

**Cumberland Council**  
**Overview and Scrutiny**  
**Annual Report**  
**2024-2025**

# Introduction

The Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report reflects on the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees during 2024-25 and looks forward to Overview and Scrutiny activity in 2025-26.

This Annual Report includes the reflections of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairs on the second year of Overview and Scrutiny in Cumberland Council as the council has continued its transition and transformation following local government reorganisation (LGR). This report also includes a summary of Overview and Scrutiny activity over the last year and the positive impacts secured on the council's policy, commissioning, and service delivery.

## Introduction to Overview and Scrutiny

Overview and Scrutiny is a process to ensure that decisions taken by the council reflect the needs and priorities of communities in Cumberland. Scrutiny is carried out by councillors who understand and promote the concerns of the people who elected them, connecting decision makers to local communities.

Overview and Scrutiny is the opportunity to look at the wider implications of decisions, develop policy and provide space to think about the overall strategy of the Council.

Council decisions are made by council officers, by the council's 'Executive' (the political leadership) and by full Council (all Councillors).

Overview and Scrutiny Committees are made up of Non-Executive Councillors who work together, across political groups, to influence key policy development, understand why decisions are made and how the council is performing to deliver the best possible outcomes for Cumberland and its people.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees do not have decision-making powers; their role is to challenge and make recommendations that influence decision makers and hold them to account.

## Overview and Scrutiny in Cumberland Council

Cumberland Council has four Overview and Scrutiny Committees, each focussing on different areas of council responsibility:

- Business and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Each committee has eight members and meets six times a year.

Each year the scrutiny work programme is developed to reflect the Council Plan priorities and functions that fall within each Committee's remit. The process for developing the council's Overview and Scrutiny work programmes is consultative and comprehensive. Initial proposals are influenced by legislation, plans and strategies, performance reports and include engagement with the Executive, partners, officers, and other stakeholders.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees decide which areas they wish to examine. This may arise following representations by members of the public about a particular matter; be an issue identified by councillors themselves; or follow on from reports or performance assessments on the council's activities.

An Executive and Scrutiny Protocol has been developed as a commitment to good practice and good governance between the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny. Both Executive and Overview and Scrutiny have endorsed this protocol, which is published on our website: **[Executive and Scrutiny ethos protocol \(cumberland.gov.uk\)](https://cumberland.gov.uk)**.

The Overview and Scrutiny process provides an opportunity for members of the public and local communities to input their views on any issue.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings are open to the public to attend. Meeting dates, agendas, papers, and minutes are published on the council website - **[Cumberland Council Scrutiny meetings](#)**.

## Overview and Scrutiny activity during 2024-25

### Summary

During 2024-25 Overview and Scrutiny Committees have made significant contributions to the development of strategy and policy on key issues such as health and wellbeing, prevention and early help, economic growth, housing, and social care - supporting robust decision making, stronger policies, and better services across our council.

### Scrutiny activity highlights

#### Preparations for CQC and Ofsted Inspections

Overview and Scrutiny has been a critical friend to Adult Social Care and Housing, and Children and Family Wellbeing services, providing critical insight to support self-assessment and improvement. The Committee required that both Adults and Children's directorates work together on some reports, on key matters such as transitions, promoting better joined up working and collaboration on key issues.

In Children's services, the council received an excellent report from Ofsted, achieving a 'good' rating. The Committee will be continuing to monitor this welcome progress and will be scrutinising improvement plans that have arisen from the inspection process.

#### Scrutiny of Key Council Strategies and Plans

Overview and Scrutiny Members have made significant contributions to support the development and delivery of many of the council's key strategies and plans over the last year.

**Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy** – Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee challenged the draft vision and strategic aims as they were misaligned. As a result, changes were made to the draft Strategy to ensure that the five strategic aims clearly set out how the Council and partners were going to work towards achieving the vision of ending homelessness in Cumberland. Committee Members also identified that there was uncertainty around some of the funding to deliver part of the strategy and highlighted their concerns on this issue to the Executive.

### **Commissioning requirements for 0-19 services** - Health Overview and Scrutiny

Committee looked at the commissioning requirements for 0-19 services, and how the new service would be much more proactive, collect and use data, and target its work to reach those most in need of the service - using face to face meetings alongside digital tools. The Committee also looked at the length of contract and the mix of interest from the pre contract market engagement exercise.

**Budget Strategy 2025-26 and Budget Consultation Report** – Business and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work included how the budget consultation would satisfy the requirement for "meaningful consultation". Key areas of focus were on the budget consultation process and input into both the methods of consultation, and the content of the consultation. The Committee were pleased to see in the consultation, the introduction of an online tool, to help residents better understand the budget process by helping users see how expenditure in one area affects other aspects of the budget. Recommendations were put forward to see further improvements to both the timing of budget information provided to the Committee (to allow time for their views to be considered by Executive) and the methods of consultation, to encourage a wider variety of responses to be sought.

**Overall performance relating to delivery of the Cumberland Council Plan** - This scrutiny work included requesting additional information on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), particularly KPIs which show as constantly red, with detail on what is being done to address the issue, and suggestions for additional KPIs and more of a focus on exception reporting.

### **Task and Finish Activity**

A Task & Finish group has reviewed and made recommendations to improve the Council's approach to recruitment and vacancy management, sickness absence, and related issues – tackling some key workforce challenges. In total the Task and Finish group report had sixteen recommendations which might help improve culture, sickness absence, recruitment, and retention. These recommendations will be considered by Executive in April 2025 and inform the coming year's work programme for the Committee.

## **Case Study - Moot Lodge Call-in Process and Impact**

In August 2024, the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee hosted a formal call-in of a decision to close Moot Lodge, residential care home. The call-in process enabled members of the scrutiny committee to have a closer investigation into the proposed closure of the home through the provision of visits to the care home to assess the conclusions made in the report.

The call-in gave the Committee an opportunity to hear the views of the ward representatives and people affected by the proposed closure and how this will affect their lives. The setting of the call-in meeting allowed the Committee to formally question the Council Leader, the Portfolio Holder, and officers on the reasons for their proposal, to provide them with answers to aid the consideration for the Committee Members.

The lessons learned from this call-in process have been captured and will inform improvements to process for future call-ins. Committee Members recommended, in particular, that the procedure should be changed to enable all the councillors who brought the call-in to have the opportunity to speak within the meeting. The call-in process showed that it is an opportunity to hold the Executive to account in exceptional circumstances.

The impact of the call-in has resulted in the Director of Adult Social Care reviewing his approach to developments relating to future transformation plans. In discussions with the Chair and Vice Chair of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Director is now bringing the Cumberland Care Plan, to the Committee during its development, which allows for question and challenge to be made at an earlier stage.

## **Working with Partners**

Partner engagement is an important aspect of overview and scrutiny. By engaging with partners on issues that are strategically important to the council, Committees can build relationships and advocate council priorities. Overview and Scrutiny Committees have engaged with a range of partners including: Healthwatch, Care Quality Commission (CQC) North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System (ICS), Lancashire and South Cumbria ICS, North West Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust and Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust.

# Scrutiny in numbers

## Active



committee meetings



84

items  
considered

## Pro-active



1

call in



1

site visit



task and finish group

## Chairs' Reflections

Overview and Scrutiny plays an important role in delivering excellent public services and in addressing challenges facing residents and communities across Cumberland, and the Council. Committee members are empowered to offer critical constructive challenge and operate independently, engaging early in policy development on key issues and offering the Executive recommendations and challenge that provoke discussion.

In this section, the Chair of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee outlines the work of the committee over the last year and provide their reflections on the positive impacts made and the emerging focus for their committees over the coming months and years.

### Councillor Joseph Ghayouba, Chair of Business and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

In my report last year, I stated that the priority for the scrutiny committee was to familiarise ourselves with what Cumberland inherited from the legacy councils, we are now a lot more familiar with the scale of the challenge to transform council services and this year our priority has been looking at the progress of the transformation programme and the budgetary challenges we face to deliver it.



Receiving timely budget monitoring reports continues to be a challenge and this is largely down to the numerous IT systems that the finance team are having to use to extract the required information this is placing a significant burden on the finance team. It comes as no surprise this was highlighted by the auditor as an area we need to improve on. Timing of reports continues to be an area for improvement because, whilst scrutiny is not a decision-making body it is good practice for reports to come and for recommendations to then be made to Executive to help inform their decision making. For the forthcoming year this should improve because the sequencing of meetings has been looked at and hopefully will result in this not being as much of an issue.

Cumberland has received EFS (Exceptional Financial Support) to balance the budget this year however to complete the purpose of EFS there needs to be progress on Asset Disposals. This has not progressed as much as we would have liked to see because of the time and effort required to produce a complete and accurate list of assets, again this is due to legacy IT systems and staff retention. The scrutiny committee received a report on the Asset Disposal Strategy and considered a report on asset disposals with a list of some potential assets under consideration for disposal which will help go towards the transformation of services and hopefully save money in the long run.

Progress has been made on receiving reports about IT, the committee has received an informal update on the ICT strategy and there is a formal report due to be presented to scrutiny in May. Without ICT improvements it will be incredibly difficult to fully realise the transformation programme for Cumberland, it underpins every service we deliver. It is also important that Assistant Directors understand that they need to engage with ICT and articulate how their respective processes work and what they need the IT systems to do for their area without that engagement progress will be slower.

Business and Resources had one task and finish group this year which looked at the issues Cumberland has faced in recruitment and retention. This was an important area for the council because we face significant challenges in recruiting staff to key areas such as building control and in areas such as social care. As a result of this we are having to use agency workers at great cost to the council. In total the task and finish group report had sixteen recommendations which might help improve culture, sickness absence, recruitment and retention. I would like to thank Cllrs Patrick, Thurlow, Pegram, and Davison for their input which was invaluable to the process and the diligent work of officers ensured the committee spoke to the right people and were presented with pertinent information for their task.

Next year is a crucial year for Cumberland Council with devolution on the horizon and the pressing need for the council to transform the way it delivers services for residents. Like a lot of councils up and down the country we face financial difficulties due to an increased demand on services and LGR has added to that pressure, transformation needs to happen sooner rather than later.

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2024-25 include:

- Asset Management Strategy and Plan.
- Capital Investment Strategy.
- Customer Pre-Front Door and Front Door Programme and Pilot Community Hubs.
- Quarterly Performance Reports.
- Transformation Programme.
- Budget Monitoring Reports.
- ICT Strategy and Digital Transformation.
- Outturn Reports.
- Budget Strategic Timeline Presentation.
- Fleet Strategy.
- Asset Strategy and Delivery Plan.
- Contract Management Process for the Healthy Child.
- Budget Strategy 2025-26.
- Budget Consultation Report.
- Finance Report.
- Budget Consultation Response Summary.
- People and Culture Task & Finish Group Report.
- Review of Draft Land and Property Disposals Policy.
- Cumberland Asset Disposal Programme.
- Procurement Policy.
- Community Hubs To consider the findings of the community hubs trials.
- Outside Bodies.
- Devolution.

## Councillor Carni McCarron-Holmes, Chair of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The last year, the council's second since its creation in April 2023, has been an exciting one for scrutiny as we have started to make a significant impact on the development of the Council's plans for the future and also have a focus on delivery of services.

The Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a huge remit – covering economic growth, communities, housing, transport, the environment, and regeneration. We recognise that all these areas have very direct impacts on the lives of all Cumberland's residents. As a committee, we are prioritising our activity on where we can make the biggest impact on the issues that are most important to communities across the council area.

Over the last 12 months, we have focused on influencing key policy areas, including having early engagement on the emerging Cumberland Economic Strategy. The Committee emphasised the role of improving transport to grow the economy and enable people to move into well paid jobs and access education, training, and other services.

As a council we put health and wellbeing at the centre of everything we do, and so the Committee was really pleased to be able to input into the development of the council's strategic active wellbeing framework and to engage with the review of the Council's approach to leisure services.

Another area of focus for the committee has been on a range of housing issues. I have been to Executive meetings to present the Committee's findings in relation to the draft Local Plan for St. Cuthbert's Garden Village, and the council's draft Housing Adaptations and Assistance Policy. The first one of these is a significant project for the Cumberland area which will bring new housing and infrastructure to the outskirts of Carlisle. In its support for the work done to date on the Local Plan and the project, Members were keen to emphasise the importance of ensuring new housing is high quality and designed to meet the needs of our communities, and that we recognise that a development of this scale should create a new community with all the necessary community infrastructure, service and support in place that builds strong communities.

In presenting the committee's findings in support of the ambitions of the council's Housing Adaptations and Assistance Policy I highlighted the vital importance of the effective and efficient delivery of adaptations through Disabled Facilities Grants and other support to those who need them. This issue, and the Committee's input into the Council's new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, are so important to support some of the most vulnerable people in our communities, and the Committee has committed to ensuring review of delivery of these critical plans features in our work programme for the coming year and beyond.

Housing and transport will remain high on the Committee's agenda throughout 2025/26, along with issues such as coastal erosion and flooding, and community safety.



## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2024-25 include:

- St Cuthbert's Garden Village Project Update.
- Cumberland Local Plan Update.
- Community Panels and Associated Activity.
- Cumberland Community Safety Partnership, Monitoring and Reporting.
- Leisure Review and Active Wellbeing Strategy.
- Developing an Economic Strategy for Cumberland.
- Tourism in Cumberland - Improving accessibility/inclusivity of tourism offer and developing partnerships.
- Inward Investment.
- Scope for Public Transport Workshop.
- Cumberland Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 - 2030.
- St Cuthbert's Garden Village Local Plan Regulation 19 Draft.
- Regeneration Programme and Pipeline Update.

## Councillor Jeanette Whalen, Chair of People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The People Committee oversees Children and Family Wellbeing Services and Adult Social Care.

The Committee has spent time this year focusing on how the two departments have been preparing for their inaugural inspections under the Office for Standards in Education framework for inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) and Care Quality Commission (CQC).



The Committee recognise how difficult it has been to split these services from the old County Council and to have built new services, with new senior management since the council was first incorporated on 1st April 2023.

In Children's services, the council received an excellent report from Ofsted, achieving a 'good' rating. The former Cumbria County Council had been rated as 'inadequate' in Children's services in 2012, 2013 and 2015. In 2018 it had begun its improvement journey and was rated as 'requires improvement'. The Committee will be continuing to monitor this welcome progress and will be scrutinising development plans and action plan activities that have arisen from the inspection process. In Adult Social Care Services, the CQC is yet to complete their inspection, though the pre inspection process is now underway.

In August, People Scrutiny hosted a formal call-in of a decision to close Moot Lodge, residential care home. This enabled the Committee to review the decision of the Executive and hear from ward representatives, officers and the Council Leader on the background and issues relating to the proposed decision.

In December the Committee made a formal reference to the Executive to review the staffing levels of Elective Home Education officers to match the Department of Education expected levels to help meet the demands of the service. The Executive welcomed the recommendation from Scrutiny and noted that staffing levels were the responsibility of the Head of Paid Services. It resolved "That the Executive referred the recommendation from the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 December 2024 to the Senior Leadership Team for their consideration".

The Committee arranged for informal briefings on migration support and home to school travel. These issues have been followed up in committee meetings and the transformation programme for school transport is being heard as a full Committee item in May 2025.

The Committee is very keen to ensure that it listens and hears from community voices and values its statutory members from the education sector. The Committee is currently seeking a youth representative to ensure the Committee hear these important voices.

The Committee plan to develop its approach to Scrutiny in the next year by introducing a session with portfolio holders to focus on their Executive role and their priorities. The Committee is also organising a number of visits to see policy in action.

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2024-25 include:

- CQC Inspection and LGA Peer Review.
- Inspection, Preparation and Improvement.
- Inspection Improvement Plan including Peer Review Feedback.
- Early Help and Prevention.
- Educational Attainment.
- Children Missing Education & Elective Home Education.
- ILACS Report Update.
- All Age Carers.
- Update on Transition and Preparations for Adulthood in Cumberland.
- Co-production in Adult Social Care.
- Technology Enabled Care.

## Councillor Gillian Troughton, Chair of Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee has oversight of all parts of the NHS and the Council's Public Health Directorate. This aligns with the Council's principal commitment to 'put health and well-being at the centre of everything we do'.

The majority of Cumberland is served by the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System (ICS); the area in the very south of Cumberland surrounding Millom is served by the Lancashire and South Cumbria ICS.



This report marks two years of Health Scrutiny in the new unitary authority of Cumberland Council. The body of work undertaken by the Committee is now considerable with good working relationships built up by the Committee with NHS Trusts and the each of the NHS Care Systems.

Last year the Committee expressed its concern for mental health issues and services and was pleased that remote provision of a consultant psychiatrist was being trialled at the Whitehaven site operated by Cumbria, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear NHS Trust (CNTW) which delivers mental health services to Cumberland. That concern has been taken forward by the Committee this year with the scrutiny of proposals for reconfiguring the secure mental health ward provision. This means the closure of Yewdale in Whitehaven and the consolidation of services at Carlisle. While the proposals have a clear rationale behind them based on staff availability, safety, and quality of service provision - Councillors expressed significant reservations around the effective withdrawal of services in the West of Cumbria and the need to travel for secure mental health in patient provision. The impact on both patients and friends and family and their ability to support the patient is impacted when the nearest provision is moved 40 miles away.

The Committee scrutinised the Quality Accounts of North Cumbria Integrated Care Trust, Cumbria, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear NHS Trust, North West Ambulance Service and Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust. Not all of these were received within the expected statutory timescales and were of varying quality in terms of the narrative thread and the pathways to improvement. The Committee gave responses to all Trusts along with some feedback on the format of their accounts and an offer to be engaged at an earlier stage.

The Committee recalled the North East and North Cumbria ICB because it was concerned that its initial response to the Dentistry Report was not acceptable. A revised presentation and discussion took place in May which the Committee felt answered more of the pressing issues raised. The Committee has agreed to relook at dentistry as part of a work plan item looking at disparities in health provision during 2025/26 municipal year.

At its July meeting the Committee considered reports looking at cancer services provided by NCIC and the commissioning of 0-19 health services by the council. Councillors were reassured by the approaches outlined, especially in regard to improvements in meeting targets and tracking of service users. The 0-19 contract was awarded to Harrogate NHS Foundation Trust and commenced on 1 April, the Committee plan to monitor how the service transitions to the new provider and improves the quality of service, tracking of data and integration with the wider NHS, council and education providers.

Because Cumberland Council's corporate mission is to 'put health and well-being at the centre of everything we do' the Committee looked at this to understand how the council was embedding this in how it operates and the influence this mission has on the council's 'business as usual', alongside this the Committee looked at the work that the Health Determinates Research Collaborative has undertaken in its first year of its three year programme.

At its March meeting the Committee took a report on the Sellafield off site emergency plan and response. This is of vital importance to residents and the nation given the importance of this site to the nation's future and the management of its legacy nuclear programme. The Committee resolved to look at the wider issues of emergency planning and to monitor how the replacement emergency response communications system operates in the rural and coastal context of Cumberland.

Healthwatch has been invited to every meeting of the Committee because of their important statutory role as local health champions, commissioned to undertake this important work by Cumberland Council, and has been fully engaged during the year offering a useful additional viewpoint.

The Committee has worked extensively outside of the formal meetings to develop a coherent, proactive work programme, as well as undertaking several briefings and a site visit to improve and inform the scrutiny process.

## Reports and presentations scrutinised during 2024-25 include:

- Update on Dentistry.
- NHS Quality Accounts 2024.
- Committee Update Report.
- 0-19 Healthy Child Programme - Developing the Updated Model.
- NCIC Cancer Services.
- Feedback from Deputy Chief Medical Officer (DCMO) - Dr Jeanelle De Gruchy (Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)/Office of Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID)) on her visit to Cumberland.
- Behind the Addiction Report.
- Re-Commissioning of Cumberland Addictions Services.
- Achieving our aim of 'Health and wellbeing is at the heart of everything we do': Update Report on Health and Wellbeing at the Heart Delivery Plan for End of First 6-12 Months.
- Tackling Smoking Addictions Through: Delivery of a Tobacco Dependence.
- Improvement Programme and a Campaign to Highlight the Dangers of General Vape Usage.
- Developing a Strategic Action Plan for Suicide Prevention.
- Re-Commissioning of Cumberland Addictions Services Engagement Update.
- Cumberland Health Determinants Research Collaboration Progress Report.
- Mental Health Services in West Cumbria.
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
- Recommissioning of Integrated Sexual Health Services.
- Sellafield Off-Site Emergency Plan/Response.

## Other Local Scrutiny Activity

There are also joint scrutiny arrangements put in place between Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness Councils for:

- Joint Scrutiny Committee for Hosted Services.
- Police, Fire and Crime.

## Councillor Bill Pegram, Joint Chair of Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee is made up of Members from Westmorland & Furness and Cumberland Councils. With the Chair and hosting responsibilities rotating between the two councils every six months. For the last six months I have been Chair of Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which has been a steep learning curve from a standing start while still learning about the services being scrutinised. I'm thankful for having the support of my colleagues from both councils to help to support the Committee conduct effective scrutiny.



The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme has been structured to help scrutinise future disaggregation to get the best results for our residents. For 2024/25, topics the Committee have covered include:

- HR Payroll Systems.
- Hosted Waste Disposal Contract and Service and Waste Inter Authority Agreement.
- Enterprise Cumbria - Cumbria Economic Growth Strategy.
- Children's Care Services.
- Long Term Hosted Services.

One of the other topics discussed was the disaggregation of the ICT Systems and Cyber Security and how complex of an issue it was, not only to disaggregate between the two councils but also to ensure that the Cyber Security in place was effective. To help ensure this, Cumberland Councillors received training and the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested that further training take place for those who were unable to attend, which the Assistant Director of Digital Innovations and ICT and her officers agreed to facilitate. The Committee acknowledged that the complex nature of the issues surrounding ICT made delays understandable but commented that they would remain vigilant to ensure effective scrutiny still remained possible.

It should be noted that a few Members have raised concerns regarding the time constraints for receiving up to date information and reports in a timely manner that allow for effective scrutiny. However, I'm happy to say that this issue is now being partially addressed through setting up relevant workshops to allow for the Committee to have input where appropriate and detailed discussions around issues.

I would also like to commend officers for their work on the disaggregation of services considering not only the number of services which have already been disaggregated but also the number which have been disaggregated ahead of schedule.

We are still working on our work programme for 2025/26 but a large bit of work moving forward will be the impact had on long-term hosted services and disaggregation following the Devolution White Paper. It will have an impact, not only on the Committee's work, but also both councils as a whole. But, with Joint Overview and Scrutiny is in such a healthy position, it is a challenge that I believe the Committee is up to scrutinising and working together on ensuring Cumbria as a whole receives the best services possible for residents.

## Cumbria Police, Fire and Crime Panel

The Cumbria Police, Fire and Crime Panel was established to scrutinise and support the work of the Commissioner and is one of the key checks and balances in relation to monitoring their performance.

The Panel is made up of 10 councillors and 2 independent co-opted members. The councillors are appointed on a yearly basis by Westmorland and Furness Council and Cumberland Council. The two independent co-opted members are appointed for a term of four years.

Key responsibilities of the Panel are to:

- Review the draft Police and Crime plan.
- Review the draft Fire and Rescue plan.
- Publicly scrutinise the Commissioner's annual report.
- Review and scrutinise decisions and actions by the Commissioner.
- Review the Commissioner's proposed precept levels.
- Review the Commissioner's Conduct.
- Review and confirm the Commissioner's proposed appointments of Chief Constable, Chief Fire Officer, Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer, and Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Panel meets at locations across Cumbria, four times a year. Meeting details and minutes can be accessed via this link: [meetings portal](#).

## Overview and Scrutiny Development

During its second year as a new council there has continued to be significant organisational developments and challenges. A focus on continuous improvement of Overview and Scrutiny, and further development and support to Members in further developing their scrutiny skills, continues to be a high priority.

Members have completed a range of training and development activities over the last year, including:

- An externally facilitated session for all Members on the role of Overview and Scrutiny and the development of Scrutiny skills including, in particular, questioning skills and development of impactful recommendations;
- An externally facilitated session for Overview and Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs on chairing skills and an opportunity to reflect on achievements so far and the future development of Overview and Scrutiny in Cumberland;

- Commissioned financial and budget scrutiny training;
- Three Introduction to Scrutiny (induction/ refresher) training sessions held via Microsoft Teams for all Members, led by the Strategy and Policy Team; and,
- Cyber Security training for members of the Joint Scrutiny Committee for Hosted Services.

In addition, the officers supporting the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees undertook some awareness-raising and learning activity on the role of Overview and Scrutiny with senior officers across all directorates within the council over the summer.

The outcomes of a number of these sessions were used to inform the further development of the Overview and Scrutiny Development Plan, focused around three themes:

- Executive engagement, and engagement of senior officers.
- Promotion and communications.
- Improving the effectiveness of Scrutiny.

Throughout the year, the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees have collectively maintained a regular overview of the Development Plan for Overview and Scrutiny and the combined Work Programmes of the committees. The Chair of the Council's Audit and Risk Committee also joins Chairs and Vice Chairs for these informal meetings to ensure linkages on issues of focus to both Overview and Scrutiny and Audit are identified.

## Future Planning - Overview and Scrutiny in 2025-26

Members of Overview and Scrutiny will continue to further strengthen their role in the Council's strategic planning, performance and budget management, the delivery of the Council's vital transformation programme and associated savings, and delivery of services to all our communities. Cross cutting themes including transport, finance, mental health, and the disaggregation of the Council's ICT Systems, will remain an important focus, along with the evolving devolution implications.

Enhancing the relationship between Overview and Scrutiny and the Executive, and ensuring the views of residents, communities and other stakeholders inform decision-making and scrutiny, will be vital in ensuring the value and impact of the scrutiny function and its ability to support delivery of council priorities and services. A review and refresh of the Overview and Scrutiny/Executive Protocol will be carried out – with a Task and Finish group established to undertake this work. This review will aim to:

- Ensure appropriate Executive input into Overview and Scrutiny work programming.
- Clarify Overview and Scrutiny input when items are placed on the Executive Forward Plan.
- Clarify and improve the process for making reports and recommendations to Executive, and Executive responses.
- Emphasise the importance of Overview and Scrutiny Members being able to question Portfolio Holders.
- Incorporate learning from recent Call-In processes.
- Ensure joint training for Overview and Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs and Executive Members is put in place.

- Ensure Overview and Scrutiny Committees receive customer and residents' views on service delivery.

There are challenges and opportunities facing Cumberland Council over the next months and years such as the continued work to establish and transform a new council, the disaggregation of hosted services, financial and budgetary challenges, and devolution on the horizon. The next year will be another exciting, challenging, and busy one for Overview and Scrutiny Members, exploring the big challenges and opportunities facing Cumberland and informing some of the big decisions facing the council.

## Overview and Scrutiny Team

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny function is supported by the Strategy and Policy Team and the Democratic services team working together to provide Overview and Scrutiny Committees with the support they need.

Each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees has a named lead officer to provide support to them. These are:

- Business and Resources Scrutiny Committee: Ian Hinde, Policy and Scrutiny Adviser, [Ian.Hinde@Cumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Ian.Hinde@Cumberland.gov.uk)
- Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Timothy Godfrey, Policy and Scrutiny Adviser, [Timothy.Godfrey@Cumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Timothy.Godfrey@Cumberland.gov.uk)
- People Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Abigail Roberts, Policy and Scrutiny Adviser, [Abigail.Roberts@Cumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Abigail.Roberts@Cumberland.gov.uk)
- Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Clare Killeen, Strategic Policy and Scrutiny Manager, [Clare.Killeen@Cumberland.gov.uk](mailto:Clare.Killeen@Cumberland.gov.uk)