

Report to: County Council

Date of Meeting: 15 May 2018

Report Authors: Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group/
Scrutiny Coordinator

Presented by: Councillor Hugh Irving (Chair of the Scrutiny Chairs and
Vice-Chairs Group 2017/18)

Title: Annual Report of the Council's Scrutiny Committees
2017/18

1. What is the report about?

The Scrutiny Committees' Annual Report to Council for 2017/18

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1 To present to Council the Scrutiny Committees' annual report on their activities during 2017/18.
- 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 2017/18 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 is the Scrutiny Committees' first report on its activities during the current Council's term of office. The report provides the reader with a brief introduction on what scrutiny is and how scrutiny operates, along with an overview of the work the committees and their members have undertaken during the course of the year. It also includes information on how residents can participate and contribute to the scrutiny process. A copy of the draft report can be seen at Appendix 1 to this report. Upon approval the report will be translated and be made available on the Council's website.
- 4.3 In previous years the Annual Report has focussed on Scrutiny's work in delivering the Council's corporate priorities and Corporate Plan. With the formation of a new Council in May 2017 the 2017/18 year has been a period of establishing and

learning. Now that the Council has agreed its new corporate priorities and adopted its Corporate Plan for the period 2017-2022 Scrutiny will commence its regular monitoring of its delivery.

- 4.4 During 2017/18 scrutiny has undertaken a mix of pre-decision and post-decision scrutiny work, with individual committees focussing their work on a number of specific areas, such as corporate performance, partnership arrangements, and community and economic benefit. Details of the topics which have been examined by Scrutiny can be found in the sections on the individual committees in the attached report. Throughout the course of the year Scrutiny has 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.
- 4.5 Public engagement and encouraging residents to interact with Scrutiny continues to be a challenge in Denbighshire, as elsewhere in Wales. It is an aspect of its work which Scrutiny will continue to try and improve during the forthcoming year. For this purpose, as in previous years, the Annual Report contains a form which enables the general public to suggest areas or services for scrutiny's consideration.
- 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 In 2014 the Wales Audit Office's (WAO) undertook a national study into scrutiny in Wales. This study, called *Good Scrutiny? Good Question!* 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 2017/18 the WAO undertook a further national study on Scrutiny. The main focus of this study, called *Fit for the Future*, was to examine how Scrutiny had responded to the recommendations in the *Good Scrutiny? Good Question!* report and how it had adapted to the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, including the duties placed upon it in relation to scrutinising the Public Services Board (PSB). The conclusions of this review are still awaited.
- 4.8 As a result of the initial 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. Towards the end of the 2017/18 municipal year Scrutiny undertook an evaluation exercise to assess its effectiveness against these characteristics and to identify areas which require strengthening. Questionnaires were issued to all county councillors, co-opted members and to senior officers who regularly attend and interact with

Scrutiny. A summary of the evaluation's main conclusions are contained in the Annual Report. The Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group will analyse the results of the evaluation exercise along with suggestions received on how Scrutiny can be strengthened, and the findings of the WAO review during the early part of 2018/19 with a view to identifying improvement actions and incorporating them into the Scrutiny Improvement Plan.

- 4.9 During 2018/19 work will start in earnest on monitoring the Council's delivery of its new corporate priorities and its Corporate Plan. The work of the recently re-established 'Future of In-house Adult Social Care Task and Finish Group' will continue, with its proposals for how to deliver quality social care services in future being presented to Performance Scrutiny Committee prior to recommendations being made to Cabinet. Scrutiny 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.
- 4.10 Preliminary work has been undertaken during 2017/18 on the potential benefits of establishing joint scrutiny committee arrangements between Denbighshire County Council and Conwy County Borough Council for the purpose of fulfilling Scrutiny's duties in relation to scrutinising the PSB. This work should be brought to a conclusion during 2018/19.
- 4.11 Scrutiny committees will continue to invite partner organisations and other public sector bodies to meet with them during the forthcoming year to examine how services and outcomes to residents can be improved through effective partnership. In May 2018 the initial impact of the introduction of Universal Credit on residents and on council services will be considered by Communities Scrutiny Committee. A number of partner organisations have been invited to attend this meeting. During the summer a Welsh Government representative will attend a meeting of Performance Scrutiny Committee to discuss capital funding for highways projects, whilst Partnerships Scrutiny Committee will continue to meet on a regular basis with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board representatives to discuss health and social care issues.

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 will 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