

Leicester City Council  
**Scrutiny**  
**Annual Report**  
2023-2024

# Foreword

I am delighted to have had the privilege once again to serve as Chair of the Overview Select Committee during 2023-24 and am very pleased to present a report that sets out the extensive range of work by our scrutiny committees and commissions.

This year allowed scrutiny to examine proposed decisions, policy development and performance monitoring across all commission areas in greater detail. Members also had more opportunities to undertake deeper reviews into issues and services of public interest through informal scrutiny.



I have been impressed with the volume and quality of scrutiny undertaken, and particularly the number of recommendations to the Council's Executive. I am once again thankful for the involvement and contributions of the City Mayor and his team, along with officers from across the organisation in supporting and equipping our scrutiny function. I am also particularly thankful for the level of engagement from our health sector partners, and I remain committed to engaging with decision-makers beyond the local authority. In addition, I was pleased to ensure continued involvement of young people representatives who regularly participated in several of our scrutiny bodies.

At Leicester, we take great pride in our scrutiny, and we aim to examine those issues that are central to the lives of the people in our city. We have this year continued to scrutinise key strategic priorities of the City Council, and have investigated many matters in detail, by setting up informal scrutiny work to allow a broader range of evidence to be gained by commissions. Examples of this include focussed work on the implementation of 20mph streets in the city, examining ward community funding and taking a deeper look at our adult social care contract for domiciliary care before it went out to tender.

I am confident that scrutiny will continue to develop throughout 2024/25 and as all local authorities continue to face growing pressures and challenges, including here in Leicester, it is essential that Members are equipped to examine the implications of the circumstances that we face and to help to influence decision-making to ensure our residents continue to receive support and services and to enhance our fantastic city.

**Councillor Ted Cassidy MBE – Chair of the Overview Select Committee**

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# Glossary

The following abbreviations are used to describe each scrutiny body:

**ASC:** Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission

**CYPE:** Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission

**CNS:** Culture and Neighbourhood Services

**EDTCE:** Economic Development, Transport and Climate Emergency Scrutiny Commission

**HSC:** Housing Scrutiny Commission

**HWB:** Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Commission

**JHSC:** Joint Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Heath Scrutiny Committee

**PHHI:** Public Health and Health Integration Scrutiny Commission

**OSC:** Overview Select Committee

# Introduction

## What is Scrutiny?

The Centre for Public Scrutiny defines scrutiny as “the activity by one elected or appointed organisation or office examining and monitoring all or part of the activity of a public sector body with the aim of improving the quality of public services. A public sector body is one that carries out public functions or spends public money. Scrutiny ensures that executives are held accountable for their decisions, that their decision-making process is clear and accessible to the public and that there are opportunities for the public and their representatives to influence and improve public policy.” As such, it is important that scrutiny is an essential part of ensuring that the Council and its partners remain effective and accountable.

## Leicester City Council’s Scrutiny Structure

For the 2023/24 municipal year, there was a change in the scrutiny structure. The Council continued with the model of an Overview Select Committee but was supported by six scrutiny commissions covering all facets of the council’s business rather than the previous seven. Culture and Neighbourhoods Services scrutiny commission combined the former Heritage, Culture, Leisure & Tourism and Neighbourhood Services commissions.

### Overview Select Committee



## Report Structure

This annual report covers the period between May 2023 to April 2024 and summarises some of the key activity and areas of influence by scrutiny throughout the year.

The report provides detail of the work of the Overview Select Commission, and each of the six City Council scrutiny commissions. The annual report does not intend to draw out a large quantity of detail or highlight each recommendation, and instead sets out some of the key achievements by the scrutiny bodies, examining areas of influence and work undertaken as part of focussed reviews or task and finish work. Full detail of each scrutiny meeting can be found by accessing relevant agendas, and minutes via [leicester.gov.uk](https://leicester.gov.uk).

The report also does not intend to provide full detail of what is covered by each of the scrutiny bodies. Detail of the configuration of scrutiny at Leicester City Council can be accessed via our [scrutiny webpages](#).

By its very nature, scrutiny examines some work over a more considerable period of time, and this report also points to those strands of work that will continue or may emerge throughout 2024/25. This is reflected as part of the commission summary pages throughout the report.

### Overview of Scrutiny 2023/24

In total, there were 46 public meetings across the eight scrutiny bodies (including JHSC). This was supplemented by further work performed by members in the form of separate scrutiny task group meetings or additional briefing sessions on topics of significance.

All meetings, with the exception of JHSC, took place in person at the City Council's committee rooms at City Hall, though a hybrid set-up was initiated to allow some non-voting participants to join remotely. Meetings were comprised of eight elected members that were politically balanced, with some commissions being supplemented by co-opted members or standing invitees. The Chairs of the scrutiny bodies throughout 2023/24 were as follows:

Overview Select Committee – Cllr Ted Cassidy

Adult Social Care – Cllr Melissa March

Children, Young People and Education – Cllr Misbah Batool

Culture and Neighbourhood Services – Cllr Mohammed Dawood

Economic Development, Transport & Climate Emergency – Cllr Sue Waddington

Housing – Cllr Ashiedu Joel

Public Health and Health Integration – Cllr Geoff Whittle



The commissions and committees continued to examine key strategic priorities and emerging issues. As in previous years, a significant proportion of scrutiny related to the consideration of executive decisions prior to them being taken, including scrutiny of the annual budget setting process. This equips scrutiny to challenge, support and influence the City Council's decision-making processes and remains a prime role of the scrutiny function. Scrutiny also strives to examine issues that emerge throughout the year that have significant implications for the people of Leicester.

Many of the scrutiny bodies also performed an extensive level of work in addition to that taking place as part of formal scrutiny meetings. Several focussed task group reviews were initiated throughout 2023/24. It is commonplace for the suggestion behind this work to originate at a formal meeting, often when it is apparent that the level of scrutiny required is extensive and requires a more detailed process of evidence-gathering. Examples of this work include the Overview Select Committee examining the Council's corporate equalities duty and workforce representation; the Economic Development, Transport, & Climate Emergency Scrutiny Commission's work in understanding more on 20mph zones and Culture and Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission's investigation into ward community funding. Upon the completion of all task group work, the relevant decision-maker submits a report back to a commission meeting that details a response to the scrutiny recommendations.

Scrutiny continues to gather the majority of its evidence from City Council service departments, though it has always been necessary for this to be supplemented with input from other organisations and stakeholders. During 2023/24, scrutiny sought evidence from a range of partners, particularly across the health sector and via housing tenant representatives. Moreover, the process of empowering the voice of young people across scrutiny was further developed during 2023/24, with representatives regularly participating in OSC, CYPE and PHHI.

During the next municipal year, there are ambitions to expand public and stakeholder engagement as part of the scrutiny process, particularly when performing more in-depth investigations and inquiries. Scrutiny Chairs will also be considering a broader range of methodologies when carrying out such informal scrutiny.

The following pages document some of the key achievements and highlights of each of Leicester's seven scrutiny bodies, drawing on areas of significance during the past year and referring to some of the priorities for taking scrutiny forward during 2024/25.

# Overview Select Committee

*The Overview Select Committee is the City Council's overarching scrutiny body. The committee primarily scrutinises the work overseen by the City Mayor, the council's strategic priorities and cross-cutting issues including equalities, property and the Council's finances. The Committee also engages with leaders and decision makers from key partner organisations across the city.*



The key Overview Select Committee scrutiny developments during 2023/24 included:

**Budget Monitoring Scrutiny – OSC** examined the revenue and capital finances on a quarterly basis, seeking clarity on numerous issues and requesting further information on a series of matters of significance and recommending further scrutiny of those services areas that had particular impact upon the Council's overall finances.

**Budget Setting process–** The Committee again examined the full set of budget proposals relating to the Draft Revenue Budget and Capital Programme for 2024/25. This followed tailored scrutiny at a commission level, and the comments raised previously were also examined and endorsed by OSC.

**Cost-of-Living Crisis –** The Committee reviewed the Council's continued response to the crisis and sought several strands of further detail, as well as requesting more focussed examinations of implications on the most vulnerable by relevant commissions. Youth Representatives also presented proposals relating to unused school meal produce which continue to be monitored by OSC.

**Customer Services –** OSC assessed the services provided by the Council, noting the significantly high demand and the

continued aim to digitise and transform the offer. A number of suggestions were made, particularly in relation to the telephony queuing system and a tour of customer services facilities for members was also suggested.

**Directly Questioning the City Mayor –** Members of the committee and youth representatives continued to raise questions directly to the City Mayor via a dedicated agenda item. Examples of questions raised included how the City Council would safeguard against bankruptcy, the Radio 2 in the Park festival arrangements and whether young people aged 14-16 should continue to require adult accompaniment at gym facilities.

**Exceptional Homelessness Pressures on Housing –** A special meeting was convened to examine proposals to support those experiencing homelessness pressures and proposals were later approved by Full Council.

**In-year Budget Savings –** The Committee examined a series of budget saving proposals ahead of Executive decisions being taken. Further examination of these was required following a call-in of the Executive decision; which was

subsequently resolved to be withdrawn by OSC.

**Referrals to other scrutiny bodies** – When examining corporate policy, particularly relating to the budget, OSC was proactive in recommending other commissions to undertake more in-depth scrutiny. Examples include home-to-school transport provision, implications of the cost-of-living crisis and suggesting a site-visit to the Leicester Museum and Art Gallery.

**Strategic Property Matters** – The Committee resolved call-ins to Executive decisions relating to the Market Place and St Martins Connecting Leicester schemes. Upon scrutinising both schemes further, the

Committee agreed to withdraw the call-ins and implement the decisions.

**Treasury Management/Investment Activity** – The Committee were rigorous in their examination of relevant strategy and policy, and recommended further training for Members on these matters, which was arranged in advance of decisions being taken by Full Council

**Workforce Representation** – OSC undertook some informal scrutiny relating to workforce representation across the City Council and in doing so received a comprehensive overview of how the Council adhered to the Public Sector Equality Duty before beginning to examine a significant amount of data to identify trends and areas of concern.

### **Possible Overview Select Committee plans for 2024/25 include:**

**Budget and in year budget savings**– The Committee is likely to regularly examine the City Council’s overall programme of in-year budget saving proposals on an ongoing basis and will ensure that key proposals are also considered by the relevant commissions.

**Corporate Equality Strategy and Action Plan** – The Committee intends to inspect the revised draft strategy and action plan, which will set out the City Council’s continued commitment to equality and diversity.

**Environmental Impact of Construction Projects** – OSC are keen to understand more about the overall environmental impact of corporate construction work and will assess the current position.

**Ongoing cost-of living response** – The Committee will continue to have an oversight of how the needs of the City’s most vulnerable families and communities are being met.

**Strategic Priorities**– OSC will closely examine progress made in response to the strategic priorities set out by the City Mayor and Executive.

**Workforce Representation**– OSC will conclude its findings in relation to the informal scrutiny work around workforce representation.



# Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission

*This Commission focuses on matters relating to the delivery of statutory adult social care functions, such as care services to allow independence in own homes, care services for those that require care away from home and policies that underpin a broad range of social care issues.*

The key Adult Social Care scrutiny developments during 2023/24 included:

**ASC Improvement Journey** – The Commission thanked the division for its openness in its discussion of identifying strengths and challenges for preparing for the new adult social care assessment framework to be introduced. It was requested that the Commission be updated when more information is known about the assessment and visit.

**ASC Performance Monitoring** – The Commission continued to monitor the performance of the division whereby it was recommended that an additional metric be created in relation to monitoring discharges from hospital to social care which was agreed and created for future reporting.

**Charging Policy** – The Commission debated the proposals to treat higher or enhance rate disability benefits as income in full and the introduction of an administrative charge for use of the appointeeship service. Whilst some concerns were raised, following a vote the Commission noted the proposals but recommended that further work and fostering relationships with the Making it Real Group and others who draw on support, particularly regarding communications, as well as being proactive to ensure individuals understand the scope of disability related expenditure.

**Dementia Strategy** – The Commission endorsed the refreshed *Living Well with Dementia Strategy* and agreed to support and share the aims of the Strategy.

**Direct Payments** - The Commission requested to explore the topic in which the success of the division offering direct payments for over 25years, offering choice and control to residents was celebrated, but Members recognised the concerns and risks, particularly where an individual uses a non-contracted provider or employs a personal assistant.

**Growing Needs of Autism** -The Commission commended the work and commitment to understanding the growing needs of autism and neurodiverse conditions and to promote a strength-based approach in raising awareness and encouraging employers to utilise skills. It was recommended that the issue be discussed further at the appropriate Board or Committee to enable partnership working.

**Hastings Road Day Centre** – The Commission debated the offer and utilisation of the Day Centre, which resulted in a withdrawal of a formal proposal to review the decision. Members were satisfied that officers and the Deputy City Mayor had provided assurance that alternative provision would be found, and

transitions carefully managed with support of a social worker to work closely with the person, family, and carer to ensure needs continue to be met which was monitored regularly by the Commission until all individuals transitioned to alternative services.

**Joint Scrutiny work** – The Commission examined a number of issues alongside the Public Health and Health Integration Scrutiny Commission including mental health service provision, substance misuse, winter planning and the health and social care workforce. Following feedback from scrutiny, improvements were made to the Inspired to Care website, particularly the apprenticeships pages and consideration of how to evaluate the successes of the No5 Wet Centre was requested.

**Reablement Service** – The Commission celebrated the good work of the service in enabling residents to be supported to prevent hospital admission or to be discharged from hospital and supported at home. It was noted that the service has continued to grow and is a significantly different offer to alternative places with the integration of health and social care services.

**Recommissioning of Homecare** – The Commission were keen to play a part in the process of establishing new contracts for future service provision and recommended the tender be amended from providers requiring a minimum CQC inspection of 'Requires Improvement' with 'Good' in the 'well led' section, to overall inspection being 'Good' which was endorsed.

### **Possible Adult Social Care Scrutiny plans for 2024/25 include:**

**ASC CQC Assessment** – The Commission requested to be updated on the new assessment framework concerning adult social care services and be informed of the visit.

**Adult Social Care Budget** – The Commission agreed to monitor the budget and requested an informal scrutiny briefing session to discuss details in further detail in the new financial year.

**Care Package Reviews** – The Commission have expressed urgency in the new municipal year to consider care package reviews in order to understand what is being done to address backlogs.

**Homecare Contract** – The Commission played a part in improving the tender for new contracts for future homecare service provision. The Commission is keen to discuss further when contracts are live, particularly to update on time banking and Unison's Ethical Charter for zero-hour contracts.

**Workforce** – The Commission considered the challenges to the workforce across health and social care and requested to monitor the progress, particularly the development of the draft external workforce strategy and promoting apprenticeships.

# Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission

*The Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission is responsible for examining children's social care, education & attainment and support provision for children and young people and families. Diocesan, trade union and school governor representatives work with elected Members on this Commission.*



Key scrutiny developments during 2023/24 included:

**Ash Field Academy** – The decision to withdraw funding for residential provision at Ash Field Academy was examined by the Commission. In examining the decision following a call-in, the Commission recommended that further discussions be held between Leicester City Council and Ash Field Academy on the tapering of funding in order to ease the transition whilst the Academy found other sources of funding.

**Family Hubs** – The Commission considered the progress towards the Family Hubs model in line with the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme funded by the DFE. The focus was being placed on developing an integrated network of support both online and at physical locations across Leicester.

**Fostering Service Annual Report 2022/23** – The Commission considered the activity and performance of the Fostering Service and requested further information on the costs surrounding the proposed Customer Relationship Management Tool and suggested to reach out to SGO carers via the newsletter to promote awareness of help on offer.

**In-house residential accommodation** – New residential facilities for looked-after

Children at Holly House and Hillview were examined by the Commission.

**Leicester Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report** – In reviewing the annual report, the Commission suggested that more consideration could be given to how young people could become involved in safeguarding reviews and requested that the impact of potential cuts to Childrens' Centres and any potential knock-on effect could be looked into.

**RAAC in Leicester City Schools** – The Commission received verbal updates on the use of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in Leicester City Schools. Members were reassured that possible RAAC issues in schools were being addressed and all schools in the city had the requirements for the safety standards.

**SEND Transport Provision** – The Commission examined the statutory duty to provide transport assistance to children with SEND that fit certain criteria and made a number of recommendations including seeking Government funding for electric school busses, to consider a similar transport system to the city centre 'Hop' busses for schools and colleges and raising

personal transport budgets to reduce taxi use.

**School Attendance** – The Commission examined data on the known education provision for children in Leicester up to the end of the 2022/23 academic year, looking particularly at absences and the reasons behind those absences.

**Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)** –The Commission received a verbal update on the situation involving UASC in the city. As part of the discussion, it was noted that a number of regional and national stakeholders would look at development around UASC Accommodation and how collective work can be done to improve the system.

### **Possible Children, Young People & Education Scrutiny plans for 2024/25 include:**

**Children Seeking Safety** - To examine the challenges faced by CSS in accessing education, health support and accommodation.

**DSG High Needs Block** – To consider changes to how money from the DSG High Needs Block is being spent. An informal scrutiny investigation is likely to be undertaken once an initial report has been reviewed by the Commission.

**Family Hubs** – To understand more about the programme for developing hubs across the city and how they will serve to extend early-years provision into communities.

**Sufficiency Strategy** - To look at the provision of Care Packages/Residential Accommodation for Children Looked After (CLA) by the Council in terms of increasing capacity to mitigate the need to use private sector provision.

**Update from Impower** – To provide more information about the work done by Impower in mapping the needs of CLA against the costs of placements.

**Use of Capital Programme in Schools** – To understand how spending from the Capital budget will be used to improve school buildings.

# Culture and Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission



*The Culture and Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Commission is responsible for examining many of the everyday services that people access within their own communities, including the provision of libraries, community centres, environmental and enforcement services. This Commission also holds responsibility for looking at museums, festivals & events, sports services as well as the voluntary and community sector support and issues relating to community safety and community cohesion.*

The key scrutiny developments during 2023/24 included:

## **Active Leicester Strategy Action Plan -**

The emerging Active Leicester Strategy action plan, following the launch of the strategy in July 2023 was considered by the Commission. The Commission suggested that should Sport England funding become available, grassroots/community sports clubs be considered for priority over larger professional clubs with their own funding streams. It was further suggested that opportunities to encourage cooperation between professional sports clubs and voluntary sector organisations be considered.

**Burial Strategy** – The Commission looked at action taken to mitigate the pressure on burial space following increased demand resulting from the coronavirus pandemic and the reducing availability of burial space in the council's cemeteries. It was requested by the Commission that all faiths be involved with local consultation regarding any changes in legislation on the re-use of graves arising from the national Law Commission review of burial legislation.

## **Cultural and Creative Industries**

**Strategy** – The Commission contributed to the strategy which was aimed to develop a strategy that will enable the city's creative and cultural industries to thrive.

**Museum Service** – The Commission scrutinised the museum service's use of National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) funding from Arts Council England, plans for new galleries, exhibitions and schemes, including the Climate Change Gallery at Leicester Museum and Art Gallery (LMAG), the 'Healthier Happier City' initiative and a programme of free activities aimed at helping with the cost of living as well as engagement with volunteers and volunteer development. The Commission highlighted how museums and culture could be used in different ways and sought regular updates on the Museum Strategy and NPO.

## **Voluntary Community Sector**

**Engagement** – The Commission examined the latest pledges and actions of the VCSE Strategy. It was recommended that VCSE and LCC boards co-produce funding submissions together. It was further suggested that consideration be given to establish a team to support and empower

community groups, and that there be more engagement with Ward Councillors.

**Ward Funding** – Following an initial report that was brought to the Commission in September 2023, it was agreed that a task group be convened to examine the issues surrounding ward funding. The task group looked at various aspects of the distribution of the funding and the application process. A number of recommendations were agreed including suggestions to expand the scope of multi-ward applications.

**Women in Sport** – A range of findings were presented to the Commission following scrutiny-led review into ways to and encourage more women to participate in sport and physical activity. The Commission suggested that an annual update on women's involvement in sport be provided. Additionally, the Commission recommended that good practice in other authorities should be considered in the forthcoming strategy.

### **Possible Culture & Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny plans for 2024/25 include:**

**Active Leicester and Women in Sport** – An annual report will be provided, which will also reflect how the commission's recommendations arising from the Women in Sport review have been taken forward.

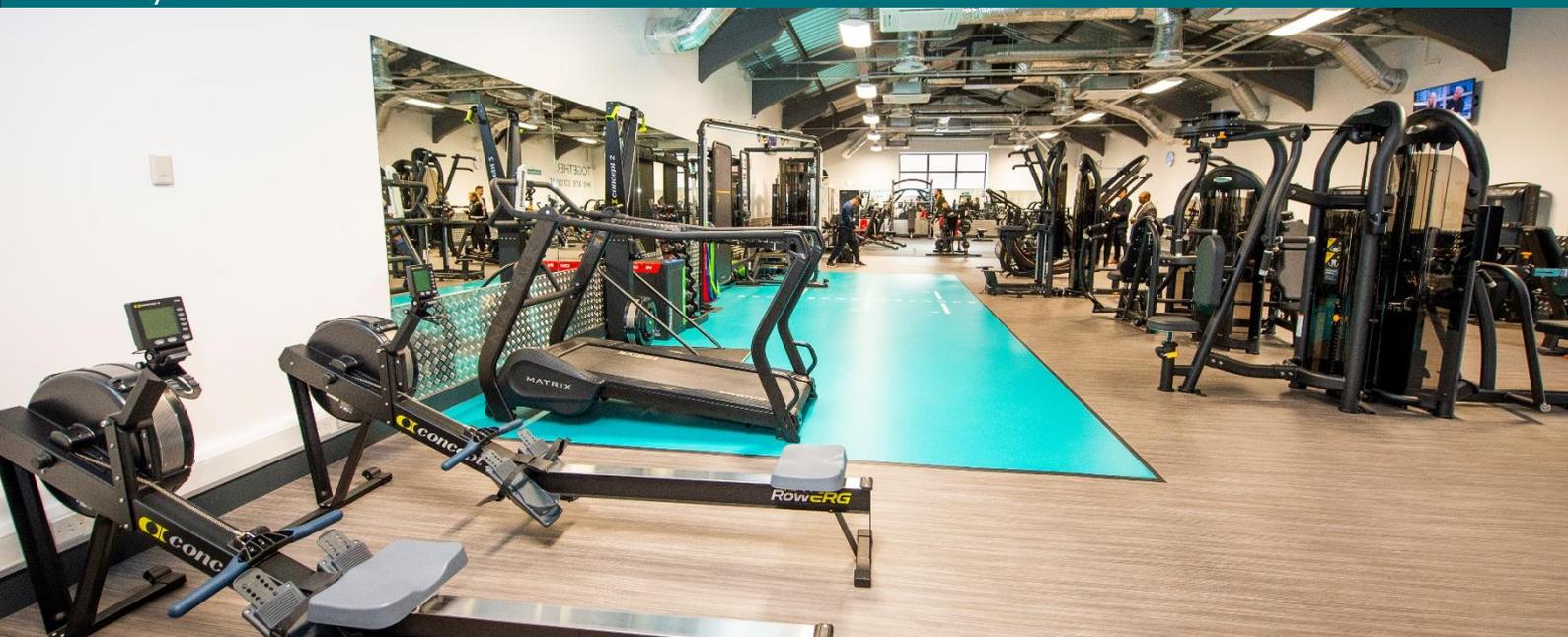
**Culture and Creative Industry Strategy** – A fuller report to be brought to the Commission following the previous report in September 2023.

**Draft Museum Strategy** – The Commission will have the opportunity to examine and make recommendations in respect of the City Council's museum strategy.

**Engagement of Community Organisations** – To consider how community organisations could be engaged to help the Council run services.

**Heritage Lottery Fund (Place Programme Funding)** – 2024/25 will be the first year of the National Lottery Heritage Fund 'Place' programme in the city. A detailed series of consultation and engagement sessions will take place with the city communities to identify their heritage priorities and opinions, which will then be used to shape a longer-term action plan that can draw on the programme funds.

**Library and Community Needs Assessment** – Summarising the community engagement undertaken in 2023 and setting out the council's proposals for library and neighbourhood centres beyond 2024.



# Economic Development, Transport and Climate Emergency Scrutiny Commission



*This commission reviews a range of matters which include regeneration, public transport and cycling provision, adult learning and job provision and climate emergency policy.*

The key scrutiny developments during 2023/24 included:

**20mph Zones** - The Commission reported its task group findings following an investigation into the approach to implementing 20mph streets in the city. A series of recommendations were agreed that related to continuing with the bespoke model but enhancing the commitment to aim to achieve 100% of suitable residential streets by 2030 and reviewing existing traffic calming measures.

**Climate Change Strategy Plan** – Following in-depth scrutiny at a dedicated meeting on this topic, the Commission made a number of suggestions and recommendations, including lengthening the time-frame for the consultation and making the consultation documents more accessible and easier to engage with, to consider more venues other than schools for Tiny Forests, to consider adding an appendix on how Leicester could be 'greened' in the final document and to consider opportunities for joint work with Public Health.

**Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging** – An informal scrutiny task group was convened to assess the current provision of EV

charging points in the city, how the Council can help to deliver EV charging points in the future and to assess any obstacles may hinder the installation of EV Charging points in certain areas and whether they can be overcome.

**Energy Efficiency for Homes** – The Commission examined energy efficiency schemes in private sector housing in the city and recommended that information on relevant schemes be promoted via Ward Community Meeting.

**Flooding** – Updates were given following serious flooding occurrences in June 2023 and January 2024. The Commission reviewed the flood defences in place and the help available for those affected by the flooding.

**Rally Park Active Improvement Project** – The Commission scrutinised the initial details of the Rally Park Scheme following a successful £1.8m bid as part of Round 4 of the Active Travel Fund and requested that officers consider approaches to retain trees and improve visibility/safety as part of design process. The Commission also

suggested working with local voluntary organisations for biodiversity gain and establishing an enjoyable space.

**Skills Sector 'Bootcamps'** – The Commission examined Skills Sector Bootcamps, led by the Council, focused on developing sector specific skills for adults. The Commission made a number of recommendations including requesting a breakdown of statistics on the number of people coming to the city to learn from

neighbouring areas. Further to this, the Commission requested that consideration be given to a Bootcamp in delivering skills in retrofitting properties.

**Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs)** – as part of its role in regularly reviewing TROs, the Commission influenced the delivery of the A6 Corridor Bus Lane Scheme, requesting officers to consider further public engagement with objections received to scheme.

## Possible Economic Development, Transport & Climate Emergency plans for 2024/25 include:

**24-Hour Bus Lanes** – To find out more about current and proposed provision with a view to potentially conducting informal scrutiny on the issue.

**Ashton Green and Railway Station approach** – Looking at progress made with key development projects across the city such as the work at Ashton Green and around the railway station, as well as further progress with the Waterside development.

**ESOL – Outcomes of delivery** – The Commission to consider the delivery of ESOL following the tracking of outcomes.

**EV Charging Informal Scrutiny** – To report on the findings of the EV Charging informal scrutiny task group.

**LLEP Arrangements** – The Commission will need to be kept informed on the transition of functions to the Council that were previously carried out by the LLEP.

**Worker Exploitation** – The Commission to receive an overview of some of challenges and issues faced in Leicester and to consider appropriate mechanisms for examining these.





# Housing Scrutiny Commission

*The Housing Scrutiny Commission examines a wide range of issues relating to housing and homelessness. This covers council services as well as issues affecting private sector housing and housing associations.*

Key housing scrutiny developments during 2023/24 included:

## **Adaptations & Disabled Facilities Grant**

- The Commission commended the service for the proactive approach to adapting properties to meet the needs of residents. It was requested that the Commission continue to be kept updated on the development of an Adaptations Strategy.

**Budget** – The Commission considered the housing revenue account budget, including the capital programme 2024/25 but recommended all associated budgets to housing services be shared in future.

**Climate Emergency & Retrofitting** – The Commission discussed the various programmes to improve energy efficiency of properties in the city. It was recommended that officers liaise with economic development regarding potential bids for upskilling individuals in green industries in which consideration is being given to be part of a regional net zero building retrofit skills pilot.

**Damp and Mould** – The Commission discussed regulations and the commitment to tackle damp and mould with the development of an Action Plan. Assurance was provided that governance processes are in place for appropriate inspection and remedial action in social housing, but the Commission requested to be updated on an online portal for the private rented sector.

**District Heating** - The Commission discussed progress regarding the installation of metres for properties supplied by the district heating network following a decision by Full Council in February 2023 to enable tenants and leaseholders to pay for usage. The Commission challenged the accuracy of costs and recommended they be reviewed to ensure tenants and leaseholders were only to be charged the identified costs. It was further agreed that the Commission would be kept updated on options for the Aikman Avenue flats.

**Empty Homes** - The Commission noted the success of the empty homes team and its importance as a non-statutory service. Assurance was provided that council tax rates are increased when properties are empty but the need for more devolved powers for the local authority to be able to take action to bring empty properties into use was highlighted.

**Environmental Budget** – The Commission noted the financial constraints to reduce the budget but recommended a formal process for documenting ward councillor suggestions to be created and future reports to include reference to other budgets available to investment in council estates.

### **Homelessness & Rough Sleeping**

**Strategy** – The Commission discussed the development of the new strategy and action plan, noting the collaboration and importance of partnership working. Clarity was sought in relation to the decision-making process for strategies to go to Full Council.

**Housing Crisis in Leicester** – The Commission discussed the Action Plan in relation to Housing Crisis that was declared in the city in November 2022 and the Task Group’s recommendations. The Commission noted the progress internally and demands of central government but requested further updates and recommended a review of the Action Plan to make the status of items clearer.

**Private Rented Sector Strategy** – The Commission endorsed the Strategy and Action Plan, noting the initiatives to enable access or sustain tenancies and improving standards within the private rented sector. The Commission requested Members be provided with additional information of support available and consideration for

further selective licensing schemes across the city.

**Repairs Online** – The Commission received a demonstration of the housing repairs platform which provides residents with greater flexibility to report repairs and alleviates pressure from the customer service centre. The successes were celebrated, and the Commission endorsed further use of the platform to report repairs and other technology where appropriate.

**Tenancy Support** - The Commission discussed and noted the important role of services provided to support tenants. It was agreed that consideration be given to utilising community radio stations to share messages of the tenant satisfaction survey and for members to be involved in the piloting of the customer care training.

**Who Gets Social Housing** - The Commission received updates regarding the housing register and requested consideration be given to improving communication to applicants on the waiting list.

### **Possible Housing plans for 2024/25 include:**

**Adaptations Strategy** – The Commission requested to be kept updated on the development of the strategy.

**Damp & Mould** – The Commission requested to be kept updated on progress of the Action Plan and particularly around the development of an online portal for tenants in the private rented sector to report damp and mould concerns.

**Homelessness Strategy** – OSC recommended the Commission explored this area in greater detail.

**House Builds & Acquisitions** - The Commission noted the commitment to increase social housing and requested regular updates on progress of developments moving forward.

**Income Collection Performance** – The Commission requested to receive an update early in the municipal year to review the performance of the full financial year.

**Regulator of Social Housing** – The Commission to be kept updated on the new social housing regulations.

# Public Health and Health Integration Scrutiny Commission



*This commission is responsible for examining the health services received by all Leicester residents, which includes the services provided by the local authority's public health team along with those delivered by the NHS and health sector partners.*

The key Health and Wellbeing scrutiny developments during 2023/24 included:

**Access to GP Practices** – The Commission discussed barriers accessing GP Practices and raised concerns around inconsistencies but were assured by plans in place and agreed to receive further updates.

**Children & Young People's Mental Health Services** – The Commission and Chair of CYPE noted progress and improvements across services but concerns were raised, particularly regarding GP referrals, which resulted in terminology for cases being sent back to practices being amended and further actions being explored with an update to be provided in the new municipal year.

**Elective Care** – The Commission discussed plans to address waiting lists and visited Phase 1 of the East Midlands Planned Care Centre, a modular building providing treatment in a Centre that will see 100,000 patients per year when fully operational. The Commission agreed to continue to monitor waiting list performance and looks forward to accepting an invitation to visit Phase 2 when completed.

**Health Protection** – The Commission monitored rates of illnesses in the city, particularly the outbreak of measles and requested details of vaccine centres within wards be circulated to Members to promote to residents.

**Joint ASC & Health Scrutiny** – The Commission examined issues alongside the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission including mental health service provision, substance misuse, winter planning and the health and social care workforce. Following feedback from scrutiny, improvements were made to the Inspired to Care website, particularly the apprenticeships pages and consideration of how to evaluate the successes of the No5 Wet Centre was requested.

**Joint LLR Health Scrutiny** – Members of the Commission discussed various items including additional investment to East Midlands Ambulance Service; pressures on ICB finances and UHL reconfiguration progress. The Joint Committee also voted to approve alterations to the terms of reference following regulations and guidance from the Department of Health and Social Care relating to changes to the role and powers of Health Scrutiny Committees.

**Maternity Services** – The Commission sought assurance on improvements to ensure safety following the inadequate CQC inspection and requested further updates to monitor performance.

**Oral Health** – The Commission raised concerns around access to NHS dentistry given statistics on oral cancer and 5-year-old children with tooth decay and requested to monitor progress. It was also agreed UHL would provide access to recent data for public health analysts and the proposal to write to the Secretary of State to request water fluoridation was supported.

**Winter Pressures** – The Commission analysed plans ahead of winter and monitored progress to compare performance. Concerns were raised about the critical incident but improvements were noted and agreed to look in more detail at virtual wards and A&E.

**0-19 Services** – The Commission celebrated the successes of the service and reiterated the importance of retaining school nursing and health visitors.

### **Possible Health & Wellbeing plans for 2024/25 include:**

**Access to GP Practices** – The Commission requested to continue monitoring access to GP surgeries following change in methods for booking appointments and a survey that indicated Leicester residents have the most difficulty accessing GPs.

**CYP Mental Health** – The Commission requested to receive an update in the new municipal year on actions for improving the process for mental health referrals by GPs.

**Health Inequities** – The Commission expressed an urgency in the new municipal year to receive an update on health inequalities as part of the ICB 5-year forward plan.

**Health Research** – The Commission have expressed an interest to consider topics, funding and inclusion of communities in research across public health, health partners and universities.

**Vaccinations** – The Commission requested to look in further detail at vaccination and screening to better understand uptake and hesitancy.

**Virtual Wards** – The Commission requested a briefing session to understand the decision-making process and mitigation of risks for the increasing use of virtual wards which was agreed for early in the new municipal year.

**Women's Health** – The Commission are keen to explore women's health services.

# Contacting Scrutiny

For more information, please contact the Governance Services Team via **[governance@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:governance@leicester.gov.uk)**.

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