

Monmouthshire Scrutiny Committee Report: 2025-2026

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

Introduction

This report provides an account of the work undertaken by the Public Services Scrutiny Committee during the 2025 municipal year and at meetings held up to April 2026. It assesses the effectiveness of the Committee's scrutiny activity and the value added through challenge, evidence gathering, accountability and follow-up, with particular regard to the extent to which scrutiny informed public service oversight and reflected the concerns of residents, service users, stakeholders and communities.

Drawing on the formal minutes of meetings across the reporting period, the report sets out the principal matters scrutinised, the challenge provided by members, the assurances and evidence secured, the recommendations and actions arising, and the extent to which scrutiny influenced transparency, accountability and future oversight.

Overview of Scrutiny Activity

During the reporting period, the Committee considered a broad range of strategic public service issues affecting residents' quality of life and wellbeing. These included dentistry, highways responsibilities and road repairs, the Severn Bridge restrictions, adult mental health, suicide prevention, dementia care, hospital reconfiguration, violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, community safety and police resourcing, and drug-related deaths. Across these meetings, the Committee identified evidence gaps, tested the adequacy of current arrangements, sought further information, recommended follow-up activity and secured actions from service providers and partners. Collectively, this demonstrates a consistent scrutiny role in strengthening transparency, accountability and the evidence base for future decision-making.

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Scrutiny by Meeting and Topic

10 February 2025 – Ordinary Meeting

Dentistry: Scrutiny of Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

The Committee undertook detailed scrutiny of NHS dentistry in Monmouthshire, challenging the Health Board on access, waiting times, workforce sustainability, service equity, preventative provision and the implications of future housing growth. The questioning exposed a number of structural pressures, including uncertainty over future workforce capacity, limits on local provision and the difficulty of aligning service planning with population growth. The Committee's added value lay in testing the robustness of the Health Board's assumptions and ensuring that strategic issues were examined through the lived experience of residents, particularly vulnerable groups and rural communities. Recommendations and follow-up arising from the meeting included the sharing of further population needs information, the continued consideration of service implications arising from housing growth and the use of the Committee's forward work programme to maintain oversight of broader Health Board issues.

7 April 2025 – Ordinary Meeting

Highways Responsibilities and Funding

The Committee scrutinised the complexity of highways responsibilities across the Council, the South Wales Trunk Road Agent and other agencies, pressing officers on accountability, communication, maintenance prioritisation, litter responsibilities, bridge management and the local impact of strategic transport routes. The Committee's questioning was effective in identifying areas where accountability was unclear and where residents would benefit from greater transparency. As a result, a series of clear follow-up actions were identified, including clarification of why particular roads fall within SWTRA responsibility, a response on the schedule for replacement of safety barriers on the M48, further discussion with SWTRA on traffic management at Thornwell, continued promotion of the M48 link road through the regional transport planning process, a workshop for members on highways funding and prioritisation, and correspondence with Welsh Government and SWTRA regarding legislation on littering from vehicles. This demonstrated scrutiny's practical value in moving discussion beyond explanation to specific actions and requests for further evidence.

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Potholes and Road Repairs

Members also scrutinised how additional funding for pothole repairs would be deployed in Monmouthshire, focusing on prioritisation, scheduling, the balance between temporary and permanent repairs, workforce capacity and communication with residents. The Committee's contribution was evaluative as well as probing: members tested not only whether additional funding existed, but whether there was a sufficiently transparent and evidence-based framework for allocating it. This led to a clear expectation that members would receive a schedule of works once funding was confirmed and that a future workshop would set out the prioritisation matrix, funding mechanisms and repair methodology in greater detail. The added value of scrutiny was therefore in strengthening accountability for how investment decisions would be made in practice and how they would be communicated to residents.

12 May 2025 – Ordinary Meeting

National Highways – M48 and Severn Bridge 7.5t Weight Limit

The Committee provided extensive challenge on the implications of the Severn Bridge heavy goods vehicle restrictions for local residents, businesses, freight movements, air quality and the resilience of the wider transport network. Members tested the adequacy of modelling, contingency planning, enforcement proposals, economic impact considerations and mitigation at key junctions. The scrutiny was evaluative, in that it examined whether the response was proportionate to local risk and whether sufficient evidence and communication had been provided to affected communities. It was agreed that National Highways would return to the Committee in approximately six months with an update. The meeting also reinforced the need for continued lobbying on issues such as junction improvements, signalisation and wider transport mitigation, ensuring that local concerns remained visible within regional and national transport discussions.

7 July 2025 – Ordinary Meeting

Adult Mental Health Services with a Specific Focus on Adult Suicide

The Committee undertook in-depth scrutiny of adult mental health services and suicide prevention, testing the quality of local data, the strength of partnership working, the support available to those at risk and those bereaved by suicide, and the extent to which rurality, co-occurring needs and barriers to access were being

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addressed. Members explored difficult but important issues with sensitivity and rigour, drawing on both professional evidence and community perspectives. The scrutiny added value by bringing together fragmented concerns about data quality, prevention, access and partnership effectiveness into a single evidence-based discussion. Importantly, the Committee did not treat the item as concluded at first consideration: members agreed that the matter should return in six months to gauge progress and requested that MIND also return when the topic was revisited. This gave the scrutiny process a stronger evaluative basis by building follow-up and comparative evidence into the Committee's work programme.

Care for People in the Community with Dementia, Including Support Available to Families

The Committee also scrutinised dementia care and family support, focusing on access to community-based services, future demand, prevention, coordination of support and the pressures arising from an ageing population. Members sought practical clarity on dementia champions, connectors, hubs, performance monitoring and the adequacy of local provision. The scrutiny was evaluative in highlighting the gap between strategic ambition and the practical challenges of local access, awareness and capacity. Recommendations and follow-up from the session included a request for a paper setting out Monmouthshire-specific information on dementia champions and related provision, a request for key performance indicators and progress data to be provided in a future presentation, and a proposal for members to visit staff and services to better understand delivery in practice. This demonstrated scrutiny's added value in combining strategic challenge with practical follow-up designed to improve oversight.

28 July 2025 – Joint Meeting of Public Services and People Scrutiny

Nevill Hall Hospital Proposals

In this joint session, the Committee scrutinised the emerging proposals for Nevill Hall Hospital, challenging the Health Board on public expectations, local access to services, cancer treatment, estate constraints and the relationship between local hospitals and the wider health system. Members tested whether engagement was meaningful and whether the proposed model would meet the needs of Monmouthshire residents, particularly those affected by travel distances and service changes. The value of the scrutiny lay in ensuring that strategic proposals

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were assessed against practical concerns about accessibility, equity and public confidence at a formative stage. A specific follow-up request arising from the meeting was for a future members' seminar on Royal Gwent, Chepstow and local hospitals, to provide broader system context and enable continued scrutiny of local hospital provision.

13 October 2025 – Ordinary Meeting

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Regional Strategy

The Committee scrutinised how regional arrangements under the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence framework were supporting Monmouthshire, with a strong focus on accountability, data quality, resource capacity, service accessibility and the tangible benefits of regional working. Members challenged the limited evidence base and tested whether the regional model was delivering measurable local impact. This was a particularly evaluative piece of scrutiny because it moved beyond descriptive reporting and explicitly assessed the adequacy of available evidence. The Committee agreed that when the matter returned, subsequent updates should provide clearer evidence of impact, including a consistent regional and local data dashboard covering demand, outcomes, equality of access and rural reach, clearer lines of accountability between the Partnership Board, Community Safety Partnerships and the Council, regular reporting on training compliance and Spectrum programme coverage, and clearer information on resource requirements, progress against agreed actions and the use of survivor and community feedback. These recommendations significantly strengthened the expectations placed on future reporting.

28 October 2025 – Ordinary Meeting

Community Safety and Police Resources

The Committee scrutinised community safety and police resources in Monmouthshire through detailed questioning of the Police and Crime Commissioner on neighbourhood visibility, confidence in policing, school engagement, county lines, data integrity, prevention work and fairness in resource distribution. The scrutiny was evaluative in testing whether regional policing plans and performance claims were adequately evidenced at county level. Members secured a number of follow-up actions, including requests for data on officer

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allocation, county lines work in schools, Monmouthshire-specific survey responses, school visits and safeguarding sessions. The Committee also agreed that the minutes and list of outstanding questions should be forwarded to the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable, and that the Chief Constable should be invited to a future meeting to discuss the responses. This demonstrated scrutiny's value in converting broad questioning into an accountable process of evidence gathering and follow-up.

15 December 2025 – Ordinary Meeting

Drug-Related Deaths and the Impact of Synthetic Drugs

The Committee scrutinised the causes, patterns and responses associated with drug-related deaths, including the growing risks posed by synthetic drugs such as nitazenes. Members explored the links between trauma, homelessness, mental health, prescribing, prevention, policing and treatment pathways, while also testing how effectively intelligence is shared across public services. This was a strong example of evaluative scrutiny because it examined whether current partnership arrangements were sufficient to respond to a changing and increasingly complex pattern of harm. The discussion also identified issues that members considered should be pursued further with policing leadership, including prevention activity, resource pressures and school-based engagement. In this respect, scrutiny added value by surfacing cross-cutting issues that warranted continued attention beyond the meeting itself.

Update on the M48 Severn Bridge Heavy Goods Vehicle Restrictions

When the matter returned, the Committee continued to test the adequacy of mitigation proposals, communications, modelling assumptions, stakeholder engagement and long-term strategic planning. The follow-up session enabled members to assess whether the response had developed sufficiently since the earlier meeting and whether local concerns were being reflected in the evolving plans. Recommendations and actions arising included a request to see the current Traffic Regulation Orders and clarify responsibility for them, and **a formal recommendation, approved by the Committee, that the Council should have a democratically elected member on the stakeholder steering group to improve communication and representation. This recommendation has not been enacted to the disappointment of the committee.** The Committee also requested that

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National Highways return again in six months' time. This demonstrated the added value of scrutiny not only in initial challenge, but in sustained review, evidence testing and democratic follow-up over time.

20 April 2026 – Ordinary Meeting

Adult Suicide – Follow-Up Scrutiny with Mind Monmouthshire and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

The Committee returned to the issue of adult suicide and mental health to test progress, bringing together evidence from both the third sector and the Health Board. This enabled members to compare service-user experience with the statutory response, challenge barriers to access, examine referral pathways, data limitations, digital exclusion and the role of community-based support. The session illustrated scrutiny at its strongest: evidence-led, comparative and focused on outcomes as well as process. It added value by promoting openness about what had improved, what pressures remained and where further action was still required. Specific actions arising included exploring whether the Council's communications channels and website could better signpost residents to support services and arranging for information leaflets to be placed in members' mail trays. These were modest but practical examples of scrutiny translating discussion into immediate local action.

Conclusion

Across the reporting period, the Public Services Scrutiny Committee added demonstrable value through structured challenge, evidence-led questioning and follow-up. Its effectiveness is evidenced not only by the breadth of issues considered, but by the recommendations, actions and requests for further assurance arising from its work, including additional data, progress reports, seminars, visits, workshops, formal correspondence and the return of partner organisations to future meetings. Taken together, these outcomes indicate that the Committee's scrutiny was active, evaluative and capable of strengthening the quality, transparency and responsiveness of public service oversight on behalf of Monmouthshire residents.