

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021-22

Summary of the work of Scrutiny for 2021-22



26

Committee
Meetings held
in public



93

recommendations
made



61

Reports
considered



1

Call-in was
received



13

In-depth reviews
undertaken



11

partners
engaged with
the Committees



12

members of the
public addressed
the Committees



**Plus regular attendance
from Health Colleagues from;**

CCG, CWP, NHS, Countess of Chester Hospital Trust,
Mid-Cheshire Hospital Trust, North West Ambulance Service



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Foreword by the Statutory Scrutiny Officer

I am pleased to be able to present to you the Combined Annual Scrutiny Report for 2021/22.

Scrutiny has an important role to play within Cheshire West and Chester Council as it enables Elected Members to act as the voice of local people when scrutinising decisions, as well as ensuring that there is accountability and good governance around the decision-making process. In recent years, some local authorities' Public Interest Reports and Best Value Inspections have reported inadequate scrutiny in place. However, the findings from the recent Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Review Challenge at Cheshire West and Chester Council, undertaken in July 2022, highlighted that the scrutiny process at Cheshire West and Chester was adding real value to local decision making.

At Cheshire West and Chester Council, the scrutiny process has a robust and varied annual programme with a priority to focus on activities that have the greatest impact and can make a real difference.

Cheshire West and Chester Scrutiny Committee has continued with its review exercises of Council Companies, the Council's budget, and its performance, providing Members with a good level of assurance that the right governance and management are in place.

In addition, People and Places Scrutiny Committees have both focused on areas of underperformance or on topics which have been raised by either Elected Members or officers. The Health Scrutiny Committee has focused its attentions on scrutinising and acting as a critical friend to health colleagues with a

number of Substantive Variation reviews taking place around proposed changes to health services.

During the course of 2021/22, scrutiny activities have been delivered through a variety of forums from formal committees to informal Task Groups and site visits. Due to the volume and importance of topics and priorities, Members have welcomed the opportunity to undertake some of these activities in Task Groups, often held virtually, and their findings have subsequently been reported back to their respective Scrutiny Committees. This approach enables Scrutiny Members to dive deeper into issues rather than merely a lighter touch at Committee.

During the recent LGA Peer Review, it was noted how Scrutiny has added real value to local decision making both in terms of pre-scrutiny / policy design, as well as robust challenge and that Members have very much welcomed opportunities for cross-party working. It was also pleasing to hear that all the Scrutiny Chairs felt supported and well briefed.

Training for Scrutiny Members is an ongoing priority and will be a focus for the New Member Induction Programme scheduled for May 2023 following the Borough Council elections. The priorities for the 2022/23 municipal year will continue to focus on activities which add value whilst being balanced across policy development and pre-decision scrutiny, together with improving how Scrutiny engages with local communities and community groups. In addition, with the formulation of the new Integrated Care System, Health Scrutiny Committee will prioritise reviewing these important changes.

Penny Housley - Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Introduction to Scrutiny

The scrutiny function plays an important role in reviewing and shaping Cheshire West and Chester Council's services and performance framework.

Cheshire West and Chester Council has four Overview and Scrutiny Committees (see below) and each Committee has its own areas of responsibility which are themed around the Council's directorates and reflect the priorities within the Council Plan "Play Your Part to Thrive":

- Cheshire West and Chester (Corporate)
- Health
- Peoples
- Places

The People Overview and Scrutiny Committee also appoints Statutory Co-optees to sit on its Committee and they are able to be involved with scrutiny matters relating to education. These Co-optees consist of up to five Parent Governor Representatives and Church Representatives from the local Dioceses.

Scrutiny Members have an important role in holding Cabinet Members to account, whilst still remaining independent, and at Cheshire West and Chester Council the role of Overview and Scrutiny is valued and welcomed by the Cabinet. Scrutiny can make

recommendations for change and have powers to intervene in the decision-making process in certain circumstances.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings take place regularly, they are open to the public and they are also broadcast live on the Council's website. Scrutiny regularly invites officers, partners, local organisations, health colleagues and witnesses to attend to provide evidence, explain situations and respond to Members' questions.

Scrutiny's activities can take place in a variety of formats from light touch at formal Committees to deeper dives in Task Groups.

Local Authorities have a statutory responsibility to produce an Annual Scrutiny Report to highlight their work. Each of the four Scrutiny Committees have prepared their own individual reports and this combined report brings together a summary of their work. (Please note four individual reports are appended to this Combined report).

Cheshire West and Chester Overview and Scrutiny Committee

This Committee is responsible for holding to account those who deliver services on a borough-wide basis and cross-cutting issues impacting on the Council and borough as a whole. This includes effectiveness and delivery of borough -wide services and strategies, Council owned companies, overall performance and the annual budget development and consultation process

A SUMMARY OF THE WORK OF THE PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR 2021/22:

During the course of this municipal year, the Scrutiny Committee has met on six occasions and the Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Committee enables it to scrutinise more strategic and corporate topics such as the Council's Budget, Council Companies and the Council's Performance, whereas the other Scrutiny Committees focus more on services which affect people or the place.

The Committee scrutinised a range of topics such as Council Owned Companies, Council's Asset Management Plan, Performance Management Framework, the implementation of the Best4Business Programme and the Council's Budget for 2022-23.

As well as the regular activities, the Committee also scrutinised the Council's approach to consultation, held a Call-In hearing in relation to the Future delivery model for Vivo Care Choices and received updates on the Council's Planning process.

Full details of the Committee can be found on the Council's [website](https://cmttpublic.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=1018&Year=0)

<https://cmttpublic.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=1018&Year=0>

The Cheshire West and Chester Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2020/21 comprised of nine Members as follows:-

Councillor Martin Barker (Chairman) Councillor Mandy Clare Councillor Steve Collings (Deputy Chairman) Councillor Michael Edwards Councillor Mike Jones	Councillor Sheila Little Councillor Paul Roberts Councillor Harry Tonge Councillor Helen Weltman
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Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

This Committee is responsible for undertaking the Council's Statutory Scrutiny responsibilities relating to planning, provision and operation of Health Services across Cheshire West and Chester. This involves reviewing the work of health service commissioners (such as the Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group CCG), providers of health services (such as Acute Hospitals) and other health sector organisations.

Full details of the Committee can be found on the Council's [website](#).

<https://cmttpublic.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=1086&Year=0>

A SUMMARY OF THE WORK OF THE PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR 2021/22:

The Overview and Scrutiny function forms an integral part of the Council's governance operation and the Health Scrutiny Committee also supports the work of our health colleagues. Our aim throughout the year has been to support health colleagues and act as a "Critical Friend", in particular their response to the post-pandemic challenges. It has also been our aim to provide challenge and insight into the activities proposed or undertaken by our NHS colleagues to help ensure that they serve the residents of west Cheshire as fully as possible.

The Scrutiny Committee has, on numerous occasions, expressed its thanks and appreciation to everyone working in the NHS and health and care environment for their resilience and dedication shown in their roles and towards their patients during the coronavirus pandemic. The Committee heard on many occasions about staff going above and beyond for their patients and also how COVID-19 impacted their services.

The Scrutiny Committee has kept a watchful eye on the new emerging Integrated Care System which came into effect on 1 July 2022. As part of its informal development sessions, the Scrutiny Committee received regular updates on how the new health system will operate and further sessions are being planned to keep the Committee updated in the municipal year 2022/23. The Scrutiny Committee is keen to ensure that, where possible, residents of west Cheshire are not disadvantaged by these new proposals.

Throughout the year, due to the complexity of issues, the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee kept their meeting agendas focused on only one or two items. This approach worked well as it allowed the Committee time to undertake a deeper dive into the issues, gain a greater understanding of the services and the challenges they were facing, as well as undertaking more robust scrutiny.

Scrutiny at Place (where Place for us is Cheshire West) will retain its importance and focus to reassure our communities that the new Integrated

Care System is democratically overseen and accountable through active examination and challenge. In this way we can champion health needs both at the borough level and working jointly with our other Local Authority scrutiny colleagues where we have common purpose across

Cheshire and Merseyside. As the new system evolves, the Committee will strive to identify what really matters to our residents, protect our health services and reduce inequalities.

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2021/22 comprised the following six Elected Members:

Councillor Kate Cernik (Chairman) Councillor Michael Edwardson (Deputy Chairman) Councillor Keith Millar	Councillor Eveleigh Moore Dutton Councillor Lynn Riley Councillor Rachel Williams
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People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

This Committee is responsible for holding to account those who deliver services based on individual needs to children and adults. The Committee reviews and makes recommendations for improvement to any matter that have an impact on the educational needs, safety or health and wellbeing of people in Cheshire West and Chester. This includes; statutory responsibilities in relation to education, social care and safeguarding, welfare rights, healthy life and lifestyle choices and integration of services with partner organisations. The Committee is also responsible for reviewing performance relating to Children's and Adults Services such as OFSTED reports. The Committee also appoints Statutory Co-optees relating to education matters.

Full details of the Committee can be found on the Council's [website](#).

<https://cmttpublic.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=1016&Year=0>

A SUMMARY OF THE WORK OF THE PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR 2021/22:

This Scrutiny Committee's Terms of Reference enables it to scrutinise any matter that impacts on the educational needs, safety or health and wellbeing of residents. This year the Scrutiny Committee scrutinised topics including Hate Crime, Youth Work Strategies and Education. This was undertaken via task groups and their reports presented at the Scrutiny Committee.

A task group was established to review the borough's Youth Service and the task group Members made recommendations to help shape and influence the Council's new Youth Strategy. The Committee had oversight of a refreshed draft of the Domestic Abuse Strategy, and sought assurances that the Strategy provided the framework for the Council to meet

legislative duties and deliver a high quality service across the borough. A task group also scrutinised the Adult's and Children's Social Care performance reports and acted as a 'critical friend' in providing constructive feedback.

During the year, Committee Members visited several Children's Centres across the borough and undertook Recommendation 41 visits. These were introduced following the death of Victoria Climbié, Lord Laming's Inquiry into her death recommended that Councillors should regularly visit front-line services in the Children's services department and report their findings and concerns about workloads or other issues to their Chief Executive and the relevant Scrutiny Committee. Councillors at Cheshire West and Chester Council regularly undertake these visits three times a year and their findings are reported to the Committee.

The People Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2021/22 comprised the following nine Elected Members and four Co-Optees:

Councillor Elton Watson (Chairman) Councillor Adam Langan (Deputy Chairman) Councillor Lisa Denson Councillor Shelia Little Councillor Nathan Pardoe	Councillor Margaret Parker Councillor Patricia Parkes Councillor Helen Treeby Councillor Peter Wheeler
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Parent Governor Representatives:-

- Zillah Edwards (1 November 2019 – 31 October 2022)
- Lisa Petherick (1 November 2019 – 31 October 2022)
- Ian Roberts (1 November 2019 – 31 October 2022)
- Louise Whitehead (1 November 2019 – 31 October 2021)

Places Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee is responsible for holding to account those who deliver all place-based services including environment, localities, regeneration and growth. The Committee reviews and makes recommendations for improvement in relation to any matter that has an impact on the physical, geographical and economic needs of the borough. This includes; flood management, crime and disorder, highways, streetscene, locality working and regeneration and growth.

Full details of the Committee can be found on the Council's [website](https://cmttpublic.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=1017&Year=0)

<https://cmttpublic.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=1017&Year=0>

A SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES FROM THE PLACES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN 2021/22:

The Committee met seven times during the year and scrutinised a number of topics including the borough's economy; helped to shape the Environmental Management Strategy; contributed to the development of the key Waste Management Strategy priorities and proposals; commented on the Council's approach to housing delivery; was a sounding board for the Council's Empty Homes Strategy and received a briefing on the Council's Rough Sleepers Services. A

proportion of the Place's Scrutiny Committee activities is based around contributing and shaping new and emerging policy.

The Committee has responsibility for the annual scrutiny exercise of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and the theme for 2021/22 was to review the effectiveness of the CSP via a spotlight on the priority 'Killed and Seriously Injured on the Roads'.

A scrutiny review of the Council's Speed Limit policy was also undertaken by the Committee and several recommendations were made.

The Places Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2021/22 comprised nine Elected Members as follows:-

Councillor Sam Naylor (Chairman) Councillor Simon Eardley (Deputy Chairman) Councillor Rob Bisset Councillor Paul Bowers Councillor Andrew Cooper	Councillor Gareth Gould Councillor John Leather Councillor Gina Lewis Councillor Mark Stocks
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Feedback

As a result of the LGA Peer Review undertaken in July 2022, several positive comments relating to the Scrutiny function in Cheshire West and Chester Council were made, including:

- Consistently, through this peer challenge it has been stated how Scrutiny is adding real value to local decision making both in terms of pre-scrutiny / policy design, as well as challenge.
- Scrutiny Committee Chairs report feeling supported in their roles and are well briefed. The role of Scrutiny is welcomed by the Leader and Cabinet Members.
- Relationships between the four Scrutiny Chairs was reported as good and they advised that they meet regularly to discuss work programmes.
- The Health Scrutiny Committee acknowledged that they received ongoing support with their role as a critical friend to health colleagues and they particularly welcomed the support it receives around the ongoing changes to the health and care system.
- Performance management appears well established with regular performance discussions taking place at Cabinet and Scrutiny, as well as with senior officers.

Looking forward

As the Council moves forward towards the local borough elections scheduled for May 2023, a primary focus for scrutiny will be to conclude any outstanding scrutiny reviews prior to Purdah (the pre-election period when specific restrictions on communications activity are in place) and for the Member Induction Programme, post Local Elections, to include effective scrutiny training for all new and returning Elected Members.

Implementing any recommendations which may emerge from the Council Companies Scrutiny Task Group will be a central focus for Cheshire West and Chester Scrutiny Committee as well as its annual scrutiny exercises.

Responding to issues through the Integrated Care System will be a primary focus for the Health Scrutiny Committee. The Committee will also engage as appropriate with the work of the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee which will work across the Cheshire and Merseyside footprint.

The People Scrutiny Committee would like to better understand how the new Assurance Framework for Adult Social Care will operate and how it might be used to enhance standards in the Care sector.

GLOSSARY

CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CWP	Cheshire Wirral Partnership
NHS	National Health Service
LGA	Local Government Association

We would love to hear from you!

If you have suggestions for topics that scrutiny
could consider please do let us know.

Email **scrutiny@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk**

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and minutes of the meetings are available at
www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

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to watch the streams are contained in
the agenda packs on our website.