



Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report 2024/25

Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction to scrutiny in Leicestershire	4
What is overview and scrutiny?	4
What are the principles of good scrutiny and how does it make a difference?	4
What does scrutiny look like in Leicestershire?	5
What types of scrutiny do we undertake?	5
How can stakeholders and the public get involved?	6
Scrutiny Activity during 2024/25	7
Scrutiny Commission	7
Adults and Communities	10
Children and Families	12
Highways and Transport	15
Environment and Climate Change	18
Health	20
Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny	22
Overview and Scrutiny Members	23
The Overview and Scrutiny Team	24

Foreword

Welcome to Leicestershire County Council's annual report of overview and scrutiny activity undertaken during 2024/25. This report sets out the wide-ranging work undertaken and outcomes achieved by the Council's six overview and scrutiny committees and provides a general summary of how scrutiny operates and how you, as a member of the public, have contributed.

Scrutiny plays a key role within the Council's governance arrangements providing critical challenge to decisions taken and policies implemented. This has been particularly difficult this year given the financial pressures faced by the Council which have been tougher this year than ever before. Each scrutiny committee has therefore carried out its work with the clear understanding that as elected members we are responsible for ensuring that the Council's scarce resources are used to best meet the needs of Leicestershire residents, local businesses and service users.

Despite these pressures, we continue to be impressed with the volume and quality of scrutiny undertaken by each committee and the number of recommendations made to help drive improvement in services. This year this has included the Scrutiny Commission's input into local government reorganisation proposals which could see the biggest shake up in local government structures in a generation.

The Highway and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee has continued its oversight of flooding impacts and mitigation works, an area of increasing concern amongst residents, whilst the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been looking at the Council's delivery of its Net Zero targets and new strategies to deliver greater biodiversity and encourage local nature recovery.

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented on the Council's Suicide Prevention Strategy and sought more information on support for social isolation and loneliness, and our Children and Families and Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committees have focused on supporting the education, health and care needs of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and improvements in the pathway to adulthood following a peer review.

As this will be the last annual report reviewing scrutiny for the current Council before the elections in May 2025, we would like to pay tribute to officers for supporting and facilitating the overview and scrutiny process. We also thank staff working within partner organisations that have sent representatives to share information and their experiences, and Cabinet Members that have attended meetings to answer our questions.

We would also thank all scrutiny members for their commitment and contribution to the process, with special thanks to the Chairs and Spokespersons who have continued to drive each Committee's work programme to address areas of concern and interest.

The four Scrutiny Commissioners are responsible for leading the Overview and Scrutiny process, deciding on priority issues for Scrutiny and areas that merit more detailed review.



Michael Mullaney CC
Chairman of the
Scrutiny Commission



Rosita Page CC
Vice Chairman of the
Scrutiny Commission



Neil Bannister CC
Scrutiny
Commissioner



Max Hunt CC
Scrutiny
Commissioner

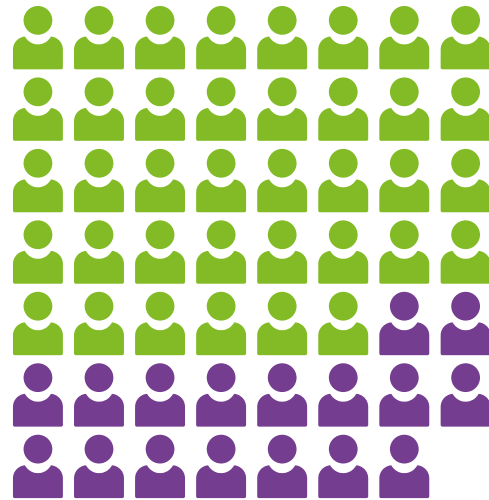
Introduction to scrutiny in Leicestershire

What is overview and scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny (scrutiny) is an important part of local democracy and provides the legal power for Members who are not Cabinet members to look into issues of concern and make sure decisions taken are for the benefit of Leicestershire residents.

Although scrutiny cannot make decisions, it can make recommendations for improvement to those that do (i.e. the Cabinet). Scrutiny can also look at services provided by other organisations, such as health, and make recommendations for partners too.

There are currently 55 Councillors elected to Leicestershire County Council to represent the residents of Leicestershire. **Of those, 30 (non-Cabinet members) are appointed to the Scrutiny Commission and five other Overview and Scrutiny Committees** which are politically balanced committees and provide challenge to the Cabinet.



What are the principles of good scrutiny and how does it make a difference?

The four key principles of scrutiny as established by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny are:

1. To provide critical friend challenge to executive policy and decision makers.
2. To enable the voice and concerns of the public to be heard
3. To be carried out by independent minded councillors
4. To drive improvement in public services

Scrutiny committees hold the Cabinet to account for the decisions it has taken or intends to take, and acts as a critical friend, helping to ensure the Council delivers its services efficiently and effectively. They do this by:

- Reviewing and commenting on the County Council's budget and strategic policies.
- Undertaking pre-decision scrutiny of key matters, making recommendations for improvement wherever possible.
- Monitoring and challenging the performance of services and the outcomes delivered for those living and working in Leicestershire.
- Providing transparency by holding meetings in public and taking questions from residents.

What does scrutiny look like in Leicestershire?

In Leicestershire all scrutiny work is carried out by the Scrutiny Commission and five Overview and Scrutiny Committees which each look at a particular service area of the Council. These are outlined in the table below.



Scrutiny Committees can also initiate time limited pieces of work to look at a particular issue in detail. These can be informal task and finish groups, providing for short sharp scrutiny of a complex topic, allowing Members to make recommendations over the course of a couple of months or less that can be considered directly by officers and Cabinet Lead Members.

Alternatively, a formal Scrutiny Review Panel can be established. Whilst time limited, these can run for several months and their recommendations, which may suggest a change in policy or service provision, are submitted to the relevant parent scrutiny committee prior to consideration by the Cabinet.

Reports of previous Scrutiny Review Panels and Task and Finish Groups can be viewed on the Council's [website](#). Details of two carried out this year are set out below.

You can also find out more about how Overview and Scrutiny works in Leicestershire by accessing our [Overview and Scrutiny Guide](#) on the Council's website.

What types of scrutiny do we undertake?

Well over a quarter of reports considered by the Council's Scrutiny Committees resulted in comments being presented to and considered as part of the Cabinet's decision making process.

Scrutiny Committees have sought to keep abreast of issues, receiving information and updates on a range of issues, but has focused substantially on monitoring the Council's performance and seeking assurance around service and project delivery.

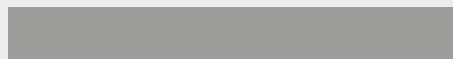
Pre-Cabinet Scrutiny



Performance and Assurance



Policy Development



How can stakeholders and the public get involved?

Our committees work to ensure the Council and its partners are delivering the right policies and services that will benefit Leicestershire residents and service users. They do this by:

- Inviting partners, stakeholder representatives and external experts to contribute evidence to broaden Members' understanding and inform their discussions.
- Having co-opted members on the Children and Family Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, representing parent governors and Church of England maintained schools.
- Using Scrutiny Members' local knowledge from within their communities to question decision makers (i.e. Cabinet Lead Members) and officers.

Attendance and involvement by the public is also actively encouraged, and this can be done by:

- Attending a meeting – Members of the public are welcome to attend any public meeting of a Scrutiny Committee, details of which are listed on the [online meeting calendar](#).
- Asking a question – all Scrutiny Committees allow for public questions at the beginning of each meeting. If you wish to ask a question, please see our [online guidance on how to submit a question](#).
- Submitting a petition – all Scrutiny Committees can receive petitions relating to an area that the council has authority over. It can be submitted by anyone who lives, works, or studies in Leicestershire. For further details, see our [online guidance on how to submit a petition](#).
- Identifying issues which a Scrutiny Committee might look at (particularly through a specific review).
- Providing evidence to inform Scrutiny (either in writing or in person).
- Contributing to consultations, surveys, workshops and/or focus groups.

Here is a summary of the level of public involvement in scrutiny undertaken over the last year.

Committee Meetings held:	34
Reports Considered:	124
Hours of public debate:	55
Questions submitted by Members and the Public:	74
Webcast views:	2261
Comments submitted to Cabinet:	25
Recommendations made and additional information and assurance sought	53



Scrutiny Activity during 2024/25

Scrutiny Commission

The Scrutiny Commission reviews the overall strategic direction and corporate policies and priorities of the Cabinet and Council, including the budget and its four-year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Full details of the Commission's work can be found on the Council's [website](#).

English Devolution White Paper: Local Government Reorganisation

The Commission considered and commented on the proposed content of the Council's interim plan for local government reorganisation. The Commission:

- Questioned the Acting Leader regarding the timing for reorganisation following the Government's decision not to fast-track Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland through postponing the County Council election as requested.
- Raised concerns regarding the sustainability of discretionary services currently provided by district councils within the proposed unitary model.
- Challenged the potential impact of Leicester City Council seeking to extend its boundaries and what effect this would have on residents in those localities as well as on the remaining area of Leicestershire.
- Questioned what the role of parish and town councils would be under the new structure, and the availability of resources to support them in delivering some local services within communities.

The Budget and finance monitoring

The central role of the Scrutiny Commission is to monitor the financial health of the Council. It has been an exceptionally demanding year with concern that the Council would, for the first time, need to use its reserves to balance the budget at the end of the year. Fortunately, this was not necessary but pressures remain. The Commission has:

- Submitted its views to the Cabinet on the Council's budget proposals for the next four years.
- Heard about the escalated spending controls, including recruitment controls, put in place to help manage in year budget pressures.
- Raised concerns regarding the growing deficit on the High Needs Block element of the Dedicated Schools Grant, noting the risk to the Council if the Government did not continue the statutory override that currently permitted this.
- Challenged rising costs relating to the delivery of the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road. The Committee received assurances regarding discussions being held with contractors to mitigate these as far as possible.



Property Management and Investments

The Commission looked at a number of property related proposals and monitored the performance of operational property management and the Investing in Leicestershire Programme. The Commission:

- Supported proposals to progress with the delivery of the East of Lutterworth Strategic Development Area, following officers' responses to questions regarding alternative delivery options and reassurance provided regarding future grant funding and risk.
- Supported proposals to commit additional County Council owned land to the M69 Junction 2/ Stoney Stanton Strategic Development Area which was necessary for the delivery of infrastructure that would mitigate the impacts of the scheme and provide benefits to local communities.
- Considered the Council's in year performance against its Corporate Asset Management Plan, raising concerns regarding management of the Council's rural estate. The Committee has requested an update on progress to deliver an action plan put in place to address historical issues regarding long standing rent arrears.
- Challenged the performance of the Investing in Leicestershire Programme which, if not for the Council's rural estate showed an overall reduction of approximately £8m. The Commission were reassured that the Programme needed to be looked at over the long term noting that performance had been good despite difficulties in the market.
- Commented on the revised Strategy for the Investing in Leicestershire Programme, submitting comments to the Cabinet for consideration regarding the timing of inspections.

Customer Experience

The Commission looked at the Council's draft Customer Experience Strategy, submitting comments to the Cabinet for consideration. The Commission:

- Welcomed the new Strategy but commented that despite the drive towards digital options, a personalised approach to its customers would always be important across all contact channels, especially for vulnerable residents.
- Highlighted residents feedback that it was often more difficult to get through to the Customer Service Centre (CSC) on Mondays and Fridays, and sought reassurance that staffing levels would be adapted to respond, thus reducing call waiting times.
- Raised concerns that the Council's website was often found by residents to be confusing and difficult to navigate which might hinder delivery of the Strategy.
- Sought more information regarding response times to enquiries submitted to the CSC by email and how many of these were to chase up previous contacts made.
- Was pleased to hear about the use of SMS text messaging to keep people updated regarding their enquiries which was proving successful in reducing demand on the CSC by avoiding the need for people to chase for updates.

Crime and Disorder

In its capacity as the Council's designated Crime and Disorder Committee the Commission considered the Council's progress to deliver its Community Safety Strategy and Domestic Abuse Reduction Strategy in partnership with other agencies. The Commission:

- Commended the valuable work of the service and the excellent partnership arrangements in place with the City Council and district community safety partnerships which helped ensure good community cohesion across Leicester and Leicestershire.
- Was reassured by the County Council's work with the police and counter terrorism unit, and its communication with community leaders which had played a part in ensuring Leicester and Leicestershire did not see any rioting like those seen elsewhere in July and August 2024.
- Welcomed the different domestic abuse support services available for men and women and those from minority groups, such as the LGBTQ+, gypsy/traveller communities and those from black, Asian and multi-ethnic backgrounds, noting that this had to be tailored to individual needs.

Performance

The Commission has continued to monitor the overall performance of the Council and across specific service areas including arrangements with partners. The Committee:

- Considered the Council's Annual Delivery Report and Performance Compendium which provided a useful overview of the Council's performance across all service areas and included a wide range of statistical data and comparisons against other similar authorities. Whilst this showed the Council continued to perform well despite its low funded position, members would use this to identify future areas for scrutiny.
- Evaluated the number of corporate complaints received during the year, noting that the Local Government Ombudsman had confirmed that all local authorities were seeing a spike in numbers received, particularly regarding special educational needs and delays in the education and health care plan assessment process.
- Reviewed the performance of East Midlands Shared Services and welcomed progress made in the delivery of its strategic priorities.
- Questioned the Director of Inward Investment and Place Marketing Organisation (PMO) regarding delivery of its priorities for 2024/25 and the work undertaken to secure inward investment into rural parts of the County.
- Continued to monitor the performance of Leicestershire Traded Services, some areas of which have continued to struggle to recover following the Covid-19 pandemic. The Commission also held a private workshop to more closely assess overall performance and income generated against capital costs invested.

Next Year...

The Commission will continue to monitor the Council's financial performance and the performance of its commercial traded services. It will also look again at the management of the Council's rural estate and comment on a proposed new strategy in this area.



Adults and Communities

This Committee exercises the Scrutiny function in relation to services provided by the Adults and Communities Department. Full details of the Committee's work can be found on the Council's [website](#).

Peer Review of Pathway for Adulthood

The Committee has considered several reports regarding the findings and recommendations from the Peer Review of the effectiveness of the Council's current pathway to adulthood, with a focus on the Young Adult Disabilities (YAD) Team managed and operated by the Adults and Communities Department. The Committee:

- Was pleased to note that most of the short-term actions identified from the review would be completed by the end of the year, and that longer-term actions involving partners and stakeholders would be progressed swiftly.
- Commented that an area for future development would be the pathway for young people who did not have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- Discussed from an operational practice point of view, when a young person should be seen and treated by the law and the Council as an adult, and how this should be balanced with the needs of parent(s) to keep them informed and updated should the young person wish them to be.

Archives, Collections and Learning (ACL) Centre

The Committee discussed at length its concerns regarding the future storage capacity of the Records Office and the risk posed to the Council's current Arts Council England accreditation. The Committee held a private workshop on this matter and subsequently made recommendations to the Cabinet regarding future proposals. The Committee:

- Raised strong concerns regarding the risks, including financial risks, to the Council if it lost its accreditation. The Committee noted this would result in the Council being instructed how to store its records with no regard to cost but that such costs would still need to be met by the Authority.
- Questioned if there was an opportunity to dispose of collection items to reduce the space required and raise funds.
- Considered other areas of funding, noting that the County Council was precluded from most grant funding because the storage of records was a statutory requirement the Council had to budget for.
- Recommended the Cabinet develop the ACL Centre and that funding for this be allocated in the refreshed MTFS for 2024 – 2029.

Adult Social Care Customer Service Centre (CSC)

The Committee commented on the draft Customer Experience Strategy so far as this related to adult social care and welcomed the update on progress made to improve the performance, efficiency and effectiveness of the Adult Social CSC. The Committee:

- Raised concern that more needed to be done to provide people with clearer information regarding expected timelines for a response and resolution, for example, when reporting a crisis. The Committee commented that this would reduce follow up calls from residents and free up capacity within the CSC.
- Received assurance that functionality of the telephone system to provide call backs, thus avoiding people waiting online, was being addressed.
- Welcomed plans to redirect calls from professional representatives through a different contact route and the use of priority numbers for people with allocated social carers.

Leicestershire County Council Adult Social Care Regulated Services

The Committee has considered several reports on the Adults and Communities Department's in-house provision of services which were required to be regulated and inspected by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The Committee:

- Raised residents' concerns that some were being misinformed by partner organisations that the service was free for an initial six weeks. The Committee agreeing that this needed to be addressed quickly.
- Questioned when two venues in Hinckley and Wigston offering the Short Breaks Service would be reinspected. Whilst they had both been rated 'Good' in 2017 and 2019, the Committee was concerned that the CQC was under no obligation to reinspect within a specified timescale, even if invited to return.
- Visited one premises that had been classed as 'requiring improvement' and was reassured that the concerns raised by the CQC had been addressed, noting anecdotal evidence received from service users and their families.
- Requested a report on the progress and implementation of an action plan relating to Melton Short Breaks.

Leicestershire Adult Learning Service (LALS) Ofsted Inspection Findings

The Committee received a report which provided information on the findings of an Ofsted inspection of the LALS conducted in January 2025. The Committee:

- Congratulated the Service on its 'Good' Ofsted rating which was seen as a stamp of quality that Leicestershire County Council was providing for learners engaged with the service.
- Noted there was potential for the service to be an agent of change for the workforce to equip people of all ages to acquire new skills and move back into the workforce, and to enable small to medium sized employers who were unable to provide their own training to recruit to posts.

Next year...

We will continue to monitor the impact of demand and cost pressures on the Departments budget, the preparations for the CQC inspection, and continued increase in inflation and cost of living pressures.



Children and Families

This Committee scrutinises the services provided by the Children and Family Services Department to children, young people and families as well as education, special needs and safeguarding matters. Full details of the Committee's work can be found on the Council's [website](#).

SEND and Inclusion

The Committee has continued to scrutinise the provision of services which support the education, health and care needs of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The Committee:

- Received an update on performance within the Transforming SEND and Inclusion in Leicestershire (TSIL) programme and to what extent it was improving outcomes and experiences for children and young people and their families and delivering financial benefits. The Committee raised concern regarding increasing demand which continued to affect the financial position of the High Needs Block of the Dedicated School's Grant (DSG).
- Requested an annual update on the progress of the TSIL programme in delivering its objectives.
- Was pleased to note that a deficit within the Early Years Block of the DSG was planned to be cleared over four years. In 2021/22, the recorded deficit was £4.26m, and as of March 2024, this deficit had reduced to £3.1m.
- Received assurance that the Department would continue to respond to the needs of all children and young people in Leicestershire with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in place, up to the age of 25.
- Raised concerns on a proposal for a transfer in funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant and for the funding to be used for the establishment of a Special Educational Needs (SEN) Investment Fund. The proposal was presented to the Cabinet, alongside the concerns raised by the Committee, and this was subsequently approved.
- Recommended an analysis of costs relating to specialist SEND placements, alongside work which was being undertaken to strengthen the understanding of the demand for placements.
- Commented on a refreshed SEND and Inclusion Strategy; a key partnership strategy to support the education, health and care needs of children and young people in Leicestershire with special educational needs and disabilities.

Children in Care and Care Leavers

The Committee received reports on progress achieved against the Department's duties and responsibilities to children in care and care leavers. The Committee:

- Congratulated the Director and the Department on the overall effectiveness of children's services in Leicestershire which had been judged to be Outstanding. Two areas for improvement had been highlighted and the Committee received assurance that an action plan had been developed to address these.
- Raised concern regarding performance data relating to the number of care leavers not in employment, education or training. Members received assurances that the Service would continue to engage with care leavers and undertake work in order to support them with accessing employment, education or training.
- Was assured that there had been a reduction in the weekly unit cost for supporting Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC), despite a significant level of demand and continued financial pressures within the system.
- Raised concerns regarding the cost of providing social care placements, noting that high costs were often a result of the complexities within the cohort of young people taken into care. A large number of children within this cohort required support with behavioural challenges as a result of experienced trauma.
- Was pleased to note that new statutory regulations for the use of agency children and family social workers, published in September 2024, would improve services for children in care and care leavers and go towards addressing the Department's recruitment and retention challenges.
- Received assurances that demand and profile modelling exercises continued to be undertaken in order to regularly assess the need for social care and to develop service provision. The Committee noted that a strategy for increased foster carer provision continued to be a key priority for the Department.
- Welcomed confirmation that four in-house children's homes had been opened across Leicestershire as part of the Children's Innovation Partnership (CIP), in Partnership with Barnardo's.

Safeguarding

The Committee received reports outlining the Department's work to help children live in safe, stable environments and have secure attachments. The Committee:

- Was pleased to note that there was an ongoing commitment to support young people who were victims of any form of Child Criminal Exploitation and that robust partnership working was in place to respond to all referrals.
- Raised concern relating to safeguarding of children who are electively home educated (EHE) and was assured that concerns were investigated as part of the Department's statutory safeguarding duty.
- Received assurances that children becoming subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time had usually experienced periods of improvement and stability between plans. However, factors such as domestic abuse meant that there could be setbacks in such periods of stability. Key work was being undertaken to prevent the risk of children from becoming subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time.

Childcare

The Committee received a report outlining the Council's statutory duties with regards to childcare and an overview of the work being undertaken by the Early Years Inclusion and Childcare Service to support the delivery of the expansion of early education and childcare provision. The Committee:

- Noted that the expansion was in response to Government policy for funded childcare hours to be extended to children of eligible working parents in England from nine months old.
- Received assurances that although there was a risk that a sufficient number of childcare places would not be available in order to meet the demand expected as a result of the expansion of childcare policy, planning had indicated that the Council would meet its statutory duties in line with the policy change.
- Were pleased to note that a contingency fund would be created so that funding could be utilised in order to respond to the financial implications of changes in the number of children taking up the entitlements.
- Raised concern relating to the number of Leicestershire childminders who had left the sector due to increases in provision costs. The Committee were pleased that the Department had support in place for those wishing to enter to profession.

Next year...

The Committee will continue to monitor performance against the Department's safeguarding duties and its responsibilities relating to SEND and inclusion, Children in Care and Care Leavers. It will also receive reports on School Place Planning and Admissions, Homes for Ukraine, and a report relating to the Government's new policy statement Keeping Children Safe and Helping them to Thrive.

The Committee will be interested in reviewing how the Department implements the recommendations and requirements of the forthcoming Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. The Bill aims to make provision regarding a number of key areas relating to children and young people.





Highways and Transport

This Committee scrutinises the Council's highways and transportation services. Full details of the Committee's work can be found on the Council's [website](#).

Flooding

A key area of focus for the Committee has been to monitor work undertaken by the Department to deliver the Flood Risk Management Strategy with particular focus on flood preparedness, response and recovery in the light of recent flooding across the County. The Committee has received a number of questions on this topic from Members of the Public and so requested a detailed presentation regarding the Council's responsibilities and performance. The Committee:

- Emphasised the need to manage public expectations and make clear that the County Council's role as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) was limited as it did not have powers to enforce works to be undertaken by those responsible, nor was it allocated resources to carry out works in default.
- Commented that conducting flood exercises and building flood resilience amongst communities would be critical for the future. The Committee suggested that focus should be given to community engagement to ensure residents themselves were better prepared for future flooding events and in particular took steps to protect their own property.
- Was pleased to hear that the Flood Risk Management Team informally investigated flood events and would seek to address issues in much the same way as was undertaken under the Section 19 process meaning the practical outcome of work undertaken by the Team would be very similar.
- Raised concerns about the impact that increased housing and industrial developments had on flooding, highlighting that the County Council was only a statutory consultee to the planning process and whilst it could suggest mitigating actions, this was ultimately a matter for the local planning authority to determine.
- Commended the work of flood wardens and parish and town councils for the work they did supporting communities both during a flood event but also to promote the need to be better prepared for the future.

Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging

The Committee commented on the Council's Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Strategy and received an update on charging infrastructure projects. The Committee:

- Welcomed funding received from Government to support Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure which supported a pilot launched in the autumn of 2024 which would see up to 100 public charge points consisting of a mix of standard and rapid charge points for Leicestershire.
- Suggested there was a growing need for charging facilities in rural areas and that the prospect of village community charging bases were options that would be welcomed by residents where alternative options might not be appropriate.
- Commented that through the planning process developers should be required to install electric vehicle charging points as standard across all new developments.

Development of the Local Transport Plan (LTP4) 2026 – 2040

The Committee along with Chair and Spokespersons from the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny committee considered and commented on progress to deliver the new Local Transport Plan (LTP4) for 2026-2040 together with the LTP4 Core Document and approach to the development of the full LTP4. The Committee:

- Welcomed the detailed and aspirational Plan, commended its colourful and engaging style and the fact that it would be sufficiently flexible and agile to respond to new technology as this arose.
- Highlighted that whilst the Plan set out the principles for how the County Council wanted people to travel and was not intended to set out an approach to new developments in the County, such detail coming later as the Plan was developed.
- Noted that Phase 3 of the Plan would involve monitoring and reviewing the Plan to see if progress was being made towards the vision of increased walking, cycling and use of public transport.
- Raised concerns regarding the condition of private roads and emphasised the need for developers to ensure this were built to an adequate standard to ensure these could be adopted by the Council.

Bus Services

The Committee looked at the work being carried out to refresh the Leicestershire Bus Service improvement Plan which had been prepared quickly to meet Government requirements. The Committee:

- Commended the cohesive and aspirational approach of the Plan but commented that delivery would be dependent on the level of Government funding available, noting that an estimated £100m would be required to support the ongoing delivery of the full ambitions outlined.
- Commented that the current funding model did not enable long term planning which would be a challenge that needed to be addressed.
- Welcomed the use of Demand Responsive Transport and the anecdotal success stories regarding the pilot with Fox Connect, which gave the flexibility and ability to connect clubs with other social activities that residents would otherwise not have been able to attend.

Network Management

The Committee received a report reviewing activity in the highway by the County Council and other third parties, such as utility companies, and considered the effect this was having on network management. The Committee:

- Raised residents' concerns regarding temporary traffic lights and the length of time some roads remained closed which was frustrating and affected local businesses.
- Noted that there had been a 36% growth in permit applications received by the service and discussed how this affected current resources and the ability for officers to respond in a coordinated way.
- Was pleased to hear how new improved internal processes had been introduced regarding planned works in the highway to ensure these were better controlled and organised but noted emergency works that needed to be carried out at very short notice would always arise from time to time.
- Promoted the one.network website which was a national facility that provided up to date information on all road issues such as closures or delays on the network.

Next Year...

The Committee will continue to monitor performance across the Highways and Transport Department and in particular will be looking at flooding and highway maintenance which are of particular importance to residents.





Environment and Climate Change

This Committee scrutinises Waste Management Services and the Council's green agenda. Full details of the Committee's work can be found on the Council's website.

Medium Term Financial Strategy

In January 2025 the Committee scrutinised the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2025/26 – 2028/29 as it related to Environment and Climate Change. The Committee:

- Discussed the changing environment around waste management and areas where savings could be made despite growth pressures. The Committee highlighted the need for action to limit the long-term impacts of waste on the environment with an ultimate aim of reducing non-recyclable materials.
- Commented on the planned reduction of opening hours at some recycling and household waste sites (RHWS) in the summer. The Committee was reassured that evidence supported the change and showed that sites were used less in the evenings compared to morning usage. However, it emphasised the need to provide clear advice to the public to check the Council's website prior to visiting.
- Shared concerns regarding increasing levels of fly-tipping across the County and suggested that enforcement was the best deterrent meaning work with partner agencies to tackle the problem remained key.

Biodiversity Action Plan

The Committee commented on the draft Biodiversity Duty Plan, making recommendation to the Cabinet for consideration. The Committee:

- Questioned how delivery of the plan would be balanced against delivery of Government targets to increase housebuilding, noting that Local Plans would in future reference Bio Net Gain requirements.
- Highlighted that some issues, such as flooding and biodiversity, were not wholly within the County Council's remit or control, and that it therefore needed to work in partnership to support other organisations and communities to address some of these issues directly.
- Commented on the need to consider the range of measures to improve nature introduced by the Government as a whole and not in isolation, for example measures associated with the Biodiversity Duty Plan needed to be looked at alongside aims to improve water quality, air quality and waste management. The Committee requested that a flow chart showing how biodiversity interacts with other policies is included in all relevant documents to make this clear and help avoid duplication of effort.

Air Quality and Health Partnership Action Plan 2024 - 28

The Committee commented on the Air Quality and Health Partnership Action Plan 2024-28 before this was submitted to the Cabinet for approval. The Committee:

- Was reassured to hear that the Partnership was much stronger than it had been in previous years and was used the monitoring and measuring of air quality data to inform future action so far as resources permitted.
- Welcomed plans to roll-out the 'Wheeze' project run in South Wigston across the County.
- Supported proposals to map the cumulative effect of air quality arising from smaller, local developments to help identify areas of risk of harm to health and where mitigation work could be targeted by the Partnership.
- Welcomed the work taking place with district councils to ensure local plans being developed embedded health impact assessment requirements, including air quality.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

The Committee welcomed a report on the draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy and submitted comments as part of the public consultation on this to the Cabinet for consideration. The Committee:

- Noted that the development of the Strategy had been funded by the Government, and that the County Council had led on this as the designated responsible authority for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.
- Supported the innovative approach that had been taken to make the Strategy interactive which would help encourage participation by the public.
- Welcomed the identification of practical steps that could be taken to make a big difference to the local environment.
-

Environment Strategy and Net Zero Action Plan Reviews

The Committee considered and commented on the draft revised Environment Strategy Action Plan, the 2035 Net Zero Council Action Plan and the 2050 Net Zero Leicestershire Action Plan. The Committee:

- Discussed the need for the Strategy to be consolidated and streamlined in response to budget constraints, narrowing down the list of previous actions which had been criticised for being too detailed.
- Welcomed the change in approach to streamline the number of objectives from over 300 to 55 as part of the efficiency review which the Committee agreed would help officers to better target their activity towards delivery.
- Commented on the need for the objectives to be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relative and time bound) to ensure delivery toward the 2035 and 2050 targets could be properly measured.

Next year...

The Committee will continue to monitor the Council's Environment and Climate Change performance and will consider the option of inviting water companies to a future meeting discuss water quality in rivers and waterways across the County.



Health

This Committee reviews and scrutinises matters relating to the planning, provision, and operation of health services in the County of Leicestershire. Full details of the Committee's work can be found on the Council's [website](#).

Winter Planning 2024/25

The Committee reviewed the plans of the health system to manage pressures in Leicestershire across winter 2024/25. The Committee:

- Requested more detail on the winter plan and initiatives that were in place to increase capacity.
- Welcomed the Pharmacy First service offer of treatment for seven common conditions but queried whether these were being publicised enough to make residents aware of their availability.
- Gained reassurances that people with mental health needs would be directed to where they could receive help during the winter months.

Suicide Prevention

The Committee considered the draft Leicester, Leicestershire Suicide Prevention Strategy 2024 to 2029, submitting comments and amendments to the Cabinet for consideration. The Committee:

- Suggested amendments which were accepted and made to the wording of the priorities within the Strategy to make the priorities clearer.
- Gained assurances that faith groups were being consulted on the Strategy.
- Suggested that rather than just training professionals, family and friends should also be trained on what signs to look for with regards to suicide. The director confirmed that the Strategy could be strengthened in this regard.
- Emphasised that the different services for mental health should complement each other work but not duplicate this.
- Requested a report at a future meeting of the Committee regarding the work being carried out to tackle social isolation and loneliness.

Social isolation and loneliness

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Public Health which provided an overview of the initiatives in place to support social isolation and loneliness in Leicestershire. The Committee:

- Praised the work carried out in communities by Local Area Co-ordinators.
- Discussed which particular types of people were most impacted by loneliness and how to reach out to those people.
- Made suggestions for publicising a toolkit which had been created for tackling loneliness in Leicestershire including raising awareness of the toolkit amongst elected members.

Urgent and Emergency Care offer in Leicestershire

The Committee noted that a large amount of urgent and emergency care services were based in the City of Leicester rather than in the County of Leicestershire and requested a report from the Integrated Care Board regarding what services were available in the wider County. The Committee:

- Gained assurances that population hotspot data was used when planning the locations of urgent and emergency care services.
- Noted the important role the NHS 111 clinical navigation service played.
- Noted that a review was taking place into same day access to health care services and requested more information regarding the review.
- Raised concerns that due to being unable to get appointments at dental practices, patients were presenting at Emergency Departments with urgent dental issues.

Next year...

The Committee intends to look at the long-term plans to cope with demand across the health service and receive updates regarding the work of Public Health.



Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny

Health Overview and Scrutiny members have also taken part in meetings of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Joint Health Scrutiny Committee and considered agenda items relating to the availability of appointments at GP Practices and dental services, recruitment and retention of staff within the health system, and women's health. The Committee:

- Investigated the causes of a critical incident being declared at University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust (UHL) in October 2024, raised concerns that the situation had become critical so early in the winter, and gained some reassurances about the additional interventions which were being put in place to manage demand.
- Received regular updates regarding UHL's Future Hospitals Programme and raised concerns regarding the potential impact the outdated buildings could have on the quality of care for patients and the ability of the Trust to recruit and retain staff. The Committee wrote to the Secretary of State for Health regarding the delays to the New Hospitals Programme.
- Fed into a consultation on the East Midlands Fertility Policy and wrote to the Secretary of State for Health regarding the inconsistency of Fertility Policy across England.

Next year...

Next Year the operation and servicing of the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be managed by Leicester City Council.



Overview and Scrutiny Members

Scrutiny Commission	<u>Michael Mullaney CC (Chairman)</u> <u>Neil Bannister CC</u> <u>Tom Barkley CC</u> <u>Mark Frisby CC</u> <u>Hilary Fryer CC</u> <u>Simon Galton CC</u>	<u>Tony Gillard CC</u> <u>Max Hunt CC</u> <u>Jonathan Morgan CC</u> <u>Rosita Page CC</u> <u>Terry Richardson CC</u>
Adults and Communities	<u>Terry Richardson CC (Chairman)</u> <u>Bill Boulter CC</u> <u>Nick Chapman CC</u> <u>Dr Kevin Feltham CC</u>	<u>Leon Hadji-Nikolaou CC</u> <u>Jewel Miah CC</u> <u>Phil King CC</u>
Children and Families	<u>Hilary Fryer CC (Chairman)</u> <u>Richard Allen CC</u> <u>Fula (Kamal) Ghattoraya CC</u> <u>Leon Hadji-Nikolaou CC</u> <u>Ross Hills CC</u>	<u>Max Hunt CC</u> <u>Sue Jordan CC</u> Canon Carolyn Lewis (Church of England Representative) Robert Martin (Parent Governor)
Highway and Transport	<u>Tony Gillard CC (Chairman)</u> <u>Richard Allen CC</u> <u>David Bill MBE, CC</u> <u>Mark Frisby CC</u>	<u>Amanda Hack CC</u> <u>Keith Merrie MBE CC</u> <u>Les Phillimore CC</u>
Environment and Climate Change	<u>Mark Frisby CC (Chairman)</u> <u>Bill Boulter CC</u> <u>Nick Chapman CC</u> <u>Dan Harrison CC</u>	<u>Max Hunt CC</u> <u>Rosita Page CC</u> <u>Brenda Seaton CC</u>
Health	<u>Jonathan Morgan CC (Chairman)</u> <u>Michael Charlesworth CC</u> <u>Nick Chapman CC</u> <u>Ross Hills CC</u>	<u>Betty Newton CC</u> <u>Trevor Pendleton CC</u> <u>Brenda Seaton CC</u>

The Overview and Scrutiny Team

If you would like to feed into the scrutiny process or suggest a topic for scrutiny's attention, you can get in touch with the Scrutiny Team at democracy@leics.gov.uk.

Alternatively, you can contact the officer that supports a specific Committee as detailed below.

Scrutiny Commission Joanne Twomey Democratic Services Manager Tel: 0116 305 6462 Email: Joanne.twomey@leics.gov.uk	Highway and Transport Aqil Sarang Democratic Services Officer Tel: 0116 305 6844 Email: aqil.sarang@leics.gov.uk
Adults and Communities Angie Smith Democratic Services Officer Tel: 0116 305 0589 Email: angie.smith@leics.gov.uk	Environment and Climate Change Aqil Sarang As above
Children and Families Damien Buckley Democratic Services Officer Tel: 0116 305 0183 Email: Damien.buckley@leics.gov.uk	Health Euan Walters Senior Democratic Services Officer 0116 305 6016 Email: Euan.walters@leics.gov.uk

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 Leicestershire County Council

For further details on the contents of this report please email: democracy@leics.gov.uk