

A magnifying glass is positioned over a dark, textured surface, possibly a book cover or a document. The background features a pattern of overlapping, dark, oval shapes that create a sense of depth and texture. The lighting is dramatic, with the magnifying glass and the surface it rests on being highlighted against a dark background.

How you can become
involved in the work of

Overview & Scrutiny



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL



What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny emerged in the Local Government Act 2000 as part of the Government's 'modernisation' agenda. The Act required Local Councils to revisit their existing Committee structures and move towards a model that more closely resembled that of Central Government with its Cabinet and Select Committees.

Overview and Scrutiny is a way of working for local councils that holds the Executive to account but also an important mechanism for driving forward improvements in services.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny was established to support the development of Overview and Scrutiny nationally. In its 2004 Good Scrutiny Guide it developed



the following principles for effective public scrutineers:

Four Principles of effective Overview and Scrutiny

- Provide a 'critical friend' challenge to executives and external authorities
- Reflect the voice and concerns of the public
- Take the lead and own the scrutiny process on behalf of the public
- Make an impact on the delivery of public services

Overview and Scrutiny is led by Councillors. They lead on the Review of topics where issues are researched and recommendations developed. They are also involved in setting work programmes for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, bringing forward topics and issues, identifying who they want to hear from to inform their work and what they want to know and how it is presented to them.



What is Overview and Scrutiny?

Topics for Overview and Scrutiny are identified from a variety of sources.

These can include: -

- Issues critical to the Council's improvement
- Topics suggested for review by the Cabinet
- Matters referred from Full Council meetings
- Topics put forward by Overview and Scrutiny Councillors
- The Forward Plan for Cabinet (future decisions)
- Issues raised by members of the public

Call In of Cabinet decisions

The Cabinet makes key decisions which are decisions that affects more than two wards and/or involves more that £50,000. Within three working days of the minutes of the 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 the Cabinet or Full Council should reconsider the decision. It may also be consulted by the Cabinet on forthcoming decisions and the development of policy.

At Northampton to date Call-In has been used sparingly, which shows that the decision making process is transparent and open to constructive challenge.

The Overview and Scrutiny process enables non-Executive Councillors (those who are not on the Cabinet) to influence decisions that are taken by Cabinet and to ensure that the views and needs of local people are taken into account.

Overview and Scrutiny is objective and constructive, aiming to add value to any area it considers.



The Overview and Scrutiny structure at Northampton

In May 2010 the Overview and Scrutiny structure changed. One Overview and Scrutiny Committee was established which sets up time limited Scrutiny Panels to carry out in-depth Reviews.

Previous Scrutiny Reviews are published on the council's webpage:
www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny

The Scrutiny Panels now hold their meetings in public, and individuals are encouraged to attend.





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 become involved with 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.

Only on rare occasions, when certain types of confidential information are 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 Committee and Scrutiny Panels 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 Scrutiny Panels

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





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

Become a Witness

One of the main ways in which the Scrutiny Panels 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 Scrutiny Panel

If you have knowledge or expertise in the topic being reviewed become a co-opted member to the Scrutiny Panel. 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.





“ Get in touch... ”

Should you wish to contact the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee his details are listed below:-



Councillor Jamie Lane
Chair,
Overview and Scrutiny Committee,
telephone 01604 792470,
email cllr.jlane@northampton.gov.uk

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer is always very happy to speak to local people about the activities of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. 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 Scrutiny Officer by calling 01604 837408 or by emailing tiff@northampton.gov.uk

You can view recent agendas and minutes on the Council's website at www.northampton.gov.uk or by contacting Democratic 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

