



**NORTHAMPTON**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



# SCRUTINY

## NEWSLETTER

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## introduction

Welcome to the Spring 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)  
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### councillors: -



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



**Brandon Eldred**



**Brian Hoare**  
Chair of  
Community Safety  
Evaluation of  
dispersal orders)  
Task and Finish Group



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

## Website

Overview and Scrutiny's dedicated web pages can be Located:

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

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 Reports



## 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](mailto: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 Councillors, except those who are members of the Council's Cabinet, can put themselves forward to join Task and Finish Groups to review issues of interest and importance and inform critical policy development.

## Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups 2006/2007

During 2006/2007 Overview and Scrutiny carried out reviews on:-

- Tree Policy - The Current Tree Maintenance Operations
- Allotments (Water Charges) - Water Charges for Allotment Holders
- Housing Repairs - Housing Repairs Service within the Council

The most recent reviews to be completed are:-

- Street Scene - Abandoned vehicles and the implications of the Clean Neighbourhood Act 2005
- Leisure Services - Council's Leisure Services
- Homelessness (Rough Sleepers) - To further develop the multiagency approach to rough sleepers
- Evaluation of Dispersal Orders - To add value to the Dispersal Order Process

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee accepted these above Task and Finish Group's final reports at its meeting on 27 March 2007 and agreed to them being presented to Cabinet on 2 July 2007.

## Street Scene Task and Finish Group

This Task and Finish Group was set up to review poor performance indicators on the collection of abandoned cars and to review the new legislation,

Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 - to dealing with problems of side waste and litter left following refuse collection and whether appropriate resources are available. Two local residents were co-opted onto this review.

Recommendations contained in the final report include:-

### Abandoned Vehicles

- 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 that 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.

### Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005

- 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.

### Fly-tipping and Littering

- 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 Cabinet monitors the impact of the anti-littering campaign after six months.
- 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 the availability of nets to put on recycling boxes be widely publicised and consideration be given to providing them free of charge when new boxes are issued.
- That, in the proposed evaluation of the recycling system currently used, Cabinet considers the use of a different type of receptacle that can be closed at the top.
- That a high priority is given to the employment of additional Enforcement Officers when finances permit.
- 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.
- That the Council works with the Landlords Forum to ensure that recommendation 5.14 above is promoted.
- That the implementation of the recommendations be monitored six months after the report has been presented to Cabinet.

### Leisure Services Task and Finish Group

This Task and Finish Group reviewed 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 was co-opted onto this Task and Finish Group to provide valuable expertise and knowledge in the subject being reviewed.

Recommendations contained in the final report include: -

### Leisure Services Strategy

- 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.
- It is recognised within the Strategy that the Council's role is to identify the need for leisure within Northampton and facilitate provision of relevant services.
- Northampton Borough Council engages with key partners, including Planning and Regeneration within the Council, WNDC and Northamptonshire County Council, in the development of the Leisure Strategy.

### Vision for Leisure Services

- A clear vision for the improvement and development for Leisure Services in Northampton will be established.

### Aims for Leisure Services

- 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

### Assessment of Needs and Appraisal of Options

- Cabinet ensures that the aims and objectives for Leisure Services will be supported by a clear monitoring and evaluation process.
- A 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
- The value for money of Northampton Borough Council's major leisure facilities will be assessed and recommendations provided before any future decision

on the provision of Leisure Services is made.

- A thorough Options Appraisal process will be carried out before a decision on future provision is made.

### Planning Policy

Cabinet ensures that the vision of Leisure Services will be included in the Local Development Planning Framework

## Homelessness (Rough Sleepers) Task and Finish Group

The purpose of this Task and Finish Group was to further develop the multi-Agency approach to rough sleepers and to reduce/eliminate rough sleeping in Northampton. Three co-optees joined the Group, Mr C Manning, Service Manager (Rehab) Northamptonshire Health Care Trust (NHT), Mr G Owen, Town Centre Manager, and Sergeant M Phillips, Northamptonshire Police.

Recommendations contained in the final report include: -

- Northampton Borough Council takes the lead with all Agencies working together on rough sleeper initiatives, through the Single Homeless Forum.
- The membership of the Rough Sleepers Forum be re-visited to ensure that all relevant Agencies are included.
- All members of the Rough Sleepers Forum to sign a Confidentiality Protocol to ensure there is no breach of confidentiality especially when individual clients are discussed.
- The rough sleepers database is developed as a high priority.
- The 'Green Book' - 'A Pocket Guide for anyone Threatened with Homelessness' be updated and be used for all Agencies as a basis for information regarding available services for rough sleepers. A flow chart be produced detailing the process for rough sleepers and be included in the development of the 'Green Book.'
- A Rough Sleepers Strategy be produced with an emphasis on prevention. The evidence contained in this report should form part of that Strategy.
- The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services and the Corporate Manager for Housing Services meets with the Research and Development Department of the Salvation Army regarding the potential for the Salvation Army to develop its existing projects for rough sleepers. This

should be investigated in conjunction with a current funding bid to the Department of Communities and Local Government for a purpose built hostel in the town.

- Research is undertaken regarding further funding opportunities and joint working for the provision of extra beds for rough sleepers and the provision of a 'halfway house'.
- Improved communication between County of Northampton Council on Addiction (CAN) and the Town Centre Partnership regarding rough sleepers is encouraged.
- The Town Centre Partnership is requested to donate funds to help alleviate the problem with rough sleepers particularly in the town centre and the Grosvenor Centre.
- Northampton Borough Council works jointly with Northamptonshire County Council regarding providing provision for rough sleepers during severe weather conditions.
- The involvement of Neighbourhood Wardens in providing information of the location of rough sleepers is formalised.
- Dialogue takes place with the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) regarding the potential for joint working to provide more counselling facilities.
- The Council looks at ways that it can support CAN to reduce its waiting time for triage provision.
- The Council's links with the Prison Service and Probation Service is continued. There is a need for a representative from the Probation Service to attend the Rough Sleepers Forum.
- Funding of £90,000 per year, for rough sleeping initiatives, from the Department of Communities and Local Government is maximised.
- The Council works with local hospitals regarding the introduction of a Protocol for the discharge of its patients.
- The Council works with the Hope Centre regarding the development of its day centre facility.
- Consideration is given to a multi Agency networking event, hosted by the Council, to facilitate joint working and highlight awareness of rough sleepers.

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

The purpose of the Task and Finish Group was to add value to the Dispersal Order process. The Task and Finish Group was set up to conclude an incomplete piece of work from the previous Overview and Scrutiny system. The previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee had requested an evaluation of Dispersal Orders and 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.

Recommendations include:-

- Borough Councillors receive more training and understanding of the Dispersal Order process if they are to perform their community leadership role effectively.
- The Anti Social Behaviour Unit contributes to Councillor Induction explaining how Councillors should engage in the Dispersal Order process. A copy of this report will be used as part of the Councillor Induction process.
- Greater emphasis should be placed by the Police on reporting of Dispersal Orders or Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). This need should be emphasised to the new Community Safety Teams.
- Measuring the effectiveness of Dispersal Orders is essential and the ComPaSS Unit will be 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.
- Prevention is better than cure. Joint Action Groups (JAGs) will engage with the community and inform residents prior to the implementation of a Dispersal Order. Resolution of the problem rather than implementing a Dispersal Order is the preferred outcome.
- Entry and Exit Strategies will form an integral part of the Dispersal Order Process. They will be formulated at the planning stage and without them the Dispersal Order is not an effective long-term intervention in the improvement of community safety.
- Monitoring and reporting back are essential elements in the process of improving community confidence. The Portfolio Holder for Business Intelligence, E-Government and People Support will present regular reports, including a summary of the evaluation of Dispersal Orders to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).
- It is also essential to improve the confidence of local communities following a Dispersal Order. Therefore a précised evaluation report will be sent to the local residents with details of ongoing plans to maintain community safety.
- The provision of diversionary youth facilities appears to be a potential contributor to the resolution of problems and therefore the lack of need to implement Dispersal Orders. The Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Community Safety will ensure that there is a programme to improve youth facilities across Northampton as an "invest to save programme".

- Northampton Borough Council, and other Agencies, will work towards zero Dispersal Orders and see this as a success with problems being resolved at an earlier stage. If Dispersal Orders are used it indicates that problems are being allowed to escalate where this level of intervention is required.

Copies of the Task and Finish Groups' final reports can be found on the Overview and Scrutiny pages of the Council's website

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

If you would like to receive a paper copy of one of these reports please telephone **Tracy Tiff** on **01604 837408**.

## Monitoring Overview and Scrutiny Reviews

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. Progress reports on the implementation of the key recommendations contained in the report were reported in the Summer and Winter 2006 editions of the Scrutiny newsletter.

The Portfolio Holder for Local Environment attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 March 2007 and provided an update of the implementation of recommendations that had been outstanding when he had attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in October 2006:-

- Taking agenda items en bloc at the start of the meeting where no one wishes to speak or make a comment and where Officers do not have an update will be reviewed as part of the detailed review of the Planning Committee Protocol.
- Microphones are available to the public so that members of the Committee can hear what they are saying as well as the public who sit behind them. Both the Court Room and the Great Hall have been trialled, with the use of microphones. Questionnaires were

issued and feedback indicated that the Jeffery Room was preferred. This is now in use but with a changed layout.

- Those registered to speak at Planning Committee are informed verbally of the Meeting Protocol prior to the meeting so that they are aware of what to expect. This Protocol is also published on the Council's website.

### ■ Allotments (Water Charges) Task and Finish Group

This Task and Finish Group was set up to investigate the reasons for the proposed water charges for allotment holders within the Borough. A motion was put forward and carried at Full Council on 22 May 2006 that asked for a short, focused, time limited Scrutiny investigation to be undertaken for the proposed water charges for allotment holders within the Borough. The report and its recommendations were well received and accepted by Cabinet at its meeting on 16 October 2006.

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:-
  - (a) Water usage to be charged at a rate per pole and per field as an incentive to each field to conserve water.
  - (b) 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 on allotment sites is explored.
- That consideration be given to taking out a short-term loan against future land sale to cover the cost of replacing water pipes on all allotment sites.

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:-

- 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 Task and Finish Group asked Cabinet to implement the above recommendations as soon as possible but by no later than April 2008.

The Portfolio Holder for Local Environment attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 March 2007 and reported progress on the implementation of the Task and Finish Group's recommendations: -

- The Allotment Strategy will be presented to Cabinet shortly for approval. This document is key to the implementation of many of the recommendations contained in the Task and Finish Group's final report.
- It would take some time to replace the current water pipes with pipes of a larger size of 50mm
- It had been agreed not to impose water charges to allotment holders until the pipework has been replaced.

The Portfolio Holder will attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 June 2008 to report on the progress of any outstanding recommendations.

## Public Engagement and Communications Task and Finish Group

This Task and Finish Group was set up to review the way the Council consults and involves its citizens, to evaluate how robust mechanisms are and to suggest areas for improvement.

Recommendations included: -

### Management and Resources

- Northampton Borough Council identifies a member of staff, from the Communication or Community Development Service Area, with specific responsibility for consultation for the Council.

- There is a need for a budget for providing advice on consultation. Each service area must provide for consultation in its own budgets. The relevant budgetary measures should be allocated in the next budget process.
- All consultation exercises should be planned to include feedback to the participants.
- The costs and benefits of these exercises should be calculated in full before the process starts.

### Information and Co-Ordination

- All consultation data and the results of analysis should be accessible from a central source.
- The outcomes of all consultations should be made available to all services.

### Systems and Protocols

- Appropriate corporate consultation mechanisms should be in place by the autumn to give the Council meaningful results. A baseline should be established in order that progress can be monitored.
- Northampton Borough Council should adopt an effective consultation protocol to circulate internally and externally within the Council. A starting draft has been produced by this Task and Finish Group.
- A Corporate Policy and implementation process on consultation and engagement should be produced.
- The proforma used at the Focus Group sessions should be adapted so that it can be used generically within the Council.
- The results of consultations need to be built in to decision-making, service planning and priority setting processes in the Council.
- Northampton Borough Council should make use of neighbourhood working for consultation processes and wider working potential.
- Plain language should be used in all Council documents in order that any member of the public is able to access Council material.

### Engagement with Diverse Communities

- Current methods of consultation should be supplemented with other mechanisms to reach a larger and more diverse population allowing citizens to initiate or add to the debate. For example Community Groups could be encouraged and supported to bring issues, concerns and ideas directly to the Council.
- A corporate brand that helps Northampton Borough Council to bring consistency and inspire confidence should be developed.

## Future Work and Review

- The consultation exercise undertaken as part of the review by this Task and Finish Group be used as the benchmark in 12 months time to see what improvements the Council has made in that period of time.
- Another piece of focussed work should be undertaken to ensure that the Council is accessing all groups in the community in a systematic and regular way.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Democratic Services provided a progress report of the implementation of the Task and Finish Group's to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 27 March 2007:-

- In order for some of the recommendations to be implemented Posts require alignment and responsibilities need to be resolved. A review of responsibilities would be carefully planned.
- Some recommendations have been implemented, some are ongoing and some are on hold.
- A section within the Corporate Plan template deals with communications and consultation. All managers and team leaders are equipped to add this into their Service Plans and include into their budget plans.

The Portfolio Holder will attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 October 2007 to report on the progress of any outstanding recommendation

## 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, which brings together Scrutiny Chairs and Scrutiny Officers from the East Midlands to discuss issues of mutual benefit.**

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 February at Matlock, a presentation was given on:-

- Health Scrutiny by the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

The network meets in various locations around the East Midlands. The next meeting will be held in July 2007.

Copies of agendas and minutes can be found on the EMRLGA website [www.lg-em.gov.uk](http://www.lg-em.gov.uk)



## Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit

The Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit was developed in 2006/2007 and provides practical guidance to everyone involved with Overview and Scrutiny in Northampton, which includes Councillors, members of the public, Council staff, co-opted members and witnesses.

The Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit sets out how Scrutiny at Northampton works and how people can get involved. It is intended to make Scrutiny challenging and constructive and also be an inclusive process.

The Toolkit aims to give clear guidance on the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function as well as provide practical advice to all those who take part in the Overview and Scrutiny process:-

- Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Task and Finish Groups
- Co-opted members
- Cabinet members
- Council Employees
- Witnesses in Overview and Scrutiny inquiries
- Members of the public

The Toolkit is published on the Council's website and a copy can also be obtained by contacting the **Scrutiny Officer** on **01604 837408**.





## Northampton: effective call-in example

The Centre for Public Scrutiny noted the Scrutiny Call-In on the Sixfield Area Action Plan (January 2006) as an example of best practice and published an article on it in its March Newsletter.

The article reported that following a research report on the call-in procedure published by Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) in 2006, the CfPS has been keeping an eye-out for examples that demonstrate effective use of call-in. Having attended a recent workshop in Northampton it learned of the instance where the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee was able to add significant value to the authority and minimise its exposure to risk.

A copy of the CfPS newsletter can be located <http://www.cfps.org.uk/champions/bitem>

## Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2006/2007

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has published its **Annual Report 2006/2007** on its website [www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny). The Annual Report will be presented to Cabinet at its meeting on **2 July 2007** and then to Full Council on **23 July 2007**.

The Annual Report summarises the work of the Committee over the past Municipal Year detailing Overview and Scrutiny achievements during 2006/2007 and the way that the Scrutiny function has developed.

## Seminar on the Government's White Paper - Strong and Prosperous Communities Implications for Overview and Scrutiny

The Authority recently hosted a Seminar on the Government's White Paper Strong and Prosperous Communities Implications for Overview and Scrutiny. The seminar was open to all Borough Councillors and invitations were sent to Scrutiny Chairs, Vice Chairs and Scrutiny Officers of neighbouring Local Authorities. It was well received and well attended.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny facilitated the half-day Seminar which was split into two sessions:

Session one concentrated on future developments in Overview and Scrutiny and the White Paper and Scrutiny. Session two concentrated upon Community Call for Action. Attendees broke into five groups and gave case studies of issues that they perceived would be dealt with either through Community Call for Action or dealt with locally.

## 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 13 June at 7.00pm	Jeffery Room at the Guildhall
Wednesday 25 July at 7.00pm	Jeffery Room at the Guildhall
Wednesday 3 October at 7.00pm	Jeffery Room at the Guildhall
Tuesday 11 December at 7.00pm	Jeffery Room at the Guildhall
Wednesday 30 January 2008 at 6.00pm	Jeffery Room at the Guildhall
Tuesday 1 April 2008 at 7.00pm	Jeffery Room at the Guildhall
Tuesday 3 June 2008 at 6.00pm	Jeffery Room at the Guildhall