



# Overview & Scrutiny

annual report

**2006 - 2007**



**NORTHAMPTON**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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# Foreword by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

This, the second Annual Report by Northampton Borough Council's Scrutiny Committee, gives an overview of the Committee's activities over the past twelve months and its plans for the forthcoming year.

This is my second year as Chairman of Scrutiny, we have made successful progress in developing our Scrutiny function at Northampton a large part of that success is due to the dedicated support, enthusiasm and hard work of our Scrutiny Officer, Tracy Tiff, on behalf of the Committee I thank her for this.

We have developed an Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit, which provides a practical guide to everyone involved with Overview and Scrutiny. It gives clear guidance on the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function and provides practical advice for all those who take part.

Members of Scrutiny have been keen to involve members of the public as far as possible in the reviews carried out by Scrutiny; members of the public have been part of our reviews into Allotments (Water Charges), Housing Repairs, and Street Scene. The members of the public have contributed well to these investigations, and helped

to improve the working of this Borough Council with many of the recommendations now in place. I would like to place on record my and the Committee's thanks to the Co-opted members who put in a huge amount of their free time last year. Their contribution is greatly appreciated.

As part of Local Democracy Week Scrutiny held a workshop for members of the public giving a brief presentation on the role of Overview and Scrutiny, how members of the public could get involved, and how Scrutiny can help improve the working of the Council.

We produced a structured work programme for the first time, which reflected the Council's priorities; the work plan has changed over time and is now also linked to the Council's Improvement Plan. Effective scrutiny is not an easy task, but it is a rewarding one. My thanks go to all those involved who have

invested their time to bring change about.

Lastly I would like to pay tribute to Councillor Marion Allen and Councillor Margaret Pritchard who are standing down at the forthcoming elections, thank you on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee for your hard work, I

have no doubt that your contributions to the Scrutiny process will have changed the lives of Northampton people for the better, thank you.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B Glynane'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Councillor Brendan Glynane**  
**Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

# Introduction

Since 2001, in accordance with the Government's "modernisation" agenda, the Council has operated a very different political decision making structure, moving away from the traditional subject-based committees to a model more closely resembling that of Central Government with its Cabinet and Select Committees.

Councillors fall into two categories.

The Leader and five other Councillors form the Cabinet. They are responsible for the direction of the Council and take key decisions within the budgetary and policy framework agreed by the Council. Each Cabinet member (Portfolio Holder) has responsibilities for specific aspects of the Council's policy or work (portfolio).

The remaining 41 Councillors are known as non-Executive Councillors and are given the opportunity to be involved in scrutinising policy and the services provided for residents which is done through Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups.

In 2005 the Council reviewed its political structures and replaced its seven Overview and Scrutiny Committees with one.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has two main functions, namely holding the Cabinet to account – *Scrutiny* and conducting policy reviews into areas of the Council's services with a view to making recommendations for improvement – *overview*.

Overview and Scrutiny is objective and constructive, aiming to add value to any area it considers. It is based on an evidenced process that leads to Task and Finish Groups compiling reports to Cabinet and/or Full Council.

## **The four main principles of Overview and Scrutiny are: -**

- Policy development and review
- Holding the Cabinet to account
- Investigating issues of local concern
- External scrutiny including health scrutiny

# The Overview and Scrutiny Process

## Northampton's Scrutiny Structure

Overview and Scrutiny within the Council continues to evolve.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee comprising fourteen Councillors from each Political Group sets up time limited Task and Finish Groups to carry out strategic and operational reviews.

All non-Executive Councillors are given the opportunity to be involved in the reviews by putting themselves forward to join the Task and Finish Groups. The Task and Finish Groups look in detail at specific topics and produce reports following their investigations that put forward evidence-based recommendation to Cabinet and/or Full Council.

Overview and Scrutiny reviews cover a wide range of topics and complex issues.

Community involvement at all stages of the Task and Finish Group investigations is encouraged and a variety of methods are used to gather residents' views, for example interviewing expert witnesses and co-opting experts in the topic being reviewed. This is discussed in more detail on page 7.

Overview and Scrutiny at Northampton engages with external partners and other organisations to obtain evidence.

# Determining the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

A structured Overview and Scrutiny Annual Work Programme was produced for the first time for 2006/2007. Initially the work programme reflected the Council's priorities, for example, "make Northampton a safer, cleaner and greener place to live". Over time the work programme changed and is now also linked to the Council's Improvement Plan. This allows the Council to use Overview and Scrutiny as part of its approach to improving its services.

The review areas that were agreed for 2006/2007 were: -

- Tree Policy
- Best Value Performance Plan Process
- Allotments (Water Charges)
- Housing Repairs
- Leisure Services
- Street Scene
- Homelessness (Rough Sleepers)

- Evaluation of Dispersal Orders

## Monitoring Process

The monitoring system was introduced in 2006. This system monitors the implementation of the recommendations that the various Task and Finish Groups produce.

Approximately six months after Cabinet has accepted Overview and Scrutiny recommendations, the Portfolio Holder is requested to attend a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide details of the implementation of the recommendations. Should recommendations be outstanding, the Portfolio Holder is asked to come back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in a further six months time to provide more details.

# Involving the Public

Overview and Scrutiny at Northampton involves the public as far as possible in the reviews that are carried out by its Task and Finish Groups. The public can be involved in a number of ways, for example:

- By becoming a co-opted member to one of the Task and Finish Groups for the life of that review.
- Individuals with a particular knowledge of the subject being reviewed can be invited to give evidence at a Task and Finish Group meeting. This enables Councillors to make well-informed recommendations but also gives individuals and organisations from outside the Council a way of having their voice heard and influence the delivery of Council services.

During the last year, Task and Finish Groups have involved the public by a variety of methods such as:

- Interviewing expert witnesses
- Co-opting experts in the topic being reviewed
- Inviting Residents Associations and Parish Councils to give information on side waste (littering) and abandoned vehicle issues

- Inviting local churches to give information on assistance they provide to rough sleepers
- Visits to rough sleeper drop-in sessions
- Visits to users of relevant services
- Inviting local residents to an Overview and Scrutiny Workshop

Members of the public are welcome to attend Overview and Scrutiny meetings to hear the range of issues under discussion.

Overview and Scrutiny has begun to use technology more to keep people informed, for example, an information sheet is attached to the E-Bulletin newsletter that informs the public how it can find out about the work of Overview and Scrutiny and become involved by: -

- Attending a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Writing to the Task and Finish Groups
- Expressing an interest to become a co-opted member
- Becoming a witness
- Suggesting future issues that they would like the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review

Further details are given on page 11.



# Local Democracy Week – Overview and Scrutiny Workshop

Local Democracy week took place in Northampton during the week commencing 16 October 2006. Key aims were for Local Councils to engage with citizens, including young people, to help promote and encourage active citizenship and participation in local democracy.

An all day event took place on Saturday 14 October 2006, at the Guildhall, hosted by the Northampton Borough Council's Community Forums.

Councillor Glynane (Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee), Councillors Malpas and Roy (Deputy Chairs) and Councillor Pritchard hosted the workshop and gave brief presentations on: -

- The role of Overview and Scrutiny

- The role of co-optees and witnesses in the Scrutiny process
- Details of the recommendations contained in the Public Engagement and Communications Task and Finish Group's final report
- Monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Task and Finish Groups' final reports

Attendees at the workshop made comment regarding the cleanliness of the town's bus station and queried whether this could be included as part of the Overview and Scrutiny's Work Programme 2006/2007. As the Annual Work Programme was full, the relevant Portfolio Holder was requested to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 12 December 2006 to provide a response to the concerns and queries raised by the Workshop.

The Portfolio Holder advised that: -

- The Bus Station is cleaned daily with staff around during the daytime, but most of the cleaning takes place with a night shift. This was set up due to the amount of people using the station during the day.
- Deep cleansing is carried out as and when the service is asked to do so and the Town Centre Manager provides an order for this work.
- Providing the individuals with Community Service Orders are closely supervised, the Portfolio Holder could foresee no reason why they could not contribute to helping keep the Bus Station tidy, however, it was presumed they would only be available for the day shift rather than nights.



# Use of the Web

Overview and Scrutiny now has a dedicated section on the Council's website ([www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny)) that has been developed over the past year. It details the role of Overview and Scrutiny and how it works at Northampton, together with times and dates of meetings. The site contains the contact details of the Scrutiny Officer and there is also the facility for the public to submit suggestions for a future Overview and Scrutiny Review. There is a list of current Scrutiny reviews and a library of past Scrutiny reviews.

The site also contains a number of documents including details of the current and previous Overview and Scrutiny Annual Reports, Annual Work Programme, Overview and Scrutiny Guidance Information, Co-Optee Handbook, Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit and the E-Bulletin Overview and Scrutiny Newsletter.

## Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit

The Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit was developed in 2006/2007 and provides practical guidance to

everyone involved with Overview and Scrutiny in Northampton, which includes Councillors, members of the public, Council staff, co-opted members and witnesses.

The Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit sets out how Scrutiny at Northampton works and how people can get involved. It is intended to make Scrutiny challenging and constructive and also be an inclusive process.

The Toolkit aims to give clear guidance on the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function as well as provide practical advice to all those who take part in the Overview and Scrutiny process: -

- Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Task and Finish Groups
- Co-opted members
- Cabinet members
- Council Employees
- Witnesses in Overview and Scrutiny inquiries
- Members of the public

The Toolkit is published on the Council's website and a copy can also be obtained by contacting the Scrutiny Officer. Contact details are given on page 43.

# E-Bulletin Newsletter

The first edition of the E-Bulletin Newsletter was published in the Spring 2006 and will continue to be published three times a year. This newsletter has proved useful to Councillors, staff and the public and continues to raise awareness of Overview and Scrutiny across the Authority, with partners and across the local community.

**SCRUTINY NEWSLETTER**  
ISSUE 1 SPRING 2006

**THIS ISSUE**

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**introduction**

Welcome to the first edition of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny E-Bulletin, the e-mail newsletter of Northampton Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which is available for employees and the public

The bulletin will keep you up to date with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Task and Finish Group news, training events, additions to the website, forthcoming meetings and new developments.

**Who is involved in Scrutiny**

The new Overview and Scrutiny Committee was set up in September 2005 and comprises fourteen councillors representing each political group:

**Councillor Brendan Glynane** (Chair)  
Telephone: (01604) 453833  
Email [cilr.bglynane@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:cilr.bglynane@northampton.gov.uk)

**Councillor Christopher Malpas** (Deputy Chair)  
(Chair of the Public Engagement and Communications Task and Finish Group)  
Telephone (01604) 233640  
Email [cilr.cmalpas@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:cilr.cmalpas@northampton.gov.uk)

**Councillor Anjona Roy** (Deputy Chair)  
(Chair of the Protocol Working Group)  
Telephone 07976 260268  
Email [cilr.aroy@northampton.gov.uk](mailto:cilr.aroy@northampton.gov.uk)

**councillors:**

1 Marion Allen	7 Jamie Lane (Chair of the Parenting Task and Finish Group)
2 Richard Church	8 Margaret Pritchard
3 Brandon Eldred	9 Lee Mason (Chair of the Homelessness Task and Finish Group)
4 Michael Hill	10 Andrew Simpson
5 Brian Hoare	11 Liz Tavener
6 Michelle Hoare	

**What is Overview and Scrutiny ?**

Councillors who are not in the Cabinet are charged with keeping an overview of Council business and scrutinising areas of particular interest or concern.

Their role is to hold the Cabinet to account, when deemed necessary, in the business they undertake and to assist in the development and review of Council policy. The latter task involves looking in detail at areas of service delivery or issues of general concern and making recommendations to the Cabinet or to the whole Council.

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# Training and Development

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair and the Scrutiny Officer attend meetings of the East Midlands Regional Local Government Association (EMRLGA) Scrutiny Network which bring together Scrutiny Chairs and Scrutiny Officers from the East Midlands to discuss issues of mutual benefit.

The Authority recently hosted a Seminar on the Government's White Paper – Strong and Prosperous Communities – Implications for Overview and Scrutiny. The seminar was open to all Borough Councillors and invitations were sent to Scrutiny Chairs, Vice Chairs and Scrutiny Officers of neighbouring Local Authorities. It was well received and well attended.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny facilitated the half-day Seminar which was split into two sessions:

Session one concentrated on future developments in Overview and Scrutiny and the White Paper and

Scrutiny. Session two concentrated upon Community Call for Action. Attendees broke into five groups and gave case studies of issues that they perceived would be dealt with either through Community Call for Action or dealt with locally.



# Scrutiny Support

The Council is committed to the Overview and Scrutiny process and has put in place the relevant resources to support the process.

Overview and Scrutiny is supported by a Corporate Director and two Corporate Managers. Each Task and Finish Group has one Corporate Manager and a senior employee dedicated to it for the life of the review.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a Scrutiny Officer who carries out research, assists in compiling the Task and Finish Groups' final reports, produces the E-Bulletin newsletter, drafts the Annual Report, assists in the production of the Annual Work Programme, produces the agendas and minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Task and Finish Groups meetings and sets up relevant meetings, such as Task and Finish Groups, meetings with the Portfolio Holders and meetings of the Chair and Deputy Chairs. The Scrutiny Officer produces the Overview and Scrutiny web page, and updates it on a regular basis.

The contact details for Overview and Scrutiny can be found on page 43.

# Improvements and Long Term Objectives

## Improvements

The aim of Overview and Scrutiny in Northampton is to develop an effective scrutiny function that assists the Cabinet and staff to continuously improve services.

Many improvements have taken place over the last year:-

- The development of a structured Annual Work Programme that is formally published and widely distributed.
- Further development of the good practice Overview and Scrutiny Protocols and guidance notes.
- Production of the Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit.
- Production of the Overview and Scrutiny dedicated web site.
- The introduction of a monitoring system to log progress of the implementation of the recommendations that arose in the Task and Finish Group's review reports to Cabinet.
- Actively involving the public in the work of Scrutiny.
- Regular progress meetings are now held with the Corporate Directors and the Chair and two Deputy Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny.
- External experts are invited to provide evidence to inform Task and Finish Group reviews.

# Long Term Objectives

Looking to the future, we continue to seek to improve Overview and Scrutiny and have put in place a number of long term objectives: -

- Work more closely with the media and public relations
- Work closely with Northampton County Council for successful delivery of the Local Area Agreement (LAA)
- Continue to develop Overview and Scrutiny's role to raise its profile
- Continue to develop training for members of staff who may be called as witnesses by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The training will also ensure that key employees understand the Scrutiny process
- Continue to actively involve the public in the work of Overview and Scrutiny
- Develop the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme based, as far as possible, on the Council's priorities and on service areas that require improvement



# The Overview and Scrutiny Programme 2006/2007

## The Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee met six times from June 2006 to May 2007.

It looked at issues such as: -

- Annual Work Programme 2006/2007,
- Local Area Agreement (LAA) Joint Scrutiny Arrangements,
- Update and final reports from the Tree Policy, Allotments (Water Charges), Housing Repairs, Leisure Services, Street Scene, Homelessness (Rough Sleepers), Evaluation of Dispersal Orders Task and Finish Groups,
- Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit,

- Defined Overview and Scrutiny lead Councillors to each Portfolio Holder
- Annual Report 2006/2007.

The Committee monitored the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Planning, Homelessness and Public Engagement and Communications final reports from work carried out during 2005/2006.

A Working Group to investigate the Best Value Performance Plan process was set up. The Working Group that produced good practice Overview and Scrutiny Protocols re-convened and produced an Overview and Scrutiny Councillors' Code of Conduct Protocol.

# The Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Cllr. Glynnis (Chair)



Cllr. Ray (Deputy Chair)



Cllr. Melpour (Deputy Chair)



Cllr. Allen



Cllr. Church



Cllr. Elford



Cllr. Hill



Cllr B Hoare



Cllr M Hoare



Cllr Lane



Cllr Massey



Cllr Mason



Cllr Pritchard



Cllr Simpson

# Call-In of Cabinet Decisions

The Cabinet makes key decisions, which are decisions that affect more than two wards, and/or involves more than £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 call-in is used sparingly, and during 2006/2007 the facility was not used at all.



# Meetings of the Chair and Deputy Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny



Cllr. Glynnis (Chair)

Cllr. Ray (Deputy Chair)

Cllr. Malpas (Deputy Chair)

This Group met six times during 2006/2007. It sets the agendas for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings.

During the year, the Group has discussed the Scrutiny role, the Seminar on the Government's White Paper – Strong and Prosperous Communities – Implications for Overview and Scrutiny, the Local Democracy Week workshop and the need for further good practice Overview and Scrutiny Protocols. The Corporate Directors have attended regular meetings of the Chair and Deputies of Overview and Scrutiny

to provide details of priorities and information within their service area.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee delegated the monitoring of call-in recommendations to the Chair and Deputy Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny. Councillor Hadland, Leader of the Council, attended the meeting on 15 March 2007 and provided an update on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Sixfields Area Action Plan Call-In (January 2006).

Recommendations included: -

- That in pursuing its aspirations to support the Northampton Town Football Club, Cabinet should keep its support of specific interests separate from its plan making activities for Sixfields. This will maintain the necessary distinction between the obligations of the Council as a Planning Authority and its other interests promoting social and economic activity in the town.
- That the Committee recommends to Cabinet that it reviews its decision to demonstrate that it has: -
  - taken into account all the evidence;
  - taken into account the wider community, social and economic interests in the development of its plan for the Sixfields area;
  - properly evaluated all four options and that the resulting plan complies with all legislative requirements and Government guidance; and
  - given regard to the compelling legal advice provided and taken steps to mitigate against any risk that may arise

from future actions against the Council on the legitimacy of its plan making for the Sixfields area.

- That to ensure there is consistency in plan making, Cabinet considers running in parallel the development of the Area Action Plan for Sixfields and the Town Centre Area Action Plan.

The Chair and Deputies Chairs met with the Leader of the Council and heard that all of the above recommendations are now enshrined in the Local Development Framework Document and Scheme.

The Local Development Scheme focuses on the nature of the Scheme rather than the location.

# Task and Finish Groups

Task and Finish Groups' reports are published on the website and can be located at [www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny).

## Allotments (Water Charges)

### Task and Finish Group Membership



Cllr Allen  
(Chair)



Cllr Crake



Cllr M Hoare



Cllr Patterson

### Work Undertaken

The Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group, comprising Councillors Marion Allen, Trini Crake, Michelle Hoare, Les Patterson and two co-opted members, Mr Tony Care and Mr Barry Oliver, was set up because a motion was put forward and carried at Full Council on 22 May 2006 that asked for a time limited Scrutiny investigation to be undertaken for the

proposed water charges for allotment holders within the Borough.

The review was a short, focussed piece of work that linked to the Council's corporate priorities and examined a range of information.

The Task and Finish Group met four times during July and September 2006 and looked at water usage on allotment sites within the Borough of Northampton, water costs were investigated as were other Local Authorities allotment rental and water charges. Site visits to various allotments within the Borough took place; interviews with the Portfolio Holder (Community Engagement and Democratic Services) and relevant senior staff from Northampton Borough Council were held. Desktop research was undertaken using the Internet.

### Outcome of the Review

After gathering evidence the Task and Finish Group established that the introduction of water charges to allotment holders could not be investigated in

isolation. Other issues such as water leakage, water conservation, security on the allotment sites and possible concessionary discounts needed to be considered too.

The Task and Finish Group made a series of recommendations to Cabinet for implementation by April 2008 at the latest: -

- That there should be no introduction of water charges until all water pipes on each allotment site have been replaced.
- That a Water Charging Policy be introduced containing the following conditions: -
  - (a) Water usage to be charged at a rate per pole (30 yards) per field as an incentive to conserve water.
  - (b) When permission to erect a shed on an allotment plot is granted, the placing of a water butt with guttering, for water conservation should be a condition of approval.
- That when the water pipes are replaced, the installation of standpipes of allotment sites is explored.

- That consideration be given to taking out a short-term loan against future land sale to cover the cost of replacing water pipes on all allotment sites.

The following recommendations were outside the Group's original remit but were put forward for consideration as they were connected to the issue under review. They arose during the work of the review and are significant to the future management of the allotment sites and are offered as support to the work of the Council: -

- That consideration be given to revisiting and updating the Allotment Strategy 2004. The Allotment Strategy should be adopted by April 2007. Once approved and implemented, it could be used as a benchmark for the future, such as an umbrella for a five-year business plan for each allotment site. Within the Allotment Strategy the following issues need to be addressed: -
  - Security
  - Water conservation plan
  - Disabled access

- Alternative methods to manage/run allotment sites
- That consideration be given to the introduction of 50% concessions for allotment rental charges and the following groups be considered: -
  - Individuals over 60 years of age
  - Disabled users
  - Unemployed users

The report and its recommendations was accepted by Cabinet at its meeting in October 2006. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitored the implementation of the recommendations at its meeting on 27 March 2007.





# Housing Repairs

## Task and Finish Group Membership



Cllr Roy  
(Chair)



Cllr Beardsworth



Cllr Hill



Cllr Malpas



Cllr Tavener

This Task and Finish Group was set up to look at the Housing Repair Service within the Council. Two members of Northampton Tenants and Council Together Group (NTACT) were co-opted onto the Task and Finish Group to provide valuable expertise and knowledge in the topic being reviewed.

Mid review, the Task and Finish Group realised that it would not be able to complete the review in the allocated timescale and asked the Overview and

Scrutiny Committee to suspend the review to a later date.

Although the Housing Repairs review has been suspended, it was agreed at the October 2006 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that it be recommended for inclusion in the Scrutiny Work Programme 2007/2008.

# Tree Policy

## Task and Finish Group Membership



Cllr Lane  
(Chair)



Cllr Hollis



Cllr Mason

## Work Undertaken

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee set up this Task and Finish Group to review whether the Council has a Tree Policy in place in order to achieve a consistent Urban Landscape Management Policy within the Council.

The Task and Finish Group met four times during May and July 2006. It looked at what the needs were within the Borough and the resources it had, it also looked at Tree Policies from other Local Authorities. There was a site visit to Kingsthorpe Recreation

Ground and interviews were held with relevant Council senior staff. Desktop research was carried out using the Internet.

After gathering evidence the Task and Finish Group established that there was a need for: -

- A comprehensive Tree Policy for the Borough.
- More allocated resources for tree maintenance, particularly due to the age of some of the trees in the Borough that will mean heavy investment of funds over the next five years.
- Freeing up the Tree Inspectors of tree related complaints and other administrative duties so

that they are able to carry out their inspections on every tree within the Borough every 12 months.

- A review of the agreement with Northamptonshire County Council and the Borough Council in respect of the number of grass cuts per year.
- Trees to be managed in such a way that they maximise their contribution to the landscape and environment but also minimise their conflict with other urban activities.
- Consulting citizens in Tree Maintenance Policy development.
- The maintenance of hedgerows to be investigated further.

## Outcome of the Review

The Task and Finish Group made a number of recommendations, which were aimed at formalising and improving tree maintenance within the Council. Recommendations included:

- Considering the draft Tree Policy as the basis for a Northampton Borough Council Tree Policy.

- Seeking public consultation on the draft Tree Policy.
- Giving consideration to further resources to ensure the thorough maintenance of trees and the delivery of the Tree Policy.
- Requiring tree related complaints to be dealt with by an Administration Officer to free up the Tree Inspectors to undertake their inspections so that every tree within the borough is checked every twelve months for safety.
- Reviewing the agreement with Northamptonshire County Council regarding tree cuttings to be undertaken.
- Carrying out further work on involving citizens in awareness raising in tree maintenance.
- Considering including the maintenance of hedgerows in a future Policy.

The relevant Portfolio Holder will be asked to attend a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the Summer 2007 to provide details of the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report.

# Leisure Services

## Task and Finish Group Membership



Cllr Glynane  
(Chair)

Cllr Eldred

Cllr McCutcheon

Cllr Simpson

## Work Undertaken

The Task and Finish Group reviewed the objectives of Leisure Services, to investigate the extent to which the Service meets these objectives and whether the Service provides value for money. A representative from the School of Health, University of Northampton, was co-opted to this Task and Finish Group to provide valuable expertise and knowledge.

The Group met six times between September and March 2007, looked at models of best practice, gathered statistical information and data, interviewed key front line staff and carried out desktop research.

## Outcome of the Review

The Task and Finish Group made a number of recommendations that were aimed at the production of a three year Leisure Services Strategy for Northampton.

Recommendations included: -

- A three-year Leisure Services Strategy for Northampton will be devised by December 2007, making reference to longer-term issues such as the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics and the Growth Agenda.
- The role of Leisure Services in delivering Healthier Communities outcomes will be described in the Strategy.
- It is recognised within the Strategy that the Council's role is to identify the needs for leisure

within Northampton and facilitate provision of relevant services.

- Northampton Borough Council engages with key partners, including Planning and Regeneration within the Council, West Northamptonshire Development Corporation and Northamptonshire County Council, in the development of the Leisure Strategy.
- A clear vision for the improvement and development for Leisure Services in Northampton will be established.
- The aims of Leisure Services are adopted as follows: -
- Leisure Services and Programmes should, wherever possible, address the following key areas: -
  - To improve Health
  - Enhance Social Inclusion
  - Promote access and participation
  - Enhance community development
- It ensures that the aims and objectives for Leisure Services will be supported by a clear monitoring and evaluation process.

- A needs assessment of the leisure provision will be undertaken, particularly addressing the following: -
  - The Growth Agenda
  - The implications of the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics
  - Planning and Regeneration Policy process
  - Health Agenda
- The value for money of Northampton Borough Council's major leisure facilities will be assessed and recommendations provided before any future decision on the provision of Leisure Services is made.
- A thorough Options Appraisal process will be carried out before a decision on future provision is made.
- A copy of the Task and Finish Group's final report will be forwarded to the relevant Corporate Managers (Planning, Regeneration and Leisure) to ensure that action is taken on the recommendations.
- A copy of the Task and Finish Group's final report will be forwarded to the Chief Executive of the Primary Care Trust and the Chair of

Northamptonshire County Council's Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

- It ensures that the vision of Leisure Services will be included in the Local Development Planning Framework.

The Task and Finish Group's final report will be presented to Cabinet at its July 2007 meeting.



# Street Scene

## Task and Finish Group Membership



## Work Undertaken

This Task and Finish Group undertook a review of the poor performance indicators on the collection of abandoned vehicles and it reviewed the new legislation, *Clean Neighbourhoods and Government Act 2005*, particularly in relation to dealing with problems of side waste and litter left following refuse collection and whether appropriate resources are available.

Two local residents were co-opted onto this review. The Group met five times between November and March 2007 and heard evidence from a range of representatives, including Neighbourhood Wardens,

the Magistrates Court, ward Councillors and Residents Associations. Desktop research was carried out and statistical information and data was gathered.

## Outcome of the Review

The Task and Finish Group made a number of recommendations including:-

- The Council uses its powers, within legislation, to reduce the problems of extensive use of vehicles put up for sale on the highway are

dealt with before they become a major nuisance.

- In accordance with the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005, retailers who allow litter within 100 yards of their premises be fined.
- Cabinet supports the gating of alleyways as a measure to reduce fly-tipping.
- The Council's legal department seeks an agreement with the Magistrates Court on the evidence required for the Council to achieve successful prosecution against fly-tipping and littering.
- Cabinet considers adopting the Westminster model of prosecuting for fly-tipping and littering and that a presentation be given to Northamptonshire Magistrates on the Council's intentions to adopt a similar process.
- Cabinet monitors impact of the littering campaign after six months.

- It is recommended to supermarkets that they introduce a deposit system for the use of supermarket trolleys.
- Leaflets in appropriate languages regarding recycling and refuse collection be distributed to particular language groups where they know there are people in the household of that language. Leaflets in ethnic minority languages should be available through community organisations.
- Nets to put over recycling boxes be widely publicised and consideration be given to providing them free of charge when new boxes are issued.
- In the proposed evaluation of the recycling system currently used, Cabinet considers the use of a different type of receptacle that can be closed at the top.

The Task and Finish Group will present its final report to Cabinet at its July 2007 meeting.



# Homelessness (Rough Sleepers)

## Task and Finish Group Membership



Cllr Allen  
(Chair)      Cllr Lane      Cllr Pritchard

## Work Undertaken

During the Homelessness review (2005/2006) the issue of rough sleepers was investigated and the need for a further Task and Finish Group within 2006/2007 be set up to examine rough sleepers was identified. Three co-optees joined the Group, representing Northamptonshire Health Care Trust, Town Centre Management and Northamptonshire Police.

The Group reviewed rough sleepers with the aim to further developing the multi Agency approach to rough sleepers and to reduce/eliminate rough sleeping in Northampton. Five meetings were held

during November and March 2007 and evidence was heard from a wide range of representatives. The Group met with rough sleepers at various drop in sessions and attended the annual Rough Sleepers Count.

## Outcome of the Review

The Task and Finish Group made a number of recommendations that were aimed at further developing the multi Agency approach to rough sleepers and to reducing/eliminating rough sleeping in Northampton.

Recommendations included: -

Northampton Borough Council takes the lead with all Agencies working together on rough sleeper initiatives, through the Single Homeless Forum.

- The membership of the Rough Sleepers Forum be re-visited to ensure that all relevant Agencies are included.
- All members of the Rough Sleepers Forum to sign a Confidentiality Protocol to ensure there is no breach of confidentiality especially when individual clients are discussed.
- The rough sleepers database is developed as a high priority.
- The 'Green Book' - '*A Pocket Guide for Anyone Threatened with Homelessness*' be updated and be used for all Agencies as a basis for information regarding available services for rough sleepers. A flow chart be produced detailing the process for rough sleepers and be included in the development of the 'Green Book.'
- A Rough Sleepers Strategy be produced with an emphasis on prevention. The evidence contained in this report should form part of that Strategy.
- The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services and the Corporate Manager for Housing Services meet with the Research and Development Department of the Salvation Army regarding the potential for the Salvation Army to develop its existing projects for rough sleepers. This should be investigated in conjunction with a current funding bid to the Department of Communities and Local Government for a purpose built hostel in the town.
- Research is undertaken regarding further funding opportunities and joint working for the provision of extra beds for rough sleepers and the provision of a 'halfway house'.
- Improved communication between County of Northampton Council on Addiction (CAN) and the Town Centre Partnership regarding rough sleepers is encouraged.
- The Town Centre Partnership is requested to donate funds to help alleviate the problem with

rough sleepers particularly in the town centre and the Grosvenor Centre.

- Northampton Borough Council works jointly with Northamptonshire County Council regarding providing provision for rough sleepers during severe weather conditions.
- The Council works with local hospitals regarding the introduction of a Protocol for the discharge of its patients.
- The Council works with the Hope Centre regarding the development of its day centre facility.
- Consideration is given to a multi Agency networking event, hosted by the Council, to facilitate joint working and highlight awareness of rough sleepers.

The Task and Finish Group's final report will be presented to Cabinet at its July 2007 meeting.



# Evaluation of Dispersal Orders

## Task and Finish Group Membership



Cllr B Hoare  
(Chair)

Cllr Simpson

Cllr Tavener

## Work Undertaken

This Task and Finish Group evolved from the previous Overview and Scrutiny system, which had set up a Dispersal Orders Working Group that had requested an evaluation of Dispersal Orders. When the previous Overview and Scrutiny system ceased in 2004, the Community Safety Team had carried out the evaluation. The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, part 4, which came into effect in January 2004, created a power for a Senior Police Officer to designate an area, with Local Authority agreement,

where there is persistent anti-social behaviour and a problem with groups causing intimidation.

The Task and Finish Group carried out a short focussed Overview and Scrutiny Review to add value to the Dispersal Orders process. It met three times during January and March 2007, heard from a representative of Northamptonshire Police and received statistical information and data.

# Outcome of the Review

The Task and Finish Group made a number of recommendations which included: -

- Borough Councillors receive more training and understanding of the Dispersal Order process if they are to perform their community leadership role effectively.
- The Anti Social Behaviour Unit contributes to the Councillor Induction explaining how Councillors should engage in the Dispersal Order process. A copy of this will be used as part of the Councillor Induction process.
- Greater emphasis should be placed by the Police on the reporting of Dispersal Orders. The ComPaSS Unit will be asked to provide statistical data before a Dispersal Order is implemented, during and once it has been completed. This data will inform the evaluation process.
- Prevention is better than cure. Joint Action Groups (JAGs) will engage with the community and inform residents prior to the implementation of a Dispersal Order. Resolution of the problem rather than

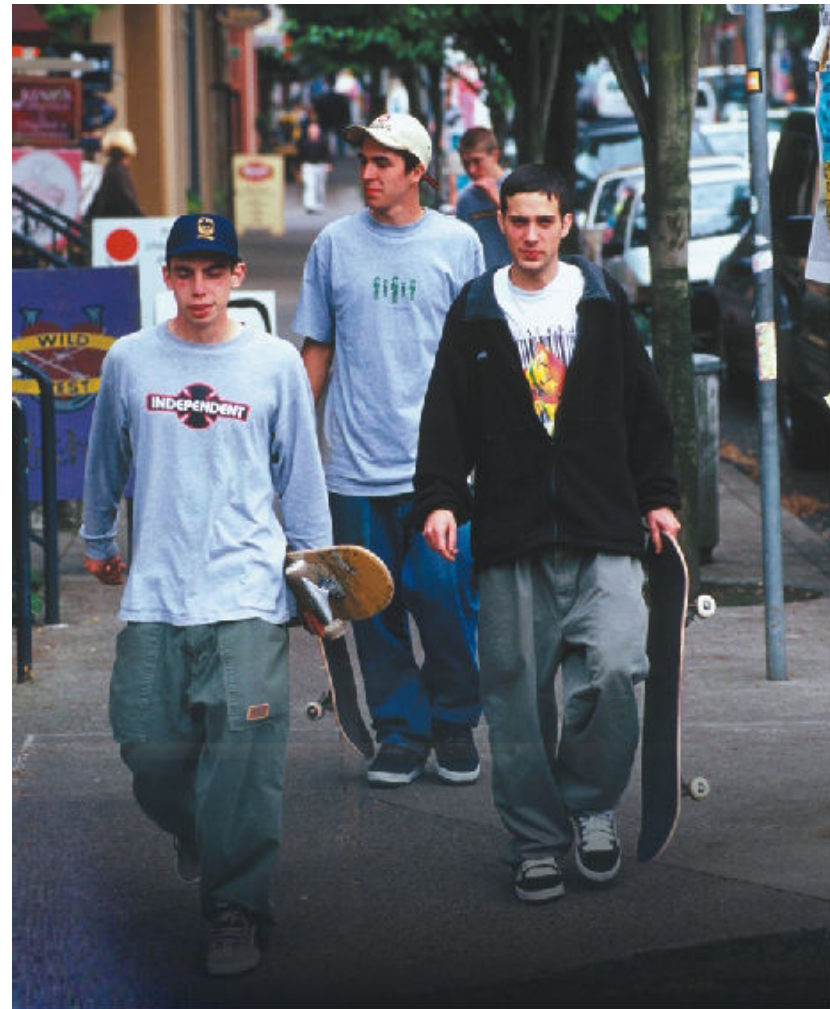
implementing a Dispersal Order is the preferred outcome.

- Entry and Exit Strategies will form an integral part of the Dispersal Order Process. They will be formulated at the planning stage and without them the Dispersal Order is not an effective long-term intervention in the improvement of community safety.
- Monitoring and reporting back are essential elements in the process of improving community confidence. The Portfolio Holder for Business Intelligence, E-Government and People Support will present regular reports, including a summary of the evaluation of Dispersal Orders to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).
- It is also essential to improve the confidence of local communities following a Dispersal Order. Therefore a précised evaluation report will be sent to the local residents with details of ongoing plans to maintain community safety.
- The provision of diversionary youth facilities appears to be a potential contributor to the resolution of problems and therefore the lack of need to implement Dispersal Orders. The Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Community Safety will ensure that there is a

programme to improve youth facilities across Northampton as an “invest to save programme”.

- Northampton Borough Council, and other Agencies, will work towards zero Dispersal Orders and see this as a success with problems being resolved at an earlier stage. If Dispersal Orders are used it indicates that problems are being allowed to escalate where this level of intervention is required.

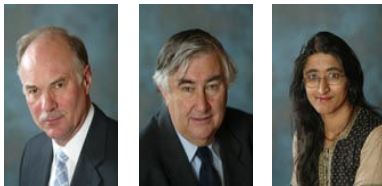
The Task and Finish Group will present its final report to Cabinet at its July 2007 meeting.



# Working Group

## Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) Working Group

A Best Value Performance Plan explains how the Council intends to meet its Medium Term Objectives and reports progress against these and some locally agreed measures of its performance. The Plan also includes information on a number of national measures of the Council's performance called Best Value Performance Indicators.



Cllr B Hoare  
(Chair)

Cllr Hill

Cllr Roy

### Work Undertaken

This Working Group carried out a short, focussed piece of work that looked at the effectiveness and integrity of the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) process.

The Working Group obtained evidence from internal witnesses and gathered statistical and data. Desktop research and looking at models of good practice were also carried out.

### Outcome

The review resulted in a number of worthwhile recommendations aimed at improving the Best Value Performance Plan process.

The Working Group's report was presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 26 June 2006 and all of the recommendations contained in the report were accepted.

# Monitoring Process

## Planning Task and Finish Group

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitored the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Planning Task and Finish Group at its meeting in October 2006. Many recommendations had been implemented but some were still outstanding. The Portfolio Holder for Local Environment attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in March 2007 and provided an update on the outstanding recommendations.

## Homelessness Task and Finish Group

At its meeting in December 2006, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitored the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Homelessness Task and Finish Group's final report. The Portfolio Holder for Residential Operations confirmed that a lot of progress had been made but some of the recommendations were still on going.

As there were actions that required further monitoring the Portfolio Holder will attend a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee to report progress on the outstanding recommendations.

## Public Engagement and Communications Task and Finish Group

At its meeting in January 2007, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitored the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Public Engagement and Communications Task and Finish Group. The recommendations had not been implemented at this stage and the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Democratic Services attended the Committee meeting in March 2007 and confirmed that in order for some of the recommendations to be implemented posts required alignment and responsibilities needed to be resolved. Some recommendations had been implemented, some were on going and some were on hold. As



there were actions that required further monitoring the Portfolio Holder will attend a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee to report progress on the outstanding recommendations.

## Allotments (Water Charges) Task and Finish Group

At its meeting on 27 March 2007, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitored the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Allotments (Water Charges) Task and Finish Group's final report. The Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Democratic Services confirmed that the Allotments Strategy would be presented to Cabinet in April 2007 for approval. This document was key to the implementation of many of the recommendations. It will take some time to replace

the current water pipes with pipes of a larger size of 50mm and has been agreed not to impose water charges to allotment holders until the pipework has been replaced. The Task and Finish Group realised that many of the recommendation would take time to implement and asked that they be implemented by April 2008; therefore, the Portfolio Holder will attend a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2008 to report on progress.

## Co-Opted Scrutiny Councillor to Northamptonshire County Council's Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Eldred

Councillor Brandon Eldred represented Northampton Borough Council on Northamptonshire County Council's (NCC) Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee during the last Municipal Year.

Councillor Eldred provided regular reports to the Committee on the work of NCC's Healthier Communities Scrutiny Committee. Reviews that the Committee has undertaken during the past year included:-

- Eligibility criteria and charging policy – A review of proposals to revise the County Council's eligibility criteria and charging policy for adult Social Care Services.
- Delivering preventative services – A review of the capacity of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Northamptonshire to deliver preventative services relating to health and social care.
- Review of access to adult Social Care Services - A review of the client pathway experience for people accessing adult social care services in the county.
- Community Services Budget Scrutiny – Monthly scrutiny was carried out on the delivery of the Community Services revenue and capital budgets for 2006/007.
- The Committee also scrutinised proposals for changes to the Meals on Wheels Service in the county, scrutinised and responded to the consultation proposals on changes to mental health and learning disability services in Northamptonshire, met with and questioned the new Chief Executive of Northamptonshire Primary Care Trust (PCT) about the vision for the future of the PCT and contacted Members of Parliament for Northamptonshire to express serious concerns about the financial deficit facing the NHS in Northamptonshire.

# Previous Overview and Scrutiny Reviews

## **Overview and Scrutiny Reviews 2005 - 2006**

Planning Task and Finish Group- Planning Committee meetings at Northampton Borough Council

Homelessness Task and Finish Group -Homelessness as a whole system

Public Engagement & Communications Task and Finish Group - How the Council consults and Involves residents

### **Working Group**

Protocol - Overview and Scrutiny Protocols and Guidance notes

### **Call-In of Cabinet Decision**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Sixfields Area Action Plan

## **Overview and Scrutiny Reviews 2006 – 2007**

Tree Policy Task and Finish Group – The Current Tree Maintenance Operations

Street Scene Task and Finish Group – Abandoned vehicles and the implications of the Clean Neighbourhood Act 2005

Allotments (Water Charges) Task and Finish Group – Water Charges for Allotment Holders

Housing Repairs Task and Finish Group – Housing Repairs Service within the Council

Leisure Services Task and Finish Group – The Council’s Leisure Services

Homelessness (Rough Sleepers) Task and Finish Group - To further develop the multi Agency approach to rough sleepers

Evaluation of Dispersal Orders - To add value to the Dispersal Order Process

### **Working Group**

Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) process

An archive of the above reports can be located on the Council’s website [www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny)

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There are a number of ways in which you can find out about the work of Overview and Scrutiny. Details of all of the current reviews are given on the Council's website and in the Overview and Scrutiny E-bulletin newsletter, but if you want to know more you can attend a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, write to the Task and Finish Groups, become a witness or suggest issues that you would like the Committee to consider reviewing.

Would you like to become involved in the future work of Overview and Scrutiny

**Yes**

**No**

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Organisation (if applicable).....

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