

Meeting Date: 26th April 2022

Portfolio: Cross-cutting

Key Decision: No

Policy and Budget
Framework

Public / Private Public

Title: Scrutiny Annual Report 2021-22

Report of: Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Report Number: OS.14/22

Purpose / Summary:

The Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021-22 summarises the role of Scrutiny at Carlisle City Council and reports on the work of the Scrutiny Panels during 2021-22.

Recommendations:

That the Council formally accept this report.

Tracking

Executive:	N/A
Scrutiny:	Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel 31/03/2022 Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel 07/04/2022 Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel 14/04/2022
Council:	26/04/2022

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Constitution: Article 6 – Overview and Scrutiny Committees, 6.03 Specific functions [c] states that:

***‘Annual report.** Overview and scrutiny committees must report annually to full Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate’.*

- 1.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021-22 summarises the role of Scrutiny at Carlisle City Council and reports on the work of the Scrutiny Panels during 2021-22.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Council formally accept the report.

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Appendices attached to report: Scrutiny Annual Report 2021-22

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government Act 1972 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- None

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL – There are no legal implications arising from the Report

FINANCE – None

EQUALITY – None

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE – None

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22



Scrutiny in Summary

Active



panel meetings



1
special
meeting



94
agenda items
scrutinised

Pro-active



1
call in



1
joint panel
site visit



task and finish groups

Engaged

Partners engaged with:

Tullie House, GLL, Police, Carlisle Partnership,
LEP, Environment Agency, Zero Carbon Partnership,
Friends of Carlisle Victorian & Turkish Baths



Introduction

Carlisle City Council has three scrutiny panels:

- Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel
- Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel
- Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel

Over the course of the year each Panel has run a full and varied workplan, reflecting aspects of the City Council's function that fall within that Panel's remit. Members have looked carefully at their work programmes, working with council officers to ensure that their scrutiny activity is targeted at the most important issues and decisions that are facing the City Council as Carlisle continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, prepares for Local Government Re-organisation in Cumbria and builds upon the many opportunities that are open to us.

What is Scrutiny and why is it important?

Scrutiny is a process to ensure that decisions taken by the Council reflect the needs and priorities of communities in Carlisle. Scrutiny is carried out by Councillors who understand and promote the concerns of the people who elected them, connecting decision makers to local communities.

Council decisions can be made by Council Officers, by the Council's 'Executive' (the political leadership) and by full Council (all Councillors).

Scrutiny Panels are made up of Non-Executive Councillors who work together, across political parties, to understand why decisions are made and how the Council is performing to deliver the best possible outcomes for Carlisle and its people. Scrutiny Panels do not have decision-making powers; their role is to challenge and make recommendations that influence decision makers.

Comment from Leader of the Council, Councillor John Mallinson

This year has again been difficult with the ongoing issues arising from COVID-19 but we have turned a corner and life is getting back to normal with face to face Council and Scrutiny meetings.

We are now heading towards a new unity council, Cumberland, made up of the former councils of Carlisle, Allerdale, Copeland and Cumbria. There is a lot of work.

needed before April 2023 when the new Cumberland Council becomes into being. Therefore, the work of Scrutiny in the coming months will be very important not only in holding the Executive to task but looking at the new functions of the new Cumberland Authority as they start to emerge.

Many of the major projects mentioned last year are going ahead with huge investment into the city. The Station Gateway and Citadels project, the Borderlands Deal and large investment into Carlisle with the Towns Deal and Future High Street Fund to name just a few.

Scrutiny has looked at the GLL and Tullie House contract and business plans as part of their work programme and continue to monitor these and other projects so adding value to the work done by both officers and the Executive.

Portfolio holders and myself attend Scrutiny meetings and I know that we are grateful to the input and recommendations from scrutiny into our Forward Plan.

I would just like to thank all Chairs and vice Chairs of the various panel and to all members who serve on the Scrutiny Panels for their hard work and dedication to the valuable work that they do.



Public engagement in Scrutiny

Scrutiny Panels are open to the public to attend at the Civic Centre. Agendas, report and minutes from Scrutiny Panel meetings are available on the City Council website. Members of the public can also submit questions for meetings; these need to be submitted 11 full days before the Panel Meeting.

For more information on these meetings or on how to engage with the Scrutiny process, please contact: **scrutiny@carlisle.gov.uk**.

Local Government Re-organisation

In May 2023 Carlisle City Council will become part of a new Cumberland Council under Local Government Re-organisation (LGR) in Cumbria. Over this year, 2022-23, a Shadow Cumberland Authority will exist, which will run its own shadow scrutiny arrangements. A unique challenge for Scrutiny Panels at Carlisle in this coming year

will be developing a constructive approach to working efficiently in tandem with shadow scrutiny arrangements. Good communication and robust work-planning will be key to this.

Future Scrutiny Arrangements for 2022 – 23

During 2021-22 a cross panel working group was established to consider future scrutiny arrangements for the final year of activity at Carlisle City Council. A proposal has been made for a move to a two-panel system, this will be considered by Council on 26th April 2022.

Scrutiny will be well prepared and in a strong position for its final year of activity at Carlisle City Council, regardless of the outcome on the two-panel decision. During this current year there has been a focus on continuous improvement through a Scrutiny Improvement Plan.

Scrutiny Improvement Plan

A Scrutiny Improvement Plan was developed in response to feedback on scrutiny from two Corporate Peer Challenges that took place in 2020, before the announcement on Local Government Re-organisation. Twelve actions address five recommendations for improvement:

- Provide Scrutiny Chairs with further dedicated support.
- Officers working with scrutiny seek and share further learning on different ways of operating scrutiny.
- Identify a senior officer champion for scrutiny.
- Consider the structure of scrutiny and options for reducing the number of panels.
- Have a scrutiny improvement plan in place.

Progress against this scrutiny plan has been reported to Scrutiny Chairs at quarterly meetings. At their final meeting of the year in March 2022, Scrutiny Chairs were satisfied that delivery of this plan has been achieved.

Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel (BTSP)

Chair's Report, Councillor James Bainbridge

Our year in Business and Transformation can be seen in two parts:

The first, whilst still under lockdown restrictions, was observing an enormous period of unknown in the Council's financial structures. It should be remembered that whilst the Council worked to keep the show on the road in the pandemic, and succeeded in doing so, it was administering several cycles of grants and support for the second year of the pandemic. In reports that came to Scrutiny, we could see the accountability of the process and work that was done.



Secondly, we had a number of intensive capital and infrastructure projects whose financial accountability we regularly monitored. With the refurbishment of the Civic Centre ground floor complete and the Sands Centre nearing completion, it has been refreshing to see project delivery in difficult circumstances being achieved. Our thanks should go to officers who have kept us informed and updated throughout the year.

Moving into the new civic year there are issues which will carry on. We have continued to keep a close watch on IT Services, given the macro-pressures that are occurring in this sector. I feel that Members of the Panel have realised and dutifully discharged our fiduciary responsibilities as best we could.

Can I thank Rowan for her assistance in the scrutiny process and her work in researching and themes and policies in scrutiny, which have assisted the panel in their work, and their task and finish work. As a Panel we have worked for the vast majority of time in unison, but naturally with some areas of disagreement such as with the Old Fire Station tenure and the intended future panel changes. However, I would hope that a casual observer if seeing our differences of opinion would consider that we have been professional in our conduct.

Can I lastly thank Members, both past and present, for their work.

Comment from Councillor Gareth Ellis, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Resources

I would like to thank the three panels for their support and scrutiny of the Executive. I have sensed a positive change from bringing information to the Panels at an earlier stage allowing for decision making to be smoother, and for the Panels to not feel like they're just making comments on completed policies and decisions.

The final budget of the Council was scrutinised with professionalism by the three Panels and we should all feel confident that whatever the challenges of the new Cumberland Authority moving forward, Carlisle City Council will have handed over a positive financial position, a solid Medium Term Financial Plan and a very healthy asset base.



Potential items for Scrutiny in 2022 - 23

The following items are topics that Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel have identified are likely to have significance in 2022-23:

- Supporting ICT Performance.
- Talkin Tarn Management Arrangements – potential for a Task and Finish Group.
- Sickness Absence.

Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel (EGSP)

Chairs Report, Councillor Lisa Brown

As we have cautiously returned to normal after the pandemic disrupted the first half of last year, it has as always been a pleasure to Chair the EGSP. My thanks go to Cllr Mellor as Vice Chair for stepping in whilst I had a brief period away from duties over Christmas to give birth to my daughter Ellie-Jayne. We had a few changes to Members of the Panel this year and I hope that they all felt that they had lots of opportunities to get to grips with responsibilities we have as Scrutiny Members to be a critical friend to the Executive.



With large investment coming into the city, I would like to praise the officers involved in the bids for their hard work and success in the processes. The majority of items coming to the Panel are the many key projects for across the city. Our focus has really been to look at these in a new light as we try to ensure Carlisle recovers quickly from the Coronavirus pandemic.

The Panel received a report on the draft Economic Strategy. Members explored the scope of the plan and raised many questions on whether it met the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as opportunities for the future and priorities for coming years.

We also focused a lot on tourism and events this year. It is vital that we see an increase in visitor numbers post-pandemic and it is pleasing that many events are returning the city centre.

We must use all the tools available to reduce poverty and improve quality of life for each person living in the urban or rural parts of the district. It is clear that the council benefits from some dedicated and experienced members of staff; their ambition for Carlisle is obvious when reading the reports to the Panel.

As Chair I have found great value in the meetings with Senior Management Team to develop our work programme. These meetings have helped focus our agendas and avoid duplication, making the EGSP work programme efficient and effective and giving Members more time to ask important questions.

The Panel has had one extra meeting this year, receiving the Towns Deals business cases before they went to Executive and then Government. Throughout there were many questions on how Local Government reorganisation could affect the Towns Deal. The Panel felt assured that these challenges had already been looked and planned for.

We are in the final year of Carlisle City Council, and at the time of writing scrutiny may look different in a few short weeks. Whichever form next year's Panels take we look forward to seeing Carlisle evolve into a blossoming city, attracting more investment to create well paid jobs and a vibrant local economy.

Comment from Councillor Marilyn Bowman, Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Housing



Over the past year Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel (EGSP) have considered a number of strategically important and high-profile matters including St Cuthberts Garden Village, Carlisle's economic recovery from COVID-19 and regeneration projects. Work to revitalising the City Centre has been a particularly strong theme for EGSP this year. The City Council has significant plans and funding in place to deliver a revitalised city centre; I look forward to continuing to work with Scrutiny on achieving the best possible outcomes.

Economic growth is important for Carlisle because it impacts the opportunities for good jobs and good homes for local people. Scrutiny work on economic growth is important because it connects planners and decision makers with the needs of local communities, it can bring a new perspective and challenges us all to continue performing well. As a Member of the Executive, I appreciate this input from Scrutiny members.

EGSP have also been important in supporting the City Council's relationship with key partners through their engagement with the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Environment Agency flood risk management teams. Scrutiny work helps to connect partners with the issues that matter to local people in Carlisle.

Potential items for Scrutiny in 2022 - 23

The following items are topics that Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel have identified that are likely to have significance in 2022-23:

- Continued oversight of major economic development projects and implications of LGR for these.
- Engagement with strategic partners such as LEP and Riverside.
- Events, tourism, high street vitality.

Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel (HWSP)

Chairs Report, Councillor Christine Finlayson

And so, another year has passed that has achieved much progress in our City Council and its surrounding district and communities. In our recovery from COVID-19, over the last year, a good many of the councils' projects have come together very well.

Sustainable Food Places

Sustainable Food Places for 2022 has been secured by £10,000 to be match funded by the City Council. Another £5,000 grant has been secured for "Veg City" to support the work of Food Carlisle.



Performance

The City Council has a Performance Report that monitors internal and external services. Regular monitoring of the Council's performance helps to drive continuous improvement and protects against financial or organisational issues that may arise, which makes it a very important role for scrutiny.

Sands Centre Redevelopment

By 20th January 2022 the project was in week 60 of 98 for the main works. At this time, construction was 2-3 weeks behind schedule due to issues in the supply chain, a direct result of COVID-19. Issues have included shortages of HGV drivers, electronic chips and site staff isolating at home.

There were many other items on the Scrutiny Agenda such as:

- The Zero Carbon Partnership.
- Housing Assistance Grants.
- Site visit to the Victorian Baths and Health Suite.
- Tullie House Business Plan.
- Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans.
- Local Air Quality Action Plan.

Along with many others a bit too numerous to mention.

I'm sure you will see it has been a very busy year, and all achieved by the amazing staff and partners. These people take their work very seriously and take great pride in their work for the benefit of residents and communities as a whole. All this work makes Carlisle, city and district, an outstanding place to live, work and thrive.

During this year Cllr Jack Paton retired from his role as HWSP Chair and as a Member of the City Council. We thank him for his commitment to these roles and wish him the best for the future.

Finally, I would like to recognise the loss of Cllr Valerie Tarbitt, a valued Member of our Panel, who passed away this year.

EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 7 APRIL 2022

HWSP.28/22 SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

The draft Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel section for the Scrutiny Annual Report 2021 - 22 had been circulated (OS.11/22).

The Panel had been asked to consider the final section of the report 'Potential items for Scrutiny 2022-23'. The following suggestions were set out in the report:

- Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans, linked to St Cuthbert's Garden Village
- Empty property and housing grant work
- Local Hub developments
- GLL contract activity
- Community Resilience and CVS Project
- Turkish Baths
- Social Prescribing and Mental Health
- Project Tullie
- Homelessness Strategy update
- Environment Agency Phase 3 flood management (Within the remit of Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel)

RESOLVED - That the Panel had considered and commented on the draft Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel section for the Scrutiny Annual report 2021-22 (OS.11/22).

EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY PANEL HELD ON 31 MARCH 2022

BTSP.35/22 SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

The draft Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel section for the Scrutiny Annual Report 2021 - 22 had been circulated (OS.09/22).

The Panel had been asked to consider the final section of the report 'Potential items for Scrutiny 2022-23'. The following suggestions were set out in the report:

- Sickness absence and staff wellbeing
- Local Government reorganisation
- Talkin Tarn Management Arrangements - site visit / potential for a Task and Finish Group.

The Panel asked that the paragraph on public engagement in scrutiny be changed to past tense as virtual meetings were no longer allowed to be used for formal meetings.

RESOLVED - That the Panel had considered and commented on the draft Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel section for the Scrutiny Annual report 2021-22 (OS.09/22).

Comment from Councillor Elizabeth Mallinson, Portfolio Holder for Communities, Health and Wellbeing

We saw our meetings come back to Face to Face after virtual meetings held due to COVID-19 and it was great to be back into the Civic Centre and into our new Council Chamber.

Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel over the last year has looked at a number of items some that fall into this Portfolio but other that are cross cutting items shared with other Portfolio Holders but have an impact on Health and Wellbeing:

- Updates on work regarding COVID-19 in our communities.
- Annual Equality Report and Action Plan.
- Armed Forces Covent and how it affects every Portfolio area of work and what we are doing to make our work-place Armed Forces veteran friendly.
- Police Hub and their work.
- Turkish Baths.

I would like to thank the Chair, Vice Chair and the Panel for all the work that they have done these last 12 months and to officers who have brought their reports to this Panel.

Future Items:

- Healthy activities through leisure activities
- Police Hub update when it is brought in-house.
- Report on the application to the World Health Organisation (WHO).



Potential items for Scrutiny in 2022 - 23

The following items are topics that Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel have identified are likely to have significance in 2022-23:

- Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans, linked to St Cuthbert's Garden Village.
- Empty property and housing grant work.
- Local Hub developments.
- GLL contract activity.
- Community Resilience and CVS Project.
- Turkish Baths.
- Social Prescribing and Mental Health.
- Tullie House Business Plan and Project Tullie.
- Homelessness Strategy update.
- Environment Agency and future flood risk management, Phase 3.