

<b>Report to</b>	<b>Democratic Services Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020</b>
<b>Presented by</b>	<b>Councillor Graham Timms (Chair of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group)</b>
<b>Report author</b>	<b>Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group/Rhian Evans, Scrutiny Co-ordinator</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Annual Report of the Council's Scrutiny Committee 2019/20</b>

## **1. What is the report about?**

- 1.1 To present to the Democratic Services Committee the Scrutiny Committees' annual report on their activities during 2019/20.

## **2. What is the reason for making this report?**

- 2.1 To present to the Democratic Services Committee the Scrutiny Committees' annual report on their activities during 2019/20, prior to its submission to Annual Council for approval.

## **3. What are the Recommendations?**

- 3.1 That the Committee considers the Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committees for 2019/20 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 2019/20 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. The report also provides an overview of Scrutiny's work to support the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities and ultimately the realisation of its Corporate Plan. 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. However, two requests were received from residents or external organisations suggesting topics which may benefit from Scrutiny's attention, both of which are detailed in the report. These requests were made using the 'Scrutiny Request Form' which is available on the Council's website, a copy of which can be found in the Annual Report. Scrutiny will continue with this practice of encouraging the public to suggest areas or services which they think may benefit from scrutiny's consideration.
- 4.6 Whilst encouraging residents to participate in scrutiny on a regular basis can prove extremely difficult, if a controversial or local public interest topic appears on a scrutiny committee agenda the public are more than willing to engage with scrutiny and attend meetings. In 2019/20 proposed sites were put forward by the Council as potential locations for development into a transit site for the gypsy and traveller

community for inclusion in the new Local Development Plan (LDP). These drew extensive public interest and opposition. A large number attended the meeting at which the matter was discussed and representatives from the public were given an opportunity to address the Committee.

4.7 When considering a request for a topic to be scrutinised, be the request from a councillor, an officer or a member of the 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?

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.

4.8 Also included in the attached report is information on the work of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) of Conwy and Denbighshire councils established to examine the work of the Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board (PSB), as well as an update on the work of the various task and finish/working groups operating under the auspices of Denbighshire's Scrutiny Committees.

4.9 Scrutiny committees have continued 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. During the year representatives from Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB), North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS), Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the North and Mid-Wales Trunk Road Agency (NMWTRA) have attended Scrutiny Committee meetings for various discussions.

4.10 The COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions placed on all walks of life affected Scrutiny's work towards the end of the 2019/20 municipal year and well into the 2020/21 Council year, with meetings cancelled and all but urgent decisions placed on

hold. Scrutiny will restart its business during the autumn of 2020 by initially examining the COVID-19 recovery plans of all the Council's services. This will enable committees to shape their future work programmes through the inclusion of an appropriate balance of post pandemic recovery work and the lessons learnt for future emergencies, with relevant subjects deferred from those meetings which were cancelled.

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

5.1 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 translated and made available on the Council's intranet and website.

6.2 Any costs incurred with respect of the work of task and finish groups will be met from within existing budgets

## **7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?**

7.1 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?**

8.1 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**

9.1 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?**

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

## **11. Power to make the decision**

11.1 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.

11.2 Democratic Services Committee's duties in relation to Scrutiny are detailed in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011