



Scrutiny Annual Report to Council

2024-25

To be considered at the City Council meeting
on the 2nd of September 2025

Introduction by Cllr Gavin Lloyd, Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

Welcome to the Scrutiny Annual Report for the municipal year 2024-25. It contains a few highlights from the year, including cross-cutting themes, as well as work by the individual boards.

Firstly, I would like to thank Cllr Naeem Akhtar for all the work he has done in his role as Chair since 2021 - the scrutiny work he has led on in Coventry, as well as at the West Midlands Combined Authority has set a high bar for those that follow. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Councillor Thomas for her work in chairing the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board and Councillor Kelly in her role as Deputy Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee during 2024-25 and welcome Councillor Kelly in her new role as the Chair of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board.

Scrutiny is an important part of the Council's democratic structure which is 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 of the executive: Is the right action being taken? Are services working effectively?
- External scrutiny: Examining services that impact upon the local community, such as health and policing.
- Scrutiny uses evidence to make recommendations to the Cabinet to request change; it does not make decisions.

The focus for scrutiny in 2025-26 will continue to be how we work with partners to sustain and improve services, particularly within the current economic and financial situation. This year the focus will be on impact and all scrutiny boards will undertake a task and finish group within their portfolio area to identify areas of improvement for Council services.

Get involved:

- Email the Scrutiny Chairs and Team via scrutiny@coventry.gov.uk
- Follow us on twitter @covscrutiny
- Find meeting dates and agendas here: [Coventry City Council Meeting Papers](#)

Scrutiny 2024-25



Scrutiny Board Highlights 2024-25

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

Pre-Decision Scrutiny

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee focused on pre-decision scrutiny this year. There were several Cabinet reports which were considered by the committee before the executive made a final decision. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee took the opportunity to look at the proposed decisions in more detail, questioning the relevant Cabinet Members and officers on the details provided in the reports. Reports that were subject to pre-decision this year were:

- LGA Peer Review Findings
- Proposed Consultation for the Community Safety Partnership Plan 2024-27 - additional recommendations
- Additional Licensing of HMO's
- Dog Control PSPO's
- One Coventry Performance Report
- City-wide PSPO
- Climate Change Strategy
- Temporary Accommodation
- Coventry Municipal Holdings Ltd – published accounts
- One Coventry Services Consultation

Strategic Energy Partnership

At their meeting on 20 November 2024, Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee considered a performance update of the Strategic Energy Partnership (SEP). The fifteen-year Strategic Energy Partnership between the Council and E.ON is the first of its kind in the UK and has the potential to put Coventry at the forefront of the net zero transition. The Council's relationship with E.ON will help support the development of ground-breaking projects, with potential funding from E.ON as well as other sources. The committee asked questions and received responses which identified, the importance of decarbonisation, but also the need to ensure that there is sufficient supply of energy to be affordable; that the benefits of the way the partnership was set up in Coventry was that it meant projects could be procured more quickly than if there was separate procurement processes for each individual project. Other benefits include legitimacy schemes supported by the Council have with residents; that there will be 2200 jobs created annually through the Energy Plan. The SEP was working with schools and colleges to promote apprenticeships within the sector, with a target of at least 25 in the first 5 years.



Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board

Consultation on Spending, Saving and Council Tax Proposals for 2025/26



The Board considered a proposal for a three-week budget engagement process in October 2024 to help shape the December pre-budget report. The aim was to align budget planning more closely with the Council's One Coventry Plan by gathering public input on service priorities, without including specific financial proposals. A draft survey was to be widely promoted to increase participation, especially from diverse community groups. The Board endorsed the proposal, requested the addition of a socio-economic group question in the survey, and emphasised the importance of including Residents' Associations in its distribution.

During the Budget Consultation period, the Board reviewed a briefing on the City Council's public consultation regarding revenue spending, savings proposals, Council Tax, and the Adult Social Care precept for 2025/26. A seven-week consultation was approved by Cabinet, closing on 28th January 2025. The Board discussed financial settlements, proposed changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme, and equality impacts, including effects on care leavers and low-income households. They made several recommendations, including enhancing public awareness of discretionary support, reviewing the treatment of vulnerable groups, and evaluating the proposals' impact after 12 months.

Task and Finish Groups

Home to School Transport

The Board reviewed recommendations from the Home-to-School Transport Task & Finish Group, which emphasised the benefits of cross-service collaboration and the need for increased staff capacity to identify efficiencies. The Board supported continuing review of transport arrangements, sharing the Coventry model with the LGA, and exploring cost management strategies. They recommended replicating the collaborative approach in other Council areas, increasing use of in-house transport, and considering a fair incentive scheme for parents who transport their children. The Board will continue to monitor this in 2025/26.

Sickness Absence

The Board reviewed the findings of the Agency Staff and Staff Sickness Task and Finish Group, noting workplace changes and existing good practices in mental health support. Key suggestions included creating an internal agency staff pool and sharing best

practices across departments. The Board agreed to receive regular reports and recommended enhanced oversight and monitoring of staff sickness and agency usage by the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources.

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board

Child Friendly Cov

At their meeting in October the Board considered a briefing note on Child Friendly Cov including the Safe Spaces programme that was being introduced in the city. The Board welcomed the work being delivered to make the city more child friendly and recommended to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People:

- That consideration be given to other types of food outlets, including food hubs, and community centres and libraries being included in Safe Spaces
- That Home Educators be included and involved in all future work in this regard, particularly the survey
- That Secondary schools be further encouraged to participate and consideration be given to providing incentives to participate
- That consideration be given to licensed premises being included in Safe Spaces
- That the possibility of using the Child Friendly Cov logo as a "Kitemark" in schools be investigated
- That the engagement with Primary and Secondary Heads be welcomed and continued
- That consideration be given to participation in Local Democracy Week particularly visiting Parliament by members of the Pupil Parliament

The Board also received a link to the video promoting [Safe Spaces](#). The Board will monitor progress on these recommendations during 2025/26.

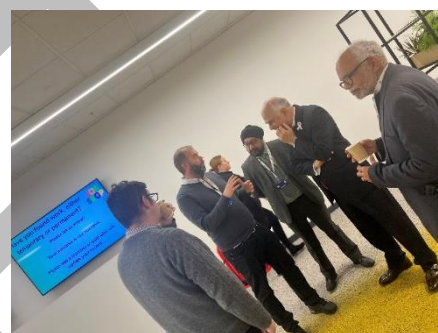
Early Help

At their meeting in April, the board considered a report on Early Help, which looked in detail of the Early Help Strategy. Members of the board asked questions about health partners role in Early Help and heard that although health partners take an active role in the delivery of Early Help, there were no Lead Professionals from health. As a result, the Board recommend to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and the Cabinet Member for Public Health, Sport, and Wellbeing that health commissioners and providers ensure capacity within the service for more lead practitioner roles.

Business, Economy, and Enterprise Scrutiny Board

Economic Development Strategy/Skills Strategy at the Coventry Job Shop

The Board reviewed progress on the Skills and Economic Development Strategies. Key discussions on the Skills Strategy included graduate retention, careers advice benchmarking, job rotation models, NEET performance, and AI-related skills development. For the Economic Development Strategy, the Board explored business support, social value initiatives, energy efficiency audits, and the potential impact of the Investment Zone. The Board endorsed the report's recommendations and requested a follow-up progress report in 2025/26 focusing on benchmarking and graduate retention efforts. Following the meeting, members were led through a tour of the Job Shop facilities by officers.



Drone Technology

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board received a briefing on Coventry City Council's involvement in drone technology projects. The Council has participated in several initiatives, including the Urban Air Port demonstration, Project Skyway, and the Drone Ready City project, showcasing drones' potential in areas such as traffic surveys, inspections, and medical supply transport. Benefits include cost reduction, efficiency gains, and lower emissions. The Board discussed regulatory, security, and operational considerations and supported continued use and integration of drones into Council services. Members requested updates on related projects and access to drone open data.

WMCA Bus Franchising Consultation

The Board reviewed a briefing on Transport for West Midlands' (TfWM) proposal to introduce a bus franchising system, which would shift control of routes, timetables, and standards from private operators to TfWM. A public consultation was underway between January to March 2025, with franchising potentially starting in Coventry by 2027 if approved in May 2025. The Board explored funding, operational standards, consultation outreach, integration with other transport modes, and service design. They supported the proposal and requested detailed feedback be submitted, including the need for broader consultation on user needs, evaluation of alternative transport modes, considerations for rural and vulnerable users, and raising public awareness. They emphasised achieving best value amid limited public funding. The Board will continue to

monitor progress of the WMCA Bus Franchising from a Coventry perspective throughout 2025/26.

Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board

Severn Trent and site visit

For the first meeting of the year, the Board considered an item on Water Quality and received a briefing note and presentation from representatives from Severn Trent. The Board questioned the representatives on the investment programme, as well as the 5-year plan, as well as work to improve the health of the regions rivers and steps taken to reduce pollution.

Severn Trent Water presented their five-year plan, which involves a £65 million investment to mitigate flood risk and enhance water quality through Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS). The company aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 and has committed to significant investments in environmental projects, including the restoration of rivers and enhancement of local habitats. The presentation emphasised the importance of community involvement in water management, with initiatives like the Get River Positive program and the establishment of River Rangers to foster local engagement. Board members raised questions regarding pollution areas, the relationship with the Canal and River Trust, and the impact of hard standing driveways on drainage systems.

In December the Board visited the Finham site to find out more about the process.



Impact of Budget Decisions

Several of the items considered by the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board were related to changes in service provisions as a result of budget decisions. The impact of the changes that the Board looked at were:

- Garden Waste
- Street Lighting
- Resident Parking Schemes

The Board looked at whether the proposed savings or income generation had been made, as well as whether there had been any unintended consequences. For the item on Street Lighting, the police attended and were able to provide assurances that there had not been an increase in crime or anti-social behaviour over the time that the part-night-time lighting had been implemented.

The Board requested further updates on the Garden Waste collection take-up for 25-26, including the new regulations on Food Waste which are due to be implemented.

The Board also noted that the scheme to standardise residents parking schemes had been fully implemented.

Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board

Visit to UHCW

The Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5) received a verbal update from the CEO of University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire (UHCW) on A&E waiting times amidst winter pressures, including increased cases of flu, COVID-19, norovirus, and respiratory issues in children. The Board discussed patient feedback, staffing, triage improvements, and service delivery challenges such as pharmacy closures, increased emergency care use during elective care waits, and rising mental health cases.

Efforts to improve efficiency included automated pharmacy systems and AI tools. Safety measures like 24-hour security and body cameras were in place for staff. The Board noted the update and agreed to develop a briefing to explore better communication of UHCW services, including Virtual Beds, to Coventry residents.



Sports Strategy and visit to Alan Higgs Centre

The Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board reviewed Coventry's current Sport and Physical Activity Strategy and its upcoming refresh, set to be completed by 2025. The new strategy will combine the 2014-2024 Sports Strategy and 2019-2024 Physical Activity Framework. Achievements include a reduction in inactivity among older adults, increased active travel, and near-universal access to fitness facilities. Over £100 million has been invested in sports facilities, and Coventry was named European City of Sport in 2019.

The updated strategy will focus on reducing inactivity in specific groups through community programs, with an Equality Impact Assessment ensuring inclusivity. The Board requested more data on access to facilities, physical activity in those over 75, and walking buses for schools, and suggested considering transport links and local training opportunities to boost participation.

The Board supported the strategy's development, particularly in enhancing inclusion for older adults.

