

Scrutiny at Leeds City Council

Annual Report 2014/15



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Welcome

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all members involved in the scrutiny process for their time, effort and dedication over the past 12 months.

However, we need to recognise that Leeds City Council continues to experience huge change. The way in which we design and deliver services requires reappraisal. As a council we look and feel differently than we did even three years ago. Decisions the Council makes need to be made well, with full knowledge of the impact such decisions are likely to have on our communities. The scrutiny function provides a means to ensure all elected members have a clear role in this process. I am therefore very pleased to present the 2014-15 Scrutiny Annual Report, which summarises key work undertaken by the Council's seven scrutiny boards over the last year in driving our ambitions, as well as holding decision makers to account.

Added value in particular is gained through pre-decision scrutiny. Scrutiny is a valuable sounding board for new policy initiatives and there are some key examples set out within this annual report. This area of work needs to be further encouraged and in doing so, it will require senior politicians and officers to plan ahead and give ample time and opportunity for scrutiny involvement. Scrutiny board members on their part need to continue to seize the opportunity to focus on those areas where they can have an influence and make a difference.

Whilst it is evident that scrutiny is becoming more and more relied upon to provide robust, evidence-based challenge to service delivery and performance, the scrutiny function itself has not been exempt from the budgetary pressures being faced by the Council. The growing expectations placed upon scrutiny will need to be balanced against reduced levels of available support. Nonetheless, I am confident the scrutiny function in Leeds will continue to seek assurance that risks are being appropriately managed and public funding is being spent effectively.

On the national scene, Leeds scrutiny continues to shine. In October 2014, the Centre for Public Scrutiny published a policy briefing document on the national and local policy landscape around domestic violence and acknowledged the in-depth scrutiny inquiry undertaken by the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board. In March 2015, Ofsted also formally acknowledged the role of Scrutiny in Leeds, stating *'Scrutiny activity and oversight of children's services is impressive, with strong prioritisation and a comprehensive understanding of the needs of children, young people and their families. Robust challenge is achieved through a range of pertinent inquiries and a strong corporate parenting ethos that extends beyond looked after children'*.

As in previous reports to Council, key development areas for scrutiny are also highlighted in this report and as the responsible Executive Member, I am committed to support the future development of scrutiny in Leeds.



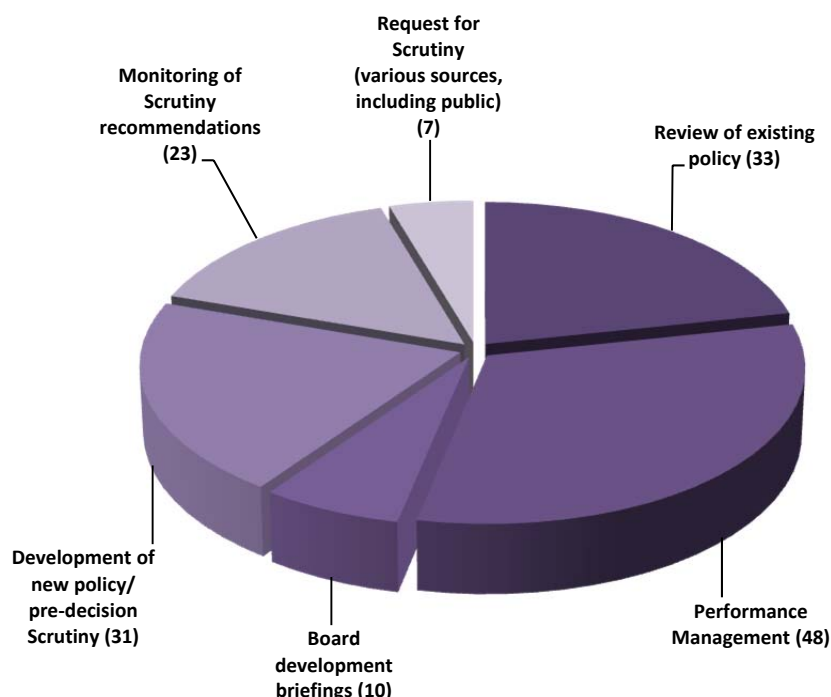
Councillor James Lewis
Executive Member for Resources and Strategy

**Find out more at www.leeds.gov.uk/scrutiny and follow Scrutiny on
Twitter: @scrutinyleeds**

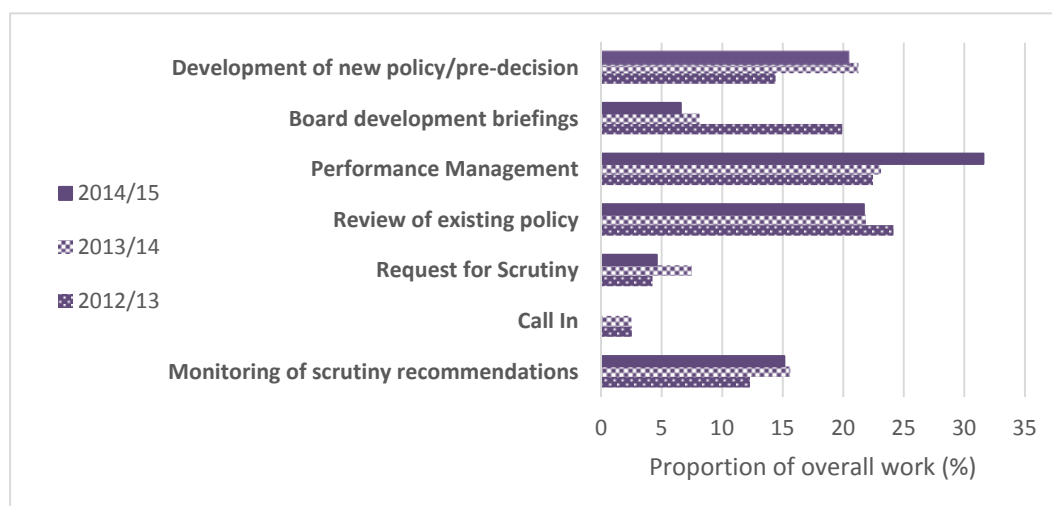
Summary of work 2014/15

The charts below highlight the type and proportion of work that the Scrutiny Boards have done this year and trends over the last 3 years.

Type and total number of scrutiny work items in 2014/15



Scrutiny work items 2012 - 2015








Key Observations

- There has been an increasing trend in the number of performance management work items, with a significant increase during 2014/15.
- Board development briefings have continued to reduce.
- There has been a slight reduction in the number of work items relating to pre-decision scrutiny during 2014/15.
- No Executive Board or delegated officer decisions were Called In during 2014/15.

Highlights and Achievements

A summary of the significant pieces of work undertaken by scrutiny over the last 12 months is presented below, including relevant links to published reports by Scrutiny. This snapshot identifies where Scrutiny has specifically added value linked to existing Best Council Objectives.

Best Council Objective	Areas of Scrutiny	Added Value/Impact
Building a child-friendly city	Learning Improvement Service (Children and Families Scrutiny Board) Report to be published during 2015/16	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessed the impact and value of the Learning Improvement Service in raising educational standards in the city and narrowing the attainment gap, particularly in early years. Engaged directly with education practitioners and governors to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the service, which helped inform improvements.
	Kinship Care (Children and Families Scrutiny Board) Report to be published during 2015/16	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluated the Kinship Care Services in relation to carers, children and young people. Ensured that sufficient support and intervention measures are being implemented so children can be safely cared for in the wider family network, therefore preventing children from entering care.
	Children and Young People's Plan 2015-2019 (Children and Families Scrutiny Board)	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informed the new Children and Young People's Plan. In particular, the following key indicators/priorities are included in the Plan which the Scrutiny Board recommended: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ reducing the attainment gap in Leeds, in particular for disadvantaged children ➤ improving child and adolescent mental health support.
	Provision of Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Services for children and young people in Leeds (Health and Wellbeing and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board) Report agreed in May 2015 and published in June 2015 (Click here for the Scrutiny report)	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively engaged service commissioners, providers and service users to help identify weaknesses and strengths across TaMHS services and CAMHS. This helped inform recommended actions for improvement, particularly around accessibility of these services. Strengthened links with HealthWatch Leeds (HWL) as the Scrutiny Board commissioned HWL to undertake some stakeholder engagement work to help inform this inquiry. Provided robust challenge to proposals set by the Integrated Commissioning Executive in light of concerns raised during the inquiry. Involved the Chair of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board, which allowed both Boards to share common issues and also identified links with the scrutiny review of Kinship Care.
	Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) (Children and Families Scrutiny Board) Ongoing work	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working collaboratively with relevant directorates and partners, including the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board, to consider issues raised by the recent Rotherham report to ensure proactive action is being taken by the Council and its partners in response.

Best Council Objective

Delivery of the Better Lives programme

Areas of Scrutiny

Added Value/Impact

Future of Homecare Services

(Health and Wellbeing and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board)

Statement of scrutiny findings published in April 2015
([Click here for Scrutiny statement](#))

Leeds Maternity Services Strategy

(Health and Wellbeing and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board)

Specialised Services

(Health and Wellbeing and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board)

Children's Epilepsy Surgery Services

(Health and Wellbeing and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board)

Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust

(Health and Wellbeing and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board)
Ongoing work



- Conducted pre-decision scrutiny to inform a new design model for home care services.
- Sought clarification and assurance from the Executive Board surrounding particular areas of concern that reflected views shared with scrutiny by private providers and service users.



- Conducted pre-decision scrutiny, engaging with commissioners and providers of Children and Maternity Services in the development of a 5-year Maternity Services Strategy for Leeds that will inform future commissioning plans and decisions.



- Provided challenge to NHS England in view of concerns expressed by scrutiny about its 30-day consultation (launched on 24 March 2015) in relation to proposed changes/ additions to a number of specific specialised commissioning policy, service specifications and commissioning products. These concerns related to the following:
 - Limitations in NHS England's approach to involving and engaging a wide range of stakeholders in relation to specialised services – including local authority health scrutiny.
 - NHS England's reliance on a web-based approach to public consultation.
 - The lack of any clear 'impact assessments' to help facilitate wider public participation in the consultation process.
 - Significant concern regarding the length of the consultation period.



- Engaged with Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust and the North East England Paediatric Neuroscience Network in responding to NHS England's proposals on proposed changes to the specification for Children's Epilepsy Surgery Services (CESS).
- Challenged NHS England generally on the consultation process, but specifically on the proposals in light of the following concerns expressed by scrutiny:
 - The future sustainability of the North East Network without a designated CESS centre.
 - A lack of clear evidence to support any improved outcomes within CESS centres.
 - Concern that there was insufficient information available to enable the Scrutiny Board to make a fully informed consultation response.



- Proactively responded to a request for scrutiny by Unite the Union in relation to potential risks to patients being created by the Board of the Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust (YAS). As such, Scrutiny provided robust challenge regarding the transparency of the Trust's current accountability and assurance processes/ arrangements.
- Continued monitoring and overview in the development of performance improvement plans developed by YAS and each of the organisations with a commissioning and oversight role.

Best Council
Objective

Promoting
sustainable
& inclusive
economic
growth

Areas of Scrutiny

Added Value/Impact

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

(Sustainable Economy and Culture Scrutiny Board)

Scrutiny comments reflected in appendix 2 of the report to Executive Board in February 2015 ([Click here for Scrutiny comments](#))



- Conducted pre-decision scrutiny to inform proposals for Strategic and Neighbourhood Spending of the CIL. This involved the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board Chair.
- Recommended action to ensure sufficient resources to Community Communities in carrying out their functions in relation to the CIL, which was endorsed by Executive Board.

Leeds Grand Theatre

(Sustainable Economy and Culture Scrutiny Board)

Scrutiny comments reflected in appendix C of the report to Executive Board in February 2015 ([Click here for Scrutiny comments](#))



- Responded proactively to a request by the Executive Board for Scrutiny to have an input into the commissioned review of the most appropriate future management and governance arrangements for the Leeds Grand Theatre and Opera House Trust Ltd (LGTOH).
- Made recommendations for the Executive Board to take into account when considering the findings of the commissioned review, which were welcomed and accepted.

Arts@Leeds Scheme

(Sustainable Economy and Culture Scrutiny Board)

Comments published February 2015 ([Click here for Scrutiny comments](#))



- Conducted pre-decision scrutiny to inform the allocation for the next 3 year Arts@Leeds grants 2015-18.
- Identified a particular need to use key performance indicators to publicise and articulate more clearly the benefits and monitoring arrangements linked to these grants.

Employment and Skills

(Sustainable Economy and Culture Scrutiny Board)



- Worked in conjunction with a wide range of directorates and Jobcentre Plus towards achieving a shared understanding of the implications and opportunities created by the shift to digital services to support jobseekers and actions required by the Council.
- Visited a Digital Jobcentre and a Community Hub to engage directly with staff and service users to help inform improvements around the better use of data and resources.
- Informed emerging proposals for the target priority group(s) and the development of a proposed programme of support.

Housing Mix

(Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board)
Ongoing work



- Responded to a request for scrutiny from a former co-opted member of the Scrutiny Board to examine the adequacy of responses linked to the previous scrutiny inquiry in 2011 on housing growth.
- Agreed to broaden this further and, with representation from the Sustainable Economy and Culture Scrutiny Board.

Best Council Objective

Becoming a more efficient and enterprising council

Areas of Scrutiny

Added Value/Impact

Off Contract Spend and Waivers (Resources and Council Services Scrutiny Board)



- Ensured progress is maintained in implementing the new Contracts Procedure Rules and other Effective Procurement documentation.
- Worked with Procurement to identify efficiency measures to reduce off-contract spend and improve contract planning to address unplanned extensions or waivers of contracts.

The role of Police Community Support Officers linked to local integrated partnership working (Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board)



- Expanded on the scrutiny work undertaken last year on the role of PCSOs to assist Safer Leeds, in conjunction with relevant directorates, with the ongoing development of more integrated working between West Yorkshire Police and a range of locality based services to help deliver improved outcomes for local people.

Citizens Advice Bureau provision (Resources and Council Services Scrutiny Board)



- Reviewed the decision made by the Leeds Active Consortium regarding the future provision of CAB offices in Leeds and the plans for future advice provision.

Asset Management (Sustainable Economy and Culture Scrutiny Board)



- Assessed the current progress and future activity linked to the Council's asset management rationalisation programme.
- Worked closely with the Chair of the Resources and Council Services Scrutiny Board due to the importance of this issue to the Council's overall financial strategy.
- Informed the new Asset Management Plan 2014-2017 prior to its formal approval by Executive Board on 15th October 2014.

District Heating (Sustainable Economy and Culture Scrutiny Board)



- Informed the Council's plans in developing an ambitious city wide district heating network. This involved the Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board.
- Pressed for interim action to be taken in relation to ongoing problems experienced by some residents at Saxton Gardens with the existing district heating scheme.
- Pursued further details surrounding actions and proposals to maximise the jobs and skills opportunities from this project.

Area based delegations (Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board) Ongoing work








- Working in conjunction with the Citizens and Communities directorate to explore viable options for future based delegations to Community Committees, with specific focus to service areas within the Environment and Housing and City Development directorates.

Commissioning and Contract Management (Resources and Council Services Scrutiny Board)



- Acted as 'critical friend' in the ongoing development of an integrated people's commissioning service.

Best Council Objective	Areas of Scrutiny	Added Value/Impact
Supporting communities and tackling poverty	Annual Tenancy Visits (Tenant Scrutiny Board) Inquiry report published April 2015 (Click here for scrutiny report)	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted an in-depth assessment of the current arrangements for annual tenancy visits, which involved primary research to gauge the views of housing managers, front line officers and tenants. The Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board was also consulted. • Identified actions to increase service efficiencies and improve tenant/landlord relations. • Pressed for a development programme for the introduction of mobile technology in housing management.
	Contents insurance for Council tenants (Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board)	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessed the benefits of the Tenant Home Content Insurance Scheme to the Council and tenants. • Specified a need to design a marketing package to increase the take up of contents insurance.
	Leeds Housing Standard (Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board) Scrutiny comments were reflected in appendix 4 of the report to Executive Board in September 2014 (Click here for Scrutiny comments)	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducted pre-decision scrutiny to inform the development of a new Leeds Housing Standard. • Specified and ensured that the explanatory memorandum linked to the Leeds Housing Standard provided greater clarity to developers of the highways standards set out in the Council's Street Design Guide. • Flagged the need for further initiatives to achieve greater efficiency and to speed up the decision making process, especially for housing development proposals
	Council Tax Relief Scheme (Resources and Council Services Scrutiny Board)	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed proposals to change the Local Council Tax Support Scheme from April 2015, with the following key points raised by scrutiny: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Pressed for any savings in the support scheme budget, accrued through none payment as a result of a claimant not engaging with the council, to be diverted into specific job seeking support initiatives; ➢ Ensuring the effective development of the impact assessment for the scheme; ➢ Identified a need to introduce a hardship fund into the proposed scheme; ➢ The need to ensure that the Jobs and Skills section has the capacity and resources to fulfil its part of the proposed scheme.
	Housing Leeds Rent Collection (Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board)	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessed the number of tenants in 'technical arrears' and informed proposals to minimise the impact of arrears, particularly in relation to tenants accessing credit. • Pressed for an improved format for reporting arrears performance data.

Best Council
Objective

Dealing
effectively
with the
city's waste

Areas of Scrutiny

Peckfield Landfill Site

(Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board)
Report published April 2015 [\(Click here for scrutiny report\)](#)



- Pursued a public request for Scrutiny surrounding a longstanding and sensitive matter.
- Worked closely with the Environment Agency to build on the existing partnership approach with the Council, which has led to greater commitment from the Peckfield landfill operator to undertake more proactive management measures.
- Engaged in dialogue with the Peckfield Landfill Community Liaison Committee and the landfill operator to improve future communications with local residents.
- Recommended action to strengthen the general role of Community Liaison Committees.
- Identified the need to develop an 'Out of Hours Protocol' for the Peckfield landfill site.

**Recycling options for households not
receiving alternate weekly collections**

(Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board)



- Worked in conjunction with Waste Management to inform the early stages of developing an alternative 'menu' of recycling options for households considered unsuitable for AWC.
- Engaged the Leeds High Rise Tenants Group in considering options to help overcome the specific challenges faced by high rise properties in relation to recycling.

Reflecting on the Year

Last year we identified a number of key action areas to help develop the scrutiny function. Progress made in delivering these key actions is summarised below.

As highlighted in this report, there have been numerous pieces of work this year involving collaborative working between Scrutiny Boards. These include:

- Leeds Housing Standard
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Asset Management
- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Housing Mix
- Emotional Well-being and Mental Health of Children and Young People
- District heating
- Annual Tenancy Visits

Below are examples of methods used this year to demonstrate the added value brought by scrutiny:

- Informed national policy briefings by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (Domestic Violence)
- Showcased scrutiny reports at conferences led by the Council (Domestic Violence and Cluster Partnerships)
- Promoted as exemplar pieces of work to help partners encourage wider local authority scrutiny involvement (tackling illegal money lending)
- Informed Member training seminars (tackling illegal money lending)
- Formally recognised by Ofsted as part of its inspection report (general work of the Children and families Scrutiny Board)
- Worked collaboratively with external consultants (Leeds Grand Theatre)

Key Action Areas for 2014/15

1. Explore more opportunities for Scrutiny Boards to work collaboratively in undertaking reviews of a cross-cutting nature.
2. Encourage the proactive use of social media in the work of the Scrutiny Boards.
3. Explore effective methods to help demonstrate the added value gained from the work of the Scrutiny Boards throughout the year.
4. Continue to support and develop the Tenant Scrutiny Board
5. Develop close working relationships with Community Committees

The Scrutiny Unit's Twitter account @scrutinyleeds continues to be actively utilised in promoting work undertaken by Scrutiny and has attracted more followers this year.

The Scrutiny Unit took part in the #Ourday social media promotional event in November 2014.

Scrutiny Chairs are also being encouraged to actively use Twitter.

The Tenant Scrutiny Board is now well established and continues to be chaired and run by tenants and leaseholders.

The Board undertook a major inquiry this year into Annual Tenancy Visits and has continued to work closely with the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board.

The Board is also working closely with the new Tenant Involvement Team.

This year the work of the Scrutiny Boards have either directly involved Community Committees or have formally recognised their vital role in ensuring effective services locally. Key examples include scrutiny of the Universal Youth Activity Funding; the Community Infrastructure Levy; and Area Based Delegations.

Community Committee meeting agendas are also shared with scrutiny to help identify common issues and inform work items.

Planning for the future

As always a key focus remains on ensuring that scrutiny is a worthwhile process for elected Members and adds value to the running of the Council.

As has been our practice in previous annual reports, we have produced an action plan for the coming year identifying our key development areas.

The actions shown below are not an exhaustive list and a number of actions from previous years will continue to be progressed.

Key Action Areas 2015/16

