



2023/2024

**‘Social Services, Housing and Community
Safety Annual Report’**

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1. Chair's Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I present the Annual Report for the Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee May 2023 – April 2024

This report provides the opportunity to reflect on the work that has been undertaken by the committee and its attempts to ensure that any decisions taken are in the best interests of the citizens of Neath Port Talbot

The Scrutiny Committee worked during the year to scrutinise various decisions to be taken by the Council.

The Committee continued to monitor quarterly performance management data and scrutinise the information received. The committee scrutinised various decisions including the Policy on Rent and Service Charge Arrears Prevention and Recovery, Policy on Financial Contributions for Temporary Accommodation, Neath Port Talbot Social Services Strategic Action Plan for Neurodivergence (Autism and other conditions) 2024-2027 and the Directors Annual Report 2022-2023.

The committee also continued its own work and received information pertaining to Unpaid Carers, Hospital Admissions and Discharge Processes and Information Sharing in Respects of the Transition Process between Children and Adult Services.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my Vice Chair, Councillor Helen Clarke for her continued support along with the Cabinet members , Councillor Alun Llewelyn, Councillor Jo Hale and Councillor Sian Harris, who have been present at the meetings to listen to and consider the views of the committee prior to making any decisions .

Finally, I would like to thank the officers for their invaluable support, continued hard work, professionalism and guidance throughout the year

Councillor. C.Galsworthy, Chairperson
Social Services, Housing and Community Safety 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 the various Annual Reports of the scrutiny committees.

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 are 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 8 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 Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Committee 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 Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Committee 2023/2024

4.1 Number of Meetings

The Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee met on 9 occasions during 2023/2024.

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 on 29th 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.

- Issues considered

May 2023 – April 2024

As detailed in the table attached at Appendix 1.

6. Investigative Scrutiny

Each year a Scrutiny Committee can undertake a piece of work in more depth on a specific area where they feel they could assist in delivering service improvements. During the year the committee set up a Task & Finish Group to consider Social Impact Bonds. The remit of the group is to '*explore the use of social bonds in social care and other alternative financial models to enhance budgetary provision for services.*' The work of this group is currently ongoing.

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 and Project Management Officer	E-mail a.thomas6@npt.gov.uk
Tom Rees	Scrutiny Officer	E-mail: t.rees1@npt.gov.uk
Pamela Chivers	Scrutiny Officer	E-mail: p.chivers@npt.gov.uk

Alternatively if you think Scrutiny should consider a certain area or issue as part of their work programme then please e-mail democratic.services@npt.gov.uk