

Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report 2022/23



Contents

Foreword	3
What is Overview and Scrutiny?	4
Principles of good scrutiny	4
How does scrutiny make a difference?	5
Leicestershire's scrutiny structure	5
Your role in our work	6
How to get involved	6
Alternatively contact us...	6
Key issues we have looked at and what we have done...	8
Scrutiny Commission	8
Adults and Communities	11
Children and Families	13
Environment and Climate Change	16
Health	18
Highways and Transport	21
Contact the Overview and Scrutiny Team	23

Foreword

By the Scrutiny Commissioners

This annual report provides a summary of the work undertaken and outcomes achieved by Leicestershire County Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees during the 2022-23 municipal year. It also provides a general overview of how scrutiny operates and how you, as a member of the public, can get involved.

The committees scrutinised and questioned Cabinet Members on their portfolios and reviewed a range of specific topics, including those that affected internal Council services, its budget and those which were particularly important to communities and residents. This report provides a summary of some of the key highlights of the work undertaken.

We would like to pay tribute to Council officers for supporting and facilitating the Overview and Scrutiny process and staff working within partner organisations that have sent representatives to share information and their experiences. We also thank Cabinet Members that have attended our Scrutiny meetings to answer our questions.

Finally, we would like to thank all Scrutiny Members for their commitment and contribution to the process, with special thanks to the Chairs and Spokespersons who have continued to drive each Committees work programme to address areas of concern.

If you wish to find out more about our Scrutiny meetings please go to the Council's [website](#). They are all open to the public and if you would like to get involved, Scrutiny members and the Scrutiny teams contact details are included in this report. We encourage you to get in touch and add your voice to our work.

The four Scrutiny Commissioners are responsible for leading the Overview and Scrutiny process, deciding on priority issues for Scrutiny and areas that merit more detailed review.



Michael Mullaney CC
Chairman of the
Scrutiny Commission



Rosita Page CC
Vice Chairman of the
Scrutiny Commission



James Poland CC
Scrutiny
Commissioner



Amanda Hack CC
Scrutiny
Commissioner



What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny (scrutiny) is an important part of local democracy and provides the legal power for Members who are not Cabinet members to look into issues of concern and make sure decisions taken are for the benefit of Leicestershire residents.

Although scrutiny cannot make decisions, it can make recommendations for improvement to those that do (i.e. the Cabinet). Scrutiny can also look at services provided by other organisations, such as health, and make recommendations for partners too.

Scrutiny committees are politically balanced committees made up of non-Cabinet Members.

Principles of good scrutiny

The four key principles of scrutiny as established by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny are:

Provide critical friend challenge to executive policy and decision makers

- **Constructive, robust, purposeful challenge.**
- **Non-aggressive to create optimum conditions for investigative evidence based processes.**

Enable the voice and concerns of the public

- **Meetings conducted in public and webcast.**
- **Innovative public communication, consultation and feedback.**

Be carried out by independent minded councillors

- **Councillors actively engage in the scrutiny function to drive improvement.**
- **Areas are reviewed in an a-political atmosphere.**

Drive improvement in public services

- **Promotes community well-being and improves the quality of life.**
- **Strategic review of corporate policies, plans, performance and budgets.**

All our scrutiny members received training from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny in Autumn 2021 to help ensure these principles continue to be embedded into our approach to Scrutiny.

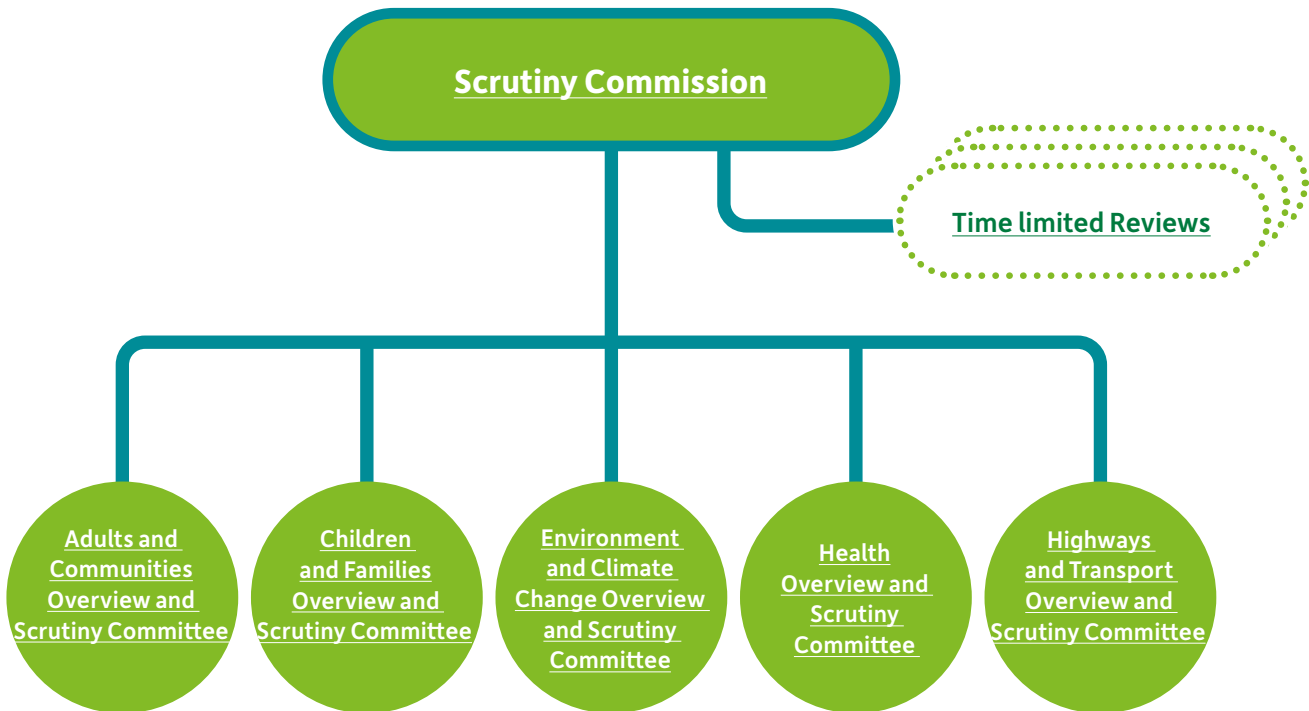
How does scrutiny make a difference?

Scrutiny committees hold the Cabinet to account for the decisions it has taken or intends to take, and acts as a critical friend, helping to ensure the Council delivers its services efficiently and effectively. They do this by:

- Reviewing and commenting on the County Council’s budget and strategic policies.
- Undertaking pre-decision scrutiny of key matters, making recommendations for improvement wherever possible.
- Monitoring and challenging the performance of services and the outcomes delivered for those living and working in Leicestershire.
- Providing transparency by holding meetings in public and take questions from residents.

Leicestershire’s scrutiny structure

In Leicestershire all scrutiny work is carried out by the Scrutiny Commission and five Overview and Scrutiny Committees which each look at a particular service area of the Council. These are as shown in the diagram below.



Scrutiny Committees can also initiate time limited pieces of work to look at a particular issue in detail. These can be informal task and finish groups, providing for short sharp scrutiny of a complex topic. Properly focused they ensure Members can swiftly reach conclusions and make recommendations, perhaps over the course of a couple of months or less, that can be considered directly by officers and Cabinet Lead Members.

Alternatively, a formal Scrutiny Review Panel can be established. Whilst time limited, these can run for several months. and their recommendations, which may suggest a change in policy or service provision, are submitted to the relevant parent scrutiny committee prior to consideration by the Cabinet.

Reports of previous Scrutiny Review Panels and Task and Finish Groups can be viewed on the Council’s [website](#).

Your role in our work

Our committees work to ensure the Council and its partners are delivering the right policies and services that will benefit Leicestershire residents and service users. They do this by:

- Inviting partners, stakeholder representatives and external experts to contribute evidence to broaden Members' understanding and inform their discussions.
- Having co-opted members on the Children and Family Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, representing parent governors and Church of England maintained schools.
- Using Scrutiny Members' local knowledge from within their communities to question decision makers (i.e. Cabinet Lead Members) and officers.
- Ensuring transparency by holding meetings in public and webcasting these live via the Council's [YouTube channel](#).

How to get involved

Overview and Scrutiny Committees provide a voice for the people of Leicestershire and allow the public to have a greater direct say in Council matters, and in areas which the Council is able to influence. Attendance and involvement of the public is actively encouraged, and this can be done by:

- Attending a meeting – Members of the public are welcome to attend any public meeting of a Scrutiny Committee, details of which are listed on the [online meeting calendar](#).
- Asking a question – all Scrutiny Committees allow for public questions at the beginning of each meeting. If you wish to ask a question, please see our [online guidance on how to submit a question](#).
- Submitting a petition – all Scrutiny Committees can receive petitions relating to an area that the council has authority over. It can be submitted by anyone who lives, works, or studies in Leicestershire and can be submitted in writing or as an e-petition. For further details, see our [online guidance on how to submit a petition](#).
- Identifying issues which a Scrutiny Committee might look at (particularly through a specific review).
- Providing evidence to inform Scrutiny (either in writing or in person).
- Contributing to consultations, surveys, workshops and/or focus groups.

Find out more about how Overview and Scrutiny works by accessing our [Overview and Scrutiny Guide](#) on the Council's website.

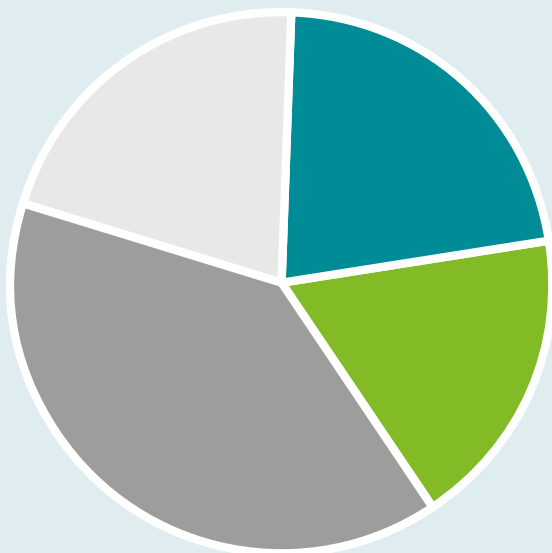
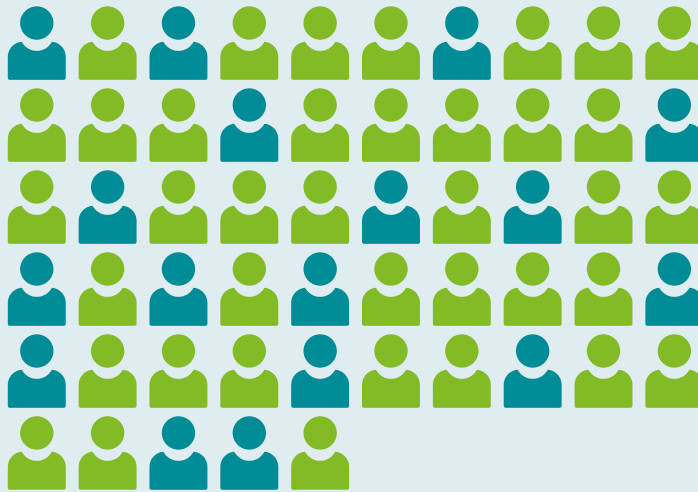
Alternatively contact us...

If you wish to get involved, you can contact a member of the Scrutiny Team or a Member of one of the Committees, details of which are included in this report



Scrutiny in Numbers

There are currently 55 councillors elected to Leicestershire County Council to represent the residents of Leicestershire. **Of those 38 are appointed to the Scrutiny Commission and five other Overview and Scrutiny Committees**, providing critical friend challenge to the Cabinet.



Types of Scrutiny Undertaken

Well over a quarter of reports considered by the Council's Scrutiny Committees resulted in comments being presented to and considered as part of the Cabinet's decision making process.

Scrutiny Committees have sought to keep abreast of issues, receiving information updates on a range of issues affecting residents, but has focused substantially on monitoring the Council's performance and seeking assurance around service and project delivery.

■ Pre-Cabinet Scrutiny
 ■ Policy Development
 ■ Performance and Assurance
 ■ Information

Leicestershire County Council continues to be committed to allowing residents full insight into its decision making. **All our Scrutiny Committees are held in public, allowing people to attend in person to view the debate.**

Meetings are also publicly broadcast live, and the recordings can be found on the Council's website where they are available to view in perpetuity. See the Council's [YouTube channel](#). **Our Webcast views saw an increase of more than 370% this year.**

Committee Meetings held:	31
Reports Considered:	117
Comments submitted to Cabinet:	30
Hours of public debate:	55
Webcast views:	9700
Questions submitted by Members and the Public:	37

Key issues we have looked at and what we have done...

Scrutiny Commission

The Scrutiny Commission reviews the overall strategic direction and corporate policies and priorities of the Cabinet and Council, including the budget and its four-year Medium Term Financial Strategy. Full details of the Commission's work can be found on the Council's [website](#).

The Budget and financial pressures

The central role of the Scrutiny Commission is to monitor the financial health of the Council. It has been another demanding year with an unprecedented rise in costs and inflation and continued growth in demand for services. In addition to regularly reviewing the Council's overall financial performance, the Commission has specifically looked at those projects and services which pose the biggest risk to the Authority. The Commission has:

- Submitted its views to the Cabinet on the Council's budget proposals for the next four years.
- Requested that a scrutiny review panel be established to consider in detail proposed cuts to Shire Grants.
- Questioned the Lead Member regarding the Council's campaign for fair funding and expressed disappointment that the Government still had no plans to push this forward.
- Expressed frustration that Government grant funding was fixed at the point of allocation and not indexed linked, meaning increased costs had to be met out of the Council's own resources.
- Reviewed and challenged all options regarding the delivery of the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road the cost of which had risen from £85.3m in 2021 to £116.1m; the County Council's contribution to this rising from £23m to £51m.
- Took a holistic view of the budgetary impacts of rising demand for Special Educational Needs and Disability Services (SEND) and SEND transport and challenged the planned approach to address the expected rise in the funding deficit to £91m by 2026/27. The Commission questioned both officers and Lead Members covering Children and Family Services, Finance and Transport Services.

Corporate Property Asset Management and Investments

The Commission looked at the performance of the Corporate Asset Investment Fund (CAIF) and considered and commented on the new Corporate Asset Management Plan for 2022 – 2025. The Commission:

- Welcomed the performance of the CAIF which generated over £7m in revenue income each year but heard how the fund would now be repurposed in line with national rule changes regarding borrowing.
- Challenged the Council's approach to monitoring and managing its farm estate following the high costs incurred to clean up one farm following large amounts of potentially hazardous waste having been found on site.

- Questioned the approach taken to identify non-operational properties for sale where these were surplus to requirement and asked that officers consider how this process might be sped up to bring in additional resources quickly.
- Was consulted on two new types of planned CAIF investments in Bank Risk Sharing Funds and Christofferson Robb and Company's Capital Relief Fund 5. Whilst these were riskier investments than the Council had previously made, the Commission agreed they were calculated and manageable.

Commercial Services

The Commission considered the performance of Leicestershire Traded Services (LTS) which had been hard hit by the pandemic and still struggling to recover in some areas. The Commission:

- Challenged the services recovery plans post pandemic, noting plans to reconfigure menus and renegotiate contracts to manage/reduce cost and wastage.
- Welcomed news that demand for the accredited School Meal Service had been improving post pandemic which gave confidence for its future success but raised concerns about continued profit losses due to rising staff and product costs and questioned if operating the Service out of county continued to be a wise approach.
- Sought reassurance from the Lead Member that all options were being looked at regarding Beaumanor Hall, noting that its commercial viability and the cost of investment and repairs had to be balanced against what was a recognised, valuable and well liked property asset.
- Requested that future reports include details of the capital and running costs for each traded service to provide a clearer view of their individual financial performance and profitability going forward.

Strategic Planning and Growth

The Commission invited the Joint Strategic Planning Manager for Leicester and Leicestershire and the Head of Planning at Leicester City Council to a meeting to discuss key strategic planning and growth related matters, in particular the planned Leicester and Leicestershire Statement of Common Ground on Housing and Employment Land Needs. The Commission:

- Expressed concern about the uplift in housing numbers allocated to Leicester City, some of which would have to be passported to district councils to deliver, but welcomed the joint approach between all local authorities in the area to address this, recognising the need for cooperation at a strategic level.
- Heard about the work undertaken by the City Council to deliver more houses but noted it was restricted by the amount of suitable development land available.
- Challenged how the cost of infrastructure to support the increased growth, being passed to district councils as a result of the City's increased unmet need, would be met given the financial pressures facing the County Council.



Crime and Disorder

The Commission received reports in its capacity as the Council's designated Crime and Disorder Committee regarding the Council's approach in partnership with other agencies to community safety work and dealing with domestic abuse. The Commission:

- Commented on the Council's Community Safety Strategy for 2022 – 2026.
- Received an update on the work taking place in line with the Council's new Leicestershire Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy 2022-2025, noting the good progress being made but raising concerns about the lack of guaranteed future government funding to support the programme beyond 2025.
- Provided feedback on the Council's proposed three year Youth Justice Plan for 2023-2026.

The Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) and Place Marketing Organisation (PMO)

Representatives from the LLEP and the PMO were invited to a Commission meeting to outline progress being made in delivering their priorities for 2023. The Commission:

- Heard about the LLEP's plans to address digital poverty and digital exclusion given many services were now delivered online and people were more likely to work remotely.
- Challenged the LLEP's approach to providing support to micro-businesses in rural areas.
- Questioned what proactive steps were being taken by the PMO to attract new investment into the area.
- Commented that whilst it was clear the PMO was undertaking a lot of work, there was a need to capture more data in a more coordinated way across the County to demonstrate how effective this was and whether it was being targeted in the right areas.

Next Year...

The Commission will continue to monitor the Council's financial performance and the performance of its commercial services and asset investments. The Commission will look in more detail at how the Council manages its farm estate and will receive the final report of the review panel looking at the Shire Grants programme in time for the 2024/25 budget.

Membership and contact details:

Tom Barkley CC	Michael Mullaney CC (Chairman)
Hilary Fryer CC	Rosita Page CC (Vice Chairman)
Simon Galton CC	Trevor Pendleton CC
Tony Gillard CC	James Poland CC
Amanda Hack CC	Terry Richardson CC
Jonathan Morgan CC	

Adults and Communities



This Committee exercises the Scrutiny function in relation to services provided by the Adults and Communities Department. It also monitors the activities of the Health and Wellbeing Board aimed at improving the integration of health and social care services.

Full details of the Committee's work can be found on the Council's [website](#).

Budget and Demand Pressures

The Adults and Communities Department has worked through another challenging year due to rising costs, inflation, and demand pressures. Given concerns over the impact this would have on the Department's budget the Committee:

- Raised questions on the rising number of referrals and received assurance on how these were being managed and cases allocated to individual adult social care workers at any one time.
- Requested more information regarding the timing of social care assessments given the 44% rise in those awaiting assessment nationally, particularly for those awaiting hospital discharge. The Committee was assured of the work of Home First which carried out assessments within one to two days.
- Sought reassurance on plans to address the forecasted growth in the number of people presenting with mental health conditions and physical disabilities.

Learning Disability (LD) Employment Performance

The Committee received an update on the numbers of people with learning disabilities known to the County Council who were in employment, and information on the emerging feasibility of work being undertaken to develop more supported employment opportunities. The Committee:

- Heard how, with the re-procurement of Community Life Choices Services, more providers interested in assisting service users with LD to find employment had been commissioned, and a number were exploring the potential to provide training to small and medium enterprises to help increase job opportunities available.
- Were pleased to hear that employment rates for adults with a LD in Leicestershire were amongst the highest in the country and that the Department had been asked to share its experiences through the Association of Directors and Adults Social Services network.
- Requested that the Department look into the reasons why some people with LD were not actively seeking work to determine if enough support was being given.

Social Care Reform Programme

The Committee considered regular updates on the Government's Social Care Reform Programme and held a standalone workshop to review and comment on the draft Self-Assessment in preparation for inspection by the Care Quality Commission under the new assurance process introduced through the Health and Care Act 2022. Members' recommendations were incorporated within the draft document.

Commissioning and Procurement of Homecare Services

The Committee received an update on the outcomes of the tender for integrated home care services in partnership with the NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) for the County to create additional capacity through a framework of providers. The Committee:

- Welcomed the progress made and plans in place to develop the Framework and mitigate assessed risks.
- Noted there were challenging areas for Home Care coverage, predominantly in rural areas around the edge of the County but were assured there was enough capacity.
- Acknowledged further work need to be done to strike the right balance between ensuring carers were paid and remunerated appropriately for any extra costs they incurred (such as travel), and providers being able to sustain the market and ensure continuity of care for service users.

Performance

The Committee has continued to monitor the performance of services across the Adults and Communities Department as well as look at complaints received. The Committee:

- Requested information on the library website and in-person visits, and clarification on reasons for people using the website.
- Noted the continued good progress with the development of supported living accommodation to provide alternatives to residential care.
- Was pleased to note the positive increase to the 'hours of volunteering' which was higher than levels recorded prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Congratulated the Department on its successful bid for funding (£780k over three years) to Arts Council England (ACE) for funding through the National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) programme for Libraries and Heritage provision.

Policy Development and Service Changes

The Committee has helped to shape the following Council strategies and policies and departmental service changes by submitting its views and recommendations to the Cabinet on the following:

- Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Carers Strategy 2022-2025
- Extra Care Service Review and Procurement
- Procurement of Community Life Choices Services (Day Services)
- Eligibility for Care Technology Services

Next Year...

We will continue to monitor the impact of demand and cost pressures on the Departments budget, the preparations for social care reforms and increases in inflation and cost of living pressures.

Membership and contact details:	
Linda Broadley CC	Jewel Miah CC
Barry Champion CC	Terry Richardson CC (Chairman)
Nick Chapman CC (Vice Chairman)	Amanda Wright CC
Leon Hadji-Nikolaou CC	

Children and Families



This Committee scrutinises the services provided by the Children and Family Services Department to children, young people and families as well as education, special needs and safeguarding matters.

Full details of the Committee's work can be found on the Council's [website](#).

SEND and High Needs Block Development

The Committee has continued to scrutinise the Service on its delivery of SEND and Inclusion services whilst it continues to experience challenges with increasing demand for support services, rising costs and a widening budget deficit within the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. The Committee:

- Monitored the financial performance of the Council's SEND and Inclusion service noting that whilst there had been significant investment to improve capacity and the support offer, rising demand continued to make it difficult for progress to be made in reducing the budget deficit.
- Raised concerns and challenged the reasons for the continued rise in the number of children and young people requiring an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) which was disproportionately high in Leicestershire when compared to other areas.
- Raised questions and sought regular updates on the number of EHCPs not carried out within the statutory timeframe.
- Welcomed the introduction of the Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire (TSIL) programme which aimed to transform services to become more efficient and effective, to identify the barriers for providing support and to ensure that children subject to an EHCP received the right support in the right setting. The Committee expressed its keen interest and hope for the success of the programme in delivering its objectives and agreed to monitor progress throughout.
- Heard from representatives of Newton Europe, specialist consultants appointed by the Council to aid its delivery of the TSIL programme.
- Raised concerns and questioned the outcome of a SEND Local Area Revisit that found that sufficient progress had not been made in driving improvements in the quality of EHCP assessments which impacted on children and their families. The Committee was pleased to hear that the inspection report confirmed the Department's capability in making the recommended improvements but agreed to continue to monitor progress in this area.
- Requested further reports on the number of, and support provided to, children who are electively home educated.

Admissions

The Committee requested an update on challenges experienced within the admissions service during the 2022/23 admissions cycle. The Committee:

- Raised concern that some children had not been allocated a school place by the statutory deadline.
- Received assurance that children subject to an EHCP, looked after children and those known to social workers would be prioritised when allocating school places.
- Were pleased to hear that the Service was working collaboratively with colleagues in the Environment and Transport Department to reduce delays in allocating school transport.
- Welcomed changes to the admissions system which had been made for the next admissions cycle which would aim to alleviate delays and reduce the number of parents applying for only their preferred secondary school place.

Corporate Parenting

The Committee commented on the Council's draft Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2022–25, its feedback being reported to the Cabinet as part of the approval process. The Committee:

- Emphasised the importance for all members of the Council to acknowledge and fulfil their role as Corporate Parents and the need for commitment from members and officers towards 'Our Promise'.
- Questioned the process for monitoring outcomes relating to support for children in care and care leavers.
- Received assurance that the senior management team within the service held monthly performance meetings to review data and discuss successes and challenges regarding accommodation, safeguarding, and education, training and employment.
- Was pleased to hear that feedback from children continued to be collected through engagement, by regularly assessing pathway plans, and through regular meetings of a care leavers panel.

Child Criminal Exploitation

The Committee requested a report on the Council's response to tackling Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). The Committee:

- Raised concern that a significant percentage of CSE referrals were children with some form of disability, or children with an EHCP.
- Received assurance that the service focussed on early intervention and on providing early support to children at risk of being exploited and would continue to offer support to children and families in making a statement, within a judicial process, and beyond.
- Welcomed the child focussed approach adopted by all agencies and the commitment to target and prosecute perpetrators of crime and to safeguard victims of exploitation.
- Requested an annual update on CCE and CSE so that work conducted with partner agencies to support vulnerable children and the outcomes achieved could be closely monitored.

Performance

The Committee continued to monitor the performance of all services provided by the Children and Family Services Department throughout the year. In response, the Committee:

- Challenged the rise in the percentage of children becoming subject to a child protection plans for a second or subsequent time and to what cases were reviewed within timescale.
- Raised concerns about the challenges faced in recruiting and retaining social work staff and sought reassurances regarding the strategies being put in place to address this.
- Considered reports on the performance of the Council's Fostering and Adoption Services.
- Commented on the findings of the Independent Reviewing Officer on the extent to which the Council had fulfilled its responsibilities to children in its care during the year.
- Received a report on service quality and outcomes achieved by the work of the LLR Safeguarding Children Partnership Board.
- Looked at the performance of Virtual School and heard from the Virtual School Head.

Next Year...

As the TSIL Programme is implemented, the Committee will receive regular updates on how the programme is performing and to what extent it is improving the SEND and Inclusion system for children and families and reducing the Councils budget deficit in this area.

The Committee has requested an update on recruitment and retention pressures, including the Department's strategy for addressing challenges posed by agencies and the expected impact which national reviews into social care would have on delivering support to children and families.

Membership and contact details:

Mark Frisby CC	Craig Smith CC (Vice Chairman)
Hilary Fryer CC (Chairman)	Geoff Welsh CC
Leon Hadji-Nikolaou CC	Co-opted Education Representatives
Ross Hills CC	Canon Carolyn Lewis (Church of England Representative)
Max Hunt CC	Robert Martin (Parent Governor)

Environment and Climate Change



This Committee was established in July 2021, with responsibility to scrutinise Waste Management Services and the Councils green agenda, including its pledge to become carbon neutral by 2030 and 'net zero' countywide by 2045.

Full details of the Committee's work can be found on the Council's [website](#).

Net Zero

The Committee took part in the Council's 12 week public consultation on the draft Leicestershire Net Zero 2045 Strategy and Action Plan. The Committee:

- Commented that the Strategy could be simplified but recognised the complex concepts that needed to be put across.
- Sought assurance that appropriate consultation documents would be used for different audiences to ensure wide accessibility and that these would be engaging and user friendly to encourage all residents and stakeholders to take part.
- Noted that the Strategy was net zero, rather than zero carbon, as it would be impossible to plan for a future without carbon.
- Heard how the policy pathway would not align with the Paris Agreement given the major policy gap between current targets and the required pace of action.

Tree Management

The Committee reviewed the progress of work taking place under the framework of the Tree Management Strategy which set out the approach for the management of the County Council's trees and woodland estates. The Committee:

- Was pleased to hear about the number of trees that had already been planted and sought more information about tree planting initiatives in their local areas.
- Considered the Council's plan to develop its own tree nursery and given the Council's budget constraints, sought and received some assurance regarding future investment in the proposed nursery.
- Welcomed the Council's use of the Value of Trees (VoT) on the Highway Toolkit which enabled the Council to select the appropriate trees to plant in particular locations and evaluate the benefits of planting those trees.

Water Management

The Committee invited representatives from the Environment Agency, Severn Trent Water and Anglian Water to attend two of its meetings to answer questions regarding water management in Leicestershire. The Committee:

- Encouraged better partnership working between local authorities, the water companies and the Environment Agency (EA), emphasising the need for planning policy officers in district councils to work proactively with the EA and the water companies to reduce the impact of flooding from new developments.
- Raised concerns about how existing sewage and drainage systems would be able to cope with new housing being built and gained assurances that the system had capacity.
- Raised concerns about river water quality in Leicestershire and requested further information from the water companies regarding plans for improvement.
- Gained reassurance from the water companies that they were working with farmers to improve water management, in particular runoff from a pollution perspective.
- Raised concerns regarding the disruption to communities caused whilst water pipes were being repaired particularly in relation to road closures and encouraged local authorities and water companies to work more closely regarding the timing of repairs.

Organic Pollutants in Domestic Sofas

The Committee learnt about the emerging issue of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in Upholstered Domestic Seating and the implications for the Council in managing this as a waste authority. The Committee:

- Gained an understanding of the causes of the problem (i.e. flame retardants in the seating) and the risk of chemicals escaping whilst this was being disposed of.
- Made suggestions for lobbying Government in relation to ensuring furniture manufacturers did not use POPs in future.
- Asked for a further report at a future committee meeting to monitor progress with the issue.

Performance

- A key function of the Committee is to monitor the Council's performance in the delivery of its environmental and climate change targets. The Committee:
Welcomed the progress the County Council was making towards its environmental targets but sought information regarding work being carried out to address those that were RAG rated red.
- Encouraged the Council to gain a better understanding of how many of its employees were commuting to work and how far they were travelling, to assess the impact on emissions targets.
- Raised concerns about a lack of awareness of the Council's climate change initiatives particularly amongst members and requested that this be looked at.

Next Year...

The Committee intends to receive further updates on the Tree Strategy, the Net Zero Strategy and continue its regular performance monitoring.

Membership and contact details:	
Bill Boulter CC	Max Hunt CC
Nick Chapman CC	Rosita Page CC
Mark Frisby CC (Vice-Chair)	Trevor Pendleton CC (Chairman)
Bertie Harrison-Rushton CC	



Health

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

Full details of the Committee's work can be found on the Council's [website](#).

Primary Care

The Committee has looked at the challenges facing Primary Care as the health system came out of the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to change the way General Practice (GP) work. The Committee has:

- Heard about the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Primary Care Improvement Plan which focuses on improving access, quality and the recruitment of an appropriate workforce.
- Raised concerns about the difficulties patients were facing in booking GP appointments, particularly the requirement to call early in the morning. The Committee gained reassurances that going forward appointments would be released gradually throughout the day, could be booked in advance and be available in person, via a video or telephone call.
- Gained reassurances that quality assessments of GP Practices took place and work was ongoing to reduce variation in the way practices delivered services.
- Sought information regarding the numbers of patients that failed to attend appointments and what was being done to tackle this issue.

Urgent and Emergency Care

The Committee has looked into the performance of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Urgent and Emergency Care System and the findings of a Care Quality Commission (CQC) report which raised issues around access, demand, and staffing. The Committee has:

- Asked questions and sought reassurance about plans to address the issues raised in the CQC report but raised concerns about the lack of a clear strategy for improvement.
- Acknowledged that some of the performance problems with the Urgent and Emergency Care System resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic but commented on the longstanding issues which irrespective of the pandemic needed to be addressed, for example, the ambulance handover delays which were a symptom of a much wider problem with the through-flow of patients.
- Raised concerns about mixed messaging in relation to Urgent Treatment Centres and their opening hours which left the public unclear about where they should go for treatment and at what times.

Covid-19 and Flu Vaccination Programme

The Committee reviewed plans for the delivery of Covid-19 and flu vaccinations during autumn and winter 2022. The Committee:

- Welcomed the two mobile vaccination units that were operating across Leicestershire and the focus on targeting areas where vaccination uptake had been low.
- Evaluated the visibility of communications that were being disseminated to the public regarding the availability of the vaccines and gained an understanding of the different demographics that were being targeted.
- Raised concerns about variations in how different GP Practices were advertising vaccine availability to their patients.

Winter Pressures 2022/23

The Committee reviewed plans for managing demand across the health and care system during the 2022/23 winter period. The Committee:

- Noted the schemes put in place to reduce the number of patients requiring hospital beds, such as the 'Home first' approach and the use of 'virtual awards'.
- Welcomed the additional acute capacity that had been added to the Health and Care System including additional acute beds at UHL, additional community beds and the opening of the Ashton residential and nursing care home.
- Received an update in January 2023 regarding how the winter was progressing and noted that UHL had declared a critical incident on 30 December 2022 due to high patient attendances but were able to stand the incident down on 1 January 2023.
- Welcomed the improvement in handover times at the Leicester Royal Infirmary Emergency Department.
- Sought an update on the performance of the new Integrated Care System.

Healthy Child Programme

The Committee considered proposals from the Director of Public Health regarding the proposed model for the procurement and delivery of a 0-19 Healthy Child Programme and in particular the award of the 0-11 service to Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust and the decision to integrate the 11-19 service within the Council's Children's and Families Wellbeing service. The Committee:

- Welcomed the proposals for the 0-19 Health Child Programme;
- Raised concerns about the need for conversations to be held with headteachers in Leicestershire regarding the support that could be offered in relation to mental health and wellbeing in schools.
- Raised concerns regarding the length of time between each health check but heard about several other initiatives which addressed the welfare of children at an early age.
- Looked at the progress of the 11-19 service (now known as the Teen Health Service: 11-19) after it had been in place for 6 months and were pleased to see that the new service was more reactive to emerging issues amongst young people such as substance misuse.

Cancer Performance

The Committee carries out regular monitoring of key performance indicators relating to the health system in Leicestershire and one of these which the Committee has been keeping a close eye on is cancer metrics such as time taken from referral to treatment and from diagnosis to treatment. The Committee noted that most of the metrics had been rag rated red for some time and therefore requested further detail from the NHS regarding what was causing the backlogs and what work was taking place to address this. The Committee:

- Welcomed the Weekly Recovery Action Plan and work taking place with the national improvement support team.
- Noted that the backlog was reducing.
- Raised concerns about the impact on patient's mental health whilst they were waiting for a diagnosis/treatment but was pleased to hear that a psychological support service was being introduced for people with cancer.

LLR Joint Health Scrutiny Committee

Health Overview and Scrutiny members have also taken part in meetings of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Joint Health Scrutiny Committee and considered agenda items relating to dental services, maternity services, and the finances and accounts of University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust and their reconfiguration plans. Next year the County Council will take over the running and Chairing this Committee for the next two years.

Next Year...

The Committee plans to take a closer look at the workforce challenges facing the health and care system, substance misuse in particular vaping amongst young people, and hopes to receive an update on progress with the Hinckley Community Diagnostics Centre.

Membership and contact details:

Michael Charlesworth CC	Phil King CC (Vice Chairman)
Fula (Kamal) Ghattoraya CC	Jonathan Morgan CC (Chairman)
Dan Harrison CC	Betty Newton CC
Ross Hills CC	

Highways and Transport



This Committee scrutinises the Council's highways and transportation services.

Full details of the Committee's work can be found on the Council's [website](#).

The Budget and the Highways and Transportation Capital and Works Programme for 2022/23

The Department faces increased financial pressure with increasing demand and rising costs. The Committee therefore took a detailed look at the Department's proposed Highway and Transport budget for the next four years and specifically its capital programme which accounts for over 60% of the Council's overall capital budget. The Committee:

- Welcomed the work underway to look at various savings options for Park and Ride services run jointly with Leicester City Council.
- Raised concerns about the sufficiency of funding for future major road schemes from the Department of Transport (DfT) and commented that the added financial impact on the County Council was unsustainable; the Council would now be reliant on developer contributions to deliver future major road schemes arising from local plans, the Council's limited resources having to be prioritised to support the delivery of school places given its statutory responsibilities.
- Commented on the impact an increasing population had on the highway network through the generation of additional traffic and travel demands, increased transportation of goods and services and increased weight and size of vehicles.

SEND Transport Services

The Committee continued to monitor the rise in expenditure for Special Educational Needs (SEN) services, demand having increased by 12% in the last financial year, and how this was being managed given that projections were that growth would continue. The Committee:

- Acknowledged the Council's role as corporate parent for young people up to the age of 25, though noted the gap in legislation to transport 16 to 19 years.
- Was encouraged by the proposals to use larger vehicles to transport more children at once where appropriate to meet the increase in demand.
- Commented that more needed to be done to ensure SEND transport was considered early in the planning process when considering the location of new special schools.
- Highlighted the need to improve communication with parents about transport problems so that alternative arrangements could be made where necessary.
- Encouraged parents to apply for the Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs) in order to transport their own children.

Leicestershire Highway Design Guide (LHDG) Full Refresh

The Committee has taken an early look at work undertaken to fully refresh the LHDG which provides guidance regarding highways and transportation infrastructure for new developments in areas for which Leicestershire County Council is the Local Highway Authority (LHA), and supports outcomes of the Council's Strategic Plan, particularly that of a "Strong Economy, Transport and Infrastructure". The Committee:

- Commented that Section 106 developer funding and commuted sums should be maximised to the widest possible use.
- Considered the design of some new build schemes, with narrow roads, issues with pavement parking, and footpaths designed out of some new build developments.
- Requested that minimum dimensions for garages be included in designs to accommodate cars which had changed in size over the years.
- Requested the design guide include street furniture to prevent obstructions.
- Considered planning authorities role in discussing applications accessed by unadopted roads, and suggested they take a more holistic view by considering the effect of a development on others.
- Suggested that developers be encouraged to use as much of the carbon capture technologies available, such as advanced concrete methodology.

Melton Mowbray Distributor Road

The Committee has continued to monitor progress on delivery of the Council’s major road network developments and specifically looked at proposals to deliver the north-eastern section of the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road (NE MMDR) from a transport perspective. The Committee:

- Considered and discussed options regarding whether or not to progress with the NE MMDR scheme, including cost implications, and provided comment prior to consideration by the Cabinet.
- Noted the time and resources that had been put into the MMDR scheme, and were supportive of its delivery, acknowledging it was a critical part of Melton Borough’s Local Plan and would directly support 4,500 new homes.

Performance

The Committee has continued to regularly monitor the performance of Highway and Transport Services and from this has:

- Welcomed Leicestershire’s continued excellent record on road condition but noted there were funding pressures that might start to have an impact.
- Noted that overall satisfaction with the condition of highways had reduced.
- Been proactive in its response to petitions and questions from the public and Members as part of the democratic process.

Next Year...

The Committee will continue to monitor road safety performance and will specifically look at the Road Safety Strategy next year as well as Leicestershire Flood Risk Management Strategy and provide feedback as part of the Local Cycling, Walking Infrastructure Plans engagement proposals.

The Committee will continue to monitor public satisfaction with the road network of Leicestershire and the key performance indicators for Highways and Transport Services.

Membership and contact details:

Richard Allen CC	Bryan Lovegrove CC
David Bill MBE, CC	Keith Merrie MBE CC (Vice Chairman)
Tony Gillard CC (Chairman)	Les Phillimore CC
Amanda Hack CC	

Contact the Overview and Scrutiny Team

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 democracy@leics.gov.uk.

Alternatively, you can contact the officer that supports a specific Committee as detailed below.

Scrutiny Commission

Joanne Twomey
Democratic Services Manager
Tel: 0116 305 6462
Email: Joanne.twomey@leics.gov.uk

Adults and Communities

Angie Smith
Democratic Services Officer
Tel: 0116 305 2253
Email: angie.smith@leics.gov.uk

Children and Families

Damien Buckley
Democratic Services Officer
Tel: 0116 305 0183
Email: Damien.buckley@leics.gov.uk

Environment and Climate Change

Euan Walters
Senior Democratic Services Officer
0116 305 6016
Email: Euan.walters@leics.gov.uk

Health

Euan Walters
As above

Highway and Transport

Angie Smith
As above

Leicestershire County Council Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/23

Published July 2023

Democratic Services

Chief Executive's Department

Leicestershire County Council

For further details on the contents of this report please email: democracy@leics.gov.uk