

Report to	County Council
Date of meeting	19 July 2022
Report author	Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group/Rhian Evans, Scrutiny Co-ordinator
Presented by	Councillor Hugh Irving (Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group 2021/22)
Title	Annual Report of the Council's Scrutiny Committees 2021/22

1. What is the report about?

The Scrutiny Committees' Annual Report for 2021/22

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1 To present to Council the Scrutiny Committees' annual report on their activities during 2021/22.
- 2.2 To comply with Section 7.4.4 of the Council's Constitution which stipulates that scrutiny committees must report annually to full Council on their work and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Council considers the Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committees for 2021/22, comments accordingly and approves its publication.

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 2021/22 was very much a year of adapting to the 'new normal' following the pandemic. Scrutiny Committee meetings continued to be held virtually, with only the Chairs of committees and a few committee support officers attending County Hall, all other members and officers joined meetings remotely.
- 4.3 The 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 each committee 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.
- 4.4 The report outlines how Scrutiny has supported the Council's work to deliver its corporate priorities and ultimately its Corporate Plan by the end of its term of office in 2022. In fulfilling this work, the committees undertook a mixture of pre-decision and post-decision scrutiny, with individual committees focussing their work on a number of specific areas, such as corporate performance, the effectiveness of partnership arrangements in delivering services, community and economic benefit, as well as COVID-19 recovery work.
- 4.5 The report also provides an overview of:
- the work of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) for the Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board (PSB)
 - the integral role of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group (SCVCG) in securing effective scrutiny; and
 - the process for proposing a topic for Scrutiny's attention and the method used to determine whether a topic is suitable for detailed examination by Scrutiny
- 4.6 The report also summarises:

- the conclusions of the review undertaken following the only call-in of Cabinet decision during the year
- the work undertaken by a number of Scrutiny Task and Finish/Working Groups which reported to Scrutiny, and how Scrutiny then progressed their recommendations; and
- the types of additional work undertaken by Scrutiny members.

4.7 Engaging with the public and encouraging residents to interact with Scrutiny continues to be challenging. Whilst, residents and stakeholders are eager to engage with Scrutiny if a committee is discussing a matter of local concern, or a potentially contentious decision, it is far more difficult to generate public interest in other Scrutiny discussions. Nevertheless, during 2021/22 it was extremely pleasing to have students from Ysgol Dinas Bran approach Scrutiny asking to participate in the discussion on eradicating the use of single use plastics in the School Meals Service. Scrutiny was then able to convey the students' concerns and observations to Cabinet. Similarly having service-users' families contribute to the discussion on potential options for reopening the Meifod work opportunities service for people with learning disabilities following the pandemic was extremely positive. Their contributions highlighted how much service-users and their families valued the experiences and skills gained at Meifod, and their pride in Meifod's reputation, both locally and further afield, for manufacturing garden furniture of the highest quality.

4.8 Members of the public can submit a request for Scrutiny to examine a specific topic or matter of concern. This is done via the submission of a Scrutiny proposal form which can be completed [electronically](#) or through the submission of a paper copy of the form which can be found at the back of the attached Annual Report. With a view to improving greater public engagement and participation in Scrutiny, all county councillors are requested to draw residents' attention to this facility and the method for requesting Scrutiny to examine matters of concern to them.

4.9 Throughout the year Scrutiny continued to engage with both public and private partner organisations with a view to effectively working together to improve services and outcomes for residents. During 2021/22 a number of different public and private organisations attended meetings of either a Scrutiny Committee and/or a Task and Finish Group and contributed towards their work. Amongst these organisations were Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB), North Wales Economic Ambition

Board (NWEAB), GwE (North Wales Regional School Improvement Consortia), North Wales Social Care and Well-being Services Improvement Collaborative (NWSSIC), Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board (PSB), Conwy and Denbighshire Community Safety Partnership, Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC), Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW), Agricultural and landowner organisations Country Landowners Association (CLA), Farmers Union of Wales (FUW) and the National Farmers Union (NFU) as well as a private Flood Risk Consultants and Water Engineering company. As a result of participating in a task and finish group one external organisation's representative commented how much he had enjoyed being part of the group, stating that he looked forward to contributing in future too, as he thought there had been many positive outputs from the Group's efforts.

4.10 As the Council's term of office drew to a close the SCVCG undertook an evaluation exercise of the Scrutiny function's effectiveness. During the next few months the Group will be analysing the results of that exercise with a view to identifying areas that require strengthening and improving during the new Council's term of office.

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

Effective scrutiny will assist the Council to deliver its corporate priorities in line with community needs, residents' wishes and within budget.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

6.1 The publication of the Annual Report forms part of the regular committee reports despatch to county councillors and other recipients, therefore there are no additional costs entailed with its publication. The Annual Report upon approval and translation will be 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?

A Well-being Impact Assessment (WBIA) is not required for this report as no decision or change of policy is being sought. The Annual Report is presented solely to inform councillors and residents of the Scrutiny Committees' work during the preceding twelve months and as a means of outlining potential future areas of work.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

Members of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group (SCVCG) have been involved with the process of drafting the Annual Report and its proposed contents.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

There are no significant financial implications resulting from this report. As mentioned in paragraph 6 above any costs relating to the production of the Report will be contained within existing budgets, as will any costs arising from the establishment of task and finish groups.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

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

11. Power to make the decision

11.1 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000

11.2 Section 7.4.4 of the Council's Constitution.