

## **Report of the Chair of the Customer Services, Climate Change and Scrutiny Management Committee (CSCCSSMC)**

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This is my first report as Chair, and I'd like to start by thanking Democratic Services and my Vice Chair, Cllr Merrett, for their support since May in putting in place revised scrutiny arrangements. I would also like to thank my predecessor, Cllr Crawshaw, for his work in helping to define the scope of the new Scrutiny committees.

All members had the opportunity to attend (or watch a recording of) a training session run by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. It was a very helpful session which highlighted the importance of effective work planning and scrutiny's role as a 'critical friend' in helping to inform future decisions and identifying areas for improvement in how the council and its partners deliver services that affect residents.

Under the revised arrangements, what was CCSMC has taken on the climate change portfolio from the previous Climate Change Scrutiny Committee, which has been abolished. I am conscious of the need to maintain a focus on this important policy area, rather than it be seen as an 'add on' to the previous committee's areas of responsibility.

There are now three scrutiny committees which sit alongside CSCCSSMC:

- Children, Culture & Communities Scrutiny Committee
- Economy, Place, Access and Transport Scrutiny Committee
- Health, Housing & Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

It has taken new and old members alike some time to get to grips with the scope of each committee, which span a number of Directorates and areas of Executive Member responsibility. Although there are fewer scrutiny committees than previously, each committee will meet monthly, with the aim being to not have meetings in February and August (though some flexibility will be needed).

As per the expectation set out in the council's constitution, the first meeting of each committee in the municipal year was an informal meeting at which members, officers and relevant Executive Members could discuss areas of policy and service delivery where scrutiny might be able to add value, with a view to helping to inform future decisions.

These meetings were then followed by a meeting of members to discuss a draft Work Plan, to be subject to public scrutiny at the first formal meeting of the committee.

I attended the first informal meeting for each committee and was encouraged by the conversations which took place. I would like to thank the Chairs and Vice Chairs for their work in managing these meetings and subsequently pulling together draft Work Plans, and also officers and Executive Members for their positive participation.

With each committee having a broader scope of responsibilities than previously, it will be more important to use the time and officer resource available wisely in order to focus on issues where scrutiny can have maximum influence and impact. There will of course continue to be reports that committees are statutorily obliged to receive and which are often simply to note, and agenda items that are focused largely on holding officers and Executive Members to account for the delivery of agreed policies, but I hope that in the coming months committee members will have the opportunity to engage in some pre-decision scrutiny.

Committee members will also have the opportunity to get involved in some time-limited scrutiny reviews on specific topics. I know that committees have already identified some topics, and I look forward to seeing the outputs of this work.

At the time of writing this report, there has been one formal scrutiny committee meeting held (Children, Culture & Communities Scrutiny Committee) and the Chair, Cllr Nicholls, reports that he has been well supported by his Vice Chair and has raised the possibility of some additional training for members in effective approaches to chairing and inquiring, which is something I will pick up with officers. Cllr Nicholls also notes that he has acquired a couple examples of a flow chart guide on how to scrutinise, which sounds like a helpful tool.

In future reports I would hope to include a brief update from all Chairs, as by that stage all committees will have started their programme of public meetings.

Councillor Fenton  
Chair of the Customer Services, Climate Change and Scrutiny  
Management Committee  
13 September 2023