

# Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committees 2022 to 2023



## Appendix 1

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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 nine 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.

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 elected 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. Two of the three parent governor representative posts on Scrutiny are currently vacant. If you are a parent governor at one of the Council's 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). We would love to hear from you.

## **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 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, other public services/organisations 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 explanation on the PAPER test on the following page illustrates the criteria and process for determining whether a topic is suitable for scrutiny.

During 2022/23 a total of 34 requests for items to be scrutinised were considered by the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group. Of these 34 requests:

- 21 were submitted by county councillors
- 11 by officers
- 1 was a request from a Co-opted Education representative.
- 1 was referred by the Governance and Audit Committee

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, training or development opportunities for scrutiny committee members and helping to implement any necessary changes to scrutiny practices.

## **The process for determining a topic's suitability for scrutiny**

### **Step one: considering the request**

Proposal form or request received and careful consideration is given to the reasons behind the request.

### **Step two: does it stand up to the PAPER test?**

- **Public interest:** is the matter of concern to residents?
- **Ability to have an impact:** can Scrutiny influence and change things?
- **Performance:** is it an underperforming area or service?
- **Extent:** does it affect a large number of residents or a large geographic area?
- **Replication:** is anyone else looking at it?

**If not**, then no further action is required by a scrutiny committee and the request will be referred elsewhere, or information requested and shared with the individual or organisation who submitted the request.

**If yes:**

**Step three: assessment and planning** (this will be done by the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group)

- 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 to pursue etc.)
- If task and finish group 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 2022/23**

24<sup>th</sup> May 2022 marked the new municipal year and a new Council term for Denbighshire County Council, which welcomed the return of 25 former County Councillors together with the addition of 23 newly elected members.

Over the course of the year Council Services gradually transitioned out of the Covid recovery measures in place during 2021/22 and began returning to 'business as usual', albeit with some services having adapted to new ways of working.

Council committee meetings, including Scrutiny Committee meetings, were held as 'hybrid meetings', which meant committee members had the option of attending the meeting in person at the designated venue, or remotely via video conferencing. All Scrutiny Committee meetings are now webcast live on the Council's website, with a recording of the webcast available on the website following each meeting.

## **Scrutiny and the Council's Corporate Priorities during 2022/23**

The Council's Corporate Plan [‘The Denbighshire We Want’](#) and its priorities for 2022 – 2027 was agreed in October 2022, the Plan sets out what it is that the Council wants to achieve for the benefit of local residents and communities over the next five years. The Corporate Priorities for the 2022 to 2027 Council term are as listed below. Beneath each heading are examples of the types of actions that will help deliver each priority:

**1. A Denbighshire of quality housing that meets people's needs:** ensuring that everyone is supported to live in homes that meet their needs.

- Ensuring that people can access quality housing that meet their needs.
- Helping people to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.
- Working to prevent homelessness.

**2. A prosperous Denbighshire**

- Supporting economic growth.
- Developing a plan to grow Denbighshire's businesses in the future.
- Providing advice and support for business growth and helping local communities to thrive.

**3. A healthier and happier, caring Denbighshire**

- Delivering high standards of social care.
- Supporting people of all ages to live well and be safe.
- Helping people to live independently, providing support when needed.

**4. A learning and growing Denbighshire**

- Supporting parents, and young children in the early stages of their development.
- Making sure everyone has fair opportunities to learn.
- Providing quality buildings and facilities that support learning and thriving communities.
- Supporting people to learn new skills, volunteer and find good jobs.



## **5. A better connected Denbighshire**

- Maintaining a quality road network and enabling people to access education, employment, services and activities.
- Supporting communities with improved digital networks and skills.
- Working to support personal and community well-being.
- Supporting our green infrastructure.

## **6. A greener Denbighshire**

- To become a net carbon zero and ecologically positive organisation by 2030.
- Looking after and improving the natural environment.
- Working with communities to cope with and reduce the impacts of climate change.
- Improve recycling rates and reduce waste.

## **7. A fairer, safe, and more equal Denbighshire**

- Working to address the inequality and poverty faced by our communities.
- Ensuring that everyone receives the same standard of service to support their well-being.
- Promoting and celebrating diversity within our communities.

## **8. A Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language**

- Ensuring that everyone can access services in Welsh naturally at all stages in their lives.
- Supporting the broader use of Welsh and the celebration of Welsh culture.
- Developing a strategy to promote Denbighshire's rich culture, heritage and natural assets.

## **9. A well-run, high performing Council**

- Embedding a positive culture of ambition, transparency and improvement.

- Developing close and trusted relationships between our staff, elected members and our communities.
- Ensuring the council is well-run and good value for money.
- Ensuring Denbighshire County Council is a good employer and an excellent place to work.

The Council is fortunate in that its thematic scrutiny committee structure provides sufficient flexibility to enable any of the committees to examine various aspects of the Authority's progress in delivering its corporate priorities.

## **Call-in of Cabinet decisions**

The Council's Call-In Procedure was invoked twice during 2022/23 both call-ins were for decisions taken by the Council's Cabinet.

### **1. Recommendation of the Regional Fee Setting Group.**

On 13 December 2022 Cabinet discussed a report detailing the recommendations of the North Wales Regional Fees Group for 2023/24, in respect of residential and nursing home fees. The report explained how the fees were calculated and concluded with a recommendation for how Denbighshire County Council should utilise this work to inform local fee setting. Cabinet resolved to accept all the recommendations of the Fees Group as set out within the report.

A call-in of the decision was received on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2022. As this decision did not require to be implemented urgently the decision-maker (Cabinet) and the Chair of Communities Scrutiny Committee agreed to waive the 5-day period set-out in the Council's Call-In Procedure Rules to hear the review. This enabled Communities Scrutiny Committee to consider the basis for the call-in and review the evidence upon which the Cabinet had taken its decision and its next meeting, which was on 19 January 2023.

Having considered the evidence presented to it in relation to the decision taken by Cabinet, the Committee decided not to ask Cabinet to reconsider its decision of 13 December 2022 to accept the recommendations of the Fees Group. Nevertheless, in response to a new scrutiny request on the issue of 'Engagement with Care Forum Wales and Care Providers in Denbighshire' the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group has asked Communities Scrutiny Committee to examine the progress achieved in encouraging care providers to engage with the Council on matters relating to care provision and fee setting. The Committee will be examining this aspect during the autumn of 2023.

## **2. Applications Shortlisted for Shared Prosperity Funding.**

A decision taken by Cabinet on 25 April 2023 with regards to the application and shortlisting process, together with the recommendations from the Core Partnership Group about which Shared Prosperity Fund applications to approve, was subsequently called-in on 5<sup>th</sup> May by members of the Independent Group. The grounds for the call-in were a lack of understanding of the application process along with a lack of consultation with elected members throughout the process.

Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on 18 May 2023 reviewed the Cabinet decision. At the conclusion of an extensive debate the Committee was satisfied that having considered the information in the report and its associated appendices, along with the representations made during the course of the discussion, in relation to the application and shortlisting process, it recommended that the Cabinet decision of 25 April 2023, insofar that it related to the projects shortlisted by the Core Partnership Group for approval, be upheld. Whilst it was content for the projects to go forward to the next stage of the approval process it did ask that Cabinet share with all county councillors:

- (i) information on the evaluation conclusions relating to each individual application received for Shared Prosperity Funding;
- (ii) information relating to the governance arrangements for the Shared Prosperity Funding;
- (iii) the Communication Plan relating to the Shared Prosperity Funding.

In addition, the Committee requested that:

- (iv) each Member Area Group be updated on any risks identified relating to individual projects and on the progress with their deliverability going forward;  
and
- (v) relevant Cabinet members and Council officers liaise with local members prior to taking any delegated decisions that may be required, as outlined in the Cabinet report of 25 April 2023.

## **Positive outcomes of the scrutiny process**

One of the main objectives of the scrutiny process is to add value and to try and ensure that decisions taken by the Council have a positive impact on the lives of people who live, work and visit Denbighshire. There is an expectation for Scrutiny to evidence the benefits it has added to the decision-making process and how those benefits manifest themselves in better outcomes for businesses and residents of the county. Such benefits, in the main, are generally difficult to evidence, but the overall objective of Scrutiny is to support better decision-making which in turn delivers better services.

One such decision which was a direct result of a recommendation made by Communities Scrutiny Committee was the establishment of the Moorlands Management Officer role. This post was established in 2020 following the Committee's [Review into the Llantysilio Mountain Fire](#) 2019. An update report was presented to the Committee in March 2023 highlighting the positive impact of having a Moorland Officer fostering good relationships and co-ordinating multi-agency and stakeholder working in relation fire response plans and habitat/fuel load management over key areas of the Clwydian Range, Llantysilio Mountain and Llandegla Moor.

The Committee endorsed the progress made in delivering the Denbighshire Moorlands Project and supported the efforts underway to extend the existing partnership with Natural Resources Wales. It also requested that officers of the Moorland Partnership Board regularly updated local councillors on Board decisions or operational work that affected their electoral ward.

Following a previous Task and Finish Group set up by Communities Scrutiny Committee with Natural Resources Wales, Dŵr Cymru/Welsh Water and land owner representatives, for the purpose of establishing closer working relationships with all public bodies and individual landowners in an effort to educate on the responsibilities of riparian land owners to reduce the risk of flooding, the Committee was once again asked to support the proposal to re-establish a similar multi-agency working group to oversee the Development of the new Flood Risk Management Strategy. The establishment of multi-agency officers

and members working groups are viewed as a useful way of opening up communication channels, fostering levels of mutual trust to aid better working relationships and practices that should in turn benefit residents and the organisations themselves.

## Communities Scrutiny Committee



Cllr. Huw Williams (**Chair**)



Cllr. Karen Edwards (**Vice-Chair**)

The following link will take you to [information about the Communities Scrutiny Committee, its agendas and reports on the Council's website](#)

This Committee examines 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. The Committee considered a range of Corporate Priority topics during the 2022/2023 municipal year.

### **A Prosperous Denbighshire**

The Committee continued to monitor the work being undertaken through the **Rhyl Regeneration Programme** - a priority for many years due to the level of deprivation in the town. A considerable amount of investment had taken place in the regeneration of Rhyl for the benefit of businesses, residents and tourists.

The **Draft Tourism Signage Plan for Denbighshire** was considered, with the Committee acknowledging the importance of the distinctive brown tourism signs on roads that were equally as important as social media and electronic navigational aids in encouraging tourism. It was requested that, with a view to exploring how all areas, both urban and rural, could maximise the economic impact and benefits to be realised from the Tourism Signage Plan that the topic be presented to each Member Area Group (MAG) for discussion.

Staying with tourism, the **Second Homes and Short Term Holiday Lets** item, detailing the current planning requirements in relation to second homes and short term holiday lets, together with potential measures such as taxation and / or licencing that could be introduced in the future and their implications was examined. The discussion included the impact on availability of local housing and need for second home owners to make a fair and effective contribution to the communities in which they buy.

### **A Greener Environment**

This priority is working with communities to cope with and reduce the impacts of climate change. The Committee reviewed the **Proposed Central Rhyl and Central Prestatyn Coastal Defence Schemes** – to ascertain the value and benefit of the potential coastal flood risk management schemes. The Committee supported the progression of both schemes to construction, subject to funding approval and recommended that that the schemes be taken to Strategic Investment Group, Cabinet and Council successively for their respective approval.

As part of the Authority's means to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and tackle the Climate and Ecological Emergency it introduced the **Wildflower Meadow Project**, a cross service collaboration to create urban and peri-urban local provenance meadows through a reduced 'cut-and-collect' mowing regime. The Committee received an update report on the engagement and increased publicity with stakeholders on the Wildflower Meadow Project and pledged its continued support for the Project.

The **Waste Service Remodelling Project** update was presented to the Committee highlighting the upcoming activities to facilitate the change to the waste service. The new service would begin with the introduction of collection of Absorbent Hygiene Products in September 2023; the 'kerb side sort' recycle service would commence in March 2024 with the residual waste model being implemented during the summer of 2024. A robust communication and engagement exercise will support the new service roll out so that all residents are aware of, and understand, the proposed changes. The Committee endorsed



the future activities to be undertaken in preparedness and requested that the Impact Assessment be regularly reviewed and updated as the project progressed.

### **A healthier and happier, caring Denbighshire**

The **Welsh Ambulance Service Trust (WAST)** gave the Committee a presentation highlighting matters relating to ambulance response times, including various emergency response data for callouts in Denbighshire. The Committee were grateful for the information provided by the WAST, and acknowledged the measures being developed and implemented in a bid to respond and effectively manage emergency call-outs going forward. The Committee, having regard to the pressures currently experienced by WAST recommended that the Corporate Director: Environment and Economy convene a discussion between senior officials of Denbighshire County Council and WAST with a view to exploring potential options for enhancing local authority and Third Sector links that could possibly help support the Ambulance Service to focus its resources on dealing with emergency calls.

## Partnerships Scrutiny Committee



Cllr. Joan Butterfield (**Chair**)



Cllr. Peter Scott (**Vice-Chair**)

This Committee is responsible for examining the effectiveness of services provided by the Council either in collaboration, or in partnership, with other public sector organisations, and for making sure that those services are meeting the needs of residents.

The following link will take you to [information about the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee, its agendas and reports on the Council's website](#)

Despite changes in political leadership and management structures across the region work on developing and delivering regional and sub-regional partnership working arrangements continued. As partnership working arrangements continue to develop and evolve in the post-pandemic era, the Committee continued its work in examining the effectiveness of services delivered in collaboration, or in partnership, with other public sector organisations, private companies and voluntary groups, making sure that they met the needs of residents.

The number and types of services delivered in conjunction with external providers are extremely wide-ranging, from social care to economic development and environmental enforcement to community safety. Every one of these partnership arrangements also help secure the delivery of each of the corporate themes which will in due course contribute towards the realisation of the Council's Corporate Plan.

With a view to ensuring that both the local and regional economy were adapting in the wake of national and international social, financial and political unrest while continuing to focus on future regeneration and prosperity the Committee examined the **Annual Report of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board 2021/22** and discussed with Board representatives its achievements to date as well as challenges that lay ahead. Acutely aware of the economic and personal hardship the cost of living crisis was having on individuals and families across the county and its potential 'knock on' effect on Council services the Committee scrutinised the effectiveness of the **Homelessness and Housing Support Services'** early intervention work, supporting families in crisis to remain in their own homes and plan for the future. This type of early intervention work is heavily reliant on strong partnership working arrangements being in place and being effectively co-ordinated between public, private and voluntary organisations. Housing, social and financial pressures, amongst other factors, can lead to mental health problems, particularly amongst the most vulnerable and deprived in society. The Committee is continually keen to ensure that all agencies are working effectively together to protect the most vulnerable residents within the county. As part of its work in gaining assurances that residents are protected from harm's way it examined the **2021/22 Annual Report on Safeguarding Adults in Denbighshire**. It also met with representatives from the Health Board, Police and the Council's Social Care Service to examine **Partnership Working Arrangements in relation to Mental Health** as it wanted to make sure that all of these agencies were working effectively together to identify mental health issues at the earliest possible opportunity in order to facilitate the timely provision of appropriate intervention and support to vulnerable individuals in crisis.

Denbighshire, similar to many other areas, has an ageing population which results in an ever increasing demand for social care services. With a view to managing this demand and supporting individuals to remain active and independent for as long as possible health, social care, housing and the voluntary sector work closely together, under the auspices of the **North Wales Regional Partnership Board** to develop and deliver services that meet people's individual need. This organisation's activities in planning and developing appropriate services were also examined by the Committee during the year.

Acknowledging the growing importance of the voluntary sector along with the Council and other public authorities' reliance on voluntary organisations to help them reach out to individuals and communities to help them build strong, vibrant, sustainable communities across the length and breadth of the county, the Committee discussed with the Chief Officer of **Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (DVSC)** the services and support provided by DVSC affiliated voluntary organisations in Denbighshire. DVSC provides support and guidance to community organisations and individuals with the aim of empowering them to establish, build and sustain local networks that will encourage long-term community resilience and promote independence.

In its capacity as the Council's designated committee for scrutinising crime and disorder related matters members examined the performance and activities of the **Conwy and Denbighshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP)** through consideration of its Annual Report for 2021/22 and also focussed on its priorities for 2022/23. Environmental crime, such as dog fouling, littering, graffiti, fly tipping etc. are unsightly and blight local communities, they can also pose a threat to public health. In an attempt to make sure that the contract, between the Council and the company commissioned to take enforcement action against the perpetrators of environmental crime, was robust and delivered the type of services which met the needs of local communities the Committee contributed to a consultation on variations to the contract in place to deliver **Environmental Enforcement Service** patrols across the county.

Again, as during the tenure of previous councils, the Committee has continued its programme of regular meetings with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board for the purpose of realising the delivery of the **North Denbighshire Community Hospital Project** which should eventually culminate with the building of a purpose built hospital and health and social care hub in the area. The Committee will continue with this work during the forthcoming years.

## Performance Scrutiny Committee



Cllr. Hugh Irving (**Chair**)



Cllr. Gareth Sandilands (**Vice-Chair**)

The following link will take you to [information about the Performance Scrutiny Committee, its agendas and reports on the Council's website](#)

Performance Scrutiny Committee has a crucial role to play in ensuring that the Council delivers quality services to residents and in supporting the Council to deliver its Corporate Plan. 2022/23 was in a way very much a transition year for the 'new' Committee following the local authority elections. Metaphorically speaking it was a year of picking up the baton from its predecessor, tying up loose ends, and setting firm foundations for the Committee's work during the forthcoming 2022/27 Council term.

In fulfilling this role, the Committee regularly monitored the delivery of a number of the Council's plans and strategies. For example, the **Housing and Homelessness Strategy Action Plan**, inherited from the previous Council but identified as a key area of work for the new Council in its bid to tackle poverty and deprivation in the county. It concluded the monitoring work on the delivery of the **Corporate Plan 2017/22** and then commenced the monitoring arrangements for the new **2022/27 Corporate Plan**. By focussing on the Council's progress in implementing the Plan and at its performance with the initial stages of its delivery the Committee will be able to identify areas or services which may merit closer scrutiny as time goes on. Hand in hand with monitoring the Council's progress in delivering its plans and strategies the Committee, twice a year, reviews the Authority's **Corporate Risk Register**. This Register contains the high level risks that have been

identified as ones that have the potential to disrupt the day to day delivery of essential Council services, as well as its medium to long-term objectives. The Register also identifies the measures put in place to manage those risks and secure the continued delivery of front line services during challenging times. Through the examination of the Risk Register, the Council's performance in delivering its Corporate Plan and in responding to residents' complaints submitted under the **'Your Voice' Complaints Procedure** the Committee can focus its work on supporting service delivery improvements on all fronts.

Having information and services freely available and easily accessible to residents within reasonable reach to the communities where they live is crucial if the Council is to realise its ambition of delivering the nine themes within its new Corporate Plan. Annually Performance Scrutiny Committee examines the **Library Service's Standards and Performance** in delivering services in line with the national requirements set out in the Welsh Public Library Standards, but more importantly for local residents the progress made in Denbighshire in delivering innovations aimed at transforming libraries from the traditional concept of them being strictly book-lending establishments into more holistic 'happy places' that support individual and community resilience and well-being.

Empowering community resilience and improving the well-being of residents through working in partnership with various Council and external organisations were key features in a number of areas examined by the Committee during the year. These aspects were scrutinised during the consideration of the **Draft Director of Social Services Annual Report for 2021/22**, the **Social Care Market Stability Report**, and the potential expansion of day care services at **Hafan Deg in Rhyl**. Examination of **Cefndy Healthcare's** performance in recent years gave the Committee an insight into the organisation's operations during and post Covid and Brexit, both of which had disrupted global supply chains, and impacted on employment and business development opportunities. It was encouraging to learn that this well-established and much valued employer was adapting and evolving to meet new and future demand for its products.

In addition to regular monitoring of the Council's performance in delivering medium to long-term strategies and action plans Scrutiny also needs to be able to respond to the here and now, including making sure that shortcomings or oversights encountered elsewhere are not likely to occur in Denbighshire. In the wake of the tragic death of an 8-year-old boy as a result of prolonged exposure to mould in a housing association flat in England, members examined the Council's own procedures for dealing with **Mould and Condensation in Denbighshire's Council Housing Stock**. Scrutiny of this work reassured the Committee that the Council had robust systems and processes in place to ensure that reports of damp, mould and condensation were dealt with promptly and effectively.

Under the Council's thematic scrutiny committee structure Performance Scrutiny Committee is the main committee that deals with the scrutiny of education related topics, as generally they impact in one way or another on performance related matters, be that on individual performance or collectively the performance of a school or the local education authority and those external organisations that support the delivery of education.

The impact of Covid on pupils' education has been widely reported and is well documented. In the absence of examination results data, it has been nigh on impossible for local authority scrutiny committees to effectively monitor collective educational performance during recent years. Therefore, the focus of education related scrutiny during 2021/22 has been on the Education Service's plans and preparedness for the changes that lie ahead. Focussing on those changes the Committee has during the year examined the Service and GwE's (the regional school improvement service) work in supporting schools with the implementation of the new **Curriculum for Wales**. It has also looked at the progress made by the Education Service in complying with the statutory requirements relating to **Additional Learning Needs** as set out in the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 and considered the potential implications for the county's schools and pupils of the conclusions drawn by the Welsh Government following its consultation on **School Categorisation according to Welsh Medium Provision**.

Despite the constraints posed by the non-availability of school examination performance data for the Committee to examine, Estyn (the external regulator for schools and education

matters) reports on individual schools are still available and are an important yardstick of a school's performance in delivering educational services. An extremely critical Estyn inspection report on Christ the Word Catholic School, a new voluntary aided all-through school in the county, which resulted in the school being placed under special measures, prompted the Committee to examine what led to the school being placed in special measures and the steps being taken by all involved with the school to address the recommendations made by Estyn. The Committee during a meeting attended by representatives from the Catholic Diocese, the new interim school leadership team, local authority Education Service staff and officers from GwE, examined in detail matters relating to school leadership and management since its establishment until it was placed in special measures, along with the response to the recommendations for improvement made by Estyn and the proposed plans for recovery and improvement. Reassured that necessary and appropriate steps were being taken to support the school to achieve lasting improvements the Committee agreed to continue monitoring the delivery of the action plans with a view to securing sustainable long-term improvements.



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

The Conwy and Denbighshire Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) was established by both authorities during the term of the previous councils for the purpose of fulfilling their statutory duties of scrutinising the Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board (PSB). This Committee comprises of 16 members, 8 representing Conwy County Borough Council and 8 representing Denbighshire County Council. Each Council's representation on the JOSC reflects the political balance of their Council. The JOSC's terms of reference specifies that the Chair and Vice-Chair will alternate every two years between the elected membership of Denbighshire and Conwy councils. Dependent on which Council's turn it is to Chair the JOSC, the Vice-Chair will be appointed from amongst the other Council's representatives on the committee. 2022/23 was the second year of Denbighshire's turn to chair the JOSC and Councillor Gareth Sandilands was elected Chair with Councillor Cheryl Carlisle from Conwy appointed as Vice-Chair.

Similar to all other committees the 2022/23 year involved a period of training and transition for the JOSC, prior to continuing with the work started by its predecessor committee. In line with its terms of reference the JOSC considered the **Public Services Board's Annual Report for 2021/22**. At the conclusion of its consideration it was satisfied that the Board had complied with the requirements of the Well-being and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in relation to reporting on its activities and the progress made in delivering its 2017 to 2022 Well-Being Plan.

Whilst the work to deliver one Well-Being Plan was reaching its culmination the preparatory work to develop its successor Plan had been underway for some time. As documented in last year's Annual Report the JOSC had examined the approach taken in developing the new Well-being Assessment, a key document required to support the development of the new Well-Being Plan. In addition to being required to consult with the JOSC on the Well-being Assessment the PSB is also required to consult with the JOSC on its draft Well-Being Plan, and any amendments it proposes to make to it. Therefore,

during 2022/23 the **PSB's draft Well-Being Plan for the period 2023/2028** was presented to the JOSC for examination ahead of its approval and adoption. In fulfilling its statutory role as a consultee on the Well-Being Plan the Joint Committee examined the draft Plan in detail before endorsing its four key themes of:

- Well-being
- Economy
- Equality
- Housing

which should support the Plan's focus of making Conwy and Denbighshire a more equal place with less deprivation. All of these themes and the Well-being Plan's overall objective dovetail and complement each Council's own Corporate Plan.

During the forthcoming year the JOSC will focus its work on examining how the PSB is managing risks as well as its progress with the initial stages of implementing and delivering the Well-Being Plan.

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



Cllr. Gareth Sandilands (**Chair**)



Cllr. Cheryl Carlisle (**Vice-Chair**)

### Membership

#### Conwy County Borough Council

- Cllr. Cheryl Carlisle (Vice-Chair)
- Cllr. David Gerard Carr
- Cllr. Bernice McLoughlin
- Cllr. Angie O'Grady
- Cllr. Stephen Anthony Price
- Cllr. Kay Redhead
- Cllr Austin Roberts
- Cllr. John Roberts

#### Denbighshire County Council

- Cllr. Joan Butterfield
- Cllr. Kelly Clewett
- Cllr. Pauline Edwards
- Cllr. Alan Hughes
- Cllr. Paul Keddie
- Cllr. Terry Mendies
- Cllr. Gareth Sandilands (Chair)
- Cllr. Elfed Williams

The following link will take you to [information about the Joint Committee, its agendas and reports on the Council's website](#)

## **Scrutiny requests from residents**

For a number of years Denbighshire's scrutiny committees has operated an established mechanism which 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-ordinators. Completed scrutiny request forms are presented to the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group, in the same way as requests received from councillors, officers or other organisations 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.

### **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) or by downloading the [form](#) from the Council's website and submitting it by e-mail. 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 or watch the webcast on the Council's website. 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 can be found overleaf).

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, either in person or via video link, 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 one of the Scrutiny Co-ordinators 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 recommendations made are also available on the Council's website, as are the recordings of recent scrutiny committee meetings.

Further advice or information is available by contacting the Scrutiny Co-ordinators, Karen Evans on [karen.a.evans@denbighshire.gov.uk](mailto:karen.a.evans@denbighshire.gov.uk) (01824 712575) or Rhian Evans on [rhian.evans@denbighshire.gov.uk](mailto:rhian.evans@denbighshire.gov.uk) (01824 712554), or by sending an e-mail to the following general e-mail address: [democratic@denbighshire.gov.uk](mailto:democratic@denbighshire.gov.uk) .

## 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-ordinators

Legal, HR and Democratic Services

PO Box 62

Ruthin

LL15 9AZ

or e-mail it to [democratic@denbighshire.gov.uk](mailto:democratic@denbighshire.gov.uk)