

Introduction

The October 2013 edition of the Overview and Scrutiny newsletter is the eighteenth production. 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.

Chair's welcome

The chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Scrutiny Reviews are underway and the Scrutiny Panels have now started their evidence gathering. They are receiving information from a variety of expert advisors, desktop research and carrying out a number of site visits. I do hope that you will take the time to be involved in one of these Reviews either by attending and observing a meeting, addressing a meeting or writing to one of the Panels. Further details about these in-depth Reviews are given later in this newsletter.

Overview and Scrutiny is always keen to receive the public's input into the work that it does and to make this easier for you all meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny committee and its Panels are held in public. Anyone is welcome to attend to listen to the proceedings. You can speak on any agenda item for a maximum of three minutes per item. You are not required to register your intention to speak in advance but should arrive a few minutes early, complete a Public Speaking Protocol and notify the Scrutiny Officer of your intention to speak.

The Overview and Scrutiny newsletter is published three times a year. If you want more details of how Overview and Scrutiny operates at Northampton please contact the [Scrutiny Officer](#) who will be very happy to arrange a one to one and provide a full briefing.

I welcome your suggestions and comments on what future editions of the Scrutiny E-newsletter could include.

I hope that you find this newsletter useful and informative.

Dates of forthcoming meetings are detailed on the last page of this newsletter.

Councillor Jamie Lane
Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Centre for Public Scrutiny

(CfPS) - Good Scrutiny Awards 2013

As reported in the June 2013 newsletter, Overview and Scrutiny at Northampton was been shortlisted for an award as part of the Centre for Public Scrutiny's (CfPS) Good Scrutiny Awards 2013 under the category transforming services for its Review - Managing Community Centres.

Although shortlisted, Northampton's Overview and Scrutiny function did not win an award this year. The judges said that this work, which facilitated the transfer of a large number of community facilities from the council to community control, demonstrated the contribution that scrutiny can make to implementing a key government policy around community asset transfer successfully at local level.

Please take a look at the short [video](#) about this Review that was shown at the Awards Ceremony. This [video](#) is also published on the Overview and Scrutiny page of the Council's [website](#).

How are Scrutiny Reviews carried out?

Scrutiny Reviews are selected from issues which the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers important to the people of Northampton. Scrutiny Panels are led by non-Executive Councillors.

Often, individuals and representatives of organisations, who have expertise or have expressed an interest in a particular subject, are co-opted to a Scrutiny Panel for the life of the Review. One of the current Scrutiny Reviews has four co-opted members assigned to it.

Scrutiny Panels are responsible for managing each Review by gathering and taking evidence. At the end of the Review they present their findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval. The report is then presented to Cabinet for its consideration and feedback.





Scrutiny Activity for 2013/2014

Improving the Town's Park

The purpose of this high profile in-depth Review is to improve community engagement within the town's parks, the required outcomes being:

- To make recommendations for the improvement within the town's parks that better meet the needs of the community
- To ensure that every park and open space within the town achieves its potential
- To inform the terms of reference and membership of the Park Management Committees

This Review is benefitting from the expertise and knowledge of four co-opted Members representing various Friends of Parks Groups across the borough.

The Scrutiny Panel has almost concluded its evidence gathering and it is anticipated that it will report its findings to the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny on 27 January 2014.

Management and Regulation of Private Sector Housing (including HIMO's)

The purpose of this important Scrutiny Review is to investigate the regulation and management of private lettings, both by landlords and agencies. The required outcomes are:

- To agree the priorities for private sector housing towards achieving high quality, affordable private sector lettings
- To ensure that private lettings make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods
- To consider the options for licensing and make recommendations to Cabinet
- To consider the legislative options available to the Council and make recommendations to Cabinet
- To produce a best practice guide for Northampton's private sector landlords

This Review is at the early evidence gathering stage. It is expected that the Scrutiny Panel will conclude its work at the end of April 2014.

A further Scrutiny Review will commence its work in January 2014:

Welfare Reform Act

The purpose of this Review is to evaluate the effect of the Welfare Reform Act on the public and Council employees.



Overview and Scrutiny Committee twelve months?

It has been a very busy year so far for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It has looked at the transition from West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC) to Northampton Borough Council (NBC), the ownership and location of outdoor lighting that is owned by NBC. The Committee has undertaken its performance management scrutiny role and crime and disorder scrutiny role. Cabinet Members will attend the meeting on 11 November 2013 to apprise the Committee of their priorities; the purpose of which will inform Councillors of any potential pre-decision scrutiny activities.

A Working Group of the Committee will, early next year scrutinise the Council's budget proposals. The Working Group will identify three key budget proposals for the Committee to scrutinise in-depth.

Overview and Scrutiny Excellence Plan 2013-2015

It was reported in the January 2013 edition that an evaluation of the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) function at Northampton had been carried out using the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS)'s framework "Accountability Works for You", together with two mini peer Reviews undertaken by Officers and Councillors from Broxtowe Borough Council and Rugby Borough Council. It had some very positive outcomes, acknowledging the achievements made, a number of which have been recognised as best practice nationally. Minimal recommendations were proposed regarding potential improvements to the O&S function.

As a result of the evaluation, an Excellence Plan for Overview Scrutiny has been produced and published. This document highlights a number of the processes and procedures that O&S at Northampton follows.





Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Panel dates for your diary:

Overview and Scrutiny meetings are publicly advertised and everyone is welcome to attend. All meetings start at 6pm.

Overview and Scrutiny Commit

2013

- 11 November

2014

- 27 January
- 7 April
- 9 June

Scrutiny Panel 1 –

Improving the Town's Parks

2013

- 2 October
- 25 November

Scrutiny Panel 2 –

Management and Regulation of Private Sector Housing (HIMOs)

2013

- 17 October
- 7 November
- 4 December

2014

- 23 January
- 13 February
- 30 April

Scrutiny Panel 3 –

Welfare Reform Act

It is anticipated that this Scrutiny Review will start its work in January 2014



To find out more



Visit our [website](#)



[Email](#) to ask for more information



Or call the **Scrutiny Officer** on **01604 837408**

