



Scrutiny Committee Report

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL

Committee	CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date	12 MARCH 2024
Title	SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2023
Report of	CHAIRMAN OF CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Background

1. Overview and scrutiny at the Isle of Wight Council continues its aim in ensuring that local government remains transparent, accountable, and open, resulting in improved public policies and services.
2. The annual review of the work of overview and scrutiny provides the opportunity of highlighting the issues dealt with by scrutiny over the past year.

Recommendation(s)

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| 3. The Committee is invited to note the report and identify any matters that require further action so to improve the delivery of the overview and scrutiny function. |
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Raising the profile of Scrutiny

4. The statutory scrutiny officer has worked at raising the profile of scrutiny with both councillors and staff by producing a suite of scrutiny guides aimed at clearly setting out the role of scrutiny.
5. Work is ongoing with scrutiny committee members to change the way in which the scrutiny function is carried out, with more emphasis on member engagement and the workplans being councillor-led to enable scrutiny to carry out its role effectively rather than being a 'listening committee'.
6. A paper was taken to the Corporate Management Team in September 2023 to raise the profile of scrutiny amongst staff and to encourage drawing on the scrutiny function in the early stages of developing or reviewing policies or strategies. The report highlighted that by involving scrutiny early, and throughout the process, it can

add real value in developing robust policies or strategies with the input from those that represent the Isle of Wight community and others.

Work planning

7. The Corporate Scrutiny Committee, together with the three Policy and Scrutiny Committees, continue their workplan going up to 2025. The workplans are reviewed at every meeting, and when an item is identified for inclusion within a workplan a scoping document is produced containing the reasons why the item has been chosen, the lines of questioning and the outcomes being sought. The scoping document is circulated to all the committee for approval. This ensures that scrutiny is councillor owned and led and focusses upon the issues that are deemed to be of key interest.
8. For each agenda item it will have an agenda item cover that is published within the agenda pack, giving the background to each item as well as the focus for scrutiny and any potential outcomes. This is to ensure that even if no report is provided or required there is a clear understanding of the item.
9. Agenda planning meetings for all the committees continue to be held with the relevant cabinet members and senior officers in advance of each meeting aimed at ensuring that the relevant information sought by councillors can be provided and giving officers a clear hypothesis on what exactly scrutiny wishes to focus.
10. The chairmen and vice chairmen of all the scrutiny committees have quarterly meetings to discuss workplans, processes and sharing ideas. The chairmen of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and the Audit Committee also have quarterly meetings to discuss workplan items of mutual interest.
11. Preliminary discussions have been taking place as to whether to add a fifth meeting to the Health and Children's committees scrutiny calendar to ensure that the committees are able to look at key and urgent topics in a more timely and effective manner.

Scrutiny Data

12. Due to information being available online there is data to show the level of engagement and interaction with each of the committees.
13. The number of interactions with each committee modgov page:

	2021	2022	2023
Corporate Scrutiny Committee	1999	1659	2489
Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services, Education and Skills	271	201	407
Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Health and Social Care	336	279	296
Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	426	319	521

14. Interactions on the committee modgov pages dropped in 2022 in comparison to 2021, however increased further in 2023. The meeting that had the most web page

interactions during 2023 was the Corporate Scrutiny Committee held on 6 June with 1194 interactions.

15. The number of committee meeting views online:

	2021	2022	2023
Corporate Scrutiny Committee	266	497	527
Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services, Education and Skills	95	140	184
Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Health and Social Care	95	65	126
Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	46	151	255

16. Views have continued to increase from year-on-year data which is incredibly positive. There was a dip in views for the Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Health and Social Care in 2022 as the September meeting became an informal meeting following the death of the Queen.
17. The meeting that had the most views in 2023 was the Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services, Education and Skills held in September with 89 views.
18. Engaging the public with scrutiny is important and something that needs to be worked on as, other than publishing papers, there is not a lot of interaction with the public on what scrutiny is looking at in its upcoming meetings.
19. Over the course of the last year the scrutiny committees have made several recommendations to Cabinet for consideration in their decision-making process:

	No. of Recommendations	No. Approved	No. Partially Approved	No. Rejected
Corporate Scrutiny Committee	18	15	3	0
Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services, Education and Skills	1	0	1	0
Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Health and Social Care	2	2	0	0
Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration	20	20	0	0

20. Out of the total of 44 recommendations put forward by the committees, 37 were accepted by Cabinet and 4 were partially accepted, meaning only part of the recommendation was taken forward. Positively no scrutiny recommendations were completely rejected by Cabinet.

Corporate Scrutiny Committee

21. The Committee continues to use the forward plan to identify any key items which it believes would benefit from discussion and where it can add value.
22. The chair and vice-chair met with the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer to discuss Corporate Scrutiny's approach to financial scrutiny over the course of a financial year, as one of the key elements is that financial scrutiny should be an all-year process rather than just conducted around January/February time. It was agreed that more emphasis would be placed on reviewing budgetary information from the Quarterly Performance Monitoring reports and a report on budget assumptions would be brought to the committee on an annual basis to review what was predicted in the budget setting process against what they are six months later.
23. The Call-In function available to scrutiny was utilised in September 2023 when a decision on the Lease of Brown's Golf Course was called in. The committee heard from the councillors that requested the call-in and from the relevant Cabinet member and council officers. The recommendation that was put forward by the requestors fell by six votes against to three votes in favour. As no call-ins had taken place since 2019 it was a good opportunity to review the process and understand where improvements could be made in potential future revisions to the Constitution.
24. The committee monitored flooding issues over the course of the year in various informal meetings and culminating in a formal meeting that involved representatives from the Isle of Wight Council, Southern Water, Environment Agency, and Island Roads. The committee were keen to ensure that there was a joined-up approach, effective communication with the public and that genuine improvements are made for the future.
25. The committee requested a review into the Councils Performance Management Framework ahead of a refresh that was due in October 2023, this resulted in a report coming to the committee that highlighted where key improvements needed to be made. The committee will monitor moving forward to ensure that improvements have been made, put into practice, and embedded within Council culture.
26. Other key issues that were discussed by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee during 2023-24 included:
 - Consultations and Community Engagement
 - Partnership Arrangements
 - Empty Property Strategy
 - Capital Programme
 - Corporate Complaints
 - Housing Affordability Supplementary Planning Document
 - Scams and Fraud Prevention
 - Cyber Strategy 2023-2030

Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Health and Social Care

27. The committee is responsible for undertaking health scrutiny in accordance with the statutory regulations.

28. The committee have worked hard to highlight the views of residents of the Island with focused items on cross-Solent patient travel, dentistry, and mental health services.
29. Dentistry especially has been a key focus of the committee as Island residents struggle to access NHS dental services and treatment. As Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board (ICB) have delegated responsibility for dentistry, alongside pharmacy and optometry, the committee have regularly kept dentistry on the committees agenda to keep a spotlight on the topic and receive regular updates on progress being made.
30. The committee continues to cultivate good working relationships with partners in the IW NHS Trust and Integrated Care Board alongside representation from Isle of Wight Healthwatch.
31. Informal briefing sessions continue to be held with health and social care partners. These have been effective in discussing key issues in greater depth and identifying any significant matters that require debate at the formal meetings. During the past year there has been sessions looking at the Be The Difference recruitment website, social prescribing, and two briefings on health and social care budgets.
32. Agendas for Health scrutiny can often have up to five or more items being discussed in a three-hour window. With only four meetings scheduled a year this has caused some items to not have the required level of time for discussion and deliberation by the committee or the item is not included on an agenda at all. A proposed fifth meeting a year is being put forward to try and allow for meetings to have less agenda items which would ensure more effective use of time with greater discussion and focus.
33. Other key issues that were discussed by the Committee during 2023-24 included:
 - Winter Pressures
 - Project Fusion
 - 111 Service
 - Dementia Strategy
 - Annual Complaints Report
 - Adult Social Care Reform & Assurance
 - Recruitment & Retention in Health and Social Care

Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services, Educations and Skills

34. The Committee continues to have a main focus on ensuring that children on the Island are safe, have good access to services and achieve their full potential.
35. Following Hampshire County Councils request for the strategic partnership to end from 31 January 2024, returning the overall leadership and management of all Children's Services functions, including education, to the Isle of Wight Council, the committee have keenly been monitoring the transition.

36. School Place Planning continues to be an important topic for the committee following representations that were made to the committee by headteachers and school governors in September 2022. The committee continues to challenge the Cabinet to deliver on a long-term solution.
37. The committee invited guest speakers along to meetings to provide a different perspective on Island issues. Youth Council representatives came and spoke with great passion about the lack of youth provision on the Island. A representative from OUS Hampshire and Isle of Wight came and spoke about the opportunity to provide mentoring to support pupils figure out for themselves the challenges of their next steps after completing sixth form.
38. Two long-standing co-opted parent governor representative vacancies were successfully filled to bring the committee membership up to full capacity and to represent the parent voices on education matters.
39. Agendas for Children's scrutiny can often have up to five or more items being discussed in a three-hour window. With only four meetings scheduled a year this has caused some items to not have the required level of time for discussion and deliberation by the committee or the item is not included on an agenda at all. A proposed fifth meeting a year is being put forward to try and allow for meetings to have less agenda items which would ensure more effective use of time with greater discussion and focus.
40. Other key issues that were discussed by the Committee during 2023-24 included:
 - Performance and Budget
 - Adoption and Fostering
 - School Transport
 - Youth Provision
 - Isle of Wight Family Hub
 - SACRE Annual Report
 - Children in Care Annual Report
 - Children's Safeguarding Annual Report
 - Safety Valve
 - School Attainment

Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration

41. The remit of the committee is wide and so a variety of topics come to the committee for discussion and deliberation. The committee have had the opportunity to scrutinise strategies ahead of them going to Cabinet for a decision, such as the Cultural Strategy, Planning Enforcement Strategy, Acquisition Strategy and Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy. This allowed the committee to put forward comments and recommendations to be taken into consideration by the relevant Cabinet Member.
42. An additional meeting was arranged in December 2023 to allow the opportunity to scrutinise the Draft Island Planning Strategy (DIPS), ahead of it going to Cabinet and Full Council in January 2024. The committee invited all councillors to attend and gave time for feedback and questions from non-committee members to ensure cross chamber working. The committee put forward seven recommendations in

total, and even though the DIPS was subsequently delayed due to further government legislation, the committee were assured that the recommendations would still be taken into consideration.

43. The committee has struggled at times in formal meetings with keeping quorate. There is currently a vacancy on the committee which has resulted in the committee becoming inquorate if members are unable to attend or must leave meetings early. This has an impact on future meeting agendas and officer time as items have to be rolled onto the next meeting.
44. Other key issues that were discussed by the Committee during 2023-24 included:
 - Annual Waste & Recycling Survey
 - Coastal Works
 - Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans
 - Islandwide Digital Connectivity
 - Isle of Wight Skills Plan
 - Housing Strategy Progress Report
 - Visitor Economy

Key Issues for 2024

45. The committees will continue to monitor the delivery of the key activities as contained in the Corporate Plan and push for them to be provided in a timely manner. A refreshed Corporate Plan, Parking Strategy and Leisure Centre review are due in 2024, which the committees will be keen to review, and which will influence the scrutiny workplans.
46. Given the pressures on the budget each committee will continue to request assurance that expenditure remains on track and any pressure areas are identified at an early stage so corrective actions can be initiated.
47. The committees will continue to strive to be utilised constructively and timely in the review and formulation of key policies so to assist the Cabinet in reaching the most effective decisions for the benefit of Island residents.
48. Having better public engagement with scrutiny is a key focus moving forward. Even though there has been an increase year on year in the number of views of scrutiny committee meetings online, having members of the public in the room and engaged with topics is just as important.

Outcome

49. The committee is invited to note the report and identify any matter that requires further action so to improve the delivery of the overview and scrutiny function.

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