

<b>Report to</b>	<b>County Council</b>
<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>5 September 2023</b>
<b>Lead Member/Officer</b>	<b>Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group/Steve Price, Democratic Services Manager</b>
<b>Head of Service</b>	<b>Lisa Jones, Interim Head of Corporate Support Service: People</b>
<b>Report authors</b>	<b>Karen Evans and Rhian Evans, Scrutiny Co-ordinators</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Annual Report of the Council's Scrutiny Committee 2022/23</b>

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

1.1. The Annual Report of the Council's Scrutiny Committees for 2022/23.

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

2.1. To present to Council the Scrutiny Committees' annual report on their activities during 2022/23.

2.2. The report is presented to County Council to comply with Section 7.4.4 of the Council's Constitution which stipulates that the Authority's 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?**

3.1 That Council considers the Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee for 2022/23, 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. It was reported last year that 2021/22 had been very much a year of adapting to the 'new normal' following the pandemic, 2022/23 on the other hand was a year of transition. Transition out of the Covid recovery measures with service delivery practices having more of a familiar feel about them, although the majority of services had adapted to a greater or lesser extent and adopted new ways of working. It was also a year of transition and new beginnings for the Authority following the local authority elections. In 2022 48 councillors were elected to serve on Denbighshire County Council, 23 of whom were elected for the first time. The elections also resulted in a change in administration in the county.
- 4.3. The first year of a new Council's term always entails a vast amount of training and familiarisation events for elected members, to help them settle into their new roles and understand their responsibilities. From the outset of the new Council term committee meetings, including Scrutiny Committee meetings, were held as 'hybrid meetings', with committee members having the option of attending the meeting in person or remotely via video conferencing. All Scrutiny Committee meetings are now webcast live on the Council's website, with a recording available on the Council's website following each meeting.
- 4.4. The Committees' 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 undertaken by each committee 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.
- 4.5. The report outlines how Scrutiny has supported and challenged the Council's work throughout the year, via a mixture of pre and post-decision scrutiny; monitoring corporate performance and risk management; assessing the effectiveness of partnership arrangements in delivering services, supporting residents and delivering community and economic benefit across the county.

4.6. During the year Scrutiny continued the practice of engaging with both public and private partner organisations with a view to effectively working together to improve services and outcomes for residents. These organisations are referenced in the report. Scrutiny intends to continue engaging with these and other organisations in future.

4.7 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 played by the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group (SCVCG) in securing effective scrutiny;
- 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; and
- summarises the conclusions of the reviews resulting from the call-in of two Cabinet decisions during the year

4.8 As the term of the former Council drew to a close the outgoing SCVCG undertook an evaluation exercise of Scrutiny's effectiveness. The findings of that exercise were analysed by members of the incoming Council's SCVCG who recommended a number of actions to strengthen and improve the effectiveness of Scrutiny going forward. These included the provision of scrutiny specific training events, and raising public awareness of Scrutiny as a facilitator for citizen involvement in the decision-making process and encouraging residents to engage with Scrutiny to facilitate better decision-making: Work will take place during 2023/24 and throughout the term of this Council to address both these areas.

4.9 It has long been acknowledged that Scrutiny, locally and nationally, encounters difficulties in getting the public to engage with its work, other than when contentious issues are discussed. The provisions in the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 are expected to assist in this regard as it requires local authorities to develop and implement a Public Participation Strategy

(PPS), which include arrangements to facilitate bringing the views of the public to the attention of Scrutiny. Denbighshire's draft PPS is currently under development. However, there is already a mechanism in place for residents to submit a request seeking Scrutiny to examine a specific topic or matter of concern to them. This can be done via the submission of a Scrutiny proposal [form](#) which can be completed electronically or submitted as a paper copy. As part of our efforts to encourage greater public engagement and participation in Scrutiny, we ask all county councillors to draw the availability of this facility to residents' attention.

## **5 How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?**

- 5.1 Effective scrutiny will assist the Council to deliver its corporate themes and Plan in line with community needs, residents' wishes and within budget.
- 5.2 The approval of the report will have a neutral contribution towards the Council's ambition to become Net Carbon Zero and Ecologically Positive by 2030, as the report will only be published in electronic format and will be available to read or download on the Council's intranet site and public website.

## **6 What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

- 6.1 The publication of the Annual Report forms part of the committee reports pack despatched electronically to county councillors and other recipients. Upon approval and translation, it will be available to read or download on the Council's intranet site and public website. 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 consulted on its 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 Scrutiny 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.