



2023/2024

**‘Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny
Committee Annual Report’**

1. Chair's Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I present the Annual Report for the Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee May 2023 – April 2024.

It has been an honour to chair the committee during this period and I would like to thank all Members and Officers for their work and contributions over the past 12 months.

This report reflects the important topics we have been considering as a committee and the importance of scrutiny to ensure the correct decisions are made for the residents of the borough.

There are many challenges facing the authority in terms of mental health, the rising cost of living and funding constraints. At a time when every penny counts, scrutiny is essential to ensure that we are providing residents with the best services and delivering services that the community want and need.

I believe the committee has undertaken its role effectively over the past 12 months and we have made some very difficult decisions. It will be vital that we continue to thoroughly scrutinise all aspects of the committee's remit going forward to ensure our services are working for our residents.

Looking ahead, our Forward Work Programme will provide some structure in terms of our meetings, but members will also be able to add items onto the agenda when required. I also hope that members of the public will engage with the committee and inform us of issues that are important to them.

The committee will continue to work hard on behalf of all residents of the borough and I am looking forward to tackling the challenges ahead.

Councillor R. Phillips, Chairperson

Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

2. Introduction to Scrutiny

The Centre for Public Scrutiny suggests that there are four key principles to effective Scrutiny and they are:

1. provides ‘critical friend’ challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers
2. enables the voice and concerns of the public and its communities
3. is carried out by ‘independent minded governors’ who lead and own the Scrutiny process
4. drives improvement in public services

Scrutiny is an integral part of the Council’s political structure and in many ways it plays a key role in assisting the Cabinet. Scrutiny Committees in the Council have met regularly through the year and have considered a wide range of issues. A number of the Scrutiny Committees have undertaken some in depth work as part of their forward work programmes, and this is highlighted within this document.

The Scrutiny Committees within the Council are:

- Cabinet
 - Policy & Resources Sub
- Education, Skills and Wellbeing
- Social Services, Housing and Community Safety
- Environment, Regeneration & Streetscene Services

Each of the Committees includes a mix of non-Executive Councillors that is politically balanced to reflect the political balance of the Council. The Chairs and Vice Chairs plus the Committee Membership are decided annually by Full Council. Each Committee meets at least eight times during a Civic Year.

3. Purpose of Annual Report

3.1 The main aim of this report is to highlight the work that has been undertaken by the Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee 2023-2024.

3.2 The document may also facilitate discussions on additional items that could be included within the work programme for 2024/2025.

4. Overview of the work of the Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee 2023/2024.

4.1 Number of Meetings

The Education, Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee met on eight occasions during 2023/2024 and jointly with Cabinet Scrutiny Committee on two occasions.

4.2 The Work Programme 2023/2024.

Generally the agendas for the scrutiny meetings have been consistent with those outlined in the forward work programme. The Committee agree its Scrutiny work programme during their Forward Work Programme Workshop held on 22nd June 2023.

When developing the work programme it was essential to give consideration to the key plans and strategies of the Council. The work programme also includes the results of any external inspections that had been undertaken within a specific service area or on a corporate level.

The review of the work of the Committee is included in the following pages has been structured to reflect the key roles of the Committee: Pre-Decision Scrutiny (which included policy development and review) and any items they wished to look at as part of their remit (usually for information purposes)

5. Key Issues considered during 2023/2024.

Throughout the civic year the Committee is consulted on a number of areas that require decision. These range from routine general issues to the larger more complex decisions. Cabinet Board Members are in attendance during

discussions and any views of the Committee are taken on board prior to making a decision.

The Scrutiny Committee also undertakes the performance monitoring role by considering a wide range of reports. Members challenge the information that is included which enables them to understand the issues facing the service. These reports are monitored on a quarterly basis.

As well as scrutinising key decisions, the Committee identifies topics within their remit in which they wish to look at in more detail. These items are usually for information purposes e.g. updating Members on specific projects of work.

The Council is well placed to demonstrate the improvements it has made to the scrutiny function and it is essential that we continue to build on these developments and I look forward to the next year as we take forward the priorities of the Council.

- Issues considered

May 2023 – April 2024

As detailed in the table attached at Appendix 1.

6. Joint Committees

During the year, the committee worked jointly with the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise two items:

Strategic Schools Improvement Programme Proposal to Amend the Council's Sustainable Communities for Learning Capital Funding Projects, and Revise the Capital Spend Profile.

The item was scrutinised in detail at the Joint Meeting held on 20th November 2023. Following scrutiny, the recommendations outlined in the report were supported to Cabinet.

Pontardawe Swimming Pool

The item was scrutinised in detail at the Joint Meeting held on 8th May 2024. Following scrutiny an amendment was put forward in relation to recommendation 4. The recommendations were supported to Cabinet with the amended recommendation.

7. Scrutiny Contact Information

The Scrutiny Team are located in the Chief Executive's Legal and Democratic Services section and their contact details follows:

Name	Position	Contact Details
Alison Thomas	Senior Scrutiny Officer and Project Management Officer	E-mail a.thomas6@npt.gov.uk
Pamela Chivers	Scrutiny Officer	E-mail: p.chivers@npt.gov.uk
Tom Rees	Scrutiny Officer	E-mail: t.rees1@npt.gov.uk

If you would like to suggest Scrutiny consider a certain area or issue as part of their work programme then please e-mail your suggestion to:
democratic.services@npt.gov.uk