



Report of the
Overview & Scrutiny
Committee

Annual Report
2012/2013



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

This Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report highlights the work of the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) and its Scrutiny Panels over 2012/2013.

It has been an extremely busy year for O&S with three very in-depth Reviews being undertaken around:

- Serious Acquisitive Crime, violent crime and community safety
- Retail experience
- Infrastructure requirements and S106 Agreements

All of these Reviews had the assistance of key co-opted members and their expertise and knowledge played a welcomed part in assisting the Panels in compiling their findings, conclusions and recommendations. The reports of these important Reviews will be presented to Cabinet in the Municipal year 2013/2014.

I was very pleased that public suggestions totally influenced the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2012/2013 and for the Work Programme 2013/2014, over twenty suggestions from the public were received.

The Committee scrutinised the Council's budget proposals by delegating work to its Reporting and Monitoring Working Group to identify three key budget proposals for the Committee to scrutinise in-depth.

It is very important for O&S to be involved with decisions at an appropriate early stage to apply real influence and play the important role of 'critical friend.' Again, Overview and Scrutiny has continued to fulfil its robust pre-decision scrutiny role by undertaking a number of key pre-decision activities.

An evaluation of the Overview and Scrutiny process at Northampton took place 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. I was pleased to note that minimal recommendations were proposed regarding potential improvements to the O&S function.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Councillor Les Marriott for all his hard work in chairing the Overview and Scrutiny Committee over the past two years.

I would like to thank all those involved in Overview and Scrutiny over the past year. I highlight 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**



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Key Achievements

How was this impact made during 2012-2013?

The Panels carry out in-depth Scrutiny Reviews, whilst the O&S Committee concentrates on strategic issues, including holding the Executive 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.

Key Example:

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

This O&S structure enables non-Executives, who are not O&S Members, to be fully involved in the O&S process.

Key Example: The Scrutiny Panel that looked at Infrastructure Requirements and Section 106 was made up of eight non-Executives, of which four were not O&S Councillors, demonstrating complete involvement of non-Executives in the O&S process. In addition, a non-Executive from Northamptonshire County Council and a non-Executive from Daventry District Council were co-opted to this Review highlighting joint scrutiny work.

Crime and Disorder Scrutiny

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. This is an example of excellent working relationships between non-Executives and partners. In addition to this approach to crime and disorder scrutiny, a Scrutiny Panel investigated serious acquisitive crime, violent crime and community safety, details of which are given later within this Annual Report.

“Overview & Scrutiny adds great value to the community safety work undertaken within Northampton. Their continued interest and contribution is welcomed, and the focussed pieces of work they undertake continue to support and progress the delivery of community safety projects across the Borough.”

Debbie Ferguson,
Community Safety Partnership Manager



Performance Management Scrutiny

At the start of the Municipal year, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a development session on the performance trends to enable non-Executives to undertake their performance management scrutiny role.



Critical Friend to Cabinet

Robust Pre-Decision Scrutiny

The O&S structure enables regular, robust pre-decision scrutiny. Three in-depth pre-decision scrutiny activities were undertaken this year.

Key example: Scrutiny input into the Tenant Involvement Strategy, Housing Allocations Scheme and Tenancy Strategy 2012-2015.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered tenant involvement, housing allocations scheme and the tenancy strategy over three meetings - 25 July 2012, 17 September and 12 November in order that its comments could be put forward as part of the consultation process.

Information obtained from the following sources formed the main body of evidence gathered by the Committee:

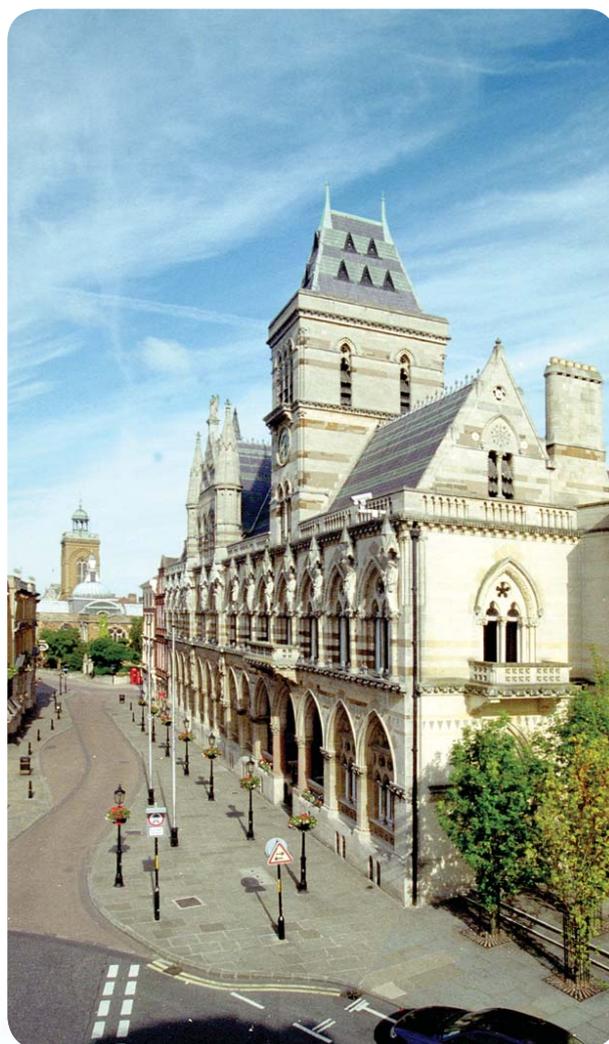
- Cabinet Member (Housing)
- Director of Housing
- Head of Strategic Housing
- Housing Services Manager, Landlord Services

This pre-decision scrutiny activity demonstrates non-Executives providing input into the decision making at an early stage.

LGSS Scrutiny Inquiry

The Committee commissioned a Scrutiny Inquiry to work with key officers with regard to some services of this Council being undertaken by Local Government Shared Services (LGSS). This enabled non-Executives to receive reports and updates at various stages of the process.

A key outcome of the Inquiry was an in-depth consideration of how services provided by LGSS will be available to Councillors. The Inquiry discussed a vast amount of information and data over a very short time frame. It had been very beneficial to gain a clear understanding of the future delivery of services.



Call-In

At Northampton call-in is used sparingly, and during 2012/2013 there was one call in hearing which demonstrates that the decision making process is transparent and open to challenge.

Influencing Policy Development

Three in-depth Scrutiny Reviews were undertaken during 2012/2013. The final reports will be presented to Cabinet early in the Municipal year 2013/2014.

Review work of 2011/2012 has received Cabinet's response. 85.19 % of the recommendations were accepted, and 3.7% was enhanced by Cabinet, highlighting 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.

Evaluation of Overview and Scrutiny

The self-evaluation of the O&S function at Northampton was repeated in 2012, the aim of which fifteen to produce an Excellence Plan for O&S building upon the good practice that has been previously recognised.

The purpose of the evaluation was: -

- To demonstrate the effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny at Northampton
- To identify areas and means for further developing Overview and Scrutiny at Northampton Borough Council
- To provide objectivity by identifying evidence from the questions posed in the framework
- To highlight any potential barriers to improvement

A significant amount of evidence was gathered from various sources. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee completed the self-evaluation framework form based on the following key areas:

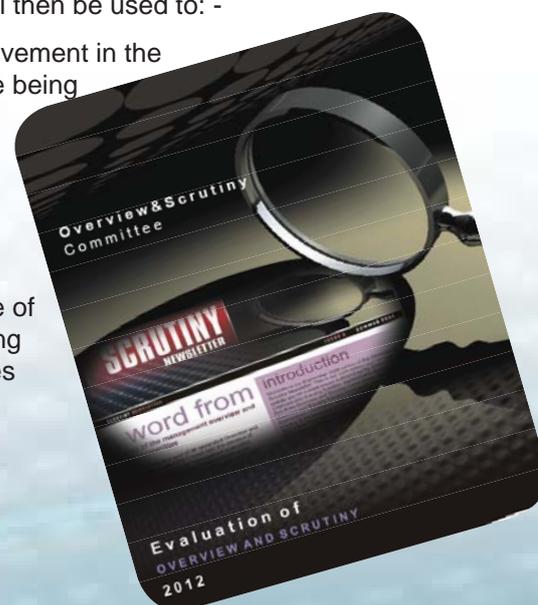
- Work Programme
- Work of the Panels/Evidence gathering
- Outcomes and Impact
- Accountability role

Councillors completed a short questionnaire, comprising six main questions.

The Scrutiny Teams of two Local Authorities undertook mini peer reviews. The Scrutiny Officer, NBC, carried out a comparison of Northampton Borough Council's Scrutiny function with that of other districts as suggested by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS).

The report highlighted a number of achievements and recommended that the findings be used to produce an Overview and Scrutiny Excellence Plan building upon the good practice undertaken by O&S at Northampton Borough Council. The Overview and Scrutiny Excellence Plan will then be used to: -

- Encourage involvement in the process of those being scrutinised
- Communicate the potential of Scrutiny to local communities
- Build confidence of those undertaking Scrutiny activities



Raising the profile of Overview and Scrutiny at Northampton

The profile of Scrutiny and Overview has been raised with a number of important and successful reviews carried out during 2012/2013. We are keen to keep this up and are always inviting 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.

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

The press (BBC Northants) attended one of the earlier meetings of the innovation and reported it as 'forward and modern thinking and that it was like being in Tomorrow's World.'

Northampton's paperless committee trial was referred to in the Kent local press positively, as Kent County Council is looking to introduce a similar scheme.

External feedback on the innovation demonstrated public interest had been received, as far afield as central Government and Kent County Council.

Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and the Care and Quality Commission (CQC) Action Learning Set (ALS)

A Project is underway, hosted by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), together with a number of Local Authorities:

- Northampton Borough Council
- Chesterfield Borough Council
- Warwick District Council
- Dacorum Borough Council
- Test Valley Borough Council

The CQC is keen to explore developing relationships with district and borough councils which is the main aim of this project. Therefore an Action Learning Set (ALS) comprising the above Local Authorities was formed.

The Action Learning Set (ALS) consists of Councillors and Scrutiny Officers. Councillor Danielle Stone, NBC's representative to NCC's Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee, and Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, are members of the ALS.

A main aim of the Project is the production of a document that details the relationship between district Councils and the CQC. The document is currently being drafted.

An action from the ALS was for Northampton to host a briefing session for Northants and neighbouring Authorities about the work of the CQC and how district Councils can link in. This session will be arranged early in the Municipal year 2013/2014.



Key Example of Review work: Serious Acquisitive Crime, violent crime and community safety

The purpose of the Review was to:

- To investigate, as a benchmark, Northampton's crime statistics in relation to serious acquisitive and violent crime
- To identify 'hotspots' in relation to serious acquisitive and violent crime
- To identify the impact that serious acquisitive crime and violent crime has on the residents of Northampton
- To identify the serious acquisitive crime and violent crime issues that Northampton Borough Council, in partnership with other Agencies, can have an impact upon

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed at its work programming event in March 2012 to include a review of serious acquisitive crime, violent crime and community safety. These were issues that had been identified by a number of members of the public as key concerns. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned Scrutiny Panel 1 to undertake the review. An in-depth review commenced in May 2012 and concluded in April 2013.

This Review links to the Council's corporate priorities - Corporate Priority 2 - Invest in safer, cleaner neighbourhoods, creating an attractive, clean and safe environment.

Recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel were around the themes:

- Housing
- Planning and Regeneration

- Neighbourhood wardens
- Partners and Agencies
- Community Forums
- Northants Probation Services

A copy of this report will be provided to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Northamptonshire.

This has been a most interesting scrutiny Review, highlighting as it has the complex factors behind crime. The trends are worrying. The evidence from our expert witnesses shows clearly two things:

- 1. Information to the community from the community safety partnership is key to creating an understanding of the facts rather than the myths. It is also key in creating an understanding of how we can all take measures to reduce opportunities for crime, how to report crime, and how to work with preventative and enforcement agencies.*
- 2. Partnership working came out from the evidence as absolutely essential to the maintenance of good community relations, for effective preventative measures and for good policing. We all have a part to play in keeping our neighbourhoods safe and pleasant to live in.*

I have learned a great deal from this process and I look forward to the recommendations being taken up for debate and consideration. satisfaction measures.

Councillor Danielle Stone
Chair, Scrutiny Panel 1 - Serious Acquisitive Crime, violent crime and community safety



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.

The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2012/2013 was totally influenced by public suggestions.

Key example: Retail experience

The purpose of the Review was to:

- To investigate how NBC can support the town centre business community
- To investigate how NBC can support local businesses throughout the development period of any major building projects in and close by to the town centre (i.e. Grosvenor; bus interchange; university accommodation etc.)
- To identify and examine good practice from other boroughs
- To identify ways to develop greater involvement / engagement with local, regional and national businesses in public land improvement initiatives

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed at its work programming event in March 2012

to include a review of the retail experience at Northampton. This was an issue that had been identified by a number of members of the public as a key suggestion for a future Scrutiny review. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned Scrutiny Panel 2 to undertake the Review. An in-depth review commenced in May 2012 and concluded in May 2013.

This review links to the Council's corporate priorities - Priority 1 - Northampton on track - a vibrant town.

Recommendations of the Review centred around:

- Retail experience
- Cleansing
- Partnership working

This was a very in-depth Review that took place between April 2012 and May 2013.

The Councillor role is an important one and the Council's Scrutiny process is a good place for Councillors to make a real difference. I consider that in carrying out this Review and producing a comprehensive report, the Scrutiny Panel has done that.

The Panel received both written and spoken evidence from a wide variety of expert advisors including Cabinet Members for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning and Environment, Northampton Borough Council, an independent business owner, University of Northampton and the Northampton Community Forums.

The Panel made a series of site visits to a selection of towns and cities, the findings of which informed the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

Councillor Matt Lynch
Chair, Scrutiny Panel 2 – Retail Experience



Co-Opted Members

The Scrutiny process benefitted from the expertise and knowledge of six co-opted members to Reviews this year.

I found the experience of looking in depth at serious acquisitive crime and violence in Northampton very enlightening and felt that by the end of the Scrutiny Panel we had a far more informed view due to the evidence we heard, the rigour adopted when questioning witnesses and the statistical analysis which was undertaken as part of the scrutiny. Some commonly held myths were debunked, agencies were held to account and areas which require more in depth scrutiny were identified. It was a very well worth exercise and one which I would be happy to repeat.

Sharon Henley, Crime Prevention Design Adviser, Northants Police Co-Optee - Scrutiny Panel 1 Serious Acquisitive Crime, Violent Crime and Community Safety

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 2011/2012 are being implemented and monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.



Councillor Empowerment Fund

As reported in the Annual Report 2011/2012, this high profile Review highlighted that a Councillor Empowerment Fund benefits CVGs. Non-Executives ensured that CVGs were engaged in the Review. Upon the advice of the Chair of the Voluntary Sector Forum, a sample of CVGs provided a response to the core questions demonstrating an inclusive approach to engaging with CVGs. The Groups attended the same meeting and addressed the Scrutiny Panel together. They felt their views were heard and taken into account. The recommendations of the Review comprised innovative methodologies to gather further community feedback such as the Voluntary and Community Forum promoting the Scheme.

Recommendations of the Review were around the themes:

- Annual Councillor Allowance
- Easy to complete application form and comprehensive guidance notes
- Positive publicity
- Key partners promoting the scheme amongst CVGs
- Monitoring of the effectiveness of the Scheme

Cabinet enhanced one of the recommendations of the report, increasing the annual allowance to £3,000, accepted a further four recommendations and rejected four recommendations of the Review.

An interim monitoring report was received in September 2012 and the O&S Committee will monitor the success of the scheme after it has been in operation for one year.



Hate Crime Reporting Mechanisms

Cabinet accepted all of the recommendations contained within the Overview and Scrutiny report and congratulated the Scrutiny Panel on its high quality, comprehensive report.

Customer Services

This short, sharp Review focused on evaluating all the Council's customer services.

It was highlighted that over the last two years there have been significant improvements made within customer services throughout that the Council and new and innovative improvements have been made.

This Scrutiny Review demonstrates the importance of good quality customer services to each and every customer.

Cabinet accepted all of the recommendations contained within the Overview and Scrutiny report and congratulated the Scrutiny Panel on its high quality, comprehensive report.

Independent Living Strategy

As reported in the Overview and Scrutiny Annual report 2011/2012, the purpose of the Review was to evaluate the draft Independent Living Strategy for older people and make recommendations for development of this Strategy.

Recommendations of the Review are around the themes:

- Independent Living Strategy

- Partnership working
- Working with older people
- Service delivery
- Sheltered Housing
- Funding Opportunities
- Monitoring

Cabinet's response to this Review is expected in the autumn 2013.

Review work 2012/2013

Overview and Scrutiny 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:

Serious Acquisitive crime, violent crime and community safety

Please refer to page 7 for a precis of this Review.

Retail experience

Please refer to page 8 for a precis of this Review.



Infrastructure Requirements and S106 Agreements

The purpose of this Review was:

- To identify the infrastructure requirements to Northampton and the surrounding areas
- To evaluate how the infrastructure will be delivered through Section 106 Agreements/Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)
- To identify any funding gaps and how these will be filled
- To understand the management of S106 funding

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed at its work programming event in March 2012 to include a review of infrastructure requirements and S106 Agreements. A number of proposals around these issues had been proposed by members of the public as a key suggestion for a future Scrutiny Review. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned Scrutiny Panel 3 to undertake the Review. An in-depth Review commenced in July 2012 and concluded in May 2013.

The Scrutiny Panel established that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities:

Baseline data:

- Purpose and scope of S106 Agreements and introduction to CIL
- Joint Core Strategy Infrastructure Schedule
- Central Area Action Plan Infrastructure Schedule
- Sources of funding for infrastructure
- Table of existing NBC S106 obligation monies and information relating to NCC and WNDL S106 monies
- Developer Obligations Supplementary Planning Document

- Future provision of skills and training programmes
- Affordable housing
- Memorandum of Understanding for the Growth Management Scheme for the A45/M1
- Sports and Playing Pitch Strategy
- Map: defended and undefended areas
- Drainage Strategy (summary)
- A copy of a Section 106 Agreement
- Desktop research

This Review links to a number of the Council's corporate priorities, including Priority 1 – Northampton on track – a vibrant town, Priority 2 – invest in safer, cleaner neighbourhoods and Priority 5 – better homes for the future.

Recommendations of the Review were around the themes:

- Infrastructure requirements
- Affordable housing

The Scrutiny Panel received a wealth of background information and data to inform its comprehensive review of a period of ten months. A series of interviews with a number of expert advisors were also held.

The Scrutiny Panel conveys its thanks to Officers from Huntingdonshire District Council for taking the time to visit Northampton and give an informative presentation on "the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – A Local Authority's Perspective".

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

**Councillor Phil Larratt
Chair, Scrutiny Panel 3**



Looking ahead

The Work Programme for 2013/2014 has been approved and the Scrutiny Panels will begin to scope the Reviews shortly. They will be looking at the following important topics:

- Improving the town's parks
- Management and regulation of private sector housing (including HMOs)
- West Northants Development Corporation (WNDC)
- Responding to the Welfare Reform Act



What are our challenges for 2013/2014?

- To build on Overview and Scrutiny's achievements by setting stretching targets to broaden our impact, to be identified in the Overview and Scrutiny Excellence Plan.
- To continue to ensure the Overview and Scrutiny work programme reflects concerns of service users, community and public – consulting with a wide range of organisations, partners and the public for suggestions for scrutiny Review and then on the actual work programme.
- To ensure that Overview and Scrutiny 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 decision-makers and provide evidence that it has made a real difference.
- 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.



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 01604 837408 or by emailing ttiff@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 democraticservices@northampton.gov.uk.

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



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 dokumentu, prosze skontaktuj sie z Tracy Tiff pod numerem 01604 837408

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 laga 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。

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