Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2014/2015 **DRAFT** 

#### A Message from Councillor Jamie Lane, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

This Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee Annual Report gives a summary of the Committee's activities over the past twelve months and maps out its plans for the forthcoming year.

It has been another busy year for O&S with three comprehensive reviews being undertaken:

Interpersonal Violence (centring on domestic abuse)
Poverty in the Town
Keep Northampton Tidy

All of the reviews benefitted from the assistance of co-opted members, their knowledge and experience assisted the Scrutiny Panel in arriving at its conclusions and recommendations. All of the reviews have been completed and the findings will be presented to Cabinet early in the Municipal year 2015/2016.

The O&S Committee also set up two Working Groups that undertook short, sharp reviews:

Parking, with a particular focus on match day parking Tree Maintenance Issues

I have continued to promote the good work of Overview and Scrutiny at Northampton wider, a number of the processes and procedures being noted nationally as examples of best practice.

Again this year, we asked the citizens of Northampton to suggest topics for Scrutiny reviews. There were around fifty suggestions from the public which will be considered by non-Executives at a workshop to be held in the spring 2015. From these ideas, Cabinet's priorities for the year and suggestions put forward by Councillors, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will approve its Work Programme 2015/2016 at its first meeting of the Municipal year.

The Committee scrutinised the Council's budget proposals by delegating work to its Reporting and Monitoring Working Group who identified four budget proposals for the Committee to scrutinise indepth.

I would like to thank all those involved in Overview and Scrutiny over the past year. The support of all those involved in reviews is required for a successful outcome.

I do hope that you find this report informative and interesting.



Councillor Jamie Lane
Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

#### **Achievements**

## How was this impact made during 2014-2015?

The Scrutiny Panels carry out in-depth Scrutiny reviews, whilst the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee concentrates on strategic issues, including holding the Cabinet to account, performance management and scrutiny of crime and disorder. This structure attracts increased public participation and the involvement of non-Executives in Scrutiny reviews.

# Involvement of Non- Executives (not Scrutiny Members) in Overview and Scrutiny

The O&S structure enables non-Executives, who are not members of the O&S Committee, to be fully involved in the O&S process.

All of the three Scrutiny Panels this year included non-Executive Councillors who were not O&S Councillors.

**Key Example:** The Scrutiny Panel that looked at poverty in the town was made up of seven non-Executives, of which four were not O&S Councillors, demonstrating complete involvement of non-Executives in the O&S process.

#### **Crime and Disorder Scrutiny**

**Key Example:** Crime and Disorder Scrutiny is an example of excellent working relationships between non-Executives and partners.

In 2010 the scrutiny of crime and disorder was formalised, putting in place clear working arrangements between the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and the Committee. A bi-annual report from the CSP continues to inform the O&S Committee of work undertaken, and non-Executives decide if further review or scrutiny is required. This report focuses on the levels of performance and whether crime has increased in the light of reduced resources, if so what measures have been taken to meet any shortfall in performance.

Overview & Scrutiny's continued interest and input into areas specific to Community Safety is very much welcomed. Their engagement with, and interest in all relevant partner organisations has been excellent, resulting in well informed and balanced recommendations which will enhance and support service delivery.

# Debbie Ferguson Community Safety Partnership Manager

The O&S Committee has also looked at the ownership and location of outdoor lighting that is owned by Northampton Borough Council (NBC), the clear guidelines on Section 106

Agreements and the spending of this money, the Northampton Bus Terminal and the Licensing Function Performance.

# **Performance Management Scrutiny**

A new process enabling the Committee to identify key performance measures earlier on was introduced in 2013/14. The Committee informs the Chair prior to a meeting of the O&S Committee of performance measures that it feels warrant future scrutiny.

The scrutiny of specifically identified measures is included on the agenda of meetings of the O&S Committee. This results in measures being reviewed on an exception basis with relevant Cabinet Members being called to present information to the Committee. Cabinet Members are scrutinised on performance, the causes of underperformance and the corrective actions being taken. Active debate is undertaken and support and challenge is offered to the recommendations being made to deliver service improvements.

Key example: Performance management scrutiny of:-

- ESC01 Total bins/boxes missed in period
- ESC02 missed bins corrected within 24 hrs of notification

#### **Critical Friend to Cabinet**

#### Call-In

At Northampton call-in is used sparingly. During 2014/2015 the facility was not used at all.

#### **Influencing Policy Development**

Three in-depth Scrutiny reviews were undertaken during 2014/2015:

Interpersonal Violence (centring on domestic abuse)
Poverty in the Town
Keep Northampton Tidy

Review work of 2013/2014 has received Cabinet's response. Almost all of the recommendations were accepted, which highlights that Overview and Scrutiny is continuing to make significant influence of Council policy, both in terms of holding the Cabinet to account and contributing to policy development, and the well-being of the citizens of Northampton.

#### Raising the profile of Overview and Scrutiny at Northampton

The profile of O&S has continued to be raised with a number of important and successful reviews carried out during 2013/2014. O&S is keen to keep this up and invites suggestions for the work programme from various partners, Agencies and members of the public.

The Scrutiny review process at Northampton is widely recognised both within the Council and amongst the citizens of Northampton.

The O&S Work Programme received extensive press coverage, locally, which over 25 individuals responded to, suggesting more than 30 ideas for future Scrutiny review.

## **Paperless Innovation**

The purpose of the innovation was to implement paperless Committees, using O&S as a pilot. Advancement of technology provides a real opportunity to protect the environment by utilising ICT to its full capacity and reducing the quantity of printed material.

The paperless innovation created benefits such as financial savings; highlighted the Council as modern, forward thinking and being environmentally responsible.

The pilot continues to operate successfully and the O&S Committee and its three Scrutiny Panels agreed to continue to operate paperless.

As reported in last year's annual report, the innovation attracted national interest. External interest in the innovation has continued this year, with a number of enquiries regarding the success of the innovation.

#### Public engagement within the Overview and Scrutiny process at Northampton

O&S has included various issues referred to it from the public onto its Work Programmes. The details below provide key points of how O&S work has reflected the concerns of service users.

#### **Key Example of review work:**

#### **Keep Northampton Tidy**

The purpose of the review was:

 To undertake a review regarding implementing a 'Keep Northampton Tidy' campaign with an accent on preserving wildlife and encouraging children (and adults) to take an interest in their surroundings, to include Community Clean Ups and 'Northampton in Bloom.'

- A review of the problem of littering and fly-tipping, particularly in un-adopted roads and the gateways into the town.
- To explore opportunities to enhance the gateways into the town.

Following approval of its work programme for 2014/2015, the O&S Committee agreed to include a review - Keep Northampton Tidy in its work for 2014/2015. The O&S Committee commissioned Scrutiny Panel 3 to undertake the review. An in-depth, comprehensive review commenced in May 2014, concluding in March 2015.

A Scrutiny Panel was established comprising eight Councillors and one co-optee, who represented the Northampton Waste Partnership.

This review attracted the interest of five members of the public, some who attended various meetings of the Scrutiny Panel, and two addressed a meeting of the Scrutiny Panel.

Recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel were around the themes:

- Keep Northampton Tidy
- Keep Northampton Tidy Campaign
- Gateways into the town
- Purple Flag Accreditation

The report will be presented to Cabinet in the Municipal year 2015/2016.

The Scrutiny Panel was made up from members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Councillors Sivaramen Subbarayan (Deputy Chair of the Scrutiny Panel), Mick Ford, Matt Lynch, Phil Larratt and Winston Strachan and myself (Chair); together with other non-Executive Councillors Penny Flavell and Dennis Meredith. The Scrutiny Panel benefitted from the expertise of the co optee, Vanessa Kelly of the Northampton Waste Partnership.

The Scrutiny Panel received both written and spoken evidence from a wide variety of expert advisors. Desktop research was carried out by the Scrutiny Officer. Representatives undertook site visits to Northampton, a market town and a city, making comparisons regarding the cleanliness of the town centre. All of which produced a wealth of information that informed the evidence base of this high profile Scrutiny review.

Following the collation of the evidence, the Scrutiny Panel drew various conclusion and recommendations that are contained in the report.

The Review took place between May 2014 and March 2015.

Councillor Tony Ansell
Chair, Scrutiny Panel 3 – Keep Northampton Tidy

# **Co-Opted Members**

The Scrutiny process benefitted from the expertise and knowledge of four co-opted Members to reviews this year.

As a co-optee I found the evidence presented and experiences and awareness of the presenters to add significantly to my knowledge of inter personal violence and that of the local authority. The vocation and victim focus was strong from all parties and will inform the future response to the needs for vulnerable victims. The Scrutiny Panel provided an opportunity to share honest concerns whilst recognising the climate all agencies now operate in and gave significant assurances that there is still innovation, investment and significant priority to current and emerging IPV risks.

Steve Lingley
Detective Superintendent
Head of Crime, Northants Police
Co-Optee – Scrutiny Panel 1 – Interpersonal Violence

#### **Scrutiny Panels**

How has the work of the Scrutiny Panels made a difference to the Council and our residents?

Recommendations from three Scrutiny reviews that were undertaken during 2013/2014 are being implemented and monitored by the O&S Committee.

#### **Key examples**

## Improving the Town's parks

This high profile Scrutiny review highlighted the need to look at community engagement within the town's parks.

Recommendations of the review were around the themes:

- Communication
- Town's parks
- Park Action Plans
- Key roles of the Park Management Committees
- Membership of Park Management Committees

Cabinet accepted all of the recommendations contained within the report and Overview and Scrutiny monitored the implementation of its recommendations in September 2014 and January 2015. Monitoring is now complete.

### Impact of the Welfare Reform Act

This was another high profile Scrutiny review that received a wealth of evidence from key Agencies, partners and the general public.

The findings from the review were reported by the local press.

19 recommendations were included in the report. They were broadly focussed on:

- Northamptonshire Credit Union
- Voluntary Sector
- Food Banks
- Monitoring

Cabinet received the report at its November 2014 meeting and will provide its response to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the summer 2015.

# Management and Regulation of Private Sector Housing (Including HIMOs)

The purpose of this review was to investigate the regulation and management of private lettings, both by landlords and agencies.

Recommendations were around the themes:

- Licensing and Legislative options
- Priorities for the Private Rental Sector
- Best Practice Guide

Cabinet received the Overview and Scrutiny report accepted all of the recommendations contained within it. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will monitor the implementation of the accepted recommendation in the autumn 2015.

#### Review work 2014/2015

O&S at Northampton has undertaken some excellent review work again this year.

The best practice Scrutiny review work has continued to be built upon. Over the last year, Scrutiny reviews have attracted interest from both external organisations and the public.

Overview and Scrutiny at Northampton continues to be Councillor-led and focuses on the major issues affecting the town. It has therefore carried out some very high profile reviews this year, the impact of which will be reported in next year's O&S Annual Report:

#### **Interpersonal Violence**

The purpose of the Scrutiny Panel was to review Northampton Borough Council's response in addressing issues around interpersonal violence (domestic abuse, sexual abuse and child exploitation), centring on domestic abuse.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its work programming event in March 2014, agreed to include a review of interpersonal violence. This was an issue that had been suggested by Scrutiny Panel 1 (Serious Acquisitive Crime, violent crime and community safety) recommending that a review of inter-personal violence be undertaken by a future Scrutiny Panel. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned Scrutiny Panel 1 to undertake the review. The Scrutiny Panel benefitted from the expertise of two co-optees – representing the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Northants Police. An indepth review commenced in May 2014 and concluded in March 2015.

Recommendations were broadly focussed on:

- Funding
- Training
- Housing related issues

The report will be presented to Cabinet in the Municipal year 2015/2016.

This was a very interesting and informative review; with clear evidence received. A wealth of data was received and the Scrutiny Panel undertook a number of site visits. Representatives of the Scrutiny Panel attended conferences regarding preventative models for domestic violence.

I, and also a couple of witnesses to this review, met with the Rt. Hon. Theresa May, MP, Home Secretary, on the issue that this Scrutiny Panel investigated. She suggested that the Scrutiny Panel looked at literature that was available to educate people; the Scrutiny Panel has investigated this. Mrs May showed a keen interest in the work that this Scrutiny Panel did.

Domestic Abuse Awareness Week took place week commencing 24 November 2014. 25 November 2014 was International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. I was delighted that the Scrutiny Panel was able to host, together with officers from Community Safety, an information stand at the Guildhall on this day. Representatives from Northampton Women's Aid also provided information at the stand.

I also took the opportunity to disseminate information about Domestic Abuse Awareness week to all ward Councillors who promoted the information at their surgeries.

The Scrutiny Panel held interviews with Cabinet Members, Senior Staff at Northampton Borough Council and various external expert witnesses. Desktop research was carried out by the Scrutiny Officer.

The result is a comprehensive piece of work, which recommends to Cabinet a number of improvements in addressing domestic abuse issues.

#### **Councillor Jamie Lane**

# **Chair, Scrutiny Panel 1 – Interpersonal Violence**

#### **Poverty in the Town**

The purpose of the Scrutiny Panel was to review poverty in the town to ascertain whether it is a serious issue:

- Whether it growing and more generally what are the trends (including migration)
- What are the causes of poverty locally?
- > What can public services do in this time of austerity?
- What can other groups/individuals do to help?
- What the impact is, if any, is there on the economy, crime, health and education

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its work programming event in March 2014, agreed to include a review of poverty in the town. This was an issue that had been suggested by the public as an area for future Scrutiny review. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned Scrutiny Panel 2 to undertake the review. The review benefitted from the expertise of a co-optee, representing the Transport Scrutiny Committee, Northamptonshire County Council, (NCC). An in-depth review commenced in May 2014 and concluded in March 2015.

The Scrutiny Panel noted that there is no one definition of poverty used in the UK and therefore felt it was important for its own definition of poverty to be agreed and used throughout this review:

- Have nothing set aside for emergencies
- Cannot replace broken goods or furniture
- Can't afford their children's school uniforms, or the cost of school trips
- Have no spare money for holidays, hobbies or leisure activities
- Can't afford to keep their homes warm
- Can't afford to participate in social activities and customs of their community

Recommendations were around the themes:

Promoting the work and initiatives of various organisations and charities Working with the Director of Public Health, Northamptonshire County Council in promoting national awareness campaigns

This review attracted the interest of the public, of which two addressed meetings of the Scrutiny Panel.

The report will be presented to Cabinet in the Municipal year 2015/2016.

A comprehensive review took place between May 2014 and March 2015. A wealth of background data and information was received by the Scrutiny Panel and a series of interviews with a number of key expert advisors were held. A number of organisations and community groups provided written information. Desktop research was undertaken by the Scrutiny Officer, the findings of which informed the review.

Information gathering was very important to this review so that the Scrutiny Panel could map who was most affected and receive details of the processes and systems currently in place to address the causes and mitigate the impact of poverty in Northampton. This enabled the Scrutiny Panel to devise its recommendations that will be considered by Cabinet later this year.

As part of the monitoring regime, Overview and Scrutiny will review this report six months after Cabinet has received it.

#### Councillor Elizabeth Gowen

Chair, Scrutiny Panel 2 - Poverty in the Town

#### **Keep Northampton Tidy**

Please refer to page 5 for a précis of this review.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee also commissioned two Working Groups to undertake short, sharp Scrutiny activities:

#### **O&S Parking Working Group**

Following a motion that was unanimously carried at full Council at its meeting in October 2014:

"This Council recognises the exceptional parking problems that residents and tenants regularly encounter in St James as a result of match day parking. But the problems in

St James are not only match day parking. The people coming into St James taking up residents' and tenants spaces include people coming into the area to work and some people parking at the flats and walking to the station to avoid the parking charges there. This council therefore resolves to do the following:

- 1. Look into the possibility of issuing tenants in NBC homes that have allocated parking areas with free parking permits. The properties considered would be: Cordwainer House, Stitchman House, Stirup House, Lapstone House, Eyeletter House, Abbey House, Melbourne House, Devonshire House, although this list is not exhaustive. This measure would ensure that premium allocated parking is not occupied by people from the outside area. This should be supplemented with sufficient enforcement to tackle inappropriately and incorrectly parked vehicles.
- 2. This council also agrees to consult with Northamptonshire County Council, the Police and Highways to look at the possibility of extending free parking permits into other parts of St James, Upton, Duston and other parts of the town which may then replace the current parking permit scheme which is presently under review and thus remove the need to financially penalise the people of St James simply because people from the outside area come to park in St James, as a successful sports club is located on their door step.
- 3. This Council resolves to ask the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to carry out a detailed investigation to look at these options for Cabinet to consider."

A Working Group was set up to carry out this Scrutiny activity.

The purpose of this Scrutiny activity was to undertake a review, to gain a better understanding of residential parking problems, as detailed in motion that was unanimously carried at full Council on 27 October 2014. In doing this, the Working Group will:

- Investigate the possibility and viability of issuing tenants in NBC homes (including Corwainer House, Stitchman House, Stirup House, Lapstone House, Eyeletter House, Abbey House, Melbourne House, Devonshire House) that have allocated parking areas with free parking permits.
- Investigate the possibility and viability of extending free parking permits to other parts of St James, Upton, Duston and other parts of the town

The Working Group heard from a number of key expert advisors and its recommendations are around:

- Residents' Parking Permits
- Car Parking
- Season Ticket Holders buses

The report will be presented to Cabinet in the Municipal year 2015/2016.

# **O&S Tree Maintenance Working Group**

Following a motion that had been carried at full Council at its meeting on 15 September 2014:

'There are many areas of the Eastern District where historic planting of the wrong kind of tress in the residential areas cause a number of problems for residents - from light being blocked from homes, to fallen debris, to damage to property from roots.

This Council resolves to develop a plan to consider removing trees that are identified as problematic and consider replacing them with smaller tress more suited to residential areas.

'This Council recognises this issue is complex and many trees are located on housing land that will soon be managed by Northampton Partnership Homes so therefore refers this matter to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider.'

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed, at its meeting on 26 January 2015, that an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group would be set up to look at tree maintenance issues.

The recommendations are around:

- Right to light
- Reporting mechanisms
- Tree Inspection Programme
- S106/CIL process
- Revised Tree Maintenance Policy

The report will be presented to Cabinet in the Municipal year 2015/2016.

#### Looking ahead

The Work Programme for 2015/2016 will be approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the spring 2015 and three Scrutiny Panels will scope the reviews.

Details of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2015/2016 will be published on the Overview and Scrutiny <u>webpage</u> as soon as it is finalised.

#### What are our Challenges for 2015-2016?

- To build on, and update, the achievements of O&S as identified in the Overview and Scrutiny Excellence Plan (2013-2015).
- To ensure that Overview and Scrutiny continues to make a positive contribution to the development of policy and the continuous improvement of the Council's operations.
- To continue to ensure the O&S work programme reflects concerns of service users, community and public – ensuring that a wide range of organisations, partners and the public are consulted with for suggestions for scrutiny review and then on the actual work programme.
- To ensure O&S is able to respond effectively to legislative requirements, such as the new powers, for example, wider powers to influence policy and public service delivery in their area – for example investigated issues beyond its traditional remit but affect local people.
- To continue to ensure O&S works with the community and key partners to respond to concerns.
- To continue to ensure that the work of O&S has a positive effect on decisionmakers and provide evidence that it has made a real difference.
- To continue to increase public participation in O&S at Northampton by increased public suggestions for scrutiny review and increased attendance at O&S Committee and Panel meetings. This process has continued to increase year on year.

#### **Glossary of Terms**

#### Call-In

The process by which the O&S Committee considers whether a decision is properly taken or is the right decision.

#### Cabinet (Executive)

The Executive body responsible for day-to-day running of the Council and the development of policy. Cabinet Members have portfolios or areas of responsibility (e.g. Housing) for which they take executive decisions.

#### Councillor (Member)

An elected local representative on the Council, a Councillor represents the interests of the people who live in their ward and Northampton as a whole

# **Pre-decision Scrutiny:**

O&S may inform Executive decisions on topics on the Forward Plan by making evidence based recommendations or advice prior to formal decision by the Executive.

#### Review

A study led by Scrutiny Councillors on a current issue, selected by the Committee. It aims to identify areas of good as well as poor practice, compare performance with other councils' countrywide, and challenge existing practice where relevant.

The review will lead to recommendations for improvements to relevant Cabinet Members as well as outside agencies, such as health trusts. While these are not obliged to support the recommendations, effective consultation has been proven to lead to consensus and to Cabinet support for reviews undertaken.

#### Contact details for more information

Tracy Tiff, 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 her by calling 0300 330 7000 or by email.

You can view recent agendas and minutes on the Council's website at <a href="https://www.northampton.gov.uk">www.northampton.gov.uk</a> or by contacting <a href="https://www.northampton.gov.uk">Democratic Services</a>

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 <a href="https://www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny">www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny</a>

# Suggest an item for Overview and Scrutiny to investigate?

Do you have any suggestions for issues for inclusion onto the Overview and Scrutiny future Work Programme? If so please complete the form overleaf and return to: -

Overview and Scrutiny
Northampton Borough Council
The Guildhall
St Giles Square
Northampton
NN1 1DE

Email: Scrutiny

# Suggest an item for

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Do you have any suggestions for issues for inclusion onto the Overview and Scrutiny future Work Programme? If so please complete the form opposite and return to: -

Overview and Scrutiny
Northampton Borough Council
The Guildhall
St Giles Square
Northampton
NN1 1DE

Email: Scrutiny

Just as Overview and Scrutiny has considerable influence when used in the right way, there are times when other procedures are more appropriate.

Overview and Scrutiny cannot help in the following areas:

- Individual complaints about specific issues - these should be taken up through Northampton Borough Council's Customer Care Procedure.
- Proper accounting for money of the Council - this is the responsibility of the Audit Committee - for information, contact 01604 837356
- The conduct or behaviour of a councillor or officer - this is the responsibility of the Standards Committee - for information, contact 01604 837101.

It cannot be guaranteed that items raised in this way will actually be considered by Overview and Scrutiny.

# Suggested Issues for Overview and Scrutiny

Name:

Email:

Telephone

Issues suggested for inclusion on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

If English is not your first language and you need help in translating this document please contact Tracy Tiff on 01604 837408.

Jesli angielski nie jest Twoim jezykiem ojczystym a potrzebujesz pomocy w przetlumaczeniu tego Если английский не Ваш родной язык и Вам нужна помощь с переводом этого документа, то свяжитесь с Трайсу Тиф.Тел. 01604 837408

Haddii afka Ingriisigu aanu ahayn luuqad-daada kowaad oo aad u baahan-tahay in lagaa caawiyo turjumidda warqaddan fadlan kala xidhidh Tracy Tiff tilifoonka 01604 837408

如果英語不是你的主要說用語言而需要幫助將這 份文件翻譯,請致電 01604 837408 向 Tracy Tiff 提出要求。

যদি ইংরেজী আপনার মাতৃভাষা না হয় এবং এই দলিলটি অনুবাদে আপনার সাহায্যের দরকার হয় তবে অনুগ্রহ করে ট্রেইসি টিফ-এর সাথে 01604 837408 এই টেলিফোন নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করুন।

# LARGE PRINT AND TAPE

If you would like this document as large print or as a tape recording please call 01604 837408