

Overview & Scrutiny

Scrutiny Bulletin

Cheshire West and Chester Councils Quarterly Scrutiny Newsletter

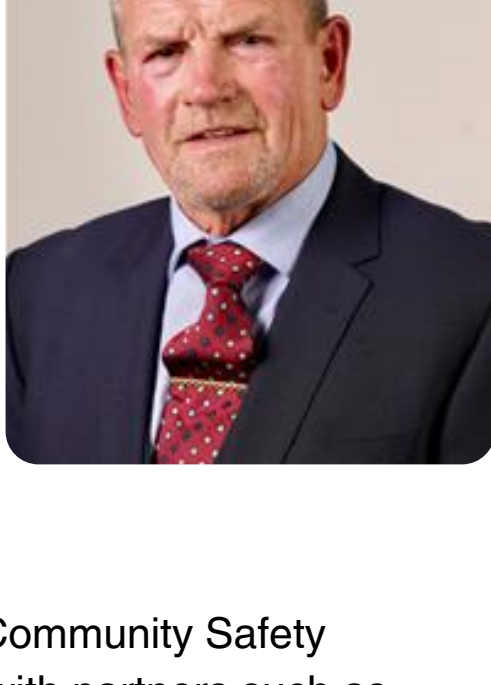
Winter 2025/2026

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

Stay engaged with our special features, interviews with scrutiny members, and opportunities for you to voice your opinions. We're here to keep you connected with the decisions that the Council makes.

Updates from the Scrutiny Chairs

The Places Overview and Scrutiny Committee, of which I am Chair, plays a crucial role in holding to account services that impact all the boroughs residents and visitors. The responsibilities of the committee are varied and involve holding to account the Cabinet Members who oversee Highways and Transport, Environment and Communities, and the Economy and Housing, and we have strong working relationships with Officers and Cabinet Members across these functions which enable us to act as the critical friend that scrutiny needs to be.



Over the last eight months, the Scrutiny Committee has been exceptionally busy progressing several in-depth reviews and taking part in a number of site visits. This included a Task Group on the Community Safety Partnership and Neighbourhood Nuisances scrutinising litter and graffiti with a view to improving the areas where residents live. Over the next four months, the scrutiny committee will be focused on bringing these reviews to completion, agreeing recommendations, and preparing final reports for Cabinet consideration.

A particular highlight for me, as Chair of this Scrutiny Committee, is the annual review we undertake of the Community Safety Partnership. As an ex-police officer, the opportunity to scrutinise how the Council is working collaboratively with partners such as Cheshire Police to keep our residents safe and well is invaluable.

Being on a committee with a focus on Place, which is anything that impacts the physical make-up of our borough such as its highways, environment, and infrastructure, offers Members the opportunity to get out and see the excellent work frontline staff are undertaking. The Committee has undertaken a walk around Chester with the Police and Community Safety Wardens and several Councillors visited Canalside Depot in Ellesmere Port recently and got to see several vehicles making up the new Street Care fleet. I use my role as Chair to request items from Cabinet Members that I know residents are particularly concerned about such as the condition of our highways and pavements and the maintenance of the borough's green spaces. Also being a Ward Councillor and a Town Councillor for Northwich means that residents often come to me with their concerns and highlight key issues they come across living and working in the Town and Borough. I can share these with the Committee who represent wards across the whole geographic footprint of the borough so that we might together identify which topics should be scrutinised at committee meetings or as part of our Scrutiny Reviews.

Being Chair of a scrutiny committee provides real variety for me as when I sit at the committee, I am approaching items as a scrutineer and taking a non-political approach. Working collaboratively with colleagues across all political parties is key to developing effective and impactful recommendations. Finally, I would like to thank the Committee for their hard work and commitment throughout this municipal year, and for the collaborative way we have worked together to scrutinise important issues and deliver our work programme.

Councillor Sam Naylor
Chair of Places Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Review of Neighbourhood Nuisances

Hands-on insight, smarter solutions, and a shared commitment to neighbourhood pride.

The Places Overview and Scrutiny Committee has completed a review into neighbourhood nuisances such as littering, graffiti, and fly-tipping—issues residents consistently raise as their priorities. A highlight of the review was Scrutiny Councillors stepping out of the meeting room and seeing operations first hand, visiting the Canalside Depot in Ellesmere Port to see frontline teams in action. This insight and firsthand experience provides Scrutiny Members with a deeper understanding of the challenges service areas experience and allows them to understand how services actually work.



The Scrutiny Committee learnt about some recent improvements including the electric sweepers for narrow streets, QR codes on bins for easy reporting, and data dashboards to target problem areas. Enforcement remains a challenge, but hotspot monitoring, fixed penalty notices, and multi-agency operations like Operation Flycatcher are making a difference. Volunteers play a vital role, and the Council aims to celebrate their contributions and expand community involvement through initiatives like the “Your Streets” programme.

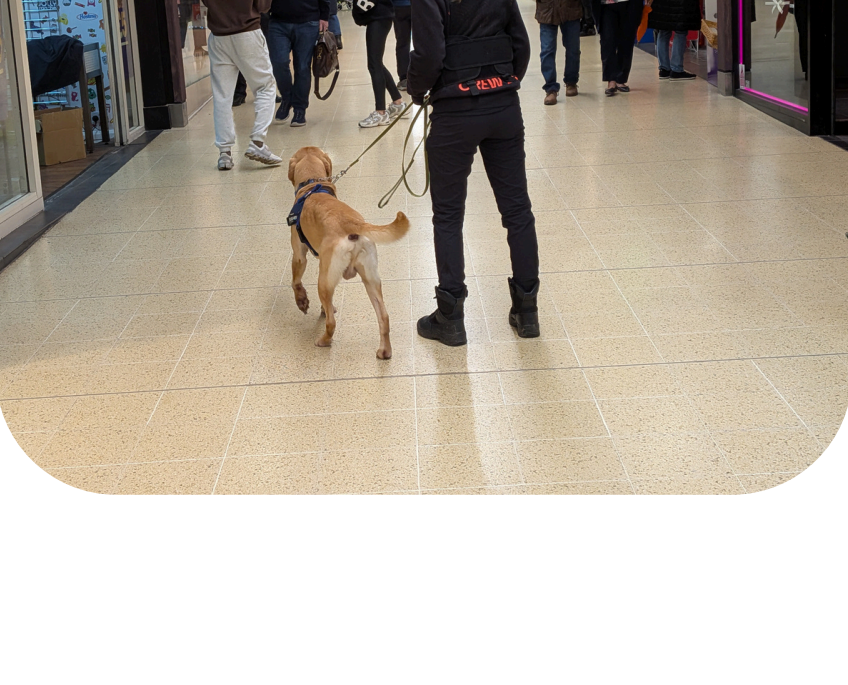
Key recommendations from the scrutiny review included better resident feedback, more CCTV in fly-tipping hotspots, wider use of QR codes, and improved engagement with third parties. The Task Group was also keen to recommend that Councillors should be encouraged to act as local champions in their wards, connecting residents with resources and supporting volunteer efforts.

Read the full report: <http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/scrutiny>

Scrutiny Review of the Community Safety Partnership

Safer communities and targeted interventions.

The Places Overview and Scrutiny Committee carried out the annual review of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP). For 2025-26 the chosen topic was Serious Violence and Knife Crime. This topic also addressed a Notice of Motion which was raised at Full Council in December 2024 by Councillor Jimmy Shannon.



The first meeting of the Task Group took place via Microsoft Teams where Officers provided Scrutiny Members an insight into the Serious Violence Duty in Cheshire and focused on addressing the knife crime motion.

The second session of the Task Group focused on Chester City Centre, the Task Group Members were invited by Cheshire Police and CSP Officers to observe a live Police sniffer dog operation before being taken on a brief tour of the city's crime hotspot areas which finished at the CCTV control room.

Scrutiny on the Road

Visit to Victoria Infirmary Hospital, Northwich

Scrutiny Councillors enjoyed a visit to the Victoria Infirmary Hospital and were impressed by the facility and services offered, including orthopaedic services and theatres where cataract operations were undertaken. Councillors learnt that the hospital took pressure off the Leighton main Hospital as it housed a minor injuries Emergency Department (ED) and ran well-planned services like phlebotomy and outpatient services. Councillors commented on how well future-proofed the new operating theatres were and how in the future more services could be offered there. One issue that was raised to Hospital staff by the Scrutiny Councillors was the limited availability of parking at the hospital site.

Visit to North West Ambulance Service Cheshire & Merseyside Office, Liverpool

Scrutiny Councillors visited the North West Ambulance Service headquarters in Speke to see first-hand the vital work carried out there, including meeting senior staff and frontline call handlers who manage emergency and urgent care responses across the region. Scrutiny Councillors found this visit extremely valuable as they were able to speak with Senior Ambulance Service staff about the daily challenges they face. Councillors spent time with 999 call handlers and engaged in conversations regarding how they respond and advise patients when they call. As well as this, Councillors saw how new electronic hospital handover boards were used to document live ambulance handover times at regional hospitals and were pleased to observe the minimal wait times shown at the Countess of Chester Hospital. Control room staff also relayed first-hand the improvements in handovers at the Countess of Chester Emergency Department (ED). Members were able to see that the information around improvements in handovers that had been presented to them in recent reports was clearly reflected in real practice.



Countess of Chester Women & Childrens Hospital

Scrutiny Members from the People and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees recently visited the Women and Children's Hospital at the Countess of Chester Hospital site. The building made a strong impression, having been co-designed with input from local families to prioritise natural light, warmth, and a sense of space. A key feature and improvement of the new facility is the provision of single inpatient rooms, most of which include en-suite bathrooms. This improvement will significantly enhance privacy for patients and their families and is expected to greatly improve the overall hospital experience. During a recent update to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Countess of Chester team also highlighted the range of additional services provided within the hospital, including gynaecological services

Seren Lodge, Countess of Chester Hospital

A number of Scrutiny Members attended the opening of the new Seren Lodge which is a £7.5m specialist mother and baby unit which will support perinatal mental health for mothers, babies and families. The hospital aims to provide a calm environment which supports mothers who are suffering from poor maternal mental health difficulties. Scrutiny Members were very impressed with the unit as it is the first specialist centre of its kind in the region. They learnt that as soon as the opening event had taken place a mother and baby were moving straight in.



The Health and People Overview and Scrutiny Committees benefit from their site visits as they allow them to understand first hand service pressures and see and appreciate for themselves the working environments in which they are operating including: Patient flow through the emergency departments; Staffing pressures and working conditions and space constraints, layout issues, and environmental challenges. The Scrutiny Councillors have also been able to witness some of the new positive developments which have taken place including the new Seran Lodge, Chester's Maternity Ward and Victoria Infirmary Site. In the coming weeks Health and People Scrutiny Committee Members are visiting emergency departments at Mid Cheshire Hospital/Leighton and the Countess of Chester Hospital.



Adult Social Care - Care Quality Commission Inspection

The People Overview and Scrutiny Committee had requested to undertake a scrutiny exercise on the findings from the recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance visit concerning Adult Social Care. The CQC is the independent regulator of health and adult social care, and the Council's Adult Social Care services were inspected in February 2025 with the findings released in August 2025.

A Scrutiny Task Group learnt that inspectors found the service to be good overall, with many areas performing well. However, there was some room for improvement identified in the judgement and the Scrutiny Task Group agreed several recommendations. In concluding discussions, Scrutiny Members proposed several topics for the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise further. It was also noted that some of the findings from the assurance visit would automatically be picked up in the regular reports to scrutiny: including the Market Oversight Report, Annual Local Safeguarding Adult Board Report and the Adult Safeguarding Performance Report.

A summary of scrutiny's ongoing and pending reviews

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

- New Model for ICT
- Annual Scrutiny Review of Council Companies 2025-2026
- Women's Health
- Review of Hospital Discharge
- Access to Mental Health Services
- Children in Care Annual Scrutiny Exercises
- Local Safeguarding Adults Board and Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Reports 2025-2026
- Child Trafficking (County Lines)
- Online Safety Act & Social Media in Schools
- River Pollution Phase 2
- Care Quality Commission Adult Social Care Inspector

Scrutiny committee agendas look-ahead

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

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| Cheshire West and Chester Overview and Scrutiny Committee | Social Value Debt Management Council Owned Companies 2025-26 | 2 Mar 2026 |
| People Overview and Scrutiny Committee | Disability Day Care Services Member Visits to Children Services Intake Teams Adult and Children Safeguarding | 13 Apr 2026 |
| Health Overview and Scrutiny | Countess of Chester Hospital Improvement Journey Mid-Cheshire Hospital Update All Age Neurodiversity | 9 Mar 2026 |
| Places Overview and Scrutiny Committee | Contaminated Land Strategy Housing Delivery | 23 Mar 2026 |

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



Email



Website