

Scrutiny Management Board 29 April 2024

Report Title	Draft Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/24
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Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	N/A
Which Corporate Plan priority does the report most closely align with? Our priorities for the future North Northamptonshire Council (northnorthants.gov.uk)	Modern Public Services

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/24

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To enable the Scrutiny Management Board to contribute and comment on the Draft Scrutiny Annual Report for 2023/24, prior to it being referred to full Council, in line with the Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Scrutiny Annual Report summarises the work for all scrutiny activities undertaken in the municipal year 2023/24. The impact of the work of Scrutiny will continue to be evidenced over time by the implementation and impact of its recommendations to the decision-makers and key stakeholder – Executive, Full Council and external partners. The Scrutiny Annual Report will ensure that full Council is informed on the work of Scrutiny, in accordance with statutory guidance.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. It is recommended that the Scrutiny Management Board:
- a) Note and comment on the draft Annual Scrutiny Report 2023/24.

- b) Subject to the above, delegate to the Statutory Scrutiny Officer / Head of Democratic Services in consultation with the Chair of the Scrutiny Management Board and Scrutiny Manager to finalise the contents of the annual report, prior to its submission to full Council for consideration.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. The Scrutiny function forms an integral part of the Council's decision-making process and governance mechanism. Each year, the Scrutiny Annual Report will provide a summary of the work and impact of the Council's Scrutiny function.
- 4.2. Since its inception in April 2021, the Council has continuously evolved its scrutiny framework to enhance effectiveness and transparency. At the Annual Meeting in May 2021, the Council established two scrutiny committees, namely the Scrutiny Commission and Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee, as part of a hybrid model of governance.
- 4.3. Initial Model (April 2021 - May 2023): The Council initially operated with two scrutiny committees:
- **Scrutiny Commission:** Responsible for high-level oversight.
 - **Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee:** Focussed on scrutinising financial matters and performance metrics.
 - **Scrutiny Review Panels** were also active as required.
- 4.4. Fundamental Review (2022/23): In 2022/23, the Council conducted a comprehensive review of its scrutiny arrangements. The outcome was a strategic shift toward greater effectiveness and transparency.
- 4.5. New Scrutiny Arrangements (From May 2023) resulted in creation of the following:

Scrutiny Management Board:

- To strategically drive forward the scrutiny function.

Corporate Scrutiny Committee:

- Mirrors the work of the old Finance and Resources Committee.
- Focuses on finance, performance and external partnerships (e.g., Northamptonshire Children's Trust).
- Aims to provide a comprehensive view of performance.

Health Scrutiny:

- Statutory duty to scrutinise health matters.
- Evaluates integration of health, public health, social care and education.
- Aims for optimal outcomes for the public.

Place and Environment Scrutiny Committee:

- Focuses on corporate objectives related to Place and Economy.
- Addresses significant ongoing projects and critical service delivery elements.

4.6. The Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny¹ states “*part of communicating scrutiny’s role and purpose to the wider authority should happen through the formal, public role of full Council – particularly given that scrutiny will undertake valuable work to highlight challenging issues that an authority will be facing and subjects that will be a focus of full Council’s work. Authorities should therefore take steps to ensure full Council is informed of the work the scrutiny committee is doing.*”

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1. The Scrutiny Annual Report is an opportunity for all those involved in the scrutiny function to reflect on the activities and outcomes in 2023/24, to consider what has worked well and where further improvements could be made. It provides an opportunity to highlight the important scrutiny work that has taken place during this municipal year.
- 5.2. The draft report is attached at Appendix 1.
- 5.3. The Scrutiny Management Board is now asked to comment and contribute on the contents of the Scrutiny Annual Report.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1. Resources and Financial

6.1.1 There are no direct resources or financial implications arising from the report.

6.2. Legal and Governance

6.2.1 The legal basis on which scrutiny operates at North Northamptonshire Council is summarised in the Statutory Guidance for Overview and Scrutiny which states:

- The Local Government Act 2000² mandates that local authorities operating executive arrangements must establish one or more overview and scrutiny committees. Localism Act 2011 provides further guidance.
- These committees scrutinise the actions of the executive and the authority itself, providing an overview of matters affecting the authority’s area and its inhabitants.

¹ [Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities](#)

² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/1021/made>

- Effective scrutiny is crucial for holding decision-makers accountable and ensuring the efficient delivery of public services.
- The purpose of scrutiny, effective scrutiny practices and benefits are outlined in statutory guidance provided by the government.

6.2.2 Key Points from the Statutory Guidance:

Purpose of Scrutiny:

- Scrutiny plays a fundamental role in local democracy by holding authorities accountable.
- It helps drive improvements within the authority and ensures efficient service delivery.

Effective Scrutiny Traits:

Authorities with effective scrutiny arrangements share certain key traits:

- A strong organisational culture that welcomes challenge.
- Commitment from senior members and officials.

Local Authority Autonomy:

- Authorities are best-placed to determine which scrutiny arrangements suit their individual circumstances.
- However, critical self-assessment and a culture conducive to effective scrutiny are strongly encouraged.

Legal Framework:

- Section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 specifically requires local authorities operating executive arrangements to establish overview and scrutiny committees.
- These committees play a vital role in ensuring transparency, accountability and effective governance.

6.2.3 There are no direct legal implications relating to council activities arising from this report.

6.3. **Relevant Policies and Plans**

6.3.1. All corporate priorities listed in the Corporate Plan 2021/25.

6.4. **Risk**

6.4.1 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.

6.5. Consultation

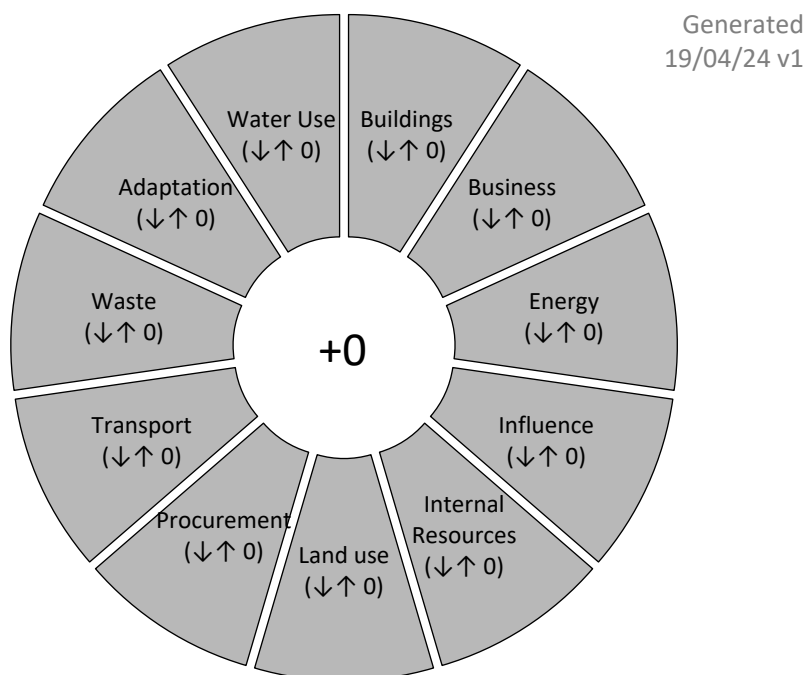
6.5.1. Consultation on the draft contents of the Scrutiny Annual Report has been undertaken with the Chairs of all Scrutiny Committee for their respective activities and is now being reported to the Scrutiny Management Board for consideration of overall content.

6.6. Equality Implications

6.6.1 There are no direct equality implications arising from the report.

6.7. Climate Impact

6.7.1 There are no climate impacts arising from the report.



North Northamptonshire Council has committed to being a carbon neutral organisation by 2030, 5 yrs & 8 mos away.

6.8. Community Impact

6.8.1 There is no community impact arising from the report.

6.9. Crime and Disorder Impact

6.9.1 There are no crime and disorder impacts arising from the report.

7. Background Papers

7.1. [Agendas and minutes of the Scrutiny Committees and Scrutiny Management Board during 2023/24](#)