

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

2018- 2019



Cyngor
sir ddinbych
denbighshire
County Council



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What is scrutiny?

Scrutiny is a key component of the Council's political structure. Many of the Council's important decisions are taken by Cabinet, a group of eight councillors to whom the County Council has given its powers to take decisions relating to policies and procedures on its behalf.

The term 'scrutiny' derives from the Latin word 'scrutinium/scrutari' which means 'to search'. In the context of local government Scrutiny's role is to research and examine policies and decisions to assess whether they could be improved or strengthened to deliver better services for residents and visitors to Denbighshire. Scrutiny is often referred to as the Council's 'critical friend', its purpose is to provide constructive criticism in order to continually seek improvements to services, secure better decisions and realise better outcomes.

Scrutiny committees cannot take decisions, but they can influence policies, review decisions taken by Cabinet and Officers, make recommendations, and examine a range of topics that affect residents, local businesses and visitors to the county.

Scrutiny in Action

Scrutiny should at all times work in an impartial way. It should not be influenced by party politics, its focus should be on improving the lives of residents and on securing better outcomes for the county area.

Whilst Scrutiny Committees have an active role to play in developing policies and reviewing performance, they also have the responsibility of holding the Cabinet and other decision makers to account on the decisions they make.




If a Scrutiny Committee believes that an issue should be looked at in more depth before a decision is implemented, it can request a review under the "Call-In" procedure which will allow Scrutiny Committees to formulate alternative proposals.

How does scrutiny work in Denbighshire?

Scrutiny acts as a 'critical friend' to the Council's leadership, driving improvements not only to services delivered by the Council itself, but to services delivered in partnership with other public services in the area by enabling the concerns of the public to be heard.

The Council's scrutiny work is undertaken by three thematic, cross-cutting scrutiny Committees, meeting approximately every 7 weeks and comprising of 11 members from all political parties/groups on the Council.

The three committees in Denbighshire are:

-  Communities Scrutiny Committee
-  Partnerships Scrutiny Committee
-  Performance Scrutiny Committee

When examining education matters representatives appointed by the Church in Wales and the Catholic Church, along with representatives elected by parent governors, also serve on the committees. When dealing with education matters these representatives have full voting rights.

Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group

The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the three scrutiny committees serve on the Council's Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group along with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Corporate Governance Committee (the Council's Audit Committee) and the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee. This Group acts as a co-ordinating group for the committees' work. Requests for items to be considered by a scrutiny committee, be they from county councillors, Council officers, residents or the general public are examined by this Group to determine whether they meet the criteria for Scrutiny, or whether they would benefit from being considered by another forum or group. The flowchart on the following page illustrates the criteria and process for determining whether a topic is suitable for scrutiny.

During 2018/19 a total of 33 requests for items to be scrutinised were considered by the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group. Of these 33 requests:

- ❖ 23 were submitted by county councillors
- ❖ 10 by officers
- ❖ 0 by residents/general public (despite the fact that none were submitted directly by the public a number of the requests submitted by county councillors were done so in response to concerns raised with them by their constituents)

The Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group ensures that the scrutiny committees' work programmes are balanced and that subjects are not duplicated. It also has a role to play in supporting and strengthening the Council's scrutiny function through the identification of best practice and helping to implement any necessary changes to scrutiny practices.

Consideration of a topic's suitability for scrutiny

Proposal Form/Request received

(careful consideration given to reasons for request)



Does it stand up to the PAPER test?

- **P**ublic interest – is the matter of concern to residents?
- **A**bility to have an impact – can Scrutiny influence and change things?
- **P**erformance – is it an underperforming area or service?
- **E**xtent – does it affect a large number of residents or a large geographic area?
- **R**eplication – is anyone else looking at it?

YES

NO

No further action required by scrutiny committee. Refer elsewhere or request information report?

- Determine the desired outcome(s)
- Decide on the scope and extent of the scrutiny work required and the most appropriate method to undertake it (i.e. committee report, task and finish group inquiry, or link member etc.)
- If task and finish route chosen, determine the timescale for any inquiry, who will be involved, research requirements, expert advice and witnesses required, reporting arrangements etc.

Scrutiny's work during 2018/19

As part of their work during the 2018/19 Council year the Council's three Scrutiny Committees have focussed on a number of subjects with a view to supporting the Council to deliver its corporate priorities. The Corporate Priorities are:

- 🌍 **Housing:** ensuring that everyone is supported to live in homes that meet their needs
- 🌍 **Connected Communities:** making sure communities are connected and have access to goods and services locally, online and through good transport links
- 🌍 **Resilient Communities:** making sure that the Council works with people and communities to build independence and resilience
- 🌍 **Environment:** securing an attractive and protected environment which supports well-being and economic prosperity; and
- 🌍 **Young People:** creating a county where younger people will want to live and work and have the skills to do so

By adopting this approach Scrutiny's objective is to improve services to residents and the quality of their daily lives.

Denbighshire County Council's services touch the lives of all of the county's residents, be they young or old, hence the reason why the scrutiny committees have during the course of the year examined the Council's performance in delivering its services. In addition, as service delivery models evolve to meet changing needs, Scrutiny has been involved with shaping new ways of delivering services for the future.

A brief overview of the work undertaken by each committee during the course of the year is summarised on the following pages.

Performance Scrutiny Committee



Cllr. Huw LI Jones (**Chair**)



Cllr. Hugh Irving (**Vice-Chair**)

This Committee has a key role in monitoring the Council's performance in delivering services. Consequently it regularly reviews the Council's progress in delivering its **Corporate Plan**, and its performance in dealing with complaints under the authority's **Your Voice** complaints procedure.

Twice a year it reviews the Council's **Risk Register** to ensure that the Authority has appropriate measures in place to lessen the impact of any major changes in legislation, national policies or unforeseen events on the Council and on residents.

Acknowledging the pressures caused by an ever increasing demand on social care services and the dwindling availability of financial resources to meet that demand, the Committee has examined the **Director of Social Services Annual Report** on the Service's performance in delivering those services in 2017/18 and its plans to meet new legislative requirements and deliver the services during 2018/19. It also reviewed the performance of **Cefndy Healthcare**, a company which provides valuable employment opportunities for vulnerable people and improves their quality of life, in delivering its business during 2017/18 and examined its business plan for 2018/19.

Whilst a number of local authorities have reduced the number of libraries they operate, or transferred them over to community groups to run, Denbighshire has opted to keep them open and operate them itself. Recognising that modern day libraries mean a lot more than books the Council is currently in the process of developing them into community hubs, where people can go to access a number of services and attend events. The Committee has continued to monitor the Library Service's performance in meeting the Welsh Government's **Library Standards** and the Council's progress in developing them into **Community Hubs**.

The quality of Council's education provision to ensure that all pupils reach their potential and are equipped for the world of employment has also featured on the Committee's work programme during the year, as it has examined both the **Provisional and Verified Examination Results**. As a result of scrutinising the results the Committee raised concerns with Qualifications Wales on the substantial

increase in the 'C' grade threshold for the English examination taken in the summer of 2018 and its detrimental impact on students' educational and career options. The Committee felt that this particular cohort of students had been disadvantaged because Qualifications Wales had not given advance warning of their intention to significantly raise the threshold.

Having regard to the growing concerns about the environment and global warming the Committee has examined the Council's **Draft Fleet Management Strategy** and proposals to develop a sustainable **Highways Management Strategy**

The following link will take you to information about the Committee, its agendas and reports on the Council's website:

<https://moderngov.denbighshire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=269&LLL=0>

Partnerships Scrutiny Committee



Cllr. Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones (**Chair**)



Cllr. Emrys Wynne (**Vice-Chair**)

Effective and efficient delivery of services in collaboration with various public sector partners is a key feature of this Committee's work.

Welsh Government expects all public sector partners to work effectively together to deliver seamless services to residents to improve their quality of life. This is particularly true when delivering health and social care services to vulnerable people. These types of services need to complement each other and therefore it is crucial that their delivery is integrated wherever possible to ensure that no gap in service provision occurs when one type of service ceases and before another starts.

With a view to ensuring that the county's most vulnerable people are protected and supported the Committee has examined the findings of the **Independent Investigation into the Care and Treatment on Tawel Fan Ward** and discussed these findings and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board's (BCUHB) future proposals for dementia care with the Board's Chief Executive and senior officers. It has also examined the Council's **Annual Report on Safeguarding Adults in Denbighshire 2017/18** as well as the services available to homeless people in the county as part of its consideration of the **Homelessness Prevention Action Plan and Draft Commissioning Plan 2019/22**.

Health Board representatives have attended a number of Committee meetings during the year to discuss the Council and local residents' concerns in relation to the delivery of healthcare services in various parts of the county. Amongst the issues examined in detail were the Health Board's plans for delivering services at **Denbigh Infirmary**, as well as healthcare services in the **Ruthin** and Corwen areas. It has continued to monitor the Health Board's progress in delivering its plans to open a new healthcare facility and hospital in Rhyl for the **North Denbighshire** area. Committee members were pleased to receive assurances from Health Board officials that they want to engage with the Council when developing these new facilities in order to support the delivery of integrated health and social care services. Another proposal aimed at delivering better integrated health and social care services which

the Committee has examined during the year is the development of **Pooled Health and Social Care Budgets**. The committee will continue to monitor all these topics during the forthcoming year.

Both the Council and the Health Service are indebted to families and carers for supporting sick and vulnerable residents to live in their own homes for as long as possible, and to remain resilient for as long as they can. These volunteers alleviate both demand and financial pressures on both Health and Social Care Services. It is therefore important that services are available to support Carers in their work and to ensure that they have some time to themselves to unwind and live their own lives. With a view to ensuring that the Council was making adequate provision for them the Committee examined the availability of **Support for Young Carers in Denbighshire** as well as accessibility to **Respite Care Provision for all Carers** across the county.

Every local authority is required to have a designated crime and disorder scrutiny committee, Partnerships Scrutiny Committee is Denbighshire's designated crime and disorder scrutiny committee. In fulfilling that role during the year the Committee examined the Conwy and Denbighshire **Community Safety Partnership's (CSP) Annual Report 2017/18** and the priorities it had identified for 2018/19. Other community safety related matters examined in detail by the Committee during the year were the effectiveness of the **CCTV Partnership** established for the delivery of CCTV services in Rhuddlan, Rhyl and Prestatyn along with proposals for enhancing the service in partnership with Cheshire West and Chester Council. The Committee also had an input into the draft contract specification for the delivery of **Environmental Crime Enforcement Services** in the county in future.

With the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Beauty (AONB) straddling the length of the county's eastern border Denbighshire has a wealth of natural assets, and is home to a wide variety of wildlife and protected habitats. This area attracts tourists from across the world, who in turn boost the local economy. As a result these areas need to be managed carefully to ensure that their ecosystems and habitats are sustainable into the future. To seek assurances that everything possible was being done to secure the future of these areas, both ecologically and financially, the Committee examined the **AONB's Management Plan**, how the Plan complemented the plans of the local authorities who are members of this AONB, and also examined the **current collective work of AONB's across Wales**.

The introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 established Public Service Boards (PSB) as statutory bodies. This in turn required councils to designate one of its scrutiny committees as their committee for scrutinising the work of the local PSB. Conwy and Denbighshire councils had established a Joint PSB to cover both counties and until this year each council had its own designated committee to scrutinise its work. With central government placing greater emphasis and pressure on local authorities to work closer together in order to improve outcomes for residents, both Conwy and Denbighshire councils agreed to explore the possibility of establishing a formal Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the purpose of scrutinising the PSB. As Partnerships Scrutiny Committee was Denbighshire's designated PSB Scrutiny Committee it contributed

towards the development of the **Proposals for Establishing a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the PSB** and the work to compile its terms of reference. It recommended the proposals and draft Terms of Reference to County Council who in due course approved its establishment. The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee is the only one in North Wales at present and is amongst one of the first in Wales. Reference to this Committee's work can be found later in this report.

The following link will take you to information about Partnerships Scrutiny Committee, its agendas and reports on the Council's website:

<https://moderngov.denbighshire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=268&LLL=0>

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Communities Scrutiny Committee



Cllr. Huw Williams (**Chair**)



Cllr. Graham Timms (**Vice-Chair**)

This Committee has an important role in scrutinising matters that affect local communities and residents' daily lives. During 2018/19 the Committee continued to monitor the impact of the introduction of **Universal Credit** had on local residents and Council services, along with the effectiveness of the measures the Council and its partners, in particular Citizens Advice Denbighshire (CAD) and the Department for Work and Pensions, had established to mitigate the effects of the new benefit's introduction.

Proposals on how to **Implement the Welsh Government's Free Childcare Offer** in the county were examined, this led to the Committee asking to examine the **Early Education and Flying Start Commissioning Process**. Amongst other education or school related topics considered by the Committee during the year was the **Impact of the Closure of Ysgol Rhewl** on the pupils, staff and the local community. It also examined and made recommendations on a revised **School Meal Debt Policy**. Having considered matters relating to the non-statutory elements of the Council's **Learner Transport Policy**, it recommended the establishment of a working group to look at this policy in detail. As a result a thorough review of this policy will take place in the forthcoming months to make sure it is fit for purpose for the future.

Compliance with planning permission conditions is a matter on which councillors regularly receive enquiries, therefore the Committee examined the **Performance and Effectiveness of the Council's Planning Compliance Function**. It consequently recommended that a Planning Compliance Charter between the County Council and the area's city, town and community councils should be drawn up to facilitate effective partnership working to support compliance work through prevention and early intervention when non-compliance was suspected.

Tourism has always been an important contributor to Denbighshire's economy, particularly in its coastal areas. However, in recent years there has been a steady growth across the UK in 'staycation' holidays, short breaks and adventure holidays. With a view to ensuring that Denbighshire was utilising its natural assets to maximise

the benefits to its economy from the growth in these type of holidays the Committee examined the Council's **Tourism Strategy** and how the authority worked with other sub-regional, regional and national bodies to promote the county's offer to would-be tourists, and how it supported small businesses to capitalise on the tourist pound.

During the long, hot summer of 2018 thousands of visitors were attracted to the area, which boosted the local economy. Unfortunately, whilst the majority of people were basking in the summer weather one part of the county was dealt a devastating blow when a wildfire ignited on Llantysilio Mountain, near Llangollen, a popular area with tourists. On the basis of its natural habitat and the assemblage of wildlife that live there the mountain is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), it also forms part of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The fire on the mountain burnt from mid-July until late September. The damage caused to the mountain itself was catastrophic, as were its consequences for those who depend on it for a living, whilst the disruption caused to local residents and businesses during the fire event because of the restrictions in place while tackling the fire for an extended period of time were severe. As a result the Committee decided to conduct an inquiry into the incident with a view to establishing what lessons could be learnt from it in order to reduce the risk of further disasters occurring in future, and if something similar were to happen again how best to respond and deal with it. More information about the inquiry and its findings can be seen later in this report.

As the Council is, within the next few years, proposing to change the way it deals with household waste the Committee has looked at the **Proposed New Waste and Recycling Model**. It will continue to monitor and provide observations on the proposed new model as it develops over the forthcoming years.

In response to concerns in the county on handover times from the Ambulance Service to hospital Emergency Departments the Committee met with representatives from the **Welsh Ambulance Service Trust (WAST)** and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board **Out of Hours (OOH) Service** to discuss the concerns and examine proposed initiatives to reduce handover times, including how the GP OOHs Service could ease the pressures on Emergency Departments if used properly.

The Committee also gave consideration to matters relating to **County Council Cemeteries**, including future capacity in the county's cemeteries, the maintenance regime for its lawned cemeteries and provided observations on the proposed increases in cemetery fees.

The Council's Call-In Procedure, where non-Cabinet members seek scrutiny to review a Cabinet decision within a specified time following the decision being taken, was invoked once during 2018/19. Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the call-in of the Cabinet decision relating to **Gypsy and Traveller Site Provision** in the county at a meeting on 11 October 2018 and requested that Cabinet reconsider the proposed location for both the residential and transit sites in the county. Cabinet, having received the Scrutiny Committee's observations and recommendations on the matter, decided to confirm its original decision regarding the proposed location for both sites and to proceed to undertake a pre-planning consultation on the proposals.

At the conclusion of the pre-planning consultation exercise the Committee analysed the responses received to the proposals and formally recommended to Cabinet that the residential and transit Gypsy & Traveller sites should not be developed close to each other and that the location of both sites should be determined as part of the ongoing Local Development Plan process. Cabinet eventually approved that planning consent should be sought for developing a residential gypsy and traveller site in St. Asaph, but that the transit site should be developed elsewhere in the county.

The following link will take you to information about the Committee, its agendas and reports on the Council's website:

<https://moderngov.denbighshire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=271&LLL=0>

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Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board

Reference was made earlier in this report to Denbighshire County Council and Conwy County Borough Council's decision to establish a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) to fulfil their statutory obligation to scrutinise the work of the local Public Services Board (PSB). In establishing this Joint Committee both councils agreed that it would comprise of 16 members, 8 from each Council reflecting the political balance of their respective authorities. They also approved its terms of reference and agreed that the Chair and Vice-Chair would be appointed for a two year period, with these office holders representing a different local authority. The post of Chair and Vice-Chair of the JOSC will alternate every two years between Conwy and Denbighshire.

Prior to starting a formal schedule of meetings a familiarisation event was held for the new Joint Committee in early 2019, and the JOSC held its inaugural meeting in May 2019. At its first meeting it appointed Councillor Brian Cossey of Conwy County Borough Council as its chair and Councillor Graham Timms of Denbighshire County Council as its Vice-Chair for the 2019/20 and 2020/21 municipal years. It also decided to meet on a quarterly basis and agreed its work programme for the forthcoming year. During 2019/20 the JOSC's work of scrutinising the Public Services Board will start in earnest, focussing in particular on the progress the PSB has made to date in delivering its priorities and how PSB partner organisations contribute to the work of the Board and view the Board's benefits to their organisations.



Cllr. Brian Cossey (**Chair**)



Cllr. Graham Timms (**Vice-Chair**)

The following link will take you to information about the Joint Committee, its agendas and reports on the Council's website:

<https://moderngov.denbighshire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=540&LLL=0>

Task and Finish Groups

During 2018/19 Scrutiny has continued its use of Task and Finish Groups to undertake detailed policy development work on its behalf. The long-standing task and finish group examining future delivery models for **Adult Social Care Services** has continued its work during the year and will do so again during 2019/20, as it seeks to find sustainable long-term delivery solutions that will provide fit for purpose social care services for adults that conform with the WG's vision for social care and the well-being of the individual.

Concerns in relation to the **Use of Plastics** and specifically single use plastic was discussed under a Notice of Motion at a County Council meeting. Consequently, Scrutiny was asked to examine the Council's use of plastics and how it could effectively reduce its dependency on plastic. A decision was taken to establish a Task and Finish Group for this purpose. Following its establishment it soon became evident to the Task and Finish Group that the authority's use of plastics was a far more complex area than originally foreseen, consequently this group's work is taking slightly longer than initially anticipated. However, the Group hopes to be in a position to report its findings and recommendations to Performance Scrutiny Committee and then County Council during 2019/20.

Towards the end of the 2018/19 municipal year Communities Scrutiny Committee decided to establish a **Working Group** made up of elected and co-opted education members and officers from the Council's Education Service, Transport Department and other associated services to examine **Denbighshire's Learner Transport Policy**. This Working Group will specifically focus on providing clarity around the Council's annual learner transport budget and the cost of transporting pupils/students to non-statutory education. It will also assess the potential impact and risks of withdrawing free learner transport to non-statutory education. This Group will commence its work in the new academic year, starting in September 2019.

Scrutiny Inquiry into the Llantysilio Mountain Fire

As mentioned earlier in this report the fire on Llantysilio Mountain during the summer of 2018 had a devastating effect on the mountain's habitat, farmers, graziers, local residents and businesses, as well as the area in general. Elected members were keen for Scrutiny to conduct an inquiry into the fire and its short and long term consequences on the local area. The Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group asked Communities Scrutiny Committee to conduct this inquiry.

The Committee decided to examine the fire incident and the multi-agency response to it, as well as assess the impact the fire had on the local area, environment and businesses. Scrutiny felt that a thorough review of these aspects would help identify any lessons learnt to enable practical solutions to be devised to improve multi-agency responses to similar events in future. Elected members were conscious that Denbighshire has extensive areas of moorland and forestry and therefore wanted to make sure that plans were in place to effectively mobilise all partner organisations to act in a coordinated approach when dealing with wildfires and other incidents in future. They also wanted to establish whether land management practices could be improved to help reduce the spread of fires, or to isolate wildfires in future.

As a number of public bodies and organisations, small and large private businesses, and local residents had been involved with, and/or affected by the fire it took some time to gather statements and evidence to enable an inquiry meeting to be held at Llangollen International Pavilion on 20th March 2019.

A range of stakeholders, agencies and organisations involved with the fire incident, those affected by it and those involved with the management and grazing of the land in the area, were invited to attend and address that meeting. It was emphasised to all in attendance that the purpose of the meeting was to receive and exchange information and share experiences of dealing with the fire and its consequences. Throughout the evidence gathering exercise and at the meeting itself it was emphasised that the purpose of the review was **not** in any way to apportion blame on any individual, service, organisation or group with respect of the fire or the response to it, but to better understand and learn from the event to help improve the response and management of similar incidents in future.

At the meeting Committee members were able to ask questions to representatives from the various organisations in attendance and members of the public were also given an opportunity to submit questions to the various organisations taking part in the meeting. Comprehensive replies to any questions raised at the meeting which could not be answered on the day were provided in writing later.

The Committee was extremely encouraged by the way the general public fully engaged with this inquiry. They provided photographic and video evidence of the fire and the damage caused. Detailed daily logs were received from a number of individuals whose lives, properties and livelihoods were severely affected by the fire. The Committee is extremely grateful to all the individuals who engaged with the inquiry and to the following agencies, organisations, private and public bodies that contributed and engaged with the review in one way or another:

- North Wales Regional Emergency Planning Service (NWREPS)
- Natural Resources Wales (NRW)
- North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS)
- North Wales Police (NWP)
- The Horseshoe Pass Graziers Association
- Owners of the Llantysilio Estate and their land agents
- Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water
- Hafren Dyfrdwy Water Company
- Llantysilio Community Council
- Denbighshire County Council's:
 - ❖ Countryside Services
 - ❖ Public Protection Service
 - ❖ Highways Service
 - ❖ Communication & Marketing Service

All forms of evidence received were very useful to the Committee to help it understand the public's concerns about the fire and its consequential impact.

The Committee has now concluded its review of the evidence and published its report. Its main conclusions were that:

- the management of the fire incident, in particular communication between all agencies and with the public, would have benefited considerably if a Tactical Co-ordinating Group (TCG) - an established practice under emergency planning procedures for incidents designated as 'major incidents', had been established
- it would be beneficial to have a Regional Wildfire Plan drawn-up to aid co-ordination, communication, and help organisations to understand the extent of each other's capabilities and available resources to respond to these types of fires
- the lack of robust land management on the mountain over a prolonged period of time had contributed towards the length of time that the fire burned. The reason for the absence of robust land management being a combination of changes to agricultural and environmental policies which led to the reduction in the price and demand for Welsh Mountain sheep, which graze this type of terrain, rendering them uneconomical to rear and farm. If these indigenous hefting flocks are lost from the moors and upland areas there is an increasing risk that more natural habitats will be lost to fires in future and the moorlands will become areas of wilderness and lose their healthy bio-diversity and ecosystems, whilst the demise of hefting flocks will see a centuries old way of life lost forever
- regular and effective habitat management activities require to be undertaken in upland areas and this work needs to be co-ordinated between the various agencies, private landowners and graziers. In order to build and maintain effective working relationships between all parties and benefit all who live, work and visit these types of moorland areas the Committee recommended that an Upland/Moorland Management Officer post be established for the purpose of supporting and co-ordinating such activity in future

On the basis of its findings the Committee has written to the WG seeking it to act urgently as part its review of agricultural and environmental policies to make sure that future agricultural policies are aimed at securing the economic and environmental sustainability of upland and moorland areas across Wales by ensuring that sheep farming practices and production, essential components for effective and sustainable land management in these areas are supported to be economically viable. It has also made representations to seek financial assistance to support the urgent work needed on Llantysilio Mountain to try and reverse the damage caused and to re-establish the habitat.

From the Committee's perspective it is pleasing that the three main public agencies, Denbighshire County Council, Natural Resources Wales and North Wales Fire and Rescue Service agreed with the Committee's recommendations. In addition they agreed, in principle, to the establishment of an Upland/Moorland Management Officer post. It is encouraging that discussions are currently underway between these partner organisations on how this key post can be financed and supported for the future.

The Committee's full report which includes its findings, conclusions and recommendations can be found by following the link below:

<https://moderngov.denbighshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=271&MId=5774&LLL=0>

Additional work

As in previous years Scrutiny Committee members have continued with their scrutiny roles outside of the formal committee meeting arena. They have represented their committee at the various Service Challenge meetings and the Council's Strategic Investment Group (SIG) etc. Under the standing business item on all Scrutiny Committee meetings representatives have reported back to their committees on the discussions, recommendations and decisions taken at those meetings.

Wales Audit Office reports

Scrutiny has continued with the practice of receiving national themed reports from the Wales Audit Office (WAO) and examining whether Council services are adapting sufficiently to address national recommendations. During 2018/19 it considered the following WAO reports:

- ❖ [Waste Management Services in Wales](#)
- ❖ [Report on Local Government Services to Rural Communities](#)
- ❖ [Provision of Local Government Services to Rural Communities: Community Asset Transfer](#)

In addition to the above the Auditor General for Wales published a report specifically on Scrutiny in Wales. This report '[Overview and Scrutiny – Fit for the Future?](#)¹', published in June 2018 was a follow-up to the national report '[Good Scrutiny? Good Question!](#)²', published in May 2014. Whilst the 2014 report was a national report, the 2018 report was tailored to each local authority's scrutiny function and local practices.

For the 'fit for the future' study the Wales Audit Office (WAO) undertook a thematic review of scrutiny across Wales. The purpose of the review in the main was to examine the impact of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 on the work of scrutiny committees. The WAO also looked at how councils were organising their scrutiny of public service boards and examined how well placed councils were to respond to future challenges. These challenges included the pressure on public finances and the move towards more regional working between local authorities and other organisations.

The WAO's review concluded that Denbighshire County Council's scrutiny function was responding well to current challenges, however limited capacity to support scrutiny may hinder future progress, and there was scope for cabinet members to contribute more actively to scrutiny discussions. The WAO came to this conclusion because:

- a. the Council creates a supportive environment for scrutiny, but limited capacity to support scrutiny may hinder the ability of the scrutiny function to deal with future challenges;

¹ WAO report 'Overview and Scrutiny – Fit for the Future?' – Denbighshire County Council (June 2018): https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&ved=2ahUKEwiEgL7AmM3jAhV5REEAHahFANsQFjADegQIBBAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fmodern.gov.denbighshire.gov.uk%2Fdocuments%2Fs26361%2F587A2018-19%2FOverview%20and%20Scrutiny%20DCC%20Final.pdf%3FLL%3D-1&usg=AOvVaw2bjFi_YH93Vp_mMuB5w24

² WAO Report 'Good Scrutiny? Good Question' (May 2014): https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=2ahUKEwiWt7Xymc3jAhXbSRUIHSCoDf8QFjAAegQIABAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.audit.wales%2Fsystem%2Ffiles%2Fpublications%2FWAO_Scrutiny_Report_English_2014.pdf&usg=AOvVaw2vtwPAZVS_SYqfJJuFlvJA

b. the overview and scrutiny function was well planned, took a balanced approach to using pre- and post-decision scrutiny and was developing ways to more effectively engage members of the public in scrutiny; and

c. the Council evaluates the effectiveness and impact of the scrutiny function, but there was scope for cabinet members to take a more active role in scrutiny discussions.

Whilst no formal recommendations for improvement were made to the Council by the Auditor General, he did suggest two 'Proposals for Improvement', which were that:

1. *'The Council should review the adequacy of support arrangements, in terms of both the amount and type of support that overview and scrutiny committees may need.'*

The WAO acknowledged that Denbighshire had a clearly defined Scrutiny function that used a number of different approaches to undertake a range of activities. Both officers and members viewed Scrutiny as being effective and having a valuable role in the Council's governance arrangements.

The WAO clarified its reference to the 'adequacy of support arrangements' as follows:

'It is not yet clear what impact changes to the scrutiny of the Public Services Board will have on the Council's current capacity to support scrutiny. But an assessment of the support needs will be part of the Public Services Board scrutiny options paper currently being developed. The Council has previously assessed the level of scrutiny support needed as part of its budget setting. However, the future challenges of regional scrutiny and the Council's plans to increase the scrutiny function's focus on public engagement are likely to place further pressure on existing support capacity going forward. So the Council needs to consider whether the amount and type of scrutiny support it currently has is sufficient to meet future challenges.'

Formal joint Scrutiny arrangements of the Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board are now in place, supported by the existing Scrutiny support staff in Denbighshire and Conwy. The WAO was mindful that public services were increasingly being delivered, or planned, regionally and sub-regionally. The complexity of scrutinising regional, multi-organisational public service delivery needs to be addressed by all local authorities.

2. *'Cabinet members should routinely present reports and respond to questions from overview and scrutiny committee members about the Council's policies and decisions, in accordance with statutory guidance.'*

The review was undertaken at the beginning of the new Council term, following the May 2017 elections. By doing this the WAO aimed to help embed effective Scrutiny by councillors from the start of the new electoral cycle, which will run until May 2022.

With a new administration and some new Cabinet members, the WAO found that at the time, experienced Cabinet portfolio holders took a more active role in presenting information and responding to challenge, with scope for these to be adopted more consistently by all Cabinet members.

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How can residents participate in Scrutiny?

Would you like scrutiny to look at a particular matter?

You can raise a matter for consideration by one of Denbighshire County Council's scrutiny committees by filling out the Scrutiny Request Form (overleaf). The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the three scrutiny committees meet periodically to decide how to allocate the work of the scrutiny committees and will consider if any matter raised should be examined in detail by one of the committees, or if another course of action should be pursued. This can range from a referral to the service responsible, to full scrutiny of the matter by one of the scrutiny committees, or even the establishment of a specialist 'task and finish group' to investigate and report on a particular matter.

Would you like to attend a meeting of a scrutiny committee?

Denbighshire County Council's scrutiny committee meetings are generally open to the public, and residents of Denbighshire and the general public are encouraged to attend. A list of upcoming scrutiny committee meetings and the matters to be discussed are available on the 'Scrutiny' page of the Council's website.

If you wish to take part in the discussion on a particular matter you will require the permission of the Chair of the committee (further details below).

Occasionally some items being discussed by a committee will contain confidential information and cannot be discussed in the usual public forum. Any such items (referred to as 'Part Two (II)') will be clearly identified when the meeting papers are published, and the Chair of the committee meeting discussing a 'Part II' item will make it clear that the meeting should continue without the press and public in attendance in order to avoid divulging confidential information.

Would you like to speak to a committee on an item being discussed?

Members of the public are very welcome to attend scrutiny committee meetings but will require the permission of the Chair of the committee if they wish to speak or make representations at a committee meeting. If you wish to submit evidence to a committee, or address members on your experience in relation to a subject under discussion, please contact the Scrutiny Co-ordinator in advance of the meeting so that this can be arranged and any paperwork can be circulated to members of the committee.

Occasionally scrutiny committees may wish to 'co-opt' an individual with particular experience or expertise to become a temporary member of the committee or ask them to contribute to an inquiry as an expert witness.

Keeping up to speed with decisions made by Denbighshire's scrutiny committees

You can keep track of what is being discussed at each scrutiny committee meeting, as well as any other public Council meeting, by visiting the 'meetings' page of the Council's website. The latest 'work programme' for each of the scrutiny committees is available with the meeting

papers for each meeting and the confirmed agenda for each meeting will usually be available 5 - 7 days before the meeting is due to take place.

The minutes of previous scrutiny meetings and a record of the decisions made are also available on the Council's website.

Further advice or information is available by contacting the Scrutiny Co-ordinator, Rhian Evans on rhian.evans@denbighshire.gov.uk (01824 712554) or the Democratic Services Officer, Karen Evans, on karen.a.evans@denbighshire.gov.uk (01824 712575).

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SCRUTINY REQUEST FORM

Is there something you would like scrutiny to have a look at?

Please give a brief description of the topic you would like to be considered by one of the Scrutiny Committees and why you think it should be considered

Would you like to attend a meeting of a Scrutiny Committee?

YES/NO

It would be useful if you could give us the following details so that we may respond to your request

Your name:

Address:

Postcode:

Email:

Telephone number:

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO: SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATOR, LEGAL, HR AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES, COUNTY HALL, WYNNSTAY ROAD, RUTHIN LL15 1YN or e-mail it to rhian.evans@denbighshire.gov.uk