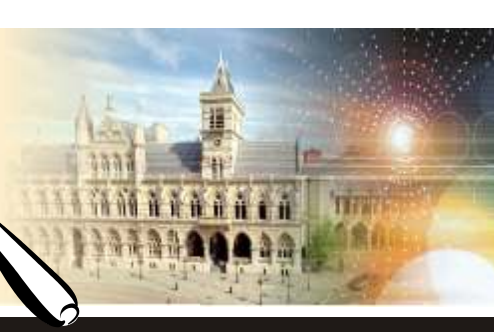




NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL



SCRUTINY

NEWSLETTER

SCRUTINY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 3

WINTER 2006

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introduction

Welcome to the Winter edition of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny E-Bulletin, the e-mail newsletter of Northampton Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which is available for employees and the public.

The bulletin will keep you up to date with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Task and Finish Group news, training events, additions to the website, forthcoming meetings and new developments.



Who is involved in Scrutiny



The Overview and Scrutiny Committee comprises fourteen councillors representing each political group:



Councillor Brendan Glynane (Chair)
(Chair Leisure Services Task and Finish Group)
Telephone: **(01604) 453833**
Email cllr.bglynane@northampton.gov.uk



Councillor Christopher Malpas (Deputy Chair)
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Councillor Anjona Roy (Deputy Chair)
(Chair Housing Repairs Task and Finish Group)
Telephone **07976 260268**
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councillors: -



Marion Allen
chair:
Homelessness
(rough sleepers)
Task & Finish Group



Brandon Eldred



Brian Hoare



Jamie Lane



Lee Mason



Andrew Simpson



Richard Church
(Chair of the
Street Scene Task
and Finish Group)



Michael Hill



Michelle Hoare



Barry Massey



Margaret Pritchard



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 web pages, under Council, Government and Democracy on the council's website www.northampton.gov.uk

Details of all of the current reviews are given on **page 4**.

Website

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee launched its dedicated web pages on the Council's website in September 2006 which can be located:

www.northampton.gov.uk

under Council, Government and Democracy Democratic Processes and Events.

Details include:-

- The role of Overview and Scrutiny and the Scrutiny structure at Northampton
- Types and dates of Overview and Scrutiny meetings
- How you can get involved in Overview and Scrutiny
- Overview and Scrutiny Protocols and Guidance
- Current and Previous Overview and Scrutiny Reviews
- Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and Annual Report



Feedback

We are always looking at ways we can improve the information the e-bulletin provides so we need your feedback!

You can sign up to receive e-mail or hard copies of the **Scrutiny Newsletter** by

telephoning **Tracy Tiff** on **01604 837408**

Or email ttiff@northampton.gov.uk



Task and Finish Groups

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee sets up time limited Task and Finish Groups to carry out important reviews, which will make focussed valuable, recommendations to the Cabinet.

All Non-Executive Councillors can put themselves forward to join Task and Finish Groups to review issues of interest and importance and inform critical policy development.

Two further Task and Finish Groups Allotments (Water Charges) and Tree Policy have completed their investigations and Cabinet accepted all of the recommendations made in the Allotments (Water Charges) Task and Finish Group's final report. The Tree Policy Task and Finish Group's final report will be presented to cabinet on 19 December 2006.

Monitoring Overview and Scrutiny Reviews 2005/2006

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitors the implementation and effectiveness of the recommendations made in Task and Finish Groups' reports at future meetings. The timetable is detailed in the Overview and Scrutiny Monitoring Work Programme 2006/2007.

Planning Task and Finish Group

This Task and Finish Group made a number of recommendations to Full Council which are aimed at increasing public satisfaction with both the Planning Committee and the Council's website.

A progress report on the implementation of the key recommendations contained in the report was detailed in the summer edition of the Scrutiny newsletter.

The Portfolio Holder for Local Environment attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 October 2006 and provided details of the key



recommendations that have been implemented and a progress report on those yet to be implemented:

Improvements that have been made: -

- Staff keep a general watch for anyone who looks unsure or bewildered at the Planning Committee and offer advice.
- The Chair now announces any items withdrawn at short notice at the start of the meeting.
- 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.
- Alternative venues to hold Planning Committees are being piloted and customer feedback sought.
- Planning Committee agendas are now bound in a more professional manner and the meeting dates are advertised on the inside of the front cover, rather than at the rear.
- The Protocol for the meeting is printed on the inside front page of the agenda outlining who can speak, for how long and how business is conducted.
- Those registered to speak are informed verbally of the Protocol prior to the meeting.
- The Council's website indexes planning applications in alphabetical order, by street name and by postcode.
- The Portfolio Holder will attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 March 2007 and provide a progress report on the recommendations yet to be implemented.

Outcomes of Reviews

2006/2007

○ Allotments (Water Charges) Task and Finish Group

The Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group was set up because a motion was put forward and carried at Full Council on 22 May 2006 that asked for a time limited Scrutiny investigation to be undertaken for the proposed water charges for allotment holders within the Borough.

The review was a short, focussed piece of work that linked to the Council's corporate priorities and examined a range of information. The Task and Finish Group looked at water usage on allotment sites within the Borough of

Northampton, water costs were investigated, as were other Local Authorities allotment rental and water charges. Site visits to various allotments within the Borough took place, interviews with the Portfolio Holder (Community Engagement and Democratic Services) and senior staff from Northampton Borough Council were held, baseline information was received and desktop research carried out using the Internet.

This review was carried out between July 2006 and September 2006.

The report and its recommendations were well received and accepted by Cabinet at its meeting on 16 October 2006. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will monitor the implementation of the recommendations at a future meeting.



○ Tree Policy Task and Finish Group

The Task and Finish Group was set up because the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was unclear whether the Council has a Tree Maintenance Policy. One of the previous Overview and Scrutiny Committees had looked into this but the work had not been finished. The aim of this review was to investigate the need and purpose of such a Policy.

The review examined a range of information. It looked at what the needs were within the Borough of Northampton and the resources it had, it also looked at Tree Policies from other Local Authorities. There was a site visit to Kingsthorpe Recreation Ground, interviews were held with senior staff from Northampton Borough Council, baseline information was received and desktop research carried out using the Internet.

This review was carried out between June and August 2006.

The report will be presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 19 December 2006.

Task and Finish Group Work Already Started

Housing Repairs Task and Finish Group

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that as it was felt that this review could not be completed in the allocated timescale, that it be suspended to a later date.

Although the Housing Repairs review has been suspended, it was agreed at the recent Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the tenant consultation events scheduled for 25 January 2007 from 4.15pm to 6pm and 6.30pm to 8pm at the Guilhdall be held.

Tenants are asked to confirm their attendance at this event by **Monday 8 January 2007** by contacting the **Scrutiny Officer** on telephone **01604 837408** or by email **ttiff@northampton.gov.uk**

Further information will be given in a future newsletter.

Leisure Services Task and Finish Group

This Task and Finish Group is reviewing the objectives of Leisure Services, to the extent to which the Service meets these objectives and whether the Service provides 'value for money.' A representative from the University of Northampton has been co-opted onto this Task and Finish Group to provide valuable expertise and knowledge in the subject being reviewed.

The Task and Finish Group has interviewed key front line staff, carried out desk top research, looked at models of good practice, and gathered statistical information and data. This information will contribute to the Task and Finish Group's final report which will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 27 March 2007.

Copies of the Task and Finish Group's final reports can be found on the Overview and Scrutiny pages of the Council's website under Council, Government and Democracy. If you would like to receive a paper copy of the Task and Finish Groups' final reports please telephone **Tracy Tiff** on **01604 837408**.

Homelessness (Rough Sleepers) Task and Finish Group

During the Homelessness review (March 2006), the issue of rough sleepers was investigated and the need for a further Task and Finish Group to investigate rough sleepers had been identified.

The Group held its initial scoping meeting in November and is looking to further develop the multi agency approach to rough sleepers with a view to reducing/eliminating rough sleeping in Northampton.

This information will contribute to the Task and Finish Group's final report which will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 March 2007.

Street Scene Task and Finish Group

This Task and Finish Group is reviewing the poor performance indicators on the collection of abandoned cars and reviewing the new legislation, Clean Neighbourhoods and Government Act 2005, and how it will impact on this Council, particularly in relation to dealing with problems of side waste and litter left following refuse collection and whether appropriate resources are available.

The Group held its initial scoping meeting in November and. Two local residents have been co-opted onto this Task and Finish Group to provide beneficial knowledge in the subject being reviewed.

The Group is scheduled to present its conclusions to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 March 2007.

Community Safety (Evaluation of Dispersal Orders) Task and Finish Group

This Task and Finish Group will be evaluating dispersal orders and is due to hold its initial scoping meeting to decide on the evidence that should be gathered to inform its review.

This information will contribute to the Task and Finish Group's final report which will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 March 2007.

East Midlands Scrutiny Network Meeting News

Councillor Glynane, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and the Scrutiny Officer attend the East Midlands Regional Local Government Association (EMRLGA) Scrutiny Network meetings.

The Scrutiny Network meets on a quarterly basis and outside speakers are often invited to attend. Input has been received from various agencies such as the Audit Commission, South East Employers and the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS).

At the meeting held in September, a presentation was given on:-

- Crime, Disorder and Scrutiny at Gedling Borough Council

The network meets in various locations around the East Midlands. The meeting held on 27 November was hosted by Northampton Borough Council and presentations were given on:

- The Government's White Paper on Local Government
- The implications for Overview and Scrutiny
- Scrutiny of Arms Length Management Organisation

Copies of agendas and minutes can be found on the EMRLGA website www.lg-em.gov.uk

Councillor Glynane (Chair), Councillors Malpas and Roy (Deputy Chairs) and Councillor Pritchard hosted the workshop and gave brief presentations on:-

- The role of Overview and Scrutiny
- The role of co-optees and witnesses in the Scrutiny process
- Details of the recommendations contained in the Public Engagement and Communications Task and Finish Group's final report
- Monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Task and Finish Groups' final reports.

Attendees at the workshop had made comment regarding the cleanliness of the town's bus station and had queried whether this could be included as part of Overview and Scrutiny's Work Programme 2005/06. This year's work programme is full.

However the relevant Portfolio Holder has been requested to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 December 2006 to provide a response to the concerns and queries raised by the Workshop.



Local Democracy Week

As part of Local Democracy Week, an all day event took place on Saturday 14 October 2006, at the Guildhall, hosted by the Northampton Borough Council Forums. Overview and Scrutiny had a workshop at the event which was attended by local residents.

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.

Date of Meeting	Venue
Wednesday 31 January at 6.00pm	Jeffery Room at the Guildhall
Tuesday 27 March at 6.00pm	Jeffery Room at the Guildhall
Wednesday 13 June at 6.00pm	Jeffery Room at the Guildhall
Wednesday 25 July at 6.00pm	Jeffery Room at the Guildhall