

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL



COUNCIL

Monday, 13 July 2009

YOU ARE SUMMONED TO ATTEND A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL, WHICH WILL BE HELD AT THE GUILDHALL NORTHAMPTON ON MONDAY, 13 JULY 2009 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING WHEN THE FOLLOWING BUSINESS IS PROPOSED TO BE TRANSACTED:-

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES.

To approve the minutes of the proceedings of the Meeting of the Council held on 29 June 2009.

3. APOLOGIES.

4. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

6. MEMBER AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The questions and answers tabled are attached.

7. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS

8. OPPOSITION GROUP BUSINESS

'A statement from the leader of the opposition regarding strategic business reviews and partnership working'

9. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09

10. COMMITTEE PLACES

Copy to follow

11. SHADOW CABINET PROTOCOL

Copy herewith

12. APPOINTMENTS TO THE COLES AND RICE CHARITY, THE CHARITY OF HERVEY AND ELIZABETH EKINS AND NORTHAMPTON MUNICIPAL GENERAL CHARITIES

Copy herewith

13. NOTICES OF MOTION

A)

Proposer Councillor Palethorpe
Seconder Councillor Lane

This Council notes the concerns of many local residents in Northampton about the Sheltered Housing system and the lack of personal contact they receive under the 'floating support' scheme, and believes it was a mistake by the Government to take Sheltered Housing out of the Housing Benefit budget, leaving Sheltered Housing within the underfunded Supporting People budget, and making it difficult for district councils to manage.

This Council therefore calls on the Chief Executive to urgently instigate a review of the system and listen to the concerns of local residents.

B)

Proposer: Councillor Malpas
Seconder: Councillor Flavell

This council fully supports the valuable contribution that community centres and their staff make in supporting and sustaining our local communities. By facilitating the meeting and business of a diverse range of associations, clubs and community and faith groups, these facilities continue to have a positive impact on the overall wellbeing of our town.

This council looks forward to supporting community centres in the future and playing its part in facilitating community life across Northampton

14. MATTERS OF URGENCY WHICH BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE MAYOR IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED.

The Guildhall
Northampton
3rd July 2009

D. Kennedy Chief Executive

Questions for Full Council Monday 13th July 2009

Question 1

Question for Cllr. Beardsworth from Mr N Adams

As the tender document for 'The provision of Asbestos sampling' has been issued, would the portfolio holder assure tenants that full findings from the survey(s) would be made available on request?

Response

The findings of the survey will be made available to individual tenants where asbestos has been identified in their home.

However, the Asbestos Register cannot be released in its entirety owing to the requirements of the Data Protection Act. Information, excluding personal and excluded data, will be published.

Sally Beardsworth
Portfolio Holder for Housing

Questions for Full Council Monday 13th July 2009

Question 2

Question for Cllr P Varnserry from Cllr M Golby

In regards to Duston Day in the Park, an annual event in my ward which is funded by Duston Parish Council and run entirely by volunteers, can you please explain why the council could not support this event, and insisted on charging £25 for the use of Errington Park.

Response

The £25 administration fee reflects the following services provided by council officers:

1. Approval and advice relating to the event's organisation, including but not restricted to, risk assessments, public liability and food safety.
2. Fulfilling the council's duty to inform the Performing Rights Society (PRS) that music was being played at the event.
3. Informing and advising the Northampton Safety Advisory Group, which brings together representatives from local Police, Ambulance and Fire authorities, and Northamptonshire County Council.

Paul Varnserry
Portfolio Holder for Communities

Questions for Full Council Monday 13th July 2009

Question 3

Question for Cllr A Woods from Cllr C Malpas

Would the leader agree that the introduction of a 'motion update' item on future council agendas would help councillors monitor the progress of motions passed by this council, and if so will he pledge to introduce such an item?

Response

This was something that we requested while in opposition so would be supportive of in principle. A rolling 'motion update' document appended to every council agenda might, however, not be the best way of implementing this.

I would be happy to explore methods of achieving this – for example by uploading such a document on the council's website, available to all councillors, residents and employees.

Tony Woods
Leader of the Council

Questions for Full Council Monday 13th July 2009

Question 4

Question for Cllr A Woods from Beverley Mennell

Will Council explain whether their refusal to accept a booking for a democratic and representative group of tenants to meet at the Guildhall is because they want sham and unrepresentative consultations with tenants chosen by themselves, so they can get adverse decisions through?

Response

No.

On 4th February 2009, Cabinet approved a new way to engage with tenants at both Borough-wide and local levels, following a report by the Priority Estates Partnership (PEP). The report will be considered again by Cabinet later in the year, following consultation with residents.

**Tony Woods
Leader of the Council**

Agenda Item 7

Agenda Item: 7

**Council
Monday 13th July 2009**

Portfolio Holder Presentations

1. Report of the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Partnerships and Improvement (Page 1)
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Portfolio Holder Report for Partnerships & Improvement

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 13th July 2009

Inspections & Audits

The Council's Access to Services inspection has been completed and the report published on 11th June. The council was judged to have a One Star – 'Fair' service with 'Excellent Prospects for Improvement'.

This is the most positive report that the council has received from the Audit Commission in years and confirms the momentum of improvement that has now been established.

This encouraging result is down to the dedication of council officers, who deliver improvements throughout the organisation – day in, day out – by the current administration and, particularly, of managers who have put in place plans for sustained improvement that have been judged as providing 'Excellent Prospects for Improvement'.

Government Disengagement

The Council continues to await a letter from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) confirming our collective disengagement from government monitoring. The government's Cabinet reshuffle will have caused some additional delay but it is now six months since the arrangements for close government monitoring were dismantled and a recommendation provided to the Minister that we be removed from supervision.

The council continues to remind DCLG of the need for a formal letter of disengagement. I hope members of the three main parties will join me in lobbying their colleagues in Westminster to expedite this much-needed, and well deserved, proof of improvement.

Customer Services & ICT

Staff workshops have been scheduled to set the groundwork for improvements to the council's One Stop Shop – a vital and valued front-facing service.

An order has been placed to procure an adaptor to integrate Revenues and Benefits software systems with the council's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The new system will be in place by January 2010 and will further reduce the time Northamptonians wait for their benefits. In 2008/09 new claims are judged in 16.1 days (BV78A) compared with over 80 days in the 2003.

Partnerships & Improvement

It has been increasingly clear, over the last few months, that the capacity of this council to change and improve has taken a major step forward. This is evidenced by the large number of initiatives now coming forward to put right previous failures of this Council to engage with partners, to drive forward change and to deliver real and sustainable improvement for residents. This is evidenced by:-

- The publication on 29th June of the emergent Joint Core Strategy for West Northamptonshire. In two years, the current administration has taken the bull by the horns and worked with partners to progress the Local Development Framework after years of delay. The need for clearer local planning policy is evidenced by major appeals from developers in both Daventry and South Northants, where the absence of a strong, evidence-led planning policy has resulted in uncertainty for local people and businesses and a bigger bill to the taxpayer via a 'planning by appeal' culture. Only through a strong and unshakeable planning policy can the council hope to realise the new jobs and infrastructure are delivered to breathe new life into Northampton and stop the rot of urban sprawl and dormitory estates.
- The council's emergent Central Area Action Plan (to be considered by Cabinet on 15th July). It is clear that the most important piece of 'infrastructure' required for an expanding Northampton is a stronger, more vibrant centre. The Central Area Action Plan provides the 20-year policy framework to deliver a pleasant city with a beating heart.
- The publication for Cabinet to consider on 15th July of an Options Appraisal Review for the council's 12,500 homes. A previous review was botched when a deeply flawed Options Appraisal was brought forward. This administration is very clear that all options must now be considered based on a robust evidence base and that a range of solutions to the needs of different estates be brought forward. The welfare of council tenants remains a paramount concern of this administration.
- The publication for Cabinet to consider on 15th July of a revised Housing Asset Management Strategy to ensure the delivery of the Decent Homes Standard for council tenants.
- A programme of Strategic Business Reviews supported, where appropriate, by market-testing to drive forward tangible improvements in services and better value-for-money for local taxpayers.
- Plans for this authority to build up to 50 new Council homes – the first for nearly 20 years – predominantly 3 and 4 bedroom homes to address the very severe shortage of such homes.

Taken together, these proposals demonstrate a major acceleration in the pace of change and an administration dedicated to improving this council and our town.

LGA Conference

I attended the Local Government Association Conference last week with the Deputy Leader, the Leaders of the Opposition Parties and the Chief Executive. The overwhelming message from the conference was that local government finances are likely to be very heavily squeezed over the next few years as the effects of the current recession work through the system.

This council has made a good start in the last two years of bringing our costs under control and reducing our cost base but we will have to be more vigilant and more innovative if we are to continue to deliver better quality services for less.

The message from senior national politicians of all three major parties was that local government can expect greater freedoms but will have to do more with less.

Tony Woods

Leader of the Council

Portfolio Holder for Partnerships & Improvement



Portfolio Holder Report for Engagement

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 13th July 2009

Place Survey

Government spending watchdog the Audit Commission recently issued its first 'Place Survey', which forms part of the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) of public services in Northamptonshire. The results are based on residents' surveys asking for feedback on countywide public services.

I was pleased that 9 out of 10 residents said they were 'satisfied' with Northampton. Cabinet and officers are reviewing the results that impinge upon this council and will take steps to improve services where residents say so.

Crucially, residents expressed concerns about this and other councils' value-for-money, an issue that the administration is addressing as part of its business-led strategic review of all services.

Any changes to the management of council services will be made with a view to protecting council services and improving their value-for-money. Only this way will we get a better deal for Northampton's hard-working taxpayers.

I sincerely hope that councillors of all parties and none will support our drive to move to smarter ways of working and, where they disagree, offer constructive solutions and alternative sources of funding to retain services in-house.

Council Performance

The 2008/09 outturn report was considered by Cabinet on the 29th June. The results show that:

- 51% of comparable performance indicators are up since 2007/8;
- 38% of comparable performance indicators are down since 2007/8;
- 51% of indicators reported, met or exceeded the target set;
- 49% of indicators, where targets had been set, were below target.

Further analysis of council performance between 2003/04 and 2008/09 has been completed to measure the council's improvement over this time.

Results show that:

- 70% of comparable indicators improved their performance, compared to 2008/09, 5% maintained performance and 25% deteriorated;

- 35% of indicators have improved their ranking (how well the council performs next to other authorities).

These reports show that Northampton Borough Council is undergoing change and is beginning to deliver the services that Northamptonians deserve.

This change was acknowledged in the council's annual audit inspection by the Audit Commission, which reported that:

'Significant progress has been made by the Council over the last year. The rate of progress is now consistent with other councils... The two remaining services that were subject to government intervention – housing and planning – have now improved sufficiently to be released from monitoring'.

Community Centres

At the time of writing, Cabinet will consider a report about the Council's 21 community centres on 8th July.

Community centres have an important role to play in building strong communities that stick together. This administration is determined to ensure that despite the government's effective pay-cut to this authority and other financial shortfalls brought about by the recession, Northamptonians have easily-accessible facilities, actively managed for their local communities.

A review of community centres is long overdue and the Council needs to consider not only the performance of its centres, but how it can work with Northamptonshire County Council, Northamptonshire Primary Care Trust and Northamptonshire Police to develop facilities that support community needs and those that emerge as the town grows to a city of 300,000.

Equalities

The council has made rapid progress in its work on equality and diversity. In September, the council will undergo a 'peer challenge' by representatives of other authorities to assess whether we are an 'achieving authority' under the government's national framework and to look at new ways of improving.

All services have assessed their current positions and are working to improve where there are gaps. Equality Impact Assessments are now a routine part of managing services and are being actively used to make improvements.

Neighbourhood Management

New approaches to neighbourhood and area management are being considered, which will build on achievements over the last three years. The current arrangements do not provide a uniform approach across Northampton and the Council must consider how it moves to delivering more area-based services and more effective engagement and consultation with residents.

The objective will be to make closer links between engaging the community and delivering the services they need, while setting up ways of ensuring that local people have a clear say in what happens in their area. Ward councillors, of all parties and none, will be key to achieving this.

Overview & Scrutiny

Overview and Scrutiny has been going through an improvement programme with a self-assessment leading to plans designed to strengthen the council's scrutiny function. Whatever the colour of this council, it is right that scrutiny committees are given the tools to hold the administration to account. Proposals from Overview and Scrutiny Management Board are anticipated in the Autumn.

Legal Services

Legal Services recently obtained an injunction against an individual who was carrying out works on cars and other mechanical goods on council car parks, thereby causing a nuisance to residents.

The injunction prohibits this individual from carrying out such acts in the Duston/Ryehill area. I would like to thank the opposition councillor who brought the matter to the attention of officers for action.

The litigation team also dealt successfully with cases in respect of possession, benefit fraud and four taxi prosecutions.

Electoral Services

1. The Local Returning Officer, the Elections Team, and a large team of other officers in support, successfully delivered the joint elections of 4th June for the 23 county divisions in Northampton Borough and as part of the Regional European Parliamentary election arrangements. The polls, verifications and counts were all carried out in the usual high standard that candidates have come to expect from the team. For the first time ever a central count was held at Kettering Conference Centre for the whole of the County Council.
2. The combined County Council and European Election arrangements were well over a year in the planning involving every Council in the County and Region. Northampton Borough Council's Local Returning Officer and Elections Team worked closely with the Returning Officer at the County Council. I hope members of this chamber will join me in congratulating our team on their work in ensuring its success.

Brian Hoare

Deputy Leader of the Council
Portfolio Holder for Engagement



Portfolio Holder Report for Housing

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 13th July 2009

Housing Asset Management Strategy

A draft of the Council's Housing Asset Management Strategy (HAMS) is being prepared and will be discussed at Cabinet on 15th July. HAMS is like a business plan for the Council's social housing service and will set out the Council's options for improving Northampton's approximately 12,500 Council properties.

The strategy will be subject to detailed consultation with residents. Members can be assured that any changes the Council makes will be made with a view to improving tenants' homes, whilst also protecting taxpayers' money.

A briefing for members on this and related matters was held on 7th July.

Decent Homes Programme – Phase One

34 contractors responded to the Council's initial advert for the renovation of homes on two estates in Kingsley and Kingsthorpe. Tenders for five short-listed contractors have been received.

A Residents' Steering Group visited the five contractors on-site. Officers hope to be able to make an announcement as to the contractor in the next few days so that building can get under way in October.

Private Finance Initiative (PFI)

There is still no news on the council's Expression of Interest submitted to Government on 31st October. We have been advised that a report from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is with Ministers but that the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is unclear as to when councils might hear back.

Rent Arrears

Earlier this month, I took part in the council's prize draw for tenants who pay their rent on time. Generally speaking, two thirds of the Council's tenants pay their rent on time. Up to a third of tenants, however, need extra help from the council in terms of debt advice and counselling.

The council continues to take a tough line with deliberate non-payers and is considering whether to extend a similar incentive scheme to tenants who pay their rent via direct debit.

Sheltered Housing

Concerns have been raised about the council's sheltered housing service. I would like to assure members that the council continually reviews its service, consults with residents and would have no qualms about making any changes, within the confines of sound financial management.

To be crystal clear, the current administration has not reduced the amount of support to its sheltered housing residents. I would keenly encourage members of this council, or any other, to avoid playing politics with some of our town's most vulnerable residents. Members of this council have a duty not only to raise issues, but also to offer sensible solutions to them as they arise.

Chartered Institute of Housing Annual Conference

The council was represented at last month's Chartered Institute of Housing conference in Harrogate. Officers attended useful sessions on future economic trends, ageing populations and Housing Revenue Account options among others. A group of local residents were also present.

Temporary Accommodation

There are currently 19 homeless families in temporary accommodation and none in Bed and Breakfast.

Rough Sleeping

The council has been appointed a regional 'rough sleeping champion' for its work to help rough sleepers.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has promised additional funding in return for the council's expertise in providing training, peer reviews and consultancy services to other councils.

This is important work, complemented by the council's 'Places of Change' project to help end rough sleeping in Northampton. The council is piloting personalised budgets for rough sleepers showing yet again that Northampton is leading the way nationally.

Voids

A 'Voids Strategy Group' has been set up, widening the terms of reference of the former Voids Monitoring Group, to compare how voids are dealt with in Northampton versus 2- and 3-star services in other authorities. I will report back to members once this work is complete.

Sally Beardsworth

Portfolio Holder for Housing



Portfolio Holder Report for Environment

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 13th July 2009

Street Care and Parks & Open Spaces

At the time of writing, bedding plants are in place throughout the town's parks and hanging baskets up in the town centre. Britain in Bloom judging was also due to take place on 10th July.

In response to the warm weather, Extra staff have been drafted in to collect litter in Abington Park, Becketts Park and on the Racecourse. I am making every effort to learn all the lessons from the unacceptable levels of rubbish in Abington Park over a recent bank holiday weekend.

At the time of writing this report the Memorial Rose Garden in Abington Park has yet again been vandalised. It was a wanton act of destruction and it affects the original residents that donated the roses, CHOICES, the disable volunteers that are helping to restore the garden to its original glory and our gardeners who have had the sad job of repairing the damage. It also will affect the Britain in Bloom. We will not be able to finish the gardens until the autumn, as replacement roses will not be available until then.

Waste Services

The monthly kerbside glass recycling service began on 1st June 2009. During the first round of collections 270 tonnes of glass was collected and not sent to landfill. During 2009 we aim to roll out the kerbside glass collections to 15,000 households on black bag collections. A promotion campaign is planned throughout the Summer and Autumn to further promote recycling across the town.

Market Testing

Following approval from Cabinet, we aim to market test the services of Waste Management, Street Care and Grounds Maintenance in order to continue the Council's drive for increased value for money, efficiency and effectiveness.

Regulatory Services

In May, the council's Environmental Crime team began an operation to reduce unauthorised car sales on our streets. Where possible, registered keepers were identified and contacted and stickers placed on cars.

Over the first ten days of the operation 55 vehicles were investigated, 29 of which were subsequently moved and 9 tracked to other parts of the town.

After the first ten days, the number of identified vehicles on Wellingborough Road was down from 14 to 3.

Litter from cars

From 6th July to 2nd August, the council's Regulatory Services team will be involved in a national campaign by Keep Britain Tidy to encourage residents to report littering from cars. Across the UK, members of the public will be able to report littering from vehicles online.

The aim of the campaign is to raise awareness of the problem of littering from cars as well as encouraging people to be the eyes of local councils in the battle to Keep Britain Tidy. Three sites in Northampton will be monitored before and after the campaign to measure the success of the campaign.

Keep Britain Tidy are sponsoring most of the promotional material including posters, car stickers, bin stickers, bill boards, bus rears and local radio. The council, meanwhile, will liaise with local media and put information on its website to encourage people to get involved.

Trini Crake

Portfolio Holder for the Environment



Portfolio Holder Report for Planning & Regeneration

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 13th July 2009

Draft Joint Core Strategy

The emerging Joint Core Strategy (JCS) for West Northamptonshire has been published and was discussed by the West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee on 6th July.

The JCS sets out plans for the development of Northampton and its surrounding areas to 2026 to meet the demand for housing and jobs. Northampton must see a step-change in investment if it is to accommodate growth on this scale and avoid adding to Northamptonshire's public service delivery problems, notably in schools, transport and jobs.

Over the coming weeks there will be an opportunity for public comment on the proposals, both during the summer consultation period on the emergent strategy and during the formal statutory consultation on the pre-submission document in November. This council also has an opportunity to respond, and I am sure councillors will want to take part in this debate.

Central Area Action Plan

Linked to the Joint Core Strategy, the council's Central Area Action Plan will be considered by Cabinet on 15th July.

Councillors have already had an opportunity to contribute to this through workshops and scheduled one-to-one meetings. Thank you to those councillors who attended.

A prospering town centre, offering quality jobs, retail and leisure opportunities, taking advantage of the town's fine heritage and focussed on the riverside is key to ensuring that the the town centre grows and develops as the thriving heart of the growing town.

Again, there will be public consultation on the emerging strategy over the summer, followed by a statutory consultation on the pre-submission document from November.

Market Square

Several events in recent weeks have demonstrated how our Market Square is being used in a more versatile way for the first time, in a long time. Events included a continental market, the British Grand Prix screening (which even

the Leader of Northamptonshire County Council praised but avoided giving credit to this council) and Armed Forces Day. Many favourable comments were received on these events. I am sure members will agree that it has been great to see more people making the most of our Market Square.

Public consultation has demonstrated that there is widespread support for a fountain in the southeast corner of the Market Square. There is no fountain in our town centre, and the council is working on plans for a group of water jets, with new seating to create an attractive and welcoming entrance to the square. The council will consult on the proposed feature as part of the planning application and would hope to install the fountain in the New Year.

The council is also testing large parasols for use at the Market Square's new catering facilities.

WNDC

The government has announced its 'five-year plan' for the West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC). The consultation paper can be viewed on their website.

The consultation period ends on the 18th September. It has been recommended that Cabinet broadly accept the recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny 1, particularly in relation to the transfer of planning powers back to this council. These proposals will be reflected in the council's own submission to the review process.

I am pleased to report that a new Chief Executive of WNDC has been appointed and look forward to strengthening the partnership with this council in the coming months.

Sustrans Connect 2 (SC2)

The SC2 project to create new cycle routes connecting Briar Hill, Upton and Hunsbury to the town centre has now completed its first phase and I was pleased to attend the launch on Saturday 4th July.

A total of four kilometres of traffic free greenway will have been laid upon its completion in 2011, with two bridges replaced and new seating, lighting and conservation planting. I am also pleased to report that the closed bridge over the river at Midsummer Meadow will be replaced in the next few weeks to re-establish the footpath and cycle route on the riverside to the East of the town.

Richard Church

Portfolio Holder for Planning & Regeneration



Portfolio Holder Report for Communities

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 13th July 2009

Leisure Services

As at 31st May, 10,738 pensioners and young people had signed up for free swimming at the council's leisure centres. In May alone, 2,450 people swam for free. Swimming among over-60s was up 68% on a year ago, and among under-16s it was 56% up.

Trilogy Fitness Suites – Membership Update

Membership sales were also up in May, attracting 80 online sales and 24 corporate memberships with 76 student memberships.

Lings Forum Swimming Pool Changing Rooms

At the time of writing, work to refurbish the changing rooms at Lings Forum Leisure Centre was under way. The project cost is £65,000 funded with the help of grant aid from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Work will include general redecoration, improvements to toilet facilities and retiling to improve wheelchair access.

Northampton Sports and Play Development Team

The council's team successfully delivered half-term holiday activities in Blackthorn and Wootton.

Working in partnership with Blackthorn Children Centres over 200 children and young people enjoyed a variety of events at the Big Lottery funded Playday at Lings Wood Playing fields.

The council's team secured £10,000 of funding from 'Activity Grants for Youth' (joint partnership funding by Northampton Youth Forum and Northamptonshire County Council) to provide summer holiday activities for 13-19 years olds and support new Street Football activities in the Upton area.

The council received notification that last year's Sports Relief Mile event, coordinated by the council's Sports Development and Events teams, was rated in the top 10 events. As a result, the council has been invited to apply to organise a flagship mile event for 2010.

In partnership with Northamptonshire PCT, the council's team commenced two weight management '10% challenges', one community-based programme based at Lings Forum and one programme aimed at council employees. The

programmes are 12-weeks long and offer help to support participants who have a high Body Mass Index (BMI) to develop a healthier lifestyle.

Eastfield and Spencer Sport and Physical Activity Project

In partnership with Age Concern, the council arranged an Intergenerational Day at St Albans Church in Eastfield to break barriers in the community between older residents and younger residents.

The event was well attended with attractions such as a bungee run and several dance, arts and crafts activities. The event also gave the team an opportunity to meet the community and promote the Eastfield and Spencer Sport and Physical Activity Project.

The council continues to work with Age Concern on the Easy Rider project. The second led-ride from the Camrose Centre to Harlestone Firs took place on Saturday 30th May.

The team delivered a 12-week course on physical activity and 'cooking on a budget' for the over-50s at Cardigan Close Community Centre. The programme was well attended and feedback has been extremely positive with participants changing their eating and exercise habits as a result.

Market Square Events

Since the last report, and at the time of writing, the number of successful events held on our Market Square has been growing. It includes Spratton Folk Festival, May Day, Music on the Square, the Big Picture, a successful 2 day continental market and Hands on Science.

The Silverstone Formula One Grand Prix weekend event saw displays of Ferraris and Harley Davidson motor cycles, plus demonstrations of radio-controlled model cars on the market square. The 'big screen' coverage of both qualifying and the race was a resounding success. My thanks to BBC Radio Northampton for providing the screen.

The inaugural Armed Forces and Veterans Day Tea Dance event also drew an enthusiastic crowd. The Lord Lieutenant of Northamptonshire, Lady Juliet Townsend, gave an inspiring speech and everyone was treated to the spectacle of the Mayor leading off the first dance with the Chair of Northamptonshire County Council.

There are many events planned for weekends throughout July and August to include Heart FM and EDF Energy presenting the first ever Green Britain Day, a Day of Dance, Get involved....Sport, Skate Park, Royal Anglian Talavera Celebration - support our troops in this historic parade, Shoe Town Festival Parade, Music on the Square on 14 and 22nd August

Events in Northampton's Parks

Since the last report, and at the time of writing, 28 days' of events had taken place in Northampton's parks, including the John Scarrott Fun Fair and the Fight 4 Cancer Run.

The Bands in the Park season has been extended until 13th September 2009.

Northampton Museum & Art Gallery

Since the last report, and at the time of writing, there were two exhibitions in the Northampton Museum & Art Gallery by:

1. The Mayday Trust – artists included young people leaving care, victims of abuse, those with moderate learning difficulties and recurring mental health problems, ex-offenders and individuals with a history of drug abuse – and;
2. University of Northampton – an annual showcase of work by students working towards a BA (Hons) in Fashion. The exhibition forms an important part of the course and publicises the work of budding designers from Northampton.

The museum hosted the launch of the Shoe Town Festival on June 26th. This summer-long event celebrates Northampton's historical prominence and enduring associations with this industry. Our museum holds probably the finest shoe collection in the world and this, plus many Northamptonians' current and past association with the boot and shoe industry, will make the Shoe Town Festival a "must see" for both local residents and those travelling from further afield.

Abington Park Museum

The Fun Day event held on June 20th attracted 1314 visitors into Abington Park Museum; a huge increase on the standard Saturday footfall of around 200 visitors. Other events forming part of the day's attractions included a mediaeval village, archery demonstrations and falconry displays on the adjacent parkland and the opportunity for children to take part in ancient crafts.

Open Air Art

The Open Air exhibition at Abington Museum opened on 22nd May 2009. The annual event, which began over 50 years ago is open to artists of all varieties and is popular as ever, with around 200 works on show this year.

I will close by expressing my thanks all council staff who have worked hard on each and every one of the events and activities listed in this report. It is also important that all councillors play an active role by showing support for the

many leisure, culture and heritage activities that are taking place in Northampton.

Paul Varnserry

Portfolio Holder for Communities



Portfolio Holder Report for Finance

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 1st June 2009

Finance & Assets

The 2008/09 Annual Governance Statement and Statement of Accounts were reviewed by the Audit Committee on the 22nd June. Post-Cabinet and Council on the 29th June, our external auditors, KPMG, will commence their audit in late-July. The accounts will be back to the Audit Committee, Cabinet and Council in September following the audit.

As well as working on the 2008/09 accounts audit, work is needed on preparing for the introduction of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). The introduction of IFRS to local authorities will see a significant change in technical accounting. The Finance Team are commencing work on establishing how this will impact in the future and what steps need to be taken now, to ensure a smooth transition.

2008/09 Outturn Reports

The outturn positions for the Housing Revenue Account, Capital and General Fund outturn reports were reported to Cabinet on the 29th June.

Budget Monitoring 2009/10

The Finance Team are communicating with Heads of Service to establish if there are any risks that need addressing now, of not meeting any of the savings/efficiencies built into the 2009/10 budget. The period report to Cabinet will provide this update.

Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)

The Use of Resources self-assessment has been presented to our external auditors. The CAA is a much harder test, but we are striving to maintain the previous CPA score of 2, which our external auditors have confirmed would still represent an improvement. Interviews have taken place with some directors and the review continues.

Asset Management

The council has successfully completed a negotiated surrender of a lease in respect of the Silver Horse Public House at Goldings. No payment has been made by the council to achieve this. It has been a source of anti-social and criminal behaviour in the past and the council has responded to community

concerns about its continued use as a pub. The council now has full control of this property and can decide on the best use of it in the future

Revenues and Benefits – Overview

Management and governance arrangements within Revenues and Benefits have now been scheduled to fit new corporate arrangements. This will ensure that management teams and our portfolio holder can be fully briefed on performance matters.

Revenues

Collection during May was 9.01% – 0.29% below target. This means we are 0.51% below our target. We are looking to benchmark performance to see how we compare with our neighbours.

We continue to closely monitor the position on collection rates, in order that any performance issues are escalated at the earliest opportunity. The council's 'Coping through the Recession' open day was one opportunity for the council to offer support to residents struggling to meet their payments.

Benefits

Caseloads and the associated increase in work levels continue to challenge our capacity assessing cases. Teams have been working hard to clear excess levels of work and we are starting to see an improvement. Five new benefit assessments officers are coming to the end of a three-month training program and should therefore start to contribute to the completion of outstanding claims.

It is worth noting that comparative performance against last year has slipped but our performance is still favourable against performance elsewhere in the country. We do, however, expect performance to return to 2008/2009 levels and are working hard with this aim in mind.

Northamptonshire Area Procurement Service (NAPS)

The month of June has seen NAPS respond to the stakeholder engagement challenge by supporting local events offering advice to businesses during the recession in both Northampton and Daventry.

Three revised Project Initiation Documents (PIDs) have been submitted to the Northamptonshire Efficiency & Improvement Partnership resulting from the proposed changes to the programme in May and NAPS is confident these will then be supported by the Chief Executives Steering Group.

Progress with introducing an e-tendering system is good, with the first project going live in July. Several collaborative projects are now in the pipeline including Environmental Services and Bring Banks & Textiles Collection.

David Perkins

Portfolio Holder for Finance

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2008/2009

Council 13 July 2009

Report Title	OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2008/2009
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Agenda Status: PUBLIC

1. Purpose

1.1 To receive the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2008/09, as attached at Appendix A.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Council notes the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2008/09.

3. Background and Issues

3.1 Part 2, Article 6 of the Council's Constitution requires that the Overview and Scrutiny Committees report annually to Council on their workings and make recommendations for further work programmes, and amended working methods if appropriate. Attached at Appendix A is the fourth Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report to the Council, covering the 2008/09 Municipal Year. It aims to provide a succinct summary of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees appointed, as well as the main issues scrutinised during the course of the year.

4. Options

4.1 This report is for information and therefore there are no options for decision.

5. Implications (including financial implications)

5.1 Priorities

5.1.1 Effective Overview and Scrutiny arrangements leading to improvements in service design and delivery contribute to achieving the ambition of being a well managed Council where the customer is at the heart of what we do.

5.2 Policy Framework

5.2.1 The work of Overview and Scrutiny plays a major part in the development of the Council's policy framework. This is identified in the work programme.

5.3 Resources and Risk

5.3.1 Not applicable.

5.4 Legal

5.4.1 Statutory power to undertake the proposals as set out in the report

5.4.1.1 The duties to undertake Overview and Scrutiny are set out in the Local Government Act 2000.

5.5 Equality

5.5.1 Overview and Scrutiny carries out Equality Impact Assessments for its Reviews, working closely with the Policy Team Leader.

5.6 Consultees (Internal and External)

5.6.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee has been consulted on the content of the Annual Report.

6. Background Papers

Key background information: -

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee agendas and minutes
- Overview and Scrutiny Review reports

Report Author and Title: Tracy Tiff, Overview and Scrutiny Officer on behalf of Councillor A Simpson, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

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Report of the
Overview & Scrutiny
Committee

Annual Report

2008/2009



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Glossary of Terms



Detailed below are some of the terms used in the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report, which explain how the Council uses or interprets a term, phrase or abbreviation.

Annual Report	Scrutiny Committees summarise their work and findings in an Annual Report
Budget	The annual summary of income and expenditure
Cabinet (Executive)	The Executive body responsible for day-to-day running of the Council and the development of policy. Cabinet Members have portfolios or areas of responsibility (e.g. Housing) for which they take executive decisions
Call-in	The process by which Overview and Scrutiny Committees consider whether a decision is properly taken or is the right decision
CASPAR	Crime & Anti-Social Behaviour PARTnership
Chair/Deputy Chair	The person who chairs a body of the Council e.g. a Scrutiny Committee
Chief Executive	The senior employee of the Council
Citizen	A member of the public who is not a Member or employee of the Council
Committee	A formal body consisting of elected Members
ComPaSS	Community Profiling and Shared Solutions. The aim of the ComPaSS Unit is to routinely profile crime and disorder and criminal justice on behalf of the seven Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) within Northamptonshire. This involves the regular collection and analysis of relevant data, on behalf of all local CDRPs, highlighting hotspot areas and community safety issues, as well as providing evaluated solutions
Co-Opted Member to a Scrutiny Committee	An individual with an area of expertise or experience who is invited to sit on a Committee or Work Group (either for the Municipal year or for the duration of a specific review) to provide information and advice to maximise effective decision-making



Glossary of Terms



Continued

Council	The term used for the organisation or in respect of the meeting of all of the Councillors
Councillor (or Member)	An elected local representative on the Council, a Councillor represents the interests of the people who live in their ward and Northampton as a whole
Exempt information	Information which is exempt from the normal publication rules (normally under Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act, 1972)
Key Decision	An important decision which affects more than one ward of the Council or will involve spending of large amounts of money. They must be made public and can only be taken after appropriate notice
Leader of the Council	The political head of the Council, usually the leader of the largest group of Members (or coalition) - responsible for the proposal of policies and day to day running of the Council
Member (Councillor)	A Councillor; the elected representative of the community
Member of the Public	Anyone who is not a part of the Council
Minutes	The formal record of the proceedings of a meeting
Northampton Borough Council (NBC)	The local authority, which delivers borough council services to the whole of Northampton. These are mostly different to the services provided by Northamptonshire County Council
Officer	A paid official of the Council
Overview and Scrutiny	<p>The process offers both opportunities and challenges for Councillors and members of the public to improve the quality and delivery of services the Council provides to its local communities. The work of Overview and Scrutiny includes:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Policy Development and Review■ Oversight of the Best Value Review Programme■ Holding the Executive to account



Glossary of Terms



Continued

PI	Performance Indicator
Policy	A plan of action or approach to an issue - part of the Council's Policy Framework
Policy and Financial Framework	The Council's main policies and approach to managing its finances
Portfolio Holder	A Member of the Executive with responsibilities for specific aspects of the Council's policy or work
Protocol	A document, which sets out, how people will behave or matters will be handled
Scrutiny	(See Overview and Scrutiny). The way in which Members oversee the work of the Council and investigate the needs of the community A study led by Scrutiny Councillors on a current issue, selected by the Committee. It aims to identify areas of good as well as poor practice, compare performance with other councils countrywide, and challenge existing practice where relevant
Scrutiny Review	The Review will lead to recommendations for improvements to relevant Cabinet Members as well as outside agencies, such as health trusts. While these are not obliged to support the recommendations, effective consultation has been proven to lead to consensus and to Cabinet support for reviews undertaken
Smartwater Ink	A colourless solution that contains a unique forensic code that is invisible to the naked eye. The code is registered to individual addresses and can be used to mark valuables and items at people's homes. If anyone is stopped with marked items, identification is made by flashing an ultraviolet light over the items. Traces of SmartWater will fluoresce green and can then be traced back to their owner. This can be used as evidence should the matter go to court and can result in a prosecution
Ward	An area of Northampton for which elections are conducted





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a message from

Councillor Andrew Simpson, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

This Annual Report by Northampton Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees gives a summary of the Committees' activities over the past twelve months and maps out its plans for the forthcoming year.

Over the last year, Overview and Scrutiny has considered a wide range of issues from partnership working with West Northants Development Corporation (WNDC), investigation into the contaminated water incident that took place during the summer to a Review of the Council's customer services facilities. Other Agencies and the general public were fully engaged in these Reviews.

The public suggested issues for inclusion on the Overview and Scrutiny work programme 2008/2009. At the Balloon Festival that took place in August 2008, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee asked attendees to suggest issues. The public suggested many issues and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee selected the top ten issues that had been proposed. At the Local Democracy Week event held at the Guildhall in October 2008, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee held a ballot for an item for inclusion onto its Work Programme. The item with the most votes was More Facilities for Older Children. Northampton's Youth Forum was very involved in this Review, offering advice for details for inclusion in the scope and presenting comprehensive evidence.

The evaluation of the Overview and Scrutiny function at Northampton was completed in January 2009. It had some very positive

outcomes, acknowledging the achievements made, some of which have been noted as examples of best practice. Challenges and areas for improvement were also suggested and these will be subject to debate at an Overview and Scrutiny workshop to be held early in the new Municipal Year. The workshop will aim to produce an Improvement Plan for Overview and Scrutiny. The workshop will be externally facilitated by Howard Boots, Head of Overview and Scrutiny, Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council. Howard, along with the scrutiny team from Rugby Borough Council, undertook peer reviews of our scrutiny function as part of the evaluation process. The Improvement Plan will look to further develop the Overview and Scrutiny function at Northampton.



**Councillor
Andrew Simpson
Chair, Overview
and Scrutiny
Management Committee**



Introduction

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny is about Councillors working with the public to make sure that the Borough Council is making improvements to services to improve the quality of life for all in Northampton.

How does Overview and Scrutiny work?

There are three Overview and Scrutiny Committees that mirror the Cabinet Portfolios. In addition there is an Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, of which one of its duties is to approve the annual work programme.

Overview and Scrutiny Structure



The Committees set up in depth investigations, often into poor performing or developing areas.

The Reviews are either undertaken by the Committee or Task and Finish Groups are set up to review specific issues. The Task and Finish Groups continue to be a successful feature of Northampton's Overview and Scrutiny process.

Following an in-depth Review, the report, together with any recommendations for improvement, is submitted to Cabinet and/or full Council. If the recommendations are accepted and actioned they are monitored by Overview and Scrutiny as part of its vigorous monitoring work programme.

Overview and Scrutiny also forwards its views to Cabinet and/or full Council through the pre-decision scrutiny process.

In all that it does, Overview and Scrutiny continues to have regard to the Centre for Public Scrutiny's principles of effective scrutiny: -

- Making an impact on service delivery
- Providing effective challenge
- Reflecting the voice and concerns of the Public
- Taking the Lead and Owning the Scrutiny process



Call-In of Cabinet decisions

Cabinet makes key decisions which are decisions that affects more than two wards and/or involves more than £50,000. Within three working days of the minutes of Cabinet meeting being published, two Councillors may "Call-In" a decision made at that meeting. This means that Overview and Scrutiny examines the decision to make sure that it was made in the correct way and using robust information. Overview and Scrutiny may recommend that Cabinet or full Council should reconsider the decision. It may also be consulted by Cabinet on forthcoming decisions and the development of policy.

Achievement

The Overview and Scrutiny Call-In process at Northampton has been noted by the Centre for Public Scrutiny as an example of best practice.



Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee 2008/2009



**Councillor
Andrew Simpson**
(Chair)



**Councillor
Jenny Conroy**
(Vice Chair)



**Councillor
Ifty Choudary**



**Councillor
Jamie Lane**



**Councillor
Christopher Malpas**



**Councillor
Pam Varnserry**

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee co-ordinates and manages the work of the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees. It has the following responsibilities: -

- Co-ordinating work programmes
- Allocation of resources
- Allocating areas of responsibility in cases of doubt
- Re-allocation of areas of responsibility in the event of changes to Cabinet Portfolios
- Involvement of other people in Overview and Scrutiny process
- Training and Development needs for Overview and Scrutiny Councillors
- Publicising the work of Overview and Scrutiny both within the Council and externally to the public and external organisations
- Evaluating the performance against the four main principles of Overview and Scrutiny



How Overview and Scrutiny contributes to the Council's Corporate Objectives

Overview and Scrutiny supports the Council's five priorities and underpinning commitments and a lot of scrutiny work is developed around these priorities.

The Council's five priorities and underpinning commitments are:

- **We will help our communities become safer, greener and cleaner**
- **We will improve housing and health to enhance the well-being of our communities**
- **We will be a well-managed organisation that puts our customers at the heart of what we do**
- **We will promote economic development and growth in Northampton**
- **We will strengthen our commitment to partnership working and engaging with our communities to deliver better outcomes**



How you can become involved in the work of Overview and Scrutiny

There are a number of ways in which the public and interested organisations can find out about the work of Overview and Scrutiny:-

Attend a Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

All Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings are held in public and anyone is welcome to attend to listen to the proceedings. Meetings are usually held at the Guildhall.

Only on rare occasions, when certain types of confidential information is being discussed, are members of the public not allowed to attend Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings.

As well as wanting to keep people informed about Overview and Scrutiny, the Councillors on the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Task and Finish Groups are keen to hear your views on the topics they are looking at.

There are a number of ways in which the public's views can be heard by the Councillors.

Write to the Task and Finish Groups

If you have a particular interest in a Review you can write to or e-mail the relevant Task and Finish Group to give your views to the Councillors. If you do choose to make a contribution to a Task and Finish Group's Review, any comments you make will not be made public unless you have agreed to this.

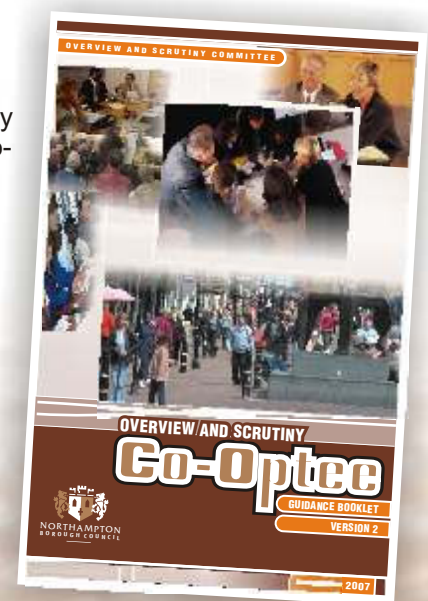
Become a Witness

One of the main ways in which the Task and Finish Groups gather the evidence they need to inform their Reviews is through inviting individuals with a particular knowledge of the subject to attend their meetings and provide evidence. This enables the Councillors to make better informed recommendations but it also gives individuals and organisations from outside the Council a way of having their voice heard.

Become a co-opted member to a Task and Finish Group

If you have knowledge or expertise in the topic being reviewed become a co-opted member to the Task and Finish Group. Co-opted members are normally representatives of groups or organisations or members of the public with specific or relevant expertise external to the Council.

Overview and Scrutiny has put together a Co-Optee Handbook that gives brief details the roles of a Co-Opted member.



Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Management Committee



Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Achievements and Activities

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee has overall responsibility for co-ordinating, managing and developing the scrutiny process.

The Committee introduced a number of changes as part of an ongoing process of review and development, which aims to ensure that Overview and Scrutiny is continually improved at Northampton.

- Introduction of a Media Protocol which aims to put Overview and Scrutiny Reviews and work out in the public domain
- Up to date Overview and Scrutiny WebPages
- Standard style Overview and Scrutiny reports and documents

Key Achievements and Activities

during 2008/2009

- Overview and Scrutiny Improvement Plan will be implemented in the summer 2009, following the evaluation of the Overview and Scrutiny process
- Introduction of a four year rolling training programme for Overview and Scrutiny Councillors
- Introduction of a training programme for Officers who will be providing witness evidence to Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Task and Finish Groups
- Re-introduction of the robust Overview and Scrutiny Monitoring Work Programme
- Introduction of further Overview and Scrutiny Protocols to ensure smooth running of the service

Praise for Overview and Scrutiny

Overview and Scrutiny processes, procedures and documents have been commended recently: -

- **Overview and Scrutiny Protocols** - Comments include: "useful documents", "well written". "concise" *Scrutiny Officer, North West Leicester Council*
- **Overview and Scrutiny Public Speaking Procedure and Protocol** - A good system. Impressed by the straightforward Public Speaking Protocol. *Scrutiny Support Officer, East Sussex Council*
- **Witness Protocol** - Copies have been requested from a number of Local Authorities, including Lincolnshire County Council,



Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Praise for Overview and Scrutiny

Continued

- **Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit and Co opted Guidance Handbook -** Comments include: - "Well-written, well thought through, concise" - *Scrutiny Officer, North West Leicester Borough Council*
- **Overview and Scrutiny Newsletter -** Comments include: 'fabulous'. - *Councillor, Hertsmere Borough Council*
- **Overview and Scrutiny Review Reports -** Comments include: - 'amongst some of the best read'. - *Councillor, Hertsmere Borough Council*
- **Overview and Scrutiny WebPages -** clear and concise information provided. - *Head of Overview and Scrutiny, Tameside Borough Council and Councillor from Hertsmere Borough Council*
- **Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2007/2008 -** Format of the report commended by *Head of Overview and Scrutiny, Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council*

Evaluation of Overview and Scrutiny

This comprehensive Review evaluated the performance of Overview and Scrutiny at Northampton using the Centre for Public Scrutiny's (CfPS) framework.

A significant amount of evidence was gathered from a variety of sources: -

- The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Officer completed the self-evaluation framework form
- All other Councillors were sent a short questionnaire, comprising six main questions regarding the Overview and Scrutiny process at Northampton Borough Council
- The Head of Scrutiny at Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council and the Scrutiny Officers from Rugby Borough Council undertook separate peer reviews
- The Overview and Scrutiny Officer carried out a comparison of Northampton Borough Council's Scrutiny function with that of other districts, noted as best practice by the CfPS



Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Achievements

- There have been some good issue-based Reviews.
- Overview and Scrutiny sets its own work programme.
- Members are committed to the Overview and Scrutiny process.
- All Overview and Scrutiny members have a fairly good awareness of their role in Scrutiny.
- There is effective challenge to performance monitoring.
- There is good use of external witnesses and experts.
- A formal monitoring system is in place to monitor progress of the implementation of Overview and Scrutiny recommendations.
- Past issues for Review have been suggested by the public, for example Allotments (water charges).
- Task and Finish Groups are non-partisan and focus on the issue being reviewed.
- Scrutiny is generally of a consensus nature and it is rare for a vote to be used.
- Cabinet reacts well to scrutiny and is required to formally respond to scrutiny recommendations within two Cabinet cycles.

- There is effective scrutiny. For example the work around the closure of post offices and the Review of the contaminated water incident.
- The relationship between Scrutiny and the Executive was considered by the Peer Reviewer to be very good and the Executive is keen to see a challenging and effective Scrutiny Function.
- A number of effective publications have been produced, for example the Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit and a regular newsletter.
- There is an effective Call-in process.
- There is positive support from senior management for Scrutiny, particularly as a senior officer is assigned to each Task and Finish Group for the life of the Review.
- Good quality information is issued to Overview and Scrutiny members.

Challenges

- Limited pre-decision scrutiny.
The Forward Plan is not used to inform the work of Scrutiny.
- Lack of understanding of how Overview and Scrutiny can help the improvement of the Council.
- The general public often do not understand Overview and Scrutiny. The public must be interested in a



Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Challenges

Continued

- Scrutiny Review if they are to participate.
- The public is not consulted about the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme.
- There is limited press coverage of Overview and Scrutiny Reviews.
- The term 'scrutiny' is often seen as negative and overly intrusive.
- The value of Overview and Scrutiny is not always recognised.
- Overview and Scrutiny Officer resources.
- The Overview and Scrutiny website requires updating.
- Better attendance at development sessions.
- The Overview and Scrutiny work programme has a tendency to be reactive, rather than focusing on delivery of the corporate plan and service improvement.

Suggested Changes

- The Portfolio Holder(s) and Leader should be invited to inform the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee of his/her priorities at the work programme setting stage.
- Work Programmes should contain clear links to Council priorities and National Indicator Set performance information

and encourage an input from the Executive into the development of the Work programme.

- Overview and Scrutiny must be clearly identified with the improvement programme for Northampton and this would be aided by the adoption of a clear mission statement for the Overview and Scrutiny function.
- There needs to be linkage of Overview and Scrutiny work to the Council's Improvement Plan.
- Consideration should be given to renaming the Overview and Scrutiny Committees as Panels.
- There should be more engagement with the press, including proactive statements from the Chairs.
- There is a need to demonstrate clearer outcomes following Reviews.
- The profile of Overview and Scrutiny in Northampton and therefore the Borough of Northampton itself can be raised by highlighting through, for example, the Centre for Public Scrutiny web site and other sources, the good practice currently being undertaken.
- The evaluation of Overview and Scrutiny could be carried out every two years.
- Consideration could be given to holding some Overview and Scrutiny meetings in community buildings.
- The percentage of recommendations accepted by Cabinet should be calculated.



Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Once completed, the framework provided a clear picture of how Overview and Scrutiny operates in Northampton. The findings were used to identify priorities for improvement planning.

Shadow Countywide Joint Scrutiny Committee

Work has continued with the County Council and the other District Councils in Northamptonshire on the Countywide Joint Scrutiny Committee. The shadow Committee was set up early in 2009 with an aim of this becoming the Countywide Joint Scrutiny Committee after the County Council elections in June 2009.

Review - More Facilities for Older Children

At the town's Balloon Festival in August 2008, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee asked the public to suggest issues for inclusion onto the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. The public suggested many issues and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee selected the top ten issues that had been proposed.

At the Local Democracy Week event held at the Guildhall in October 2008, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee held a ballot for an item for inclusion onto its Work Programme. The item with the most votes was *More Facilities for Older Children*.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee worked with the town's Youth Forum in scoping the Review. Four co-optees joined the Review, representing Northamptonshire County Council's Children and Young People's Services, Connexions and Northampton's Voluntary Youth Association. The Youth Forum was also very active in the Review helping to obtain evidence from a variety of sources.

This was a short, sharp Review, which is due to conclude its findings during the Municipal Year 2009/2010.

Key Outcomes

- Not known. The Committee will report its findings during the Municipal Year 2009/2010.



Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

What are the future challenges for Overview and Scrutiny?

Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)

Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) will replace Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). CAA will look at the public services in an area delivered by councils and their partners, including the private and voluntary sector. CAA aims to be more relevant to local people by focussing on issues that are important to their community. It will also develop a shared view about the challenges facing an area, such as crime, community cohesion, a sustainable environment or public health issues and will also create a more joined up and proportionate approach to public service regulation.

Local Area Agreements Round 2 (LAA2)

Local Area Agreements (LAAs) set out the priorities for a local area agreed between central government and the local authority, Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and other key partners at a local level. LAAs simplify some central funding, help join up public services more effectively and allow greater flexibility for local solutions to local issues.

Councillor Call for Action (CCfA)

Through Councillor Call for Action (CCfA), the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enables Councillors to refer a local matter to Scrutiny. The Act became

legislation in Spring 2009 and the measure, CCfA, is aimed to help Councillors raise matters on an Authority's agenda on behalf of their constituents where all usual courses of action have failed to resolve the matter. It will be up to Overview and Scrutiny to determine whether or not to hold a Scrutiny enquiry into the issue and respond.

Ward Councillors play a central role in the life of a Local Authority as a channel for discussion between the Council and its citizens and as a champion for local concerns. To strengthen Councillors' ability to carry out this role, the Government has enacted, in the Local Government and Public Involvement and Health Act 2007, section 119, provisions for a CCfA.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 also makes provision in section 236 for Councils to delegate some of its functions to individual Councillors to allow them to make decisions at a ward level, which will bring real improvements to their local areas.

Overview and Scrutiny Improvement Plan

Following the evaluation of Overview and Scrutiny, the Improvement Plan will aim to make changes to the Overview and Scrutiny process at Northampton to ensure it continues to improve and make a difference to the citizens of Northampton.

A workshop for Overview and Scrutiny Councillors has been set for Spring 2009 to agree an Improvement Plan for the service.



Overview & Scrutiny Committee **1**

Partnerships, Regeneration, Community Safety and Engagement



Overview & Scrutiny Committee 1

Partnerships, Regeneration, Community Safety and Engagement

welcome from

Councillor Andrew Simpson, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny 1

Over the course of the year, Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1, with responsibility for partnerships, regeneration, community safety and engagement, has carried out a number of productive and detailed Reviews, which have been of importance both locally and nationally. Reviews that have been undertaken include:-

- Partnership working between Northampton Borough Council and West Northants Development Corporation
- Concessionary Fares

The Committee has continued to monitor progress on previous Overview and Scrutiny work to ensure that recommendations have been implemented.

It has provided a response to Government consultations and has, as part of the performance-monitoring regime, investigated best value performance indicator in depth.

The Committee looks forward to new challenges during 2009/2010 and continuing our good work.



Councillor
Andrew Simpson
Chair, Overview
and Scrutiny
Management Committee

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1

This Committee covers areas of business, which is a priority for the Council. It has had a busy year successfully delivering a number of Reviews and other work during 2008/2009.

Reviews

Reviews for 2008/2009 included: -

Partnership working between Northampton Borough Council (NBC) and West Northants Development Corporation (WNDC)

This Review established how well WNDC is performing and how well NBC and WNDC are working together in partnership to deliver the regeneration, planning and growth objectives for the town.

The need for the Review had arisen from the previous work of this Committee, in particular the Historic Buildings Task and Finish Group, which had looked at the proposed Needle sculpture as well as historic building protection and WNDC's role, and also monitoring of Planning Performance Indicators. Past work had suggested a Review into WNDC's performance and how it works with NBC would be beneficial to both organisations.



Key findings: -

- Northampton Borough Council (NBC) needs to strengthen its capacity to develop and deliver projects jointly with West Northants Development Corporation (WNDC). WNDC and NBC partnership working is however improving.
- Northampton has lacked a clear vision for the town, which has inhibited the investment for WNDC.
- WNDC has not been proactive enough in developing projects with NBC. NBC needs to strengthen its capacity to develop projects jointly with WNDC.
- WNDC has, until recently, had a poor record of performance for development control.
- The out of town location of WNDC makes it difficult for public access and the co-ordination of development control.
- It would be beneficial for meetings between NBC and WNDC to take place in order that a better co-ordinated Development Control Service be developed.
- There is a lack of financial resources to tackle the key pump priming required. WNDC resources, proportionate with its funding, appears to have been spread too thinly across too many priorities. The Committee concludes that it is apparent that WNDC is under-funded.
- There is currently no agreed Local Development Framework (LDF) for West Northamptonshire. The lack of a Local Development Framework has led to WNDC substituting spend on less focussed activities, not delivering long-term benefit. Whilst applauding the £3.2 million funding to the community fund, the Committee feels that this will have no long-term positive regeneration effect.



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- WNDC taking planning powers in house caused significant disruption to NBC. NBC's Planning Services is now performing at a level that it could take on additional development control powers from WNDC.
- The current economic climate has altered the way in which WNDC needs to do its business. Like traditional Urban Development Corporations, WNDC now has to pump prime and encourage development in difficult economic times, rather than over-develop.
- WNDC's Policy of preventing Senior Politicians on its Board from sitting on Planning Committees for their area loses key local knowledge and should be reviewed. It is a mistake for WNDC to feel that being an elected Member is a declarable interest as this is not the case. In addition, there is a democratic deficit where Council representatives continue to serve on WNDC's Board after no longer being an elected Member.
- The Committee highlights one good example of joint working, the St John's area masterplanning supported by Northamptonshire County Council and WNDC and led by NBC. This should be used as a model for future projects.
- Whilst recognising collaborative working with WNDC in other areas, there is clear evidence this has not been the case with NBC.
- Communication at senior officer level is the key to success and has not always been present in the past but is said to be improving.
- There is confusion regarding what regeneration, planning and partnership meetings WNDC should be represented at. There is a need for NBC and WNDC to clarify the remit and role of various Steering Groups and Boards in relation to regeneration and growth.
- There is a variable approach to Partnership working, and a lack of integration with experienced partners, although some recent improvements are acknowledged.
- The Committee is aware that a Development Corporation should support the Local Authorities by assuring the delivery of the Growth Agenda by:
 - Working with Local Authorities to support development of their integrated and widely supported visions and plans.
 - Facilitating development and house building.
- WNDC has informed the Committee that the main internal constraints mostly relate to limited capacity and resources and due to a change in its original delivery and business model, too much emphasis has been placed on the Local Authorities to drive change when the powers have been removed.
- A Communications Protocol is not in place and there is the need to promote projects widely to encourage interest from all types of investor in a Community that is seen to be exciting, vibrant and interesting with excellent facilities would be beneficial.
- There are gaps in the planning consultation process. There is evidence that comments made by NBC's Planning Committee in relation to consultation by WNDC have not been reported back to WNDC's Planning Committee when it determines a Planning Application.
- There are no clear lines of responsibility between WNDC and Local Authorities for consultation over major projects. This can leave out not only elected Members but also the public. Castle Station master plan and the Needle Project are examples where this has occurred.



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- There is still considerable public confusion over the role of WNDC and Local Authorities like NBC.
- Use of NBC's office space would help to integrate WNDC and NBC officers towards improved joint working and more efficient use of public funds.
- There is a gap in WNDC providing feedback on the consultancy work undertaken by Environmental Health. It is realised that the draft Service Level Agreement for the work has not been agreed.
- WNDC reports planning performance figures on Major, Minor and Other Planning Applications on a quarterly basis. Performance has been improving steadily following the introduction of the in-house Development Control Service in January 2007 but was pretty poor until recently.
- WNDC will be subject to a Government Review, which will assess its value for money. This review is scheduled for December 2009 and will be a positive vehicle for discussing how the Council can work with WNDC to help refocus on its core objectives, mainly the delivery of the Growth Agenda.
- The Committee acknowledges that the Council would wish to secure the return of responsibility for minor planning decisions in Northampton Town Centre as a first step to the return of large development control decisions. The Council's improved performance in determining planning applications and the investment it has made in improving its Planning Service demonstrates that it is building the capacity to determine these applications. The Committee realises that it is anticipated that Planning (Development Control) powers will, ultimately, be returned to NBC, however, some care and caution needs to be used when looking at returning Planning powers to NBC. WNDC is a statutory Local Planning Authority. It might delegate work back to NBC through a Service Level Agreement but it cannot 'hand back' Development Control Powers without a change in legislation. Also, in taking back any powers, NBC would need to ensure that it could expand its Development Control capability to handle the additional workload. Such a transfer needs to be carefully planned and implemented.
- It is a concern on the way in which NBC is consulted by WNDC on planning applications, particularly major applications of a strategic nature. NBC is not a statutory consultee and planning staff has expressed concerns that NBC is not always consulted in a timely way to allow NBC to co-ordinate a comprehensive response to planning applications, bearing in mind that some will have to be reported to Planning Committee.
- The Committee realises that NBC can help WNDC by providing support to WNDC in pressing Government and other Agencies to act in a way that supports the sustainability of growth.
- There is a gap in the process of ensuring conditions that are set by WNDC's Planning Committee are notified to and enforced by NBC. There needs to be a protocol developed to ensure enforcement by NBC or WNDC planning conditions takes place.
- The Committee notes that the Council's Planning department is being restructured in such a way to be geared up by Christmas 2008 to take on additional responsibility.



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- WNDC has been criticised for its performance in determining planning applications against the national targets, and the current performance of WNDC in determining applications is below national targets. This will, no doubt, be considered in the review of WNDC by the Government.
- WNDC should be using Planning Performance Agreements, with assistance from ATLAS (Advisory Team for Large Applications) to process major applications.

Key Outcomes

- NBC and WNDC partnership working is improving.
- There is a lack of financial resources to tackle the key pump priming required.
- NBC can help WNDC by providing support to WNDC in pressing Government and other Agencies to act in a way that supports the sustainability of growth.
- There is a gap in the process of ensuring conditions that are set by WNDC's Planning Committee are notified to and enforced by NBC.
- Further outcomes are not yet known. The report was received by Cabinet at its meeting on 25 February 2009. Cabinet's response will be forwarded to a future meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1.

Concessionary Fares Appreciative Inquiry

The Appreciative Inquiry was tasked with the consideration, in conjunction with public consultation, of possible variations to the Concessionary Bus Travel Scheme currently operated by Northampton Borough Council. The setting up of the Appreciative Inquiry followed representations on variations being made to full Council in May 2008. Subsequently, the matter was referred to Cabinet by full Council (2nd June 2008) and on to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 (25th June 2008).

The Appreciative Inquiry is focused on a number of possible variations to the current concessionary scheme. The current scheme offers the concession to residents aged 60 and over and residents with eligible disabilities for free bus travel. The current scheme offers free bus travel between 9.30am and 11pm, Monday to Friday and all day at weekends. At present, there is no provision for companions to travel free with disabled residents.

The Appreciative Inquiry is due to complete its work early in the Municipal year 2009/2010 and its final findings will be reported in the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2009/2010.



Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1

Performance Monitoring

As part of the performance monitoring regime, the Chair and Vice Chair scrutinise the monthly Best Value Performance Indicators and request a report or further information on those that they feel need further investigation.

Over the year, Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 has investigated: -

BV126 Domestic burglaries per 1,000 households per Local Authority Area

The Committee investigated this issue in depth hearing evidence from the Community Safety Team, Northampton Borough Council and Northants Police.

Key Outcomes

- The operation is successful dependent on the time of year, unfortunately due to the 'credit crunch' and seasonal shopping, although some gains have been made, these have currently slipped. The use of 'Smartwater' ink will be an effective deterrent.
- NBC plays a major part in partnership with the Police as it is providing shared offices to help open up communications between offender groups / victims etc.

- Overall the relationship is strong in the short and long term. There are still issues being looked at but many Policies need to be amended and updated.
- NBC carries out 'free repairs' as long as the repair has a 'Crime Number'. It seems apparent that this system is abused, which costs the Council money.
- The 'Caspar' project in the Thorplands area was mentioned as being the only 'underachiever'. Crime has increased due to the current climate. More prevention is needed. With regards the percentages, more numbers are required to update as if we are doing the repairs the housing department should be able to report on the crime numbers.
- An Appreciative Inquiry to investigate the issues in relation to BV126 and domestic burglaries will convene in the Municipal Year 2009.



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BV170b the number of visits to Local Authority museums that were in person per 1,000 population

The Committee scrutinised BV170b ascertaining why there had been an apparent fall in visits to museums in the quarter, July to September 2008.

Key Outcomes

- Visitor figures for Northampton Museum & Art Gallery in this quarter are within the overall trend, which indicates a slight decline.
- It is known that a significant proportion of visitors to Abington Museum in the summer come in family groups. A large proportion of visitors come whilst on an overall visit to the park. The latter is heavily influenced by weather conditions, where rain or overcast conditions deter visits to the park.
- The weather for the summer of 2008 can be described as unusually overcast and wet, which matches very closely the marked fall in visitors for this period compared to previous years at Abington Museum.

Consultation

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 has provided a response to Government Consultations, namely: -

Extending Primary Care Access

The Committee provided its views on Equitable Access in Primary Medical Care programme to Northants Primary Care Trust: -

- Overall the Committee supported the introduction of new Health Centres providing 8-8 access, 7 days a week.
- There is a deficit of medical provision, such as GP surgeries, in the west and south west of the town, but a Health Centre providing services for 8,000 people is inadequate. There is a need for a centre in the west of the town to provide services for at least 16,000.
- If the centre was to be situated in the west of the town, it could create transport problems for those travelling from elsewhere in the town. For example, two buses would be needed to get there from the eastern district. Cost of travel to the centre was also a concern.
- Consideration should be given to providing dental services at the new Health Centre. There is an apparent shortage of NHS dentists.



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- The new Health Centre should work with Supporting People to commissioning services.
- Concerns regarding the effect the new Health Centre will have on the current GP out of hours' service. Some GPs may have concerns about the Health Centres being run by private organisations.

Key Outcomes

The Committee's response as above was included in the Council's response to the Consultation on Equitable Access in Primary Medical Care.

Proposed Closure of two former school sites - former Parklands Middle School and the former St Mary's Middle School sites

The Committee provided its response to the consultation for inclusion in the Portfolio Holder (Regeneration)'s response to the Department of Children and Family Services: -

- Disquiet over the apparent minimum consultation period of four weeks being given for the above two disposals and was disappointed at the lack of clarity in the consultation letter regarding the end of the consultation period.
- NBC's Planning Committee provided no objections to planning applications on 10 school field sites on the proviso that Managed Community Access Agreements were in place. The Committee was concerned that none of the conditions had been adhered to;

including the condition for Managed Community Access Agreements not being in place for the ten sites.

- The Committee asked Cabinet not to give support for the two proposed disposals without Managed Community Access Agreements being in place. There appears to be no evidence to warrant changing the Government's initial refusal of the disposal of these two sites, due to the fact that the fields were not surplus to requirements due to significant shortfalls at local schools and therefore would ask Cabinet to support continued refusal for the development of the sites.
- There is already a shortage of playing fields as identified in the Playing Pitches Strategy 2005, in particular, junior football, mini-soccer and junior rugby pitches and the proposed disposals would add to this shortage.

Key Outcomes

The Committee's response as above was included in the Portfolio Holder (Regeneration)'s response to the Consultation on proposed Closure of two former school sites - former Parklands Middle School and the former St Mary's Middle School sites.

Budget Consultation

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 took part in the Revenue Budget Consultation Process 2009/2012, making comment early on in the process.



Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1

Monitoring Process

The rigorous Overview and Scrutiny Monitoring Process was re-introduced this year and the Committee monitored the following Overview and Scrutiny Review recommendations that had been accepted by Cabinet: -

Community Safety (Evaluation of Dispersal Orders) Overview and Scrutiny Report (2006)

The purpose of the Task and Finish Group was to add value to the Dispersal Order process. The primary aim of the Task and Finish Group was to review the report produced by the Community Safety Team reviewing the first 16 Dispersal Orders initiated in Northampton between February 2004 and September 2005.

Key recommendations included: -

- A mini consultation process will take place throughout the Dispersal Order process, in particular, before the Dispersal Order is implemented.
- The ComPaSS Unit is asked to provide statistical data before a Dispersal Order is implemented, during and once it has been completed. This data will inform the evaluation process.
- The Portfolio Holder for Business Intelligence, E-Government and People Support, to present regular reports, including a summary of the evaluation of Dispersal Orders to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).
- A Joint multi Agency Action Group (JAG) to be set up when the implementation of every Dispersal Order is considered.

- Joint multi Agency Action Groups (JAGs) will engage with the community and inform residents of any pending Dispersal Orders before they are implemented and provide feedback to residents of the evaluation of the Dispersal Order at the end of the process.
- Entry and Exit Strategies will be implemented for all Dispersal Orders and will be focussed upon at the beginning of the process.
- Northampton Borough Council, and other Agencies, will work towards zero Dispersal Orders being implemented, which equals success.
- The Anti Social Behaviour Unit will be involved in Councillor Induction explaining how Councillors can become involved in the Dispersal Order process. A copy of this report will be used as part of the Councillor Induction process.

Key Outcomes

- Cabinet actioned all of the accepted recommendations contained in the report.
- A stricter process for granting Dispersal Orders is ongoing to be used only as a 'last resort'. Guidelines will be updated as and when required.
- It will be ensured that there is continued involvement of young people in the JAG process on every occasion.
- All Councillors and the Police are required to provide feedback on Dispersal Orders in their area.



Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1

Leisure Services Review (2006)

The purpose of the Task and Finish Group was to review the objectives of the Service, to review the extent to which the Service meets these objectives and to review whether the Service provides 'value for money'.

Key recommendations included: -

- A three-year Leisure Services Strategy for Northampton will be devised by December 2007, making reference to longer-term issues such as the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics and the Growth Agenda. The role of Leisure Services in delivering Healthier Communities outcomes will be described in the Strategy.
- A clear vision for the improvement and development for Leisure Services in Northampton will be established.
- The aims of Leisure Services are adopted as follows: -
 - Leisure Services and Programmes should, wherever possible, address the following key areas: -
 - To improve Health
 - Enhance Social Inclusion
 - Promote access and participation
 - Enhance community development

Needs assessment of the leisure provision will be undertaken, particularly addressing the following: -

- The Growth Agenda
- The implications of the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics
- Planning and Regeneration Policy process Health Agenda

Key Outcomes

- Cabinet accepted all of the recommendations contained in the report.
- Work is being undertaken to identify the range of options needed for Northampton over the next 20 years.



Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1

Councillor Call for Action

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enables Councillors to refer a local matter to Scrutiny.

A Task and Finish Group was set up to look at the way forward for this Council prior to the legislation being implemented.

Key Outcomes

- Cabinet accepted the report, together with its six recommendations advising Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 that as an aspect of Overview and Scrutiny function, any aspect of the CCfA is in the remit of the Committee and does not require Cabinet approval but this Initiative must be delivered within allocated Overview and Scrutiny resources.
- The Centre for Public Scrutiny recognised the work Overview and Scrutiny at Northampton had carried out in this area. It noted the Task and Finish Group's comment "that it did not support the view that the petition and call for action sufficiently empower communities to intervene with their elected representative. The Government should open a positive dialogue with local Councils, Councillors and local residents about

what more needs to happen to truly empower communities and local representatives". The Centre for Public Scrutiny's response was that "this tends to reflect the points made in the guidance to the use of CCfA as one of a number of tools to bring about the more effective resolution of local issues, and highlights that the CCfA and the new petitioning powers in the Local Democracy Bill should also be seen in this wider context."

Northamptonshire County Council's Schools Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and the Loss of School Playing Fields

An interim report on the Overview and Scrutiny report regarding the above was given by the Portfolio Holder. A final report will be presented to the Committee in due course.

Key Outcomes

- Not known work in progress. The Committee will report its findings during the Municipal Year 2009/2010.



Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1

The year ahead

Next year's work programme

During 2009/2010 the Committee wants to be flexible and not commit to too much planned work, which might prevent it from being able to react to any new issues that might arise.

Issues programmed in for

2009/2010 include: -

- Cost of Consultants
- Work surrounding Northampton Safer Stronger Communities Partnership - Appreciative Inquiry Approach



Overview & Scrutiny Committee **2**

Housing and Environment



Overview & Scrutiny Committee **2**

Housing and Environment

welcome from

Councillor Christopher Malpas, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny 2

This has been a busy year for Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2, which has responsibility for housing and environment. The following pages detail our activities over the last year and planned work for 2009/2010.

Over the past year, the Committee has sought not to just impact on the work of the Council but to address issues of greatest concerns to the citizens of Northampton. The issues that it has reviewed include: -

- The contaminated water incident that took place during the summer 2008
- Choice Based Letting System. This piece of work is still to be completed

Details of the Review work can be found on page 33.

Throughout the enquiries and Reviews, the Committee has been privileged to have had many contributions from local residents and other Agencies. Executive members have also been responsive to giving evidence to the Committee.

There was significant media interest into our Review into the contaminated water incident.

The Committee has continued to monitor progress on previous Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group work to ensure that recommendations are being carried out.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 will over the next year continue to look to add value to all the areas that it reviews.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Malpas'.

**Councillor
Christopher Malpas
Chair, Overview
and Scrutiny
Committee 2**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2

The agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 seeks to examine and influence policies under its remit of housing and environment.

Key outcomes and achievements

- Over the last year, Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 has successfully overseen one comprehensive Review, which was jointly carried out with Northamptonshire County Council, Daventry District Council and Wellingborough Borough Council. The Review was in two phases, the first phase completed early in the autumn 2008 and phase 2 finalised the Review in March 2009
- Two Appreciative Inquiries began their work early in 2009 and will report their findings in the autumn 2009
- The Committee considered the Call-In to Cabinet's recommendations on the Tenant Health Check
- Monitoring
- Performance Monitoring
- Pre-decision Scrutiny
- Budget Consultation

Reviews

Contaminated Water Task and Finish Group

Phase 1

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 successfully led a Review into the summer 2008 contaminated water incident in Northamptonshire. Representatives from Northamptonshire County Council, Daventry District Council and Wellingborough Borough Council joined the Task and Finish Group.

The findings of the Review were presented to Anglian Water Limited, the Drinking Water Inspectorate, the Water Consumer Council and Northamptonshire County Council.

On 20 June 2008 tests found cryptosporidium in a sample from water supplies to Northampton, Daventry and surrounding villages. The parasite causes stomach upsets and the most common symptom is diarrhoea.



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The Chair of the Task and Finish Group made contact with the neighbouring Local Authorities affected by the incident asking if they would find it beneficial to be part of the Review. Daventry District Council, Wellingborough Borough Council and Northamptonshire County Council all expressed an interest to be involved. Councillors from these three authorities helped to promote the Review by displaying posters and circulating copies of the questionnaires and attended the public sessions. Councillors from the three Authorities participated in the two public meetings.

Northamptonshire County Council's Scrutiny Management Committee also carried out a review into a different aspect of the situation. This Review scrutinised the effectiveness of the systems designed to minimise the effect of the outbreak on the county, and the co-operation and communication between the County Council and other organisations involved. Both Councils co-ordinated their work and shared the information gathered from their Reviews.



Key findings

From the evidence received it was apparent that Anglian Water Ltd could have done more to notify vulnerable groups of people of the incident. Comments made at the public meeting reiterated this view. It was further suggested at the public meeting that there needed to be a wide publicity campaign promoting the WaterCare Register and the importance of vulnerable people being included onto it.

The Task and Finish Group noted that through the Council's internal processes a register of vulnerable people is in existence but from the comments received in the questionnaires it highlights the need to further develop and expand this register. There is a need to liaise with relevant Council departments and Agencies regarding the production of an improved register.

Recommendations: -

- Officers, together with ward Councillors, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and any other interested groups and Agencies, develop a register of vulnerable residents. The register should be based at Northampton Borough Council's offices and be used in circumstances such as the recent contaminated water incident.
- The register of vulnerable residents should be regularly reviewed and updated.



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Key Outcomes

- The Review demonstrated good joint working with other Local Authorities
- The Review is a good example of external scrutiny
- The outcomes of the recommendations are not known as Cabinet's response to the report is expected in the Summer 2009

Contaminated Water Task and Finish Group

Phase 2

The Task and Finish Group led by Northampton Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2, with representatives from Northamptonshire County Council, Daventry District Council and Wellingborough Borough Council reviewed the Drinking Water Inspectorates (DWI) report into the contaminated water incident in Northamptonshire, which was published on 5 November 2008.

Key findings

- The equipment at Pitsford Reservoir should be checked regularly. The monitoring process did not appear to be rigorous enough.
- DWI's Report recommends that a thorough Review be undertaken throughout the Company's entire water supply area covering the hygiene arrangements in place for the exclusion of vermin, birds, insects and other small animals. The Review should cover every treated water storage unit and water treatment process unit where ingress had the potential to adversely affect the quality of treated water. DWI requested that Anglian Water Limited provide it with a summary report, by 30th November 2008, on the Review work together with a detailed site by site listing of the findings, and deficiencies found and remedial actions taken or pending.
- Ultraviolet (UV) equipment is very expensive to run. Pitsford Reservoir is classed as a low risk site and is continually monitored.
- Bottled water was delivered successfully to the vulnerable people although not everyone was aware of the WaterCare Register.
- When a problem arises such as the Cryptosporidium incident the Data Protection Act does not apply. Within the Act, it is stated that the sharing of information is permitted. Secondary Legislation states that in an emergency there is a need to share information and for Agencies to co-operate. This incident fits the criteria of an emergency and there is the need for Agencies and Organisations who hold such data to have a combined list of vulnerable people / voluntary groups.
- The Review concluded with a site visit to Pitsford works to check the measures that



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are in place and to see where the problem occurred on the site. The Task and Finish Group noted the sufficient remedial measures that Anglian Water Limited has installed to prevent such an incident occurring in the same manner at the Pitsford Water Treatment Works.

Key Outcomes

- Sufficient remedial measures have been put in place by Anglian Water Limited to prevent such an incident occurring in the same manner at Pitsford Water Treatment Works.

Choice Based Lettings Appreciative Inquiry

This Review followed the format of an Appreciative Inquiry. A small number of Councillors worked with Housing Officers investigating the Choice Based Lettings System.

Work is still underway and the final report will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 the Municipal year 2009/2010.

Parks and Grounds Maintenance Appreciative Inquiry

An Appreciative Inquiry was set up to investigate the public's perception of the Council's Parks and Grounds Maintenance Service. The Review is currently on hold until

the outcome of the Parks and Grounds Group Maintenance Working Review is known. The Parks and Grounds Maintenance Working Group is carrying out a very comprehensive Review.

Pre-decision Scrutiny

The Committee carried out pre-decision scrutiny on a number of issues, strategies and plans over the last year.

Draft Northampton Homeless Strategy

In scrutinising the draft Northampton Homeless Strategy, the Committee welcomed the Strategy noting that early intervention would improve the Partnership. The Strategy recognised the good previous Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group's work into homelessness.

The Committee commented on the wording in the document and its suggested changes were implemented.

Key Outcomes

- The draft Northampton Homeless Strategy recognised the good previous Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group work in homelessness.
- Comments made by the Committee on the content of the draft Strategy were included in the document.



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Draft Housing Services Improvement Plan 2010

The Committee was consulted on the draft Housing Services Improvement Plan 2010. The Committee welcomed the Plan making suggestions for wording changes in the document.

Key Outcomes

- The Committee's comments on the content of the draft Housing Services Improvement Plan 2010 were included in the document.

Monitoring

The Committee monitored the following Overview and Scrutiny Review recommendations that had been accepted by Cabinet: -

Street Scene (Abandoned Cars) Task and Finish Group report 2006

The purpose of this Task and Finish Group was to review poor performance indicators on the collection of abandoned cars and to review the new legislation, Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment 2005 - to dealing with problems of side waste and litter left following refuse collection and whether appropriate resources are available.



Recommendations included: -

- That the Council uses its powers, within legislation, to reduce the problems of extensive use of vehicles put up for sale on the highway are dealt with before they become a major nuisance.
- That the Council ensures resources are directed to the hotspots for abandoned cars: Blackthorn, Ecton Brook, Eastfield Park and side streets around the Kettering and Wellingborough Roads.
- That action is taken, where it continues to be a problem to prevent vehicles being driven onto public parks and burnt out, in particular Hunsbury Park.
- That, in accordance with the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005, retailers who allow litter within 100 yards of their premises be fined.
- That Cabinet supports the gating of alleyways as a measure to reduce fly tipping.



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- That the Council's legal department seeks an agreement with the Magistrates Court on the evidence required for the Council to achieve successful prosecution against fly-tipping and littering.
- That Cabinet considers adopting the Westminster model of prosecuting for fly tipping and littering and that a presentation be given to Northamptonshire Magistrates on the Council's intentions to adopt a similar process.
- That it be recommended to supermarkets that they all introduce a deposit system for the removal of supermarket trolleys from their premises.
- That leaflets in appropriate languages regarding recycling and refuse collection be distributed to households where the Council knows that there are people in the household who use that language. Leaflets in ethnic minority languages should be available through community organisations and made available to landlords.
- That landlords be encouraged to inform their tenants on the proper disposal of rubbish and that landlords be requested to provide proper places for tenants to store rubbish prior to collection by the Council, in particular, Landlords should take responsibility for informing new tenants of the collection date. The Council seeks to lead by example, as a landlord, by the way that it informs its tenants on the proper disposal of rubbish.
- That planning permission for new developments and conversions of properties for multi-occupation include a condition concerning the provision of facilities for tenants to store rubbish before collection.

Key Outcomes

- Cabinet accepted all 17 recommendations contained in the report.
- Further details on the outcome of the recommendations will be given to the Committee early in the Municipal Year 2009.



Allotments (Water Charges) Task and Finish Group report 2006

The purpose of the Task and Finish Group was to investigate the reasons for the proposed water charges for allotment holders within the Borough.



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Recommendations included: -

- That there should be no introduction of water charges until all water pipes on all allotment sites have been replaced.
- That a Water Charging Policy be introduced containing the following conditions: -
 - Water usage to be charged at a rate per pole and per field as an incentive to each field to conserve water.
 - When permission to erect a shed on an allotment plot is granted, the placing of a water butt with guttering for water conservation should be a condition of approval.
 - That when the water pipes are replaced, the installation of standpipes of allotment sites is explored.
 - That consideration be given to taking out a short-term loan against future and sale to cover the cost of replacing water pipes on all allotment sites.
- That consideration be given to revisiting and updating the Allotment Strategy 2004. The Allotment Strategy should be adopted by April 2007. Once approved and implemented, it could be used as a benchmark for the future, such as an umbrella for a five-year business plan for each allotment site. Within the Allotment Strategy the following issues need to be addressed: -
 - Security
 - Water conservation plan
 - Disabled access
 - Alternative methods to manage/run allotment sites
- That consideration be given to the introduction of 50% concessions for: -
 - allotment rental charges and the following groups be considered: -
 - Individuals over 60 years of age
 - Disabled users
 - Unemployed users

The following recommendations were outside the Group's original remit but were put forward for consideration to Cabinet as they are connected to the issue under Review. They arose during the work of the Review and are significant to the future management of the allotment sites and are offered as support to the work of the Council: -

Key Outcomes

- Cabinet accepted all recommendations contained in the report.
- Further details on the outcome of the recommendations will be given to the Committee early in the Municipal Year 2009.



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Tree Policy Task and Finish Group 2006

The purpose of the Task and Finish Group was to review the Tree Policy within Northampton Borough Council and achieve a consistent Urban Landscape Management Policy within the Council.

Recommendations contained in the report included: -

- Consider the draft Tree Policy proposed by the Group as the basis for a Northampton Borough Council Tree Policy.
- Seek public consultation on the draft Tree Policy.
- Give consideration to further resources to ensure the thorough maintenance of trees and the delivery of the Tree Policy.
- Require tree related complaints to be dealt with by an Administration Officer to free up the Tree Inspectors to undertake their inspections so that every tree within the borough is checked every twelve months for safety.
- Review the agreement with Northamptonshire County Council regarding tree cuttings being undertaken.
- Further work needs to be carried out on involving citizens' awareness being raised in tree maintenance.
- Consider including the maintenance of hedgerows in a future Policy.

Key Outcomes

- Cabinet accepted all of the recommendations contained in the report.
- Further details on the outcome of the recommendations will be given to the Committee early in the Municipal Year 2009.

Reaching the Decent Homes Standard

Over the last year the Portfolio Holder (Housing) has kept the Committee up to date with progress on reaching the Decent Homes Standard, giving the Committee the opportunity to make appropriate comment.

Best Value Performance Monitoring

Like its associate Committees, the Chair and Vice Chair scrutinise the monthly Best Value Performance Indicators and request a report or further information on those that they feel need further investigation.

Over the year, Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 has investigated: -

BV82ai Percentage of tonnage of household waste arising, which has been sent by the Authority for recycling



Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2

The Committee scrutinised the challenging targets that had been set for recycling.

Key Outcomes

- Glass recycling is due to be rolled out in 2009
- Northampton Borough Council has excellent recycling figures, it does not co-mingle but undertakes high quality recycling

BV82aⁱⁱ Total tonnage sent for recycling

The Committee investigated BV82aⁱⁱ in detail.

Key Outcomes

- The Council is currently in profit with its recycling tonnage at 40% recyclable
- Eurobins for apartment and flat communities are successful



ELP16 The number of refuse collections missed per month

The Committee scrutinised how the Council recognises missed collections. A performance project is ongoing, which includes how data is collected.

Key Outcomes

- A performance project has commenced which includes performance in relation to ELP16

BV213 Number of households who considered themselves homeless who approached the Local Authority Housing Advice Service and for whom advice casework intervention solved their situation

The Committee investigated BV213 in detail.

Key Outcomes

- The annual target and targeted quartile figure is eight and for the size of Northampton's population, the Council is doing well, being in the top quartile for homelessness
- The Council provides support to families and young people
- Assistance is given to those categorised as hardship cases



Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2

Call-In Tenant Participation Health Check

The decision of Cabinet in relation to the Tenant Participation Health Check was called in for scrutiny on the grounds that *insufficient consultation which was not in keeping with previous and existing tenant participation or the democratic process*: -

- 1 The report from PEP is noted.
- 2 For the purposes of consultation, recommendation 13 [c] of the PEP report is adopted as the basis of formal resident involvement in housing matters, through a process of selection of tenant board members who are not necessarily part of any formal or traditional structure to set on four Area Housing Partnership Boards and a borough-wide Housing Partnership Board.
- 3 Recognition is formally withdrawn from the exiting Tenant Participation Agreement and work is to commence immediately on drafting a new agreement for consultation with all council tenants in the Borough.
- 4 A further report is to be presented to Cabinet once the outcome of consultation is known.

The Committee heard evidence from: -

- Portfolio Holder (Housing)
- Leader of the Council
- Director of Housing
- Housing Advisor

The Leader of the Council provided verbal evidence and also submitted Cabinet's written response to the Committee on the Call-In, which detailed the background to the issue, requirements for tenant participation and Cabinet's response to the Call-In, which concluded: -

- Wide, proper and effective participation is an essential component of the democratic process. However, it is important that all voices are heard - not just those of the majority.
- Tenants were consulted in selecting PEP and by PEP in drafting its report.
- The call-in refers to insufficient consultation but the decisions start a consultation process.
- The call-in is incompetent and should be dismissed.

Eight members of the public addressed the Committee, conveying their concerns. Following the submission of all the evidence, the Committee realised that tenants of this Council have been without a representative since September 2008, and if this process is to



Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2

proceed a further six months will pass before this is established. There is a need for a process to ensure tenants' views are heard, and their needs and aspirations are addressed. The Committee was not in favour of deferring the process.

In respect of the reasons for the Call-in being insufficient consultation, a number of tenants had participated in those events that had been put on. Tenants' views are to be sought on the process, a representative to be appointed. Whilst the Committee emphasised that there is a need for it to have sight of the full PEP report, its absence does not demean the consultation that has taken place. Tenants need to be aware of all the options.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 (Housing and Environment) informally notified Cabinet of its comments in respect of the Call-in Hearing: -

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 (Housing and Environment) will undertake pre-decision scrutiny of the further report of the Tenant Health Check.
- There is a need to seek tenants' views on the selection process.
- When further consultation is undertaken, the Council's Community Engagement Strategy and Toolkit is used.
- A full copy of the PEP report should be circulated to all members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 (Housing and Environment).

Key Outcomes

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 rejected this Call-In on the grounds that it was unfounded as consultation had taken place
- The Call-In enabled a greater understanding to be provided about the process and the public was able to provide comments at the Hearing

Budget Consultation

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 was consulted on the proposed general fund budget for 2009/2012 in relation to housing and environmental issues.

The year ahead

For 2009/2010 the Committee has a flexible work programme, not committing to too much planned work, which might prevent Overview and Scrutiny from being able to react to new issues as they arise.

Issues suggested for inclusion for 2009/2010 include: -

- Choice Based Lettings, including the investigation of the allocations systems and improvement of the accessibility of the service as a result.
- Tenancy Occupation and sub-letting
- H&A Asset Management Strategy



Overview & Scrutiny Committee **3**

Finance, Performance and Improvement



Overview & Scrutiny Committee **3**

Finance, Performance and Improvement

welcome from

Councillor Jamie Lane, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny 3

I am pleased to present the second annual report for Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 that has responsibility for Improvement, Performance and Finance. The report details the Committee's work over the past year and its plans for the coming year.

A Task and Finish Group was set up to review the Council's Customer Services facilities. This was a comprehensive review that looked at examples of best practice and undertook extensive research.

We have been very active in the budget process this year. The Reporting and Monitoring Working Group was set up and was involved early on in the budget process and will continue to monitor the changes that have been implemented due to the budget.

The Committee scrutinised the Council's Sickness and Absence Monitoring Policies and

also monitored the Overview and Scrutiny Planning Services Review recommendations that were accepted by Cabinet.

We will approve our work programme for 2009/2010 at the first Committee meeting of the new Municipal year, the work of the Budget and Monitoring Working Group will continue to evaluate and monitor the changes and implications of the budget 2008/2012.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jamie Lane', positioned above the printed name and title.

**Councillor
Jamie Lane
Chair, Overview
and Scrutiny
Committee 3**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3

The agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 seeks to examine and influence policies under its remit of improvement, performance and finance.

Key outcomes and achievements

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 successfully oversaw and delivered one comprehensive Review during 2009/2010. The Task and Finish Group interviewed key witnesses, carried out desktop research, looked at models of good practice and gathered statistical information and data to aid the Review process.

Reviews

The objective of this Review was to evaluate the success of investments made in Customer Services since 2005.

Key findings included:

- Northampton Borough Council's Customer Services is classified, as medium in terms of value for money and the average cost per visiting customer is £12.50. The cost of a telephone enquiry is £2.50 and an on-line query equates to 50 pence. It is realised that Customer Services at Northampton Borough Council offers an in-depth service; therefore the cost will be higher. Benchmarking against other Authorities is currently not undertaken. The Task and Finish Group acknowledged that to ascertain whether a good Customer



Service Facility was being provided by Northampton Borough Council, benchmarking against the family group (Councils that are similar in size, population etc) should be undertaken. However, it is not compulsory for this to take place but it is noted as a best practice exercise.

- Whilst undertaking its site visits to the Council's Customer Services facilities, the Task and Finish Group noted that the Complaints Policy Procedure required updating. The Customer Services Leaflets and Customer Feedback forms were out of date, in particular detailing Officer's names that have since left the Authority. It would be better to include Officer's job roles with a contact number rather than the inclusion of Officer's names. The Task and Finish Group realised that from looking at the Customer Services documentation and the fact it was outdated that there was a need to review all Council core documents to ensure they are up to date and produced in plain English, following the same corporate style.



Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3

- The Call Centre was working very well and is a value for money service.
- Staffing levels were felt to be adequate at the Call Centre. Two members of staff deal with Customer contacts and complaints, request for Services passes on to the Contact centre. The use of the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system has been in progress for eight months and can allow checks on what action has been taken. This is an excellent system, which has all information and can answer customer calls immediately.
- Staff training is carried out in-house in each service area. The Customer Services Officer has a mentor who is very experienced with long service. Training also includes shadowing experienced staff. The Task and Finish Group felt that there are other courses and forums where staff could be more involved, for example, drug and alcohol abuse awareness, County of Northampton Council on Addiction (CAN)



provides some courses in this area. It was recognised that the separation of Customer Services staff on different sites is not conducive to good teamwork.

- The Task and Finish Group acknowledged that there needs to be higher promotion of customer focus throughout the whole Authority. There appears to be a resistance to more customer friendly services, for instance, the customer comes first, and a territorial attitude still exists. A culture change is needed. There is a desire to monitor the 'Customer's Journey' and consider the ethos and equality of the service along with the degree of consistency.
- The uniforms worn by Customer Services Officers at Kettering Borough Council and the reception staff at Milton Keynes Direct impressed the Task and Finish Group. £250,000 of capital resources has been made available for the One Stop Shop. It was felt that it would be beneficial for some of this resource to be used to provide uniforms for Customer Services Staff at Northampton Borough Council, identifying a corporate image.
- Abusive, aggressive calls and upset housing needs assessment customers' calls can cause stress for staff. There is good support from principles 'walking areas', internal discussions, and a watchful environment with extra headsets for difficult matters all being available. The Task and Finish Group realised that there was a need for further training for Customer Services Officers



Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3

around how to deal with the stresses of the job. Whilst evidence gathering, the Group heard of training offered by the Samaritans for its staff on 1:1 mentorship and it was felt that this type of training would be beneficial for Northampton Borough Council's Customer Services Officers.

- Many customers had to queue in the One Stop Shop to hand in additional paperwork or a completed form or questionnaire. At Kettering Borough Council, the front reception deals with such queries alleviating the need to queue.
- The Task and Finish Group was concerned with some of the environmental issues at Cliftonville House, such as the working of the air conditioning and heating systems. Some areas of the building were too hot and others seemed to be too cold. The lighting in the Revenues and Benefits section required updating, often staff had to turn off the lights to work, which could have an impact on their eyesight. Staff also had concerns regarding the cleanliness of the building.
- Kettering Borough Council uses the automated queuing system (Queue-Matrix) in its One Stop Shop and on observing this in use; the Task and Finish Group noted its effectiveness. An automated queuing system is due to be introduced in the One Stop Shop at Northampton Borough Council.
- The Call Centre does not deal with planning, building control or environmental health issues. There is a need for more technology, which may have initial set up costs but the improved, more efficient service would recoup costs in a short time.
- Customer Services Officers working in the Revenues and Benefits section of the Call Centre advised of the need to have time to keep up to date with 'Regulatory changes'. It was noted that there will be a new system with information on a computer screen trainer, but staff will still need adequate time to use it.
- The system that the Customer Services Officers use in the Revenues and Benefits section of the Call Centre is out of date. There is no scanner available, and all the individual pages have to be date stamped, items photocopied and then returned to customer, the paper work then goes to the post room, is scanned and then inputted onto the computer.
- Located with the Customer Improvement Team is an Ombudsmen Link officer, who ensures that complaints enquiries go to Customer Services. There is a direct route to the Chief Executive. The Task and Finish Group recognised that there was a need for a questionnaire to be sent to customers after complaint resolution. All Services should receive a copy on which to comment.
- The Council produces many leaflets, in excess of seventy, all of which contain valuable information. The Task and Finish Group felt that this information could be relayed in more cost effective ways such as on the Council's website for customers to download. Kettering Borough Council has a policy to display minimal leaflets; the majority of information is displayed on its plasma screens in situ in the One Stop Shop. Plasma screens display the most up to date information and news and can be shared to display partners' information.



Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3

- The Task and Finish Group is impressed with the overall presentation of the Councillor Contact Centre, which is working very efficiently, the staff are friendly and helpful, there is a record of contact and response which can provide data. It is noted that not all Councillors use the Councillor Contact Centre. It was acknowledged that a strong team is needed to work with managers to draw up Service Level Agreements around customer focus.
- There is a need for training Councillors on how to use the Councillor Contact Centre and the whole Customer Services Process. It would also be beneficial to involve Political Assistants and the Leader's Secretary in this training. Councillors could use their Political Assistants more effectively.
- The Task and Finish Group was supportive of the 24 hour claim guarantee scheme whereby customers who present a fully completed and signed new benefit claim or benefit change of circumstances form together with all necessary documentary evidence are given the assurance that their claim will be processed within 24 hours.
- Future expectations comprise initiatives such as E-Benefits, a cashless system, re-designing of the One Stop Shop and benefits assessments taking place by Customer Services Officers in the One Shop were noted.
- It was agreed that Northamptonshire County Council's Registry Office, based at the Guildhall is very small, cluttered and unwelcoming. Concerns were initially raised regarding the appointment system in operation to register births, deaths and marriages, but following desktop research it was acknowledged that this is standard practice. It takes approximately thirty minutes to register a death, the operation of an appointments system ensures the person registering the death does not have to wait and helps to alleviate a backlog or queue.
- The Task and Finish Group agreed that the Equality Impact Assessment for Customer Services is very comprehensive and the majority of areas are covered. The provision of Council documents translated into formats suitable for a range of disabled customers needs to be strengthened, by offering the facility of tapes or compact discs of requested Council documents to those such customers.
- Prior to its last meeting, the Task and Finish Group had a final walkabout of the Council's customer services facilities. The Task and Finish Group was pleased to note that some improvements have already been made; for example, some environmental improvements to the workstations of Customer Services Officers located at Cliftonville House have been implemented. Proposed improvements such as simplifying corporate leaflets and removing those that are now obsolete are planned. The Task and Finish Group supported the new Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) kiosk now located in the One Stop Shop. The ambience of the One Stop Shop has changed since the Group's initial visit, it



Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3

felt more pleasant, the seating area is now laid out nicely and labels from the backs of the chairs have been removed. The carpet appears brighter and there is no longer a musty smell. Leaflets are now nicely presented and appear to be up to date. The Group noted that the major improvements will take around twelve months to complete and was pleased to hear that these will consist of new carpeting and the installation of plasma screens in the One Stop Shop.

- The Task and Finish Group welcomed and supported the Customer Excellence Strategy 2009-2012. This document should be readily accessible by all staff.

Recommendations included: -

- In order to ascertain whether a good Customer Service Facility is being provided by Northampton Borough Council, benchmarking against the family group be undertaken.
- A cost saving exercise regarding the number of leaflets produced be undertaken and consideration given to alternatives such as information made available electronically and the installation of plasma screens in the One Stop Shop to display relevant information.
- A higher promotion of customer focus throughout the whole Authority be introduced by promoting the Customer Excellence Strategy 2009-2012.
- The Complaints Policy Procedure be updated.
- The Customer Services Leaflets and Customer Feedback forms be updated and contain Officers' posts rather than the inclusion of Officers' names.
- In depth training for all Customer Services Staff be strengthened, in particular training for staff on how to deal with job related stresses.
- The front desk based in the One Stop Shop deals with simple queries such as receiving customer's additional paperwork and completed forms.
- A Health and Safety report for Cliftonville House be produced for environmental issues such as the lighting, heating and air conditioning systems, along with the cleanliness of the premise.
- The Task and Finish Group informs Cabinet of its support for the introduction of an automated queuing system at the One Stop Shop at Northampton Borough Council.
- A team from Customer Services be set up to work with managers to draw up Service Level Agreements around customer focus.
- The provision of Council documents are translated into formats suitable for a range of disabled customers be strengthened, by offering the facility of tapes or compact discs of requested Council documents being provided to those such customers.



Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3

- Customer Services Officers be allocated sufficient time to keep up to date with 'Regulatory changes' using the new computer trainer system.
- A questionnaire be sent to customers after complaint resolution, all Services be sent a copy on which to comment.
- All Councillors be reminded to use the Councillor Contact Centre rather than contacting individual departments/services. This is necessary to ensure that accurate information about the service provision is provided.
- Training for Councillors on how to use Councillor Contact Centre and the whole Customer Services Process be given. The same training be given to the Political Assistants and Leader's Secretary.
- It be recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee that a Review of all Council core documents and leaflets be added to the Work Programme for 2009/2010. The purpose of the Review would be to ensure that all documents are produced in plain English and follow the same corporate style.
- The Task and Finish Group welcomes the capital resource of £250,000 for improvements to the One Stop Shop.
- That resources be allocated for the provision of uniforms for frontline Customer

Services Officers, identifying a corporate image. Staff be consulted on the style of the uniform.

Key Outcomes

- Not known. Cabinet's response to the report will be reported during the Municipal year 2009/2010.
- Some of the Task and Finish Group's recommendations have already been implemented prior to the report being presented to Cabinet. These were noted on the Group's final walk round of the Council's customer services facilities.

Monitoring and Reporting Budget Programme

The Committee set up a Working Group that was consulted early in the process on the budget proposals for the General Fund Revenue Budget 2009/2012. The Group made recommendations to which issues it felt each individual Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be consulted upon. This took place early in 2009.

Following the approval of the General Fund Revenue Budget 2009/2012, the Working



Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3

Group will, in the summer of 2009, monitor the effects and implications of the budget changes.

It will then monitor the General Fund Revenue Budget proposals for 2010/2013 following the same format and will again monitor the effects and implications of any changes.

Key Outcomes

- The Monitoring and Reporting Budget Programme Working Group demonstrates effective scrutiny involvement in the budget process

Budget Proposals

Like its partner Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 took part in the Revenue Budget Consultation Process, making comment on issues relevant to its remit.

Monitoring

The Authority's Sickness and Absence Monitoring Policies

The Committee scrutinised the Council's Sickness and Absence Monitoring Policies.

The Committee monitored the following

Overview and Scrutiny Review recommendations that had been accepted by Cabinet: -

Review of the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Planning Committee meetings at Northampton Borough Council 2006

The purpose of the Review was to demonstrate the effectiveness and efficiency of Planning Committee meetings at Northampton Borough Council in comparison to other Local Authorities.

Recommendations included: -

- Councillors should be allowed to speak without giving a 'for or against' reason when registering to speak (they may wish to just make a comment).
- MP's and County Councillors given the same right to speak as Ward Councillors.
- Items on the Agenda where no one wishes to speak or make a comment and where officers do not have an update be taken on block at the start of the meeting.
- Chairperson to sum up each item on the agenda once a decision has been reached so that members of the public are clear as to what has been agreed.



Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3

- An officer to be employed to work as an 'Usher' to help the public know what is happening, assist them during the meeting and to advise them if items are withdrawn at short notice.
- Microphones are available to the public so that all members of the Committee can hear what they are saying as well as the public who sit behind them.
- Agenda to be bound in a more professional manner with advertising on the back cover of forthcoming meetings.
- Protocol of the meeting to be on the inside front page, outlining who can speak and for how long and how business is conducted.
- Protocol for the meeting to be sent out to those registering to speak so that they are aware of what to expect. The Protocol should also be published on the website.
- NBC's Website to be updated so that public speaking is no longer a six month trial.
- NBC Website to index applications in alphabetical order by street name so that finding an application is easier.
- The letter that is issued to consultees to include information that planning applications are now available on NBC Website.
- Phone numbers on NBC Website be changed so that the numbers are for departments rather than individuals to ensure good customer service.
- It is re-iterated to Councillors that they can ask for any planning application to be presented to the Committee if they feel the Committee should look at it.

Key Outcomes

- Cabinet accepted all the recommendations contained in the report
- The Committee was pleased to be informed that all the recommendations contained in the report that can be implemented have been

The year ahead

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 has no programmed work for the next Municipal Year. When suggesting further issues it will identify appropriate priorities for future scrutiny investigations.

The Budget and Monitoring Working Group will continue to evaluate and monitor the changes and implications of the budget 2008/2012. It will then begin to investigate any budget proposals for 2009/2013.





Contact details for more information

Tracy Tiff, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, is always very happy to speak to local people about the activities of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. If you have any comments or queries, or would like to suggest areas which may be appropriate topics for future work, you can speak to her by calling

 **01604 837408**

or by emailing

 **ttiff@northampton.gov.uk**

You can view recent agendas and minutes on the Council's website at **www.northampton.gov.uk**

Overview and Scrutiny has its own dedicated website within the Council's website. The current work of Overview and Scrutiny and the reports already published are available on this site. The address is

 **www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny**

LARGE PRINT AND TAPE

If you would like this document as large print or as a tape recording please call
01604 837408

If English is not your first language and you need help in translating this document please contact

 **Tracy Tiff on
01604 837408**

Jesli angielski nie jest Twoim jezykiem ojczystym a potrzebujesz pomocy w przetlumaczeniu tego dokumentu, prosze skontaktuj sie z Tracy Tiff pod numerem 01604 837408

Если английский не Ваш родной язык и Вам нужна помощь с переводом этого документа, то свяжитесь с Трайсу Тиф.Тел. 01604 837408

Haddii afka Ingriisigu aanu ahayn luuqad-daada kowaad oo aad u baahan-tahay in lagaa caawiyo turjumidda warqaddan fadlan kala xidhidh Tracy Tiff tilifoonka 01604 837408

如果英語不是你的主要說用語言而需要幫助將這份文件翻譯，請致電 01604 837408 向 Tracy Tiff 提出要求。


যদি ইংরেজী আপনার মাতৃভাষা না হয় এবং এই দলিলটি অনুবাদে আপনার সাহায্যের দরকার হয় তবে অনুগ্রহ করে ট্রেইসি টিফ-এর সাথে 01604 837408 এই টেলিফোন নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করুন।





Suggest an item for Overview and Scrutiny to investigate?

Do you have any suggestions for issues for inclusion onto the Overview and Scrutiny future Work Programme? If so please complete the form below and return to: -

 **Overview and Scrutiny**
Northampton Borough Council
The Guildhall
St Giles Square
Northampton
NN1 1DE

 **Email:** ttiff@northampton.gov.uk

Just as Overview and Scrutiny has considerable influence when used in the right way, there are times when other procedures are more appropriate.

Overview and Scrutiny cannot help in the following areas:

- Individual complaints about specific issues - these should be taken up through Northampton Borough Council's Customer Care Procedure.
- The financial probity of the Council - this is the responsibility of the Audit Committee - for information, contact **01604 837356**
- The conduct or behaviour of a councillor or officer - this is the responsibility of the Standards Committee - for information, contact **01604 837101**.

Suggested Issues for Overview and Scrutiny

Name:

Email:

Telephone:

Issues suggested for inclusion on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

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Appendices: 1



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Item No.

COUNCIL

13 July 2009

Agenda Status: Public

Directorate: Chief Executive

Report Title	Shadow Cabinet Protocol
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1. Summary

The report sets out a Shadow Cabinet Protocol for inclusion in the Council's Constitution.

2. Recommendations

That the Shadow Cabinet Protocol set out at Appendix A be approved and included in the Council's Constitution.

3. Report Background

The Borough Solicitor in conjunction with the Leader of the Opposition and the Constitution Working Party has drafted a Shadow Cabinet Protocol (appended as Appendix A) that sets out its composition, role and the parameters of officer support to it. If agreed by Council this Protocol will be added to the Council's Constitution

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Resources and Risk

None.

4.2 Legal

Changes to the Constitution will create an expectation on Officers that the Protocol will be complied with. Otherwise there are no specific legal implications.

4.3 Other Implications

None.

5. Background Papers

Departmental File- various documents

Report Author and Title: Frazer McGown – Democratic Services Manager

Telephone and Email: 837101 – fmcgown@northampton.gov.uk

SHADOW CABINET PROTOCOL

1. **Composition**

The Leader of the second largest Political Group may choose to form a Shadow Cabinet by their nomination from amongst the Members of the Council and shall notify the Council and the Chief Executive of the names of the Members nominated to form a Shadow Cabinet and of any changes in the membership of the Shadow Cabinet which may occur from time to time. The distribution of portfolios between and amongst Shadow Cabinet Members will mirror those of the Cabinet, save that a single Member may cover more than one portfolio.

2. **Number of Members**

The Shadow Cabinet shall comprise no greater number of Members than the number of members of the Cabinet.

3. **Role**

The Shadow Cabinet will have collective responsibility for providing an effective challenge to the controlling Executive and for contribution constructively to the achievement of the Council's corporate and service objectives and priorities.

4. **Officer Support**

4.1 On request the Chief Executive, or senior officers acting under their direction, shall attend private meetings of the Shadow Cabinet. At such meetings, the Chief Executive (or nominee) shall brief the Shadow Cabinet on:

- (a) proposals that are to be considered by the Cabinet and that have been published; and
- (b) other matters identified by the Shadow Cabinet.

4.2 Officer briefings at private Shadow Cabinet meetings shall be factual and professional and non-political in nature and shall not extend to the evaluation of policy options, justifying or defending proposals of the Executive, or revealing information and advice that is properly confidential in nature.

4.3 Officers shall not speak or answer questions at Shadow Cabinet meetings that are open to the general public or anyone who is not a Member of Northampton Borough Council, save for any properly appointed Political Assistant and any officer present at the request of the Chief Executive.

4.4 Individual shadow Portfolio Holders are not holders of office within the Council. However, shadow Portfolio Holders may receive advice and support from the Chief Executive or senior officers acting under their direction. All such advice and support will need to comply with the protocol on Member and Employee relations contained in part 5 of the Council's Constitution.

5. Powers

For the avoidance of doubt the Shadow Cabinet will not have any Executive powers and in this respect officers cannot be instructed to act on behalf of the Shadow Cabinet or individual Members of the Shadow Cabinet in any way.

Appendices:0

Item No.



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

13 July 2009

Agenda Status: Public

Directorate: Chief Executive

Report Title	Appointments to Charities of Coles & Rice, Henry and Elizabeth Ekins and Northampton Municipal General Charities
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1. Summary

To confirm the reappointment of Mr Peter Newham to the Coles & Rice Charity and Mrs Margaret Greenwell to the charity of Henry & Elizabeth Ekins and to make six appointments of Representative Trustee to the Northampton Municipal General Charities.

2. Recommendations

- 1 That Mr Peter Newham be reappointed to the Coles & Rice Charity for a period of four years.
- 2 That Mrs Margaret Greenwell be reappointed to the Charity of Henry & Elizabeth Ekins for a period of three years.
- 3 That Mary Clarke, Cllr Andrew Simpson, Rev David Wiseman, Ruth Williams, Cllr Anthony Woods and one other be appointed to Northampton Municipal General Charities as Representative Trustees for a period of four years.

3. Report Background

3.1 Coles & Rice Charity

This charity pays a pension of £50 per quarter to persons "in need" in Northampton who are over 55 years of age and who have lived in Northampton for at least five years before reaching the pension age. The Council appoints three trustees who are currently Mrs Eley Bridle, Mrs L Percival and Mr P Newham.

Mr Newham's term of office ended on 1 March 2009. Mr Newham, a former Borough Solicitor of the Council, is willing to be reappointed as a trustee for a further period of four years.

3.2 Charity of Henry & Elizabeth Ekins

The charity promotes the education of young persons up to the age of 25 within the Doctrines of the Church of England who reside within the parishes of St Peter, Weston Favell; St Peter and St Paul, Abington and Emmanuel, Northampton and Doddington. The charity gives financial assistance towards outfits, clothing, tools, instruments or books to help beneficiaries leaving education to enter a profession, trade or calling; apprenticeships; bursaries for travel to pursue education; and financial assistance to study music or other arts.

The Council appoints one Nominative Trustee who must reside in or represent an electoral division or ward within one of the parishes covered by the charity. Currently, the Council's appointee is Mrs Margaret Greenwell of Weston Favell who is Chairman of Trustees and whose term of appointment has now expired. Mrs Greenwell, the wife of a former Chief Executive of the County Council, is willing to be reappointed for a further period of three years.

3.3 Northampton Municipal General Charities

This overarching title covers three charities; St Thomas White's Loan Charity (interest free loans up to £2,500 and education grants up to £750 to young people); Henry Lineham Fund (pensions to women fulfilling particular criteria of £412 per annum); and the Charity of Charles Edmund Thorpe (which aids deserving inhabitants as may be in need of assistance). The Trustees administer all three charities.

The Council appoints ten Representative Trustees who do not have to be Councillors. The five currently in place are Jean Bulteel, Councillor Jenny Conroy, Hilary Blackman, Michael O'Leary and Councillor Matthew Golby.

4. **Implications (including financial implications)**

4.1 Resources and Risk

None.

4.2 Legal

None.

4.3 Other Implications

None.

5. **Background Papers**

None.

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