

SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22
EXETER CITY COUNCIL
(APRIL 2021 – SEPTEMBER 2022)

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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.

2021/22 has continued to have been a year of challenge in many areas as noted within this report, but despite this, 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 Process had been delayed in 2020, and 2021 and 2022 has seen the Scrutiny Programme Board and Democratic Services work tirelessly to reinforce the focus of Scrutiny and manage the available resources to develop scrutiny training for all Members.

The Scrutiny Programme Board was setup to meet on a bi-annual basis, however given the enormous changes faced by the Council, the Scrutiny Programme Board has met on more than eight occasions during 2021/22, to provide oversight and direction on the work of Scrutiny. The meetings review Scrutiny Committees held in the recent cycle, develop best practice for both Scrutiny meetings, review Pro-forma Forms submitted by Members and develop a programme of work for the year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Scrutiny Members, our partners for their support over a difficult period and in particular to the Democratic Services team for their continued support in facilitating and reviewing the scrutiny process.

**Councillor Hannah Packham,
Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Board**

September 2022

Introduction

Welcome to the Annual Scrutiny Report for Exeter City Council, which provides an overview of the work undertaken by the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee and Strategic Scrutiny Committee during the 2021/22 year (April 2021 to September 2022).

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 acts as a 'critical friend' to the Executive, and holds it to account and providing challenge where it deems necessary. Scrutiny is a vital role in the areas of reviewing the formulation of policy development and advising the Executive of areas of 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;
- to review relevant Government policy development and legislation to assess the impact on the City and make recommendations to Executive.

In 2019, the Council agreed to reduce the number of Scrutiny Committees to two – the Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee and Strategic Scrutiny Committee, to discharge the functions conferred by Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 or regulations under section 32 of the Local Government Act 2000. Shortly thereafter, the Covid-19 Pandemic occurred which impacted the Council's decision making process. The new arrangements could not be fully realised, and the role of the Scrutiny Committees was re-focussed on the Council's response to the Pandemic (both immediate and recovery). Work had since been undertaken to highlight the role of Scrutiny under the new arrangements and additional training and resources have been put into place. Among these are:-

- the introduction of a [Scrutiny Hub](#) on the Council Intranet site, to provide Members with supporting information and guidance to assist them in good scrutiny practice;
- Appointing Deputy Chairs of Scrutiny Committee to Chair any Task and Finish Groups or Spotlight Reviews, as and when established;
- Highlighting the importance of Scrutiny Committees being led by Members, who are responsible for setting their own work programme and taking into account the views of Committee Members who are not Members of the largest political group on the Council;
- Pro-Forma for Portfolio Holders to complete to update Members on activities within their portfolios

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 proposals to the Executive in so far as they relate to matters within their terms of reference. Members have access to the Council's Forward Plan for work being undertaken throughout the year and where there is need for Scrutiny consideration following an Executive decision to bring the matter to Committee first – the Call In process.

This Annual report serves as a reminder to Members of what their responsibilities and powers are, and to re-iterate the importance of Scrutiny being Member led. For the benefit of Members, the Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Programme Board are included in this report.

Terms of Reference and Membership

Scrutiny Programme Board (SPB)

The purpose of the Scrutiny Programme Board is to manage scrutiny in a way that ensures the functions of overview and scrutiny are fairly balanced across all aspects of the Council's work, with a view to improving services, reducing inequalities and improving outcomes for the people of Exeter.

Role of the Scrutiny Programme Board:-

- to set priorities for the annual scrutiny work programme, based on submissions from Members, referrals from Council, the public and proposals from Executive, Strategic Management Board (SMB) or Scrutiny Committees;
- to allocate work fairly across the two scrutiny committees and that the work reflects all aspects of the Council's work by providing oversight and direction to the committees' work programmes;
- to ensure corporate and cross cutting business is dealt with by the relevant committees;
- to review performance against the relevant corporate priorities and inform work programmes as appropriate;
- to receive for information, and oversee implementation of, recommendations made by each of the two Scrutiny Committees;
- to plan and oversee implementation of the process for annual Budget Scrutiny;
- to produce an annual scrutiny report to Council (in conjunction with the scrutiny committees);
- to review national best practice and guidance in relation to scrutiny and recommend any changes to the way scrutiny is undertaken as a result.

Committee Membership – Scrutiny Programme Board (formed of the current Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the two Scrutiny Committees)

- Councillor Hannah Packham (Chair);
- Councillor Matthew Vizard;
- Councillor Rob Hannaford;
- Councillor Michael Mitchell; and
- Councillor Andrew Leadbetter.

General role of the Scrutiny Committees

The relevant scrutiny committee is responsible for

- hearing call-ins, petitions and any Councillor's call for action (CCFA) - which enables a ward Councillor to refer issues of direct local concern to the Scrutiny Board; approving the creation of time limited working groups for issues within its remit;
- monitoring performance against the relevant corporate priorities;
- receiving finance and performance reports;
- agreeing recommendations to Executive, Council and partner organisations;
- agreeing appointments of co-opted representatives;
- monitoring the forward plan;
- reviewing new and developing legislation to assess its impact on the city;
- considering and introducing schemes to involve the public in developing policy;

- working with national, regional and local organisations to promote the interest of local people;
- considering matters referred to the Scrutiny Committee through established Task and Finish Groups and Spotlight Reviews

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee

The Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee provides scrutiny for the following areas of Council Work

- Corporate Performance Monitoring
- Financial Performance Monitoring
- Annual Budget Setting Process
- Service specific/operational matters
- Hear call-ins relevant to the role of the committee Partnership links
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Exeter Community Safety Partnership
- Strata

Committee Membership

- Councillor Matthew Vizard (Chair);
- Councillor Michael Mitchell (Deputy Chair);
- Councillor Carol Bennett;
- Councillor Joshua Ellis-Jones;
- Councillor Bob Foale;
- Councillor David Harvey;
- Councillor Peter Holland;
- Councillor Rob Newby;
- Councillor Trish Oliver;
- Councillor Martyn Snow;
- Councillor Amy Sparling;
- Councillor Rachel Sutton
- Councillor Tony Wardle; and
- Councillor Steve Warwick.

Note: Membership for Scrutiny Chair's is proposed by the majority group and Deputy Chairs are proposed from the opposition groups.

Strategic Scrutiny Committee

The Strategic Scrutiny Committee provides scrutiny for the following areas of Council Work

- Relevant policies in the Exeter Plan
- Corporate Health & Safety
- Response to Central Government's Policy Making
- Climate change and sustainability
- Council wide/strategic matters
- Hear call-ins relevant to the role of the committee
- Partnership links
- Growth Board
- Joint Committee for Heart of the South West
- Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership

Committee Membership

- Councillor Rob Hannaford (Chair);
- Councillor Andrew Leadbetter (Deputy Chair);
- Councillor Naima Allcock;
- Councillor Marina Asvachin;
- Councillor Yvonne Atkinson
- Councillor Richard Branston;
- Councillor David Harvey;
- Councillor Paul Knott;
- Councillor Anne Jobson;
- Councillor Kevin Mitchell;
- Councillor Jemima Moore;
- Councillor Trish Oliver;
- Councillor Tess Read; and
- Councillor Matthew Vizard.

Note: Membership for Scrutiny Chair's is proposed by the majority group and Deputy Chairs are proposed from the opposition groups.

Year in Review: Scrutiny 2021/22

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee

The Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee has met on six occasions between April 2021 and September 2022.

1 April 2021

Member Questions and Answers.

Presentation on Wellbeing Exeter – review of Wellbeing Exeter to be reported to this Scrutiny Committee.

Update on work of Spotlight Review on Consultation Charter – final recommendations to be submitted to the next meeting.

1 July 2021

Member Questions and Answers.

Report of Spotlight Review on Consultation Charter – recommendations made to Executive and adopted.

Presentation on the role of Scrutiny.

7 October 2021

Member Questions and Answers.

Presentation on Homelessness/Universal Credit – Task and Finish Group recommended.

2 December 2021

Member Questions and Answers.

Car Parks and Environmental Considerations – to be re-visited in Autumn 2022.

31 March 2022

Member Questions and Answers.

Food Waste Collection - A Timeline of Plan and Decision Making - regular updates to be provided.

Exeter's Clear Street Charter Review - position noted.

30 June 2022

Member Questions and Answers.

Exeter Plan (Local Plan) - Community Engagement – report noted with a further update at the end of 2022.

Presentation on the role of Scrutiny.

No call-in requests were received during 2021/22.

Strategic Scrutiny Committee

The Strategic Scrutiny Committee has met on six occasions between April 2021 and September 2022. During the course of the year, there was a change in Chair, with Councillor

Sills standing down in the role and Councillor Denning being appointed to the role. A further change to Councillor Hannaford as Chair and Councillor Leadbetter as Deputy Chair took place with effect May 2022.

10 June 2021

Member Questions and Answers.
South West Food Hub – position noted.
Presentation on the role of Scrutiny.

23 September 2021

Member Questions and Answers.
Petition - received in relation to the Protection of Green Infrastructure in Pinhoe - report noted.
Graffiti Service - the Strategic Scrutiny Committee noted the report and asked that a request be made to the Exeter Community Partnership for the collation of a database of any information held by the Police on taggers.

18 November 2021

Member Questions and Answers
Commercialisation Work Stream - Members noted the presentation and asked the Commercial Manager to explore the suggestions made and report back to Members.

17 March 2022

Member Questions and Answers.
Councillor Foale, Portfolio Holder Transformation and Environment Update – presentation on the work being undertaken to help the city's economy recover from the Pandemic.

16 June 2022

Member Questions and Answers.
Greenhouse Gas – recommendations to Executive below:-

The Strategic Scrutiny Committee supported the report and requested that comments made by this Scrutiny be relayed to the Executive when it considers the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory report. Strategic Scrutiny Committee supported approval by Executive

Presentation on the role of Scrutiny.

No call-in requests were received during 2021/22.

Combined Customer Focus and Strategic Scrutiny Committee

The Combined Scrutiny Committee has met on five occasions between April 2021 and June 2022. The Chair rotated between the Chairs of the respective Scrutiny Committees.

20 November 2021

Medium Term Financial Plan Update – report noted.

10 February 2022

Budget 2022/23 – reports noted and resolved that a recommendation be made to the Executive and Council that Link Group include consideration of the climate impacts of investments and banking activity within their advice provided to Council.

30 March 2022

Session 1 provided an introduction session on the approach that Scrutiny could follow with regards to examining the City Development Fund.

27 April 2022

Session 2 covered what was the economic case for pursuing a City Development Fund to support delivery.

6 June 2022

Session 3 covered the Governance question, Fund Management and Governance and Risk areas.

28 July 2022

Session 4 covered the review the Strategic and Economic cases of the outline Business Case of the Exeter Development Fund.

Members of the Board discussed the way forward to include a Task and Finish Group being convened before a fifth session is held to cover a summary of sessions 1-4 and agree a way forward with a report to be presented to the Executive Committee in due course.

Looking Ahead to 2022/23

The Scrutiny Programme Board has agreed the format and content of a work programme for 2022/23 at its meeting on 28 April 2022. The Work Programme is regularly updated and reported on, at each Scrutiny Programme Board meeting for information.

The Forward Plan is available on the [Council Website](#)

Scrutiny Contact Details

Contact for information for Scrutiny items coming forward can be made through committee.services@exeter.gov.uk

Customer Focus Scrutiny Contact

- Howard Bassett - howard.bassett@exeter.gov.uk
- **Chair:** Cllr Matt Vizard
- **Deputy Chair:** Cllr Michael Mitchell

Strategic Scrutiny Contact

- Sharon Sissons - sharon.sissons@exeter.gov.uk
- **Chair:** Cllr Rob Hannaford
- **Deputy Chair:** Cllr Andrew Leadbetter