powers conferred on scrutiny committees by the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 will be funded and contained within the Council's existing budget for democratic costs. Any costs arising from the holding of joint scrutiny meetings with other local

authorities will have to be negotiated with the relevant local authority/ies and met from within the existing budgets.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision?

Effective scrutiny of Council policies, procedures and decisions should mitigate the risk of there being any adverse impact on people who share protected characteristics.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

Members of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group have been involved with the drafting of the Annual Report and have been consulted on its contents.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

There are no significant financial implications resulting from this report. As mentioned in paragraph 6 above any costs relating to the production of the Report will be contained within existing budgets and any costs arising from the establishment of joint scrutiny meetings will have to be the subject of negotiations between the relevant authorities.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

No risks have been identified with respect to the consideration of the Committees' Annual Report.

11. Power to make the Decision

Article 6.3.7 of the Council's Constitution stipulates that the Council's scrutiny committees must report annually on their activities to full Council.

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