

SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

(September 2022 – June 2023)

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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 also continued to work to reinforce the focus of Scrutiny and manage the available resources to develop scrutiny training for all Members.

The Scrutiny Programme Board was set up to meet on a bi-annual basis, but have more recently moved to meet once a quarter to provide oversight and direction on the work of Scrutiny. The meetings attended by the Chairs and Deputy Chairs aim to develop a future programme of work, review any Scrutiny Proposals (pro-forma) submitted by Members 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.

**Councillor Allcock,
Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Board**

September 2023

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 (September 2022 to June 2023).

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, and hold it to account, providing challenge where it deems necessary. Scrutiny has 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.

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. Work has continued to highlight the role of Scrutiny and the following training and resources are in place and include:-

- A link on the Council Intranet site to the [Scrutiny Hub](#) to provide Members with supporting information and guidance to assist them in good scrutiny practice;
- 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; Members are encouraged to submit requests for consideration at Scrutiny to the Scrutiny Programme Board using the [Scrutiny proposal form](#)
- Appointing Deputy Chairs of Scrutiny Committee to Chair any Task and Finish Groups or Spotlight Reviews, as and when established;
- A Pro-Forma for Portfolio Holders to complete to update Members on activities within their portfolios;
- Face to face training scrutiny with an external provider took place on 7 September 2023.

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 Naima Allcock (Chair);
- Councillor Matthew Vizard;
- Councillor Catherine Rees;
- Councillor Yvonne Atkinson;
- Councillor Michael Mitchell.

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

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 Yvonne Atkinson (Chair);
- Councillor Michael Mitchell (Deputy Chair);
- Councillor Naima Allcock;
- Councillor Marina Asvachin;
- Councillor Richard Branston;
- Councillor Andy Ketchin;
- Councillor Paul Knott;
- Councillor Andrew Leadbetter;
- Councillor Zion Lights;
- Councillor Diana Moore
- Councillor Tess Read
- Councillor Martyn Snow
- Councillor Matthew Vizard, and
- Councillor Matthew Williams

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

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 Catherine Rees (Deputy Chair);
- Councillor Yvonne Atkinson
- Councillor Jane Begley;
- Councillor Joshua Ellis-Jones;
- Councillor Adrian Fullam;
- Councillor Rob Hannaford
- Councillor David Harvey;
- Councillor Peter Holland;
- Councillor Mollie Miller;
- Councillor Susannah Patrick;
- Councillor Amy Sparling;
- 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.

Year in Review: Scrutiny 2022/23

Strategic Scrutiny Committee

The Strategic Scrutiny Committee has met on six occasions between September 2022 and June 2023.

29 September 2022

- Member Questions and Answers.
- Update from the Leader and Councillor Wood the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change
- Working Towards Net Zero – Exeter City Council’s Corporate Carbon Footprint Report and Carbon Reduction Plan
- Progress Report Shared Prosperity Fund
- Scrutiny Programme Board Annual Report

17 November 2022

- Member Questions and Answers
- Update from Councillor Wright the Portfolio Holder for Arts, Culture and Corporate Services
- Commercialisation

12 December 2022 (Call-In)

- Community Infrastructure Levy – Partial Review Consultation – Special Meeting in accordance with Standing Order No 17 following a Call-In on the Executive decision on a partial review of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

19 January 2023

- St Sidwell’s Point
- Member Questions and Answers.
- Update from Councillor Morse, Portfolio Holder for City Development and Planning

16 March 2023

- Question from the public – Mr Cleasby on the future role of Exeter City Futures
- Member Questions and Answers.
- Councillor Parkhouse, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Physical Activity
- St Sidwell’s Point Project Contractual Arrangements
- Live and Move Programme Update
- Exeter Plan: Outline Draft Consultation : Initial reporting
- Working Towards Net Zero – Exeter City Council’s Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan –
- Progress Report Shared Prosperity Fund – Update 2

16 June 2023

- Question from the public – Mr Cleasby on the adequacy of the bus service
- Member Questions and Answers
- Update from the Leader
- Presentation on the Role of Scrutiny
- Ethical and Low Carbon Advertising

There was one call-in request during 2022/23 – see above.

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee

The Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee has met on five occasions between September 2022 and June 2023.

6 October 2022

- Member Questions and Answers.
- Update from the Portfolio Holder for Recycling, Waste Management and Waterways – Councillor Williams
- Operation London Bridge – Expenditure
- Street Naming and Numbering
- Homelessness Task and Finish Working Group – Update from the Chair of the Working Group
- Scrutiny Programme Board Annual Report

1 December 2022

- Question from a Member of the Public
- Member Questions and Answers.
- Update from the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Homeless Prevention – Councillor Pearce
- Tackling the Ecological Emergency
- Homelessness Task and Finish Working Group

2 February 2023

- Member Questions and Answers.
- Update from the Portfolio Holder for City Management and Environmental Services – Councillor Ghusain
- Recycling and Food Waste Management
- Review of Exeter City Council's Homelessness Service – Report of the Homelessness Task and Finish Working Group

30 March 2023

- Member Questions and Answers.
- Update from the Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and Council Housing – Councillor Denning

- Community Safety Partnership – Presentation

29 June 2023

- Member Questions and Answers.
- River Exe – Presentation by representatives of South West Water
- Presentation on the Role of Scrutiny

No call-in requests were received during 2022/23.

Combined Customer Focus and Strategic Scrutiny Committee

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

9 February 2023

Budget 2022/23 – Annual briefing for Members prior to the Council Tax Budget Council in February 2023.

Looking Ahead to 2023/24

The Scrutiny Programme Board agrees the format and content of the work programme, (Scrutiny Work Schedule) which is regularly updated and reported on, at each Board meeting.

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

The Forward Plan is circulated to Members and 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

Strategic Scrutiny Contact

- Sharon Sissons - sharon.sissons@exeter.gov.uk
- **Chair:** Cllr Yvonne Atkinson
- **Deputy Chair:** Cllr Michael Mitchell

Customer Focus Scrutiny Contact

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