

Report to:	County Council
Date of Meeting:	15 October 2019
Report Authors:	Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group/ Scrutiny Coordinator
Presented by:	Councillor Graham Timms (Chair of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group)
Title:	Annual Report of the Council's Scrutiny Committees 2018/19

1. What is the report about?

The Scrutiny Committees' Annual Report to Council for 2018/19

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1 To present to Council the Scrutiny Committees' annual report on their activities during 2018/19.
- 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 2018/19 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 attached at Appendix 1. It 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. Upon approval the report will be translated and be made available on the Council's website.
- 4.3 The report outlines Scrutiny's important role in relation to supporting the Council's work to deliver its corporate priorities and Corporate Plan, including its regular monitoring of the Plan's delivery
- 4.4 As in previous years during 2018/19 the Scrutiny Committees have 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, the effectiveness of partnership arrangements in delivering services, 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. Scrutiny has also continued to participate in consultation exercises and invited a number of external or partner organisations to meet with the committees to discuss areas of common interest or concern.

4.5 Public engagement and encouraging residents to interact with Scrutiny is generally a challenge in Denbighshire, as it is elsewhere in Wales. Despite the fact that no direct requests were received from members of the public during 2018/19 for items to be scrutinised, residents and others from further afield did engage with Scrutiny in relation to two significant matters. These being the call-in of the Cabinet decision relating to Gypsy and Traveller Site Provision in the county and the Scrutiny Inquiry into the Llantysilio Mountain Fire, which occurred during the summer of 2018. More information on these particular topics can be found in the Annual Report. The level of public interest in these subjects highlights the fact that the public are willing to interact and engage with Scrutiny when the subject matter has a direct impact on their day to day lives. Scrutiny will continue with its current practice of enabling the public to suggest areas or services for scrutiny's consideration through the provision of a 'Scrutiny Request Form', a copy of which can be found in the Annual Report.

4.6 When considering a request from a councillor, an officer or a member of the public for a matter to be scrutinised, 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?

The attached report contains an illustration of the above process, which includes suggested alternative routes for consideration of a topic if the Group deems that it is not suitable for examination by a scrutiny committee.

4.7 Mention was made in last year's Annual Report that the Council was at that time awaiting the publication of a Wales Audit Office (WAO) study on the effectiveness of the Council's scrutiny function in responding to the recommendations of an earlier, 2014, national study on scrutiny, called *Good Scrutiny? Good Question!* The 2014 study concluded that there was a need nationally to strengthen scrutiny's role across local government and public services in general. Also included in the scope of the second study, titled *Fit for the Future*, was an assessment of how Scrutiny in Denbighshire 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). Reference is included in the Annual Report to the conclusions of this review and the Council's response to them.

4.8 In last year's report reference was made to the preliminary work which had taken place with a view to establishing joint scrutiny arrangements between Denbighshire County Council and Conwy County Borough Council for the purpose of fulfilling

Scrutiny's duties in relation to scrutinising the Public Services Board (PSB) for the area. The proposals and the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee's draft terms of reference were taken through the democratic processes of both councils and by the end of October 2018 both county councils had formally agreed to the establishment of this joint-committee, the first formal joint scrutiny arrangement for PSBs in North Wales, and one of the first in Wales. The Joint Committee which has 16 members, 8 from each constituent council, held a familiarisation and development event in early 2019 and held its inaugural meeting in May 2019. More information on this Committee and its office holders can be found in the Annual Report.

- 4.9 Also included in the attached report is information on the task and finish/working groups operating under the auspices of the Council's Scrutiny Committees.
- 4.10 Scrutiny committees have to date during 2019/20, and will for the remainder of the municipal year, continue with the practice of inviting partner organisations and other public sector bodies to meet with them to examine how services and outcomes to residents can be improved through effective partnership working. Meetings are already scheduled with representatives from Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) to discuss the delivery of health and social care services across the county, the North Wales Trunk Road Agency to discuss highway verge maintenance policies and how they align with the Council's own verge maintenance and biodiversity policies, and Communities Scrutiny Committee has undertaken to monitor the implementation of the multi-agency recommendations stemming from its inquiry into the Llantysilio Mountain fire.

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 despatched 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 of 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.

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