

## SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2022/2023

### Introduction by Cllr Naeem Akhtar, Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

2022/23 was a successful year for scrutiny with a focus on partnership working and the One Coventry Plan. This report highlights some of the important partnership work the Council is doing and scrutiny's role in scrutinising the effectiveness of those partnerships to deliver the best outcomes for Coventry residents.

I would like to thank Councillor Innes and former Councillor Auluck for their work chairing respectively the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board and the Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board during 2022/23

I would like to thank Councillor Miks for her work as Deputy Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee during 2022/23 and wish her well in her new role chairing the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board. Councillor Ali moves from chairing that board to the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board, replacing Councillor Bigham who has joined the Cabinet. Councillor R Singh will continue the work he started as chair of the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board

We also welcome Councillor Ruane as chair of the Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board, Councillor Thomas as chair of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board this year and Councillor Thay as Deputy Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee.

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:

Suggests topics for scrutiny here:

Email the Scrutiny Chairs and Team via [scrutiny@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@coventry.gov.uk)

Follow us on twitter @covscrutiny

Find meeting dates and agendas here:

[Coventry City Council Meeting Papers](#)

Scrutiny during 2022/23



Scrutiny  
Co-ordination  
Committee



Chair: Cllr N Akhtar

Deputy: Cllr Miks

Scrutiny Coordination and cross cutting items  
Policy and Leadership  
Policing and Equalities  
Designated Crime and Disorder Board  
Sustainability & Climate Change

Finance and Corporate Services	Education and Children's Services	Business, Economy and Enterprise	Communities and Neighbourhoods	Health and Social Care
Chair: Cllr Auluck	Chair: Cllr Innes	Chair: Cllr R Singh	Chair: Cllr Bigham	Chair: Cllr Ali
Strategic Finance	Children & Young People's Social Care	Business, Enterprise & Employment	City Services	Health
Council Resources	Schools	Inward Investment	Social Enterprise Strategy	Integrated Care Systems
Procurement & Social Value	Adult, Higher & Further Ed.	Transportation and Air Quality	Community and Third Sector	Adult Social Care
Workforce	Libraries	Tourism and Marketing	Housing and Homelessness	Health Inequalities
	Skills & Employability 			

## Cross Cutting Scrutiny Themes 2022/2023



### Climate Change

Climate Change has been a theme running throughout a number of items at scrutiny this year.

The Boards have considered the developing Climate Change Strategy, which will be considered for approval in 2023/24 following extensive public consultation. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee (Scruco) made a number of recommendations to strengthen the strategy and improve outcomes from it. This included giving consideration to a green energy supply, use of living walls in new developments and the use of local groups to gather information about biodiversity such as the Tree Wardens. Members also suggested ways to improve engagement with residents on the issues.

Scrutiny have also considered the air quality strategy and cycling and walking plans – looking for ways to increase use of sustainable travel. These items have been considered regularly by the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) and have resulted in requests for more information on the cycle hire scheme including usage data, other ways for the Council to support cycling, including availability of affordable bikes, progress on the implementation of cycle routes in the city, as well as supporting steps to improve safety from e-bikes and e-scooters specifically in pedestrianised areas such as the city centre.

The Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) have also considered active travel in relation to road lay out and schools. The Board welcomed the implementation of the School Street pilots and requested that they receive a further report on progress, as well as questioning officers on the practicalities of implementation and identification of schemes.

Scrutiny also considered several Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) which supported climate change actions as part of a consultation process before they were adopted by Cabinet. These included the Biodiversity SPD, the Residential Building Design Guide as well as the Tall Buildings and View Management SPD. All the comments made by the Board were fed into the consultation process and considered before agreeing the final documents.

### Partnership Working

Scrutiny has engaged with a number of partners this year on a wide range of topics. Scrutiny heard from statutory services including West Midlands Police, University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust, Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust. Scrutiny have also had representatives from

commissioned services present including Change Grow Live as well as the organisations running community libraries in Cheylesmore, Earlsdon and Finham.

The strengths of the city's partnerships show the commitment there is to supporting our citizens and growing our city and showcases our One Coventry approach. The Boards supported the partnership approach within the One Coventry Plan, with Scruco specifically endorsing the increased engagement and improved response rates to the consultation on the One Coventry Plan, as well as welcoming the ability for the Council to challenge and hold partners to account through the One Coventry Partnership.

It is always powerful when those with lived experience of a situation contribute to scrutiny. One example of this during 2022/23 was the item on Homes to Ukraine. At their meeting in November the Communities and Neighborhoods Scrutiny Board (4) invited representatives from the Ukrainian Association, the Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre, as well as a Ukrainian guest and host, to talk about their experiences of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. The Board asked questions on the details of the scheme including how much funding the Council receives, what the criteria were for people to join the scheme, where people were placed in the city people, as well as support into training and employment for Ukrainians on the scheme. The Board welcomed the work of the Migration team to support Ukrainians in the city, recognising the challenges posed by the scheme and potential challenges when the scheme ends. To that end, the Board requested a further update during 2023/24.

Scruco also heard from partners as part of the Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant the service is commissioned to Change Grow Live who came to present, including case studies, on the impact the grant has had. The Committee welcomed the work but raised concerns about issues of recruitment of specialised staff and reliance on agency staff.



Police and Council campaign following Scruco19.04.23



**Change  
Grow  
Live**

# Drug and Alcohol Service

Coventry





## **Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee**

### **Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board**

Scruco invited representatives from the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board to their meeting. These included representatives from The Haven and Panahghar. Scruco asked questions on the training and support offered to the judicial system and magistrates in relation to Domestic Abuse, the development of communication materials and concerns about low levels of prosecutions. The Committee also requested that the item remained on the work programme and will continue to receive regular updates on progress and wrote to the Chair of the Police and Crime Board requesting an increase in resources to increase capacity with regard to Domestic Abuse

### **Community Safety**

Representatives from West Midlands Police attended Scruco to outline the changes to the delivery of policing in the city. Members held the police to account and challenged on a number of issues effecting their communities including the SMILE graffiti, illegal motorbikes, and general crime figures. Members welcomed the new policing model, especially the synergy with the One Coventry Plan and requested a further evaluation of the model in the next municipal year.

### **Coventry Municipal Holdings**

Scruco have responsibility for scrutinising the performance of the Council's arms-length companies (Coventry Municipal Holdings) and did so at their meeting in October. The discussion covered the review of the performance, as well as business activity and return on investments. It was also agreed that members of Scruco would be trained with regard to arms-length companies and the Council's role. At the meeting it was agreed that the committee would visit Coombe Abbey Hotel to find out about the current offer, as well as plans for expansion of the business. Members were given a tour of the facilities, as well as the retail and leisure offer.



Members of Scrucoco visiting Coombe Abbey Hotel facilities.

### One Coventry Performance Report

Scrucoco considered the annual One Coventry Performance Report which details the Council's performance against key objectives and targets. As well as discussing the Council's performance, areas of concern were referred to the Boards below for further investigation.

### **Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1)**

#### Finance

The Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board considered a number of items on finance throughout the year. The items have addressed strategic financial issues, including Council Reserves and the Capital Programme.

The Board recognised that Councils were still working in a time of unprecedented financial pressure, and uncertainty, leading to further significant reductions in spending levels. Throughout the year the Board robustly questioned officers to seek assurance that the Council was effectively using its revenue and capital funding, managing contracts and generating income to provide the financial foundations needed to deliver services that protect the most vulnerable as well as providing the appropriate level and quality of core services for every citizen in the city.

The Board considered Social Value and Procurement, particularly in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Contract Management. The Board questioned officers about progress towards becoming a living wage employer and ways of ensuring sub-contracted employers meet the living wage criteria. The Board supported the proposal to establish a baseline of diversity data within the supply chain, targeted engagement and reporting process to deliver against the aims of the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

## City of Culture 2021

The City of Culture presented many exciting opportunities for Coventry. Unfortunately, the City of Culture Trust entered in administration in February 2023 before it was able to complete delivery of its legacy plan and Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1) met to ask questions about its legacy. The Board requested an additional meeting to look at the issue specifically. Although only one former trustee was able to attend a meeting, the Board considered the background and context of a loan from the Council to the City of Culture Trust. Members of the Board questioned Cabinet Members as well as officers. An independent review of collapse of the Trust has been requested and the outcome will be reported to scrutiny in due course. The Board however welcomed the work being done to continue working in partnership to continue the legacy of the City of Culture year.



The House Project at the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board

### **Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)**

The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) welcomed the 'Good' rating for Children's Services and have continued to monitor progress on the recommendations from the Ofsted inspection in June 2022. The Board received a progress report on the implementation of the actions from those recommendations at their meeting in March 2023. The Board noted progress on implementing the recommendations in the four key areas Ofsted had highlighted for improvement and asked for future items on Fostering and the Family Valued Project, including the re-unification project.

### **Autism in Schools Task and Finish Group**

Following on from the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board and the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board's task and finish group on a Autism a task and finish group, led by the

Education and Children's Scrutiny Board, was established to follow up an earlier task and finish group on autism, this time with an education focus to look at how children, young people, their families and education providers can best manage the period between referral and diagnosis. The group heard from Council service providers as well as visiting several school settings. The Board agreed that the work of the task and finish group will continue into 2023/24, focusing on the emerging themes of 1) The need for clearer referral pathways for parents. 2) Support for all schools to deliver best practice across the city 3) Provision in Secondary schools and strong transition from Primary and 4) The views of parents and carers, and children and young people

### **Business, Economy, and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)**

The Board considered in detail the Coventry Tourism Strategy 2019-23 and the new pilot Destination Management Organisation – Destination Coventry. The Board questioned the Cabinet Member, Council officers, as well as representatives from Destination Coventry and Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce.

The Board requested further performance data once it was available, as well as an opportunity to be involved in the process for renewing the Coventry Tourism Strategy beyond 2023.

As part of an item on Bus Provision in the City, Members of the Board raised concerns about proposed cuts to school bus services and requested an urgent item to consider what the Council could do to maintain services beyond the current school year. The Board was briefed on the situation at their January 2023 meeting and welcomed the fact that the eight services at risk were expected to continue throughout 2023/24 academic year. However, the Board recommended that the Cabinet Member identify a longer-term sustainable solution to continuing the school bus service in partnership with schools, faith organisations, transport providers and other key partners, to deliver school bus provision.

### **Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)**

In the previous year, the Communities and Neighborhoods Scrutiny Board (4) had undertaken a task and finish group on Fly-tipping Task and Finish Group and the recommendations were accepted by the Cabinet Members. During the year, the Board received updates on the implementation of the recommendations made and the impact of the work they did on communities. One area of progress was the collection of side waste (where safe to do so) so fly-tipping did not accumulate where bins could not accommodate waste.

### **Supplementary Planning Documents**

The Board considered several draft Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's) as part of the consultation process. These included Biodiversity, Residential Building Design, Tall Buildings and View Management as well as the Householder Design Guide. Members comments and questions were recorded and fed into the final consultation process before the final versions were accepted.

## **Housing and Homelessness Services**

Communities and Neighborhoods Scrutiny Board (4) scrutinised Housing and Homelessness services and the refreshed action plan. Members asked a number of questions in relation to benchmarking the service, the operation of new housing contracts, the Homefinder Allocations Scheme and enforcement undertaken in relation to properties.

Members identified a gap in the information provided on the website for support for those at risk of losing their homes due to defaulting on their mortgage. As a result of this, the Council website was swiftly updated.

## **Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5)**

### **Adult Social Care**

The Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5) considered a number of items on Adult Social Care to help support the preparation for the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspections due to start in 2023. Items they considered included Adult Social Care Quality Assurance and Market Failure Plan, Adult Social Care Annual Report and Key Areas of Improvement 2022/23 (Local Account) and how Adult Social Care keep people safe as one of their key commitments in the Adult Social Care Offer.

The Board had a robust discussion on how Adult Social Care Referrals and Assessments are managed to support the needs of the community.

The Board made recommendations to strengthen the End-of-Life Strategy which would improve the experience of the patient and their family. The final report will be considered by the Board next municipal year.

### **Holding Health Partners to Account**

The Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5) invited health partners into scrutiny on a number of occasions.

The Board held discussions with key health partners, including GP's and representatives of the Integrated Care Board in response to issues Coventry residents are experiencing in accessing GP services. Members raised concerns about accessibility to same or next day appointments. The Board also discussed further work to look at primary care estate issues.

The Board also scrutinised representatives of University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust about the wait times at A&E and challenged the level of service being received by their constituents. The Board asked questions including workforce pressures, bed occupancy levels putting pressure on waiting times and how the hospital can work in partnership with the Council to improve residents access to medical services.

The Board also received a further update on progress on implementation of recommendations from the previous year's task and finish group on Autism. The Board welcomed progress made but still raised concerns about the waiting times for assessment.