

Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/21

Chair's Review

The year of the COVID-19 pandemic has been unlike any other in the Council's history. By necessity the activities of elected members have changed from a typical years' focus on policy development and review to supporting positive governance and community leadership during this time.

Working remotely has not meant that Scrutiny has slowed pace, but has continued to strive to support the voice of local residents and pursue issues of concern. For Children's, this has entailed the deep dive into Ofsted related issues, with the first meeting only a couple of weeks into the first lockdown. Corporate Scrutiny has looked at 5G and maintained work on problem gambling, lobbying government on both issues. Health and Adult Care has continued to represent the views of local people, and even made a referral to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care.

Scrutiny Chairs express their thanks to all Scrutiny Committee Members, across the four year term. The support of the dedicated Scrutiny team, coupled with the expertise offered by the two special advisors continues to be critical to the success of scrutiny.

Councillor Alistair Dewhirst, Chair of the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Sara Randall-Johnson, Chair of the Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Rob Hannaford, Chair of the Children's Scrutiny Committee

Highlights

Remote Committee Meetings

- 18 public meetings broadcast live
- 78 reports
- 8 public speakers
- 0 call-ins

Task Groups and Spotlight Reviews

- 5 reports published
- 210 witnesses
- 22 recommendations
- 13 standing overview group meetings

How has Scrutiny listened?

- Heard from 210 witnesses in person from industry, the NHS, charities, employees, universities and members of the public in Task Group/Spotlight Reviews.
- Heard from Student and Newly Qualified Social Workers and Social Workers recruited from overseas to hear how we can support them more to stay working in Devon.
- Hosted a joint briefing session with Torbay and Plymouth Councils on the Health System response to Covid.
- Worked with Healthwatch Devon to hear patient experience on Dentistry which through Scrutiny has had direct impact on the regional commissioners.
- The Scrutiny team has run Community Surgeries throughout lockdown to support Member's community leadership role.
- The Chairs and Vice Chairs Group responded to remote working by meeting monthly to manage business and connect and the Scrutiny team has met weekly to connect and co-ordinate.

Scrutiny Impact

- Children's Scrutiny has embedded the importance of and raising the awareness of Children's Services in the council – reflected in the high % increase in the budget
- The Social Worker Workforce Spotlight Review re-enforced the importance of investing in our children's social workers and contributed to over £2million extra investment into our social workers.
- 20 mph trials continued after Scrutiny Task Group recommendations.
- The 2020 Carers Spotlight Review made recommendations to improve services for unpaid carers after speaking to 120 individuals across Devon. In March 2021, Devon Carers won a national award in the Support for Carers category of this year's prestigious Health Service Journal Awards.
- As part of the budget process, Scrutiny asked for more money to be put in to highway maintenance, and Cabinet agreed to an extra £600,000.
- Due to the 5G Spotlight Review Scrutiny lobbied on behalf of local residents to reflect concerns. These have now been taken up by the DCMS Select Committee.
- Children's Scrutiny responded quickly to the Children's Social Care Ofsted inspection and closely monitors the Improvement Plan across all meetings.
- Responding to local resident concerns at the lack of consultation on the future of the Teignmouth Community Hospital Scrutiny has now been referred to the Secretary of State for Health. NHS Devon CCG has advised that following Scrutiny's involvement there have been a number of learning points for how they will run consultations in the future.

- Work has continued through Scrutiny to progress support for problem gamblers. The Committee has had conversation with the Minister and waits for the results of the review of the Gambling Act.

Scrutiny Contributions

Sharing Practice

- Camilla, our Head of Scrutiny has taken part in two 'goldfish bowl' events to share Devon's practice nationally; on our annual report and virtual scrutiny meetings:
- We were invited to take part in the NHS England and the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Roundtable on October 14th 2020
- DCC Scrutiny Officers ran training at Exeter City Council on good scrutiny
- Camilla also took part in 'Governance and Scrutiny in a time of National Crisis' and how Scrutiny could respond to the challenge on the 10th April 2020.

Influencing the National Agenda

- Councillor Alistair Dewhirst and Camilla spoke to the National Institute of Licencing Conference on the Scrutiny work on problem gambling on the 10th November 2020