

Scrutiny Annual Report 2022-23



scrutiny

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For further information on any of the information contained within this report, or on the Scrutiny process in Newport please contact:

Democratic Services
Newport City Council
Civic Centre
Newport
NP20 4UR

Tel: 01633 656656

democratic.services@newport.gov.uk

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Introduction

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Scrutiny is the term given to the non-political process within the Council, whereby the decision makers (the Cabinet) are held to account for the decisions taken, whether they have been implemented effectively and whether they have resulted in improved services for people of Newport.

The Cabinet (also known as the executive) has the power to make the decisions needed to action the policies agreed by the Council. The remaining Councillors (non-executive) then form the scrutiny element, whose role is to challenge the performance of the Cabinet and hold them to account for the decisions taken. Scrutiny Committees can make recommendations and scrutinise the policies, decisions, and performance of the Cabinet. The Cabinet, in turn, consults with, and responds to, Scrutiny Committee recommendations.

The underlying principle of Scrutiny arrangements is to ensure that the decision-making process is open, accountable, and transparent.

Scrutiny has the following roles:

- Hold the Cabinet to account for the decisions it makes.
- Ensure that the Cabinet and Officers perform effectively and that the Council is delivering what it said it would.
- Listens to the views of the public and make sure the public voice is heard.
- Develops and reviews policy to ensure that it is fit for purpose and provides the best outcomes for the people of Newport.

Scrutiny Committees do not have decision-making powers. In all cases, the role of the Scrutiny Committee is to examine available options or consider how effectively an area is performing and then to make recommendations to the decision-making body whether that is the Council, the Cabinet, an Individual Cabinet Member, or external partners.

Scrutiny Committees are usually conducted in public, and the Committees are live streamed on the internet. Recordings of the meetings are also available online for the public to access after the event.

The Scrutiny Committee can operate in a number of ways, depending on the issue that they are looking into. The most common approaches are either to consider issues via a report at Committee meetings, or to set up a working group to look at an in-depth issue.

Since the introduction of the Wellbeing of Future Generation Act, Scrutiny has had a statutory role to scrutinise the work of the Public Service Boards. PSB's are accountable to Scrutiny Committees in respect of how they work jointly to improve the economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being of their area by contributing the achievement of the wellbeing goals in accordance with the sustainable development principle.

Under the Act, Scrutiny has the power to:

- Review or scrutinise the decisions made, or actions taken by the PSB;

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- Reviewing or scrutinise the governance arrangements of the PSB;
- Acting as a consultee on key documents;
- Monitoring progress on the PSBs implementation for the wellbeing plan and assessing the delivery of objectives.

In carrying out these roles, the Scrutiny Committee can require any statutory member of the Board to give evidence, the capacity in which they do so must relate to the exercise of joint functions conferred on them as a statutory member of the board.

How can the public get involved in the Scrutiny Process?

Scrutiny Committee meetings are normally open to the public and the agendas are published one week in advance of the meeting, on the Council's website. Members of the public are usually welcome to attend any Committee meeting to observe proceedings. Scrutiny meetings have been held on a hybrid basis since May 2022 in order to meet the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. Since April 2020 the public have been able to watch the Committees live using a live stream service on the Council's website, or to view recordings of the meetings after the event.

Agendas, reports, and minutes of meetings can be found on the [Council's website](#).

Members of the public can suggest items for the Scrutiny Committee to look into by writing, emailing, or phoning the Democratic Services Team:

Democratic Services Team
Newport City Council
Civic Centre
Newport
NP20 4UR

Tel: 01633 656656

Email: democratic.services@newport.gov.uk

What is the purpose of this Annual Report?

Each year the Council produces a Scrutiny Annual Report, which is intended to give an overview of the work undertaken by each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees over the previous 12 months. This report also sets out the planned actions for the next 12 months, summarised in Section 9, within the Action Plan for 2023/24.

This report looks at the work of the Scrutiny Committees from May 2022 to March 2023. The Annual Report is an essential tool for measuring the performance of Scrutiny, evaluating the progress made against previous targets and setting priorities for the coming year.

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Key Developments

The current Committee structure was adopted by the Council in May 2017. Since then, the Committees work has been focussed on the Council's scrutiny function relating to the roles below:

Performance Monitoring	Holding the executive to account.
Policy Review and Development	Including consultation on decisions before they are made (pre-decision Scrutiny)
Performance of partnerships	in particular the PSB and One Newport (but also NORSE, EAS, SRS, Newport LIVE and the Community Safety Partnership).
Scrutiny of Corporate Strategies/Plans Coordination / management	Such as the Corporate Plan, Improvement Objectives of work programmes - including referrals, policy review groups, recommendations monitoring, and setting processes for looking at Corporate issues such as the budget, public engagement, the Corporate Assessment)

Scrutiny's function has made a greater impact by devoting three of the four Committees to performance-based work, becoming more outcomes based and linking to the Cabinet work programme, creating a cohesive approach to improve performance within the Council.

The four Committees;

- Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
- Performance Scrutiny Committee – People
- Performance Scrutiny Committee – Place and Corporate
- Performance Scrutiny Committee – Partnerships

During this period elected members were invited to participate in a number of induction training seminars that support learning and development concerning Scrutiny. These included;

- An Introduction to Scrutiny
- Introduction to the Role and Governance Arrangements
- Terms of Reference, roles, and responsibilities
- Treasury, Budget Setting, and Finance

A training session for Senior Managers on Governance and Scrutiny was facilitated during this period.

As this was the period following local elections in May 2022, there was an increase in workload for committees who were required to consider strategic plans developed for medium- and long-term objectives in addition to the existing annual reporting considerations.

Below is a summary of the major developments and achievements this year.

1.1 Performance Scrutiny Committee – Place and Corporate

The Performance Scrutiny Committee for Place and Corporate met on five occasions during this time.

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In July the Committee received end of year updates on Service Plans 2021-22 for each of the Service areas considered under their Terms of Reference and have used this evidence base to scrutinise performance in a wider context. The Service plans have included financial information, links with corporate goals, Wellbeing goals and work towards goals set externally to the Council. Following the reconfiguration of services, it was emphasised that the service plans relate to the previous service areas and due to the changes implemented there would be a difference in responsibilities. There were new Cabinet Members as well as new Heads of Service that may not have been within the same roles when some of this work had been undertaken. The Committees reflected on the unique challenges of the preceding year, including the ongoing impact of the response to Covid-19 and thanked Officers for their work towards achieving the objectives, and for producing the comprehensive update. A number of recommendations were made to Cabinet commending the quality of the updates. Committees also requested further information on several topics across the service areas to be shared with Committee including Housing, Newport Transporter Bridge and electric vehicle charging points.

Following on, in Autumn 2022 the Committees considered drafts of new 3-year service area plans for Regeneration and Economic Development, Environment and Public Protection, Infrastructure, Housing and Communities. The Committee recommended some amendments to performance measure targets, identifying further resources to deliver the ambitions of the plans and to strengthen existing collaborative approaches underpinning some of the activities. The Committee added their support to the plans and thanked officers for the work that had gone into their development.

The Committee also considered Draft Budget proposals relevant to these service areas in detail as part of the Council's budget setting consultation process. The Committee's feedback on the budget process and public engagement were shared with Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, and the Committee's assessments of the proposals and considerations in taking the decisions were shared with Cabinet.

The Committee also requested a report on Recruitment and Retention which was presented before the end of the financial year. Members expressed their satisfaction with the value-based recruitment process and appreciated the effort put into making the onboarding process a positive experience. Committee Members requested further information to be shared with them as an information-only update.

Performance Scrutiny Committee – People

The Performance Scrutiny Committee for People met on nine occasions during the period. Similarly, to the Place and Corporate Committee, meetings in July 2022 were focused on end of year updates on Service Plans 2021-22 for Education, Children and Young People Services and Adult Services. The evidence base presented in the reports was used to scrutinise performance in a wider context. The Service plans have included financial information, links with corporate goals, Wellbeing goals and work towards goals set externally to the Council. The Committee was reminded that the service plans related to the previous structure and the current Cabinet Members and Heads of Service may not have been within the same roles when some of this work had been undertaken. The Committees reflected on the unique challenges of the preceding year, including the ongoing impact of the

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response to Covid-19 and thanked Officers for their work towards achieving the objectives set out in the plans. A number of recommendations were made to Cabinet commending the comprehensive and informative updates. The Committee recommended some amendments to the presentation of data in the reports before final versions were presented to Council.

Like Place and Corporate Committee, drafts of new 3-year service area plans were presented to People Committee in Autumn 2022. The Committee explored the challenges facing services and asked for further information on maintenance for school buildings, community projects, Social Services Programmes and Safeguarding.

The Committee recommended some amendments to performance measure targets, identifying further resources to deliver the ambitions of the plans and to strengthen existing collaborative approaches underpinning some of the activities. The Committee added their support to the plans and thanked officers for the work that had gone into their development.

The Committee also considered Draft Budget proposals relevant to these service areas in detail as part of the Council's budget setting consultation process. The Committee appreciated that there were hard decisions to be made given the current climate, and feedback on the budget process and public engagement were shared with Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. A summary of the Committee's assessments of the proposals and considerations in taking the decisions were shared with Cabinet.

2.2 Overview and Management Scrutiny

The Committee convened on six occasions during this period. Following local elections in May 2022, the Work Programme focused on several new three and five-year plans underpinning the strategic aims of the Council.

Annual Digital Strategy 2022-27 / Annual Information Risk Report 2022/ Annual Digital Report 2021-22

The Committee considered the Digital Strategy 2022-27 which represented a continuation of and development on the previous strategy. The 2022-27 strategy reflected the challenges faced and learning gained throughout the pandemic to reflect the evolution of digital need experienced by the council, its staff and the residents and businesses of Newport.

At the same meeting, the Committee considered the Annual Digital Report 2021/22 which provided an overview and assessment of the IT and digital arrangements for the council and identified where actions were required deliver improvements.

The Committee felt that the reports were comprehensive and clear and acknowledged the progress and transformation that had been made for both the Council and residents. The committee highlighted the importance of accessibility, simplicity, and ease of use for digital systems and updates and requested further information to provide additional assurance that the needs of citizens were being met. The Committee also appraised the Annual Information Risk Report 2022 as part of the Council's best practice approach to information management and security. The committee were content with the report and its contents.

The Committee were presented with the Annual Information Risk Report 2021-22 which highlighted positive achievements such as Payment Card Industry (PCI) compliance and the cyber stock take, and the challenges faced, such as issues with the public services network.

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The Committee made recommendations to create a stronger imperative for officers to complete relevant training and congratulated officers on the successes that had been delivered during the reporting period.

Climate Change Annual Report

The Committee were presented with the first Climate Change Annual Report that covered the year before the approval of the five-year plan. The report introduced the key delivery themes and priorities in each area, and further updates would be shared with Scrutiny on a regular basis. The Committee were satisfied with the introductory report and appreciated that more detail would be added as the plan progressed over the 5-year period.

Welsh Language Annual Report

The Committee were presented with the Council's five-year strategy setting out how the Council will promote and facilitate the use of Welsh for staff and residents. The Committee were asked to consider whether the Strategy reflects the Council's ongoing commitment to the Welsh language effectively. The committee agreed that the report was a fair reflection of what had occurred over the past year and highlighted the Council's ongoing commitment to the Welsh Language. The committee agreed that the Annual Report and requested more specific data to support key achievements within the report.

Strategic Equalities Plan Annual Report 2021-22

The Committee received the second annual report produced that met the Council's legislative duty under the Equalities Act, and noted progress made against the strategic equality objectives during that period. The Committee noted the progress made during the reporting period against the objectives, and asked for further information regarding the Strategic Equalities group and the work they undertook.

Annual Corporate Wellbeing Self-Assessment Report 2021-22

The Committee considered the 2021-22 Annual Report as the final report to summarise the progress Newport City Council had made in delivering the Corporate Plan 2017-22 before the new Corporate Plan 2022-27 came into effect.

The Committee noted the development of the new a Corporate Plan and were content with the objectives. The committee acknowledged the challenges and appreciated the hard work of staff particularly as this was still a period where the effects of covid were impacting on services.

Whilst there were conflicting opinions of Committee Members regarding whether the report contained too much or too little information, overall, the Committee felt that more data to contextualise any percentages given would be helpful.

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The Committee felt that more detail could be included in the report annual on the Heritage Offer, given Newport's many heritage sites, as this would support the aims of the Plan. The Committee also asked for more information regarding the student numbers at the University.

Corporate Safeguarding Annual Report 2021-22

In order to provide Scrutiny with essential information to allow effective scrutiny of the Councils' safeguarding, the Committee received an updated corporate safeguarding report. The report summarised how the theme of "safeguarding" was being fundamentally embedded within all aspects of council services, functions, and duties.

The Committee welcomed the report and thanked Officers for their hard work. Members wanted it recognised that they appreciate that this specific area of work is extremely difficult. The Committee recommended some minor changes to the report and were pleased to note that the Service Area listened to the comments and recommendations that were made in last year's meeting and had made the appropriate amendments.

Annual Scrutiny Report 2021-22

The committee considered the Scrutiny Annual Report 2021-22 and recommended a final version to be presented to Council by the Chair.

2022/23 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, the Committee was engaged as part of the consultation process Cabinet is required to conduct regarding the proposals, before recommending an overall budget and required council tax to the Council for approval. The Committee was asked to consider the process undertaken for the draft budget proposals, the public engagement undertaken and to make any comments on the budget process or the public engagement to the Cabinet. The Committee were also asked to endorse the comments made by the Performance Scrutiny Committees to be forwarded to the Cabinet. The Committee asked questions regarding the report content, the process of consultation and the recommendations from the Scrutiny Committees.

The Committee made a number of recommendations for consideration in future consultations and added their comments on specific proposals to those of the Performance Scrutiny Committees for People, and Place and Corporate. These comments were presented to Cabinet in the next stage of the budget setting process.

2.3 Performance Scrutiny Committee- Partnerships

The Committee met on eight occasions during this period to scrutinise performance of Partnerships.

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Gwent Public Services Board - Draft Well-being Plan 2023-2028

The Committee were presented with a draft of the plan as part of the consultation process before the final plan was developed and presented to Council. The Committee appreciated the detailed presentation, which they considered provided a good understanding about how the Gwent Public Service Board would work and how the plan was based on a detailed Needs Assessment. The Committee explored the seven well-being objectives and representation from a Newport perspective to ensure that the areas specific requirements are heard at a Gwent level.

The Committee were particularly interested in the ensuring that Newport's particular requirements regarding demographics and geography must be adequately and fairly represented. The Committee conveyed their expectation that the Council needs to maintain a local level of planning and scrutiny through governance arrangements.

The Committee praised the level of consultation that the Partnership Team had undertaken with the residents of Newport and emphasise the positivity of inclusive consultation that seeks to actively engage with residents who may be less heard in digital engagement.

The Committee noted the content of the survey and confirmed they were content with the objectives and next steps.

Development of a Regional Scrutiny Committee for the Gwent Public Services Board

Following on from this, the Committee noted the development of the Regional Scrutiny Committee and agreed for the proposal to go to Full Council in February 2023 for adoption and agreed to the Terms of Reference. Members wished to include in the Terms of Reference that all meetings should at least be offered via Hybrid on Teams, so that Members from different Local Authorities can attend the meeting if they cannot travel. The Committee felt that this supported the climate change agenda as well as supporting the maximum participation from Regional Scrutiny Committee Members.

The Committee advised that the regional scrutiny committee should have a clear focus on the effectiveness of the overall plan and the input of each in supporting and enhancing the effectiveness of local delivery.

Public Services Board Well-being Plan Annual Report 2021-22

The Committee considered the Wellbeing Plan Annual Report presented by the Public Services Board (PSB) and submitted their comments to be shared with the PSB. Partners were invited to be part of the meeting and updated the Committee on progress made against the four Wellbeing objectives of the plan. The Committee welcomed the detailed update, and the responses to their queries. The Committee felt that the report and update reflected the strength of the partnership arrangements, both in the significant achievements made, but also in the transparency around the issues and challenges being addressed.

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Gwent Public Services Board - Local Well-being Assessment

The Committee noted the Gwent Local Well-being Assessment for information.

One Newport Well-being Plan Annual Report 2021-22

Partners including Anuerin Bevan Health Board presented Scrutiny with an update on the progress made against the key steps of the five objectives set out in the well-being plan as agreed by the partners. The update reflected the collaborative work that was carried out through the partnership arrangements rather than in individual agencies or organisations. The Committee noted the performance updates and thanked the partners for attending to provide updates and answer queries. The Committee requested further information on developments and initiatives and suggested further opportunities to progress towards the intended outcomes set out in the plan.

The Committee noted the One Newport Well-being Plan Annual Report 2021-22 and wished to make several recommendations to the Partnership concerning the content and layout of the report. The Committee request that information on the next round of participatory budgeting would be shared by the partners so the Members can promote the opportunity within their own communities.

Norse Joint Venture Partnership

In November 2022, the Council's partnership with Norse was scrutinised by the Committee. The Committee considered the comprehensive report shared and considered the content and partnership arrangements through their line of questioning. Following up on the content of the Committee explored the performance and financial performance through their queries with the officers present. Members noted the value of the opportunity to appraise the partnership and recommended that when discussing a possible renewal of the contract in future, the partnership arrangements should consider corporate social responsibility and social value, as well as the cost model.

Education Assessment Service – Value for Money 2021-22

The Committee also considered the externally commissioned Education Achievement Service (EAS) Regional Value for Money (VfM) report 2021-22 and presentation. The Committee praised the partnership for their hard work and appreciated that the job is difficult. They were content with the figures contained within the report and wished to comment that this feels like a valuable partnership.

The Committee were pleased to note that good practice is being shared within the partnership and schools from the examples that were given by the Officers and recommended that this continues in future.

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The Committee explored the data contained in the report and made several recommendations for further data and summaries to be considered for future reports.

Shared Resource Services (SRS) Update

In December 2022, the Scrutiny Committee considered an update report on the Shared Resource Service's arrangements for IT service delivery. The Committee assessed the update upon the SRS's progress to date, particularly focussing on the challenges faced in workforce planning. The Committee noted the progress made and put forward a number of comments to the SRS and officers.

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) 2021/22

The Committee noted the VAWDASV Progress Report against the Gwent Strategy 2018-2023, the Implementation Plan, and the key strategic priority work plans for VAWDASV within the corporate arrangements for the whole Council, and wished to make the following comments and recommendations:

The Committee thanked Officers for their attendance and praised the comprehensive information that was provided. The Committee felt they gained a greater understanding of how the partnership work and again wish to comment that this was one of the most well-presented reports that they have currently received during their time in the committee.

The Committee request that an All-Member seminar be set up to allow all Councillors to be informed about how VAWDASV work. Members were pleased to hear that training courses have been developed for Councillors and Senior Officers.

One Newport Partnership Well-being Plan 2022-23 Q2 Performance

The Committee noted the performance within One Newport Partnership Well-being Plan 2022-23 Q2 and made a number of recommendations to the One Newport Partnership.

Committee Members requested more case studies to demonstrate progress made, and to reflect the positive outcomes that could be shared within communities.

Regional Market Stability Report 2022-2025

The Committee considered the Market Stability Report for the first time this year. The report provided an overview of the current position of the registered services in Gwent with a specific focus on the relative 'stability' of the services commissioned. The Committee agreed that the authority continues to engage with Regional Partnership Board (RPB) and support the development of the regional Area Plan,

The Committee praised the report for being comprehensive and well explained, leaving issues in no doubt. The Committee requested a copy of the regional Area Plan following

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publication on 1st April 2023 to ensure priorities highlighted in the Market Stability Reported are reflected in the action plan.

Gwent Regional Integration Fund

The Committee considered the financial liabilities and implications of the new Regional Integration Fund and its tapered funding model. The report aided consideration of the financial liabilities in adhering to the funding model and the associated services enabled and impacted by the budget considerations. The Committee was asked to make comment as part of the Council's response to the Gwent Regional Partnership Board via the Assistant Director of Partnership & Integration, on the outcome of the consideration as to whether the organisation accepts or rejects the liabilities associated and described in the report.

The Committee wished to make the comment to Welsh Government that it was not the time for the tapering funding model, as the economic challenge climate was too great. It was agreed that innovation and improvement is desirable in the longer term, however it was not considered the right time to put those services at risk. The Committee considered that not having the funds to be able to run the projects noted in the report would have an enormous impact on the people who rely on these projects for support. The Committee requested that the deadlines be pushed back for the tapered funding model until 2024 and asked if comments and views from the other partnership members where this has been presented, could be shared with them.

Safer Newport Community Safety Partnership

The Committee received a report on Community Safety arrangements in response to their previous request for appraisal on this partnership.

The Committee wished to be involved in the working group to help shape the working plan, which would develop the strategic needs assessment, associated strategies and the work programme.

The Committee were pleased to hear about the quality work from the Newport Intelligence Hub. It was requested if an informal meeting could be arranged with the Newport Intelligence Hub Manager to set up a presentation to explain the heat maps on incidents and anti-social behaviour. Comment was made that this would be beneficial, especially for the newer Committee Members. The Committee requested that future reports could incorporate case studies and examples of partnership working.

Education Achievement Service Business Plan 2023-25

Previously, the Education Achievement Service Business Plan for 2022-25 was reported to this Committee on 15 February 2022 following which the Committee's Comments were forwarded to the Cabinet where the EAS Business Plan also considered. On this occasion the Committee received an update containing the main priorities that the EAS believe will be

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relevant to focus upon in the draft annual update (June 2023 – March 2025) to the already agreed regional Business Plan 2022-2025. Members praised the new style of the report and were content with the data presented.

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9. Actions 2022-23 Update

Ref	Proposal for Improvement	Intended Outcome	Update
1	Review membership of committees, including Chairs, following local elections in May 2022	The scrutiny structure will meet legislative requirements and reflect the proportionality of political groups elected to Council, as per the Council's Constitution.	Completed
2	Deliver a structured programme for member training and development to improve members' scrutiny skills and improve their understanding of their scrutiny role as part of the induction programme for new members following the May 2022 local elections.	Members understanding of their Overview and Scrutiny Role increases	Completed As full programme of training was offered to all members during the year. This will be strengthened by further learning and development opportunities in 2023/24.
3	Reviewing the role of Scrutiny Committees in the light of the new corporate performance self-assessment process, the arrangements for regional PSB's.	Ensure that the Scrutiny arrangements meet the requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and continue to operate effectively in the light of the legislative changes.	Completed Reports on arrangements and appointments supporting the self-assessment and regional approaches have been considered by committees as specified in the report
4	The end-to-end Scrutiny process of support for Scrutiny will be reviewed in collaboration with Officers and Chairs as part of the continuous improvement cycle.	Opportunities to strengthen scrutiny arrangements will be identified and implemented	Completed This has been considered with Chairs and a number of improvements are to be implemented including Chair's briefings and regular meetings of Scrutiny Chairs.

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9. Actions 2022-2023

Ref	Proposal for Improvement	Intended Outcome	Completion Date	Responsible Officer
1	Provide further training for Scrutiny Chairs and Scrutiny members	This will support the personal development of committee members and strengthen the skills and experience of committees.	March 2024	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
2	Re-instate regular meetings of Chairs of Committees	This will strengthen the approach to the work programme and support the identification of any further support or development work required for committees.	May 2023	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

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