



Annual Scrutiny Report 2021 / 2022

Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/2022

Foreword

Over what has been another difficult year, the four scrutiny committees have been working on behalf of Plymouth citizens, seeking reassurance that the council's pandemic response is being delivered effectively.

Despite the ongoing impact of the pandemic, scrutiny has provided opportunities to add value to the Council's decision-making in challenging times.

Restrictions brought about by the pandemic have impacted heavily on normal scrutiny output. To deliver our role we have conducted scrutiny by holding remote online meetings, enabling all scrutiny members to contribute to key policy decisions.

As the Council has emerged from the strictest of social restrictions, our usual task and finish inquiry work has taken a back seat. Over the last year we have built a substantial future work programme and we particularly look forward to addressing many of these items over the next municipal year. In doing this we will be looking at how the Council adapts to the new world, tackles the climate emergency, and improves care for Plymouth's residents as effectively as possible within the budget available.



Councillor David James
Chair, Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board



Councillor Chris Penberthy
Vice Chair, Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board

Councillor David James

This year Councillor David James will step down as a Councillor after 25 years of service to the city.



In addition to representing his residents and serving as Lord Mayor, David has been a long time champion of the scrutiny process.

David has taken the role of Chair, Vice-Chair and a member of many scrutiny committees covering a wide range of topics and has represented Plymouth's scrutiny function at numerous regional and national fora.

Whatever their political affiliation, members of Plymouth City Council have always appreciated David's cross-party approach to scrutiny.

David has been a great asset to scrutiny in Plymouth and will be greatly missed, we wish him the very best in his retirement from the Council.

Scrutiny in Plymouth

Our Constitution summarises the purpose of the Council's scrutiny function as follows:

- add value to Council business and decision-making;
- hold the Cabinet to account;
- 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;
- review relevant central government policy development and legislation to assess the impact on the City and make recommendations to Cabinet.

The last two years have presented a number of challenges to the Council's four scrutiny committees and the Scrutiny Management Board in delivering against their objectives.

Meetings of scrutiny committees and the Scrutiny Management Board have continued throughout the pandemic. A new administration took control of the Council in May and we welcomed three new scrutiny chairs. Scrutiny has adapted and used the new Corporate Plan as the basis of our scrutiny programme whilst being cognisant of continuing financial constraint and the impact of decision making on the lives of Plymouth's population and the environment.

We want to take this opportunity to thank those who have contributed to the achievements that we have made this year. We know that behind the published results of our work, many hours of discussion, research and debate have taken place through the scrutiny function.

Our Scrutiny Committees



Brexit Infrastructure and Legislative Change

- Councillor Richard Bingley (Chair)
- Councillor Dr Pam Buchan (Vice-Chair)
- Councillor Mark Coker
- Councillor Margaret Corvid
- Councillor Dr Charlotte Cree
- Councillor Neil Hendy
- Councillor Glenn Jordan
- Councillor Pat Patel
- Councillor Chris Penberthy
- Councillor David Salmon



Health and Adult Social Care

- Councillor David James (Chair)
- Councillor Mary Aspinall (Vice-Chair)
- Councillor Charlotte Carlyle
- Councillor Margaret Corvid
- Councillor Natalie Harrison
- Councillor Dr John Mahony
- Councillor Susan McDonald
- Councillor Pauline Murphy
- Councillor David Salmon
- Councillor Ian Tuffin



Performance Finance and Customer Focus

- Councillor Chris Penberthy (Chair)
- Councillor Glenn Jordan (Vice-Chair)
- Councillor Dan Collins
- Councillor Sue Dann
- Councillor Gareth Derrick
- Councillor David James
- Councillor Jemima Laing
- Councillor Mark Lowry
- Councillor Bill Stevens
- Councillor James Stoneman



Education and Childrens' Social Care

- Councillor Jemima Laing (Chair)
- Councillor David James (Vice-Chair)
- Councillor Sarah Allen
- Councillor Richard Bingley
- Councillor Charlotte Carlyle
- Councillor Sally Cresswell
- Councillor Jeremy Goslin
- Councillor Andrea Loveridge
- Councillor Philip Partridge
- Councillor Brian Vincent

Brexit Infrastructure and Legislative Change Overview and Scrutiny

The Brexit, Infrastructure and Legislative Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee has taken the lead in support of the City's growth agenda. Over the past year, the panel has focused on the following work items:

Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee supported and endorsed the Corporate Carbon Reduction Action Plan 2022.
Climate Emergency Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee endorsed the Climate Emergency Action Plan 2022, and recommended that the plan should be supported by asks to Government through local MPs and national channels and that a Plymouth Climate Emergency Action Plan website support tool should be developed by May 2022.
Plymouth and South Devon Freeport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plymouth and South Devon Freeport was announced as one of eight successful bids for Freeport status, the committee endorsed the work currently underway and will remain focused on this opportunity as it develops.
Mayflower 400	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Committee supported the Mayflower 400 programme to its conclusion in 2021.
Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee reviewed the timescales for completion of the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021 and the requirement to subsequently publish an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme. The committee endorsed the ambitions of the Plymouth Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021 and the aspiration to make Plymouth' buses more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, better coordinated and better value.
National Marine Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee endorsed the approach to the development phase of the NMP Horizons Project and that scrutiny had a continuing role in assessing the outcome and impact of the Activity Plan and development of the delivery phase bid.
Plymouth Culture Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee actively supported the development and delivery of BAS9 as a cross City transformational engagement programme. The committee also supported the Cultural Partnership, led by Plymouth Culture, to steer the implementation of the Culture Plan.

<p>Visitor Plan Annual Update</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The committee supported Destination Plymouth to lead delivery of the visitor plan working with wider City stakeholders and partners.• It also recognised the significant achievements of the Destination Plymouth, Plymouth City Council and BID teams in supporting the sector to recover post Covid 19;• The committee supported the sector ‘asks’ to government through local MPs and that the Visitor Plan 2030 be included on the Committee’s work• Programme importance of the tourism sector for the City.
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Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny

The Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee has taken the lead in scrutinising health partners and the councils adult social care services.

Councils with social care functions can hold all commissioners and providers of publicly funded health and social care to account for the quality of their services. The health scrutiny function operates through statutory powers to obtain information, ask questions in public and make recommendations for improvements, which must be considered.

Over the past year, the panel has focused on the following work items:

GP Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Committee has remained focused on GP services throughout the year and has scrutinised the approach of the CCG in the response to the pandemic. This work is ongoing as the CCG develops a new Primary Care Strategy for the County.
CQC and Urgent Emergency Care Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee review the response to the CQC action plan following an inspection of some University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust (UHP) Services. The committee was assured that appropriate actions were in place and being delivered.
Future Hospital Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee have been provided with information concerning the new hospital programme and, along with other members of the council, have since taken part in several informal sessions with UHP.
Alliance Contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee noted the progress to date on the implementation of the Plymouth Alliance.
Healthwatch Annual Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Committee continues to have a good relationship with Healthwatch and noted its Healthwatch Annual Report of 2020 – 21.
Winter Pressures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee maintained a focus on the performance of council and partner services over the winter period. Members were assured that all actions were being taken to manage system pressures throughout an extraordinarily difficult time for staff.

Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny

The Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee has taken the lead in support of a range of council services.

The Local Government Act 2000 includes crime and disorder scrutiny as one of the functions the council must ensure its scrutiny arrangements cover. In Plymouth this responsibility rests with the Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Over the past year, the panel has focused on the following work items:

Engagement with Cabinet members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The panel met with the six new Cabinet members who had responsibilities that fell within the panel's remit. We discussed with them their priorities and the challenges that they were facing. This led to items being added to the scrutiny programme for the year and for our future workplan.
Safer Plymouth Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close partnership working continues through Safer Plymouth and with the Police. The committee received an update on the work of the partnership, and will make at least annual invites to the partnership in future to comply with scrutiny requirements.
Business Support Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The business support review was noted by members following a presentation in February and implementation will be scrutinised in the autumn.
Leisure Services Contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations will be made to the responsible Cabinet members.
Financial Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members have reviewed financial performance at every meeting; they have challenged the costs and funding of a number of issues including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The manifesto commitments. ○ Home to School Transport Plan ○ Details of risks in the budget in order to allow scrutiny to better understand the extent of the risk and mitigating actions.
Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members have reviewed the Council's KPIs throughout the year and have consequently explored a number of issues including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rising numbers of homeless people

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Increasing numbers of looked after children and young people○ The rise in numbers of homeless families staying in bed and breakfast accommodation for more than two weeks○ The need to review targets to drive performance improvement● Following members' requests it has been agreed that a workshop will be held with scrutineers to look at what KPIs would aid good scrutiny.
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The committee also received reports on:

- National consultations, policy changes and legislation relating to their area of responsibility
- Controlled Parking Zones
- Bereavement Services
- Trade waste services
- The Environment Act and implications on Plymouth's waste services
- Returning to work safely

Education and Childrens' Social Care Overview and Scrutiny

The Education and Childrens' Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee has taken the lead in assessing the effectiveness of decisions of the Cabinet in these areas of the Council's statutory activity in support of the City's young people. Over the past year, the panel has focused on the following work items:

Youth Justice Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee received a wide ranging briefing on youth justice and its impact locally when an inspection takes place.
OFSTED Inspection Local Authority Children's Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee received a wide ranging briefing on the work of OFSTED and its impact locally when an inspection takes place.
Everyone's Invited School and Safeguarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee received a presentation on the Safeguarding in Plymouth
School's Catch Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The committee received an update on schools catch up and made recommendations to for home schooled young people to be linked to the Kickstart programme or other alternative apprenticeship schemes
Skills4Plymouth and Kickstart Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Committee unanimously agreed to the recommendation to write a letter to government requesting the continuation of the Kickstart programme.
Fostering Sufficiency and Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chair, Councillor Laing on behalf of the committee thanked Plymouth's foster carers, special guardians and connected carers especially with the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and the difficulties this had brought. It was highlighted to members to follow 'Foster for Plymouth' on social media and to share the content provided to get the information to Plymouth residents.

The committee also received reports on –

- Elective Home Education
- Inclusion Strategy Board
- REACH Academy
- Young Carers
- Innovate

Budget Scrutiny

Budget Scrutiny provides the opportunity to test assumptions, examine risks and challenge priorities; this is with a view to establishing and maintaining resources that are fit for purpose, deliver the priorities contained within the Corporate Plan, meet the council's statutory obligations and address the needs and aspirations of the people of Plymouth.

The Scrutiny Management Board agreed an alternative approach to scrutiny of the 2022/23 budget. The Board endorsed the following in advance of the establishment of the Select Committee to guide the review –

- That an opportunity for involvement was provided to all scrutiny members covering the breadth of the council services to participate in budget scrutiny sessions in December. This was done to give all Cabinet members the chance to privately discuss the pressures their budgets were facing in 2022/23 and the ways in which these pressures could be addressed. This would enable all scrutiny committee members to make recommendations and provide advice to feed into the formal Budget Scrutiny process..
- That as a results of significant work ahead of budget consideration in January, Budget Scrutiny would take place over a single day in January 2022, with an additional session where recommendations for Cabinet were finalised
- That a risk-informed approach would be taken utilising the strategic risk register and informed by the committee sessions, with time allocated to areas for discussion at budget scrutiny based on risk level.

The new approach acknowledges feedback from previous years that the duration of budget scrutiny when held as a single event demands significant resourcing and impacts on the individuals involved in the process due to the amount of papers, its duration and the detail of the topic covered.

The alternative approach split the process and paper publication between December and January provided greater opportunity for further consideration and reflection on the issues by scrutiny members.

Full details of the budget scrutiny process, papers and webcasts can be found at the following [link](#).

The recommendations from budget scrutiny can be found at [link](#).

Looking forward

The Scrutiny Management Board recently met with the LGA Peer Review Team; we felt the discussion and challenge was useful. We look forward to reviewing the report when it is published.

At the meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on 15 March 2022 the Board considered what can be learnt from this year's scrutiny activities and has:

- Agreed to begin to provisionally populate the scrutiny work programme for the coming municipal year
- Reviewed the budget scrutiny process and made recommendations for the next budget scrutiny select committee
- Considered member development requirements to support good scrutiny
- Developed a series of recommendations about the working of scrutiny over the coming year
- Decided to write to the Chief Executive, S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer to provide this information and the underlying rationale; whilst this letter will be sent this month, it will be published as part of the papers for the first meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board in the next municipal year.

The recommendations that have been developed are:

1. Ahead of any external review all members will receive a briefing on the role of scrutiny and how it may be best performed;
2. Before the beginning of the meeting cycle, each committee will receive a briefing on their area of responsibility, these will be open to all members;
3. More systematic prioritisation of the work programme will be conducted and issues for discussion in 2022/23 identified;
4. Further work to secure meaningful commitment to scrutiny from the executive side of the organisation;
5. A more consistent approach to the provision of information to scrutiny councillors;
6. Identify and act on short /medium term member and officer training and development needs to address the above;
7. Take steps to expand public participation and community involvement in the work of scrutiny.