

APPENDIX 1

Cyngor
sir ddinbych
denbighshire
County Council



ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

2019 - 2020

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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. All the parent governor representative posts on Scrutiny are currently vacant. If you are a parent governor at one of the Council's primary, secondary or special schools, and would be interested in representing your sector on Scrutiny please get in touch with us (contact details can be found in the 'How residents can participate in Scrutiny' section towards the end of this report).

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 (SCVCG) along with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Corporate Governance & 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, businesses 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 2019/20 a total of 21 requests for items to be scrutinised were considered by the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group. Of these 21 requests:

- ❖ 10 were submitted by county councillors
- ❖ 9 by officers
- ❖ 2 by residents/general 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 2019/20

As part of their work during the 2019/20 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.

Scrutiny and the Council's Corporate Priorities during 2019/20

Below and on the following pages is an overview of how the Council's scrutiny committees have supported the authority's work and aspirations of delivering its corporate priorities during the year:

Housing: Everyone is supported to live in homes that meet their need

Through its work over a number of years Scrutiny has strived to support the Council to deliver this particular priority. During 2019/20 it concluded the work it started some years previously on monitoring the effectiveness of the Council's regulatory work in ensuring that Caravan and Holiday Parks across the county complied with their planning and licensing conditions. Concerns had been raised that some owners may not have been fully complying with the conditions attached to their

planning and licensing permissions and may therefore be permitting people to reside in caravans on their sites on a permanent basis exposing them, particularly the more vulnerable to some significant risks through not properly meeting their housing needs. Through effective working over a number of years with park proprietors and managers, a level of mutual trust was forged between them and the Council which resulted in this situation improving. Now that Scrutiny is satisfied that the regulation of caravan and holiday parks is effectively managed it has agreed that future monitoring will be done by officers as part of their routine work.

Similarly, the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) has been a long-standing problem in the county, particularly in its most deprived areas. Back in 2010 the Council introduced an Additional Licensing Scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation in specific areas of Rhyl. This scheme complemented the mandatory HMO licensing scheme. The purpose of the additional scheme was to ensure that a large number of houses in multiple occupation complied with specific requirements before they could be licensed for habitation. This ensured that individuals and families were provided with safe, comfortable accommodation that met their needs. Due to the success of this scheme in Rhyl it was extended for a further 5-year period from 2015 onwards. In 2020 the Council was keen to continue its operation in Rhyl, but based on its success there to extend it to other towns in the county, namely Prestatyn, Denbigh and Llangollen. Both North Wales Police and North Wales Fire and Rescue Service were supportive of the proposals and scrutiny was consulted on them in early 2020. Scrutiny was generally in favour of the types of houses to be included in the revised scheme and of its extension to other towns in the county and recommended that its contents should be consulted upon before being presented to Cabinet for approval.

Whilst the Council strives to make sure that all residents live in houses that meet their needs, sadly not everybody in the county has a roof over their head. The Council has a duty to ensure it safeguards all vulnerable people, be they homeless or at risk of losing their home. Amid concerns that some individuals and families found themselves being temporarily housed in hotels or in bed and breakfast accommodation Scrutiny examined the Council's procedures and its capacity to safeguard and meet the needs of the homeless. In acknowledging the complexities involved with homelessness it endorsed the Council's decision to adopt a corporate approach towards homelessness and to include addressing the issue of homelessness in its Housing Strategy. Scrutiny will continue to monitor the development and approval of the draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy during the forthcoming year.

There is a big difference between allocating houses to individuals and families and actually meeting their needs, ensuring that they live in accommodation that they can happily refer to as their home. During the year Scrutiny met with representatives from the Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) sector in Denbighshire to examine the

effectiveness of the Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) application process in meeting people's needs and securing a suitable home for them and their families. The SARTH process aims to help people to secure a home via one single application that is shared with a number of housing providers at the same time, saving time and stress for the applicant.

A home is much more than a property to live in, a home needs to meet and suit the person's way of life. Finding a suitable location to meet the needs of the gypsy and traveller community, without having a detrimental affect on their lives and on the lives of other residents is another matter which Scrutiny has examined during recent months, specifically potential sites for inclusion in the draft Local Development Plan (LDP) for development as a transit site. A number of sites were proposed for inclusion in the draft LDP but Scrutiny asked for consultation to be undertaken with the gypsy and traveller community on the suitability of these sites to meet their needs prior to Cabinet considering their inclusion in the draft LDP. Scrutiny also asked Cabinet to write in the strongest possible terms to the Welsh Government seeking clarity on why local authorities could not work together to develop an agreed number of transit sites in North Wales rather than each county council being obliged to provide one in their area, as having six transit sites in the region seemed disproportionate in comparison to the number of illegal encampments experienced annually in the region.

Connected Communities: Communities are connected and have access to goods and services locally, on line and through good transport links

Keeping communities, businesses and people connected with one another is crucial in order to support social interaction, encourage economic growth and build strong local resilience networks. Communities are connected on a number of different levels, by roads and transport links, links between various individuals, groups and businesses that live and operate within the communities, as well as by communication links. Connectivity is one of the 21st Century's 'buzz words'. Therefore, securing the availability of effective digital platforms as well as fit for purpose physical infrastructures forms a crucial part of ensuring that communities are connected. Elected members and residents have had concerns for a number of years about the availability of good, reliable, and fast broadband services across the county. The Council regards the availability of fast, effective broadband as a crucial component in order to deliver economic growth and prosperity to the area and its residents, and as an essential tool to assist the county's pupils and students in their studies to ensure they realise their full potential. Whilst acknowledging that the quality and availability of fast broadband across the county had improved in recent years Scrutiny felt that more still needs to be done by central government to ensure that every household and business in the county can access effective broadband services if they want them. At present they felt that some areas of the county, mainly in rural areas, were being left behind and as a result businesses were at a

disadvantage when competing on the open market, as were pupils who are working towards qualifications that will shape their future career prospects. Scrutiny wrote to the First Minister of Wales and other Welsh Government Ministers outlining their concerns and seeking them to address this inequality urgently as the availability of reliable broadband should be viewed as an everyday necessity in 21st Century Wales, similar to having access to water and electricity. The letter was also copied to WG Commissioners as it was felt that the continued lack of reliable broadband for all undermined the principles of equality for all, and the goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Scrutiny was extremely pleased that the County's Library Service continued its strong performance against the national performance targets. It was also encouraged, having examined the delivery of the Service's local Library Strategy, to see that the county's libraries were at the heart of their communities helping to deliver a range of Council and public services which residents wanted in their own communities. In future years, it is hoped that the county's libraries will work closely with the new Joint Archives Service with Flintshire County Council to deliver a comprehensive archives service electronically to residents and visitors alike. Following scrutiny of the joint service's proposal to secure funding to build a bespoke archives hub in Mold, and an examination of the services that would be delivered in libraries and other outlets in both counties, Scrutiny supported the proposal's objectives. During the forthcoming year scrutiny will continue to monitor the Service's development.

As mentioned the Joint Archives Service aims to deliver excellent services to residents and visitors alike. Once tourists enter the area Scrutiny is keen that they are enticed off the major trunk roads to explore all four corners of the county and the multitude of attractions and activities on offer in Denbighshire. With this in mind it has requested a working group of officers and members to develop a tourism signage strategy for the county, one that will supplement the tourist information signs already situated on the trunk roads, and via a series of well-designed signs guide them through the county and its tourism offer. This should help boost the county's economy. Scrutiny will in forthcoming months be keeping a close eye on the strategy's development.

Resilient Communities: the Council works with people and communities to build independence and resilience

Cuts to local authority funding has meant that the Council in recent years has had to adapt and devise alternative ways to deliver its services. The aim of this approach is to build-up resilience within local communities to support their residents, with a view to only relying on public services for major intervention work at a time of crisis. The resilience of our local communities was tested and came to the fore during the recent Coronavirus pandemic crisis. Lessons learnt from the approach taken towards handling that crisis will undoubtedly be examined by Scrutiny in the months and years that lie ahead, but during 2019/20 scrutiny committees examined various aspects of the Council's efforts to build communities' resilience to deal with day to day and longer term challenges.

As part of this work it has continued to meet on a regular basis with representatives from the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) in order to ensure that joint and collaborative working between the Health Board and the Council delivers joined-up health and social care services, and that the services provided by both organisations complement and support each other's' efforts to improve the health and well-being of residents. Scrutiny has continued to monitor the Health Board's progress in delivering major capital projects in the county, such as the new North Denbighshire Community Hospital to be built in Rhyl and the Board's future plans for Denbigh Infirmary and other community based services in the county, as it sees these projects as key developments for delivering joint services. It has also examined the Health Board's plans to improve the delivery of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and its proposals for Neurodevelopment Services in Denbighshire.

Community safety and safeguarding vulnerable residents form part of the Council's statutory responsibilities, consequently Scrutiny has a role in examining the authority's performance in fulfilling those roles. For this purpose, during the year, it examined the performance and priorities of the Joint Conwy and Denbighshire Community Safety Partnership and Denbighshire's own performance in safeguarding vulnerable adults and in delivering services to those residents who had, or were at risk of becoming homeless. It also examined proposals to change the county's approach towards administering 'No Cold Calling Zones' in the county. As part of its work in examining services' work in evolving and developing to meet future needs and delivering the type of services residents want to receive Scrutiny has made recommendations for changes to the delivery of work opportunities services for people with learning disabilities. It has examined proposals to secure the future of Cefndy Healthcare, the effectiveness of the services now delivered from Hafan Deg in Rhyl, along with the overall performance of the Social Care Service and the areas identified for improvement in the future.

Cuts to funding in recent years has left the Council with fewer staff to undertake work in non-frontline services. The work carried out by non-frontline workers in the past did however indirectly improve the quality of life for a number of residents and businesses. Planning and licensing enforcement work is one such area. To compensate for the loss of personnel innovative methods of working with partners in the private and public sector had to be devised in order to make sure that planning and licensing conditions were not being flouted. For that purpose a Planning Compliance Charter was drawn up whereby City, Town and Community Councils could help the county council to oversee and manage non-compliance matters in their local area. The objective of this Charter is to facilitate early intervention in non-compliance matters in order to reduce the need wherever possible to escalate any contraventions to formal enforcement level. A similar approach has already been adopted in relation to the regulation of holiday and caravan parks, with park operators and managers working with the Council to make sure that they were all operating within the conditions granted to them. Scrutiny has been widely involved with the development of both these approaches, and in ensuring that they work effectively.

A Business Improvement District (BID) is a formal arrangement, established through a ballot of eligible business premises, whereby businesses get together to decide what additional improvements they would like to make to the area where they operate their businesses in order to improve footfall and build-up resilience. If a BID is established the businesses within that area decide how they are going to manage and deliver any improvements and what they are prepared to pay to make it happen. Following a request from a local business person Scrutiny examined the process that required to be followed for establishing a BID, with particular focus on the process followed in an area of Rhyl where a BID was established some years ago and the lessons learnt from that process. It concluded that generally applications for BID ballots should be encouraged and supported. Scrutiny suggested that interested parties should be encouraged to contact the Rhyl BID Board to seek advice and guidance on how to effectively communicate with the local business community, how to engage them in the process of establishing a Business Improvement District, and on ways of conveying to them the importance of exercising their votes.

Environment: attractive and protected, supporting well-being and economic prosperity

Denbighshire is a predominantly rural county which boasts a wealth of varied tourist attractions, ranging from coastal resorts to historic market towns. These more urban areas are surrounded by extensive areas of open countryside, whose economic mainstay is agriculture, supplemented by a growing rural tourist trade. Protecting the environment county-wide is not only key to securing the county's economic prosperity but also it helps to sustain and improve the well-being of the area's

residents. The importance of open spaces and footpaths as a means of supporting health and well-being came to the fore during the recent Coronavirus pandemic.

During the year Scrutiny met with representatives from North and Mid Wales Trunk Road Agency and the Council's Highways Service to examine their highways grass verge maintenance and pesticide application policies. The purpose of meeting with them on a joint basis was to ensure that both organisations' policies supported and complemented each other's environmental priorities and objectives.

Communities Scrutiny Committee during 2019/20 published its findings following its inquiry into the Llantysilio Mountain Fire in the summer of 2018 and its impact on the local economy and environment. The link below will take you to the Committee's full report, including the conclusions drawn and the associated recommendations:

<https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/your-council/about-the-council/Communities-Scrutiny-Committee-Llantysilio-Mountain-Fire-Report.pdf>

The Committee's objective in undertaking the review was to establish what lessons could be learnt from the response and management of the fire and what steps should be taken to avoid or reduce the risk of similar severe wildfires occurring in future. The fire badly damaged the mountain's biodiversity and impacted greatly on the local agricultural industry, residents and businesses. Recognising the extent of its impact the Committee formulated a series of recommendations with a view to mitigating the risk of similar incidents happening in future. A number of the recommendations were reliant on the willingness of partners to work together to deliver them. One particular recommendation was to establish an Upland/Moorland Management Officer post. Scrutiny was firmly of the view that this officer would be in a position to lead and effectively co-ordinate with the various agencies, landowners, farmers, graziers and local communities on land management activities and plans, which would help support the development of the habitat, ecosystems and economies of upland areas and reduce the risk of wildfires. Despite the delay caused by the COVID-19 crisis, it is extremely pleasing to know that work is now well underway to appoint an officer to this role, and that Natural Resources Wales (NRW) have offered to part fund the post for at least a three-year period. As the environment affects all residents, businesses and organisations in the area Scrutiny was pleased to be offered the opportunity of contributing to North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's consultation on the development of its Environmental Strategy.

During recent years concerns have escalated globally on the environmental impact of discarded plastics, and how it was finding its way into the world's oceans. Reducing the use of plastics is now a priority for a number of countries and for governments at all levels. Through its Use of Plastics Task and Finish Group Denbighshire County Council has also been grappling with this topic and attempting to reduce its use of plastics in areas which are not currently being looked at by either the Welsh or UK

Governments. In the first instance the Task and Finish Group decided to examine ways on how the Council itself could reduce the use of plastics in its civic offices and it recommended that the Authority should no longer purchase plastic document wallets, plastic cups, stirrers, milk jiggers etc. It even went further and decided that all refreshment vending machines should be removed. These steps were approved by County Council in early 2020 and will be implemented in the spring of 2020. Permission was given for the Task and Finish Group to continue its work for a further 12 months to examine ways of reducing the use of plastics in school catering and procurement. Due to the Council having to divert resources to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic and having to comply with strict guidelines in relation to health, safety and hygiene the Task and Finish Group's work in relation to school catering and procurement will not be able to be progressed as quickly as originally anticipated.

The Council's approach to dealing with its recyclable household waste is due to change within the next few years. As part of the work to prepare for the changes to the service Scrutiny has been actively involved in examining proposals for the new waste and recycling model, which will see the Council expanding its range of waste and recycling collection services. Proposals relating to the development of a new depot to deal with the waste and the communication strategy with residents about the changes ahead have also been examined.

Young people: a place where younger people will want to live and work and have the skills to do so

Young people are Denbighshire's future therefore ensuring that they receive the right type of quality education and training opportunities to realise their full potential has again formed a key part of Scrutiny's work during the year. As in previous years Scrutiny examined pupils' performance in external examinations and teacher assessments. Although this year it was extremely difficult to compare Denbighshire pupils' attainment in comparison to peers in other local education authority areas as the WG no longer publishes a comprehensive list of data which the Education Service can use to compare pupils' attainment with those in other parts of Wales. Nevertheless, Scrutiny was satisfied that the Council's Education Service and the regional school improvement service GwE were able to identify emerging trends that required to be addressed in all education key stages. Effective schools depend on effective leadership and management. Scrutiny wanted assurances that school governing bodies in the county were fulfilling their duties to fill vacant school governor roles and were complying with the statutory expectations in relation to policies, finance and procedures. Following its examination of the effectiveness of school governing bodies Scrutiny acknowledged that the local education authority was only able to influence and guide governing bodies, and that ultimately the responsibilities lie with the governing bodies themselves. Nevertheless, it

recommended that a number of steps should be taken in order to strengthen school governing bodies across the county to ensure that they do comply with mandatory requirements and support their schools and the pupils to realise their full potential.

An increasing amount of education delivery in the 21st Century is delivered using on-line technology. Whilst the county's schools have access to appropriate technology and effective broadband connections to deliver education packages, some pupils are disadvantaged when undertaking extended studies, research or project work at home due to poor broadband connections, particularly in some of the county's more rural areas. Scrutiny was firmly of the view that this was an equality issue which had the potential to disadvantage pupils in rural areas from realising their full educational potential. This disparity was highlighted in a letter from the Scrutiny to the Welsh Government and to the Children and Future Generations Commissioners.

Ever increasing budgetary pressures necessitated the Council to consider whether its post 16 Learner Transport Policy represented effective use of taxpayers' money on a service that was not statutory. As this was a complex area Scrutiny established a working group to examine various aspects of transport to post 16 education and to determine whether any elements of the current service could be withdrawn. As the working group commenced its work the WG announced a national review of transport to post 16 education, therefore the working group recommended that no changes should be made to the current provision until the outcome of the WG's review was published. Scrutiny also emphasised that any future consideration of this matter should have regard to the fact that post-16 education was an investment in the future of the county's students and the area's future prosperity.

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**)

Since the beginning of this current Council's term of office in 2017 the Chair of this committee was Councillor Huw Jones. A truly compassionate person, and a fair chair who ensured that every viewpoint was heard during all discussions. It was with great sadness that Committee members learned of his passing in early 2020. In addition to being the Committee's Chair he was also the Chair of the Task and Finish Group that was devising sustainable ways of delivering adult social care services for the future. As a former Cabinet member, and before that a Scrutiny Vice-Chair, Huw had a wealth of experience of all aspects of decision making which he brought with him to the Committee which helped to ensure that all recommendations and decisions were based on sound evidence. While his legacy will last, his enthusiasm, passion and wisdom will be greatly missed.

Performance Scrutiny Committee has an important part to play in making sure that the Council delivers quality services to residents and in supporting the Council to achieve its ambition of delivering the corporate priorities laid out in the Corporate Plan 2017-22. Its regular monitoring of the Council's progress in delivering its corporate priorities will ensure that the Council's aspiration of realising its Corporate Plan will be achieved. This coupled with its work in monitoring services' compliance with the Council's corporate complaints policy, which aims to make sure that any complaints received are dealt with appropriately and on time, helps the Council to deliver services of the highest quality to residents.

In recent years' local authorities have been expected to adapt the way they deliver services to meet the requirements of the 21st Century and to meet the changing expectations of all residents, old and young alike. With a view to responding to these challenges this Committee has examined the findings and recommendations of the Adult In-house Social Care Task and Finish Group and the Use of Plastics Task and Finish Group. As a result plans are in the pipeline that will see work

opportunities services for people with learning disabilities delivered in a more rewarding and sustainable way for the future, and the Council will aim to reduce its use of single use plastics by incorporating this objective into the Environment priority of its Corporate Plan for 2017-22.

The Coronavirus pandemic and the national lockdown affected the Committee's business towards the end of the municipal year, in the same way as it affected everybody's daily lives. Like all Council Committees Performance Scrutiny Committee will resume its work as soon as it is safe to do so in the new municipal year.

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>

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Partnerships Scrutiny Committee



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



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

This Committee's remit is to examine the effectiveness of services provided by the Council either in collaboration, or in partnership, with other public sector organisations in meeting residents' needs. Scrutinising the Health Board's delivery of services to residents, and its proposed future models for delivering healthcare services to local residents has been a key feature of the Committee's work during the year, as well as examining the effectiveness of the interfaces that exist between the Council and the Health Board for delivering integrated health and social care services.

The availability of suitable quality housing has also featured on the Committee's work programme during the year in the form of proposals to extend the licensing scheme for Houses of Multiple Occupation to other areas of Denbighshire and the effectiveness of the Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) work with registered social landlords in meeting residents' needs for quality housing. As the Council's designated Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee community safety is a key feature of the Committee's work. As part of its duty to fulfil this role it scrutinised the Community Safety Partnership's (CSP) performance in delivering its priorities during 2018/19 and examined its priorities for 2019/20. The Committee was consulted on proposals to adopt a different approach towards administering and introducing 'No Cold Calling Zones' in the county.

On a regional basis the Committee participated on the Council's behalf in North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's consultation on its Environmental Strategy.

It also examined the Council's Biodiversity Duty Delivery Plan which led it to invite representatives from the Council's Highways Service and the North and Mid-Wales Trunk Road Agency (NMWTRA) to a meeting to discuss their verge cutting and

pesticide applications policies to make sure they supported the Council's aims and its corporate priority relating to the environment.

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=268&LLL=0>

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Communities Scrutiny Committee



Cllr. Huw Williams (**Chair**)



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

This Committee's role is to examine matters that directly affect local communities and residents' daily lives. These may be matters within the Council's direct control or aspects of day to day life which the Council may be able to influence.

During 2019/20 the Committee focussed some of its work on ensuring that regulatory practices used by the Council to investigate and deal with matters that often cause concern to residents or impact on their quality of life were examined i.e. the draft Charter between the County Council and city, town and community councils in relation to Planning Compliance, the effectiveness of Holiday and Caravan Park management and enforcement procedures, and Council's action plan for managing the nuisance caused by seagulls across the county.

Following publication of its findings into the Llantysilio Mountain Fire of 2018 and its impact on the area the Committee continued its work on monitoring the implementation of the recommendations it made following its inquiry.

Acutely aware of the important role that small and rural businesses in the county have on the local economy the Committee examined proposals to develop a tourism signage strategy that will attempt to entice tourists off the main trunk roads to all corners of the county to explore its attractions and sample what Denbighshire has to offer. Coupled with this strategy is the Council's Car Park management plan which aims to modernise county owned car parks and develop them into important hubs to support local businesses and act as tourist gateways to the area.

The availability of reliable broadband connections for all residents was also a feature of the Committee's work during the year which culminated in the Committee writing to Welsh Government (WG) Ministers and a number of Commissioners drawing their attention to the inequalities and disadvantages residents in a number of rural areas

encountered in attempting to live their daily lives without effective broadband connections. The Committee felt that in 21st Century Wales effective broadband connection should be regarded as a basic utility such as electricity or water, this was the basis of the Committee's correspondence with WG Ministers and the Commissioners. It was therefore extremely pleasing to hear this view echoed by the Future Generations Commissioner in June 2020 when referring to people's experiences of attempting to continue with their daily and business lives whilst dealing with the restrictions placed on them as part of the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

Mention was made in last year's report to the decision taken by both Conwy County Borough Council and Denbighshire County Council to establish a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the purpose of fulfilling their statutory duty of scrutinising the Joint Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board (PSB). This Joint Committee comprises 16 members, 8 from each Council reflecting the political balance of their respective authorities. Whilst the Joint Committee met during the year to agree a programme of work, all subsequent meetings had to either be postponed or cancelled for various reasons, including the COVID-19 crisis. It is anticipated that the Committee will be in a position to recommence its work during the autumn of 2020.



Cllr. Brian Cossey (**Chair**)



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

Membership

Conwy County Borough Council

Cllr. Geoffrey David Corry
Cllr. Brian Cossey (Chair)
Cllr. Chris Hughes
Cllr. Ifor Lloyd
Cllr. Elizabeth Roberts
Cllr. Harry Saville
Cllr Nigel Smith
Cllr. Joan Vaughan

Denbighshire County Council

Cllr. Jeanette Chamberlain-Jones
Cllr. Rachel Flynn
Cllr. Hugh Irving
Cllr. Melvyn Mile
Cllr. Arwel Roberts
Cllr. Peter Scott
Cllr. Graham Timms (Vice-Chair)
Cllr. David G Williams

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>

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Task and Finish Groups

Scrutiny continued its use of Task and Finish Groups to undertake detailed policy development work on its behalf during 2019/20. The well-established group examining potential future delivery models for **Adult Social Care Services** continued its work to find sustainable long-term delivery solutions for various aspects of adult social care services that will provide quality social care services for adults which are stimulating, motivational and rewarding in line with the WG's future vision for adult social care services. During 2019/20 this Task and Finish Group formulated recommendations on potential ways for delivering sustainable and stimulating work opportunities services for people with learning disabilities in future.

Concerns on the damage caused to the environment by the human race's **Use of Plastics**, specifically single use plastic and the methods used for its disposal has gained momentum globally in recent years. During 2019/20 this Task and Finish Group continued its work and formulated recommendations in relation to reducing the use of plastics in the Council's own office buildings. County Council endorsed the Group's recommendations and as a result disposable drinks cups, stirrers etc. will no longer be used in the offices and the Council will not be purchasing any more plastic document wallets. County Council also agreed to the Task and Finish Group's request that it be permitted to continue its work for a further twelve-months as it wished to explore how to reduce single-use plastic usage in the Council's school catering services and in the Council's procurement of goods. As this work was about to start the COVID-19 crisis struck and the country went into lockdown. Consequently, this aspect of the Group's work is yet to commence.

As reported last year Communities Scrutiny Committee established a working group 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**. The focus of the Working Group's review was to provide clarity around the Council's annual learner transport budget and the cost of transporting pupils/students to non-statutory education provision. It was also asked to assess the potential impact and risks of withdrawing free learner transport to non-statutory education. As this working group was about to commence its work the Welsh Government announced its intention to undertake a national review of transport to post 16 education. The working group recommended that no changes should be made to the current provision until the outcome of the Welsh Government's review was published. It also emphasised that any future consideration of this particular aspect of school transport should have regard to the fact that post-16 education was an investment in the county's pupils and students as well as in the area's future prosperity.

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 meeting agendas representatives report back to their committees on the discussions, recommendations and decisions taken at the meetings they attend.

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Audit Wales reports

During the course of a year Audit Wales (formerly the Wales Audit Office (WAO)) publishes a number of reports focussing on how local authorities are delivering services and adapting to new national directives or requirements. Scrutiny has agreed to consider the findings of these reports and Denbighshire's response to any recommendations made by the auditors. During 2019/20 Audit Wales focussed its work on public organisations' integration of the aims and objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 into their service delivery planning. The Act places a duty on local authorities and other public organisations to ensure that projects are developed and services delivered in accordance with the sustainable development principle and the five well-being goals defined in the Act.

In early 2020 Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the findings of two of these Audit Wales reports. One on the Council's approach to applying the Act's principles in relation to its flood risk management activities and the other examining whether the Council was taking into account the Act's requirements as part of its work in remodelling its household waste collection service. This latter report focussed on whether the Council's proposals would support the Act's well-being goals and the Council's own priority of delivering an attractive and protected environment. Having considered both reports and the Council's response to Audit Wales' recommendations the Committee was satisfied that constructive efforts were being made to deliver all work and projects in line with the sustainable delivery principle and well-being goals of the Act.

Scrutiny Requests from Residents

For a number of years Denbighshire's scrutiny committees has operated an established mechanism that enables residents to draw matters of concern to Scrutiny's attention. This is facilitated through the completion of a Scrutiny request form, available on the Council's website or from the Scrutiny Co-ordinator.

Completed scrutiny request forms are presented to the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group, in the same way as requests received from councillors and officers, for consideration and determination on whether the subject merits examination by one of the Scrutiny Committees, or whether greater benefits could be achieved if the matter was examined by another forum.

During 2019/20 two requests were received from members of the public for Scrutiny to examine a matter. Following consideration by the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group one request proceeded to be examined by Communities Scrutiny Committee. This request related to the process followed to establish Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in the county. Scrutiny concluded that the Council should support the establishment of Business Improvement Districts in the county should any town, rural area or business group wish to progress one, and that lessons learnt from previous BID application processes should be shared with any prospective new BID applicants in order to support them with the process.

The second application for scrutiny was received from an organisation which was encountering obstacles in attempting to secure access to a historical site in the county. As this site was located on private land with no public access rights the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group decided that the matter would not benefit from being scrutinised by a Committee. Nevertheless, they did offer advice to the organisation about potential alternative routes to follow in order to try and resolve the problem. The organisation concerned wrote back to the Group to thank them for considering their request and for the useful advice provided, which they intended to pursue.

The Council's scrutiny committees are keen for residents to actively engage with their work on a regular basis. You can either do this by attending meetings either in person, or remotely via the Council's website, to listen to the debates and/or by suggesting topics or areas that may benefit from being examined in detail by the committees. Details of how to suggest topics for scrutiny can be found on the following pages:

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