

Scrutiny Bulletin

Cheshire West and Chester Council's Quarterly Scrutiny Newsletter
Winter 2024/2025

Welcome to the new quarterly scrutiny newsletter for Cheshire West and Chester Council. Its purpose is to help inform residents, Councillors, Officers, and key stakeholders in Cheshire West and Chester on the work of the Councils' scrutiny function. Each edition will highlight the work of the scrutiny committees, include comments from the Scrutiny Chairs, and a preview of upcoming Task Groups and Spotlight Reviews.

Stay engaged with special features, interviews with scrutiny members, and opportunities to voice your opinions. The bulletin will keep you connected with the scrutiny that the committees undertake.

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny in local government is an essential part of a local councillor's role in representing local people. Those councillors, who sit on scrutiny committees, are there to hold the decision and policy makers of Cheshire West and Chester (and certain partner organisations) to account. Committee members take an in depth look at how local services are provided and delivered, and how the Council performs and spends its money. Scrutiny Councillors also seek assurance that the most vulnerable adults and children who live in Cheshire West are kept safe.

Overview and Scrutiny should:

- provide a 'critical friend' challenge to decision and policy makers
- reflect Cheshire West's residents, organisations and businesses' voices
- take the lead and own its scrutiny process
- make an impact on service delivery and suggest improvements
- seek assurance that services are delivered effectively, and that Cheshire West's most vulnerable residents are kept safe.

The Council currently has four scrutiny committees:

Cheshire West and Chester Overview and Scrutiny: looks at the effectiveness and delivery of borough wide services and strategies as well as corporate services, performance, budgets, and customer service.

People Overview and Scrutiny: looks at education services, adults and children's social care, and public health

Places Overview and Scrutiny: looks at crime and disorder, highways, the local environment, housing, and waste and recycling

Health Overview and Scrutiny: looks at health services, acute trusts, Care Boards, Integrated Health Partnerships, and any issues arising from local concerns about NHS services.

All Scrutiny Committee meetings are held in public and are also webcast live on the Council website for anybody to watch along. Residents can also register to give their views on an item if they register as a public speaker. See the contact details at the bottom of the page.

You can find out more about the ongoing reviews and read associated documentation on the Council's webpages:

[Click here](#)

A summary of scrutiny's ongoing and pending reviews

The Council's four scrutiny committees (Cheshire West and Chester; Places; People and Health) are currently undertaking in depth reviews of the following:

- Access to mental health services for children and young people - Ongoing
- Review of patient discharge from acute hospitals - Ongoing
- Review of Registered Social Landlords - Ongoing
- River Pollution in the Borough - Ongoing
- Annual review of Council Companies - Pending

Scrutiny committee agendas look-ahead

In their upcoming meetings the Council's four scrutiny committees will be considering the following topics:

Cheshire West and Chester Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Compliment and Complaints Section 106 payments Planning	13-Jan
	Budget	03-Feb
People Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Ofsted Social Care Compliments & Complaints Accommodations Strategy Supporting Families Programme	15-Jan
	Education Attainment Pupil Referral Units Children & Families Performance	11-Feb
Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Primary Care Stanney Lane Clinic Update	27-Jan
Places Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Housing Homelessness Community Safety Partnership Household Waste Recycling Centres	20-Jan

the above details are correct at time of publishing - work programmes are subject to change

Update from the Chair of Cheshire West and Chester Overview & Scrutiny

As Chair of the Cheshire West and Chester Overview and Scrutiny Committee I am able to work with other committee members to scrutinise a wide range of topics and gain an insight into the performance of services across the whole Council. Crucially, the committee I chair receives updates on the Council's corporate and financial performance twice a year, typically in July and November, and is also able to scrutinise the Council's budget on an annual basis before it is received by all elected Councillors at the Budget Council meeting.



I strive to foster constructive and fair discussion at every meeting, something that is beneficial to the scrutiny process as it encourages an outcome focussed and productive attitude leading to actionable recommendations.

The role comes with a lot of responsibility, but also a real sense of reward. We're in a privileged position, being able to be the voice of residents and challenge Cabinet Members on their behalf. Through scrutiny, we can ensure the Council is performing well, achieving best value, and keeping residents at the heart of decision making.

I'm proud to represent not only my Ward's constituents, but those of the whole borough along with my scrutiny committee colleagues and I am looking forward to sharing what we do in these newsletters going forward.

Councillor Martin Barker - Chair of Cheshire West and Chester Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Quarterly Case Study - SEND Review

Scrutiny listened to concerns raised by local families relating to SEND provision in Cheshire West and acted upon a Council Motion, by the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertaking an in-depth scrutiny review of Special Education Needs and Disabilities services in Cheshire West. The Task Group investigated how Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) for children with special education needs or disabled are created, implemented and monitored and how the Council communicates with families, schools, health colleagues and stakeholders regarding EHCPs. The Task Group met with a number of families, school representatives, health colleagues and third party providers. The Task Group also attended the SEND Summit held at Chester Racecourse.

During its investigations, the Task Group scrutinised how the SEND Strategy and Action Plan were monitored and how data dashboards were used to understand levels of compliance of statutory duties.

After an extensive scrutiny review, Forty Five recommendations were made by the Task Group which were all accepted by the Cabinet Member for Children and Families. The Task Group will meet termly to review progress with the implementation of the recommendations and it will also monitor the SEND improvements journey within the borough.

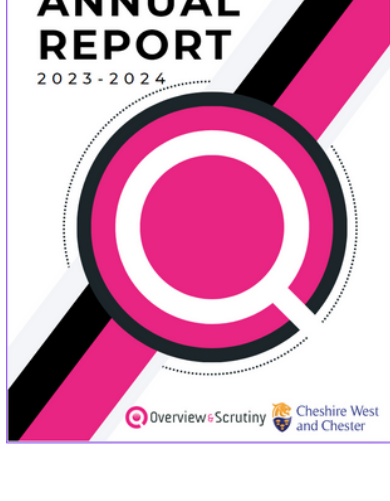
Updates from the team

The Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2023-2024 has been published with the October 2024 Council Agenda.

Pre-planning is underway for the annual scrutiny exercise of Cheshire West and Chester Councils 2024-2025 budget scheduled for 3 February 2025.

The annual scrutiny review of Council Owned Companies is due to begin in the New Year and a report will be brought to Cheshire West and Chester Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 March 2025.

Scrutiny Task Group Reports are now being published on the Council website - keep an eye out for more details!



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