



Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough

Annual Scrutiny Report

2022 - 2023

May 2023

Foreword



This is Telford & Wrekin Council's Annual Scrutiny Report, which highlights the work of our Scrutiny Committees in the 2022-2023 municipal year. The Council, Councillors and Officers recognise the important role scrutiny can play in being a source of new ideas, challenging ways of thinking, and examining current ways of working.

As the Borough continues to manage the issues presented by the cost of living crisis and the war in Ukraine, which itself has presented unique challenges to ways of working and operation, our Scrutiny Committees have continued their important work by reviewing key issues which impact upon our residents. The work of Scrutiny will only become more vital as the Council looks to protect, care and invest for its residents against a backdrop of societal changes and a

rising cost of living.

Whilst we are meeting in person, the ongoing use of virtual technology has been invaluable for workshops and task & finish groups, enabling committees to meet with an ever-wider pool of experts.

I wish to extend my thanks to my colleagues representing Shropshire Council on our Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and in particular my co-chair Cllr Steve Charmley. Health services across Telford, Wrekin and Shropshire face unprecedented pressures and it is only together that we can overcome them. This year has seen the advent of the Integrated Care System, requiring the establishment of an Integrated Care Board and an Integrated Care Partnership. This has been a new challenge for us all and we look forward to working closely with our NHS colleagues and Shropshire Council to improve the local health service.

As we look ahead to 2023 – 2024, scrutiny anticipates another busy year with the continuing impacts of ever constrained local authority budgets and the cost of living crisis posing a great challenge to our work as a Council, as Councillors, and to the lives of residents.

I would like to thank all of the officers, and the Council's partners, who attended and assisted scrutiny as well as all scrutiny Members for their hard work this past year.

Finally, a thank you to all of the Councillors who left the Council at the last election for their civic-mindedness, their dedication, and hard work.

Councillor Derek White
Chair of Scrutiny Management Board



What is Scrutiny?

What does scrutiny do?

Scrutiny acts as a critical friend and provides a checks and balance system to ensure decision making in local government is democratic, effective and transparent. Local authorities with a Cabinet system – where a relatively small number of elected members are responsible for day-to-day decision-making – must have a scrutiny function. It is a way for elected members who are not on the Cabinet to have a greater influence in policy decisions and the work of the Council. Good scrutiny ensures that the decisions made by the Council reflect the wishes and priorities of our residents.

There are four nationally accepted principles of good scrutiny set out by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny:

- Providing "critical friend" challenge;
- Amplifying the voice and concerns of the public;
- Being led by independent people who take responsibility for their role; and
- Driving improvement in public services.

At Telford & Wrekin Council, scrutiny is embedded within the organisation, with Officers recognising the important value scrutiny brings to bear on the way the Council works.

Good scrutiny ensures that decision making processes are clear and accessible to the public and that those making the decisions are held accountable for them. It should also allow opportunities for the public to influence decision making.

Who carries out scrutiny work?

Scrutiny is carried out by elected members who are not on the Council's Cabinet and members of the public co-opted for expertise in a particular area or to represent certain groups. They sit on Scrutiny Committees, which carry out scrutiny work. The committees reflect the overall political balance of the Council.

In 2022/2023, Telford & Wrekin had six scrutiny committees:



Certain Members and co-optees of the Health Scrutiny Committee also sit on the Joint Health Overview Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) in partnership with Shropshire Council to scrutinise healthcare provision across the county.

How is the work programme agreed?

Early in each calendar year, the Scrutiny Management Board makes contact with Councillors and the Council's key partners to seek suggestions for the topics that Scrutiny should consider over the next municipal year. This is called the Scrutiny Work Programme.

In June, the Scrutiny Management Board will meet and receive the suggestions that have been put forward. At this meeting, they will agree which issues meet the Scrutiny criteria and should be prioritised for the upcoming work programme and recommended to the Scrutiny Committees for consideration.

How is scrutiny work carried out?

Scrutiny can be carried out in a number of different ways with individual committees carrying out the majority of scrutiny work. This usually involves reviewing services or policies at committee meetings. A review can be a one-off item discussed at a meeting or may be considered in detail over a series of meetings. Reviews may involve discussions with Cabinet Members, Council officers, managers and officers from other organisations providing a service, service users or members of the public – whoever is relevant to the topic being discussed.

At the end of a review, a committee may make recommendations where they think improvements could be made.

Where possible meetings are held in public, however scrutiny members can also hold working group meetings to gather evidence for a review. These groups are specially formed 'task and finish' groups, tasked with the in-depth review of a specific subject of such complexity that single meetings do not suffice or where an issue cuts across different committee remits. To this end, the groups are constituted of members of two or more committees, lending their committee's respective eyes to issues. These types of review take

place virtually, allowing engagement with a wide range of consultees, as well as enabling flexibility in terms of planning and structure. A final work group report is produced and returned to the referring committee with recommendations.

How do we monitor the effectiveness of scrutiny?

There are many ways that scrutiny can make a difference – though some are easier to measure than others are. Some of the commonly used measures of effective scrutiny work are listed below, but sometimes scrutiny can make a difference simply by raising an issue for public debate.

- **Holding the Executive to account** – questioning Cabinet members in public about policies and decisions helps to ensure that decision making is open and transparent.
- **Recommendations to Cabinet** – another measure of the impact of scrutiny is the number of recommendations made to, and accepted by, Cabinet. The majority of scrutiny recommendations in the past have been accepted.
- **Recommendations to external organisations** – there are certain organisations with a statutory duty to respond to scrutiny. These organisations have no obligation, however, to accept scrutiny recommendations. Our approach is to engage partners positively in scrutiny so that recommendations are relevant, realistic, and more likely to be acted upon.
- **Policy development** – examples include examining draft policies to consider the implications for local people and suggesting improvements, giving feedback as part of a consultation on a proposed new policy or policy change, or proposing initiatives.

Holding health service commissioners and providers to account and monitoring performance of health services – examples include examining the findings of patient surveys, gathering evidence from lived experience and examining performance data linked to areas such as response times, waiting lists, and discharges. The Joint Health Scrutiny Committee are also consulted on any upcoming or underway changes to services that will affect patients across Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire.

Annual Scrutiny Report statistics:

**TOTAL NUMBER
OF PRESENTERS**



53

**TOTAL LENGTH
OF MEETINGS**



**26 hrs
37 mins**

**REPORTS
RECEIVED**



38

**NUMBER OF
INTERNAL
PRESENTERS**



37

Number of

MEETINGS



21

**TOTAL NUMBER
OF PAGES OF
REPORTS**



706

**NUMBER OF
EXTERNAL
PRESENTERS**



16

**NUMBER OF
RESOLUTIONS**



28

**NUMBER OF
RECOMMENDATIONS**



13

16

**REQUESTS FOR
FURTHER INFORMATION**



Scrutiny Management Board

Members for the 2022/23 Municipal Year:

Councillors Derek White (Chair), Steve Bentley, Thomas Janke, Gilly Latham-Reynolds, Stephen Reynolds, The Lord Sahota, Jacqui Seymour, and Chris Turley.

Chair's Summary:

The Scrutiny Management Board met once, at the beginning of the municipal year. The Board met to discuss the proposed work programme for scrutiny and to approve the draft Annual Scrutiny Report prior to its submission to Full Council.

The scrutiny work programme for the year was referred to the Scrutiny Assembly, followed by the relevant committees, for approval and prioritisation.

At this meeting, the Annual Scrutiny Report was approved for recommendation to Full Council.

The Scrutiny Management Board did not receive any call-in requests during this municipal year.



Scrutiny Assembly

Members for the 2022/23 Municipal Year:

All non-Executive Council Members and Scrutiny Co-optees

Chair's Summary:

The Scrutiny Assembly met once in 2022 – 2023 to receive a presentation from the Leader and the Chief Executive on the Council's programme for the year and to consult on the scrutiny work programme.

Following consultation on the work programme, the programme was referred to the relevant committees.

The Leader and the Chief Executive set out a number of key achievements of the Council in the preceding year, including being awarded the APSE Council of the Year, an Outstanding Ofsted judgement and being shortlisted for the MJ Council of the Year award, which focused on the Council's corporate priorities. Members asked a series of questions covering different aspects of the Council's work.



Business and Finance Scrutiny Committee



Members for the 2022/23 Municipal Year:

Councillors Stephen Reynolds (Chair), Eric Carter, Nathan England, James Lavery, Adrian Lawrence, Ian Preece, Gilly Latham-Reynolds, The Lord Sahota and Roy Williams (Co-Optee)

Chair's Summary:

The main role of the Business and Finance Scrutiny Committee is as a consultant for the Cabinet's budget proposals. However, our remit also covers oversight of the service and financial performance of Council services and how the Council is promoting growth in the local economy.

In this last year, the Committee has overseen and scrutinised many different elements of the business and financial services provided by the Council. Some of the highlights of our work during the last year are set out below.

Housing Investment Programme Annual Update

The Service Delivery Manager: Housing Investment Programme delivered an update on the Council's Housing Investment Programme (HIP) and Nuplace.

The programme had been in place for 7 years and had been instituted in response to the Borough's need for quality rental housing whilst supporting the Council's agenda for growth. In the longer term, whilst improving the quality of the offer of the private rented sector in the Borough, the HIP and Nuplace have also generated a reliable income stream for the Council that has been used to protect the provision of frontline services in the face of budgetary constraints.



Members were keen to hear more about the reception of residents to the housing offer provided through the schemes and how they contributed to the fight against climate change.

In terms of resident feedback, Members were informed that the overwhelming majority was positive with 96% of residents saying they would recommend Nuplace to friends and family and 75% saying they intended to live in their Nuplace home indefinitely.

The HIP and Nuplace both aimed to reduce carbon emissions; to this end 18 Nuplace homes were being delivered which met the Future Homes Standards, which required them to be built using lower carbon methods and included various energy efficient schemes such as heat pumps. These 18 homes would help to test how best to deliver low carbon homes in the most viable way possible in future.

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 - 2026/27

In January 2023, the Committee received the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 - 2026/27 for scrutiny. The report outlined the administration's budget proposals for municipal years 2023/24 to 2026/27. As in other recent years, the local government financial settlement only covered a single year; this made it difficult for the Council to plan on a longer term basis. Finding efficiencies remained important, though it was noted that this was becoming increasingly difficult after ten years. Supporting this, departments were constantly reviewing spending and searching for new ways to create savings or generate income.

There were no alternative budget proposals from the opposition groups.



Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee

Members for the 2022/23 Municipal Year:

Councillors the Lord Sahota (Chair), Mark Boylan, Stephen Burrell, Ian Fletcher, Janice Jones, Angela McClements, Karen Tomlinson, Bob Wennington, Sherrel Fikeis (Co-Optee), Lyn Fowler (Co-Optee), Carol Morgan (Co-Optee), and Mel Ward (Co-Optee)

Chair's Summary:

The Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee's role is to scrutinise and monitor the planning and performance of the Council's vital services for children and young people as well as examining the authorities' role as a corporate parent.

This year, the Committee has undertaken vital pieces of scrutiny, including examining Education Attainment, the 10 by 10 activity scheme, religious education and the role of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education and the Belonging Strategy.



Educational Attainment 2020 to 2022

In November 2022, Members were presented with the Educational Attainment figures from 2020 to 2022. This was important as it marked the return to examinations for pupils following the Covid-19 pandemic rather than teacher assessed grades which had been used during the pandemic. Members noted that the attainment data showed that children within the Borough had been broadly in-line with the national average.

Members asked a number of questions regarding educational attainment ranging from support following the Covid-19 Pandemic, comparison of attainment figures from before the Covid-19 Pandemic and support for those children receiving free school meals.

10 by 10

In November 2022, Members received a presentation on the '10 by 10' project. The presentation summarised the goal of the project which was to introduce 10 life changing activities to children by the age of ten. Members were given insight into what type of activities were available for children, which ranged from learning to swim and play a musical instrument to visiting heritage sites and libraries. The importance of the project was stressed as trying to give children across the Borough the best start in life.

SACRE

The Committee received a presentation from the Chair of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE). Members were advised of the role and the responsibilities of the SACRE, such as the development of the local agreed syllabus for Religious Education in the Borough.

Members asked questions in relation to the results in exams for Religious Education and how data was benchmarked across the Authority.

Belonging Strategy

A summary of the Belonging Strategy was provided to Members of the Committee. The aim of the strategy was to make every young person have a positive sense of belonging to their school or education setting and that they were cared about. The various priorities of the strategy were discussed and the schemes that had taken place within the strategy were considered.

Members discussed how children were to travel to these activities and were assured that support was available. The strategy was inclusive and a discussion took place regarding the schemes available to children and young people with additional needs.



Communities Scrutiny Committee

Members for the 2022/23 Municipal Year:

Councillors Chris Turley (Chair), Steve Bentley, Eric Carter, Vanessa Holt, Thomas Janke, Jim Loveridge, and John Thompson



Chair's Summary:

The Communities Scrutiny Committee has a wide ranging remit that covers a number of key areas relating to the development of Telford & Wrekin as a Co-operative Council, and the planning, delivery and performance of services provided to local communities. We also look at issues relating to how the Council works with partner organisations, housing, homelessness, transport and highways, regeneration, waste and recycling, customer services, community engagement, and enforcement. The Committee is also the designated body for scrutiny of the Safer, Stronger Communities Partnership.

Highways Update

In June 2022, the Committee received an update on Highways work in the Borough from the Director: Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services. This presentation covered a variety of areas within Highways, touching upon funding, past works, and innovative practice being integrated into works.

Members expressed their support for the work conducted by the Highways team and were especially pleased by the timely fashion in which they completed works.



Trading Standards Overview

At its October 2022 meeting, the Committee heard from the Public Protection Group Manager on trading standards and enforcement in Telford and Wrekin. The work of the trading standards team covered a wide range of matters and Members heard a number of headline statistics relating to the enforcement activities undertaken by the team in the preceding 12 months.

The Committee endorsed the intelligence led approach adopted by the trading standards team and agreed with the identified priorities projected for the year ahead. Members expressed specific concerns about underage vaping and were heartened by the work that was being done to combat sales of vaping products children.

Safer Stronger Communities Update

This update, from the Safer Stronger Communities Group Manager, provided background to the scheme and its funding, its focus areas within the Borough, and the approaches taken to tackle crime. Members, while acknowledging the difficulty of the task, were keen to hear about how the scheme reached out to young people. The 'Friday Night Football' programme was highlighted as among the primary actions targeting the young people in the scheme areas. The Committee noted that all areas which intended to have a safer and stronger scheme now had one in place.



Traffic & Road Safety Overview

In November 2022, Members received a briefing on road safety and traffic engineering. The briefing sought to inform the Committee of the team's work and its priorities.

The presentation from officers covered the breadth of work that the team undertakes, ranging from traffic regulation orders to engineering works, and how works are planned and brought forward. From the year 2023/24, it was intended to develop working groups with ward Members, to deliver annual programmes of work based on public enquiries and Members' local knowledge.



Environment Scrutiny Committee

Members for the 2022/23 Municipal Year:

Councillors Gilly Latham-Reynolds (Chair), Mark Boylan, Graham Cook, Thomas Janke, Tim Nelson and Gemma Offland



Chair's Summary:

The role of the Environment Scrutiny Committee is to scrutinise and monitor the Council's environmental impact and policies. The Committee is also the designated body for scrutiny of Flood and Water Management. Some of the highlights of our work during the last year are set out below.

Telford and Wrekin Council Becoming Carbon Neutral and Plastic Free Update

In November 2022, the Committee received an update on the Council's progress towards its carbon neutral and plastic free goals. Members heard a number of positive steps that the Authority had taken since the last update, including the impact of retrofitting works at Newport Leisure Centre. The Committee was supportive of the progress being made and expressed specific support for the retrofitting work and any future schemes of a similar nature.

Members were keen to see the Council promote its successes in its effort to become carbon neutral and to utilise its unique position to act as a leader and convenor of businesses and other organisation within the Borough in their own efforts to become more environmentally responsible.

Active Travel & Electric Vehicles – Workstream Update

The Committee heard an update on active travel and electric vehicle (EV) policies in Telford & Wrekin. The update detailed a number of initiatives and the work that had been undertaken to date as well as next steps. The Committee was supportive of the work but noted the need for accessibility to be considered when planning for EVs. The Committee also noted the current prohibitive cost of EVs for many residents and the problems posed by the evolving technology of EVs potentially putting people off investing in an electric vehicle for personal use.

Shropshire Good Food Partnership

The Committee received a presentation on the work and priorities of the Shropshire Good Food Partnership. Food and the environment had been a subject of interest for the Committee for a number of years and Members were pleased to receive the Partnership to discuss these matters. The meeting came as the Partnership and the Council were embarking on joint work, as a result, the Committee requested a further meeting with the organisation in the next municipal year to review the outcomes of the collaboration.

Expected work to come:

The Committee plan to examine the following topics further:

River Sewage

There is a planned item focussing on the issue of river sewage in the Borough, this item will involve the Council's partners and look at how, when, and why sewage is released into rivers.



Health Scrutiny Committee

Members for the 2022/23 Municipal Year:

Councillors Derek White (Chair), Nigel Dugmore, Arnold England, Veronica Fletcher, Vanessa Holt, Gemma Offland, Stephen Reynolds, Jacqui Seymour, Jean Gulliver (Co-Optee), Fiona Doran (Co-Optee), Hilary Knight (Co-Optee), and Dag Saunders (Co-Optee)



Chair's Summary:

The Health Scrutiny Committee scrutinises and monitors the planning and performance of the Council's adult social care services and health service matters related to the Borough of Telford and Wrekin. Some Members of the Committee are also appointed to work jointly with colleagues from Shropshire Council on the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Primary Care Services – Call To Action

Several Members had reported concerns from residents regarding access into primary care services across the Borough. The Committee therefore agreed to undertake an in-depth review of the first point of access into primary care. The Committee established a Working Group, which held a series of informal workshops and evidence gathering sessions.

The Working Group heard directly from the Integrated Care System, a GP, Healthwatch Telford & Wrekin and patient representatives. The Working Group considered a model that had been implemented in Somerset. The Committee were extremely grateful to hear directly from a representative of Taunton Vale Surgery regarding their model.

In February 2023, the Committee agreed to produce an Interim Report for future consideration and recommended that further work be completed on this vital service area in the next municipal year.

Adult Social Care Regulation

The Committee received an update on recent changes to adult social care regulation. The Committee heard that the CQC had a new duty to independently review and assess Local Authorities and the particular areas of focus relating to this, such as the new 'OFSTED style' grading system in relation to care provision provided by the Local Authority. The Committee asked questions in relation to the survey that was required to be sent out to service users and the legislation around the charging policy.

Integrated Care System Update

Members received two progress updates from the Integrated Care System (ICS). The Committee heard that an Integrated Care Strategy would be developed in partnership with the NHS, Local Authorities and local stakeholders to improve health and care outcomes and experiences for the local population.

Hospital Discharge and Intermediate Care Update

The Committee received a presentation on hospital discharge and the intermediate care system. Members raised queries regarding the process of hospital discharge, funding arrangements and future planning. Members raised particular concerns around equity of service provision, in particular relating to the disparity between Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin in terms of community hospitals. Members received information on the proposed virtual wards and requested more information be provided at a future meeting, particularly in relation to funding and allocation of support.



Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Members for the 2022/23 Municipal Year:

Councillors Derek White (Co-Chair, Telford & Wrekin Council), Steve Charmley (Co-Chair, Shropshire Council), Nigel Dugmore (Telford & Wrekin Council), Stephen Reynolds (Telford & Wrekin Council), Kate Halliday (Shropshire Council), Heather Kidd (Shropshire Council), Fiona Doran (Telford & Wrekin Co-Optee), Hilary Knight (Telford & Wrekin Co-Optee), Dag Saunders (Telford & Wrekin Co-Optee), Lyn Cawley (Shropshire Co-Optee), Louise Price (Shropshire Co-Optee) and David Sandbach (Shropshire Co-Optee)

Co-Chairs' Summary:

A Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee is required where a relevant NHS body consults more than one local authority about substantial reconfiguration proposals.

Telford & Wrekin Council and Shropshire Council have delegated the health scrutiny power to this committee for health issues which cross boundaries for both authorities.

The Committee has held 5 formal meetings this year, in addition to a number of informal planning and briefing meetings with officers and healthcare professionals.

The Committee has overseen a number of different areas of healthcare such as the scrutiny of the Integrated Care System, the progress of the Ockenden Report actions and the Winter Plan from the NHS.

Winter Plan & Urgent and Emergency Care Action Plan Update

The Committee received an update on the winter plan and the Urgent and Emergency Care (UEC) Improvement Plan. Members were informed that following the coronavirus pandemic, the profile of patients had changed and the impact this was having on healthcare delivery.

Members heard that there were three key areas of change in relation to the UEC; pre-hospital improvement, in hospital improvement and discharge improvement. The Members raised concerns regarding deficits already present within the system and the impact this would have on patient care going forward.

Ambulance Summit Update

Members were provided with an overview of the Ambulance Summit which had been attended by local Members of Parliament. Discussions had taken place around delays in ambulance discharges at both Princess Royal Hospital and the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital (Shrewsbury & Telford Hospital Trust, SaTH). The Committee requested that the plans from this summit be shared with them when they were available.

Integrated Care System

Members received two updates on the Integrated Care System (ICS) and the development of the Integrated Care Board. Members raised a number of concerns around primary health care and mental health care and stressed their importance when developing the Integrated Care Strategy. Members considered that tackling health inequalities should be the top priority of the ICS and requested that Scrutiny needed to be consulted regularly during the development of the strategy and in its ongoing work.

When the draft strategy returned to the Committee, Members discussed the language used within the report and requested clarification on definitions be included within the strategy.

Ockenden Review Update

The Committee received an update on the Ockenden Review of maternity services at the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust following the publication of the final report in March 2022. The Committee requested regular updates on the progress of the implementation of the recommendations of the report.

Members raised questions about midwifery training across the country, as further reports from other Trusts and Hospitals around the country were raising similar concerns and issues.

The Committee asked a number of questions about staffing and culture within the Trust and requested that this specifically be brought back to the Committee for further consideration.

Prevention, Primary Care, Urgent and Emergency Care, and Discharge Task and Finish Group

Members received the report of Shropshire Council's Task and Finish Group in relation to Primary Care, Urgent and Emergency Care, and Discharge. The report focused on the pressures on urgent and emergency care within the healthcare system. The Group had

concluded that progress for the system could only be made through a system wide approach.

Members requested further information be provided in relation to timelines for the bed utilisation exercise. Members asked for updates on the winter plan ahead of next year's winter season.

SaTH Maternity Services – Our Improvement Journey

The Committee received a presentation from the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust (SaTH) on the improvement journey within maternity services. Members received an update on the progress of the recommendations from the Ockenden Review, particularly in relation to the culture of the organisation.

SaTH had invested in psychological support for staff, in addition to support available for patients, parents and family. The Committee asked questions in relation to staffing, both for the level of staffing and the seniority of staff available at all times. Members discussed staff morale and the impact the Ockenden Report had on the team at SaTH.

Members requested further information on the funding of maternity services and it was agreed that this would be provided at a later date.

Looking Ahead:

Looking ahead to the new municipal year, the work of scrutiny remains as vital as ever. With a new intake of Members in May 2023, residents can expect new insights and perspectives to come to the fore providing cross-party overview of the key policies and partners that matter to all of Telford and Wrekin's residents, visitors, and workers.

Scrutiny Team Structure:

Anthea Lowe – Director: Policy & Governance

Richard Phillips – Service Delivery Manager: Legal & Democracy

Anna Plummer – Democracy Manager

Stacey Worthington – Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny) (Statutory Scrutiny Officer)

Kieran Robinson – Democracy Officer (Scrutiny)

Sam Yarnall – Democracy Officer (Scrutiny)

Contacts:

To find out more about Scrutiny visit: www.telford.gov.uk/scrutiny

To find meeting dates and agendas for scrutiny meetings visit: www.telford.gov.uk/meetings

The Scrutiny team can be contacted at scrutiny@telford.gov.uk