



Scrutiny Annual Report 2023-24

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1. Introduction and Background

1.1. What is Overview and Scrutiny?

- 1.1.1. Scrutiny is the term given to the non-political process within the Council, whereby the decision makers (the Cabinet) are held to account for the decisions taken, whether they have been implemented effectively and whether they have resulted in improved services for the people of Newport.
- 1.1.2. The Cabinet (also known as the executive) has the power to make the decisions needed to action the policies agreed by the Council. The remaining Councillors (non-executive) then form the scrutiny element whose role is to challenge the performance of the Cabinet and hold them to account for the decisions taken. Scrutiny Committees can make recommendations and scrutinise the policies, decisions, and performance of the Cabinet. The Cabinet, in turn, consults with, and responds to Scrutiny Committee recommendations.
- 1.1.3. The underlying principle of Scrutiny arrangements is to ensure that the decision-making process is open, accountable, and transparent.
- 1.1.4. Scrutiny has the following roles:
 - Holding the Cabinet to account for the decisions it makes.
 - Ensuring that the Cabinet and Officers perform effectively and that the Council is delivering what it said it would.
 - Listening to the views of the public and make sure the public voice is heard.
 - Developing and reviewing policy to ensure that it is fit for purpose and provides the best outcomes for the people of Newport.
- 1.1.5. Scrutiny Committees do not have decision-making powers. In all cases, the role of the Scrutiny Committee is to examine available options or consider how effectively an area is performing and then to make recommendations to the decision-making body whether that is the Council, the Cabinet, an individual Cabinet Member, or external partners.
- 1.1.6. Scrutiny Committees are usually conducted in public, and the Committees are live streamed on the internet. Recordings of the meetings are also available online for the public to access after the event.
- 1.1.7. The Scrutiny Committee can operate in a number of ways depending on the issue that they are looking into. The most common approaches are either to consider issues via a report at Committee meetings, or to set up a working group to look at an in-depth issue.
- 1.1.8. Since the introduction of the Wellbeing of Future Generation Act 2015, Scrutiny has had a statutory role to scrutinise the work of the Public Service Boards (PSB). PSBs

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are accountable to Scrutiny Committees in respect of how they work jointly to improve the economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being of their area by contributing the achievement of the wellbeing goals in accordance with the sustainable development principle. This role falls within the remit of the Performance Scrutiny – Partnerships within Newport City Council's Scrutiny structure.

1.1.9. Under the Act, Scrutiny has the power to:

- Review or scrutinise the decisions made, or actions taken by the PSB;
- Reviewing or scrutinise the governance arrangements of the PSB;
- Acting as a consultee on key documents;
- Monitoring progress on the PSB's implementation for the wellbeing plan and assessing the delivery of objectives.

1.1.10. In carrying out these roles, the Scrutiny Committee can require any statutory member of the Board to give evidence, the capacity in which they do so must relate to the exercise of joint functions conferred on them as a statutory member of the Board.

1.2. How can the public get involved in the Scrutiny Process?

1.2.1. Scrutiny Committee meetings are normally open to the public and the agendas are published one week in advance of the meeting, on the Council's website. Members of the public are usually welcome to attend any Committee meeting to observe proceedings. Scrutiny meetings have been held on a hybrid basis since May 2022 to meet the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The public can watch the Committees live using a live stream service on the Council's website, or view recordings of the meetings after the event.

1.2.2. Agendas, reports, and minutes of meetings can be found on the [Council's website](#). Recordings of meetings can be found on the [Newport City Council YouTube channel](#).

1.2.3. Members of the public can suggest items for the Scrutiny Committee to investigate by writing, emailing, or phoning the Scrutiny Team:

Scrutiny Team
Newport City Council
Civic Centre
Newport
NP20 4UR

Tel: 01633 656656
Email: scrutiny@newport.gov.uk

1.3. What is the purpose of this Annual Report?

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- 1.3.1. Each year, the Council produces a Scrutiny Annual Report, which is intended to give an overview of the work undertaken by each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees over the previous 12 months. This report also sets out the planned actions for the next 12 months, summarised in Section 4, within the Action Plan for 2024/25.
- 1.3.2. This report looks at the work of the Scrutiny Committees from May 2023 to April 2024. 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.

1.4. What is the current position?

- 1.4.1. The current Committee structure was adopted by the Council in May 2017. Since then, the Committees' work has been focussed on the Council's scrutiny function relating to the roles below:

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|---|---|
| Performance Monitoring | Holding the executive to account. |
| Policy Review and Development | Including consultation on decisions before they are made (pre-decision Scrutiny) |
| Performance of partnerships | in particular the PSB and One Newport (but also Newport Norse, EAS, SRS, Newport Live and the Community Safety Partnership). |
| Scrutiny of Corporate Strategies/Plans Coordination / management | Such as the Corporate Plan, Improvement Objectives of work programmes - including referrals, policy review groups, recommendations monitoring, and setting processes for looking at Corporate issues such as the budget, public engagement, the Corporate Assessment) |

- 1.4.2. Scrutiny's function has made a greater impact by devoting three of the four Committees to performance-based work, becoming more outcomes-based and linking to the Cabinet work programme, creating a cohesive approach to improve performance within the Council. The four Committees are:

- Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
- Performance Scrutiny Committee – People
- Performance Scrutiny Committee – Place and Corporate
- Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships

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2. Key Developments

2.1. Training

- 2.1.1. During this period Elected Members were invited to participate in a number of training seminars that support learning and development concerning Scrutiny. These included:
- Training for Scrutiny Chairs
 - Effective Scrutiny
 - Scrutiny Questioning Skills
 - Treasury, Capital, Revenue and Budget Setting
 - Partnerships – Cardiff Capital Region and Western Gateway, South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee
- 2.1.2. Training has also been created for supporting Officers. This training has been trialled with HR who provided positive feedback and will be rolled out further to Service Areas.

2.2. Summary of Major Work, Developments and Achievements

- 2.2.1. Over the 23-24 period, the four Scrutiny Committees met on a total of 32 occasions. There were 4 instances of cancelled meetings across the four Committees.
- 2.2.2. Overall Member attendance for the four Scrutiny committees was 78% for the 2023-24 period.
- 2.2.3. Committees considered 18 regular/returning items such as long-standing and statutory reports, 11 new items including new plans and policies and 9 ad-hoc items such as one-off plans and policies. There was also one Policy Review Group established during this period to consider the Council's future Property Services.
- 2.2.4. There have been 6 information reports received by Scrutiny committees covering a wide variety of topics. These were:
- Exploitation of children and young people
 - Accommodation options for care leavers
 - Regulated services
 - Short break provision
 - Rapid Response service and
 - Barnardo's - contract arrangements
- 2.2.5. Committee meetings are recorded and posted to the [Newport City Council YouTube channel](#) to encourage and facilitate public engagement and enhance transparency and accessibility. Since the beginning of the municipal year, the Scrutiny meetings www.newport.gov.uk/scrutiny

amassed over 1000 views, with OSMC meetings accruing the highest proportion of views.

2.2.6. Outside of Scrutiny Committees, work has been ongoing within the Scrutiny team to make improvements to processes and meetings. This work included:

- Standardising minutes across the committees,
- Reviewing the Forward Work Programming process and improving it to better align with Cabinet and Council and to ensure that Scrutiny is adding value to the areas it considers,
- Creating and offering new training for service areas, with one test session having been conducted with Human Resources and further sessions being offered in future,
- Creating and offering new training for individual Scrutiny Committees to improve Members understanding of the Terms of Reference of the committee and its position within the wider governance structure. The training also covers the role of committee members and how to engage effectively with the variety of reports Committees receive.

2.3. Summary of Committee Meetings

Over the course of the year, the Committees discussed a range of reports, but themes arose across the Committees. These included:

- Recruitment and retention,
- Funding and budgets,
- Accessibility for residents with low digital skills, elderly residents and those who choose not to engage with the Council digitally,
- Website redevelopment,
- Contextual and comparative data,
- Ensuring reports are accessible to the public,
- Consultation and the application of feedback.

2.3.1. Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) met on ten occasions during 2023-24. Following the agreement of Newport City Council's [Corporate Plan](#), the work programme included several Strategic Plans and one-off pieces of policy/strategy review alongside regular items. The Committee attendance was 75% for the year.

[2nd June 2023 – Corporate Safeguarding Annual Report 2022-23 & Electric Vehicle Strategy](#)

During its first meeting, OSMC considered the statutory Corporate Safeguarding Annual Report 22-23. Committee highlighted the importance of training in discussion

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and its concerns regarding the impact on the Council's service delivery in the context of reductions in wider mental health services. Committee's recommendations for this item centred around clarifying data within the report and the simplification of training courses. The Committee requested that the next annual report includes more emphasis on outcomes.

When the Committee considered the Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy, discussion highlighted that there was no statutory duty of provision for EV charging ports and the process for resident application. The Committee also discussed optimising the consultation process, encouraging EV use by taxi drivers and residents and requested figures regarding the number of chargers and vehicles. The Committee requested some further information but were content with the report.

[23rd June 2023 – Welsh Language Annual Report 2022-23](#)

The Committee considered the statutory Welsh Language Annual Report 22-23 during its second meeting. Discussion included benchmarking against other local authorities (LAs), the work programme of the Welsh Language Officer, and the use of data within the report. The Committee recommended that quantitative data was included in future, with more hyperlinks to relevant Council plans for further reading and other comparable LA data. The Committee also felt that a comment from the Welsh Language Member Champion would be beneficial within the report.

[28th July 2023 – Climate Change Annual Report 2022-23 & Information Risk Report 2022-23](#)

The first Climate Change Annual Report 22-23 was considered following the review of the strategic plan during the previous year. Discussion focused on increasing travel and commuting figures and the challenges of reducing these, ethical investment and sustainability. There were also discussions about electric vehicle taxi schemes and ULEV taxis, active travel, public transport and cycle to work schemes. The committee requested further explanation and supporting information for Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating. The Committee requested further information for a number of areas and recommended that additional data be included in the next report. The Committee also asked that the work programme of improvements be shared with Members/Ward Members respectively. Finally, the Committee recommended that a survey be carried out to ascertain where bus shelter improvements would encourage bus usage and how often Cycle to Work scheme users cycled to work.

The Committee discussed a number of areas regarding the Information Risk Report 22-23, including compliance and vulnerabilities, shared systems, testing, security and risks, training and ways to promote/enforce it. The Committee also considered Subject Access Requests (SAR) and consequences of not fulfilling them. The Committee requested a variety of further information and recommended contextualising data with percentages and the inclusion of figures for "particularly complex" SAR requests. They also recommended that stronger incomplete training should be further followed up with Officers. The Committee felt that there was significant overlap between this report and the Digital Strategy Annual Report and asked that Officers consider merging the two.

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8th September 2023 – Digital Strategy Annual Report 2022-23

The Committee considered the Digital Strategy Annual Report 22-23. A variety of topics were explored including the website redevelopment project, accessibility for residents with low digital skills and collaboration between LAs. The Committee highlighted the importance of considering inclusion and accessibility when redeveloping the website and for accessibility to be considered as an important factor when developing training. They also recommended that a section containing metrics and information be included in the next report, highlighting progress within the website redevelopment and that a further update be provided in six months.

9th October 2023 – Annual Corporate Wellbeing Self-Assessment Report 2022-23 and Strategic Equalities Plan Annual Report 2022-23

During this meeting, the Committee considered the first Annual Corporate Wellbeing Self-Assessment Report following the agreement of the new Corporate Plan. Discussion centred around regeneration of the city centre and attracting businesses and students to Newport, the Newport Heritage offer, highways asset management, and bringing empty properties back into use. The Committee asked for further information and recommended that grouping RAG ratings by objective rather than rating be considered for ease of understanding, and that the inclusion of scoring for footways be included in future reports. The Committee also recommended that the Key Decisions and Achievements table be revised to use different colours from the RAG rating system. Additionally, they felt that successes should be highlighted more within the report.

The Committee also considered the Strategic Equalities Plan Annual Report 22-23 which is a statutory report. Support for residents with low digital skills, elderly residents and those who choose not to engage with the Council digitally was discussed, as well as data inclusion and staff turnover. The Committee highlighted the importance of offering accessible and user-friendly services for residents' interactions with the Council. The Committee acknowledged that this is a wider challenge outside of this report. The Committee recommended that pupil attainment be included in the next report as well as more information about the data used to evidence the need for changes/improvements and measuring outcomes.

27th October 2023 – Air Quality Action Plan 2023-28 and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Engagement Update

The Air Quality Action Plan 2023-28 was presented to Committee with an update on the monitoring of the measures the plan contains. The Committee's considerations included discussion around the gap between plans, why NO² was measured, the Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Act 2025, data collection methods, pollution, and consultation with the public. The Committee felt that the technical nature of the report was challenging in terms of translating the data into a format that was easy to read and understand. The Committee recommended that a summary document be created to support this, including hyperlinks to other relevant documents for publishing on the Council website alongside the consultation document.

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The Committee were also presented with an information only update regarding the MTFP and discussed impacting factors such as rising population numbers.

The Committee were also presented with a Scrutiny Topic Referral at this meeting which subsequently formed the Policy Review Group.

1st December 2023 – Scrutiny Annual Report 2022-23 and People Plan 2023-28

The People Plan 2023-28 was considered by Committee during this meeting. Discussion centred around opportunities and challenges presented by multi-location working, and the presentation of data in the report. The Committee recommended changes to the presentation of the report and separating Actions and Measures of Success. They also recommended summarising the Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment and creating a link to it within the report.

The Committee also considered the Scrutiny Annual Report. The Committee discussed public engagement, awareness of ongoing work within the governance structure and recommended that further work be developed to highlight the forward work programmes of different committees with all elected members.

30th Jan 2024 – Budget and MTFP 2024-25

The Committee considered the Budget proposals and MTFP for the next financial year and asked for clarification on schools' budgets and how grants split between LAs and the Educational Achievement Service (EAS). The Committee also discussed the process in developing Fairness and Equality Impact Assessments. The Committee were content with the process underpinning budget setting and public consultation and were content to acknowledge the minutes from both Performance Scrutiny Committees – People and Place and Corporate.

8th March 2024 – Strategic Asset Management Plan 2023-28 and Strategic Equalities Plan 2024-28

At the penultimate meeting, the Committee met to discuss two replacement plans – the Strategy Asset Management Plan (SAMP) and the Strategic Equalities Plan (SEP). They first considered the SAMP and discussed the Council's ambition to reach Net Zero and funding opportunities arising from Climate Change projects. The Committee reflected on the previous plan and the how the new plan would be delivered. The Committee requested a summary of actions and outcomes from the previous plan and felt that this should be referenced in the new plan. They also recommended that an annual delivery plan be presented to Scrutiny.

The discussion regarding the SEP centred around engagement with young residents, residents with low digital skills, elderly residents and those who choose not to engage with the Council digitally and consultation feedback. The Committee recommended more promotion of the plan with young people, that data be included to reinforce

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successes and challenges, and that the final report of the previous plan include a summary of work done over the period.

26th April 2024 – Corporate Safeguarding Annual Report 2023-24

At its final meeting, the Committee considered the Corporate Safeguarding Annual Report 2023-24. They discussed levels of training within Social Services for social care professionals, Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSPs), service user feedback and the inclusion of whistleblowing training data within future reports. The Committee requested a range of further information, clarifications and amendments within the report. The Committee recommended that the report included a diagram to demonstrate the complex safeguarding structure, and that the Corporate staff training data and social care professional training data be separated. The Committee also recommended that continuous professional The Committee also requested that DSPs and whistleblowing training data be included in future reports.

2.3.2. Performance Scrutiny Committee – Place and Corporate

The Performance Scrutiny Committee - Place and Corporate met on eight occasions during 2023-24. The work programme focussed on regular items such as performance monitoring and budget proposals, but also included updated plans and strategies underpinning the Corporate Plan. The Committee attendance for this period was 91%.

10th and 24th July 2023 – End Of Year Reports 2022-23 – Place and Corporate

The Committee's first meeting considered the service areas within the Place directorate. They discussed a number of topics including waste and recycling for sustainability, public toilet availability and maintenance, electric vehicle charger installation and social housing. The Committee requested a variety of additional information and highlighted the importance of seating in bus stops for elderly residents. The Committee requested an update on plans to address road conditions, and Officers confirmed that the Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP) would be presented to the Committee at a later meeting.

The second meeting considered the service areas within the Corporate directorate and Regeneration and Economic Development. The Committee discussed challenges concerning resource to support audits, customer wait times for the Council's Contact Centre and increasing the number of visitors to the Council website. The Committee requested a variety of further information and made recommendations where the report could be improved for clarity when presented in future.

11th September 2023 – Replacement Local Development Plan 2021-36

During this meeting, the Committee discussed the importance of face-to-face engagement and the need for the report to be easy to understand for residents. They also discussed infrastructure plans, healthcare provision and housing types, including

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affordable housing targets. Finally, they considered Green Belt areas, public consultation, and site suggestions. The Committee recommended that Officers engage with residents at public events and that Newport Library is utilised to support consultation. They also recommended that Officers engage with Councillors in all wards as part of the process.

27th November and 11th December 2023 – Mid Year Reports 2023-24 – Place and Corporate

Following the previous pattern, the Committee first considered the update on performance from the Place directorate. Topics that the Committee explored included rehousing and support services for homelessness, and environmental and infrastructural issues such as the impact of Ash Die Back disease. They also discussed strategies for tackling fly-tipping and increasing provision for sports and recreation. The Committee requested a variety of information and some clarifications but did not make any specific recommendations.

At the second meeting, Committee considered the Corporate directorate and Regeneration. They discussed access to digital services for residents, the website redevelopment project, and Newport City Council becoming a living wage employer as part of ambitions to become a living wage city. The Committee also explored the Participatory Budget Programme, electoral reforms and uptake of Council Tax reduction schemes. They also discussed the progress of back-office integration and the challenges faced in delivering some projects. The Committee again requested further information and amendments but did not make any specific recommendations.

15th January 2024 – Budget and MTFP 2024-25

The first meeting of 2024 for the Committee considered the Budget and MTFP for 2024-25. The Committee discussed the proposals and the challenges faced by the Council in setting a balanced budget. The Committee recommended that more detailed budget training was provided to Members following the last all member seminar on this topic in December 2023. They recommended that Cabinet consider the impact for service users when transforming Malpas Court Mansion House into a new Community Learning Centre and how this could be managed. They also recommended that discretion is given to Officers to protect vulnerable residents when implementing the change to charges for replacement bins. The Committee also recommended that the closure of the Civic Centre be put on hold until further data analysis was captured and the impact of this was explored in more detail. Finally, they recommended that the Cabinet must be satisfied that resources required to support the transformation programme are necessary given budget pressures.

19th February 2024 – Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2024-30

Following the budget meeting, the Committee met to discuss the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. The Committee discussed underground springs and water diversion and the funding processes and expenditure for reactive maintenance. The Committee recommended that the public consultation be developed to capture a wider audience and that an accessible version of the report be created to accompany both

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the report and consultation. They also required further information and amendments to the report to highlight the 5 Ways of Working under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015.

2.3.3. Performance Scrutiny Committee – People

The Performance Scrutiny Committee - People met on eight occasions during 2023-24. The Committee attendance for this period was 84%. The Committee's work programme focussed largely on performance monitoring and budget proposals but included returning items such as the Estyn Outcomes Annual Report, and the Retention and Recruitment report as per Committee's request.

6th June 2023 – Director of Social Services Annual Report 2022-23

At its first meeting, the Committee considered the Director of Social Services Annual Report 22-23 which is a statutory report. They discussed financial support for unaccompanied children, increasing numbers of referrals, as well as the increased numbers and pressures within residential care. They also discussed data collection, reflection upon previous budgets to informing future budget setting and the potential for development for a regional approach to children's services and ongoing projects. They enquired about the approach to consolidating teams and developing the Prevention and Inclusion service area, also well as provision for school holiday support and resource within the services. The Committee asked for clarifications to be made within the report and recommended that service user data be included in reports to better understand the demographics of residents accessing services.

11th and 25th July 2023 – End Of Year Reports – Education and Social Services

Over the two meetings, the Committee considered End of Year Reports for all areas within the People directorate. They considered a range of discussion topics within the Education Services report including Welsh Language in schools, updates for the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and Millbrook Primary School, holistic approaches for students, support for unaccompanied minors and attendance levels. They also discussed the new education model and requested more supporting information for RAG ratings. The Committee recommended that the seven Dimensions and seven Strategic Priorities be clarified as separate and distinct sections of the report. They also requested a future update on Millbrook Primary School. They recommended that school, parent and pupil feedback be included in future reports.

During the Social Services meeting, the Committee discussed the way the service was managing the removal of profit from Children's services and its effect, the Rapid Response team, assistive technology and staff training.

The Committee recommended that clarifications be made within that report and requested further information. They recommended sharing an all-Member communication regarding the current position of the Deprivation of Liberties Safeguards (DOLS) and Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS).

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26th Sept 2023 – Estyn Outcomes Annual Report 2022-23

For the first time since the pandemic, the Committee were able to consider the Estyn Outcomes Annual Report 22-23 as inspections had been suspended during the Covid-19 outbreak. They discussed Welsh language in education, support and assistance for schools on Estyn's recommendations, the new focus of their inspection results and attendance. The Committee requested further information and highlighted the importance of continued work to promote the use of Welsh language.

28th Nov and 12th December 2023 – Mid Year Reports – Education and Social Services

In the first consideration of the Mid-Year Reports, Committee considered Education Services. They discussed Millbrook Primary School, Welsh language in schools, attendance and links between poverty, attainment and absence. They also discussed support for children and families experiencing poverty and for refugee children. The Committee requested a range of further information to improve their understanding and welcomed the universal provision of free school meals to all primary school aged children.

In the second round, Committee considered Social Services' Mid-Year Report. They discussed RAG ratings and completion statuses, staff retention and the removal of profit in Children's services. The Committee also explored, collaboration with the NHS and the Dementia Hwb. The Committee requested further information and highlighted the importance of funding the Violence Against Women, Domestic and Sexual Violence (VAWDSV) service. They recommended looking at alternative internal provision for the Newport Dementia Hwb.

16th January 2024 – Budget and MTFP 2024-25

The Committee were consulted at this meeting regarding the budget proposals and MTFP. They discussed Special Educational Needs (SEN) out of county placements and local provision, Additional Learning Needs provision, assistive technology and the appointeeship fee increase. They felt that the ALN investment was good for students with complex needs and were pleased that it was reflected within the budget and wanted to ensure that where domiciliary care was replaced by assistive technology care, that there was sufficient family support in place to enable this.

26th March 2024 – Recruitment and Retention

The Committee requested that a report be brought to them so they could explore issues and opportunities concerning the Recruitment and Retention of staff within Social Services. This included vacancies and their impact, the deployment of agency staff and pools of relief staff and succession planning. The discussion explored collaboration with other LAs and national work to address some of the challenges faced and engagement to encourage people into the profession. The Committee requested further information and recommended that the report returned in one year

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for review. Some of the recommendations to take forward included engagement with schools to encourage entry into the social work field.

2.3.4. Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships

The Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships met on seven occasions during 2023-24. The Committee's work programme was varied during this period, with a selection of performance monitoring, new plans and strategies for review and final reports. The Committee attendance for this period was 64%.

[19th July 2023 – Newport Local Action Plan Consultation Draft and Newport Live Partnership](#)

At their first meeting, PSC – Partnerships discussed the Newport Local Action Plan Consultation and the Newport Live Partnership. The discussion around the first item considered the consultation process, feedback received, and the reach and accessibility this secured. The Committee recommended scheduling events in schools with student interpreters and Natural Resources Wales being represented within the consultation as part of the inclusion of flood risk. Committee then moved on to consider the Newport Live Partnership and discussed funding, mental and physical health, future programming, visitor demographics and community reach. The Committee also discussed plans for public consultation, commercial competitiveness and collaboration with partners. The Committee recommended that the partnership explore ways of measuring impact on mental health for those engaged in activities, and that women's activities are explored further, with this being considered in the future programming for the new leisure centre.

[4th October 2023 – Shared Resource Service \(SRS\) Monitoring Update and One Newport Well-being Plan Final Report](#)

The Committee met to discuss the SRS Monitoring Update and the One Newport Well-being Plan's final report. When discussing the SRS Monitoring Update, the Committee discussed recruitment for organisations in the partnership, security, availability of support, revenue reserves and capital funding. The Committee also explored options for digital storage and environmental impact, and resilience testing scenarios. They requested further information and recommended that more information on the Disaster Recovery Plan be included in future reports.

When considering the update from One Newport, the Committee were keen to explore matters such as participation and partnership relationships, flood risk mitigation, the next Gwent Wellbeing Plan, continuous learning and improvement, and the website redevelopment project. The Committee requested further information and recommended that there be permanent signage for Bee Friendly Cities.

[10th October 2023 - Gwent Regional Partnership Board Area Plan 2023 – 2027 and Gwent Regional Partnership Board Area Plan Annual Report 2022-2023](#)

The Committee discussed a variety of topics regarding the Gwent Regional Partnerships Board Area Plan including the advantages that this approach affords to

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Newport as well as some of the challenges faced by the Board. The Committee enquired about the Rapid Rehousing Programme and Regional Integration Fund. They went on to consider the final Gwent Regional Partnerships Board Annual Report and the continuation of strategic objectives against a backdrop of challenges such as increasing populations. The Committee consider collaboration, care provisions and funding, innovation from partnership work and investment. They requested clarifications and amendments for future reports.

8th November 2023 – Norse Joint Venture Partnership – Strategy and Performance Review 2022-23 and Safer Newport Draft Strategic Needs Assessment 2023

The Committee met to discuss the Norse Joint Venture Partnership Review and the Safer Newport Draft Strategic Needs Assessment at this meeting. When considering the Norse Joint Venture, they discussed financial arrangements, the demographics of the workforce, environmental considerations and the impact of economic developments on projects. The discussion also explored apprenticeships, volunteer work and employment in the local economy. They requested further information and minor amendments to the report.

When considering the Strategic Needs Assessment, the Committee queried the level of engagement with rural areas and the links to the Community Council Liaison Committee. They recommended the inclusion of rural areas in the final report, translations of the consultation for community engagement and requested further information.

6th December 2023 - Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Regional Strategy 2023-2027

The Committee met to discuss the Strategy and covered a range of topics including the report rate for domestic abuse crimes, crime categorisation and monitoring, funding and budgets. The discussion also considered the experience of disadvantaged and diverse groups, housing pressure and impacts and links between violence and drug and alcohol abuse. The Committee supported the approach of including the voices of victims and survivors in the report, partnership working and collaboration, education and links between. They requested further information to aid their understanding of this topic.

20th March 2024 – Educational Achievement Services (EAS) – Value For Money, Safer Newport Strategic Needs Assessment 2024-2029, Serious Violence Duty: Gwent Strategic Needs Assessment and Strategy

Discussion during the EAS item covered benchmarking and baselines for comparison of results, school development plans, and improvement. The Committee also explored challenges around funding provision. The Committee requested further information to complement the data which had been provided in the report.

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When considering the Safer Newport Strategic Needs Assessment 2024-2029, the Committee explored participation in the consultation and feedback, and anti-social behaviour. They requested further information and recommended exploring ways to further engage with diverse communities.

Finally, the Committee considered the Serious Violence Duty: Gwent Strategic Needs Assessment and Strategy. They discussed issues around county lines drug dealing and trends in data around crimes reported. The Committee requested further information and clarifications, and recommended that further breakdown of data concerning reported hate crimes be included in future reports.

24th April 2024 – South-East Wales Adoption Service Update and Fostering Services Update

The Committee first considered the South-East Wales Adoption Service Update. They discussed the reasons for low assessment levels compared to enquiries, objectives and challenges that the service face including a shortage of adopters, the process of foster carers moving to adoption and the potential impact on fostering services monetary allowances for adopters, and the impact of regulations that allow adopted children to know their birth parents' identities. The Committee praised the service for the progress made and acknowledged the challenges that remain. They requested updates on post-commencement regulations, recruitment campaigns, and impact assessments in the next report.

Finally, the Committee considered the report about fostering services. They enquired about the delay on the report about harmonisation of fees, differences in recruitment between adopters and foster carers, financial support for kinship carers and legislative changes to facilitate fostering. The Committee commended the collaborative mother and baby foster work and encouraged further collaboration to strengthen support networks. The Committee also requested more information on the parent and child fostering scheme and outcomes regarding children's experience of fostering to be included in the next report.

Policy Review Group

During the 2023-24 period, Scrutiny undertook its first Policy Review Group (PRG) since 2017. A referral was made for Scrutiny to appraise future operating models for Newport City Council's property services arrangements to inform decision making. The group met on 4 occasions between December 2023 and January 2024. The scope of the work was agreed, and the PRG requested evidence from a number of experts to be considered by the sub-committee. They considered a range of information and data sources as part of their exploration of the topic. They ultimately submitted their conclusions to be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in January 2024 and the outputs of the Committee were shared with Cabinet to support their decision making on the most appropriate way forward.

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2.4. Previous Consideration and Outcomes

- 2.4.1. The previous consideration of this item was at the [1st December 2023](#) meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.
- 2.4.2. As a result of Committee's feedback, changes have been implemented to support and improve the Scrutiny function.
- 2.4.3. Governance Structure training is in development for Elected Members to provide a refresher on the framework arrangements in place that combine to provide a robust system of decision making and accountability. This will include the reporting duties and processes for Committees to demonstrate how topics and items are considered under Terms of Reference as part of the whole system of governance. In addition to this, a monthly round up of meetings and decisions has been created for all Elected Members to ensure that they are informed regularly. These will be rolled out within the 2024-25 period.
- 2.4.4. In addition to the above, references made to 'regular' meetings of the Scrutiny Chairs has been updated to 'quarterly' until such time as it needs further amendment.

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3. Actions 2023-24 Update

| Ref | Proposal for Improvement | Intended Outcome | Update |
|-----|---|--|--|
| 1 | Provide further training for Scrutiny Chairs and Scrutiny members | This will support the personal development of committee members and strengthen the skills and experience of committees. | Training on a number of topics was offered to Scrutiny Chairs and Members, facilitated by the Welsh Local Government Association. This included training on facilitation for Chairs, training on good scrutiny practices and effective Scrutiny questioning. |
| 2 | Re-instate quarterly meetings of Chairs of Committees | This will strengthen the approach to the work programme and support the identification of any further support or development work required for committees. | This increased awareness and collaboration between Committees to ensure that robust governance arrangements were underway. It also provided a forum for discussion and support for Chairs and Officers. |
| 3 | Standardise minuting across the Scrutiny committees | To improve the quality and accessibility of minutes for Elected Members and members of the public. | This ensured consistency and accessibility for Members and members of the public who engage with meeting minutes. |
| 4 | Update comments and recommendations process in meetings | To improve the quality and consistency of comments and recommendations made by Committees to Cabinet. | This strengthened the quality and consistency of comments and recommendations made by committees to Cabinet as Officers were available to assist with any matters of clarification during the conclusion process in meetings. |

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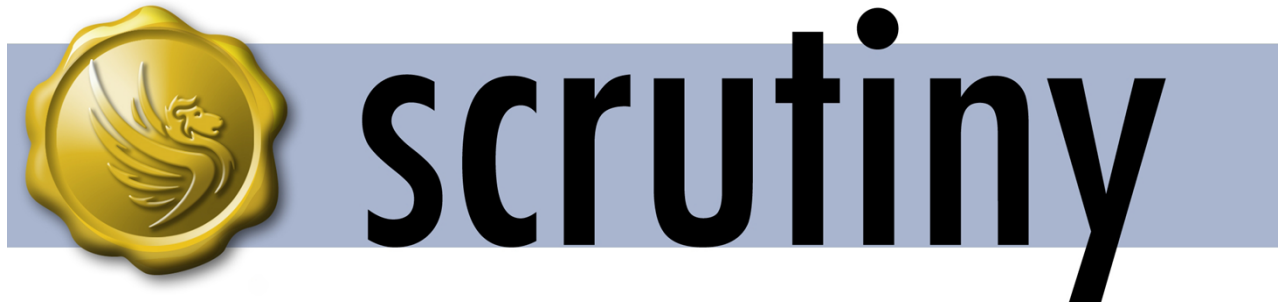
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4. Actions 2024-25

| Ref | Proposal for Improvement | Intended Outcome | Completion Date | Responsible Officer |
|-----|---|---|-----------------|---|
| 1 | Standardise agendas | This will strengthen the quality and consistency of agendas across Scrutiny committees and increase accessibility for members of the public. | August 2024 | Scrutiny Advisors |
| 2 | Re-incorporate outcomes monitoring into Scrutiny Advisor Reports | This will support the work carried out by committee in creating a clear line of accountability and a greater understanding of work carried out after comments and recommendations are made to Cabinet. | August 2024 | Scrutiny Advisors |
| 3 | Update essential reference documents including the Members handbook, the Officers handbook and the Scrutiny Team Manual | This will support Members and Officers to better understand Scrutiny processes and protocols and enhance their work with guidance. This will also strengthen processes by clarifying and unifying guidance. | September 2024 | Scrutiny Advisors |
| 4 | Governance Structure Training | Training will be provided to all members to provide a refresher on governance arrangements. This will help to support transparency and shared understanding of the overall framework and how it interlinks to create a robust system. | | Democratic and Electoral Services Manager |
| 5 | Monthly round up for Members | This will help to highlight to members the items considered, and any recommendations and decisions made through the governance framework to support transparency. | | Scrutiny and Governance Teams |

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For further information on any of the information contained within this report, or on the Scrutiny process in Newport please contact:

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