

Scrutiny Chairman's Annual Report

It's been a busy year for the Scrutiny Committee, with nine full meetings and one special meeting (with hybrid accessibility) and briefings. We started the year by introducing our new way of working, that of 'critical friend' giving robust clear guidance to Cabinet, Council, officers and external bodies / organisations. Both pre- and post-decision making. This approach was given significant praise and encouragement by the external review team, who highlighted our efforts.

An early informal meeting developed and added to the works program, with a keen emphasis towards 'adding to and ongoing'. Of the varying work that Scrutiny Committee undertook we actively encouraged public participation – a key facet of local government activity. As usual, committee deliberated and debated a wide range of topics, reaching decisions and democratically resolving to advise the various bodies engaged.

Topics of note were:

- Decisions of Cabinet, Council, Officers and external organisations
- Corporate Plan and mid-point review
- Six monthly Establishment updates
- Collection of debt
- Voids
- Planning consultants
- Planning enforcement working group recommendations
- Planning Procedure
- Six monthly whistleblowing updates.
- The Leader's Annual Report
- Participatory budgeting
- Annual report of complaints and compliments
- S106 agreements
- Does local government work for women
- 3 RD Ltd business plan x 3
- 3 RD Ltd business appraisals for sites
- Cost of living crisis
- Motion 583 – protecting rivers and seas
- Scrutiny agenda process
- Ongoing budget updates

In November 2022, Dean Emery and I visited the anaerobic digester plant at Cannington, near Bridgwater. We gave a detailed report of the visit to the Scrutiny Committee and followed up with more questions for the owner.

Finally, it has been a privilege and pleasure to chair the Scrutiny Committee and I am indebted to officers and members for their tireless hard work, thus making our meetings well informed. There were a number of comings and goings of officers and members, as to be expected, the transition was smooth and seamless. A large thank you to everyone.

Cllr Simon Clist (Upper Culm)
Chairman – Scrutiny Committee