



a word from the chair of the management overview and scrutiny committee

This has been the first year of an expanded Overview and Scrutiny function within the Council with the creation of three new committees and a management committee following the Liberal Democrats taking control of the Council in May 2007. This has presented us both with opportunities and challenges for Overview and Scrutiny within Northampton Borough.

The opportunity has been there to involve more Councillors in scrutinising the work of the Council and in contributing to its improvement. With the Government strengthening the role of Scrutiny in looking at partner organisations and moving towards 'scrutiny of place' the future challenge is to look beyond the role of Northampton Borough Council. Overview and Scrutiny needs to involve and work closely with all external partners and organisations who all contribute to the well being of the people of Northampton.

At the same time Overview and Scrutiny needs to demonstrate clearly how it is contributing towards the recovery of Northampton Borough Council and above all helping involve more citizens in its work.

We are currently conducting a Review of how Overview and Scrutiny works in Northampton, looking at best practice elsewhere and building on experience gained over the last few years.



Councillor
Andrew Simpson
Chair, Overview
and Scrutiny
Management Committee

introduction

Welcome to the September 2008 edition of the Overview and Scrutiny Newsletter. This is our sixth edition and we want to update you on current issues surrounding the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function. Northampton Borough Council has three Overview and Scrutiny Committees, which have an Overview and Scrutiny function in regards partnerships, regeneration, community safety and community engagement; housing & environment; improvement, performance & finance. The overarching Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee co-ordinates and manages the work of the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

We also want to alert you to reports and meetings which may interest you. If you have any questions about the scrutiny function, or about how to get involved, please e-mail the Scrutiny Team on scrutiny@northampton.gov.uk. Further information can also be found on the Overview and Scrutiny webpages www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny.

Overview and Scrutiny Adding value to the work of the Council

Overview and Scrutiny adds value because through it Councillors can devote the time to look at issues and problems in depth. This is done by carrying out Overview and Scrutiny Reviews. The Reviews bring in all the necessary people to speak to them so that they can get a more rounded understanding. Then the evidence collected can be used to put together recommendations for improvement to the Cabinet or Council.

Overview and Scrutiny also provides an opportunity for the public and other stakeholders to access, influence and inform the work of the Council. It enables them to raise issues and contribute to Reviews and Inquiries and also hear first hand issues in more depth than is possible at other Council meetings.

Overview and Scrutiny Reviews

Each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees has suggested topics that they would like to look at in depth over the next year. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee ratified the work programme 2008/2009 and determined the order that the reviews would commence. The reviews that are currently underway are:

- **Contaminated Water Task and Finish Group** - To investigate the recent contaminated water problem. Phase one of the review will obtain the public's views how they felt



Water Limited responded to the situation of contaminated water. Northamptonshire County Council is also carrying out a review into the situation but from a different perspective. The County Council is scrutinising the response to recent problems with the water supply, including the effectiveness of systems designed to mitigate the impact on the county and the co-operation and communication between the County Council and relevant partners. Both Councils will share the information gathered in their reviews.

- **Evaluation of Overview and Scrutiny in Northampton** - Evaluation of the performance of Overview and Scrutiny at Northampton using the Centre for Public Scrutiny's framework
- **Monitoring and Budget Programme** - To investigate the council's monitoring and budget programme and make recommendations for improvement

All Task and Finish Groups will be reporting their findings and recommendations to their partner Overview & Scrutiny Committee in due course. A library of completed reviews can be viewed on the Council's website: www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny.

Norwich City Council has requested a copy of the Overview and Scrutiny Allotments (water charges) review that was carried out in 2006. Norwich City Council is currently looking at how its scrutiny reviews are carried out and will use our review as an example. Wellinborough Borough Council is carrying out a scrutiny review into homelessness and has asked for copies of both Northampton Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny homelessness review that was carried out during 2005/06 and the more recent rough sleepers review that was completed in March 2007.

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2007/2008

The Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report, which has recently been published, reflects on the work of the various Overview and Scrutiny Committees during 2007/2008. Copies are available on request from the Overview and Scrutiny Team: scrutiny@northampton.gov.uk or by visiting the Council's website www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny

Evaluation of the Overview and Scrutiny Operation

The effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny function will shortly be under the "spotlight". An evaluation of the Overview and Scrutiny function at Northampton is currently underway using the Centre for Public Scrutiny's evaluation framework. We expect this to be quite a challenging review, but we see it as essential to help drive the improvement of the Overview and Scrutiny function forward. The outcome of the review will be reported in a later edition of the newsletter.

Your Input

Can you suggest any ways in which to improve the newsletter? Would you like to write an article for it?

If so then send your comments to the Overview and Scrutiny Team at scrutiny@northampton.gov.uk

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 webpages on the Council's website under Council, Government and Democracy. www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny

Who to contact

The Overview and Scrutiny Team is always very happy to speak to local people about the activities of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. 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 Team by calling **01604 837408** or by emailing scrutiny@northampton.gov.uk.

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

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee



Councillor Andrew Simpson (Chair)



Councillor Jenny Conroy (Vice Chair)

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 (Housing and Environment)



Councillor Christopher Malpas (Chair)



Councillor Pamela Varnserry (Vice Chair)

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 (Partnerships, Regeneration, Community Safety and Engagement)



Councillor Andrew Simpson (Chair)



Councillor Ifty Choudary (Vice Chair)

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 (Improvement, Performance and Finance)



Councillor Jamie Lane (Chair)



Councillor Jenny Conroy (Vice Chair)

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&S1	O&S2	O&S3	O&S Management Committee
2 September 27 November 21 January 2009 1 April 24 June	9 October 2009 4 December 29 January 2009 23 April 2 July	1 October 10 December 26 January 2009 30 April 16 July	11 November 3 March 2009 11 May

