

Democratic Services
Town Hall, N1 2UD

Report of: Interim Director of Law and Governance

Meeting of: Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee

Date: 4 May 2023

Ward(s): N/A

Subject: Annual Report of the Council's Scrutiny Committees 2022-23

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. The terms of reference of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee state that the committee will consider an annual report from the council's scrutiny committees.
- 1.2. This report summarises the work of the council's scrutiny committees in 2022-23. All scrutiny committee chairs are members of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee and may wish to highlight the work of their committees at the meeting.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To note the work of the council's scrutiny committees in 2022-23.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Council has five scrutiny committees, each responsible for scrutinising the performance of particular services provided by the council and its partners. The Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee also has responsibility for coordinating the work of the scrutiny review committees.

3.2. Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

This year the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee has carried out a review titled 'Making Children Visible'. This is a broad review, focused on how the council works to improve the visibility of vulnerable children and ensure that there are equitable processes and inclusive practices that enable the voice of these children and young people to influence the support and services for them to thrive.

The Committee has received evidence from children and young people at the Lift and Platform youth hubs, young people engaging with Targeted Youth Support, youth workers, foster carers, care leavers working with The House Project, home educating families, Arsenal in the Community, Disability Action Islington, the charity Barnardo's, New River College, the Virtual School, Whittington Health, the council's library service, and a range of council officers.

In addition, the Committee has considered the draft Education Plan and Special Educational Needs strategy, school results and attainment of the borough's young people, the Child Protection annual report, quarterly performance reports, and the Annual Presentation from the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families. The Committee has also considered the progress made on previous scrutiny reviews, including past reviews on the impact of Covid-19 on young people, equalities in educational outcomes, vulnerable adolescents, and fixed period and permanent exclusion from school.

3.3. Environment & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

This year the committee has focused on scrutinising the council's Net Zero Carbon 2030 Strategy, with a particular focus on the circular economy and green jobs. The Committee has considered how the council can encourage sustainable economic development and work with both residents and businesses to support the council's climate ambitions. The Committee has received evidence from a range of council services, including Inclusive Economy and Jobs, Planning and Development, Housing Property Services, Greenspace and Leisure, and Transport Planning. This work was supplemented by informal evidence gathering meetings that heard from representatives of the GLA, community energy projects, academics working on net zero carbon issues, and others.

In addition, the committee considered quarterly reports on Net Zero Carbon performance, the performance of the Environment & Climate Change directorate, Libraries and Heritage, and the performance of the Employment and Skills service. The Committee also considered matters relating to last mile deliveries, reducing menstrual waste, biodiversity, the impact of drought on the borough's trees, and the Urban Agriculture Project. The Managing Director of the North London Waste

Authority also presented to the Committee on their activities and the progress of the North London Heat and Power Project.

The Committee received annual reports from the Executive Members for Environment, Air Quality and Transport, and Inclusive Economy and Jobs.

The Committee also held a special public meeting, engaging with local people on how the council can work towards the 2030 net zero carbon target. This session was held as a virtual meeting and was attended by 70 participants, many of which were representing local community organisations and campaign groups.

3.4. Health and Care Scrutiny Committee

The Committee's main area of focus this year has been the review of 'transformation in Adult Social Care'. This has considered the impact of the Health and Social Care Act 2022, changes to health and care governance and the impact and opportunities for services, and has particularly focused on the development of the Reablement service. Evidence has been received from council officers, service users, Age UK, Help on Your Doorstep, and Kent County Council.

The Committee has received performance updates from University College London Hospital, Whittington Health, Camden & Islington NHS Foundation Trust, and Moorfields Eye Hospital. Annual reports were received from Healthwatch, the Safeguarding Adults Board, and the Executive Member for Health and Social Care.

There was also an opportunity at each meeting for the Executive Member for Health and Social Care and senior officers to brief members on Health and Wellbeing issues in the borough, including access to GP Surgeries, Covid-19 statistics, and scarlet fever.

3.5. Housing Scrutiny Committee

This year the Housing Scrutiny Committee has carried out a strategic review of overcrowding in Islington, considering the impact of overcrowding on Islington residents, and best practice and innovative approaches to tackling this issue. This review has considered evidence from Housing officers, Islington Law Centre, Peabody Housing Association, Environmental Health, the New Build team, and Planning and Development. A presentation was also received from the London Fire Brigade on safety issues.

The Committee has also considered housing repairs performance, including the council's work to review cases of damp and mould. An update on damp and mould

will now be considered as a standing item at every committee meeting.

In addition, the Committee received quarterly reports on the performance of the Homes and Neighbourhoods service, and considered issues such as voids processing times, broadband access, tenant satisfaction measures, and proposed changes to the housing allocations scheme.

3.6. Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee

This year the Committee has carried out a review of the Cost of Living Crisis, considering how the council can best support residents experiencing hardship in the current financial climate. The Committee has received evidence from council officers on the hardship faced by residents, the Council Tax Support Scheme and possible options for amending the scheme, Cripplegate Foundation, SHINE (Seasonal Health Intervention Network), CallyEnergy (a local community energy company), residents seeking to retrofit energy saving measures on their homes, and Co-operation Town on their work in supporting food cooperatives.

The Committee considered the Annual Workforce Report summarising workforce issues and the development of the council's workforce strategy. The Committee received presentations from the Leader of the Council, the Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance, the Executive Member for Community Safety, the Executive Member for Equalities, Culture and Inclusion. The Committee also received quarterly corporate performance reports and monthly financial monitoring reports. The Committee scrutinised the Executive's budget proposals and the committee's comments were reported to the Executive prior to the budget being set.

The Committee also scrutinised a number of partner organisations, including Thames Water on burst water mains and flooding in the borough, Operose Health on GP surgery provision, the Metropolitan Police on local policing performance, including the findings of the Casey review.

3.7. Other matters

- 3.7.1. The reviews undertaken by the council's scrutiny committees are supported by a 'scrutiny initiation document' that is agreed by the committee prior to the review starting. The document sets out the aims, objectives and scope of each review. For 2022-23 this document was revised to include a summary of how the scrutiny review contributes to the council's priorities. This helps to demonstrate the value that scrutiny adds in helping to support the council's strategic objectives, while ensuring that scrutiny work is prioritised to make the best use of the resources available.

- 3.7.2. The Council's scrutiny committees are currently developing the recommendations of their reviews undertaken in 2022-23. Once the final reports are agreed, they will be submitted to the Executive for consideration. The Executive will then respond to the recommendations, detailing which recommendations may be implemented. An update will be submitted to the relevant scrutiny committee following 12 months of implementation.
- 3.7.3. Training for members and Chairs on scrutiny matters was provided as part of the member development programme in June 2022. This was hosted by an external trainer and focused on the role of scrutiny in good governance and scrutiny skills and techniques. It is intended to hold similar sessions in future.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial Implications

- 4.1.1 All costs for supporting scrutiny work are met through existing budgets. Each scrutiny committee is supported by an officer from the Committee Services team who clerks meetings and acts as the scrutiny officer for the committee alongside their other responsibilities.

4.2 Legal Implications

- 4.2.1 Scrutiny is a statutory function under the Local Government Act 2000. Scrutiny committees have powers to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions, to make reports or recommendations relating to the discharge of those functions, and to make reports or recommendations to Council or the Executive on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area. The work of the council's scrutiny committees is guided by the Scrutiny Procedure Rules and Terms of Reference in the Council's constitution.

4.3 Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030

- 4.3.1 There are no direct environmental implications associated with this report. The Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee regularly scrutinises performance against the council's net zero carbon ambitions and other scrutiny committees will consider environmental issues where relevant to their work.

4.4 Equalities Impact Assessment

- 4.4.1 The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of

opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

- 4.4.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report, which summarises the work of the council's scrutiny committees in 2022-23. The council's scrutiny committees regularly consider equalities issues in their work and any recommendations made by committees may be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment.

5 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 5.1 The Committee is asked to note the work of the council's scrutiny committees. Scrutiny Committee Chairs may wish to comment on particular aspects of their committee's work at the meeting.

Appendices:

- None.

Background papers:

- None.

Final report clearance:

Approved by:

Interim Director of Law and Governance

Date: 24 April 2023

Report Author: Jonathan Moore, Committee Services Manager
Tel: 020 7527 3308
Email: Jonathan.Moore@islington.gov.uk