

<b>Title of Report</b>	<b>ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2021/22</b>	
<b>Presented by</b>	Councillor Robert Ashman Deputy Leader	
<b>Background Papers</b>	Minutes of the meetings of the <a href="#">Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 8 June</a> and the <a href="#">Community Scrutiny Committee on 29 June 2022</a>	<b>Public Report:</b> Yes
<b>Financial Implications</b>	None identified for 2021/22. Costs depend on whether any outsourcing is required when undertaking Task and Finish work.	
	<b>Signed off by the Section 151 Officer:</b> Yes	
<b>Legal Implications</b>	None identified	
	<b>Signed off by the Monitoring Officer:</b> Yes	
<b>Staffing and Corporate Implications</b>	Resources are referred to in the body of the report but there are no major staffing or corporate implications.	
	<b>Signed off by the Head of Paid Service:</b> Yes	
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	It was requested as part of the improvements to the scrutiny processes that an annual report be presented to Council setting out the work of the Scrutiny Committee over the preceding twelve-month period.	
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>THAT THE ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT BE RECEIVED AND NOTED.</b>	

## 1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 A corporate peer review which was undertaken in 2019 prompted the establishment of a Cross Party Scrutiny Working Group which was tasked with looking at improving the scrutiny process. The Working Group recommended a number of actions, one of which was that an annual report be submitted to Council which sets out the work of both the Scrutiny Committees over the preceding twelve-month period.
- 1.2 The Annual Scrutiny report for 2021/22 is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.3 Both the Community Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Scrutiny Committee have been given the opportunity of making comment and suggesting changes to the report before being reported to Council.
- 1.4 Both Committees welcomed the report with members advising that they were pleased to receive a clear report on what scrutiny was achieving; and the commencement of the Scrutiny Work Programming Group was acknowledged. It was felt that the scrutiny function was now moving in the right direction.

<b>Policies and other considerations, as appropriate</b>	
Council Priorities:	All
Policy Considerations:	None
Safeguarding:	No issues identified
Equalities/Diversity:	No issues identified
Customer Impact:	No issues identified
Economic and Social Impact:	No issues identified
Environment and Climate Change:	No issues identified
Consultation/Community/Tenant Engagement:	This report was considered by both the Corporate and Community Scrutiny Committee before being submitted to Council.
Risks:	No issues identified
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# North West Leicestershire District Council

## SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

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## 1. Foreword

“As the Chairs of the Community and the Corporate Scrutiny Committees, we are pleased to present this Annual Report for the 2021/22 municipal year. This report provides a summary of the work undertaken by both Committees during this period and provides an opportunity to reflect on this work. Whilst the past year has been another challenging period for the Council due to the ongoing covid pandemic, we feel that both Committees continued to constructively play their part in terms of scrutinising performance and contributing to key council policies and decisions.

We look forward to working with the new Chief Executive and will continue to work closely with the Council’s senior managers and staff to ensure that it is a productive year ahead; and we would like to offer our thanks and appreciation to the officers and Members who support both the Committees”.



Councillor Russell Boam  
Chairman, Corporate Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Jim Houlton  
Chairman, Community Scrutiny  
Committee

## 2. Membership

### Corporate Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Russell Boam (Chairman)  
Councillor B Harrison-Rushton (Deputy Chair)  
Councillor Elliott Allman  
Councillor Dave Bigby  
Councillor Alexander Bridgen  
Councillor Gill Houlton  
Councillor Tony Saffell  
Councillor Sean Sheahan  
Councillor Nigel Smith  
Councillor Michael Wyatt  
Councillor Carl Benfield (Substitute)  
Councillor David Everitt (Substitute)  
Councillor Marie French (Substitute)  
Councillor Stuart Gillard (Substitute)  
Councillor Russell Johnson (Substitute)  
Councillor Virge Richichi (Substitute)  
Councillor John Bridges (Substitute)  
Councillor Rachel Canny (Substitute)  
Councillor Dr Terri Eynon (Substitute)  
Councillor Louise Gillard (Substitute)  
Councillor Dan Harrison (Substitute)  
Councillor Michael Hay (Substitute)  
Councillor Jenny Simmons (Substitute)  
Councillor Jake Windram (Substitute)

### Community Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Jim Houlton (Chairman)  
Councillor Ray Morris (Deputy Chairman)  
Councillor Carl Benfield  
Councillor Alexander Bridgen  
Councillor Dr Terri Eynon  
Councillor John Geary  
Councillor Michael Hay  
Councillor Gill Houlton  
Councillor Jenny Simmons  
Councillor Michael Wyatt  
Councillor Dave Bigby (Substitute)  
Councillor Angela Black (Substitute)  
Councillor John Clarke (Substitute)  
Councillor Tony Saffell (Substitute)  
Councillor Carol Sewell (Substitute)  
Councillor Rachel Canny (Substitute)  
Councillor Marie French (Substitute)  
Councillor Louise Gillard (Substitute)  
Councillor Stuart Gillard (Substitute)  
Councillor John Legrys (Substitute)  
Councillor Sean Sheahan (Substitute)

### 3. Introduction

North West Leicestershire District Council adopts the Cabinet system to operate its decision making and there are two Scrutiny Committees comprising non-Cabinet members – the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and the Community Scrutiny Committee. Below is a non-exhaustive list of their respective areas of responsibility. Each Committee may receive reports and comment on matters of policy or items of business of a reasonably similar nature to those listed.

#### Corporate Scrutiny Committee

Asset Management  
Estates and property  
Review of Constitution  
Communications  
Customer Services  
Finance  
Human Resources  
Equalities  
ICT  
Legal Services  
Revenue and Benefits  
Shared Services

#### Community Scrutiny Committee

Business/Economy  
Planning and Building Control  
Tourism  
Partnerships  
Community Safety  
Leisure  
Health and Wellbeing  
Waste Services  
Stronger Safer Communities  
Environmental Health  
Licensing  
Environmental Protection  
Statutory crime and disorder committee  
Strategic Housing – Housing Strategy  
Housing Management  
Economic Development  
Regeneration

Scrutiny is central to the Council's decision-making process and has two main roles.

- (1) The development and review of policies for a wide range of subjects and services.
- (2) The critical examination of the Council's performance and effectiveness of its decisions.

The Scrutiny Committees look into areas of local concern; they recommend improvements the Council can make to ensure quality of life is improved for all. The main tasks of the Committees are:

- **Performance Monitoring** – The Council has to meet corporate priorities set out in the Council Delivery Plan and report against those indicators. Scrutiny can examine any aspect of the Council's performance, including services that it delivers through partnerships with other organisations.
- **Holding the Cabinet to Account** - Decisions made by the Cabinet but not yet put into practice can be reviewed by the Scrutiny Committees and challenged.
- **Policy review and development** - Scrutiny can propose new policies or review existing policies and recommend changes to the Cabinet.
- **External Scrutiny** - Any issue directly affecting the residents of North West Leicestershire can be scrutinised by the Committees, including services provided by another organisation.

It is through demonstrating the value and impact that effective scrutiny can have in supporting councils and other organisations to deliver better, more cost-effective services, that scrutiny is a valued element of local democracy.

## **4. The Committee's Resources**

Support to the Committees is provided by the two Strategic Directors who offer sound and practical advice on subject matters and help the Committees manage their respective work programmes with regular dialogue with the Chairmen of the two Scrutiny Committees.

Administrative support is provided by Democratic Services under the direction of the Democratic Services Team Manager.

Legal advice is provided by Legal Services under the direction of the Monitoring Officer.

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) is regarded as a focal reference point for professional advice and training; and East Midlands Councils has offered support, as required, to assist with Task and Finish Groups.

The Committee does not have its own dedicated budget and its work is funded from the Democratic Services budget.

## **5. The Work of Scrutiny**

Scrutiny work is Councillor led. In addition to Councillors leading on which subjects they wish to consider in depth through Task and Finish Groups, they also set their own work programme which is populated with topics selected from the Cabinet's Forward Plan, matters relating to the Council's priorities and challenges, and issues of importance to local residents.

Scrutiny does not get involved in minor matters or individual concerns which are not of wider community significance. These need to be addressed through the appropriate service unit, Ward Councillor, or the Portfolio Holder responsible for the issue.

Scrutiny does not deal with individual complaints as these should be addressed through the Council's Complaints Procedure.

The Council's Constitution sets out the rights of Scrutiny Committee Members to 'call in' a Cabinet decision if they feel it has not been made in accordance with decision-making principles set out in Article 12 of the Constitution. The Monitoring Officer is able to support and advise any members wishing to call in an item.

The 'call in' procedure may result in the convening of a special meeting to consider the matter unless the next programmed meeting falls within the deadlines set in the Council's Constitution. The 'call in' process has not been initiated during the past 12 months.

## **6. Scrutiny Cross- Party Working Group**

A Cross-Party Working Group was established in 2020 to deliver the outcomes of the corporate peer review. Whilst the Cross Party Working Group is not be a decision-making body, the group is tasked with:

- Monitoring the progress of the project against the agreed action plan.
- Acting as 'critical friends' providing feedback and comments throughout the project.
- Acting as 'champions' for the successful delivery of the project within their respective groups by ensuring that the progress of the project was regularly reported back to all group members.
- Making recommendations to appropriate decision-making bodies based on the consensus of the Group.

Its membership comprises

- Councillor Robert Ashman, Deputy Leader
- Councillor Dan Harrison, Conservative
- Councillor Nigel Smith, Conservative
- Councillor Terri Eynon, Labour
- Councillor Sean Sheahan, Labour
- Councillor Tony Saffell, Independent

At its meeting on 26 October 2021, the Scrutiny Cross Party Working Group made a recommendation to establish a Scrutiny Work Programming Group to include the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees, the Directors and members of the opposition. This recommendation was agreed by both the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and the Community Scrutiny Committee at the meetings held on 5 January and 9 February 2022 respectively.

## 7. The Scrutiny Work Programming Group

The Terms of Reference are as follows:-

Lead Officers	Strategic Directors
Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider requests for inclusion on the work programmes of each Scrutiny Committee;</li> <li>• Consider whether there are other ways of receiving information;</li> <li>• Consult with members of Scrutiny Committees, Senior Officers, Cabinet Members for horizon scanning on policy development;</li> <li>• Look at the corporate priorities, Council Delivery Plan and Cabinet Forward plan and identify key issues/topics for investigation/inquiry</li> <li>• Consider events and decisions in the Council's calendar which could require an input/consultation via Scrutiny</li> <li>• Review any follow up work required after previous scrutiny</li> </ul>
Membership	Membership to comprise the chairs of the two scrutiny committees and an opposition scrutiny committee member from each group.
Meetings	The Work Programming Group will meet approximately every 2 months (6 meetings a year)

It was agreed that Scrutiny Work Programming Group would run for a year. This would allow time to determine whether a more formal arrangement, such as a Scrutiny Commission, would likely be an effective addition to the process.

## 8. Scrutiny Principles

The following principles-based approach for identifying and managing the scrutiny work plan have been agreed.

### **Identify** Issues for consideration by Scrutiny

- Consulting with members of Scrutiny Committees, senior officers, Cabinet members – horizon scanning on policy development
- Looking at the corporate priorities, Council Delivery Plan and Cabinet Forward plan – identify key issues/topics for investigation/inquiry
- Considering events and decisions in the Council's calendar which could require an input/consultation via scrutiny – eg budget setting, CDP development
- Considering requests from members – eg via another forum or scoping report submitted
- Evaluating the Council's performance – eg quarterly reports, end of year reports, reviewing success of a particular scheme or initiative
- Reviewing any follow up work required after previous scrutiny work

### **Prioritise** the potential list of scrutiny topics based on factors including

- the resources required to deliver it (from members, offices and financially)
- the value and level of impact which could be achieved
- link to the council's priorities
- whether it is a regular recurring item which requires consideration before Cabinet/Council approval
- consideration of the guidance for selecting scrutiny topics

### **Scope and plan**

- Decide which scrutiny topics/work will be done each year
- Add to the work programme for each year to ensure manageable agendas for each meeting
- Consider allowing some scrutiny time for ad hoc requests which arise mid-year
- Ensure that items on the work programme are clearly scoped, with clear objectives for the committee and officers (use scoping form where possible)

### **Recommend** (if appropriate) based on the following

- Being specific about the recommendations
- Ensure that they are evidence based and realistic
- Focus on measurable outcomes (where appropriate)
- Address a specific person or group
- Be realistic about any financing requirements
- Develop in partnership with the executive, council officers and partners

**Respond** – Cabinet should respond to recommendations made by Scrutiny within 2 months. The response should be:

- A commitment to deliver the measure within the timescale set out
- A commitment to be held to account on that delivery in 6 months or year's time
- Where it is not proposed that a recommendation be accepted, the provision of substantive reasons as to why not
- Can be given by way of Cabinet report/meeting considering the recommendations

### **Review and evaluate**

- Regularly review progress and evaluate outcomes eg at Directors/Chairs meetings
- Produce an annual report which demonstrates the work the Committees have done and their impact



Topics <b>are</b> suitable for Scrutiny when	Topics <b>are not</b> suitable for Scrutiny when
Scrutiny could have an impact and add value	The issue is already being addressed elsewhere and change is imminent
The topic is of high local importance and reflects the concerns of local people	The topic would be better addressed elsewhere (and will be referred there)
The resources are available that would be required to conduct the review – staff and budget	Scrutiny involvement would have limited or no impact on outcomes
It avoids duplication of work elsewhere	The topic would be sub-judice or prejudicial to the council's interests
The issue is one that the committee can realistically influence	The topic is too broad to make a review realistic
The issue is related to an area where the council or one of its partners is not performing well	New legislation or guidance relating to the topic is expected in the next year

## 9. The Scrutiny Year

Over the 12 meetings which the Scrutiny Committees held during 2021-22, several different topics were scrutinised, as shown in the table below:

Item	Considered by	Action of the Committee	Outcome
Community Grants Annual Report	Community Scrutiny Committee on 19 May 2020	Listened to representatives from the Citizens Advice Bureau and Age UK and asked questions around the content and criteria.	Helped shape the format of future reports and gain a better understanding of the grant criteria.
Zero Carbon	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 9 June 2021	Received an update on the progress made so far on the Council's zero carbon aims and raised a number of questions and issues for Cabinet to consider.	Urged Local Plan Committee to seriously consider what could be done to impose good targets for the Carbon Footprint on new houses built in the district.
Corporate Accommodation	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 9 June 2021	Considered the proposals and submitted a number of questions and issues for Cabinet to consider ahead of its final decision	Gained a better understanding of the issues regarding the accommodation and sought assurances that customer services would not be adversely affected.
Community Hub	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 9 June 2021	Considered the proposals and submitted a number of questions and issues for Cabinet to consider ahead of its final decision	Gave examples of where improvements could be made to the customer experience.
Council Delivery Plan Review	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 9 June 2021	Considered the draft Plan and asked questions around the content and format.	Helped shape the format and content of future reports.
Disposal of Land Holding	Community Scrutiny Committee on 22 July 2021	Considered the proposals and submitted a number of questions and issues for Cabinet to consider ahead of its final decision	Cabinet considered the issues raised as part of this confidential report before making its final decision

Marlborough Centre	Community Scrutiny Committee on 22 July 2021	Considered the proposals and submitted a number of questions and issues for Cabinet to consider ahead of its final decision	Cabinet considered the issues raised as part of this confidential report before making its final decision
Fleet Management Strategy	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 1 September 2021	Commented on the proposals which included the purchase of electric vehicles to replace diesel; the options for replacement diesel; and the future potential location of the Waste and Parks depots.	Helped to gain an understanding of hydrogen technology; the costs associated with electric charging and the lifecycle of a battery.
Special Expenses Policy	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 1 September 2021	Commented on the draft policy which aimed to formalise the Council's current position on special expenses.	Supported the views of the Coalville Special Expenses Working Party
Recovery of Leisure Centres	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 1 September 2021	Received a presentation on the recovery of the leisure centres during the Covid-19 pandemic.	Gained an understanding of the issues faced by the Leisure Centres during the pandemic.
Draft Housing Strategy	Community Scrutiny Committee on 26 October 2021	Commented on the draft strategy	Helped to understand how information was gathered to inform the future needs of housing and asked that Right to Buy, being the most affordable way of getting on the housing ladder be included in the Strategy.
Medium Term Financial Plan	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 10 November 2021	Noted the changes to assumptions that drive the MTFP and questioned some of the thinking behind it.	The Committee now has a better understanding of the issues which drive the MTFP.
Shop Front Scheme	Community Scrutiny Committee on 24 November 2021	Considered the proposals and submitted a number of questions and issues	Requested that all businesses be encouraged to take pride in the whole unit, not just the initial shop front.
Zero Litter Strategy	Community Scrutiny Committee on 24 November 2021	Considered the proposals and submitted a number of questions and issues for Cabinet to consider ahead of its final decision	Sought assurances that the provision of more cameras would be a priority. Asked that the Government be lobbied on the promised litter picking incentives and deposit scheme.

NWLDC Cycling and Walking Strategy	Community Scrutiny Committee on 24 November 2021	Considered the proposals and submitted a number of questions and issues for Cabinet to consider ahead of its final decision	Sought a more user-friendly document with more ambition and with speedier action. As a result, officers agreed to look at clarifying several details within the strategy including population and housing numbers, confidence levels, HS2, PCT assumptions and other ambitious figures presented.
Budget Proposals 2022/23	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 8 December 2021 and 5 January 2022	Commented on the budgetary proposals to be taken forward as part of the developing 2022/23 budget.	Comments were considered by Cabinet and Council when formulating and agreeing the budget.
Customer Services Strategy	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 8 December 2021	Considered the proposals and submitted a number of questions and issues for Cabinet to consider ahead of its final decision	Sought assurances that the systems used for self-serve were accessible on all user platforms so as not to put obstacles in people's way that could deter them from using the service.
NWL Visitor Economy Plan	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 5 January 2022	Considered the proposals and submitted a number of questions and issues for Cabinet to consider ahead of its final decision and its opposition to the closing of Ashby Tourist Information Centre	Asked that more work be done on attracting tourists to the area.
Flood Management in NWL	Community Scrutiny Committee on 9 February 2022	Received a presentation and made a number of comments.	Gained a better understanding of flood management in the district and suggested an annual report.
Empty Homes Policy	Community Scrutiny Committee on 9 February 2022	Commented on the draft policy.	Suggested that the service could revisit a Council run grant scheme to help get homes in use again
Economic Growth Plan	Community Scrutiny Committee on 9 February 2022	Considered the proposals and submitted a number of questions and issues for Cabinet to consider ahead of its final decision	Encouraged more work to be done around climate challenges and engagement with developers about the efficiencies of their buildings from the outset and then work with existing employers to see how they could improve the efficiency of their sites and premises.

Marlborough Square Public Realm	Community Scrutiny Committee on 9 February 2022	Considered the proposals and submitted a number of questions and issues for Cabinet to consider ahead of its final decision	Officers reflected on the comments made in respect of making the area more pedestrian.
Housing Asset Management Plan	Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 9 March 2022	Commented on the draft plan.	Ensured that the Plan was changed to make reference to the installation of electric vehicle charging points in council housing areas.
Coalville Regeneration Framework	Community Scrutiny 6 April 2022	Provided comments and observations to inform the final version.	The Committee asserted its hopes that by the year 2035, all of the authority's licenced taxis would be electric in order to comply with Zero Carbon objectives.

## 10. Task and Finish Groups

The Scrutiny Committees can set up special working parties called Task and Finish Groups when they need to undertake a detailed, in-depth investigation into a particular issue. The work is undertaken by a small group of councillors appointed from the membership of the Scrutiny Committee.

During 2020/21 Scrutiny Members established the following Task and Finish Group: -

### Housing Strategy

The Group was tasked with looking at if and how NWLDC can influence an increase in the supply of affordable housing in the district and was asked to make recommendations to Cabinet to this effect.

The membership was: -

- Cllr E Allman
- Cllr T Eynon
- Cllr K Merrie
- Cllr S Sheahan
- Cllr N Smith
- Cllr M Wyatt

The Group held four meetings between the period of 14 April 2021 and 18 August 2021 and considered a range of reports and presentations as part of their work to review the targets for affordable housing provision in the district.

The concluding report to the Task and Finish Group was used at the Group's final meeting on 18 August 2021 to inform the debate which resulted in the Group's final recommendations being agreed by the Community Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 26 October 2021 and subsequently supported, subject to an amendment, by Cabinet at its meeting on 9 November 2021.

## 11. Looking Ahead to 2022-2023

The year ahead will see the Corporate Scrutiny Committees being chaired by a different member and we therefore welcome Councillor Nigel Smith.

The Scrutiny Committees will continue to grow and develop in their role of holding the authority's decision makers to account. The key priority for the year ahead will be the establishment of the Scrutiny Work Programming Group which could act as a pre-cursor for the establishment of a Scrutiny Commission, subject to its success or otherwise. This will be against a backdrop of a change in leadership with the introduction of a new Chief Executive.

## 12. Members' Attendance Record

### Corporate Scrutiny Committee

Attendance	9 June 2021	1 Sept 2021	10 Nov 2021	8 Dec 2021	5 Jan 2022	9 Mar 2022	%
Russell Boam	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	83%
Bertie Harrison-Rushton	N	N	Y	N	N	N	17%
Elliott Allman	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N	50%
Dave Bigby	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
Alexander Bridgen	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	83%
Gill Houtt	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
Tony Saffell	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	67%
Sean Sheahan	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
Nigel Smith	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	50%
Michael Wyatt	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	50%

### Community Scrutiny Committee

Attendance	19 May 2021	22 Jul 2021	26 Oct 2021	24 Nov 2021	9 Feb 2022	6 April 2022	%
Jim Houtt	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	83%
Ray Morris **	N/A	N/A	Y	Y	Y	N	75%
Carl Benfield	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	67%
Alexander Bridgen	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	33%
Dr Terri Eynon	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
John Geary	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
Michael Hay	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
Gill Houtt	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	67%
Jenny Simmons	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100%
Michael Wyatt	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	67%

\*\* Appointed to the Committee on 7 September 2021