

SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

(July 2023 – April 2024)

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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 continues 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 to develop a future programme of work, review 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.

**Councillor Naima Allcock,
Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Board (2023/24)**

November 2024

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 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; 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, the following training and resources are in place:-

- 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 of 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 template for Portfolio Holder Reports to update Members on activities within their portfolio; and
- 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 interim report serves as a reminder to Members of 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;
- to ensure that work is allocated fairly across the two scrutiny committees and 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); and
- 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 Yvonne Atkinson
- Councillor Michael Mitchell
- Councillor Catherine Rees
- Councillor Matthew Vizard

General role of the Scrutiny Committees

The relevant scrutiny committee will:

- hear call-ins, Councillors' call for action and petitions;
- monitor performance against the relevant corporate priorities;
- receiving finance and performance reports;
- agree recommendations to Executive, Council and partner organisations;
- agree appointments of co-opted representatives;
- monitor the forward plan;
- review new and developing legislation to assess its impact on the city;
- consider and introduce schemes to involve the public in developing policy;
- working with national, regional and local organisations to promote the interest of local people;

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 and Chair is proposed by the majority group and Deputy Chair is 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 and Chair is proposed by the majority group and Deputy Chair is proposed from the opposition groups.

Year in Review: Scrutiny 2023/24

Strategic Scrutiny Committee

The Strategic Scrutiny Committee has met on four occasions between July 2023 and April 2024.

21 September 2023

- Member Questions and Answers
- Ethical and Low Carbon Advertising: Planning Policy considerations
- Working towards Net Zero: ECC's Corporate Carbon Footprint Report and Carbon Reduction Plan
- Shared Prosperity Fund Progress Report – Update 3

16 November 2023

- Member Questions and Answers
- Update from Councillor Wood on Portfolio for Leisure and Physical Activity
- Draft Exeter Plan Consultation
- Live and Move Programme Update

25 January 2024

- Member Questions and Answers
- Update from Councillor Parkhouse on Portfolio areas of Climate and Ecological Crisis

14 March 2024

- Member Questions and Answers
- Update from Councillor Wright on Portfolio for Culture and City Centre Strategy
- Update from Councillor Morse on Portfolio for City Development
- Share Prosperity Fund Progress Report – Update 4
- Working Towards Net Zero – ECC's Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan
- Draft Exeter Plan - Initial Reporting on Consultation responses
- Ethical Advertising and Low Carbon Framework

There were no call-in requests during this period.

Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee

The Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee has met on four occasions between July 2023 and April 2024.

5 October 2023

- Member Questions and Answers
- Update from Councillor Williams on Portfolio areas for Place and City Management
- Progress Report Homelessness Strategy
- Update on street cleansing, bins and litter following the changed approach

- Healthy Homes

30 November 2023

- Member Questions and Answers
- Update from Councillor Denning on Portfolio areas Council Housing Development and Support Services
- Council Housing Strategy
- Tenancy Policy

1 February 2024

- Update from Councillor Foale on Portfolio for Corporate and Democratic Services and Environmental Health
- Waste Recycling Fleet
- Street Cleansing Litter Bin Review
- Allotment Service Review

28 March 2024

- Member Question and Answer
- Update from Councillor Pearce on Portfolio for Communities and Homelessness Prevention
- Progress Report on Homelessness Strategy

No call-in requests were received during this period.

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.

7 February 2024

Budget 2024/25 – Annual briefing for Members prior to the Council Tax Budget Council in February.

Looking Ahead to 2024/25

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](#)

Introduction of Councillor Sharepoint Hub in 2024 has brought all information for Members together in one place and has replaced the Intranet.