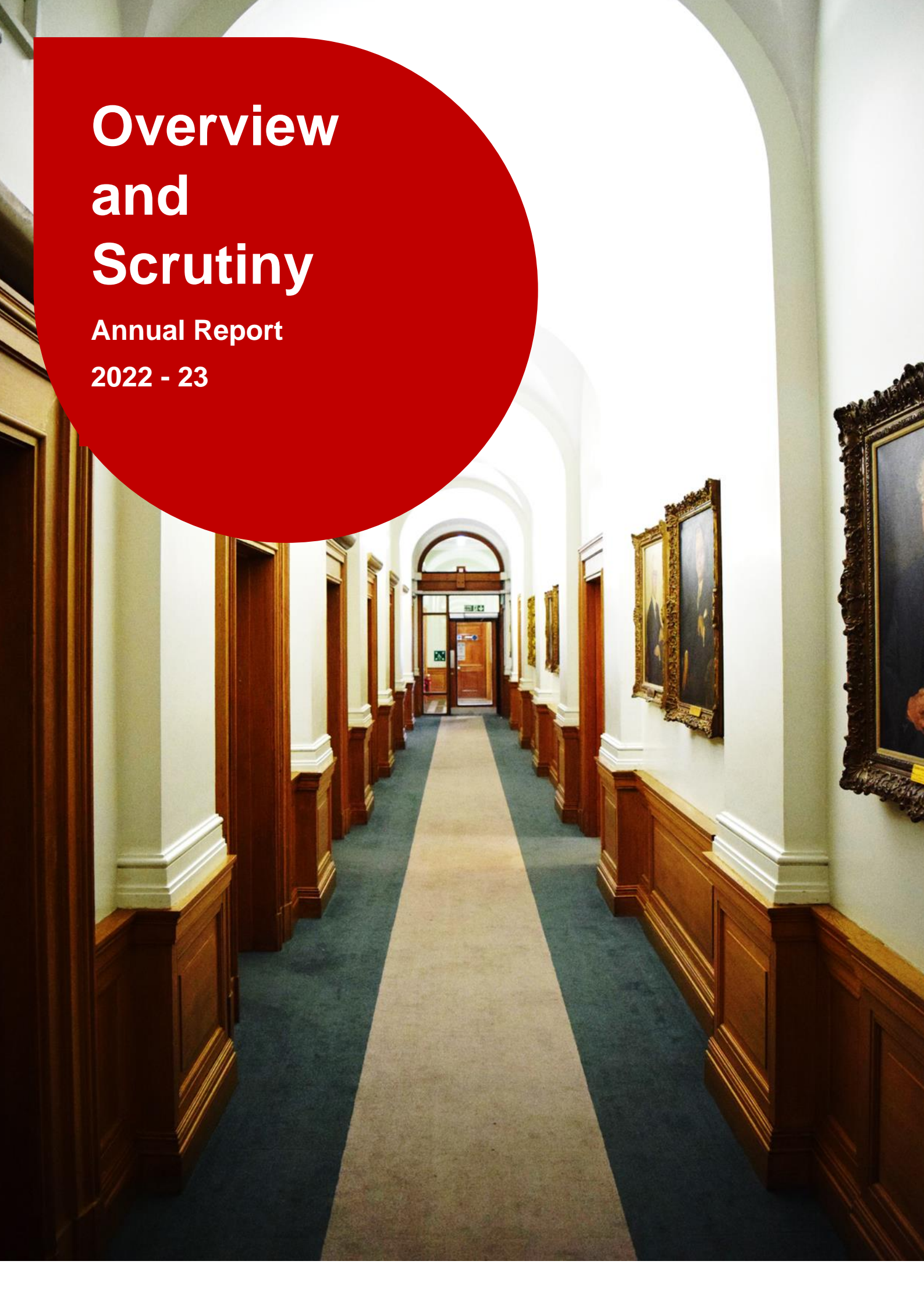


# Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report

2022 - 23



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# Introduction

By Scrutiny Board Chairman, Councillor Ray Gooding



I am delighted to be introducing the second Annual Scrutiny Report since becoming Scrutiny Board Chairman in May 2021. It's been a very busy and interesting year for scrutiny, both in terms of the business dealt with by the respective scrutiny committees and their related task and finish groups, and for the Scrutiny Board.

Last year's report set out plans for a review of the effectiveness of entire scrutiny function – that review has now been concluded, and the Board have subsequently been overseeing progress against the recommendations. There's more on that within this current report, but for me particular highlights include:

- Work to raise the profile of the scrutiny function, both within the Council and with the public. Regular liaison with the Communications Team now takes place to identify particular pieces of work for promotion – the Young Person's Mental Health review is a notable example of this and one where we have had the opportunity to publicise the work of the Scrutiny function through close cooperation with the Communications Team;
- The establishment of a defined training programme for all members of scrutiny committees intended to develop the professionalism of the function;
- Recognition of the need to develop effective working relationships with our Cabinet colleagues so that scrutiny can best fulfil its remit of holding the Executive to account – whilst retaining the essential separation between the roles.

Scrutiny works best when it reflects the concerns of local communities, so I would also like to take this opportunity to ask you all to bear this in mind when you are contacted by residents. If you are getting multiple contacts on the same topic, it's likely there could be a role for scrutiny and I'd welcome that conversation.

Similarly, if you have any questions or feedback on the content of this report, I'd be delighted to hear from you. I commend this report to Council.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ray Gooding'.

**Councillor Ray Gooding, Scrutiny Board Chairman**

# What is Scrutiny?

Scrutiny is a core feature of the Council's decision-making process.

At Essex County Council the governance model used to make decisions is that of the Leader and Cabinet, also referred to as the Executive model. Introduced by the Local Government Act (2000) this model is the most commonly used within local government and sees decision making powers afforded to a small group of the Council's 75 Councillors. These are the Leader and his nine Cabinet colleagues.

The Act requires that Councils using the Executive model also operates a scrutiny function to act as a 'check and balance' to the significant power held by the Cabinet. As such, only Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet can work within the scrutiny function. Their role is to consider the decisions taken, or that are proposed to be taken by the Cabinet and provide constructive advice and comment for Cabinet's consideration. This is characterised as taking the position of a 'critical friend' and the most effective outcomes are achieved when there is mutual trust and understanding between scrutiny and the Cabinet.

Although the existence of the function is set out in legislation, how it operates and how it is structured is left to individual councils. This provides for a high degree of flexibility and the ability to consider different topics and issues in the most appropriate way. In Essex, the Scrutiny Board coordinates the work of the four standing scrutiny committees by considering the best use of resources, particularly where topics to be considered may fall within the remit of more than one committee. The committees are:

- [Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee](#)
- [Health Overview and Policy and Scrutiny Committee](#)
- [Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee](#)
- [People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee](#)

Meetings of the scrutiny committees are held in public and are livestreamed to YouTube. As well as these meetings, the committees are also able to commission to smaller working groups, usually called Task and Finish groups, to consider issues that require more in-depth attention. These groups produce reports, which are publicly available, and are submitted to the relevant Cabinet Member for their consideration and response.

There can sometimes be the perception that Scrutiny is somewhat powerless when compared to its Executive cousin. However, where there is a culture of trust and respect between the Scrutiny function and the Executive, the Scrutiny function can attain and deploy a great deal of influence ultimately benefiting both the Council and the residents of Essex. Whilst it is true to say that this culture does currently exist between Scrutiny and the Executive at Essex County Council, it is also appropriate to reflect and consider ways in which the relationship could be further developed and enhanced. This has formed a key part of the review to be undertaken by the Scrutiny Board, on which more information now follows.

# Review of the Scrutiny Function

Last year the Scrutiny Board undertook a review into the operation and effectiveness of both the Board itself and the wider Scrutiny function.

The Board had carefully considered the scope of the review and identified the key areas for consideration. The review analysed how scrutiny was currently working at Essex and best practice examples from around the country. It heard from current scrutiny members, officers, the Leader of the Council as well as considering external advice and guidance.

Recommendations were agreed by the Scrutiny Board in Autumn 2022 and since then the Board has been overseeing progress against these, including:

- Outcomes - a renewed focus on outcomes to ensure that scrutiny is making a meaningful impact and contributing to the decision-making process through policy development and pre-decision scrutiny.
- Scrutiny-Executive Protocol - a Protocol has been developed outlining expectations and processes and helping to foster a strong working relationship between the scrutiny and executive functions. ***This Protocol is presented to Full Council for noting.***
- Communications – work is underway to raise the profile of the scrutiny function, both within the Council and with the public. This includes a revamped Scrutiny Bulletin, regular engagement with the Communications Team and proactive media work.
- Training - a standard programme of member training has been established to increase knowledge of scrutiny (amongst both scrutiny and non-scrutiny members), develop questioning skills, and on how to use evidence effectively.
- Call-in – a review of the call-in procedure has been undertaken to ensure that members understand the legislative background to call-in as well as when and how the process should best be used. ***This is presented to Full Council for noting.***
- Health Scrutiny – PAF and HOSC committees are working increasingly closely together to utilise the statutory powers of health scrutiny and address the significant challenges around health and social care.

As well as progressing specific recommendations, the Scrutiny Board has also taken on an increased coordination and oversight role encompassing committee work programmes, dissemination of best practice (including on key lines of enquiry and post-meeting reflection sessions), how performance monitoring is managed and the issue of member attendance.

Through the work of the Board and the individual Committees, the aim is for scrutiny to go from strength to strength at Essex.

# Work of the Scrutiny Committees

Over the following pages you will find an introduction to the work undertaken by the Scrutiny function over the course of the year. The four Scrutiny committee Chairmen have selected some key pieces of work completed by their individual committees also highlighting, where relevant, work that has taken place jointly across two committees where it had been identified that this would make the best use of time and resources.

The Task and Finish review undertaken by HOPSC and PAFSC on Young People's Mental Health is included as an example of this type of work. Task and Finish groups allow a more focused and detailed look at a particular topic than would be possible in a standard committee setting. Recommendations are produced at the conclusion of the review and passed to the appropriate Cabinet Member, once endorsed by the 'parent' scrutiny committee, for consideration and response.

## 1. Chairmen's Highlights from each Committee:

- Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee (CPSC)
- Health Policy and Scrutiny Committee (HOPSC)
- People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee (PAFSC)
- Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee (PSEG)

## 2. Example Task and Finish Review:

- Young People's Mental Health

# Health Overview Policy and Scrutiny Committee

This committee reviews and scrutinises matters relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services in the County of Essex. This includes primary, secondary, tertiary care, and public health, and may involve reviewing the work of commissioners (such as local clinical commissioning groups), providers of health services (such as hospitals) and other organisations in the health sector.

The committee's Chairman and Vice Chairmen are Councillors Jeff Henry, Dave Harris and Clive Souter. Full details of the committee's work and membership can be found on the Council's [website](#).



Essex has one of the most complex health environments in the Country. Since the creation of the Integrated Care Systems (ICS), it has been split across three different strategic health footprints that do not align with our County Council borders. The ICS's have all introduced their own strategies and HOSC has the ongoing challenge of continuing to have strategic oversight of these different programmes.

HOSC have met with all three ICS leads over the past months and will continue to do so as these new systems begin implementing their strategies.

HOSC focus over the past 12 months has spanned a number of different services, including detailed scrutiny of maternity services at East Suffolk and North Essex Foundation Trust (ESNEFT) after they received a 'requires improvement' from the Care Quality Commission (CQC). This has also been the case for the East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST).

Mental health has been a big focus of the committee's work over the past year, with representations received from both the Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (EPUT) and the North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT) on how they are delivering services since the pandemic.

The committee have also undertaken two external visits to Colchester General Hospital and the Linden Centre, an inpatient psychiatric unit in Chelmsford. The Linden Centre has been focussed on externally in the media over the past few months and HOSC are aware of the position there and that of the inquiry that is currently taking place. HOSC will continue to monitor this situation closely.

A piece of work I am proud of is the joint Task and Finish group that undertook a review into mental health services for young people. At the annual meeting of the Council in May 2022, a motion was considered on mental health services for young people. The motion rightly recognised the work of schools, charities, mental health professionals and our own officers, and noted the important role they play in the lives of young people.

**Councillor Jeff Henry – Chairman**

# Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee

This committee exercises the scrutiny function on matters relating to environment, economic growth and infrastructure, sustainability, highways and transportation, libraries, planning, communities, waste and recycling and trading standards.

The committee's Chairman and Vice Chairmen are Councillors Alan Goggin, Dave Blackwell and Mike Steel. Full details of the committee's work and membership can be found on the Council's [website](#).



I'm delighted to introduce this annual update to Full Council from the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee (PSEG).

With a remit that includes climate change, libraries, bus services and highways it was always going to be a busy year for the Committee and suffice to say the last 12 months have not disappointed!

As ever, I would like to begin by thanking all past and present members and officers for their commitment and hard work, as well as all those who have attended and contributed to our meetings. Particular thanks go to my two Vice-Chairman, Councillor Mike Steel and Councillor Dave Blackwell.

It would be impossible to cover everything the Committee has done so I will just pick out a couple of highlights of our work.

A regular attendee at our meetings (he almost has his own seat!) has been Councillor Lee Scott, Portfolio Holder for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport. On a quarterly basis, the Committee scrutinises highways performance. Cllr Scott deserves enormous credit for his open and engaged approach to this work, and committee members deserve equal credit for asking challenging and constructive questions. These sessions demonstrate what I think good scrutiny is about: critical friend challenge that provides public accountability and addresses issues that matter to residents. Providing robust challenge when needed, but also coming up with ideas on how to improve council services.

Many of the issues that we cover - such as climate change - cross several portfolios and therefore I am pleased that PSEG has held successful joint sessions with other scrutiny committees over the last year including with PAF on libraries and CPSC on economic development and the Tovi Eco Park. The culture of scrutiny should be one not of silo working but of close collaboration.

As well as working well internally, it is crucial that scrutiny is focused externally as well. I am pleased therefore that PSEG has facilitated public speakers when discussing cycling and when hearing a call-in on the changes to the Highways Rangers service. Scrutiny should be



amplifying the voice of residents, businesses and parishes, and I am delighted that PSEG is leading the way on this.

One of the joys of chairing PSEG is the variety of topics that the Committee covers and this year that has been no exception. Topics have included reviewing the Bus Service Improvement Plan, understanding efforts to support arts and culture post-covid, hearing plans to boost recycling as part of the new waste strategy and working on changes to Local Highway Panels. Again, enormous credit to committee members for tackling such a broad range of topics in such an engaged way. Even though the Committee includes many Councillors with a substantial amount of experience and expertise, the overall desire from members is to improve and expand the level of scrutiny. As a result, many have agreed to attend extra training sessions as we approach the third year of this particular group. Attendance at meetings has been good – and above previous levels.

With the variety of topics that we cover, I am sure the next 12 months will be as busy as the last, and we are looking forward to working with officers and members to ensure that PSEG continues to deliver strong, non-partisan collaborative scrutiny focused on outcomes for our residents.

If you would like to contribute to our work or make suggestions for our work programme, then please get in touch with me at [cllr.alan.goggin@essex.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.alan.goggin@essex.gov.uk)

**Councillor Alan Goggin – Chairman**

# Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee

This committee reviews the overall strategic direction, policies and priorities of the Cabinet and Council including the budget strategy, financial resources, equality and diversity issues, procurement and the delivery of Everyone's Essex.

The Committee's Chairman and Vice Chairmen are Councillors Chris Pond, Michael Mackrory and Mike Steptoe. Full details of the committee's work and membership can be found on the Council's [website](#).



Last year I stated that the Committee had been keen to assess the financial impact of, and response to, Covid and the subsequent challenges on the budget process, including the assumptions being made for future budgets. That has not changed over the last twelve months with still great uncertainty over some of the longer-term impacts of the pandemic compounded now by increasing care complexity and demand in the Adult Social Care and Health budgets, economic pressures from unprecedented levels of inflation and rising interest rates and continued uncertainty on government funding.

To keep up to speed we request financial updates on at least a quarterly basis incorporating the latest quarterly Outturn which is also presented to Cabinet. Considering these reports in a scrutiny forum (as well as at Cabinet) does permit a longer discussion on the challenges being faced and extracts more detail around priorities, the choices being made and future planning. This accountability and transparency to the financial decision-making process is an essential element of robust local government scrutiny. This has become even more apparent when we see the recent reported financial situations at some other local authorities. In particular, the Committee will be keen to hear if there are any lessons learnt for the sector as a whole from the Commissioners' report on financial management at Thurrock Council. Members are always keen to challenge and seek confirmation from the Cabinet Member and officers that regular benchmarking and sharing of knowledge with other local authorities is undertaken on a range of financial issues and challenges being faced.

We supplement regular financial updates with deep dives on certain budget aspects as and when we feel it appropriate and helpful to get a greater understanding of what lies behind some challenges and issues. We have looked at the regulatory background to, and the Council's policy towards, reserves and provisioning and considered the different types of reserves that have been put in place. Members have been keen to highlight that there were a number of drawdowns from reserves last year, particularly to counter the impact of inflation, but also to develop strategic priorities and have challenged the sustainability of continuing to do this over an extended period of time.

Our financial scrutiny can vary in approach and sometimes means seeking further information on specific entries and/or challenging how a particular commitment or project is to be financed: For example, Members have recently pushed for clarifications on the

reprofiling of budget slippages particularly in relation to Highways Panels, the financing of climate change aspirations and targets and the s106 developer contributions process and governance. Members have also raised the possible mitigation for planned savings at risk of non-delivery and asked for further detail on the weaknesses of savings projections. The CPSC have also questioned the ongoing trend of staff vacancies and have pushed to fully understand where they were located and the extent of any impact on operations. As a result, the Committee has asked to be kept regularly informed on the impact of staff vacancies and future staffing reviews.

The County Council are required to refresh and produce a Capital and Treasury Management Strategy every year and update accordingly to comply with latest professional guidance and statutory requirements. The Strategy had not been presented to the Committee for scrutiny in previous years and I welcomed the opportunity to comment on the latest proposed updated Strategy in January 2023 emphasising that transparency and accountability were enhanced by pre-scrutiny. Whilst the draft strategy outlined the major risks that the Council was exposed to, many of the risks were unpredictable and members queried the sensitivity of the risks identified and sought assurance that regular monitoring was being undertaken.

The Committee has also taken the lead in oversight of the Everyone's Essex performance framework and, with the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen from the other scrutiny committees, have been scrutinising progress on a quarterly basis to ensure transparency in holding the Executive to account on delivery of the objectives and targets within it. Recent issues discussed have included climate actions, increasing physical activity, skills needed for employment in new technology, all-age employment opportunities and more focus on locality-based funding. Incorporated into the most recent discussion was an update on Levelling Up actions being planned and taken, a Locality Fund update and some responses to the cost-of-living challenges.

As the organisation continues to both respond to changes arising from the pandemic and broader evolutionary changes to ways of working, the Committee will continue to scrutinise both the impact of proposed changes on the organisation and on staff. The CPSC has discussed the support being given to staff, managers and leaders in each function to help embed new work styles and hybrid working. A broader property and estate review is due to be scrutinised in March 2023.

Looking forward, the scrutiny function is now giving thought to arrangements for considering any formalised devolution proposals and to investigate any opportunities to work jointly with the scrutiny teams in our neighbouring authorities.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of my committee for their commitment, and their collaborative and non-partisan approach to scrutiny which is vitally important in building trust in the political independence of the scrutiny function here at the County Council. I am sure the Committee will seek to further challenge decision-makers going forward on how they continue to respond to financial and organisational challenges.

**Councillor Chris Pond – Chairman**

# People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee

This committee exercises the scrutiny function on matters relating to children and young people, families, education, adult social care, special needs and safeguarding.

The committee's Chairman and Vice Chairmen are Councillors Ray Gooding, Carlo Guglielmi and Peter May. Full details of the committee's work and membership can be found on the Council's [website](#).



The PAF has a wide remit covering so many of the services that were at the brunt of the pandemic, such as education, services for children and families and adult social care. Much of our focus going forward will be looking at the new priorities and strategies that are being developed to reshape services to respond to changing expectations, and new and often more complex support needs.

In my report to you last year I stressed how the PAF had been involved at an early stage in the development of various new corporate strategies and this process has continued with early engagement on further new draft strategies for Adult Community Learning, All-Age Carers, and Disabilities. Each time, the Committee has challenged the assumptions and priorities of each strategy and been able to suggest changes.

The aspirations in high level strategies can often be easy to support and the real test for a scrutiny committee is to challenge what difference they make to the service user. We will continue to keep a critical eye on this and seek evidence of outcomes being achieved. With the SEND strategy, for example, the under identification of moderate Learning Disabilities and speech and language difficulties, continued differences in waiting times for diagnosis across Essex, and how young people access and navigate services, have all previously been highlighted in a Care Quality Commission inspection and the new strategy will need to be seen to specifically address these as part of future partnership working arrangements.

Coming out of the pandemic and the current economic pressures, the future role of Adult Community Learning (ACL) has assumed even greater importance to help provide training so that local people can increase their employability. The PAF has discussed more flexible ways to deliver courses, the refreshing of curriculum and encouraged the ACL property portfolio review underway and opportunities for better siting of some ACL facilities.

The PAF has continued to work with colleagues from the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the development of the Everyone's Essex Library Service 2022-26 plan and the proposed wider community and family role. It was good to see public questions on this at one of our sessions and it afforded the opportunity to seek reaffirmation that the libraries will continue to be run by professional staff and that the use of volunteers will only be as a supplement to that. The new additional focus on levelling up within the new library plan has highlighted some concerns on levels of literacy and the Chairman of the Education Task Force will be invited to a future session to discuss this further. Levelling up will continue to be an overarching theme across our work. The current HCRG (formerly Virgin Care) contract for the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing

Service was controversial for some when it was awarded as it meant a completely new outcomes focused approach. We have continued to challenge if the service is reaching the most hard-to-reach as they often subsequently need the most interventions. An additional challenge for us as scrutineers is that because of its new innovative approach there is nothing directly comparable to benchmark in other local authorities. There is also a longer timeline to assess the outcomes being sought compared to quantitative measures.

The PAF has worked with the HOSC looking at the NHS Integrated Care System footprints mapping Essex (see the HOSC Chairman's Statement elsewhere in this report). The PAF has also led a session looking at discharge flows from acute hospitals and ensuring that appropriate domiciliary care is available throughout Essex. The aim is to support people in their own home for as long as possible. However, a major challenge is staff recruitment and retention and the PAF will continue to ask what can be done to improve this situation.

Rising levels of Domestic Abuse has been identified as an unfortunate consequence of the pandemic lock downs. The PAF has been updated on improvements that have been made in terms of support for victims and survivors of domestic abuse and will continue to challenge how the local system responds to the likely additional demands for support.

A new CQC assurance process for local government will start during 2023 and the HOSC and PAF have been briefed on the expectations for that new inspection regime. In preparation, the County Council arranged for an LGA-led mock inspection during February 2023 and, as part of that, some HOSC and PAF scrutiny members participated in a peer inspection scrutiny focus group and responded to questioning on Scrutiny's role in challenging the County Council on adult social care issues. The PAF will soon consider the report of the mock inspection and the ongoing preparations for a future formal inspection.

We have heard one call-in during the last year in relation to the closure of the Essex Teacher Training Programme and the governance process that was followed leading up to the proposed decision. I was pleased that the PAF fully engaged in robust scrutiny of this and, whilst allowing the decision to be implemented, highlighted that there should have been earlier engagement with the PAF and asked the Scrutiny Board to consider lessons learnt and if the current Cabinet-Scrutiny protocol required any changes as a result.

Annually the PAF meets the Independent Chairmen and the statutory partners of both the Children's and Adults Safeguarding Boards and challenges their strategic priorities and the effectiveness of partnership arrangements. The Boards are not operational boards and so we will be seeking more operational focused updates as well in future.

I am pleased to see public questions being asked ahead of some of our discussions and this direct interaction with our residents is something we all need to continue to promote. We now prepare for some items by talking with representatives of Healthwatch Essex's Collaborative Forum to raise our awareness of the challenges faced by people needing support. We will look to use other Forums as well to help further understand user concerns.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of my committee for their continued commitment and interest in the work of the Committee, and their collaborative and non-partisan approach to scrutiny which is vitally important in building trust in the political independence of the scrutiny function here at the County Council.

**Councillor Ray Gooding – Chairman**

# Task and Finish Review – Mental Health Services for Young People

Last year Full Council backed scrutiny recommendations to improve young people's access to mental health services. The recommendations came from a Task and Finish Group made-up of members from the HOSC and the PAF Committees.

*Task and Finish Groups can be established by the Scrutiny Committees to carry out in-depth reviews on a particular service area, policy or issue and make recommendations. They are a way by which scrutiny members can help to develop policy.*

At the Full Council meeting on 10 May 2022, a motion was carried that a referral be made to scrutiny to undertake a review into mental health services for young people, and that it reports back its findings and recommendations by the end of December 2022.

After agreeing a 'scoping document', the Task and Finish Group held meetings between August and October 2022 and considered a wide range of oral and written evidence. The Group quickly identified that a key challenge for young people was how they can best access support and determine the service that they need.

The Group recognised that it needed to do more than just identify causes of concern; it was important to 'drill down' to identify what could be done to help resolve some of these issues and make recommendations on the way forward.

*Task and Finish Groups gather evidence in a variety of ways including written submissions, interviews with internal and external witnesses, site visits, work with partner organisations and other councils, desktop research, public meetings, and surveys.*

Recommendations were eventually finalised by the Group in late 2022 and these focused on improving the training and retention of staff, introducing a single point of contact (hub) in Essex for young people requiring mental health support, and a 'wellbeing hub' in every primary school in Essex.

*Task and Finish Group recommendations are made to the 'parent' scrutiny committee and then to the relevant Cabinet Member who will give a formal response.*

Having been backed by Full Council, the Group's work is being shared with the Essex Health and Wellbeing Board, the Essex Strategic Coordination Group, Essex MPs and the chairs of the relevant House of Commons Select Committee.

The Scrutiny Board is now supporting HOSC and PAF to monitor the outcome and potential implementation of the recommendations. This will ensure that the issue remains at the heart of scrutiny's agenda moving forward and will continue scrutiny's efforts to make a real difference to the lives of young people in Essex.

# Training and Development

Following the elections that took place in May 2021, a focused induction programme was delivered to members of the Scrutiny committees on the nature of the scrutiny function itself and the remit of the individual scrutiny committees.

Feedback from these sessions was positive, and the Scrutiny Board agreed that training and development should be kept under review and that suitable opportunities for further development should be identified and delivered. With this in mind, the Scrutiny Board considered member training as a part of the wider Scrutiny Review.

This review recommended that the Board establish a standard programme of member training to increase knowledge of scrutiny (amongst both scrutiny and non-scrutiny members), develop questioning skills, and help members to use evidence effectively; considering the results of a skills audit of members where appropriate.

It was also agreed that the Scrutiny Board was to have oversight of any requests for spending on any training packages commissioned on a collective basis, over and above any individual needs identified by Members as part of the Personal Development Plan process, to ensure that best value is being achieved.

The Board has subsequently worked with officers and organised two training sessions with the LGiU in March:

- *Scrutiny: Understanding and Maximising Your Role.* To enable members to better understand scrutiny including its role, principles, and value; learn from good practice of other councils; develop scrutiny skills; and explore opportunities and options for the development of scrutiny at the Council.
- *Questioning Skills.* Focusing on something that is key to a successful scrutiny function: asking questions! This can be viewed as two separate elements; identifying the right questions to ask to begin with, then actively listening to the response given and putting appropriate follow up questions where needed.

Further formal sessions will be identified and organised by the Scrutiny Board as it seeks to ensure that members are well-trained scrutineers with the skills needed to carry out their roles effectively.

Alongside these formal sessions, the Scrutiny Board continues to disseminate best practice including on the use of Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) and encourage individual committees to organise briefing sessions to deepen the knowledge of members serving on scrutiny.

Committee members are also encouraged to continue to actively consider what support and training they need, with the Scrutiny Board and officers within Democratic Services providing support and advice as requested.

# How the Public can get Involved

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An increasing focus is to get residents involved in the work of scrutiny. There are a number of ways this can currently happen:

## **Attending a meeting**

Members of the public are welcome to attend any public meeting of a scrutiny committee, which are listed on the [online meeting calendar](#).

All scrutiny committees normally allow 15 minutes for public questions at the beginning of each meeting. If you wish to ask a question, let the Chairman or clerk know by 1pm the day before a meeting is scheduled. Public meetings are usually streamed live on YouTube, with recordings available afterwards, via this link [ECC Democracy - YouTube](#).

## **Giving Evidence**

Scrutiny regularly asks organisations or individuals to give evidence at meetings for the purpose of their investigations. If you will be attending scrutiny to give information to a committee, you can find information and guidance about what to expect in the [Scrutiny Handbook](#).

## **Suggest a Topic**

If you would like to feed into the scrutiny process, or suggest a topic for scrutiny's attention, you can get in touch with the Scrutiny Team at [democratic.services@essex.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@essex.gov.uk).

Alternatively, you can contact any of the Councillors who are on the relevant committee or task and finish group and ask them to consider representing you or calling you to give evidence. You can find out which local Councillors are on which committee by checking on the [website](#).

Plans are also being put in place to develop this process and make it easier for you to suggest topics for scrutiny. Watch this space for further updates on this exciting initiative!

**This document has been produced by Essex County Council's Democracy and Transparency service. Contact us by email at [democratic.services@essex.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@essex.gov.uk).**