

Monmouthshire Scrutiny Committee Report: 2025-2026

Report of the People Scrutiny Committee: The Effectiveness and Added Value of the Scrutiny undertaken during January 2025 to April 2026

Introduction

This report provides an overview of the work of the People Scrutiny Committee during the 2025 municipal year and up to April 2026. It evidences the Committee's effectiveness in supporting good governance, strengthening decision-making and contributing to improved service delivery for Monmouthshire residents. It also demonstrates how the Committee has fulfilled its role in reflecting the views, experiences and concerns of residents, service users, carers, communities and partners.

The report draws on the formal minutes of the Committee's ordinary, special and call-in meetings. It highlights where scrutiny added value through pre-decision scrutiny, policy review, constructive challenge, public engagement and follow-up action. In doing so, it shows how the Committee has helped to test the quality of evidence, influence the development of proposals, seek assurance on delivery and keep a clear focus on outcomes for residents.

Overview of Scrutiny Activity

During the reporting period, the Committee considered a broad range of strategic and service matters across education, housing, social care, equality, wellbeing and community services. Its work included pre-decision scrutiny of key policies and strategies, review of service performance, examination of budget proposals, consideration of petitions and public forum contributions, and follow-up of actions arising from earlier meetings. Collectively, this work strengthened accountability, improved the quality of policy and service development, and supported more informed and resident-focused decision-making.

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Scrutiny by Meeting and Topic

21 January 2025 – Ordinary Meeting

Review of Homesearch Policy

The Committee scrutinised the Homesearch Policy with a clear focus on fairness, accessibility and practical impact for residents seeking housing support. Members tested how the policy worked for people experiencing homelessness, applicants with learning disabilities or support needs, rural communities and the armed forces community. This scrutiny added value by drawing attention to the availability of support for applicants, the need for partner agencies to be equipped to help residents use the system, and the importance of understanding emerging housing pressures and patterns of need.

Through its challenge, the Committee secured follow-up action on briefing partner agencies, further information on the rural allocations policy and Capsule, and additional work to explore homelessness among veterans. The discussion illustrated the Committee's role in reviewing policy not only for procedural soundness but also for how effectively it serves residents in practice and reflects community concerns.

Forward Work Planning and Budget Scrutiny Preparation

The Committee also used this meeting to shape its forward programme and identify issues requiring further scrutiny, including areas of emerging public concern and upcoming budget discussions. This early prioritisation added value by ensuring that scrutiny time was directed towards matters with the greatest potential impact on residents and by supporting a planned and purposeful approach to committee business.

18 February 2025 – Ordinary Meeting

Inclusion Strategy and Additional Learning Needs Policy

In reviewing the Inclusion Strategy and Additional Learning Needs Policy, the Committee focused on whether children and young people are identified and supported early enough, whether mainstream provision is sufficiently inclusive, and whether vulnerable groups are visible within the system. Members tested the Council's arrangements for service children, children with specific learning difficulties and children educated other than at school. This scrutiny strengthened

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oversight of how policy translates into practice for children and families and kept a clear focus on the best start in life for learners in Monmouthshire.

Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals

The Committee also examined the draft budget proposals affecting people services, testing the practical implications of savings and investment decisions for social care, youth provision, community hubs and support for residents. This provided an important opportunity for scrutiny to challenge assumptions before decisions were finalised and to ensure that budget choices were viewed through the lens of impact on service users and communities rather than finance alone.

4 March 2025 – Special Meeting (Call-in)

Call-in of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Decision

The call-in meeting demonstrated the Committee's constitutional role in holding executive decision-making to account. Members examined concerns about transparency, accountability, consultation and the assessment of impact in relation to funding allocations. Although the Committee ultimately accepted the decision, the scrutiny process added clear value by airing concerns in public, clarifying governance arrangements, highlighting the limits of local control, and strengthening the case for more timely and meaningful scrutiny of major funding decisions in future.

This meeting showed that scrutiny's value is not limited to changing decisions; it also lies in improving openness, exposing weaknesses in process, and ensuring that decisions affecting communities are tested in a public and democratic forum.

30 April 2025 – Ordinary Meeting

Y Prentis – Shared Construction Apprenticeship Scheme

The Committee scrutinised the proposed closure and transfer of the Y Prentis shared apprenticeship scheme with a particular focus on outcomes for young people, the local relevance of the replacement model, workforce implications and the long-term sustainability of construction skills provision. Members tested the strength of the evidence, including performance, completion rates, local participation and the risks associated with transition to a provider based in West Wales. This scrutiny added value by ensuring that a significant service change was subject to robust challenge before a decision was progressed.

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Whilst the Committee supported the preferred option, the scrutiny process secured a clear expectation of continued oversight of the transition and reinforced the need for future skills provision to deliver tangible benefit for Monmouthshire's young people, employers and communities.

17 June 2025 – Ordinary Meeting

Audit Wales Report on Hospital Discharge

The Committee reviewed the Audit Wales findings on hospital discharge through the lens of residents' experience, delayed discharge, readmission risk, workforce pressures and the quality of information available to support scrutiny. Members pressed for more timely and comprehensive data, challenged how risk is managed in discharge decisions and highlighted the importance of stronger system integration across health and social care. The scrutiny added value by maintaining focus on practical improvement in discharge pathways and on achieving better outcomes for residents moving from hospital back into the community.

Pre-decision Scrutiny of the Play Sufficiency Assessment

This was a strong example of pre-decision scrutiny in action. Members tested whether the Play Sufficiency Assessment accurately reflected the experiences of children and young people across the county, especially in rural areas and in relation to girls, older children and communities with limited facilities. By challenging gaps between assessment findings and action planning, and by emphasising the importance of listening directly to children, the Committee strengthened the policy before endorsement and helped ensure it was more responsive to local need.

16 July 2025 – Special Meeting

Review of the Housing Support Grant Programme

The Committee undertook detailed scrutiny of proposals to recommission housing support services funded through the Housing Support Grant. Members examined demand, unmet need, value for money, market resilience, the balance between in-house and commissioned provision, and the importance of service user voice. This scrutiny was particularly valuable because it took place in advance of procurement, enabling the Committee to influence the approach at an early stage and to emphasise transparency, monitoring and better outcomes for vulnerable residents.

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22 July 2025 – Ordinary Meeting

Petitions on Home to School Transport Policy

The Committee received petitions and public representations on home to school transport, providing a formal and visible route for parents, residents and community representatives to raise concerns about safety, equity and the practical impact of policy decisions on families. By focusing on route safety and securing officer review within ongoing work, the Committee ensured that the public voice directly informed the Council's response. This was a clear example of scrutiny acting as a democratic channel between community concern and service review.

County of Sanctuary and Strategic Equality Plan Monitoring

The Committee scrutinised the County of Sanctuary report and the Strategic Equality Plan annual monitoring report, testing how inclusion and equality commitments are communicated, funded and translated into frontline practice. Members brought forward a range of perspectives, including issues raised through the public forum, and secured further information and follow-up actions. The added value of scrutiny in this area lay in ensuring that equality and inclusion are examined not only as policy commitments, but also in terms of implementation, community impact, accountability and public confidence.

30 September 2025 – Ordinary Meeting

Community Meals Review

The Committee scrutinised the Community Meals Review with a clear emphasis on the wider social and preventative value of the service, not simply its cost. Members explored user experience, nutritional value, safeguarding, routes into the service, local sourcing and future delivery options. This scrutiny added value by ensuring that modernisation proposals remained rooted in dignity, wellbeing and practical support for residents, especially older and vulnerable people who benefit not only from the meal itself but from the contact and reassurance that accompany the service.

Whole Authority Approach to Wellbeing and Prevention

The Committee also reviewed the Whole Authority Approach to Wellbeing and Prevention. Members challenged the strategy to ensure it reflected the role of communities, town and community councils, lived experience, and the need to start

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from the perspective of residents rather than services alone. This policy scrutiny strengthened the strategic focus on prevention and highlighted the importance of designing services and partnerships around what matters to people in their everyday lives.

21 January 2026 – Ordinary Meeting

Elective Home Education and Children Missing Education Policy

The Committee scrutinised the performance report on Elective Home Education and undertook pre-decision scrutiny of the Children Missing Education Policy. Members explored safeguarding, capacity, pupil voice, family engagement, trends in home education, links to unmet need in mainstream education and arrangements for multi-agency escalation where children may be at risk. This represented a significant example of scrutiny strengthening policy and accountability by testing whether the Council's approach was sufficiently robust, evidence-based and child-centered before adoption.

24 February 2026 – Ordinary Meeting

Corporate Parenting and Disability Inclusion

At its February 2026 meeting, the Committee reviewed the Corporate Parenting Strategy and the Disability Confident Pledge. In both areas, members focused on how policy is experienced in practice by care experienced children and young people, foster carers, staff and disabled applicants and employees. The scrutiny added value by drawing out issues of reporting, workforce stability, inclusion, accountability and continuous improvement, thereby reinforcing the Council's responsibility to translate corporate commitments into meaningful outcomes.

31 March 2026 – Ordinary Meeting

Assistive Technology

In March 2026 the Committee scrutinised the Assistive Technology service, focusing on prevention, sustainability, user confidence, partnership working and opportunities to support independence and reduce demand on higher-cost services. The discussion demonstrated how scrutiny can add value by looking beyond service activity to wider benefits for residents, carers and partner agencies, while also identifying the next practical steps to strengthen regional working and future service development.

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29 April 2026 – Ordinary Meeting

Public Libraries Strategy

In April 2026 the Committee scrutinised the Public Libraries Strategy following consultation. Members explored equity of access, outreach, social value, prevention, Welsh language provision, support for older residents, and the role of libraries and community hubs as trusted and inclusive spaces. By endorsing the strategy following detailed examination, the Committee strengthened the case for libraries as preventative services that support learning, digital inclusion, social connection and community resilience.

Conclusion

Over the course of the reporting period, the People Scrutiny Committee made a clear and positive contribution to the Council's governance and improvement arrangements. Its added value is most evident in the way it strengthened pre-decision scrutiny and policy review, improved the quality of challenge applied to reports and proposals, and ensured that decision-making remained grounded in the likely impact on Monmouthshire residents. The Committee also played an important role in bringing forward the public voice, testing whether services and strategies were fair, accessible and outcome-focused, and securing actions, assurances and further reporting where required. Taken together, this demonstrates an effective scrutiny function that supports better policy, better services and more accountable decision-making.