

SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

Bury
Council



Bury Town Hall, Knowsley Street, Bury, Lancashire BL9 0SW Tel: 0161 253 5000

Emergencies/Out of Office Hours: 0161 253 6606 www.bury.gov.uk



CONTENTS

Page 3	FOREWORD BY THE CHAIR'S
Page 5	BACKGROUND
Page 6	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN BURY
Page 7	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Page 8	HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Page 9	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Page 10	OVERVIEW AND PROJECT GROUPS
Page 11	KEY OUTCOMES
Page 14	SCRUTINY CHAIR BRIEFINGS
Page 15	SCRUTINY TRAINING
Page 16	FURTHER WORK OF THE COMMITTEES
Page 18	CONCLUSION
Page 19	APPENDIX 1 – FORWARD PLANS



FOREWORD

Bury Council's Scrutiny Committees have continued with the role of scrutinising and reviewing the work of the Executive and services of the Local Authority. The work of these bodies has ranged from pre-scrutiny of new policy initiatives prior to consideration by the Executive, monitoring and holding departments to account on aspects of service provision including Ofsted findings and regeneration work and gathering information from Departments about their work and resources.

During the past 12 months the three Committees have undertaken thematic and in-depth reviews that have provided positive, and effective Scrutiny in terms of policy development, service reviews and service development. For example, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have written to Ofcom regarding telecommunication infrastructure following concerns from the community. They have also provided effective Scrutiny of the Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth during the development of the Regeneration Plan's; this again demonstrates the Committee holding to account the Cabinet Member in real time on issue's which are important to the Public. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee has reviewed the Improvement Plan following Ofsted Reports and requested regular updates on the SEND Development Plan and the establishment of a SEND Task and Finish Group. The Health Scrutiny Committee has been well briefed on the

change to service pathways of the former Pennine Acute Trust footprint and health inequalities in the Borough of Bury.

During the year, steps have been taken to encourage greater collaborative working across the three Scrutiny Committees and a dedicated meeting for the three Scrutiny Chairs has been continued and embedded. An example of the good practice this has achieved is that the Children and Young People Scrutiny Chair attended Health Scrutiny to discuss Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. In addition, both Chair's from Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and Health Scrutiny Committee attended Overview and Scrutiny (Budget) Committee.

We would like to thank the Elected Members, Education representatives and Co-opted Members of all the Scrutiny Panels and Commissions and the Sub-Groups, and also the Directors, Officers, Internal and External Partners and Community Representatives involved in the Scrutiny process, for their hard work over the past 12 months, and look forward to the challenges ahead.



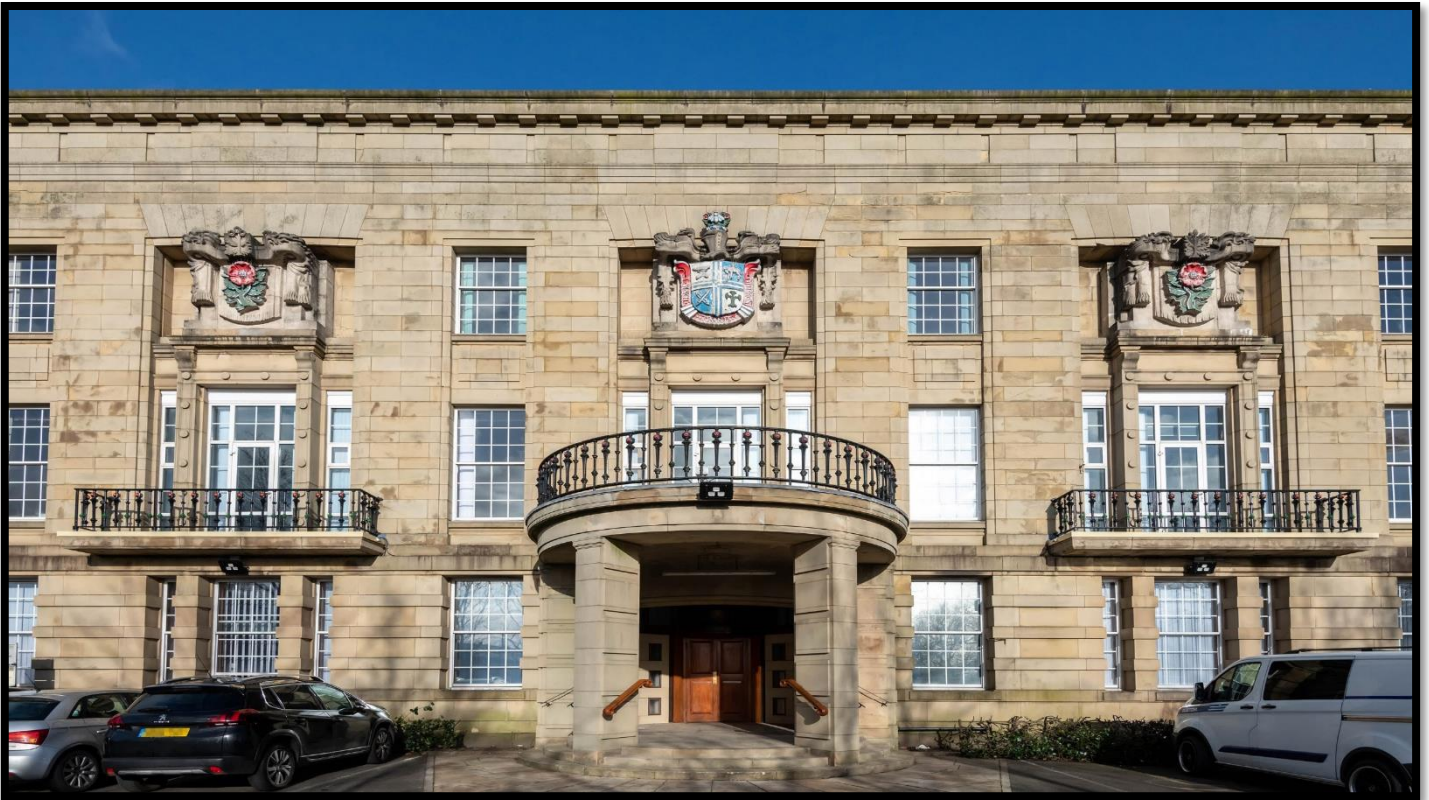
Councillor Dene Vernon,
Chair for Overview and
Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Ciaron Boles,
Chair for Children and
Young People Scrutiny
Committee



Councillor Elizabeth FitzGerald
Chair for Health Scrutiny
Committee



BACKGROUND

This Annual Report summarises the activities of the Council's Scrutiny Committees and reports on some of the highlights and achievements of the last year.

Throughout the year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has tackled a wide and varied work programme cutting across all Council Departments. The Committee has engaged with Cabinet Members and other external partners prior to decisions being taken and held them to account on service areas and policy development.

All the Scrutiny Committee's this year have been thematic covering areas in depth and allowing a full meeting to be dedicated to one themed topic which has streamlined focus and improved impact.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN BURY

Overview and Scrutiny Committees are an important part of the way we make decisions. Although they have no Executive powers, the scrutiny process does allow Members to explore issues in depth and help to influence decisions through recommendations to the Cabinet or Full Council.

In Bury, the role of scrutiny bodies can be broken down into these two main functions: -

HOLDING THE CABINET TO ACCOUNT

This involves scrutinising decisions before they are implemented by way of 'Call-in' to the relevant Scrutiny Committee for debate. The effect of a 'Call-in' is to suspend the decision until the Scrutiny Committee has had the opportunity to consider the implications of the decision and, where appropriate, to offer comments back to the Cabinet.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

This involves Scrutiny Committees undertaking reviews of functions within their individual remits leading to recommendations to the Cabinet, and to assist in the development of future policies and strategies.



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

This Committee is set up to scrutinise Cabinet decisions and Council performance, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee operates within the following terms of reference:

- To review and scrutinise the decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's functions.
- To review and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and all particular service areas.
- To set up, appoint and monitor Overview Project Groups (set up to carry out reviews of policies, services or the impact of decisions).
- To make recommendations to the Cabinet and/or appropriate Committee and/or Council arising from the outcome of the Scrutiny process.
- To review or scrutinise decisions made or other action taken in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions.
- Oversight of the provision, planning and management of the assets and audit arrangements.
- Oversight of the Council's corporate plans and strategies and the monitoring of the corporate plan and departmental plans.
- To scrutinise outside bodies and partners relevant to the Council.
- To receive all reports from external inspectors.

As well as:

- Budget and policy framework matters
- Statutory flood risk management scrutiny powers
- Statutory community safety and policing scrutiny powers
- Services within the business and regeneration directorate
- Services within the corporate core/Corporate performance





HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A dedicated Health Scrutiny Committee was set up to scrutinise partner organisations on issues relevant to the residents of the Borough. Full terms of reference are;

To review the policies and performance of the Council and external organisations in relation to the following areas:

- Adult social care (including adult safeguarding)
- Health and wellbeing board
- Housing
- Public health
- Adults and Communities budget and policy framework
- Statutory health scrutiny powers including the review and scrutiny of any matter relating to the planning provision and operation of health services for children and young people, including transitional health care services, affecting the area and to make reports and recommendations on these matters



CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A dedicated Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee was set up to scrutinise children and young people issues relevant to the residents of the Borough. Full terms of reference are:

To review the policies and performance of the Council and external organisations in relation to the following areas:

- Education and Schools
- Children and Young People Support and Safeguarding Services
- Children and Young People Specialist Services
- To scrutinise individual Cabinet decisions relating to the above areas.
- To monitor the Council's performance in the above areas.

To scrutinise statutory inspection reports and oversee the implementation of any recommendations arising from such reports:

- Transitional arrangements between children and adult services
- Statutory education scrutiny powers

OVERVIEW PROJECT GROUPS

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is responsible for setting up and monitoring reviews carried out by Overview Project Groups. These Groups are tasked with reviewing particular policy areas with a view to making recommendations that will ultimately result in service improvements.

During the municipal year two project groups have been established.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has re-established the previous year's sub-group to focus on the Performance and Finance of the Council. The group is responsible for doing in-depth scrutiny of the Corporate Performance and Finance reports for the Council. The group was developed as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee felt they did not have sufficient time within the usual cohort of meetings to provide rigorous scrutiny of these topics.

Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee has established a SEND Task and Finish Group. The group has been established to look at the provision of the Council's SEND provision. The Subgroup is inclusive of the Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny; and three additional members of mixed political backgrounds.





KEY OUTCOMES

During 2023/2024 the Council's Scrutiny Committees and Overview Project Groups have looked at a wide range of topics and issues. Various methods have been used to examine and investigate issues which have resulted in positive outcomes in terms of policy development and holding decision makers to account.

- **Performance and Finance Sub Committee**

This was established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members of the group supported by Strategic Leads within the Department have met on three occasions and interviewed two Cabinet Members; the Cabinet Member for Finance and Communities and the Cabinet Member for Corporate Affairs and HR and discussed four different reports with five different Officers.

During this municipal year the Committee agreed that the focus for 2023/24 would be: **Corporate Performance** – The Committee received regular updates from the Performance team and choose areas to do a deep-dive of the data.

Deep dive into Council tax collection and arrears update – Members received an update on the Council's Council tax collection process, the management and collection of arrears and the what the Council are doing to improve and support residents who may be struggling to pay.

Medium Term Financial Strategy- Updates were received on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy refresh.

Corporate Core Data Analysis – The Committee received in depth analysis on Corporate Core performance data.

It has been agreed that the work of the Performance and Finance group is concluded and that a new task and finish group covering Housing will be established formally in the municipal year 2024/25.

♦ **The SEND Task and Finish Group**

The SEND task and finish group has been established to look at the Council's SEND provision, issues have been raised directly with Elected members, a number of service users have attended Scrutiny meetings and voiced their dissatisfaction as well as reports in the local media and several upheld Local Government Ombudsman complaints. The SEND agenda continues to be an internal Council priority in light of high levels of budgetary commitment to the service, issues relating to the High Needs Block cumulative deficit and the Department for Education's requirements in relation to project safety valve as well as an imminent joint Ofsted and CQC Local Area SEND inspection. Therefore, it was agreed that the task and finish group be established so Councillors could work together with officers, strategic partners, parents and carers.

During this municipal year the Committee agreed that the focus for 2023/24 should include the following:

- Considering what does good look like
- Meeting staff from the SEND Team to understand roles and responsibilities.
- Meeting parents/carers and strategic partners
- Discussion with members and officers to understand issues raised
- Collate and assess information

Members used the group to seek assurances on the work being undertaken to support the SEND provision for Bury Council.

DECISIONS CALLED IN 2022/23

Under the Council's Constitution, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee and Health Scrutiny Committee has the power to call in decisions made by the Cabinet, individual Cabinet Members and key decisions made by officers. In 2023-24 there were no decisions called in by the Scrutiny Committee's.

SCRUTINY CHAIR BRIEFINGS

During the municipal year 2021/22 a networking group of the three Scrutiny Chairs was established. This group continued in the year 2023/24 and built on the good work already established. This group brought together the Children and Young People Scrutiny Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Chair, Health Scrutiny Chair the Senior Scrutiny Officer and the Monitoring Officer. These meetings took place quarterly and covered the following topics: Scrutiny Training, the Annual Report, Budget Briefings and joint working between Committee's.

The group is an opportunity for the Chairs of each Committee to share in successes and problems whilst promoting good practice and support to one another. During the municipal year of 2023/24 the group discussed the following topics:

- Chair and Cabinet Member relationships
- Cross-Scrutiny work
- Budget Papers for Overview and Scrutiny
- Joint work between Children and Young People Scrutiny and Health Scrutiny
- Key items considered at respective Committees
- Forward Planner's attached and Training and Support
- Scrutiny Annual Report



SCRUTINY TRAINING

The Scrutiny Committee's were invited to attend multiple offers of Scrutiny Training over the municipal year. Scrutiny Members were invited to take part in Scrutiny Specific training:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Training
- Finance Training (All Committees)
- Adult Safeguarding Awareness Training
- Safeguarding Adults Training
- Overview of Health and Care Landscape

Other sessions have also been made available to Committee Members though the LGA and Northwest Employers the sessions explored common challenges, issues as well as shared opportunities.

FURTHER WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested updates from the relevant Cabinet Members in respect of the following Council services and themes:

Environmental and Transport Updates

- Telecommunication Update
- Greater Manchester Transport Governance
- Bury Local Transport Strategy

Regeneration Updates:

- Prestwich Regeneration

- Whitefield Regeneration
- Millgate Centre and Estate Joint Venture
- Proposed Neighbourhood Area and Forum for Prestwich

Communities Updates:

- Greater Manchester Devolution and Trailblazer Decision
- Bury Market Update
- Community Safety Update
- Cultural Strategy
- Anti Poverty Strategy

Housing Updates

- Homelessness Strategy Update
- Six Town Housing Update
- Places for Everyone Modifications

Finance Updates:

- Year End Outturn Financial Position
- Quarter 2 Finance Report
- Housing Revenue Account Budget
- Medium Term Financial Plan and Revenue Budget
- Appendix 1 Council Tax Base and resolution and collection fund surplus deficit report 24-25
- Appendix 2 Medium Term Financial Plan and Revenue Budget Report
- Appendix 3 Council's Treasury Management Strategy 24/25
- Appendix 4 Capital Strategy 24/25 -26/27
- Appendix 5 Dedicated Schools Grant
- Appendix 6 Equality Impact Assessment
- Appendix 7 Reserves Policy

Corporate Updates:

- Health and Safety Annual Report
- Corporate Plan

In addition to the above, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee invited Chief Superintendent Chris Hill to inform the Committee on Crime and Disorder within the Borough including plans for tackling continued issues within local areas and Nick Fairclough, Senior Policy Manager for Transport for Greater Manchester to provide the Committee with an update on the Bee Network.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

As part of its performance monitoring role, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Performance and Finance Sub-Group has received regular reports in relation to Corporate Performance; Financial Monitoring; Corporate Core departmental Performance measures and the collection and recovery of Council Tax arrears.

HEALTH SCRUTINY

The Health Scrutiny Committee requested updates from the relevant Cabinet Members and officers regarding the following services and topics:

- Overview of the health and care landscape
- Health Task & Finish Group updates
- Health Inequalities Strategy update
- Northern Care Alliance update on Manchester Foundation Trust Complex Disaggregation of services.
- Adult Care Annual Complaints Report 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24.
- Greater Manchester Integrated Commissioning System and Integrated Commissioning Board update
- Updates from Bury Healthwatch
- Elective Care Updates
- Adult Social Care Updates
- National Women's Health Programme Briefing
- Primary Care Network Update
- Proposed new Joint Health Committee

The Chair of the Health Scrutiny Committee recognised the pertinent work between Overview and Scrutiny and Health Scrutiny at a Greater Manchester level to review finances of the National Health Service.

Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Bury Health Scrutiny Committee has agreed to engaging in the establishment of a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Bury, Oldham, Rochdale and Salford. Oldham Council, will be hosting the Committee in the new municipal year subject to approval at Bury Council's Annual Council meeting on the 22nd May 2024.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee requested updates from the relevant Cabinet Members in respect of the following Council services and themes:

- Children's Services restructure
- Foster Carers Update
- Improvement Plan Updates
- Youth Justice Plan
- SEND Improvement Plan
- Unvalidated outcomes of attainment
- Detailed report on Complex Safeguarding and missing response
- SEND Transport
- Early Years and provision
- Virtual Head Teacher Report

NEXT STEPS

Moving into the new municipal year of 2024/25 there are several new or improved processes which will take place to improve transition into a new Committee year and ensure members are well briefed on items scheduled for the year ahead.

Firstly, where possible and if required Chair's of the respective Scrutiny Committee's will be involved in a hand over meeting to support the new Chair in holding Cabinet Members, officers and partners both external and internal accountable for any actions expected.

Secondly, Chairs, lead officers and the respective Cabinet Members of all three committees will be invited to participate in the forward planning meetings for each Committee so to avoid duplication and encourage collaborative working.

Thirdly, agenda and papers will be sent to all Scrutiny Chairs for information on upcoming discussion items.

Finally, more Committee specific training will be opened to all Committees and the respective members to support networking and shared learning.

CONCLUSION

The Scrutiny function is well established in Bury, with good examples of in-depth reviews and partnership working. The Scrutiny Committees will continue to work thematically with 'spotlights' on areas of particular interest to develop and provide effective Scrutiny.

All Scrutiny Chair's reflected on the relationships of the three Scrutiny Committees and felt the continuation of the Chair of the Health Scrutiny and Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee being members on each other's Committee to encourage cross working between the Health and Children and Young People directorates. In addition, the inclusion of all Chair's at Overview and Scrutiny Budget meeting was seen as beneficial.

The Scrutiny functions are continuing to see improvements and relationships are continuing to be built.

Appendix 1 - Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – Work Programme 2023/24

Appendix 2 - Health Scrutiny - Work Programme 2023/24

Appendix 3 – Overview and Scrutiny – Work Programme 2023/24

Appendix 4 – Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee - SEND Task and Finish Group Work Programme 2023/24

Appendix 5 - Overview and Scrutiny – Performance and Finance Work Programme 2023/24

Appendix 6 - Overview and Scrutiny – Performance and Finance Highlight Report 2023/24