

SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

(May 2024 – April 2025)

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Foreword from the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Board

The role of Scrutiny is to provide support, challenge and to maximise the effectiveness of Exeter City Council and its working relationships with its partners across the local and wider communities it serves.

The two Scrutiny Committees have continued to take a proactive approach to matters concerning the Council and its residents, to support the Council in making a positive contribution to work in the city. The Scrutiny Programme Board supported by the Democratic Services Team have overseen much change during this year including new scrutiny committee Chairs, new Democratic Officers, a senior leadership restructure all of which have seen improved efficiency and smooth running of scrutiny.

The Scrutiny Programme Board was set up to meet on a bi-annual basis but have continued to meet quarterly to provide oversight and direction on the work of scrutiny. The meetings are attended by the Chairs and Deputy Chairs with the aim of developing a future programme of work, reviewing any Scrutiny Proposals submitted by Members on our pro-forma and support best practice for both of the scrutiny committees.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Scrutiny Committee Members, and our partners for their continued support in contributing to the scrutiny process as well as officers and the Democratic Services team in facilitating the operation of the Board and the Committees. Grateful thanks also to the external trainer for sharing her expertise which set both committees up with skills to achieve their responsibilities as laid out in our constitution.

I hope you can see a difference in this report as we have aimed to demonstrate the impact of scrutiny over the last year and I look forward to seeing this develop further over the coming year.

**Councillor Matthew Williams,
Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Board (2024/25)**

April 2025

Introduction

The Annual Scrutiny Report for Exeter City Council provides an overview of the work undertaken by the Strategic Scrutiny Committee and Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee during the 2022/23 year, July 2023 to April 2024.

Scrutiny is a key tool for promoting the best interests and wellbeing of the area and seeks to ensure that local people receive high quality services that meet their needs. The two Scrutiny Committees act as a critical friend to the Executive, hold it to account and provide challenge where deemed necessary. Scrutiny has a vital role in reviewing policy development and advising the Executive of areas for potential improvements. The work of the two Scrutiny Committees supports the Council in the work undertaken to achieve the aims of the Council's corporate objectives.

The aims of the Scrutiny process are to:-

- add value to Council business and decision-making;
- hold the Executive to account;
- to monitor the budget and performance of services;
- assist the Council in the development of policy and review the effectiveness of the implementation of Council policy; and
- to review relevant Government policy development and legislation to assess the impact on the City and make recommendations to Executive.

The two Scrutiny Committees of Strategic Scrutiny and Customer Focus discharge the functions conferred by Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 or regulations under section 32 of the Local Government Act 2000.

Continuing to highlight the role of scrutiny:

- A page on the Councillor Hub devoted to scrutiny providing Members with supporting information and guidance to assist them in good scrutiny practice;
- Committee Members who are not Members of the largest political group of the Council are encouraged to submit requests for consideration of scrutiny to the Scrutiny Programme Board using the Scrutiny Proposal Form as it is important that Scrutiny Committees are led by Members and are responsible for setting their own work programme and taking into account the views of all Members;
- Appointing Deputy Chairs of Scrutiny Committees to Chair any Task and Finish Groups or Spotlight Reviews, as and when established;
- A template for Portfolio Holder Reports to update Members on activities within their portfolio; and
- Face to face training with an external provider took place on 16 May 2024.

The Council's Scrutiny Committees continue to have an important role in relation to the development of the Council's budget and policy framework, as well as to make recommendations to the Executive on matters within their terms of reference. Members have access to the [Council's Forward Plan](#) and where there is a need for Scrutiny consideration following an Executive decision to bring the matter to Committee first via the Call-In process.

This report serves as a reminder to Members of their responsibilities and powers re-iterates the importance of Scrutiny being Member-led. The Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Programme Board can be found on Page 257 of the [Constitution](#).

Scrutiny Programme Board

The Scrutiny Programme Board is formed of the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the two Scrutiny Committees:



Chair – Councillor Matthew Williams

Strategic Scrutiny Committee



Chair – Councillor Liz Pole



Deputy Chair – Councillor Michael Mitchell

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee



Chair – Councillor Josie Parkhouse



Deputy Chair – Councillor Catherine Rees

Year in Review: Strategic Scrutiny Committee 2024-2025

The Strategic Scrutiny Committee has met on six occasions during the municipal year 2024/25.

There were no call-in requests during this period.

Year in Review: Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee 2024-2025

The Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee has met on five occasions during the municipal year 2024/25.

No call-in requests were received during this period.

Year in Review: Combined Scrutiny Committee 2024-2025

The Combined Scrutiny Committee meets to discuss joint issues and also met to discuss the Council budget. The Chair rotates between the Chairs of the respective Scrutiny Committees.

The Combined Scrutiny Committee met twice in the municipal year 2024/25.

Looking Ahead to 2025/26

The Scrutiny Programme Board agrees the format and content of the work programme held Scrutiny Work Schedule, a working document which is reported on at each Board meeting.

A copy of the Scrutiny Work Schedule is attached to each Scrutiny Committee agenda.

The coming year brings the following items already scheduled to be heard before scrutiny committees:

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee – regular Budget scrutiny, ASB in the city centre and Key People Activity Across the Council and a petition.

Strategic Scrutiny Committee – regular Live & Move programme updates, Markets & Street Trading, Citywide Net Zero alongside Working Towards Net Zero.

The Forward Plan is circulated to Members and is available on the [Council Website](#)