

# SCRUTINY

## NEWSLETTER

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ISSUE 7 FEBRUARY 2009

## introduction

Welcome to the February 2009 edition of the Overview and Scrutiny Newsletter. This is our seventh edition and in it we would like to update you on the latest developments on Scrutiny here in Northampton.

We also want to alert you to reports and meetings, which may be of interest to you.

If you have any questions about the Scrutiny function, or about how to get involved, please email **Tracy Tiff**, Overview and Scrutiny Officer on [ttiff@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:ttiff@northampton.gov.uk). Further information can also be found on the Overview and Scrutiny WebPages [www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny).

## a word from the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

**Since the last newsletter, Overview and Scrutiny has been really busy and completed its Review of how Overview and Scrutiny works at Northampton.**

There are several positive outcomes which identify many strengths of Overview and Scrutiny at Northampton and development opportunities. Further details will be given in the next edition of the newsletter. The final report will be presented to full Council at its meeting on 2 March 2009.

Some Overview and Scrutiny Reviews have been completed and others started. This newsletter will highlight the areas under discussion and keep you up to date with developments.

**There will be a number of challenges this year for Overview and Scrutiny which include:-**

- The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 which aims to give additional powers to Scrutiny and the Councillor Call for Action which is a formal method for Councillors to raise issues at Overview and Scrutiny meetings

- Scrutiny of the Local Area Agreement and Countywide Scrutiny

I hope that you find this newsletter useful. Overview and Scrutiny welcomes public attendance at its Committee meetings so feel free to attend. The dates of the Committees are given towards the end of this newsletter and published on the website [www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny).



Councillor Andrew Simpson  
Chair, Overview and Scrutiny  
Management Committee

## What's happening in Overview and Scrutiny?

Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee continues to make progress on the areas of work identified in the Work Programme at the beginning of the Council year.

## Overview and Scrutiny Reviews

### Contaminated Water Task and Finish Group

**This Group concluded phase one of the work and presented its findings to Cabinet on 26 November 2008.**

Recommendations contained in the report: -

- 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.



Phase two of the Group's work to *Review the Drinking Water Inspectorate's report* has also been completed. The Group has requested that it carries out a site visit to Pitsford Reservoir and has asked to receive a copy of Anglian Water Limited's report on its review throughout the entire water supply area covering the hygiene arrangements that are in place for the exclusion of vermin, insects and any other small animals. Details of the site visit and Anglian Water Limited's report will be given to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 in due course.

### **Billing Waste Water Working Group**

This Group concluded its findings and presented the final report to Cabinet on 26th November 2008. Eleven recommendations were contained in the report.

### **Evaluation of the Overview and Scrutiny Operation at Northampton**

The evidence gathering stage of this Review is now complete and the draft report is with the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for final comment. Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council and Rugby Borough Council undertook Peer Reviews of the Council's Scrutiny function, making positive comments about the current Scrutiny process at Northampton and also making suggestions for improvement.

Details of the final report will be given in the next edition of the Scrutiny Newsletter

### **Overview and Scrutiny Protocols**

The need for further Overview and Scrutiny Protocols was recently identified and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee is currently in the process of reviewing additional draft Scrutiny Protocols. It is anticipated that the additional Scrutiny Protocols will be published and included in an updated Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit during 2009.

### **West Northants Development Corporation (WNDC) and Partnership working with Northampton Borough Council (NBC)**

This item had been part of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1's Work Programme for some time and it was agreed that the whole Committee would carry out the Review rather than set up a Task and Finish Group. The objective of the Review is to establish how well West

Northants Development Corporation (WNDC) is performing and how well Northampton Borough Council (NBC) and WNDC are working together in partnership to deliver the regeneration, planning and growth objective for the town.

The evidence gathering stage has been completed and the Review report will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 early in 2009.

### **Concessionary Bus Fares Appreciative Inquiry**

A group of Councillors from Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 are investigating the implications of extending the hours, which Concessionary Bus Passes are in operation including costs. This Review is currently at its evidence gathering stage and is scheduled to report the findings to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 in the Spring 2009.

### **Parks and Grounds Maintenance Appreciative Inquiry**

A number of Councillors from Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 are investigating the service and looking at ways to improve the experience of local people and visitors as a result. This Review is at its scoping stage and will report the findings to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 in the Summer 2009.

### **Customer Services Task and Finish Group**

This Task and Finish Group was set up by Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 to evaluate the success of investments made in Customer Services since 2005. The scope of the Review has been completed and the Group is now amid evidence gathering. The final report is due to be finished in the Spring 2009.

### **More Facilities for Older Children**

At the Balloon Festival, a survey was carried out with members of the public, on what the public thought the Council's priorities should be for inclusion on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2008/2009. Suggestions obtained from the survey were put to a vote during Local Democracy Week and the overall winner was 'More Facilities for Older Children'.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee will lead this short focussed Review and will carry out the work during February 2009.



## Reporting and Monitoring Working Group

The purpose of this Working Group is to recommend a structure for the ongoing monitoring of performance and financial data by Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3. The Group will look to ensure that systems provide clear, consistent information that enables Councillors and the general public to understand finance and performance monitoring information.

The Group is currently busy looking at the budget process and how Overview and Scrutiny can be involved in the budget consultation process. The Group will also investigate the impact of any changes as a result of the budget. The Group is scheduled to conclude its findings in July 2010.



A library of completed Reviews can be viewed on the Council's website:  
[www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny).

## Countywide Joint Scrutiny

The Chairs of the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Overview and Scrutiny Officer, along with the other Northamptonshire Councils, are involved in the process of setting up a Countywide Joint Scrutiny Committee.

## How to get Involved

There are a number of ways in which you can find out about the work of Overview and Scrutiny.

If you want to know more please refer to the Overview and Scrutiny WebPages on the Council's website under Council, Government and Democracy: [www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny)

## Who to contact

The Overview and Scrutiny Team 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 the Team by calling **01604 837408** or by emailing [scrutiny@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@northampton.gov.uk).

You can view recent agendas and minutes on the Council's website at [www.northampton.gov.uk](http://www.northampton.gov.uk) or by contacting **Meeting Services**.

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](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny)

## The Overview and Scrutiny Committees

### Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee



Councillor Andrew Simpson (Chair)



Councillor Jenny Conroy (Vice Chair)

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 (Housing and Environment)



Councillor Christopher Malpas (Chair)



Councillor Pamela Varnserry (Vice Chair)

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 (Partnerships, Regeneration, Community Safety and Engagement)



Councillor Andrew Simpson (Chair)



Councillor Ifty Choudary (Vice Chair)



Councillor Jamie Lane (Chair)



Councillor Jenny Conroy (Vice Chair)

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 (Improvement, Performance and Finance)

## Forthcoming meetings

All Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings are held in public and anyone is welcome to attend. Agendas and minutes are published on the Council's website under Council, Government and Democracy.

Meetings commence at **6pm** and are held in the **Jeffery Room**, at the **Guildhall**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1	Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2	Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
1 April	23 April	30 April	3 March
24 June	2 July	16 July	11 May





# Feedback Questionnaire

To help us make sure this newsletter is useful and informative, please complete the questions below and return to the Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

**Did you find this newsletter useful in understanding the role of Overview and Scrutiny?**

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**If not, why?**

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**Is there anything about this newsletter that you would like to change?**

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**Which article did you find most interesting?**

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## Contact Information

**Email address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_ **Postcode:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please tick this box if you wish to receive information from Northampton Borough Council regarding Overview and Scrutiny.**

