

Foreword from the Chair, Councillor Tony Dyer

I write this foreword at a time when Bristol City Council is preparing to move to a Committee Model system of governance, with effect from May 2024. Cross party Councillors have been working on the recommendations for how these arrangements will operate, but we know following a recent decision of Full Council that Scrutiny will no longer exist in its current form. Instead, the functions will take place in the new Policy Committees, and I think it's important to take a moment to reflect on how we can ensure scrutiny activities continue to operate well in the future.

Scrutiny is at its very best when utilising the power of cross-party collaboration, both when considering decisions and working on policy development. I believe that these areas can be enhanced in the Committee system, and Councillors both now and in the future have collective responsibility to make sure the things that have worked well are retained in the new model. This report sets out the work that Scrutiny has undertaken in the last year, including where we have demonstrated best practice, and I hope that my Councillor colleagues will find this a useful reference point when considering the future approach.

Another area where I believe we need to turn our attention is regarding public engagement in our democratic decision making. Scrutiny has made some good progress by providing a vital interface for the public to engage with cross party Councillors, but there is more work to be done to improve the diversity of those who engage. I'm very pleased to hear that colleagues on the Committee Model Working Group have highlighted this as one of their top priorities and I feel optimistic that the plans they've set out to bring improvements will be successful.

Turning to resources, I think it's important to acknowledge that as we move to the Committee Model with scrutiny likely to be more tightly integrated into the committee structure itself, it is important that we properly assess the likely support needs and capacity to enable effective scrutiny under the incoming governance structure.

One of the ways in which Bristol City Council traditionally performs well is in taking a joined-up approach and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mayor Rees and his Cabinet, plus our senior officers, led by Stephen Peacock as Chief Executive, for their ongoing support to Scrutiny. Of course my sincere thanks also go to my Scrutiny Councillor colleagues for their diligence and dedication when conducting their duties and in particular I would like to show gratitude to my fellow Scrutiny Chairs and the OSMB Vice Chair; Councillors Mark Bradshaw, Geoff Gollop, Tim Kent, Graham Morris, Barry Parsons (in a role that's recently been passed to Martin Fodor) and David Wilcox for the additional contributions they've made to managing the Scrutiny function so successfully.

Whilst we know that change is coming, we have another Municipal Year of the current model to use effectively, and my fellow scrutiny Councillors and I are looking forward to planning our work programme for 23/24 at our annual workshop in June. With so many challenges facing our residents and the city of Bristol, we will all want to ensure that we're working together to achieve the best outcomes and I have every assurance that we will continue to strive for this both in 23/24 and beyond.

Councillor Tony Dyer, April 2023.

Key Figures

- Number of formal scrutiny meetings – 23
- Meetings of the OSMB Lead Members - 9
- Task and Finish Groups - 5 (including multiple meetings for each)
- Reports and Statements to Full Council and Cabinet – 4

Scrutiny Work Programme 2022/23 – Key Highlights

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB)

OSMB's main functions are to conduct oversight of the Scrutiny Work Programme and review matters that are cross cutting and/or of significant interest city wide. Main areas of focus this year have included:

- Conducting an inquiry day on Liveable Neighbourhoods, which has contributed to the design of a handbook for future schemes. Furthermore, the day produced recommendations about key considerations such as the approach to community engagement, ways to secure health and wellbeing improvements, and possible funding mechanisms.
- Carrying out the annual review of the Council's Companies' Business Plans. This was an in-depth process conducted over two sessions.
- Scrutinising the approach to City Leap.
- Receiving an update on delivery of the One City Plan.
- Reviewing the Forward Plan of Cabinet decisions to identify any matters that may benefit from scrutiny and feeding in cross party comments to Cabinet as appropriate.
- Maintaining strategic oversight of the Council's reports on performance and risk with a view to highlighting potential issues and identifying where additional review may be beneficial.
- Monitoring progress around all scrutiny activities to ensure resources are being used effectively and concentrate on the areas where Members can add the most value.
- Providing a vital interface for the public to raise issues of concern relating to work across the whole Council.

OSMB will also be considering the Council's Corporate Business Plans and Performance Framework for 23/24 at a meeting on 18th April 23, following a successful workshop in March 23 where the drafts were considered in detail and feedback provided.

Climate Change Working Group – reporting to OSMB

The role of the Climate Change Working Group has been to examine key opportunities, risks and issues affecting the Council's current and potential future climate action. This has included considering potential future actions, opportunities for cross-party collaboration

and areas where advocacy and pressure for national action is needed and will include considering recommended actions for the short term (1-2 years) or longer term (3-8 years), in the context of meeting the city's carbon neutrality and resilience ambition.

Between December 2022 and March 2023, the Working Group has engaged in three 'deep dive' sessions focused on reviewing:

- Available citywide data on carbon emissions, the role of partnerships and the Council's work with partners.
- Home retrofitting, related skills and decarbonisation of the residential/civic space.
- The Council's climate communications and engagement/outreach work and initiatives.

The Working Group will be formulating comments and identifying some specific recommendations, mindful that given the net zero context, some issues flagged will also in reality need to be addressed through the new committee governance system that will operate from May 2024.

Communities Scrutiny Commission

The role of the Communities Scrutiny Commission is the overview and scrutiny of matters that affect Bristol's neighbourhoods including housing; waste and recycling; sport and leisure; parks; libraries; and citizens' services. Crime and disorder, including the statutory scrutiny function, also falls within this remit. Unlike other Scrutiny Commissions, the Communities Scrutiny Commission is not assigned to a single Directorate and examines cross cutting issues.

The key areas of focus taken forward through the 2022/23 Communities Scrutiny Commission work programme have included:

- In October 2022 the progress of the development of the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy and Allotment Strategy was considered, which led to additional consultation on the proposals. Commission Members were also invited to comment on the ongoing review of the Housing Allocation Scheme and the proposals that were open to citywide engagement at that time.
- In November 2022 Commission Members were invited to provide a steer on the scope for inclusive co-design of tenant participation and comment on the options for tackling resource challenges. Reports were also received demonstrating the progress against the Ecological Emergency Action Plan, and the development of a Tree Strategy. These items were considered in tandem due to the crossover involved, and Members welcomed the opportunity to note the progress made following the recommendations of the Tree Strategy Scrutiny working group from 2021/22.
- In February 2023 a 'deep dive' item on Waste Improvement, including the outcome of a project to improve the storage of commercial waste, non-standard collections, and a flats recycling project, with Members welcoming the progress that has been made.
- In February 2023 the Communities Scrutiny Commission fulfilled its statutory obligation to scrutinise the arrangements for the local Community Safety Partnership

(CSP) by receiving a report at a Commission meeting from the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership (KBSP).

- In 2022-23 the proposed changes to the 2023-24 budget impacted the scheduling of several items scheduled for Scrutiny. The Communities Scrutiny Commission took a flexible approach where required to ensure that where items were impacted these could be scrutinised in an appropriate timeline and with sufficient information to make informed suggestions.

People Scrutiny Commission

The Council's adult care, child and family support, safeguarding and education and skills provision fall under the remit of this Commission. The Health Sub-Committee of the People Scrutiny Commission carries out the statutory health scrutiny role.

The key areas of focus taken forward through the 2022/23 People scrutiny work programme have included:

- At its September 2022 meeting, the Commission discussed and formally endorsed the in-depth report and recommendations produced by the People Working Group on Inclusion in Mainstream Education. The report included a range of proposed actions to improve the approach to inclusion across the city's education settings. The report has been discussed with the city's education leaders, including the Bristol Learning City Excellence in Schools group and People scrutiny leads will continue to maintain a focus on monitoring progress on the implementation of the key actions.
- The Commission has maintained oversight of adult social care transformation and reviewed specific updates on the approach being taken to improve in-house services, increase the supply of specialised and supported housing, and support people to live independently in their own tenancies.
- The Commission has also, via a standing item of business, maintained close monitoring of the Council's performance in relation to Education, Health and Care needs assessments and the timeliness of EHC plans. This will be an area of ongoing attention in 2023/24.
- Other areas of progress reviewed by the Commission included:
 - New and planned school places in Temple Quarter and Knowle, as well as some specialist settings.
 - Action being taken to tackle disproportionality in the youth justice system.
 - The Learning Disability and Autism programme.
- The Commission is planning an inquiry day scheduled for 7 June 2023, which will be focused on transitional support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (aged 16-18) in terms of employment opportunities/developing skills/continuing their education as they move on from school settings and reviewing how the Council is meeting its Care Act duties and responsibilities for this age group.

Health Scrutiny Committee (sub-committee of the People Scrutiny Commission)

The role of the Health Scrutiny Committee is to undertake scrutiny of local health service provision in accordance with Section 7 of the Health and Social Care Act 2001, the Health

and Social Care Act 2012 and Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013.

The key areas of focus taken forward through the 2022/23 Health scrutiny work programme have included:

- In late spring/early summer 2022, the Committee focused on reviewing NHS Trusts' and health providers' Quality Accounts for 2021-22. The Committee also received an in-depth briefing on NHS structures and governance, tying in with the 1 July 22 formal launch of the Integrated Care System/Partnership/Board for Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG).
- At its October 2022 meeting, the Committee discussed and reviewed updates:
 - From BNSSG ICB colleagues on how the Community Mental Health Framework is being delivered across all 6 locality partnerships within the BNSSG geographical area.
 - From BNSSG ICB/primary care colleagues on the situation and context in relation to residents' access to GP services and the underlying factors/pressures in this area.
- At its December 2022 meeting, the Committee discussed and reviewed progress updates:
 - From BNSSG ICB partners on the local NHS winter resilience framework and winter response.
 - From Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust colleagues on progress in child and adolescent mental health services.
 - From Sirona Care and Health colleagues on the development of their early help offer through offering interventions that have a focus on prevention, early intervention and reducing inequalities.
- At its March 2023 meeting, the Committee discussed and reviewed progress updates:
 - From NHS England South West colleagues on access to NHS dental services for children and adults in Bristol.
 - From University of Bristol dental school colleagues on the aims and objectives of the new purpose-built University of Bristol dental school, due to open later in 2023 and the related opportunities for community engagement, widening participation and outreach, and for taking research into the community.
 - From BNSSG ICB colleagues on the development of a system-wide Integrated Care Strategy.
 - On the 'whole systems' approach to supporting children's healthy weight.

Growth & Regeneration Scrutiny Commission

The role of this Commission is the overview and scrutiny of matters relating to the Growth and Regeneration Directorate including strategic city planning, development management, and city design, innovation and sustainability.

The key areas of focus taken forward through the 2022/23 Growth and Regeneration scrutiny work programme have included:

- At its September 2022 meeting, the Commission discussed and reviewed:

- The Planning Enforcement function within Development Management, including its operational set up, staffing levels and performance.
- A detailed update on the Temple Quarter Regeneration Programme.
- At its January 2023 meeting, the Commission discussed and reviewed progress updates on:
 - The West of England Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.
 - The placemaking approach being taken for the Frome Gateway Regeneration Framework.
 - The progress of Project 1000 (the Council’s plan to meet the Mayoral ambition of delivering 1,000 affordable homes a year by 2024) a year on from its adoption in February 2022.
 - The City Centre & High Streets recovery and renewal programme.
- At its March 2023 meeting, the Commission discussed and reviewed progress updates on:
 - The Bristol Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2023
 - The Strategic Transport & City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement projects, together with updates around the Arena mitigations, and the Zero Emissions Transport City programme
 - The Western Harbour regeneration project.

Resources Scrutiny Commission and Finance Task Group

The role of the Resources Scrutiny Commission is overview and scrutiny in respect of policies, decisions and performance relating to the Resources Directorate, including legal, finance, HR, ICT, policy and strategy, and procurement and commercialisation. The Resources Scrutiny Commission chose to hold a combination of informal (non-public) and formal public meetings during 2022/23; the informal meetings were held through meetings of the Finance Task Group.

The key areas of focus taken forward through the 2022/23 Resources scrutiny work programme have included:

- The principal focus of the work taken forward was a comprehensive approach to budget scrutiny. Through a robust process, eleven informal meetings of the Finance Task Group were held between June 2022 and January 2023 to ensure that scrutiny members had access to comprehensive information and an opportunity to comment and input throughout the run-up to the setting of the 2023/24 budget. Four extensive formal budget sessions of the Resources Scrutiny Commission were also held in public, with the joint involvement of the service-specific Scrutiny Commissions and the first two sessions held in late November 2022 were focused on scrutinising the administration’s budget consultation proposals. The second two sessions held in late January and early February 2023 were focused on commenting in detail on the Mayor’s final 2023/24 budget proposals, ahead of the February Full Council budget-setting meeting. The Resources Scrutiny Commission published a detailed summary of their comments in advance of the Budget Council meeting.
- At a separate public meeting held in December 2022, the Resources Scrutiny Commission reviewed reports/updates on:
 - The 2022/23 Collection Fund surplus/deficit report.
 - The Council’s debt position and write-offs, and the ethical approach/steps being taken to address the position.

- The Finance Task Group will be engaging through Spring 2023 in a review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, in anticipation of a revised scheme coming into place for 2024/25.