



Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough

Biennial Scrutiny Report

2022 – 2024

September 2024

Foreword

Welcome to Telford & Wrekin Council's Biennial Scrutiny Report, which highlights the work of our Scrutiny Committees during the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 municipal year. Both Councillors and Officers recognise the vital role scrutiny can play in being a source of innovative ideas, challenging ways of thinking, and examining current ways of working.

As the Borough continued to manage issues arising from 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 committees returned to meeting in person in Summer 2021, 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 colleagues representing Shropshire Council on our Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Health services across Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin face unprecedented pressures and it is only together that can we overcome them. These last two years have 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 continuing to working closely with our NHS colleagues and Shropshire Council to improve the local health service.

As we look ahead over 2024/25 to 2025/26, scrutiny anticipates another busy period with the continuing impacts of ever constrained local authority budgets, societal changes and the ongoing 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 these past two years.

Finally, a thank you to all of the Councillors who left the Council at the last election in May 2023 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 as best as possible.

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?

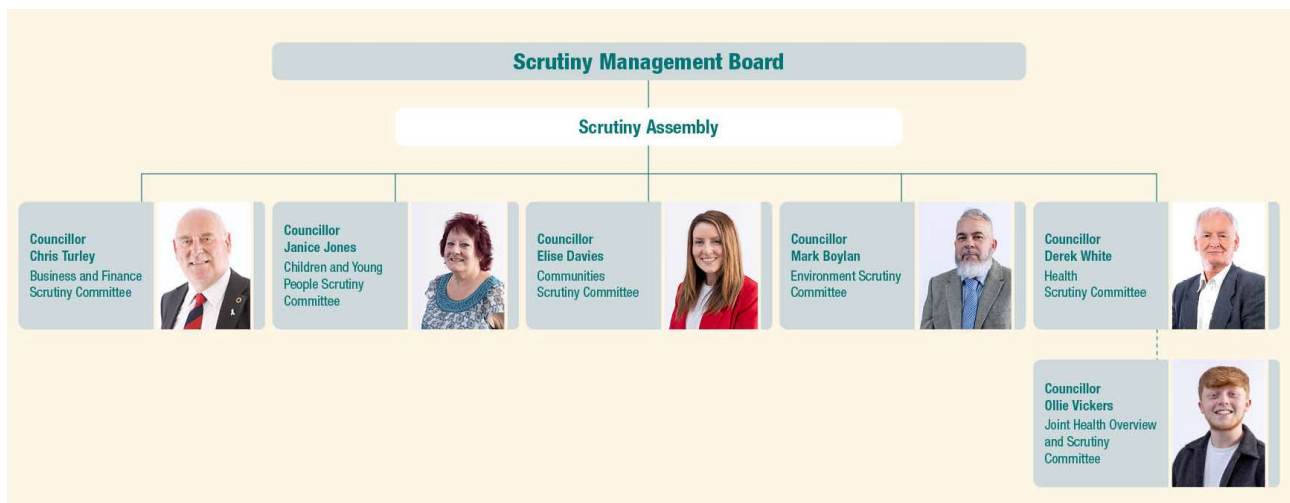
Scrutiny is carried out by elected members who are not on the Council’s Cabinet and members of the public co-opted for expertise in a particular area or to represent certain groups. They sit on Scrutiny Committees, which carry out scrutiny work. The committees reflect the overall political balance of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

Telford & Wrekin has six scrutiny committees and a breakdown of these committees over the last two years can be found below:

2022/2023 Municipal Year



2023/2024 Municipal Year



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. For the 2022/23 municipal the position of Co-Chair was held by Cllr Derek White and by Cllr Ollie Vickers for the 2023/24 municipal year.

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.

Scrutiny now operates a two year work programme to allow for Committees to undertake more in-depth work over a longer period of time, thus enabling topics to continue into the next municipal year.

In September, 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 usually take place virtually, allowing engagement with a wide range of consultees, as well as enabling flexibility in terms of planning and structure. A final working 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. 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 is also consulted on any upcoming or underway changes to services that will affect patients across Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire

Our statistics

2022/23 SCRUTINY STATISTICS...

TOTAL NUMBER OF PRESENTERS



52

TOTAL LENGTH OF MEETINGS



27 hrs
15 mins

REPORTS RECEIVED



34

NUMBER OF INTERNAL PRESENTERS



36

Number of

MEETINGS



22

TOTAL NUMBER OF REPORT PAGES



670

NUMBER OF EXTERNAL PRESENTERS



16

NUMBER OF RESOLUTIONS



33

NUMBER OF RECOMMENDATIONS



12



REQUESTS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

2023/24 SCRUTINY STATISTICS...

TOTAL NUMBER OF PRESENTERS



123

TOTAL LENGTH OF MEETINGS



44hrs
42mins

TOTAL REPORTS



60

TOTAL NUMBER OF INTERNAL PRESENTERS



91

TOTAL NUMBER OF MEETINGS



32

TOTAL PAGES



1086

TOTAL NUMBER OF EXTERNAL PRESENTERS



32

TOTAL NUMBER OF RESOLUTIONS



41

TOTAL NUMBER OF RECOMMENDATIONS



31



TOTAL NUMBER OF 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.



Members for the 2023/24 Municipal Year:

Councillors Derek White (Chair), Mark Boylan, Elise Davies, Thomas Janke, Janice Jones, Gilly Latham-Reynolds, Gareth Thomas and Chris Turley.

Chair's Summary:

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

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

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

The Scrutiny Management Board did not receive any call-in requests for the duration of each municipal year.



Scrutiny Assembly

Members for the 2022/23 and 2023/24 Municipal Year:

All non-Executive Council Members and Scrutiny Co-optees

Chair's Summary:

The Scrutiny Assembly met three times during the course of the two municipal years where they received a presentation from the Leader and the Chief Executive on the Council's programme and to consult on the two year scrutiny work programme.

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

At its meeting in June 2022, 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 in 2021. It was also highlighted that the Council had been awarded Outstanding following an Ofsted inspection of its Children's Services and had won MJ Council of the Year award in 2022. Members asked a series of questions covering various aspects of the Council's work.

In December 2023, the Scrutiny Assembly received an update on the Council's progress in relation to the independent inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in the Borough.





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)

Members for the 2023/24 Municipal Year:

Councillors Chris Turley (Chair), Andy Burford, Fiona Doran, Zona Hannington, Giles Luter, Sarah Syrda and Paul Thomas



Cllr Stephen Reynolds
Chair for 2022/23



Cllr Chris Turley
Chair for 2023/24

Chair's Summary:

One of the primary roles 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.

Over the last two years, 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 two years are set out below.

Housing Investment Programme Annual Update

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

The programme had been in place for 9 years and had been commenced 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; in 2022/23, 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 developments.

For the 2024/25 municipal year, Members will be participating in a site visit to the Nuplace development located in Donnington.

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 outlining the administration's budget proposals for that time period. 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.

Cost of Living Update

In June 2023, Members received a report on the cost-of-living crisis within the Borough. The Committee heard about the national and local impacts that the crisis had imposed and the work that the Authority had undertaken to mitigate these effects. Discussions particularly focussed on the work of officers in allocating discretionary grants and what the impact of withdrawing this funding by local government would be. Members resolved to request that Cabinet write to government to lobby for the retention of discretionary funding beyond March 2024.

Telford Land Deal and Growth Fund

In November 2023, the Committee received a presentation on the Telford Land Deal & Growth Fund following an update to Cabinet in October on the progress of both, respectively. Members were informed that the Telford Land Deal was a 10-year partnership between the Council, Homes England and the Marches Local Enterprise which would increase not just the level of housing available in the Borough but also the number of sites that could be used for commercial use. Halesfield and Stafford Park were given as examples to demonstrate how there was development of industrial units to promote local business as well as attracting businesses into the Borough to employ local people. Between 2016/17 to 2022/23 there had been £79.4m delivered investment into the Growth Fund which had led to a safeguarding of 1445 jobs across the Town.



Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 – 2027/28

In January 2024, the Committee received the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 - 2027/28 for scrutiny. The report outlined the administration's budget proposals for that same time period. For the first time in two years, the council tax base would increase by 4.99%, however Band D properties would still see one of the lowest council tax rates in the West Midlands region. 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) Vacancy (Secondary Parent Governor Co-Optee) and Vacancy (Church of England Diocese Co-Optee)

Members for the 2023/24 Municipal Year:

Councillors Janice Jones (Chair), Stephen Burrell, Zona Hannington, Amrik Jhawar, Lyndsey Parker, Kim Tonks, Jenny Urey, Ollie Vickers, Sherrel Fikeis (Co-Optee), Carol Morgan (Co-Optee) Vacancy (Primary Parent Governor Co-Optee), Vacancy (Secondary Parent Governor Co-Optee) and Vacancy (Church of England Diocese Co-Optee)



The Lord Sahota
Chair for 2022/23



Cllr Janice Jones
Chair for 2023/24

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.

Over the last two years, the Committee has undertaken vital pieces of scrutiny, including examining Educational Attainment, the 10 by 10 activity scheme, religious education and the role of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education, Elective Home Education, the Care Leaver Offer and the Belonging Strategy.

Education Attainment 2020 – 2022 & 2022 – 2024

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.

Twelve months on, in December 2023, Members received a further update on figures which had seen statistics improve further and results for KS1 pupils specifically had returned to similar levels recorded prior to Covid-19.

10 by 10

Members received a presentation on the '10 by 10' project which summarised the goal of the project 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.

10BY10

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.

Annual Safeguarding Partnership Board Report 2021/22

In July 2023, Members received the annual report of the Telford & Wrekin Local Safeguarding Partnership Board for 2021/22. The report summarised the work of the Board during the Covid-19 Pandemic and highlighted best safeguarding support practices for children and young people.

Members asked a number of questions regarding the ongoing impact of the pandemic, the cost of living crisis, systems for monitoring referrals and support processes that were in place for youth mental health.

Elective Home Education

In October 2023, Members received a presentation from the School Performance Team Leader and the Director: Education & Skills on Elective Home Education (EHE).

The presentation summarised the statutory duty of the Local Authority as detailed within the Education Act 1997 which enables children and young people to receive education at home outside of the National Curriculum guidelines.



Members recognised the challenges Elective Home Education imposed on local authorities but felt that the Council was well equipped to monitor children receiving education outside of school and to continue to work with the Local Safeguarding Team to provide support to families.

Promoting Active Travel to School (School Streets)

The Committee received an update on promoting active travel to school in the Borough following the conclusion of a working group in 2021 which specifically looked at the launch of a local School Streets Scheme.

It had been recognised that the implementation of a School Streets scheme would cause complications in terms of road closures, displacement of traffic and enforcement. Following further consultation with local schools and communities, Members were informed that a new model scheme 'A New Journey to School' was in development which would promote and encourage active travel arrangements to school, improve health and reduce congestion. A range of activities which focused on positive behaviour change would be offered as part of the scheme including bikeability lessons, walking buses, pedestrian training and

independent travel training. Up to four schools would be participating in a pilot scheme before its formal launch in September 2024 which would be delivered through the Road Safety and Active Travel Team.

Care Leaver Offer

In December 2023, Members received a report on the local offer provided to young people who had experience of being in care for a minimum of thirteen weeks between the ages of 14 and 18 years old. The Care Leaver offer focused on a wide range of areas to support young people with engagement in further education, training and employment including managing money, building relationships, health and lifestyle support and interview techniques.



Members asked questions in relation to the number of care leavers who have accessed the offer, the support available for young people aged 18-25 years old and further funding.

For the 2024/25 municipal year, Members will be participating in a site visit to the Telford and Wrekin Leavers Lounge where they will be provided with the opportunity to meet with young care leavers and seek views on the support available from the Council.

Review of actions for improvement following March 2023 OFSTED/CQC SEND Inspection

The Committee received an update from the Director: Education & Skills following a recent OFSTED and CQC inspection in March 2023 for SEND service provision for Telford and Wrekin. Members were informed that the inspection took place as a result of the introduction of a new inspection framework which includes a review of services provided by external partners such as the NHS and local Police and how education, health and care needs had been met for children who had been recognised as having special educational needs.

Members acknowledged the positive outcomes of the inspection and the wide range of accessible services that both the Local Authority and external partners already offered.

Telford Fostering

Recruitment in Fostering

In April 2024, the Committee received an update on the Council's approach to Foster Care recruitment and retention. The presentation highlighted the positive impact of recruitment activity undertaken by the Local Authority which had resulted in an increased number of Foster Carers across Telford and Wrekin. Members asked a number of questions in relation to the new marketing campaign, financial reward schemes and the Foster Carers Forum. Members learnt that the new approach to fostering supported the Council to provide better outcomes for children by providing more sustainable foster placements and were keen to understand how this work could be built upon moving forward to ensure that this work continued to gain traction and have a positive impact on children.



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

Members for the 2023/24 Municipal Year:

Councillors Elise Davies (Chair), Erin Aston, Stephen Bentley, Angela McClements, Ranbir Sahota, Peter Scott and Gareth Thomas



Cllr Chris Turley
Chair for 2022/23



Cllr Elise Davies
Chair for 2023/24

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 but were keen to hear how innovation in practice could improve the standard of roads in the Borough.

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 and were asked to input into the priorities for the team looking towards the next year.

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.

Fly Tipping

Building on previous work, the Committee received an update on fly tipping across the Borough which recognised the Council efforts to reduce fly tipping by 40% since 2021. Members discussed the role of communications in tackling fly tipping issues, highlighting the need for further education and sign posting of services.

In November 2023, Members participated in a workshop delivered by the Council's Corporate Communications and Neighbourhood Enforcement Teams which highlighted the work undertaken by officers to tackle fly tipping in the Borough. Members gained insight into the current campaign shared across communication channels and social media urging residents to help identify culprits of fly tipping.

Following the conclusion of the workshops, Members received an update on the work that had been undertaken to produce an information leaflet, highlighting fixed fines and how to report cases of fly tipping in the Borough.

Elections Review

The Committee held a review into best practice for in respect of elections following the local elections that had taken place in the Borough in May 2023. Members first received a presentation setting out an overview of the legal requirements for conducting an election, the role of the Returning Officer and illustrated the timeframes for planning, setting up and the counting of votes during an election period. Members gained insight on the strict governance procedures regarding the election counting process which was recognised to be fair and accurate. Members acknowledged the challenging work of all those involved in the running of an election and put forward recommendations to set up a task and finish group to further review the Council's processes.



In October 2023, Members participated in a workshop with Mark Heath, Returning Officer for Southampton Council, Elections Lead for The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and consultant with the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) who has over 30 years' experience in conducting elections and is widely regarded as being an expert in electoral matters. The workshop highlighted good practice and legalities for running a successful election and highlighted both the personal responsibility of the Returning Officer

and the Council's responsibilities in ensuring that the election process was both fair and accurate.

At its meeting in April 2024, the Committee were presented with the report of the Elections Review Task and Finish Group. The report outlined a total of 11 recommendations, five of which were for action and six which highlighted existing good practice that were for noting.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan Update

The Committee received an update from the Director: Communities, Customer & Commercial Services on the progress made in relation to the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (EDI).

The four year strategy was launched in July 2022 following the Council's commitment to opposing unlawful discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity. Members acknowledged that the Local Authority had continued to take positive steps in its approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion with the creation of employee led groups, an inclusive recruitment champion scheme and a new diversity calendar.

Members welcomed the approach the Council had taken in respect of being a diverse and inclusive workplace and recommended to the Governance Committee that it added Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training to be part of Members' required learning plans.





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

Members for the 2023/24 Municipal Year:

Councillors Mark Boylan (Chair), Paul Davis, Thomas Janke, Ian Preece, Helena Morgan, Tim Nelson and Hilda Rhodes



Cllr Gilly Latham-Reynolds
Chair for 2022/23



Cllr Mark Boylan
Chair for 2023/24

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 two years are set out below.

Telford and Wrekin Council Becoming Carbon Neutral & Plastic Free

As part of the Committee's continued oversight of this matter, the Committee received an update on the Council's progress towards its carbon neutral and plastic free goals in November 2022. 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 were supportive of the progress being made and expressed specific support for the retrofitting work and were keen to support any future schemes of a similar nature.

The Committee received a further update in March 2024 on the Council's efforts over the last year which highlighted the Authority's continued commitment to remove single-use plastics from operations and activities and to replace them with sustainable alternatives by the end of 2023.

Members remained 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

After expressing a desire to understand what steps were being taken to improve electric infrastructure within the Borough, the Committee received an update on active travel and electric vehicle (EV) policies in Telford and Wrekin which detailed a number of initiatives and the work that had been undertaken to date including next steps. The Committee were supportive of the work but noted the need for accessibility to be considered when planning for electric vehicles. The Committee also noted the current prohibitive cost of electric vehicles for many residents and the problems posed by the evolving technology of electric vehicles potentially dispiriting residents investment 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 representatives from the Partnership at its meeting to discuss these matters. The Partnership and the Council were embarking on joint work and as a result, the Committee requested a further meeting with the organisation in the next municipal year to review the outcomes of the collaboration.



A further update was presented to the Committee at its meeting in March 2024 which included an overview of the work undertaken in relation to the Shropshire Food Trail. Members acknowledged the work of the Partnership and their links with the local community and the Authority. Members agreed for the Partnership to return on an annual basis to provide a regular update on the work undertaken to support the Council's approach towards sustainability.

Corporate Catering



In September 2023, Members received a presentation from the Catering Group Manager summarising the work that the Corporate Catering Team had undertaken to promote sustainability and healthy eating within local schools and across Council services. Members asked a number of questions in relation to the challenges around recycling facilities, correct food waste disposals, the impact of food price increases

and the percentage of children eligible for free school meals who opted for home packed lunches.

Climate Change Adaptation

Members received a presentation summarising the work of the Council's Climate Change Team in relation to Climate Change Adaptation which included the development of a strategic risk register to mitigate carbon emissions and further explore how services within the Council could adapt.

Members participated in a workshop where they highlighted the local concerns of climate change and provided feedback on measures already put in place including the Council's tree policy. Members agreed to receive regular updates as part of the Committee work to monitor the progression of the risk register as well as the impact that Climate Change Adaptation has on Council services and its residents.

Biodiversity Net Gain

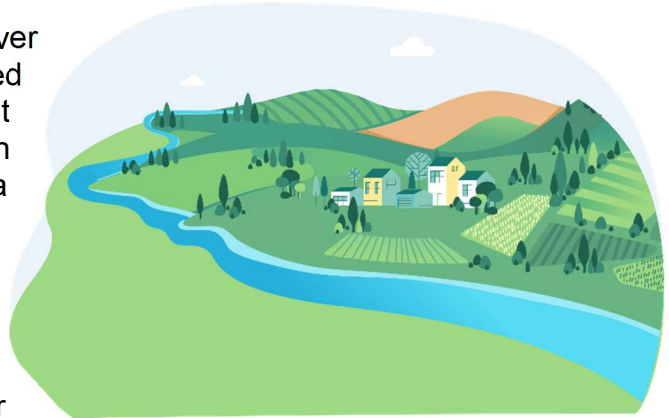
After the Committee had held a series of workshops on this subject to provide a response to a consultation held by the Council's Planning Policy, the Committee received two updates in relation to Biodiversity Net Gain within the 2023/24 municipal year which highlighted recent legislative changes to planning procedures where new applications would need to

demonstrate the level of biodiversity net gain that they would deliver to ensure the sustainability of the environment for 30 years.

Under legislative changes, new applications would be required to specify how they intend to produce at least 20% biodiverse net gain which could be delivered on-site or off-site and the Council would provide support to developers where appropriate. The level of net gain required is based on a biodiversity hierarchy set out within legislation.

River Pollution

Concerned about reports of high levels of river pollution, the Committee invited representatives from the Environment Agency to attend a meeting. At its meeting in November 2023, the Committee received a presentation from the Environment Agency which highlighted the work that had been undertaken to monitor and tackle river pollution. The presentation also addressed the support services available to residents to report instances of sewage in water courses, including a 24/7 helpline. Members were given insight into the processes for identifying and tackling sewage across water courses and how best the Council, the Environment Agency and Severn Trent could work together. The Committee recommended to formulate a task and finish group to begin work in the next municipal year to further explore how elected Members, the Authority and external Partners can deliver efficient methods of communication to increase awareness of pollution in water courses across the Borough and mechanisms to appropriately report incidents.



Severn Trent Site Visit

In April 2024, Severn Trent Water invited the Committee to visit the Rushmoor Sewage Treatment Plant, one of the largest plants in the Borough. During their visit, Members were provided with an overview of how the treatment plant and pumping stations operate to keep sewage out of homes and clear the pollution from water courses across Telford and Wrekin. A tour of the plant highlighted the process for filtering contaminants and how treated water is successfully released back into water courses. Rushmoor Sewage Treatment Plant treats 3.1 billion litres of waste water every day whilst Severn Trent Water monitors and maintains 93,000 km of pipelines in the Borough.





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)



Members for the 2023/24 Municipal Year:

Councillors Derek White (Chair), Nigel Dugmore, Stephen Handley, Luke Lewis, Gemma Offland, Ranbir Sahota, Sarah Syrda, Jenny Urey, Ollie Vickers, Simon Fogell (Co-Optee), Hilary Knight (Co-Optee) and Dag Saunders (Co-Optee)



Cllr Derek White
Chair for 2022/23 and 2023/24

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.

In July 2023, Members received a presentation on the Interim Report for the Access into Primary Care Working Group. Representatives from the NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System (ICS) were in attendance to answer questions from Members. As part of the recommendations, Members agreed to form a new Working Group to consider the role of community pharmacies in primary care to continue previous work of the committee and hear from further witnesses including local GPs. The Working Group is planned to continue into the 2024/25 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 NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin 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

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 and to receive assurances around equity for residents of Telford & Wrekin.



Virtual Wards Briefing

In July 2023, Members received a briefing from the Shropshire Community Health Trust in relation to Virtual Wards following a national mandate that these services must be introduced. Members welcomed the introduction of the service and requested further updates be provided to the committee later in the municipal year. Members recognised that the implementation of virtual wards across the Borough was still in early development and would require monitoring to ensure that the service was effective in supporting patients and welcomed the opportunity to review the effectiveness of the service in the future.

Adult Social Care Charging Policy

The Committee were presented with the draft proposals in relation to the proposed changes to the Adult Social Care Charging Policy. The policy had not altered since 2014 and funding from Government had substantially reduced over time. The Committee noted that the demand for services had increased and made suggestions on how to minimise the impact of changes to residents across the Borough. As a result, the Committee recommended to Cabinet to consider a phased implementation of the new policy with further consultations for Town and Parish Councils and external social care organisations to help signpost clients. The Committee also recommended that a six month review of the policy be brought back to Committee to provide an update on the impact of the policy following its implementation.



Pharmaceutical Services

In October 2023, the Committee received a presentation from the NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System (ICS) which provided an overview and summary of the work of Community Pharmacies in Telford and Wrekin. The main focus of Community Pharmacies is to discharge medicine services, provide consultation, provide hypertension case-finding services, provide pharmacy contraception services and to provide extended care. Members acknowledged that Community Pharmacies were an underutilised resource and highlighted to the ICS representatives the need for increased public awareness of the services offered by them. Members asked a series of questions in relation to the number of sites, services available and additional funding.

The Better Care Fund

Members received a presentation on the Better Care Fund (BCF) which included an overview of its key priorities, the ongoing work between the Local Authority and the Integrated Care System and how the fund is subsidised. The BCF was set for a two-year period in line with National Government directives to ensure that there was a standard quality of care being delivered. At a local level, work had been undertaken to ensure the effectiveness of discharges and that the care settings patients were discharged into were suitable.

Primary Care Recovery Access Plan

The Committee received an update from the NHS, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System (ICS) on the work undertaken to improve the provision of primary care services across the Borough. By the end of March 2024, it was proposed that practices across Telford and Wrekin would become digitally inclusive and offer patients the option to book appointments via the NHS app. The Recovery Plan had been developed to support residents when accessing services. Members were keen to continue to monitor the progress of the Recovery Access Plan as part of the continued work of the Primary Care task and finish group.

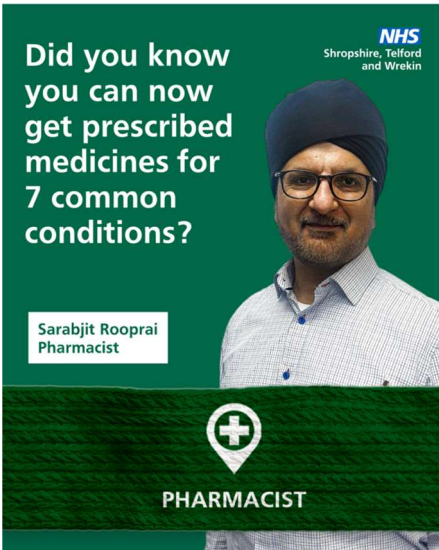
Care Quality Commission Update

In April 2024, the Committee received an update from the Service Delivery Manager: Assurance and Transformation regarding the pending inspection by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) into Adult Social Services following the introduction of legislative changes under the Health and Care Act 2022, in which Local Authorities were to be regulated and inspected by the CQC. Local authorities would be assessed over four key themes which include working with people, providing support, ensuring safety and leadership and governance structures. Following notification in February 2024, the Council had submitted its self-assessment data which highlighted a rise in the number of people who had received care under the Local Authority and the average costs of service provision. The Committee acknowledged the steps that the Council had already taken in relation to the pending inspection.



Big Conversation Campaign

The Committee received a presentation from the NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System (ICS) on the “Big Conversation” campaign launched in February 2023. The overarching aim of the campaign was to improve the experiences of local health and care services and to gather feedback to inform the development of the Joint Forward Plan (JFP). Members recognised that the campaign had a particular focus on seldom-heard groups and had illustrated a largely positive response to health care across the county. Members acknowledged areas of improvement including the availability of GP appointments and access to Pharmacy supplies.



Pharmacy First Service

The NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System (ICS) provided the Committee with an update on the new Pharmacy First service launched in January 2024. Pharmacy First adds to the existing consultation service and enables community pharmacies to complete episodes of care for seven common conditions following defined clinical pathways. By 2026, new pharmacists would be able to become independent prescribers through the introduction of modern technology. Members recognised that the Pharmacy First service had supported 3,000 consultations and saved over 500 hours of GP practice’s time.

Communications, Marketing and Engagement in the NHS

The Committee received an update on the work that the NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System (ICS) had undertaken in relation to communication, marketing and engagement channels. Across the winter of 2022/23 the ICS ran a successful campaign aimed at relieving pressure on A&E and GP services by signposting the public to the most appropriate service for their healthcare needs.

Post-campaign research showed an impact on changing behaviour but also demonstrated that there was more work to be done to ensure our population know which service to use and when. Data analysis showed a decrease in A&E activity, an increase in Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) activity and an increase in NHS 111 online activity leading to an overall reduction in ambulance handover delays during the campaign period.

Members were pleased that engagement with the campaign had been positive with a total number of 304 residents who had engaged with the campaign, 53% of those being ‘aware’ in comparison to 31% in 2023.





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)

Members for the 2023/24 Municipal Year:

Councillors Ollie Vickers (Co-Chair, Telford & Wrekin Council), Geoff Elnor (Co-Chair, Shropshire Council), Nigel Dugmore (Telford & Wrekin Council), Derek White (Telford & Wrekin Council), Kate Halliday (Shropshire Council), Heather Kidd (Shropshire Council), Simon Fogell (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)



Cllr Derek White
Telford Co-Chair for 2022/23



Cllr Ollie Vickers
Telford Co-Chair for 2023/24

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 11 formal meetings over the last two years, 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

The Committee received an update on the Winter Plan and the Urgent and Emergency Care (UEC) Improvement Plan for 2022/23. 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. 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.



**Integrated
Care System**
Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin

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.

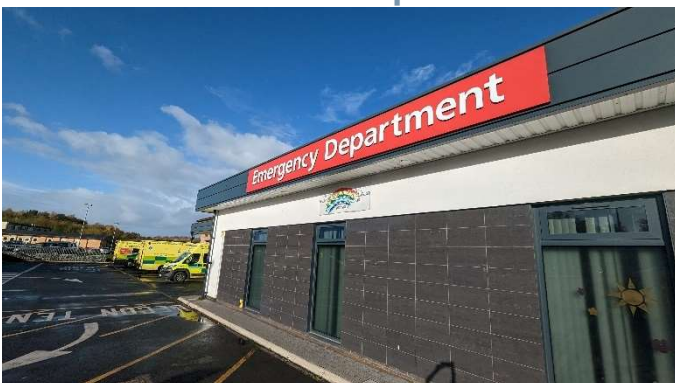
Ockenden Review Update

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.

Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Joint Forward Plan

The Committee received a presentation from the NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System (ICS) on the draft Joint Forward Plan (JFP). The Joint Forward Plan is a rolling 5 year system plan created to deliver the Integrated Care Strategy set out by the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP). Members asked a series of questions in relation to public engagement, community pharmacy provision and the transition between primary and secondary care services.

A further update of the Joint Forward Plan is expected to be presented to each Local Authority's Health & Wellbeing Boards in Summer 2024.

Winter Planning Update

At its meeting in July 2023, Members received an annual update from representatives of NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System (ICS) on Winter Planning which included a summary of lessons learnt and focused on draft proposals for the upcoming winter period for 2023/24.

A further update was requested by the Committee which was presented at its meeting in February 2024 following the conclusion of the winter period.

Primary Care and Community Pharmacy Update

Following legislative changes in relation to the provision of Primary Care, the Committee held two informal briefing sessions in August 2023. Members were provided with an update on recent changes to Pharmacy, Optometry and Dentistry, as the responsibility for the provision of these services had returned to the local Integrated Care Systems (ICSs).



Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Hospital Trust Performance Review

In October 2023, the Committee received a presentation from the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Hospital Trust (SaTH) and the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care Board (ICB) on the current performance levels at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals and how they are being supported by the local and national health care system.

Members asked a number of questions in relation to quality improvement, the current CQC rating, performance levels and service development.

Urgent Emergency Care Update

At its meeting in February 2024, the Committee received an update from the NHS Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System (ICS) on Urgent Emergency Care. The presentation focused on four key areas including performance data, operational plan components and an overarching review of winter planning and virtual wards.

Members raised a number of concerns in relation to length of stays for patients, ambulance handover times, patient discharge and bed capacity.

In light of representatives who were unable to attend the meeting, the Committee requested for an additional meeting of the Joint HOSC to be arranged for April 2024.

Rural Proofing in Health and Care Task and Finish Group

Members received the report of Shropshire Council's Task and Finish Group in relation to rural proofing in Health and Care. The report outlined the group's research into options to effectively 'rural proof' the amendment or introduction of strategies, plans, policies and provision in health and care in Shropshire.

Looking ahead to 2024/25

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 continue to 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

Paige Starkey – Senior Democracy Officer (Scrutiny) (Statutory Scrutiny Officer)

Sam Yarnall – Democracy Officer (Scrutiny)

Ashley Hickman – Democracy & Scrutiny Assistant

Further Information

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