



# SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

2012/13



*Copies of this report may be obtained from the Democratic Services & Scrutiny Secretariat at County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4QD or by ringing 01392 382300. It is also available on the Democracy Centre pages on the County Council's website at:*

*[http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/councildemocracy/decision\\_making/scrutiny/scrutiny-annual-reports.htm](http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/councildemocracy/decision_making/scrutiny/scrutiny-annual-reports.htm)*

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Chairman, Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Gordon Hook

Chairman, Place Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Vanessa Newcombe

Chairman, People's Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Richard Westlake

Chairman, Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

# Foreword

With elections on 2 May 2013, this Council may have come to an end but the challenges local government has faced and will continue to face and the corresponding importance of scrutiny to accompany decision-makers as a critical friend, do not.

The last four years have not been easy for local government, with a very difficult financial climate and increasing pressure on the public sector to deliver more with less. The 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) outlined real terms cuts of 28% in local authority expenditure over four years and the Chancellor's last Autumn Statement in 2012 confirmed that further budget reductions were anticipated for at least three years beyond the current CSR period, up to and including 2017/18. 2012/13 has not been an easy year for local government and the financial outlook will remain unsettled for some time to come.

The County Council has seen many changes over the last four years, ranging from a fundamental organisational restructure to significant reductions in spending. In the past year, the Council has finalised the contracting-out of integrated health and social care community services for children in Devon from April 2013 alongside readying itself for the assumption of its new responsibilities for Public Health and it has also been instrumental in helping to establish the future health landscape in Devon, including the Health & Wellbeing Board and Clinical Commissioning Groups and Healthwatch. Whatever the future holds - and notwithstanding the outcome of the 2013 quadrennial elections and any changes in democratic structures that may be made by a new administration - and given unsettled times ahead, it is more important than ever to work together across the political spectrum and organisational boundaries in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for the people of Devon.

Against that background it has again been a busy year again for scrutiny. We have maintained our strong tradition of Task Group work – 13 such groups have been formed to carry out new reviews or follow up previous ones to review progress and improvements and they spoke to 225 witnesses in total.

In these times of rapid change, the co-ordinating role of the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Scrutiny Committees has proved to be increasingly important in order to use the resources available to scrutiny to best effect. That Group met regularly to coordinate Scrutiny Committees' activities and to consider matters of strategic policy or performance importance, including the Cabinet's budget proposals and scrutiny's 'response'. It also met with the Leader of the Council on two occasions to again ensure optimum resources were made available to scrutiny and to avoid any potential difficulties or conflicts. This will, no doubt, present a continuing challenge for our successors during 2013/14.

I strongly believe that scrutiny in Devon has made a real, effective, contribution to the work of the Council and that it has made a difference – which is of course is what scrutiny is all about.

As the Chairman of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee, I am delighted to present the 2012/13 annual report on behalf of my fellow Chairmen and Scrutiny Committee members.

**Councillor Brian Greenslade**  
Chairman, Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee

# Membership

## Corporate Services Scrutiny

Councillors Greenslade (Chairman), Berry, Black, Bowden, Clarence, Hook, Knight, McInnes, Moulding, Newcombe, Parsons, Pennington, Radford, Robinson and Spence

## Place Scrutiny

Councillors Hook (Chairman), Black, Boyd, Colthorpe, Eastman, Edgell, Marsh, McInnes, Owen, Prowse, Radford, Smith, Walters, Way and Wragg

## People's Scrutiny

Councillors Newcombe (Chairman), Boyle, Cann, Channon, Gribble, Hawkins, Haywood, B Hughes, Lee, Pennington, Randall Johnson (Vice-Chairman), Robinson, Sanders, Spence and Taylor

Additional Members for Educational Issues:

Ms C Slow (Church of England), Mrs L Wilson (Primary Parent Governor), Mr J Mannix (Roman Catholic Church), Vacancy (Secondary/Special Parent Governor)

## Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny

Councillors Westlake (Chairman), Boyd, Connett, Diviani, Foggin, Fry, Giles, Hawkins, B Hughes, McMurray, Pennington, Randall Johnson, Robinson, Sellis and Smith

Representing District Councils: Councillor Christophers

# Role of Scrutiny

Scrutiny provides an opportunity to those Councillors who do not sit on the Cabinet or who have no formal role within the administration to provide and undertake a depth of analysis which is not always possible by the Cabinet, given the wide range of topics for which it is responsible.

Scrutiny Committees can maintain an effective scrutiny function through:

- bringing in and championing the views of people and communities;
- helping improve Council policies and services so they meet people's needs better, looking at the issues from a resident's point of view;
- contributing to the review and development of Council policies, to make sure that they do what was intended;
- making sure the Council is open about the way decisions are made;
- making sure the Council measures its own performance and regularly reports in public on how well it is keeping its promises;
- holding the Cabinet and those officers responsible for developing policy and delivering services to account;
- looking beyond the authority at issues and organisations which affect local quality of life;
- helping better joining up of public and other services; and
- focusing on outcome and improvement.

Scrutiny is not just about a Cabinet Member or Officers turning up to present a glowing report of progress, or to answer random questions. It is a series of information-gathering exercises which enable members to drill down into the detail of how a service is being delivered, and, frequently, to suggest improvements which otherwise would be unlikely to see the light of day.

## Terms of reference

The **Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee** is tasked with reviewing the implementation of the Council's existing policy and budget framework and considers the scope for new policies for the use and management of Council resources. It also reviews the discharge of the Council's corporate and strategic services, governance arrangements and community safety activity, and scrutinises authorities responsible for crime and disorder strategies.

The Committee also reviews the draft budgets of all services prior to the budget meetings of the Cabinet and the Council and it ensures the effective scrutiny of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy and policies.

In anticipation of the transfer of public health to the County Council on 1 April 2013, the Committee also reviewed the preparation of the public health budget for 2013/14 and priorities for the first time.

The **Place Scrutiny Committee** reviews the implementation of existing policies and considers new policies relating to all aspects of the discharge of the Council's functions concerning the environment, economic activity and enterprise, integrated planning and transport and community services, including community safety and emergency planning, libraries, arts and cultural heritage of the County.

The **People's Scrutiny Committee** looks at the implementation of existing policies and new policies for all aspects of the discharge of the Council's functions concerning the provision of personal services for children and adults including social care, safeguarding and special needs services, schools and learning.

The **Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee** similarly reviews the implementation of existing and policies for all aspects of the discharge of the Council's functions relating to the health and wellbeing of the people of Devon; including this year the activities of the current Shadow Health & Wellbeing Board (and, in future, of the full Health & Wellbeing Board which will come into being on 1 April 2013) in the development of commissioning strategies, strategic needs assessments and, generally, to discharge its functions in the scrutiny of any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of the health service in Devon. The Committee also assesses the effectiveness of Cabinet decisions in these areas.

In addition, this Committee may make reports and recommendations arising its scrutiny work to the County Council and to the Secretary of State for Health, in accordance with the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013.

# Background

2012/13 was again a busy year for Scrutiny. Scrutiny Officers directly supported a total of 13 Task Groups and championed new developments, including enhanced use of social media. Three of the Scrutiny Committees have again been chaired by members of the Liberal Democrat Group and one from the Labour Group. Vice-Chairmen were appointed from the Conservative, majority Group.

## Support for Scrutiny

Scrutiny Committees are supported by three dedicated officers within the Democratic Services & Scrutiny Secretariat as shown below. The Council's statutory designated Scrutiny Officer is Rob Hooper, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager. The individual Scrutiny Officers and the Committees they support are:

Scrutiny Committee	Scrutiny Officer
Corporate Services	Camilla de Bernhardt
Health & Wellbeing	
Place	Janine Gassmann
People's	Dan Looker

The team provides research, advice, report writing and other support for Scrutiny Committees and in particular for their Task Groups. Approximately two-thirds of County Councillors serve on Scrutiny Committees.

## Social Media

The Democratic Services & Scrutiny Secretariat has established a Twitter presence (@DevonDemocracy) which is used to publicise forthcoming meetings as well as highlights in the business calendar, e.g. the publication of a Scrutiny Task Group Review. Scrutiny Officers also developed a blog on the Council's website at <http://beta.devon.gov.uk/scrutiny/> to provide an opportunity to regularly reflect upon their work and issues facing the scrutiny function as a whole. The plan to integrate all social media strands in the new Democracy Centre which went live in March 2013 to give a higher profile to the work of scrutiny within the wider Democratic Services function are welcomed.

It is perhaps also worth noting that the work of scrutiny has again received favourable coverage in the media, both in local papers and on TV and radio stations, recognising and highlighting the contribution scrutiny makes to the development and delivery of County Council services. For example, the BBC picked up that the Place Scrutiny Committee had called for a review on civil parking enforcement in June 2012, which resulted in information on tackling the operational deficit being publically available and debated.

## Ways of Working

Across the country, Scrutiny operates in a climate where both direct and indirect officer support for the function continues to face pressure. In Devon, the capacity to support in-depth reviews has reduced across the organisation. Scrutiny Committees had previously revisited the way in which they worked and the future direction of travel for scrutiny, to manage expectations and work programmes in an environment characterised by change and diminished resources across the Council, working in new and innovative ways concentrating on strategic issues.

We believe the Council continues to value scrutiny and remains committed to maintaining an effective and independent scrutiny support function which must not be marginalised and or subsumed into the Council's general policy formulation activity. We welcome the Leader's continued commitment to Cabinet Members working closely and cooperatively with scrutiny and his desire that scrutiny should play a full role in reviewing the effectiveness of the budget and service prioritisation.

We believe that these improved closer working relationships between Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet Members have and will lead to improved outcomes for the Council as a whole, working together for and on behalf of the people of Devon and people who use our services.

Resources have been pooled in order to support the scrutiny function sufficiently and to service Task Groups: Scrutiny Officers are not confined to the reviews set up by the Committee they primarily support and other staff within the Secretariat may provide support where appropriate. Other tools include smaller, quicker (spotlight) or single member reviews or research activity and engaging with Locality Committees as a source of information about local service performance.

## Spotlight Reviews

Spotlight Reviews were introduced during the latter part of 2011 to include smaller, targeted, more flexible and quicker reviews of research activity and engaging with witnesses as a source of information about local service performance. Spotlight Reviews are usually held as one-off meetings and although they require more precise planning and initial set-up work than conventional Task Groups, they are very outcome-focussed which contributes to the objective of utilising member and officer resources more effectively. Spotlight Reviews have been very well-received and supported by members, officers and contributors to the scrutiny process alike.

# Review of 2012/13

## Developments during the year

Scrutiny Committees have established a closer working relationship with the [Care Quality Commission](#), the independent regulator of all health and social care services in England, and Scrutiny Officers met regularly with compliance inspectors in order to share information and to inform each other's work plans. Closer links have also been forged through the year with the Internal Audit Service delivered by the Devon Audit Partnership.

Councils continue to find it problematic to plan and develop relationships with the lack of clarity and delay by Government in publishing regulations and guidance. For example, the lack of clarity over the role of the Health & Wellbeing Board and its relationship with the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee was frustrating for members and arguably detrimental to the development of the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee's activities.

Despite these challenges, work has been undertaken locally throughout the year to understand the new health landscape. The phasing out of the Primary Care Trust and the introduction of two Clinical Commissioning Groups in its place has already led to challenges. It is essential that the complexity of commissioner/provider split combined with more commissioners does not lead to confusion in carrying out the duties of scrutiny. The Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee has a standing item on each agenda to understand the development of the Health & Wellbeing Board and the formulation of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

During 2012 the Centre for Public Scrutiny, in conjunction with the Local Government Association, produced practical guidance to help local leaders use the health reforms as a springboard to work better and influence better health and care. It is pleasing to note that the County Councils' Scrutiny Officers were invited to and directly contributed to that national publication.

In the future, health scrutiny will have its work cut out in continuing to develop these relationships, particularly with the new Healthwatch organisation to ensure the services provided are the best possible for the people of Devon.

## Performance Management

Performance management is an important area for Scrutiny Committees to be involved in against the background of and reflecting the Strategic Plan for 2011/15 entitled *Backing Devon*. A revised reporting regime was introduced in June 2012 on a report-by-exception basis, reflecting the needs of Scrutiny Committees and capable of providing the more targeted information required. Performance information has again been used to inform committees' work programmes, e.g. the delay of the new Greater Western rail franchise.

Training sessions on the use of the County Council's SPAR.net service performance and risk recording system were offered throughout November 2012 and upon request. Those members who attended the training found the system very informative and easy to use. Further performance training has also been scheduled as part of the induction programme for new members following the 2013 elections.

## Budget Scrutiny

The 2013/14 budget was again scrutinised both by individual committees and a subsequent joint all-day session of all Scrutiny Committees on 28 January 2013. Improvements were made and the process fine-tuned following member's comments last year, including allocations for individual Cabinet Members to speak.

We believe that budget scrutiny should not simply be limited to the formal budget setting exercise each year in January and February. It is very much also about reviewing what is done with approved budgets during the year and challenging the costs of service delivery to assess

- to what extent spending was within agreed budgets and if not why not;
- whether services deliver value for money;
- the extent to which alternative forms of service delivery may have been considered which could result in budget savings or redistribution;
- comparisons with other local authorities and service providers.

Therefore, for the first time, and during the autumn scrutiny committee cycle, Scrutiny Committees received an additional in-year briefing on the delivery of the 2012/13 budget and the impact on service delivery in order to inform the overall budget scrutiny process in January 2013. These briefings were helpful in confirming or otherwise if the organisation and individual services had met the Council's strategic objectives and targets in line with agreed budgets in that financial year.

Scrutiny, among other consultees including businesses, trade unions, the voluntary sector and residents, helped shape the 2013/14 budget proposals. Following the joint budget day on 28 January 2013, many of the suggestions made by Scrutiny Committees were reflected in the final budget proposals submitted to the Council.

## Outcomes

The [Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee](#) expressed its concern that the Council may be rapidly approaching the tipping point in relation to the capacity of the organisation to deliver all which is required of it. The Committee recognised the need for the Council to maximise income generation potential and resolved to investigate this further. However it also commented upon the fact that some income generating schemes, such as the 'New Homes Bonus' may cease in the future. Working with partners, especially District Councils would be increasingly important.

The [Place Scrutiny Committee](#) commented on the value of gully cleaning and work by parish lengthsman in minimising the risk of flooding on highways and preventing the deterioration of the highway structure and recommended more frequent gully cleaning and more joint working with district and parish councils in this area. As a

result, £500,000 was added to the budget booklet for gully maintenance and lengthsman services. The Committee also supported a number of other suggestions. For example, £300,000 for winter maintenance works were reinstated following the Committee's deliberations and comments as was £930,000 for repairing highway safety defects.

The **People's Scrutiny Committee** highlighted the need to be mindful of the potential impact on future budgets of any increase in demand arising from new duties placed on the Council where there may be relatively little experience of measuring latent or suppressed demand, such as for the Council's new public health duties. The Committee also agreed that the retention and size of current reserves should be carefully reviewed to maximise expenditure on delivery of services particularly in relation to provision for schools.

## Task Groups

Much of the work of scrutiny is undertaken by Task Groups and 225 witnesses participated in the process during the year. It is therefore only right that the opportunity is taken in this report to record our thanks to all those who served on such groups over the course of this year and to those who chaired them, for their hard work and dedication. We would also like to thank all the expert contributors who participated in the process, for the detailed evidence they gave to the process, for their time and effort and continued commitment to helping to shape reviews and recommendations for improvement.

Copies of all Task Group reports undertaken and finalised in 2012/13 are available on the Council's website, alongside those of previous years, at:

[http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/councildemocracy/decision\\_making/scrutiny.htm](http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/councildemocracy/decision_making/scrutiny.htm)

As an indication of the value of and contribution made by Scrutiny Committees the vast majority of those Task Groups recommendations were accepted by the Cabinet which in turn shows the value Cabinet places on the scrutiny function.

## Corporate Services Scrutiny

The Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee met six times during 2012/13, including the joint budget day on 28 January. It conducted Task Group reviews into the working relationship with the community and voluntary sector as well as the unintended consequences of the welfare benefit reform.

### **The Committee's impact during the year**

Following the committee's **Task Group to form the Armed Forces Community Covenant**, the permanent Devon Armed Forces Community Covenant was signed on the 16 May 2012 by a range of individuals and organisations including MPs, a Government Minister, The First Sea Lord, Commander of the Land Forces and District and City Council Leaders.

The work of this Task Group was specifically recognised as an exemplar of best practice by the Royal British Legion in their Best Practice Guide for Local Authorities who wish to form Community Covenants. Locally much work has been carried out since the Task Group and a recent event to galvanise support and articulate priorities was attended by representatives of more than 40 organisations who were working to support service people and their families in Devon.

Following scrutiny of the budget, and concerns over the expanding role of the third sector at a time of budget reductions the committee established a [Spotlight Review into the Community and Voluntary Sector](#). It came to light that awareness was a key issue; both awareness of all of the community and voluntary groups which exist and exactly what they do as well as awareness of how the Council currently works with them. This is a particular issue for Councillors who may have very strong links with some charities but may be unaware of others. The Spotlight Review heard that 50% of Devon residents could not name a local charity. The review made recommendations about increasing awareness, promoting the value of the sector and further exploration about community and voluntary sector friendly procurement processes.

The Committee has also just concluded a short Task Group looking at the [Unintended Consequences of the Welfare Reform Act](#). Working with the Department for Work and Pensions as well as the Local Government Association, the Task Group has produced a comprehensive report to challenge the role of local authorities in welfare reform. The Task Group considered the main changes and how they might affect the people of Devon and the organisations which support them.

The principles of making the system easier to understand and ensuring that people were better off if they worked are accepted across the political spectrum. However it was the precise detail of how these changes would be implemented which concerned the Task Group; it was felt that the proposals were based on ideology and not rooted in a developed evidence-based examination. The Task Group came to the conclusion that local authorities and other local organisations were going to be called upon by vulnerable people for help. To prepare for this would require every possible avenue being used to enable the landscape of the Devon economy to provide opportunities. Fundamentally though, people's success will rely upon support agencies.

Local authorities and voluntary organisations have been operating for some time in a climate of severe budget reductions. To undertake additional work to add to or develop support for those who need it will require careful planning and significant resources. The potential consequences of failing to meet the challenge to help the vulnerable could, it was felt, be significant both in social and financial terms. It is likely to cost the welfare state and whichever tier of government more in the long term if this support is not available.

## Place Scrutiny

The Place Scrutiny Committee met seven times during 2012/13, including the joint budget day on 28 January. It conducted two Task Group reviews during the same period into the Waste Service and the Highways Service working with Town and Parish Councils.

## The Committee's impact during the year

As mentioned beforehand, the Committee was instrumental in having the civil parking enforcement service reviewed. At the June 2012 meeting, a resolution was made to carry out a review of the service and a consultants' report has since been published which will provide an opportunity to publicly debate how the operational deficit should be tackled in future. In line with the Committee's suggestion, the Cabinet agreed to serve Notice on Devon District Councils to terminate the current agency agreements for civil parking enforcement by the end of March 2013 in order to begin the process of improving the service and reducing the deficit on enforcement.

The review of the [Working Relationship of the Highways Service with Town and Parish Councils](#) was initiated following a suggestion by a Parish Council which contacted the scrutiny team following their experience with the [Winter Maintenance Task Group](#) (Report CX/10/60, June 2010). That Parish Council's Chairman stressed that the Winter Maintenance Task Group "successfully instigated many positive outcomes" and "made a huge difference to the daily lives of so many people".

This one-day Spotlight Review focussed on the processes by which Highways defects were identified and resolved and the role which Town and Parish Councils had in this process as well as identifying opportunities for the two to be more closely aligned. The Group published its report in January 2013. This was a good example of multi-layer local government working successfully together.

The [Waste Task Group](#) published its final report in March 2013, which included five recommendations, inducing establishing a Joint Waste Service with the District Councils and comparing the cost benefits derived from attaining higher recycling rates with those achieved through "energy from waste" or other alternative waste treatment technologies. Some of the recommendations from the group's interim report in March 2012 had already been implemented, including the monitoring of contractors and the continued (financial) support to behavioural change campaigns.

## People's Scrutiny

The People's Scrutiny Committee met seven times during 2012/13, including the joint budget day on 28 January. It initiated Task Group reviews into support for carers including young carers, external placements, depression in older people, two reports covering the Devon Personalised Learning Service as well as a joint follow-up review of dementia services (see also Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny below).

## The Committee's impact during the year

In June 2012 the [Devon Personalised Learning Service \(DPLS\) Task Group](#) published an interim report which provided an overview of the DPLS and highlighted some of the key issues affecting the service. The Task Group did not, however, at that time consider work which was underway to review the existing model of in-house delivery of the DPLS; that was the focus of a second report presented to Committee in September 2012.

In September 2012 an update report was presented to Committee from the [Support for Carers Task Group/Young Carers Task Group](#) to follow-up previous work

monitoring the implementation of the recommendations. A further progress report on the implementation of these recommendations was received in March 2013. Overall, members were broadly encouraged by developments in the preceding six months. Devon was felt to be in a strong position to minimise any direct impact on carers' services with national reforms affecting the NHS, the County Council's transfer of Integrated Children Services to Virgin Care, as well as the possible impact of the Government's welfare reforms on the carers agenda.

The [External Placements Task Group](#) undertook a detailed study of the County Council's increasing dependence on external placements, and published their final report in January 2013. The Task Group recognised that some external placements were necessary. The County Council relied on independent providers for all learning disabled adult residential care (excluding respite), and for placements for children and young people where their needs were too complex to be met by existing provision in Devon. While there were various strategies to limit the number of children, young people and adults going into external placements it was felt more could be done to reduce their number and the costs involved, whilst keeping people's needs and the quality of service at the centre of the process. There was good work being undertaken in Devon, but it was not necessarily being linked together in the most strategic way. The recommendations of the Task Group aimed to promote a strategy moving forward which supported opportunities to reduce, safely, reliance on external placements.

In March 2013 the [Depression in Older People Task Group](#) presented an interim report to the Committee, which examined the scale and impact of depression in older people in Devon and the services and strategies to help those who were affected. The Task Group was particularly concerned about the extent to which issues often went unnoticed as health promotion was not generally targeted at this age group and society had been slow to recognise that growing older did not have to result in low mood, lack of self esteem and poor self confidence. The Report highlighted depression in older people as not being just a health issue but a broader social issue. It was clear that where depression was dealt with well, physical conditions would improve as a result, and vice versa. All the relevant health and social care agencies need to work more closely, along with the voluntary sector, to increase support to older people and reduce the isolation which can lead to depression.

## Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny

The Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee met six times during 2012/13, including the joint budget day on 28 January. It undertook reviews on the future of community hospitals, access to health services in rural areas, dementia services and falls and fracture prevention. The Committee also took part in regional scrutiny, led by Plymouth City Council, in an inquiry looking at the impact of regionally set pay for the NHS. There was also an individual member investigation into mortuary services in Holsworthy.

### The Committee's impact during the year

The [Future of Community Hospitals Task Group](#) aimed to understand Devon-wide provision and treatment in community hospitals and to form a view on future development. It looked at case studies of specific hospitals but did not make

judgements about how future services should be provided locally. The Task Group clearly stated the enduring need for local provision, with the acknowledgement that this may be different from before. The evolution of provision over decades had led to a patchwork of different services. The Task Group did not believe that there needed to be uniformity in service across every hospital. However, clarity in service provision, the potential to develop specialisms and the potential for hospitals to outreach into the community needed to be explored further.

The Task Group report was well received equally by commissioners and providers. The following is an extract from the official response by the NHS:

*The Task Group's timely, thoughtful and comprehensive report has been universally welcomed and the direction of travel laid out is supported in the local NHS [...] The report contents will play a pivotal role in informing future planning and provision of services.*

A refresh of [Access to Health Services in Rural Areas](#) followed the publication of a report in March 2010 (Report CX/10/36) setting out how transport provision, remote care, discharge planning and maternity services were configured across Devon. Members were pleased with the level of progress achieved; for example, a transport agreement had been reached between NHS Devon, the County Council and the community transport sector; telecare services were now available to patients who self-fund; maternity services had significantly improved and the low-risk birthing units in Honiton, Okehampton and Tiverton had seen an 8% increase in births. Often small things made a big difference and members were pleased that, for example, voluntary drivers were now issued with hospital parking permits by the acute hospitals, whereas before they had struggled with the car parking arrangements.

Members recommended, among other measures, vehicle utilisation on non-emergency NHS transport; considering reinvesting savings to ensure access to healthcare was maintained as service delivery changes; and the development of asset-based care, i.e. the flexible deployment of resources across an area to achieve the best outcomes for patients. They also recommended a review on the commissioning and provision of domiciliary care services.

The [Review of Dementia Services](#) followed the publication of an earlier report on older people mental health services in March 2010 (CX/10/37). Two and a half years on, much of that work was still in progress. The most notable and positive developments were, however, the development of dementia-friendly communities and the establishment of dementia support worker roles. Dementia-friendly communities support people with dementia by improving e.g. local facilities and social networks. Dementia support workers provide community-based support for all people who suffered from dementia and their carers as soon as possible after receiving a diagnosis. They helped navigate through the complexity of services from housing and benefits through to health, social and voluntary sector care and helped patients and their carers to remain in their chosen environment for longer.

The Group recommended, among other measures, that the Health & Wellbeing Board and Clinical Commissioning Groups make the development of dementia services a priority and work with partners to secure sufficient and long-term funding, especially for the crucial role of dementia support workers.

In October 2012, the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee hosted a one-day conference-style Spotlight Review on [Falls and Fracture Prevention](#) services. A significant number of older people – one third of people aged 65 and over, and half of the over 85s – would fall in any one year so it was vitally important that health and social care services were targeted in order to minimise follow-up care or prevent falls altogether. A number of recommendations came out of the day, including reviewing how public health promote bone health through various initiatives, e.g. breastfeeding campaigns, healthy eating initiatives or exercise programmes, especially in early learning settings and schools; establishing consistent assessment procedures across the county in primary and secondary care; or the commissioning of appropriate self-assessment tools and ensuring local availability across the county.

# Looking forward to 2013/14

Whatever the form or shape of the scrutiny function to be established by the Council following the elections in May 2013, any Scrutiny Committee will necessarily want to set its work programme for the year ahead.

Existing Scrutiny Committees would suggest - based on experience - that when looking at adding a piece of work to its work programme, its successors should attempt to ascertain the likely value to be gained from any review and balance that against the time and resources that would be involved in undertaking that activity - to make a judgement as to whether the likely outcomes can make a difference and what areas would benefit most from scrutiny input. The work scrutiny undertakes should add value to the democratic process and should have positive influences on the council's and partner organisations' policy and performance.

Scrutiny is most effective when focusing on a limited number of in-depth topics, to help prioritise it may be useful to ask if the item is:

- of particular concern to residents
- an area where performance could be improved
- a corporate priority
- an area where legislation is being developed or has recently been published
- an area which could represent better value for money
- identified as strategic risk
- potential for policy development.

A range of approaches can be used, including holding special meetings, one-off exercises and workshops, individual members being assigned specific responsibilities, site visits, Task Groups investigations, real-life case studies, post-scrutiny process reviews, mystery shopping etc.

While it is a matter for any new Scrutiny Committees to identify their own work programme, the existing Scrutiny Committees would suggest that the main challenges for 2013/14 will be:

- ensuring scrutiny focusses on issues and targets which are important in the beginning of the new administration, managing members' and officers' expectations and ensuring limited resources are directed and used effectively.
- establishing the future role and relationship of Scrutiny with:
  - o all levels of health provision, including Health & Wellbeing Boards, Health Watch, NHS commissioning organisations and providers, especially clinical commissioning groups
  - o Police & Crime Panels
  - o other community safety activity e.g. fire

- exploring the scope for alternative ways of working and involving other agencies including the Joint Engagement Board, the Centre for Public Scrutiny or the Local Government Network in obtaining data and undertaking research for Scrutiny Committees to consider.
- the role and requirements of the scrutiny function in relation to performance management and utilising links with the Devon Audit Partnership.
- understanding the Council's generic processes and practices in the commissioning and procurement of services and their future monitoring as well as assessing the impact on service delivery of such arrangements and the impact of the third sector and other partners.

Moreover, and while we recognise that existing Committees cannot bind their successors we have nonetheless identified in the Annex to this Report an outline of those areas where it is felt the Council would benefit from further scrutiny involvement.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny has previously attested that the areas where scrutiny experiences the most difficulty in effectively carrying out work relate to finance and partnership issues – arguably two of the most critical areas for the short-term future in local government.

The Council's Scrutiny Committees recognise – as does the County Council itself – the importance of an 'independent' effective scrutiny process which can both provide an authoritative means of calling the Cabinet to account and contributing to the development and delivery of services by the Council and others – for the benefit of the people of Devon.

Scrutiny is not just for Members; it is also an officer function. It is staff who work with members to scope investigations and clarify what is possible in a reasonable timeframe, who need to demonstrate the diplomacy required to get the right people in front of Scrutiny Committees at the right time, who liaise with officers who may have little or no experience of scrutiny, and, above all, who write effective, penetrating and tactful reports and recommendations.

Without the support of the Council's officers across the board, scrutiny could not work and it is therefore fitting that this report concludes by paying tribute to all those involved and in particular the Democratic Services & Scrutiny Secretariat and the dedicated scrutiny officers without whose efforts scrutiny in Devon would not operate as effectively as it does.

This Annual Report provides a valuable snapshot of the work of the Council's Scrutiny Committee's in 2012/13, demonstrating the effectiveness of the scrutiny process in which the Council and the public at large can be proud.

The Annual Report is commended to the Council.

**ANNEX - PROPOSED SCRUTINY ACTIVITY FOR 2013/14**

	<b>Budget Scrutiny (All Scrutiny Committees)</b>	<b>Proposed Task Group OR Scoping Report for proposed Task Group</b>	<b>Areas of concern currently being investigated by Scrutiny Officer(s) which may lead to further discrete activity</b>	<b>Routine Updates/Refresh of previous activity/work</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Autumn 2013	Budget Delivery 2013/14 - In-year briefing on budget delivery and impact on services				
Jan 2014	Draft Revenue Budget and Capital Programme – Scrutiny of budget based on proposed budget ad findings of in-year budget briefing				
	Joint Budget Scrutiny - Scrutiny of budget based on work of individual scrutiny committees				
<b>Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee</b>					
Suggested Future Items			Welfare Benefit Reform Act Task Group follow up	Locality budget spend	
			Devon Audit Partnership - Coordinate audit and scrutiny work programmes	Treasury Management regular updates	
			Income generation (not including selling assets)	Review and refresh the Use of Consultants Task Group report and fundamental review of the use of consultants (For details see Recommendation (d) of Minute *64)	
				Armed Forces Covenant	

Place Scrutiny Committee					
	Budget Scrutiny (All Scrutiny Committees)	Proposed Task Group OR Scoping Report for proposed Task Group	Areas of concern currently being investigated by Scrutiny Officer(s) which may lead to further discrete activity	Routine Updates/Refresh of previous activity/work	Comment
13 Jun 2103		Draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy	Winter Maintenance - Review of the winter highway service for 2012/13	Street Lighting - Update (see Minute *39 and Minute *51)	
12 Sept 2013				Civil Parking Enforcement - Progress report against Minute *73	
				Highways Working with Town and Parish Councils Spotlight Review (January 2013) - Review of implementation of recommendations	
Suggested Future Items		Renewable Energy – Review Council's current investment and future plans	Devon Audit Partnership - Coordinate audit and scrutiny work programmes	Strategy for Growth - Annual progress reports (see Minute *75)	
		Olympic Legacy - Review effectiveness of legacy programme		Waste Task Group - Review of implementation of recommendations	
		Utilities Spotlight Review (Refresh March 2012 report)			
		Quality of highway reinstatements by utility companies			
		Review of the roles, responsibilities and performance of all Risk Management Authorities - For details see Recommendation (c) of Minute *64			

People's Scrutiny Committee					
	Budget Scrutiny (All Scrutiny Committees)	Proposed Task Group OR Scoping Report for proposed Task Group	Areas of concern currently being investigated by Scrutiny Officer(s) which may lead to further discrete activity	Routine Updates/Refresh of previous activity/work	Comment
26 Sept 2013				Devon Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB) – 2012/13 Annual Report	
10 Jan 2014				Devon Safeguarding Adults Board (DSCB) – 2012/13 Annual Report	
3 Apr 2014				Annual Schools and Settings Performance Report 2013	
Suggested Future Items		Depression in Older People Task Group	Devon Audit Partnership - Coordinate audit and scrutiny work programmes	Support for Carers / Young Carers Task Group Update – Review of implementation of recommendations	
		Direct Payments and Personal Budgets		External Placements Task Group Update – Review of implementation of recommendations	
				Devon Personalised Learning Service Task Group Update - Review of implementation of recommendations from the interim report and the delivery model report	

*Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee*

	<b>Budget Scrutiny (All Scrutiny Committees)</b>	<b>Proposed Task Group OR Scoping Report for proposed Task Group</b>	<b>Areas of concern currently being investigated by Scrutiny Officer(s) which may lead to further discrete activity</b>	<b>Routine Updates/Refresh of previous activity/work</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Suggested Future Items		Ashburton and Bovey Tracey Community Hospital s - Potential relocation of beds – Assessment of impact of views of the public and the Action group.	Devon Audit Partnership - Coordinate audit and scrutiny work programmes	Quality Accounts	
			Workshop on Health Providers/Commissioners – Clarification of roles	Community Hospital TG	
			Mortality Rates - possible quality surveillance dashboard from CQC		
			DART admission service		



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