

Report to:	County Council
Date of Meeting:	4 July 2017
Report Authors:	Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group/ Scrutiny Coordinator
Presented by:	Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts (Chair of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group 2016/17)
Title:	Annual Report of the Council's Scrutiny Committees 2016/17

1. What is the report about?

The Scrutiny Committees' Annual Report to Council for 2016/17

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1 To present to Council the Scrutiny Committees' annual report on their activities during 2016/17.
- 2.2 To comply with Section 7.4.4 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 2016/17 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 This year's Annual Report follows a similar format to that used in previous years. It gives the reader a brief overview of how scrutiny operates, the work scrutiny has undertaken to support the delivery of the Council's seven corporate priorities as well as other work undertaken by scrutiny members and task and finish groups. The report also informs residents how they can participate and contribute to the scrutiny process. A copy of the draft report can be seen at Appendix 1 to this report. The report will in due course be available on the Council's website.
- 4.3 During 2016/17, as in previous years, scrutiny has undertaken a mix of pre-decision and post-decision scrutiny work. It has also regularly been involved in performance monitoring, participated in consultation exercises and invited a number of external or

partner organisations to meet with committees to discuss areas of common interest or concern.

- 4.4 Included in the report is a summary of the conclusions reached following discussions on various subjects by each scrutiny committee. It also includes a summary of the findings of the Cutting Our Cloth Task and Finish Group's work. This was the Group established to examine the actual impact of the 'Cutting Our Cloth' budget decisions on Denbighshire's communities and its residents after their implementation. Mention is also made to the progress achieved to date by the Task and Finish Group which is examining potential future options for providing social care services for the elderly.
- 4.5 As in recent years the 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's expectations for local authorities.
- 4.6 When considering a request for a matter to be scrutinised, be it a request from an elected member, an officer or from the general public, the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group (SCVCG) applies the following criteria to determine whether the item merits scrutiny:
- is it a matter of public interest?
 - does Scrutiny have the ability to influence or change things?
 - does it relate to an underperforming service?
 - does the matter affect a large number of residents or a large geographical area?
 - is anyone else looking at it?
- 4.7 It is pleasing to report that more members of the public have attended scrutiny meetings during 2016/17 than in previous years, albeit that this was influenced by the contentious nature of some of the subjects under discussion. Nevertheless, public interest in scrutiny's work seems to be increasing year on year. In addition, a number of questions submitted by members of the public have been raised during scrutiny discussions.
- 4.8 Reference was made in recent years' annual reports to the Wales Audit Office's (WAO) national study into scrutiny in Wales, *Good Scrutiny? Good Question!* This report concluded that there was a need to strengthen scrutiny's role across local government and public services in general. It also stressed the benefits of using scrutiny as a means for engaging with residents and service-users in order to take better decisions which lead to better outcomes for residents. During this last year scrutiny has started enhancing its work in this area. For example, in addition to inviting residents to suggest areas for scrutiny it has invited them, via social media and press releases, to submit evidence to the Cutting Our Cloth Task and Finish Group. Scrutiny has also continued to meet with a number of partner organisations and external companies/providers to discuss matters of concern for residents and to participate in consultation exercises which they were undertaking.
- 4.9 As a result of the national WAO report a set of '*Outcomes and Characteristics for Effective Scrutiny*' were developed and adopted on a Wales-wide basis. The aim of these characteristics is to support the delivery of better outcomes, through better decision making, based on better engagement with residents and stakeholders.

- 4.10 During the forthcoming year scrutiny will have an important role to play in supporting the development of the Council's new corporate priorities and associated Corporate Plan. The work of the 'Future of In-house Adult Social Care Task and Finish Group' will continue, therefore Scrutiny will continue to examine any proposals it puts forward. It will also continue to robustly challenge the conclusions of Wellbeing Impact Assessments (WIAs) undertaken when developing policies to ensure that the proposals are sustainable and will support the delivery of the goals and principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- 4.11 It is widely expected that local government funding from central government will continue to reduce year on year during the term of this new Council. Despite this pressure on local government services demand for the services is expected to increase as will residents' expectations. The Council will need to find a way of investing in its agreed priorities whilst at the same time protecting much valued services. This means that difficult decisions lie ahead during the term of this Council as it seeks to find affordable solutions to meet demand. In addition, Welsh Government expects local authorities to work closer and better together to deliver services which meet citizens' needs i.e. integrated health and social care budgets will become a reality within the next twelve months. Scrutiny will have an important role to perform in supporting the delivery of these changes, ensuring that the new arrangements are effective, efficient, and deliver value for money whilst improving outcomes for individuals.

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, residents' wishes and within budget.

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 upon approval and translation will be distributed to Council outlets such as libraries, One Stop Shops 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 work of task and finish groups will be met from within the existing budgets

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment? The completed Well-being Impact Assessment report can be downloaded from the [website](#) and should be attached as an appendix to the report

A Well-being Impact Assessment (WBIA) is not required for this report as no decision or change of policy is being sought. The Annual Report is presented solely to inform councillors and residents of the Scrutiny Committees' work during the preceding twelve months and as a means of outlining potential future areas of work.

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

Members of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group (SCVCG) have been involved with the process for drafting the Annual Report and its proposed 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, as will any costs arising from the establishment of task and finish groups.

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

Section 7.4.4 of the Council's Constitution stipulates that the Council's scrutiny committees must report annually to full Council on their workings with recommendations for their future work programme and any amended working methods if appropriate.

Contact Officer:

Scrutiny Coordinator

Tel: 01824 712554

rhian.evans@denbighshire.gov.uk