



**NORTHAMPTON**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



# SCRUTINY

## NEWSLETTER

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ISSUE 5

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## introduction

Welcome to the Summer edition of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny E-Bulletin, the e-mail newsletter of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

This bulletin will keep you up to date with all Overview and Scrutiny news, training events, new developments, updates to the website and forthcoming meetings.



## Welcome

We've grown! Since the last newsletter there are now three Overview and Scrutiny Committees on the Council. This reflects how important Overview and Scrutiny is to the improvement of Northampton Borough Council and to role of the Council in making Northampton a town to be proud of.

This newsletter gives you more information about the key changes and improvements which all amount to providing more opportunity for residents, interest groups and other public agencies to get more involved in the Council and to contribute to the running of the town. Northampton's Overview and Scrutiny Committee has already been noted for 'good practice' (a further section of this newsletter gives details) however we want to build on that success and we urge you to get in touch if you would like to be involved in any way.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Simpson



Christopher Malpas



Jamie Lane

## Who is involved in Scrutiny



Up to 2005 the Council had seven separate Overview and Scrutiny Committees, each reflecting a portfolio.

As part of the Constitutional changes made in September 2005 this was streamlined down to a single Committee, supported by various ad hoc task and finish groups. Whilst this has proved effective, it has been difficult to maintain the necessary breadth of overview across the range of the Council's activities.

In May 2007, the number of Overview Scrutiny Committees was increased to three, in addition to a Scrutiny Management Committee.



## Who is involved in Scrutiny contd.



The Committees mirror the Executive portfolios and are identified as O&S1 (Partnerships, Regeneration; Community Safety and Engagement) O&S2 (Housing and Environment) and O&S3 (Improvement, Performance and Finance). The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee comprises six Members who will normally be the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Its responsibilities include:

- Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny work plans
- Allocation of resources
- Involvement of other people in Overview and Scrutiny Process
- Co-ordinating work plans
- Allocation of resources
- Allocating areas of responsibility in cases of doubt
- Training and development
- Support needs

### O&S 2 Membership



Councillor Christopher Malpas  
(Chair)  
Telephone: 01604 233640  
Email: [cllr.cmalpas@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.cmalpas@northampton.gov.uk)



Councillor Jane Hollis  
(Deputy Chair)  
Email: [cllr.jhollis@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.jhollis@northampton.gov.uk)

### Councillors



Ifty Choudary



Mel de Cruz



David Garlick



Phil Larratt



Judith Lill



Dennis Meredith



Pam M Varnsverry

### O&S 1 Membership



Councillor Andrew Simpson  
(Chair)  
Telephone: 01604 634539  
Email: [cllr.asimpson@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.asimpson@northampton.gov.uk)



Councillor Joy Capstick  
(Deputy Chair)  
(Chair Voluntary Sector Task & Finish Group)  
Telephone: 01604 621352  
Email: [cllr.jcapstick@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.jcapstick@northampton.gov.uk)

### Councillors



John Caswell



Sadik Chaudhury



Tony Clarke



Jenny Conroy



David Palethorpe



Kevin Reeve



Paul Varnsverry  
(Chair: Community Engagement Task & Finish Group)



Portia Wilson

### O&S 3 Membership



Councillor Jamie Lane  
(Chair)  
Telephone: 01604 792470  
Email: [cllr.jlane@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.jlane@northampton.gov.uk)



Councillor Roger Conroy  
(Deputy Chair)  
Email: [cllr.rconroy@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.rconroy@northampton.gov.uk)

### Councillors



Scott Collins



Tim Hadland  
(Chair: Monitoring and Reporting Task & Finish Group)



Jean Hawkins



Kevin Reeve



Tess Scott



Marianne Taylor



John Yates



## 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



## Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes 2007/2008

The three Overview and Scrutiny Committees met during June and July 2007 to propose issues for inclusion in their work programmes 2007/2008. The work programmes were ratified by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at its meeting on 25 July 2007.

### O&S1 Work Programme 2007/2008

Issues for review include:

- Joint Review with NCC Alcohol Related Violence
- Partnerships within the Voluntary sector/Funding for Voluntary Sector Organisations
- Community Engagement
- Working together with Regeneration to Protect Historic sites -
- Regeneration
- Work surrounding Northampton Safer Stronger Communities Partnership (NSSCP)
- Partnership working with West Northants Development Corporation (WNDC)

### O&S 2 Work Programme 2007/2008

Potential Issues for review include:

- Joint review, together with Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 (Partnerships, Regeneration, Community Safety and Engagement) HRA Asset Management and Strategy.
- Private Sector Improvement Grants, including Disability Improvement Grants
- The reinstating of the previously suspended Housing Repairs Task and Finish Group.
- The robustness of housing allocations and the quality of tenants' accommodation and approved landlords.
- A review of parks and grounds maintenance.
- Registered Social Landlords (RSLs).
- Tenancy Occupation and Sub Letting.

## 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)



## O&S 3 Work Programme 2007/2008

### Issues for review include:

- Monitoring and Budget Programme.
- Disability Facility Grants
- Performance in relation to Housing Repairs.

Copies of the Scrutiny Work Programmes 2007/2008 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)

## Monitoring Overview and Scrutiny Reviews

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees monitor 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 2007/2008 which 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)

## Task and Finish Groups

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees set up time limited Task and Finish Groups to carry out important reviews, which then make focussed valuable, recommendations to Cabinet.

The most recent reviews to be submitted to Cabinet at its meeting on 2 July 2007 were:-

- 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 multi Agency approach to rough sleeping
- Evaluation of Dispersal Orders To add value to the Dispersal Order process

Cabinet received all of the above reports and commented that consideration would be given to the recommendations bearing in mind budgetary issues. A report will be made back to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the autumn 2007.

## Task and Finish Group Work

The following Task and Finish Groups started their reviews in July 2007 and are due to report their findings to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the autumn:-

### Community Engagement Task and Finish Group

This Task and Finish Group was set up to review the Council's engagement activities, including Neighbourhood Management and to review how community engagement can be improved and what Groups the Council should be engaging with, in particular how it should engage with new communities not currently represented. The Task and Finish Group held its initial meeting in July to scope its review and agreed that it would collate its evidence by a variety of methods, including interviews with internal witnesses and receiving written evidence from external witnesses, looking at models of best practice and carrying out desktop research. The information gathered will contribute to the Task and Finish Group's final report which will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 at its meeting on 12 September 2007.

### Voluntary Sector Task and Finish Group

This Task and Finish Group is reviewing how it can make recommendations arising from the review to Cabinet to assist in the budget process and medium term financial strategy for 2008 2011, the organisations currently being funded and the overall Voluntary Community Sector partnership strategy against the national situation of funding. It held its scoping meeting in July and will gather evidence by carrying out desktop research, interviewing internal and external witnesses and collating statistics and data. The Chair will present the final report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 on 12 September 2007.

### Reporting and Monitoring Task and Finish Group

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 set up this Task and Finish Group to review the Council's reporting and monitoring mechanisms. The initial scoping meeting was held in July and the evidence that would be gathered to form its review was agreed. The Task and Finish Group's final report will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 at its meeting on 10 October 2007.

## Northampton's Overview and Scrutiny process noted for best practice

**The Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been noted for best practice on a few issues over the past year or so.**

The Homelessness Review (2005/2006) was well received by external scrutiny peers, for example, the report was commended by Wycombe District Council's Scrutiny Commission who was due to carry out a review on the same topic. The Local Authority's Lead Scrutiny Councillor and Scrutiny Support Officer met with the Homelessness Task and Finish Group and relevant Northampton Borough Council employees to look at areas of best practice that will inform its review. This information was included in the Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2005/2006.

Recently, the Scrutiny Officer from Wycombe District Council met with the Borough's Scrutiny Officer to obtain details of this Council's Overview and Scrutiny's monitoring process as currently Wycombe District Council does not have such a process in place.

The Borough Council recently hosted a seminar on the Local Government White Paper and Bill, which was attended by many local authorities and facilitated by Gareth Wall, of the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

During discussion with Councillor Brendan Glynane, who was then the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny, Gareth noted the Borough's call in process as an example of best practice and the details were published in the Centre for Public Scrutiny's newsletter (March 2007).

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

Following the recent East Midlands Local Government Association Scrutiny Network meeting, the Scrutiny Officer at Gedling Borough Council was keen to receive a copy of the Overview and Scrutiny Rough Sleepers Review report. Northampton Borough Council's Scrutiny Officer has offered the

review was carried out should Councillors at Gedling feel this will be worthwhile.

Copies of the Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Co-Optee Guidance Booklet were requested by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The London Borough of Tower Hamlets' Scrutiny Officer was writing a briefing note on encouraging the involvement of co Optees in the Scrutiny process. The Scrutiny Manager at the London Borough of Merton asked for a copy of the Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit as she was keen to have sight of the employee's guidance note contained in the Toolkit.

The Overview and Scrutiny Co Optees Guidance Booklet has been highly praised by all co-opted members to the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups.

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A member of the public addressed Cabinet in the Summer 2006 commending the Overview and Scrutiny's Annual Report, in particular the use of plain English.

## Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS)'s Fifth Annual Conference

Councillor Malpas (Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2) and T Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, attended the CfPS's fifth Annual Conference on 13 June 2007. The conference was designed to bring together non-executive scrutineers and practitioners from across the public services to look at how effective accountability can lead to improved service delivery and drive efficiency savings across local public services. Attendees shared learning with experts and peers from their service area and across the public sector, whilst gaining insight into the common principles of scrutiny to ensure public governance works in practice.

Both attendees agreed that being at the CfPS Fifth Annual Conference was considered to be helpful and beneficial by both attendees. The information, both orally and written, that was provided was both informative and useful

Full details of the CfPS's Conference can be accessed via the CfPS's website:-

<http://www.cfps.org.uk/home/index.php>



## East Midlands Scrutiny Network meeting news

Councillor Simpson, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1, together with Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, attend the East Midlands Regional Local Government Association (EMRLGA) Scrutiny Network meetings. This Network brings together Scrutiny Chairs and Scrutiny Officers from the East Midlands to discuss issues of mutual benefit.

At the meeting held in June, presentations were given on:-

- Climate Change
- Local Government White Paper and Bill

The next meeting of the EMRLGA is scheduled for 14 September 2007 and this Council's Overview and Scrutiny Review of Rough Sleepers will be presented to the meeting.

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



## Partnership Development and Evaluation Handbook

During April 2006, the Chair of the previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny Officer attended East Derbyshire District Council and Chesterfield Borough Council's high profile launch of its 'Partnership Development and Evaluation Handbook', which had been produced as part of their review of partnerships and sharing success. Upon recommendation from the Chair, the Council purchased copies of the handbook to help to assess the Council's role and contribution to existing partnerships. The Policy Section at the Borough Council is currently using this handbook and a copy has also been forwarded to the Policy and Performance Manager at Northamptonshire Local Area Agreement (LAA) Partnership regarding possible use in evaluating LAA partnerships.

## Local Democracy Week

As part of Local Democracy week, an event will be held at the Guildhall on Saturday 13 October 2007 between the hours of 10am and 4pm. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee will host a stand and a workshop at the event, detailing the work of Scrutiny. In addition, Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 set up a Working Group to decide additional methods for the Committee to promote the work of Scrutiny during Local Democracy Week. To find out further details please contact Tracy Tiff on direct dial 01604 837408 or email [ttiff@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:ttiff@northampton.gov.uk)

## 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:-

O & S 1	O & S 2	O & S 3	O & S Management Committee
12 September 2007	8 October 2007	10 October 2007	23 October 2007
7 November 2007	22 November 2007	5 December 2007	20 December 2007
14 January 2008	31 January 2008	14 February 2008	27 February 2008
13 March 2008	27 March 2008	10 April 2008	23 April 2008
15 May 2008	28 May 2008	12 June 2008	25 June 2008