

SCRUTINY

Annual Report

2020
2021



Introduction

by **Cllr Naeem Akhtar**,

Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee



2020 turned out to be a year like no other. The global pandemic has impacted on everyone and our thoughts are with those who have lost loved ones due to COVID-19.



I would like to thank Cllr Brown for his leadership as Chair of SCRUCO at the beginning of the municipal year and welcome Cllr Bigham who was appointed in November as the Chair of Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board.

All of the Scrutiny Board Chairs have worked hard to ensure scrutiny continued throughout the pandemic. This followed an initial pause to take stock and temporarily reshape scrutiny to ensure our approach was timely and proportionate. A full schedule of meetings started in September and work programmes reflected the challenges facing the City and flexed to allow scrutiny of emerging priorities.

During this year, for the first time, Council meetings were held virtually. Members stepped up to this challenge admirably. Virtual meetings enabled scrutiny to reach a larger audience and allowed people to watch the recorded meetings back at leisure. We have had great engagement from our partners throughout the year, despite the added pressures COVID has put on them.

Looking forward to 2021/22, the Scrutiny Boards will focus on the City's reset and recovery from COVID-19 as well as items of interest to the public including fly-tipping, mental health, domestic abuse and the legacy of City of Culture.



Scrutiny is a part of the Council's democratic structure led by non-executive Councillors. It works to the common aim of improving services for the local community and is involved in the following:

- **Policy review and development:**
Helping to shape the way public services are delivered.
- **Scrutinising decisions:**
Is the right action being taken? Are services working effectively?
- **External scrutiny:**
Examining services that impact upon the local community.

Scrutiny does not make decisions; it uses evidence to make recommendations to the Cabinet to request change.

Get involved

Suggest topics for scrutiny here:

 Scrutiny Chairs and Team
scrutiny@coventry.gov.uk

Follow us on twitter

 [@covscrutiny](https://twitter.com/covscrutiny)

Find meeting dates and agendas here:

www.coventry.gov.uk/meetingagendas

Watch meetings from 2020/21 here:

www.coventry.gov.uk/onlinepublicmeetings



Scrutiny during 2020/21

At the start of the 2020/21 municipal year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the decision was taken to suspend a full scrutiny programme and for Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee to temporarily take the lead on all scrutiny activity, focussing on work programme items which were timely and proportionate. From September 2020, a full scrutiny programme was reinstated with all 6 Boards resuming their meetings and work programmes.



SCRUTINY
Co-ordination
Committee



- › Scrutiny Coordination and cross cutting items
- › Policy and Leadership
- › Policing and Equalities
- › Designated Crime and Disorder Board
- › City of Culture 2021



- › Strategic Finance
- › Council Resources
- › Procurement & Social Value
- › Workforce



- › Children & Young People's Social Care
- › Schools
- › Adult, Higher & Further Education
- › Libraries
- › Skills & Employability



- › Business, Enterprise & Employment
- › Inward Investment
- › Transportation
- › Sustainability & Climate Change
- › Digital Strategy



- › City Services
- › Social Enterprise Strategy
- › Community and Third Sector
- › Housing and Homelessness



- › Health
- › Adult Social Care
- › Health Inequalities
- › Sustainability and Transformation Plans
- › Sport & Physical Activity

COVID-19 Response

Scrutiny Co-ordination and the five Boards all considered the impact of COVID on the City, its people, the organisation and partners.

This work included items on the Council's reset and recovery approach, the approach to COVID Enforcement, the support being provided to communities, NHS reset and recovery of non-COVID health services. The Education and Children's Scrutiny Board (2) focused on the impact on schools and children's services, particularly vulnerable children and families. The Board also considered how new ways of working was supporting the continuation of support to children and young people. The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) monitored the impact of the pandemic on the delivery of the city's major capital projects, including Friargate, the

station and the improvements in the city centre. The Communities and Neighbourhoods (4) also considered the increase in fly-tipping due to the lockdown and the steps being taken not only to target perpetrators but also to change behaviour to reduce fly-tipping. Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) considered the evolving impact of COVID on the Council's financial position and considered the mitigations implemented to protect the Council's finances as well as what grants were available to businesses, individuals and the Council to support them through the pandemic.



In an unprecedented year, scrutiny members sought assurance that the Council was supporting our communities in an incredibly challenging time. The pace of change meant the Boards adapted to new ways of working too including virtual scrutiny meetings and receiving information at short notice.

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) also considered the support that had been provided to small businesses throughout the pandemic, scrutinising the effectiveness of the distribution of grants available. The Cabinet Member and officers assured the Board that the Council had worked hard and had been successful in supporting businesses, including the distribution of grants, furlough and the quick pace of change in government guidance.

Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5) received updates from health partners throughout the year on the impact of COVID on NHS services and in particular, progress on restoring non-COVID services in December. The pressures on the NHS were well understood but Members stressed their concerns that vital diagnostics and treatments were delayed. Concerns were also raised about the ability of Mental Health services to meet demand as restrictions eased.



City of Culture

City of Culture is an exciting opportunity for Coventry. The pandemic delayed the start until May 2021. Scrutiny have looked at the revised plans, considered the ever-evolving impact of COVID and changing restrictions on the programme. Members wanted to ensure that City of Culture provided opportunities for all our communities to participate in the events and that there were apprenticeship opportunities available.

The Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) considered in detail the plans to clean up the city, noting the planned steps being taken, including the establishment of a Cov Clean Streets Team, increased enforcement and a half-price bulky waste collection service. Members requested that the Council's webpage be streamlined to make it easier for members of the public to find the information they need.

New ways of working

Several Boards considered the impact of lockdown and the acceleration of implementing new more flexible ways of working, particularly the impact of working from home and virtual meetings for Members, Officers and the Public. Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) considered the Digital First project worked to improve the online customer offer and webchats had been developed; the impact of evolving Public Health guidance on the re-utilisation of Council Buildings for service delivery and staff and how these changes would be communicated and the benefits of flexible working including productivity and work/life balance. Members also considered the digital offer which enabled them to work virtually including a casework tool to support their constituents.



Sustainability and Climate Change

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee considered sustainability and climate change throughout the year and the theme fed through into the work of other boards too who were mindful to consider it when discussing their items. Members considered key areas of activity on this agenda including energy and climate change; transforming transport and mobility, protecting biodiversity, addressing environmental

inequalities and its impact on society and creating partnerships for change. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee heard how the Council were investing in the sustainability and climate change through the introduction of a dedicated team. With the new team in place, work was underway within the Council and with partners, both locally and internationally, to reduce the impact of the City on Climate Change.

Call-in: War Memorial Parking Charges



Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee considered a call-in on the decision to introduce parking charges at War Memorial Park. Members of the Committee carefully considered the decision and the information provided, questioning the Cabinet Member, Ward Councillors and officers. The Committee agreed to uphold the decision of the Cabinet Member, with the additional recommendation that the post-implementation review be extended beyond the national lockdown period, the review report includes the impact on displacement parking, blue badge holders and use of alternative transport and climate change. The Committee also requested that the report be submitted to a future scrutiny meeting.