

Overview & Scrutiny

Scrutiny Bulletin

Cheshire West and Chester Councils Quarterly Scrutiny Newsletter
Autumn 2025

Welcome to the third edition of the Cheshire West and Chester Council scrutiny newsletter. Its purpose is to help keep residents, Councillors, officers, and key stakeholders in Cheshire West borough updated on the work of the Councils' scrutiny function. Each edition will highlight the work of the scrutiny committees, feature comments from the scrutiny Chairs, and include a preview of upcoming Task Groups and Spotlight Reviews. We also hope to bring you special features, interviews with scrutiny members, and details on how to get involved in the scrutiny process, keeping you connected with the decisions that the Council makes.

A summary of scrutiny's ongoing and pending reviews

Cheshire West and Chester Council's four scrutiny committees (Cheshire West and Chester; Places; People; and Health) are currently undertaking or about to commence in depth reviews of the following:

- Neighbourhood Nuisances – Fly tipping, Littering, Graffiti and Vandalism
- River Pollution Phase 2
- Community Safety Partnership – Serious Violence (including knife crime)
- Compliments and Complaints
- Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Discharge and patient flow in Acute Hospitals
- Access to Mental Health Services for Children and Young People

If you would like to submit any evidence or take part in any of the reviews as a witness, please get in touch with us using the contact details at the bottom of the bulletin.

Scrutiny committee agendas look-ahead

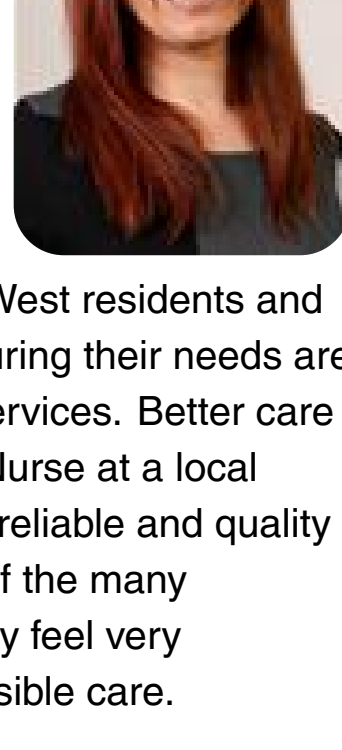
In their upcoming meetings, the Council's four scrutiny committees will be considering the following topics:

Cheshire West and Chester Overview and Scrutiny	10 November 2025	• Infrastructure Funding Statement • Financial and Corporate Performance
Places Overview and Scrutiny	24 November 2025	• Economic Growth & Development Schemes
People Overview and Scrutiny	26 November 2025	• Online Safety Act and Cyber Bullying in Schools • Domestic Abuse Strategy • Trauma Informed Practice • CQC Inspection of Adult Social Care
Health Overview and Scrutiny	05 November 2025	• Winter Planning and Winter Readiness

"the above details are correct at time of publishing - work programmes are subject to change"

Updates from the Scrutiny Chairs

On behalf of Cheshire West and Chester Council's scrutiny function, I am delighted to be able to share a snapshot of the work of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Chairing such an important scrutiny committee, which scrutinises NHS Services and holds NHS colleagues to account regarding the planning, provision, operation and delivery of local health services in Cheshire West is such an honour.



The Scrutiny Committee's aim is to be the voice of Cheshire West residents and help to improve the health and wellbeing of local people, ensuring their needs are at the forefront of planning and delivery of local health care services. Better care produces better outcomes for our residents. As a Paediatric Nurse at a local hospital, I know all too well the importance of delivering safe, reliable and quality services to our residents, whilst also having an appreciation of the many challenges our health care system currently faces. I personally feel very passionate about ensuring our residents receive the best possible care.

The Health Scrutiny Committee commences its year by undertaking its statutory requirement of scrutinising local NHS providers' Quality Accounts. The outcomes from these reviews help to formulate the Committee's Work Programme for the ensuing year. Cheshire West is lucky to have two acute hospitals in its borough. The Health Scrutiny Committee has been regularly scrutinising the Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Trust's improvement journey over recent months and will keep a close eye on their progress.

To see first-hand the challenges and pressures our health colleagues face, the Committee has undertaken a series of visits to some health care providers. This has enabled Scrutiny Councillors to chat with key hospital staff and hear about their good work along with the day-to-day challenges they face. This year improving patient flow in acute hospitals is a priority for the Committee as is exploring in more detail how children and young people access timely mental health services.

The Committee has also provided its comments on the harmonisation of two health policies – 'Fertility Treatment' and 'Gluten Free Prescriptions'. Both policies impact on Cheshire West residents, so the Committee was keen to represent them in the consultations. In July, the Committee received an informal briefing on the NHS 10 Year Health Plan 'Fit for the Future'. Its aim is to transform the NHS into a more resilient, efficient and patient centred system, shifting care from hospitals to the community and giving patients more choice and control over their health. The Health Scrutiny Committee will be holding Cheshire West Place - Integrated Care Board to account over its response to the plan and we look forward to scrutinising the plan and its delivery for our residents as the plan evolves.

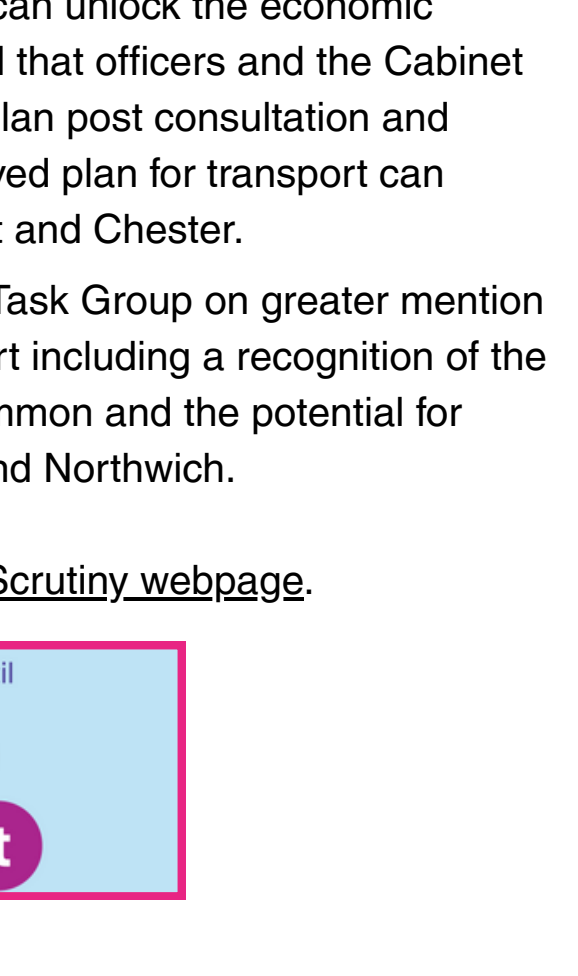
The Committee regularly engages with Cheshire West Healthwatch, their input is invaluable in facilitating better service delivery for our residents. Through our collaborative working they help us to ensure that patients voices are heard and that services are tailored to the community's needs. Collectively, we both have a role to play in good governance and accountability across the health and care system, as well as improving outcomes for Cheshire West residents.

The Health Scrutiny Committee remains focussed on continually improving the health and wellbeing of our residents. It is nothing less than they deserve. I would encourage you to get in touch with the Scrutiny Team to find out more about our work and how you can contribute. All our scrutiny meetings are webcast and again I would encourage you to watch them and hear about how we hold local decision makers to account.

Councillor Katie Kendrick OBE- Chair of Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Quarterly Case Study - The Local Transport Plan

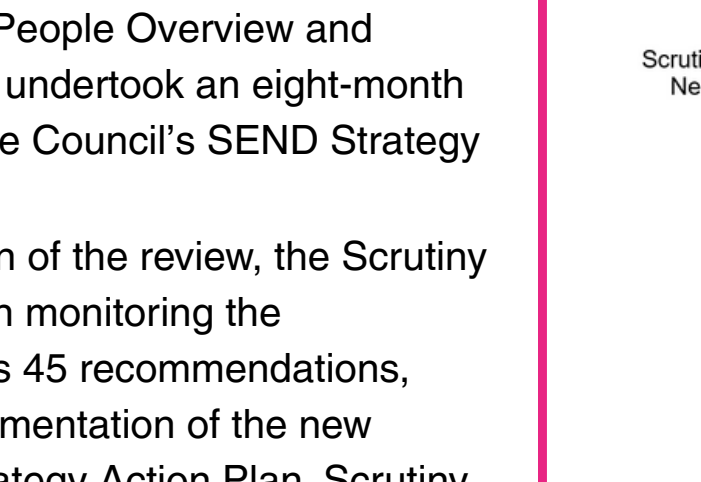
In July, Members from Places Overview and Scrutiny Committee took part in a Task Group during which they were given the opportunity to scrutinise the emerging Local Transport Plan 4 Core Strategy and the related ongoing consultation. Members welcomed the Plan and felt that it had been well developed and was inclusive and relevant to residents of the borough, however they fed back to officers that they thought it was missing mention of some valuable points.



The main missing piece was a consideration of economic growth and Scrutiny Members felt that an improved transport system can unlock the economic potential of the borough. Members recommended that officers and the Cabinet Member for Transport and Highways re-visit the plan post consultation and ensure there is more emphasis on how an improved plan for transport can benefit the economic prosperity of Cheshire West and Chester.

There were also recommendations made by the Task Group on greater mention of future technologies and other forms of transport including a recognition of the possibility of self-driving cars becoming more common and the potential for water-based transport in locations like Chester and Northwich.

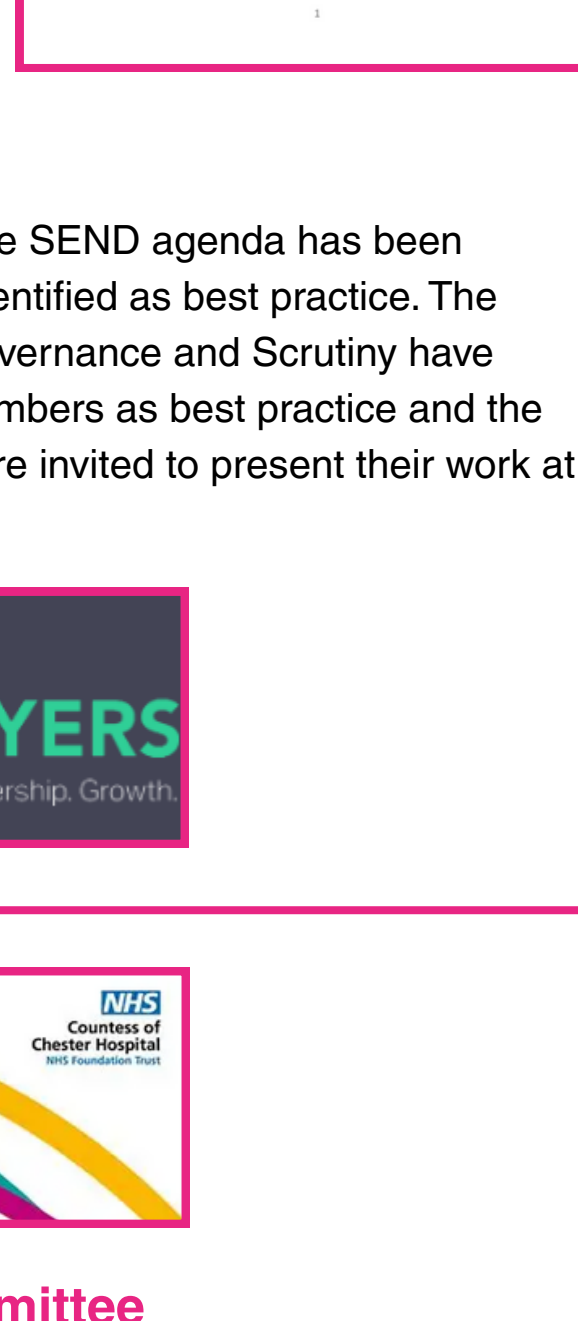
The final published report can be viewed on the [Scrutiny webpage](#).



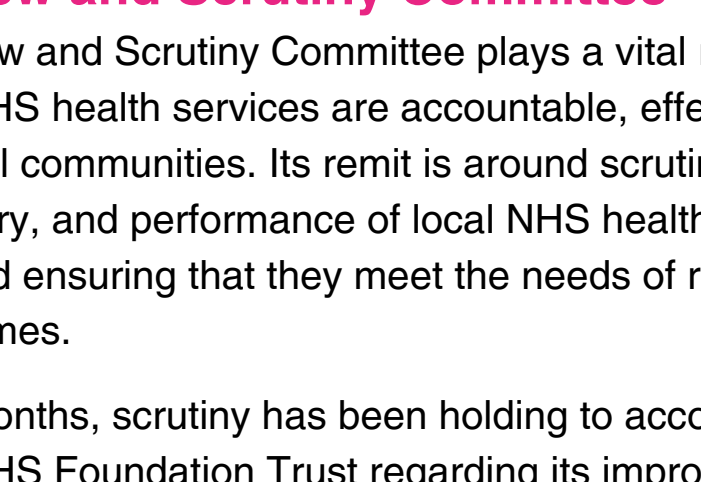
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Scrutiny (SEND)

In the first edition of this bulletin, we included a section on how the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook an eight-month scrutiny review of the Council's SEND Strategy Action Plan.

Since the completion of the review, the Scrutiny Committee has been monitoring the implementation of its 45 recommendations, along with the implementation of the new Council's SEND Strategy Action Plan. Scrutiny Members are pleased that services and processes are improving and going in the right direction. The full report is available on the [scrutiny webpage](#).



The work of the People Scrutiny Committee on the SEND agenda has been recognised nationally and the review has been identified as best practice. The Local Government Association and Centre for Governance and Scrutiny have both highlighted the committee's work to their members as best practice and the Chair of the committee and Scrutiny Manager were invited to present their work at a recent Northwest Employers regional event.



Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee plays a vital role in helping to ensure that local NHS health services are accountable, effective, and responsive to the needs of local communities. Its remit is around scrutinising and evaluating the planning, delivery, and performance of local NHS health services, including Acute hospitals, and ensuring that they meet the needs of residents and improve public health outcomes.

Over the past 12 months, scrutiny has been holding to account the Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust regarding its improvement journey. The Trust has recently undergone several inspections by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), where their judgement has been below where it should be including receiving ratings of 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'. Following these CQC Inspections, the Trust has developed Improvement Plans to address the concerns and has presented these to the Health Scrutiny Committee.

At its scrutiny meeting on 10 September 2025, the Trust's Senior Officers advised the Committee they had been on an improvement journey for several years. Some of the cultural issues, system challenges and general difficulties have been in place for at least 10 years, however the Trust was confident that its improvement plans would address these and subsequently improve their ratings. The Committee received information relating to the improvements the Trust had begun to make to address issues identified in previous inspections. These included the need to be well led, maternity services, work force issues, and the areas identified in the Section 29a Warning Notice. The Trust assured the Committee that improvements had already taken place and that these would continue. The Trust was invited back to present updates on its improvement journey to the Health Scrutiny Committee on 9 March 2026. This meeting will be webcast live and can be viewed on the Council website.

Updates from the team

The Combined Annual Scrutiny Report 2024/2025 was accepted by Council in July. Detailing everything that the Scrutiny function had achieved in that municipal year, it is available for anyone to read on the [Council website](#).

Access to Mental Health Services

The People Overview and Scrutiny Committee has commenced a scrutiny review scrutinising access and pathways for children and young people's mental health services and evaluating service availability, barriers to access, and outcomes for young people. The review's objectives are centred around examining waiting times, referral pathways, eligibility criteria, and any geographic disparities. The Scrutiny Committee is looking for lived experiences and to hear from children, young people, families or carers around their positive or indifferent engagement and experiences.

If you would like to share any experiences, please email the Scrutiny team using the contact details at the foot of this bulletin. Please note that any information shared will be kept confidential and anonymised.



Several recent Scrutiny Reports have been accepted by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny for listing on their new Scrutiny Library webpage. You can view these and other examples of Scrutiny from Councils across the country at: [Scrutiny Reviews - CFGS](#). This library has been designed to showcase best practise in creating impactful and meaningful Task Group Reports and the Scrutiny Team look forward to submitting more examples in the future.

