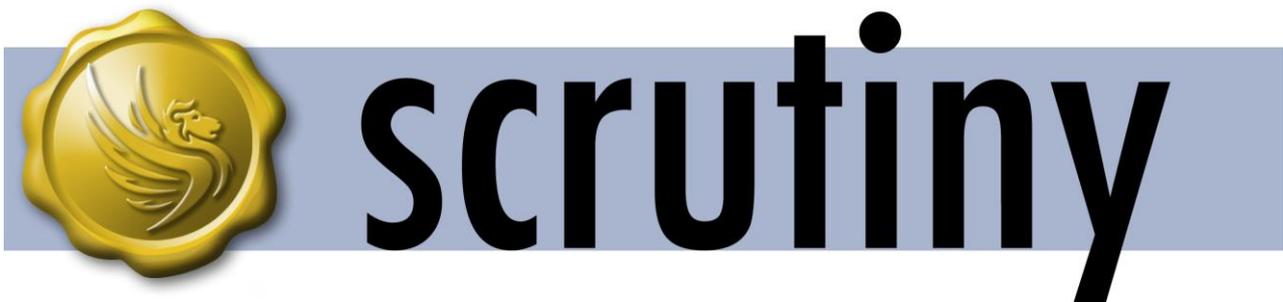




# Scrutiny Annual Report 2014-15



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## Introduction

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This report looks at the work of the Scrutiny Committees from May 2014 to April 2015. The Annual Report is an essential tool for measuring the performance of Scrutiny, evaluating the progress made against previous targets and setting priorities for the coming year.

Scrutiny has made good progress this year in delivering its work programmes and working towards the priorities set out in last year's plan. We have undertaken reviews on a number of key projects, the findings of which have been positively received by the Executive and taken into account in the final decision making process. These include projects which fed in directly to this year's budget process, for example the Riverfront Alternative Delivery Model.

The outcomes of the Libraries and Community Centres Reviews were particularly well received and demonstrate the positive impact of Scrutiny work taking an overview across all departments of the Council. These were two separate reviews, looking at the future of Library and Community Centre provision respectively. In undertaking the research it became clear that there was significant crossover between the two projects, as both were looking at the distribution and use of Council assets for providing community-based services. After each group had concluded its research into the specific topics, a joint meeting was arranged to look at the common issues in terms of property management and any potential rationalisation of assets. The joint meeting was very positive and constructive, and was able to look at solutions that crossed over traditional portfolios for the benefit of the wider Council. This was welcomed when reported to Cabinet on 9 February, and Scrutiny was complimented for approaching the issue "with considerable imagination and skill". The proposals from Scrutiny were endorsed, and impacted directly upon the final budget proposals which were agreed at the same Cabinet meeting.

### Gwent Scrutiny Challenge

As was referenced in the previous annual report, one of our most significant achievements this year has been the Gwent Scrutiny Challenge, supported by Welsh Government's Scrutiny Development Fund. The Newport Scrutiny Team has taken the lead in managing this project, which is being delivered in partnership with the Gwent Scrutiny Network and with additional support from the Centre for Public Scrutiny, Wales Audit Office, WLGA, CSSIW and Estyn.

The project started with a high profile, very well attended event on 6 June 2014 in the Riverfront Theatre, looking at experiences from the Mid-Staffordshire Inquiry and what lessons can be learned by local government about the quality of challenge within our own organisations. Auditors, Inspectors and Regulators were also invited to set out their expectations for scrutiny following on from the 2013/14 WAO Improvement Study, "Good Scrutiny, Good Question".

Feedback from attendees was excellent and the event attracted a good deal of interest, both locally and across Wales, as an interesting and innovative project – most notably being referenced by the Minister for Local Government and Government Business in her speech to the WLGA conference on 19 June 2014.

Since June we have been working with Gwent colleagues and the Centre for Public Scrutiny to ensure the messages from the event are taken forward, and the positive momentum created continues. This culminated in a workshop on 19 March 2015, attended by Scrutiny Members and Officers from across Gwent, entitled "Sharing Our Strengths, Learning Together". The workshop was facilitated by the Centre for Public Scrutiny and sought to challenge and refine ideas of what constitutes effective scrutiny, through structured discussion and engagement with other scrutiny practitioners. The session looked at the pros and cons of peer review / meeting

observation as a method of assessing effectiveness, and invited Members to think critically about the behaviours and environmental factors that enable effective scrutiny.

The notes from the March event are now being collated and will be formulated into a toolkit which can be used to support peer review and self-assessment going forward.

# The Scrutiny Improvement Group

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The Scrutiny Improvement Group was set up in August 2013, and comprises the three Scrutiny Chairs plus six Scrutiny Members.

## Current Membership

Councillors David Atwell, Tom Bond, Emma Garland, Paul Huntley, Roger Jeavons, David Mayer, Sally Mlewa, Jane Mudd and Mark Spencer.

The Group has also established a link with the trade unions by inviting Steph Davies (Unison Branch Secretary) to attend SIG meetings as an advisor and to share information on specific reviews.

## Progress Made

Scrutiny Improvement Group took an active role in planning the budget scrutiny process this year. Representatives from Newport attended the launch of the Centre for Public Scrutiny / Grant Thornton Finance Scrutiny Guide in Cardiff in July, which was then used to support Members in planning this year's scrutiny of the budget. This included briefings and workshops with scrutiny ahead of the formal consultation process in December and January, taking particular interest in the delivery and outcome of the public engagement activities. We also held workshops with each Scrutiny Committee once the final proposals had been released, to check understanding and request any further information required ahead of the formal Committee meetings. The Group is now undertaking a review of the budget scrutiny process for 2015/16, the findings of which will be tabled for discussion with Cabinet in order to plan scrutiny involvement in the budget for 2016/17.

The Group has established regular meetings with Cabinet to discuss matters of mutual interest. This has included developing a protocol for interaction between Scrutiny and the Executive, as well as discussing Scrutiny involvement in the budget process. Meetings have been positive and constructive, encouraging dialogue and strengthening the relationship between the two functions. These diarised meetings will continue in 2015/16. In response to the points raised by the Corporate Assessment, further work needs to be done on clarifying roles and responsibilities, in particular between the scrutiny function and Performance Board.

Improving awareness of and engagement in scrutiny continues to be a key priority for the Group. We are currently developing a public engagement strategy, which is aimed to increase public participation in the process and improve communication about scrutiny matters. When complete, this will take the form of a practical toolkit, and will link with other participation and engagement methods already working within the Council and local partnerships. Members have also taken an interest in internal communications, and as a result a separate task group has been set up outside of the scrutiny process to look at Members' IT, how this can be improved and how alternative meeting formats could be supported.

The Group has overseen the delivery of the Gwent Scrutiny Challenge, for which Newport was the lead authority. Members of the Group took part in the workshop in March to develop a toolkit for scrutiny self-assessment, and this will now be used to evaluate our own scrutiny processes and performance with a view to improving the quality of scrutiny challenge in Newport.

In March, the Group took part in a training session developed and delivered by the Fairness Commission, entitled "how to think critically about fairness when developing and assessing policy and practice". The day started with an introduction to "What is Fairness?", discussing the

different aspects and assumptions associated with this ubiquitous term. We then went on to examine how fairness links with the development of policy, using case studies to discuss how different interpretations of fairness could be applied. There was very positive feedback from the day, and we hope to roll this training out to more Members and Officers later in the year.

Going forward, the Group will oversee the production of the annual report this year and will use the priorities identified to formulate the work programme for the coming year.

The SIG has an important role in addressing the concerns raised within the Corporate Assessment and in responding to the issues raised to improve.

As part of the improvement programme, the SIG have been looking at potential for a review of structures that could be developed further in 2015.

# The Scrutiny Committees

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## ***Community Planning and Development***

### **Membership:**

Councillors Atwell (Chair), Delahaye, Ali, Morris, Mudd, T Suller, H Thomas, K Thomas and Watkins

### **Chair's Introduction:**

The Committee reviewed its Work Programme in June 2014 and given its wide and varied portfolio, has made good progress this year in achieving a challenging work programme, considering topics determined from a series of themed meetings we held previously to examine areas of our portfolio in more detail before selecting priority topics.

We met with partner organisations more over the course of the year including: the Chief Executive and Officers from Newport City Homes to monitor the promises made in the Stock Transfer Document, and; the Chief Executive, Chair and Members of the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board to monitor performance and service delivery over the previous year. Similar opportunities to consider the performance and challenges of our partners are scheduled in the draft Work Programme for 2015-16.

The Committee will also continue to encourage representatives from voluntary organisations to attend relevant meetings wherever possible e.g. inviting representatives from Newport Carers Forum to attend for consideration of the Carers Strategy, as essential contributors to the debate.

2014-15 has also seen an increase in the number of Regulatory Reports the Committee is receiving and monitoring progress of associated action plans developed in response to Regulatory Recommendations, most significantly, the CSSIW Performance Evaluation report 2013-14 and a report from Officers highlighting progress against the areas for improvement identified. This important area of work is also similarly reflected in the draft Work Programme for 2015-16.

We have contributed to the development of a number of policies and strategies during 2014-15 and concluded reviews through Policy Review Groups into Community Centres and Disabled Parking Bays and made recommendations, the outcomes of which we will monitor this year. We also plan to undertake reviews through Policy Review Groups of Adult Residential Care, Empty Homes, Private Rented Sector and Marketing & Engagement during 2015-16.

### **Our Activities 2014-15**

This year our work has included the following:

- **Presentation by Chair & Chief Executive of ABUHB**

The Committee received a presentation from the Chair and Chief Executive of Aneurin Bevan University Health Board on delivery and performance over the past year. Members had the opportunity to question five members of the Health Board that were in attendance and welcomed the presentation, recognised the benefits of working together agreed to invite Members of the Board to meet with the Committee twice a year and that a Review Group could take forward the exchange of ideas.

- **CSSIW Performance Evaluation Report 2013-14**

The Committee considered the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales Performance Evaluation Report 2013-14 upon the Council's Social Services. The report had received initial consideration when presented by CSSIW Officers to a Joint Meeting of the Learning Caring & Leisure and Community Planning & Development Scrutiny Committees on 27 January, but was being considered in the individual Committees for any remaining questions to be addressed to Council Officers. A report highlighting progress against areas for improvement identified in the CSSIW Performance Evaluation Report 2013-14 was considered and the Committee accepted that the CSSIW report was based upon historic information relating to the 2013-14 financial year since which progress had been made.

- **Gwent Frailty Programme**

The Committee has received the findings from the Cordis Bright Review of the Gwent Frailty Programme. This review took place between March and June 2014, and made a number of recommendations for taking forward the project. The Committee asked that their comment that it was disappointing that an action plan of the on-going actions from the report had not been included, be fed back to the Gwent Frailty Joint Committee. The Committee was also advised that Wales Audit Office will carry out a review shortly, which is expected to be reported in the Autumn and will be scheduled for the Work Programme.

- **WAO Review of Whistleblowing**

WAO presented their recommendations to the Committee following the national Wales Audit Review of Whistleblowing in all Local Authorities, looking at the Policy and supporting arrangements in place. The Committee also considered the Authority's action plan to implement the recommendations and agreed to receive feedback on an annual basis on the number / type of reported cases.

- **WAO Review of Progress against Corporate Assessment HR Recommendation**

WAO presented their report on progress made to date on the HR Recommendation contained within the Corporate Assessment. The Committee also considered the planned actions for the final quarter of 2014-15 and endorsed them.

- **Annual Information Risk Report 2013-14**

Members considered the Council's information governance arrangements and noted the actions and improvements in 2013/14 which included the move to PSN compliances, awareness-raising across the organisation and member training which will continue into 14/15. The Committee endorsed the draft Annual Information Risk Report and information governance arrangements and reiterated thanks for the development of the excellent Ward Profiles to the Information Governance Manager.

- **Communities First**

Consideration was given to a report to monitor progress of the delivery of the Communities First Programme by the Council as Lead Delivery Body for the Programme in Newport for 2013-15 and a presentation upon the impact and key outcomes to date. The Committee endorsed the progress made in the delivery of the Programme to date and agreed to send a letter from the Committee to the Cabinet Member for Social Care & Wellbeing requesting that WG be encouraged to pursue the money allocated but not spent by other Lead delivery bodies within the time set in conditions attached to the funding and consider redistributing those funds.

- **Disabled Facilities Grants**

Members of the Committee considered a report upon the Council's performance in delivery mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants in the last three years, the target set for 2015-16 in line with the Welsh Average and the underpinning aim to achieve an actual as close as possible to 2016 days; the upper quartile. The Committee recognised the progress made in the last three years, endorsed the continuation of processes outlined in the report including changes in working practices and their introduction into the future improvement plan.

- **Further Monitoring and Evaluation Work**

The Committee has also received reports and fed back comments on the following areas:

- Performance of Adult Social Care Providers
- Annual Social Services Complaints and Compliments Report
- 2013-14 Adult Protection Annual Report
- Homelessness

- **Ongoing Policy Development and Review**

The Committee has considered the following newly developed Policies, Plans and Strategies and provided its comments to the Executive where appropriate:

- Adult Services Commissioning Strategy
- Update on the Carers Strategy 2013-18
- Draft Improvement Plan 2015-16
- Reconfiguration of Social Services Housing Accommodation
- Integrated Pathway for Older People

- **Policy Review Groups**

The Committee has concluded reviews of the following topics:

- Community Centres (Member Referral)
- Disabled Parking Bays.

The Committee has established Policy Review Groups to undertake the review of the following topics within the Forward Work Programme:

- Empty Homes
- Private Rented Sector Strategy
- Marketing & Engagement

## ***Learning, Caring and Leisure***

### **Membership:**

Councillors David Mayer (Chair), David Atwell, Emma Garland; Ibrahim Hayat; Christine Maxfield; Sally Mlewa; Mark Spencer; Cliff Suller; Kevin Whitehead and David Williams.

The Committee's membership also includes statutory co-opted members where education matters are discussed, representing the Catholic Church, The Church in Wales and Parent Governors. In addition, the Committee has decided to appoint a co-opted member from Newport Youth Council.

### **Chairs Introduction:**

I remain committed to the development of a culture of effective Member led Scrutiny. We encourage teamwork amongst Members so we can deliver effective outcomes for both scrutiny and policy development and work closely with Officers to develop a positive relationship with the Executive.

This year, the Committee has embarked on a series of challenging but relevant service reviews. Notably, these include Safeguarding Children – Child Sex Exploitation, Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers and the Review of Libraries Services. Our detailed review of the Riverfront Theatre and Arts Centre contributing to the implementation of the Newport Live Trust. These reviews were led by smaller more flexible sub groups of Councillors often working with members of the other Scrutiny Committees. We were able to gather authentic and appropriate evidence that maximised the value of the outcomes for the Council and the affected communities.

These are still early days for our Scrutiny Committees. The knowledge we have gained from our current innovative review process will provide a model for even more effective research in the coming year. We will build on this success and continue to develop our skills to hold the executive to account and provide more efficient and relevant services.

### **Our Activities 2014-15**

This year our work has included the following:

- **Continuing Learning and Leisure – New Delivery Model Riverfront Theatre and Arts Centre**

A Policy Review Group was established to review the options for a new delivery model for the Riverfront Theatre and Arts Centre. Through the course of the review, it became clear that there were significant advantages to including the Riverfront within the NPDO being implemented for the Sport and Leisure Service. Based upon the evidence received, the Committee endorsed this as the preferred course of action, and this has subsequently been agreed and implemented.

- **Libraries Service in Newport**

The Committee concluded its review of regarding the options for delivering the Library Service in Newport through a new delivery model. The Committee set up a smaller Policy Review Group with the aim of assisting in the development of proposals for rationalising and modernising the delivery of the service in order to provide high quality but affordable service

for the residents of the city, and meet the level of revenue budget savings required for 2016-17 while still delivering the statutory function.

In debating its recommendations, it became clear to Members that there was significant crossover between this review and the conclusions of the Community Centres review being undertaken by the Community Planning and Development Scrutiny Committee, which recommended a wider review of Council assets, including libraries, to look at opportunities to rationalise assets and improve service delivery where more than one facility is present in an area. It was agreed that these opportunities needed to be identified and investigated before consultation could start on specific locations for future library provision.

A subsequent joint meeting of the Policy Review Groups, followed by a joint meeting of the respective Committees, supported the hub model approach to Library Services, and recommended the use of certain locations, co-locations and consideration of other community facilities / libraries.

In receiving the joint report, the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture welcomed the work of the Scrutiny Committees, saying that scrutiny members had approached the issue with considerable imagination and skill. The Cabinet Member for Human Resources and Assets welcomed the scrutiny work as they had also considered asset management issues. The Cabinet thanked the Scrutiny Committees for their work on this matter and endorsed their proposals for further consultation and implementation reports.

- **CSSIW Performance Evaluation Report 2013-14**

The Committee considered the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales Performance Evaluation Report 2013-14 upon the Council's Social Services. The report had received initial consideration when presented by CSSIW Officers to a Joint Meeting of the Learning Caring & Leisure and Community Planning & Development Scrutiny Committees on 27 January, but was then considered in the individual Committees for any remaining questions to be addressed to Council Officers.

A report was subsequently presented to the Committee highlighting progress against the areas for development identified by CSSIW in relation to Children and Family Services. Following further discussion and questioning, the Committee acknowledged the progress being made.

- **Measurement of Performance in Schools**

The Committee evaluated and compared the full range of achievement within and across schools in Newport. Members discussed the 2014 results, and progress and performance in all indicators including comparisons across Wales. Newport's rankings for all indicators were scrutinised. Monitoring and evaluating performance in this key area forms a regular and important part of the Committee's business.

The Committee also received a presentation from the Education Achievement Service (EAS) on the new Intervention Framework for the region, which aligned to the new Welsh Government Guidance and the National Model for Categorisation of Schools which came into effect in September 2014. Members were also appraised of the Draft Regional Policy for Schools Causing Concern, revised in light of the new National Model for school categorisation.

- **Education Achievement Service Contribution – Financial Year 2013-14**

Members discussed the financial contribution made by the Council to the EAS and the level of support provided to Newport by the EAS over the financial year 2013-14. Members discussed its value for money in terms of the amount of support received from the EAS, and concerns regarding lack of attendance on courses from PRU staff, given concerns raised previously. It was agreed that this matter would be investigated.

The Committee has undertaken regular scrutiny of key education matters throughout the year, and has in place arrangements for continuing and improving its activity in these matters as part of its forward work programme.

- **CSSIW National Inspection Safeguarding and Care Planning - Newport City Council**

The Committee considered a report on the outcome of inspection findings within Newport, regarding safeguarding and care planning of looked after children and care leavers who exhibit vulnerable or risky behaviour. The national report, published in January 2015, drew together key themes from all the local authorities. The local inspection report, alongside the national report, and questions posed by the first National Looked After Children Summit in March 2015, would be used to inform an improvement plan for the coming year. This would be submitted to the Corporate Parenting Forum in June 2015. As part of the improvement plan, Children's Services proposed to undertake a rolling analysis of the current Looked After Children population with a view to planning for the coming three years.

The Committee endorsed the progress made and proposals for action in response to the findings of the CSSIW report, and conveyed its comments to the Cabinet Member for Education and Young People.

- **WAO Review Safeguarding of Children Newport City Council**

The Committee considered a report on the outcome of the Wales Audit Office review of the Council's arrangements to support Safeguarding of Children and the Council's response and proposals for action. Members discussed progress against the action plan, endorsed the progress made and proposals for action, and conveyed its comments to the Cabinet Member for Education and Young People.

- **Corporate Parenting Strategy 2011/14 – Performance and Evaluation**

The Committee considered the Corporate Parenting activity undertaken by the Council in the light of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2011/14 including progress against the associated action plan. The Committee also monitored progress against targets agreed for the Improvement Plan for Corporate Parenting, all of which were either "green" or "amber". Members were appraised that the Corporate Parenting Forum had now agreed the draft Strategy for 2015-18 that built on the 2011-14 Strategy.

The Committee endorsed the progress made and proposals for action and conveyed its comments to the Cabinet Member for Education and Young People.

- **Safeguarding Children – Child Sex Exploitation**

The Committee hosted a scoping seminar for this review involving all public sector stakeholders. The approach proved to be successful in gathering ideas and information to progress the review. This will be used in scoping activity, together with the recent service audit.

The progress of this review was interrupted towards the end of the Autumn given the need to reprioritise work to accommodate the Riverfront and Libraries reviews, which needed to

conclude in time to feed into the 2015-16 budget process. Now that the deadlines for the intervening reviews have been met, work will now recommence in order to progress the review of this high risk area.

- **Further Monitoring and Evaluation Work**

The Committee has also received reports and fed back comments on the following areas:

- Annual Self-Evaluation of Education Services for Children and Young People
- SEN Inclusion – Monitoring and Performance

- **Ongoing Policy Development and Review**

The Committee has considered the following newly developed Policies, Plans and Strategies and provided its comments to the Executive where appropriate:

- Draft Improvement Plan 2015-16

- **Policy Review Groups**

The Committee has concluded reviews on the following topics:

- Delegations to Schools
- Continuing Learning and Leisure - New Delivery Model for Riverfront Theatre and Arts Centre.
- Review of Libraries in Newport

The Committee has established Policy Review Groups to undertake the review of the following topics within the Forward Work Programme:-

- Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers
- Safeguarding Children (Child Sex Exploitation)
- Newport Museum and Art Gallery

## ***Street Scene, Regeneration and Safety***

### **Membership**

Councillors Roger Jeavons (Chair), Miqdad Al-Nuaimi, Tom Bond, Chris Evans, Matthew Evans, David Fouweather, Paul Hannon, Paul Huntley, Sally Mlewa and Noel Trigg.

### **Chairs Introduction:**

This year has seen continuing improvement in the delivery of effective Member-led scrutiny in Newport. As Chair of the Street Scene, Regeneration and Safety Committee I remain fully committed to this principle, and I have been keen to introduce new ways of working to improve the information flow to Members of my Committee, making sure the Committee is working in a business-like and efficient manner.

As you will see from the list below, we have contributed to a number of major strategic issues, most notably the work we have done on the recycling review. This has benefited from an innovative approach, working with an existing officer group to review ways to increase recycling and ensure that new ideas are translated into decisions and actions. As part of this project, the Council was lucky enough to receive funding from Waste Awareness Wales to undertake a door-knocking project – this has been very successful, and it is hoped the results from this project will now support an “Invest to Save” bid to continue this project for a full year.

I look forward to continuing our scrutiny work in the coming year, delivering a refreshed and refocused work programme, and looking for further opportunities to innovate and review our approaches.

### **Our Activities 2013-14**

This year our work has included the following:

- **Road Based to Public Transport/ Rail Links**

The Committee considered the potential role of the Committee in relation to its review of Road Based to Public Transport/ Rail Links.

Possible outcomes of a review were initially identified as being those that could suggest options for improvement in the use of public transport, the levels of congestion and associated environmental benefits. The Committee subsequently requested a report upon rail development around Newport, aligned to the topic of Road Based to Public Transport. However, anticipation of an announcement by Welsh Government led to further consideration of this topic being deferred pending further announcements by Welsh Government.

- **Review of Polling Places**

The Committee established a Policy Review Group to undertake the task of reviewing polling places in Newport in preparation for the Parliamentary Election in 2015. This was a statutory duty in accordance with the Electoral Administration Act 2006 in that the Council was required to review the provision of Parliamentary Polling Districts, Places and Stations six months in advance of Parliamentary Elections, which were now held on a fixed term basis, every five years. This review was required to be completed by November 2014.

Widespread consultation was undertaken to canvass the opinion of Members, electors, interested stakeholders groups such as the disabled and the general public in order to inform the review process and to address democratic and equality impact issues. Issues raised, including those raised by Members were taken into account and considered during the review. The review was successfully concluded and approved by the Council before the statutory deadline in November 2014.

- **Draft Economic Regeneration Strategy**

The Committee gave initial consideration to revising the Council's Economic Regeneration Strategy and discussed proposals for the development of a new Strategy. This was required as the Council had received a critical response from the Wales Audit Office. On reflection, the recession was proving to be even more challenging than originally anticipated and as such the Strategy needed to be reviewed with partners.

The Cabinet had endorsed the need to undertake a 'refresh' of the Strategy in the light of the WAO's findings.

The Committee subsequently established a Policy Review Group tasked with co-ordinating the development and review of a draft Economic Regeneration/ Growth Strategy for Newport by July 2015. The Group undertook a thorough review of the draft strategy and this work has now been concluded and reported back to the Committee for endorsement.

- **Newport Local Service Board (LSB) and the Single Integrated Plan**

The Committee considered the Local Service Board's Annual Report on progress in achieving the Single Integrated Plan. Scrutiny Members were invited to consider and comment on the progress made on each theme within the Plan.

The report also provided background information on the wider question of how the Local Service Board and the Single Integrated Plan should be scrutinised in the future. This was a complex area that required careful consideration if scrutiny activity was to be meaningful and constructive.

A review regarding the operation of the Local Service Board was later put on hold pending the outcome of announcements by Welsh Government about the future operation of LSBs in Wales.

- **Further Monitoring and Evaluation Work**

The Committee has also received reports and fed back comments on the following areas:

- City Centre Redevelopment

- **Ongoing Policy Development and Review**

The Committee has considered the following newly developed Policies, Plans and Strategies and provided its comments to the Executive where appropriate:

- Draft Improvement Plan 2015-16

- **Policy Review Groups**

The Committee has concluded reviews on the following topics:

- Review of Polling Places

The Committee has established Policy Review Groups to undertake the review of the following topics within the Forward Work Programme:-

- Recycling
- Economic Development Strategy

## Planned Actions 2014-15: Update

Task	Who / When	Status (R/A/G)	Progress
<p><b>Developing the Relationship with Cabinet</b></p> <p>To work together with Cabinet to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue regular meetings between Scrutiny and the Executive</li> <li>• Develop protocols for interaction between Scrutiny and the Executive</li> <li>• Clarify the links between the scrutiny function and Performance Board</li> <li>• Review policy and decision making processes to clarify roles, responsibilities and expected timescales / stages / considerations</li> <li>• Discuss opportunities to widen the scope for monitoring the outcomes of decisions where considered necessary</li> </ul>	<p>Scrutiny Team</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Green – on track</p>	<p>In the past year we have diarised quarterly meetings with Cabinet to discuss matters of mutual interest. This has included developing a protocol for interaction between Scrutiny and the Executive, as well as discussing Scrutiny involvement in the budget process. Meetings have been positive and constructive, encouraging dialogue and strengthening the relationship between the two functions. Informal interaction between Chairs and Cabinet Members also continues outside of this formal process where appropriate.</p> <p>The diarised meetings will continue in 2015/16. In response to the points raised by the Corporate Assessment, further work needs to be done on clarifying roles and responsibilities, in particular between the scrutiny function and Performance Board. Scrutiny Improvement Group is also undertaking a review of the budget scrutiny process for 2015/16, the findings of which will be tabled for discussion with Cabinet in order to plan scrutiny involvement in the budget for 2016/17.</p>
<p><b>Training and Development</b></p> <p>To complete the review of training and development for Scrutiny Members and officers, based around identified needs.</p>	<p>Scrutiny Team / SIG</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Green – on track</p>	<p>The main focus of training activity this year has been on the Gwent Scrutiny Challenge process. The March training session sought to produce a self-assessment toolkit, now being written up, which we intend to use as part of the annual review process this year. This will include consideration of training needs to deliver the resulting priorities.</p> <p>We also had an excellent training session from the Fairness Commission in March, attended by the SIG, looking at how principles of fairness can be applied to the policy process. This was a pilot session which we hope will be rolled out to</p>

Task	Who / When	Status (R/A/G)	Progress
			all Members in the new municipal year.
To oversee delivery of and take part in the Gwent Scrutiny Challenge 2014.	Scrutiny Team	Green – on track	The Scrutiny Team took the lead to deliver this Gwent wide event in June, bringing together Members from across the county to look at how challenge can be improved through the scrutiny process. We have since worked with Gwent colleagues and the Centre for Public Scrutiny to deliver a training event in March 2015, the intended outcome of which is to produce a self-evaluation toolkit based upon the Characteristics of Effective Scrutiny that have been developed by the Welsh Scrutiny Officer Network. We will examine further training opportunities in the coming year.
<b>Communication and Engagement</b> To develop a public engagement strategy for scrutiny, to improve public access to the scrutiny process.	Scrutiny Team / SIG	Amber – progress delayed but now on track	We had hoped to complete this in 2014 but progress has been delayed due to competing priorities. We have now completed a draft strategy for consultation with the Scrutiny Improvement Group. Once the format has been agreed we will consult with internal stakeholders to discuss content and available support before agreeing a final strategy with Members. One simple change has been to arrange for all meetings to be publicised by way of the Council's Twitter account.
To examine links with other communication and engagement processes within the Council to ensure processes are consistent and duplication is avoided.	Scrutiny Team	Amber – progress delayed but now on track	As above – this will be linked with the public engagement strategy which will include links with other processes to avoid duplication. Some of this work has already started, for example working with the Community Insight and Marketing teams on our Recycling project, but we hope that the strategy will help to embed these links.
To review internal communication about Scrutiny: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To update the Scrutiny Handbook to include alternative ways of working and communication tools.</li> <li>To review the format of internal</li> </ul>	Scrutiny Team	Green – on track	The Scrutiny Team has been working on updating the handbook and internal communications, but finalising this has been put on hold while we introduce the new modern.gov committee management system.  Now this is live, we are able to finish reviewing our

Task	Who / When	Status (R/A/G)	Progress
<p>information to improve accessibility (e.g. publishing the Handbook on the intranet).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To link internal communication with the agreed training and development plan for Members and officers.</li> </ul>			<p>procedures - as well as updating the handbook for Members, we are looking at improving the information to staff about scrutiny and decision making within the new software, as well as opportunities for staff training to improve awareness of scrutiny's role within the authority.</p>
<p><b>Work Programming and Scrutiny Methods</b></p> <p>To examine opportunities for more external scrutiny to be considered by the Committees, in view of the likely requirement to scrutinise LSB partners in the future.</p>	<p>Scrutiny Team / SIG</p>	<p>Green – on track</p>	<p>External scrutiny has increased this year with Committees considering information from and about various different partners, including scrutiny of the Aneurin Bevan Health Board, Newport City Homes and the EAS.</p> <p>Formal scrutiny arrangements in relation to the Local Service Board have been considered, and a report was presented to SSRS Committee on 8 January 2015 examining the implications of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Bill and the likely future requirement to scrutinise the new Public Services Board. It was agreed therefore to defer any further work on this area until there is a clearer picture of the requirements of the new legislation.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Team attended the CFPS Many Hands Conference in March 2015, which included presentations on best practice work undertaken by several Councils relating to Joint Scrutiny ventures. We were also provided with a 'Handbook for Scrutineers' on 'Step by Step to Joint Scrutiny'. The publication is intended as a step by step guide on how Joint Scrutiny has worked in Councils and common barriers to success.</p>
<p>To examine the presentation of work programme information, and how this can be linked to the Cabinet work programme and the composite work programme document used by officers.</p>	<p>Scrutiny Team</p>		<p>The Scrutiny Team has recently updated the internal process for work programme recording, and this is linked with the Cabinet / composite work programme document. The new modern.gov software also includes the facility to manage work programmes and track the path of decisions through Committees – now the software has gone live, we</p>

Task	Who / When	Status (R/A/G)	Progress
			are looking at how this facility could be used.
To review ways of working, and look at the use of technology to support alternative meeting formats and information sharing between Members.	Scrutiny Team / SIG	Green – on track	This is an ongoing piece of work being looked at by the SIG, linking with other projects such as the public engagement strategy to improve access to, and participation in, scrutiny work. In addition, group has been set up outside of the scrutiny process to look at Members' access to IT, and we are also working across Democratic Services to look at the opportunities presented by new software such as modern.gov and sharepoint.

## External Feedback on Our Performance

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This section sets out feedback received from regulators this year on the effectiveness of our scrutiny arrangements, to provide some external context to our own assessment of our performance, and the planned actions for the coming year.

The points raised here are challenging, and change will be required across the organisation to address some of these fully. In terms of how this impacts upon scrutiny practice and processes, these external assessments have been taken into account in formulating the priorities and action plan included at the end of this annual report. In terms of the wider changes needed, we will continue to work with Scrutiny Members and with officers to raise the profile of scrutiny in Newport and drive forward the necessary improvements.

### CORPORATE ASSESSMENT

The Corporate Assessment was carried out in 2013, and echoed many of the findings of the earlier WAO Scrutiny Improvement Study. The findings and resulting actions were outlined in our last two Scrutiny Annual Reports.

Field work was undertaken in November 2014 to review progress against the Corporate Assessment, and WAO published their follow-up report on 29 May 2015. Overall, the WAO found that *“the Council has made improvements in some aspects of its arrangements, however in other areas the scale and pace of change required has not been achieved, and longstanding governance weaknesses remain”*.

The following comments and recommendations relate directly to scrutiny:

#### **Recommendation 1 (updated since 2013):**

*The Council should ensure that members are routinely and transparently considering robust information at the earliest opportunity to enable them to inform, take and challenge choices and decisions effectively, and ensure that decisions are recorded and reported transparently. This includes the consideration of:*

- *Options appraisals*
- *The implications of options, recommendations and decisions*
- *Fully costed business cases prior to initiating major programmes to support change. The financial impact of any significant proposed service changes should be reflected in medium-term financial plans directly where the change is certain to proceed or as a sensitivity if the change is not certain.*

#### **Recommendation 2 (no change since 2013):**

*The Council should address with more urgency the weaknesses in its governance arrangements that underpin its decision making to support improvement. This would include:*

- *Strengthening committee work programming arrangements to ensure they are timely, meaningful, informative, transparent, balanced, monitored and joined up;*

- *Reviewing and updating the Council's constitution ensuring that roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are clear, and that all members understand and apply their respective roles in relation to each other without compromising independence;*
- *Empowering members to be more proactive and accountable for their roles and responsibilities;*
- *Strengthening decision-making arrangements to ensure transparency and appropriate safeguards are in place;*
- *Strengthening scrutiny arrangements to more effectively inform and challenge policies, options, decisions and actions, and hold Cabinet members, officers, partners and others to account more robustly to drive an increased pace of progress and improvement;*
- *Strengthening and mandating member and officer development and learning programmes based on competency assessments to improve skills and understanding to enable them to undertake their roles more effectively; and*
- *Addressing information security and business continuity arrangements.*

**Recommendation 5 (updated since 2013):**

*To strengthen the arrangements that enable the Council to scrutinise its improvement objectives. In doing so, the Council should:*

- *Enable members to effectively challenge and scrutinise service performance:*
  - o *Clarify the respective roles of the performance board and scrutiny;*
  - o *Ensure that meeting agendas allow for sufficient time for members to focus on (broad) underperformance in both; and*
  - o *Provide training on effective challenge and scrutiny for members.*
- *Improve target setting to better reflect the service/performance standards the Council wants to achieve.*

In addition, paragraphs 23 -26 provide further detailed assessment relating to scrutiny:

- 23 *Whilst the Council has amended its Constitution following a review, there still remains a lack of clarity on and understanding of roles and responsibilities. This lack of clarity particularly relates to: whether it should be the Cabinet member or officer held to account for relevant matters at scrutiny; the role and responsibilities of scrutiny; the status of Scrutiny Policy Review Boards and the new member driven scrutiny sub-groups; and the respective roles and status of Performance Board and scrutiny in managing and challenging the Council's performance. The Council has not supplemented the changes with sufficient training to raise awareness for both officers and elected members.*
- 24 *New protocols on relationships between the Cabinet and scrutiny have been agreed and are starting to be embedded. Also a cross-party Scrutiny Improvement Group has been established to take forward the Council's Scrutiny Improvement action plan. However a fundamental overhaul of the Council's scrutiny arrangements and practice following its review of Scrutiny has not been undertaken. As such, the Council's scrutiny arrangements are still not effective. There is a lack of collective leadership and drive between Members and officers to take a firm grip on improving scrutiny. The ineffective scrutiny arrangements are frustrating both elected members and officers alike and is leading to deterioration in trust between scrutiny elected members and Council officers. Elected members have felt the need to establish new informal scrutiny sub-groups to drill down into various issues they feel*

*they need more information on, but it is not clear how these link to the wider governance framework of the Council.*

- 25 *Scrutiny Committee work programmes are still too large and lack prioritisation. Furthermore, the information provided to Scrutiny is still not sufficiently comprehensive or meaningful enough to support effective scrutiny.*
- 26 *The Scrutiny Improvement Team and many elected members are keen to drive forward improvements but are still not being empowered to play a more proactive role.*

## **CSSIW INSPECTION OF ADULT SERVICES**

CSSIW made a series of recommendations for improvement following their inspection in November / December 2014, including:

*“The scrutiny of performance relating to Adult Social Services should be improved through the provision of supporting information and the development of Members’ ability to explore the underlying issues and drive forward the necessary and agreed service improvements.”*

## **CSSIW PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REPORT**

A similar point was made about scrutiny of performance in CSSIW’s latest Performance Evaluation Report, released in October 2014, which they present each year in response to the Director of Social Services Annual Report:

*“Area for Improvement: Role of scrutiny in overseeing some areas of performance, coupled with a lack of challenge and rigour in relation to the setting and monitoring of internal performance targets.”*

The report states *“effectiveness of scrutiny in overseeing safeguarding and other procedures”* as an area for them to follow up next year.

To provide more detail, the following comment was made in relation to leadership and governance (p.16-17):

*CSSIW’s looked after children inspection acknowledged that the population considered in the inspection were appropriately recognised as a corporate priority in Newport, and that senior officers were well informed about the vulnerability of individual children and care leavers.*

*However, it was also identified that members needed to provide greater challenge to ensure that the council is achieving the best outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. They also needed to assure themselves as to the extent to which strategic aims were being effectively owned and translated into action across the local authority and partner agencies. The role of members and scrutiny in both setting and overseeing performance has also been flagged up by WAO. Our recent attendance at scrutiny and other meetings during the year has led to questions being raised about the degree to which senior managers are held to account within social services, and raised issues relating to the credibility and rigour of internal targets.*

## Planned Actions 2015-16

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The Scrutiny Improvement Group and the Scrutiny Team have identified the following priorities for the next 12 months:

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Goal</b>
<b>Work Programming and Scrutiny Methods</b>	<i>To strengthen committee work programming arrangements to ensure that they are timely, meaningful, informative and transparent, balanced, monitored and joined up.</i>
<b>Communication and Engagement</b>	<i>To improve public and staff access to the Scrutiny process.</i>
<b>Relationship with the Cabinet</b>	<i>To continue to develop the relationship and working arrangements between the Executive and Scrutiny</i>
<b>Training and Development</b>	<i>To ensure Scrutiny Members are provided with the necessary training and development opportunities to undertake their role.</i>
<b>Scrutiny Support</b>	<i>To strengthen and enhance the service provided to Scrutiny Members by the Scrutiny Team.</i>

## Action Plan

Below is an action plan for achieving the priorities within the next 12 months:

Priority	Action		Who?	When?
<b>Work Programming and Scrutiny Methods</b>  <i>To strengthen committee work programming arrangements to ensure that they are timely, meaningful, informative and transparent, balanced, monitored and joined up.</i>	1	Undertake the Annual review of the Committees work programmes and assist members in ensuring that scrutiny work is focused on key risks and priorities, and can make a positive impact on service improvement and policy development.	<b>Scrutiny Team / SIG</b>	to be completed by October 2015
	2	Work with the Scrutiny Improvement Group to consider new ways of working and examine the range of methods available in carrying out scrutiny work, including the use of technology to support alternative ways of working and information sharing between Members.	<b>Scrutiny Team / SIG</b>	ongoing throughout the year
	3	Complete the Gwent Scrutiny Challenge project and use the resulting toolkit to critically evaluate the performance of the Overview and Scrutiny function in Newport.	<b>Scrutiny Team</b>	ongoing throughout the year
	4	Develop the links between Scrutiny and Auditors / Inspectors / Regulators, in particular to support work programming and training.	<b>Scrutiny Team</b>	ongoing throughout the year
<b>Communication and Engagement</b>  <i>To improve public access to the Scrutiny process.</i>	5	Develop a public engagement strategy for scrutiny, to improve public access to the scrutiny process, ensuring that processes are consistent and duplication is avoided with other processes within the Council.	<b>Scrutiny Team / SIG</b>	to be completed by October 2015
<b>Relationship with the Cabinet</b>  <i>To continue to develop the relationship and working arrangements between the Executive and Scrutiny</i>	6	Continue regular meetings between Scrutiny and the Executive to develop protocols for interaction between Scrutiny and the Executive and to discuss opportunities to widen the scope for monitoring the outcomes of decisions where considered necessary.	<b>Scrutiny Team / SIG</b>	ongoing throughout the year
	7	Clarify the Scrutiny's role within the overall Governance arrangements of the Council, including the links between the scrutiny function and Performance Board.	<b>Scrutiny Team / SIG</b>	to be completed by April 2016

<p><b>Training and Development</b></p> <p><i>To ensure Scrutiny Members are provided with the necessary training and development opportunities to undertake their role</i></p>	8	To discuss Members requirements for training with the Scrutiny Improvement Group and to complete the review of Training and development for Scrutiny Members and Officers and ensure any gaps in training identified are addressed.	<b>Scrutiny Team / SIG</b>	to be completed by April 2016
<p><b>Scrutiny Support</b></p> <p><i>To strengthen and enhance the service provided to Scrutiny Members by the Scrutiny Team.</i></p>	9	Enhance links with colleagues within the Council and beyond and to look at a range of methods to promote and support the scrutiny function.	<b>Scrutiny Team / SIG</b>	ongoing throughout the year
	10	Update Scrutiny Team procedures and processes to ensure a consistent and thorough approach.	<b>Scrutiny Team / SIG</b>	ongoing throughout the year