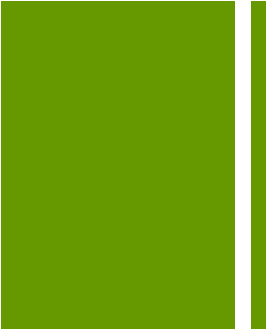


Scrutiny Annual Report 2013 - 2014



Contents

- 1 Foreword from the Chair of O&S
- 2 Andrew North – Chief Executive
- 3 Scrutiny Structure
- 4 Scrutiny Task Groups 2013-14
- 5 Scrutiny Task Groups revisited – stop press!
- 6 Overview and Scrutiny development – what's next?
- 7 Contacts
- 8 Scrutiny Registration Form for new topics

1.

Foreword

Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
Councillor Tim Harman



As the newly elected Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee I am pleased to present the Annual Report for 2013/14.

I would like to thank Councillor Duncan Smith and former Councillor Barbara Driver for their contributions to the work of the committee during the year.

The committee is responsible for co-ordinating the Overview and Scrutiny function with the Council. It commissions scrutiny task groups to carry out the detailed work ensuring that they have clear terms of reference. It is also responsible for receiving and determining how many call-ins of Cabinet decisions should be dealt with.

My vision for the future is that scrutiny should be a powerful tool to enable all members of the Council who are not part of the Executive to hold the Cabinet to account on behalf of the electorate but also to act as a critical friend.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite all members to contact me and the other lead members with regard to any suggested areas of activity or of issues of concern to Cheltenham and its people and which are appropriate for scrutiny.

Councillor Duncan Smith had this to say about the progress made last year.

"In the report last year I said there were two key challenges for the coming year so it is timely to reflect on how well we have done on these:

- *to encourage elected Members to bring forward scrutiny topics that address issues in their local communities*
- *to engage with the Cabinet & develop the Overview and Scrutiny Committee role in strategic policy development*

It has been a busy year for the scrutiny task groups with final reports from the budget scrutiny working group, dog fouling, the cemetery and crematorium all being considered by Cabinet. All of these are important issues for local communities and the task groups have worked hard to bring clear and meaningful recommendations before Council and Cabinet.

A report to Cabinet is not the end of the process and the O&S committee have been keen to invite Cabinet Members to report back on how they have implemented the recommendations. Highlights have included the successful implementation of Events consultative groups, a recommendation from the Events scrutiny task group last year. Good progress has also been made on implementing the recommendations on allotments and grass verge cutting.

Through this process O&S has become more engaged with the Cabinet and a number of Cabinet Members regularly attend O&S committee meetings with the Leader providing a

regular update. There is still a need to develop O&S's role in strategic policy development which was my second challenge for the coming year."

Councillor Driver took over the chairmanship of the O&S committee in the New Year.

She was keen to get members and the public more engaged in the work of overview and scrutiny, making more use of the committee meeting for this purpose. An update from Jeremy Williamson on the work of the Cheltenham Development task force was welcomed by members and got a good public attendance. Similarly the Managing Director of UBICO attended to give members an update on their progress and respond to a variety of questions. The crematorium was also an issue of concern for members and local residents so the chair felt it was important to get a regular update from the task group on this.

What we have achieved in our first two years is a great step forward and we would like to thank those councillors and officers who have worked so hard to make it successful.

2. The challenges for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Andrew North
Chief Executive



I said in my introduction last year that "effective Overview and Scrutiny is a vital part of local democracy as it plays a key role in holding the Cabinet, officers and the wider council to account. It is important therefore to reflect on how well it has done this, as well as what difference it has made to the community at large." Now that we are two years into the new arrangements this is a good time to review progress and ask whether scrutiny has made a real difference.

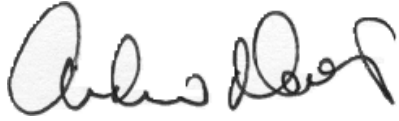
Overview and Scrutiny has continued to bring together cross party working groups on a range of different topics from dog fouling and the ICT virus incident to the operation of the new cremators in Cheltenham. Feedback from these task groups have emphasised the importance of clear terms of reference at the start from the main committee. One of the other essentials for a successful task group is strong officer support. Task groups are reliant on the technical and professional input from officers and members and have been very appreciative of the time officers have spent in attending task group meetings and preparing information. This has included taking members out on a dog warden patrol or arranging a tour of the new equipment at the crematorium. Members have been very complimentary about the facilitation support they have received from Democratic Services but suggested that some task groups have struggled to be fully effective without it.

The replacement of three Overview and Scrutiny Committees with one is still a relatively recent development and there is evidence that it is still finding its way. Resources are always going to be limited so one of the key roles for the Overview and Scrutiny Committees is to manage this by prioritising their reviews and challenging themselves on how many reviews members and officers can support at any one time. Setting their workplan and reviewing progress is an important part of every meeting. A key role for the committee is also ensuring terms of reference are tight and scope is clearly defined at the start of every review.

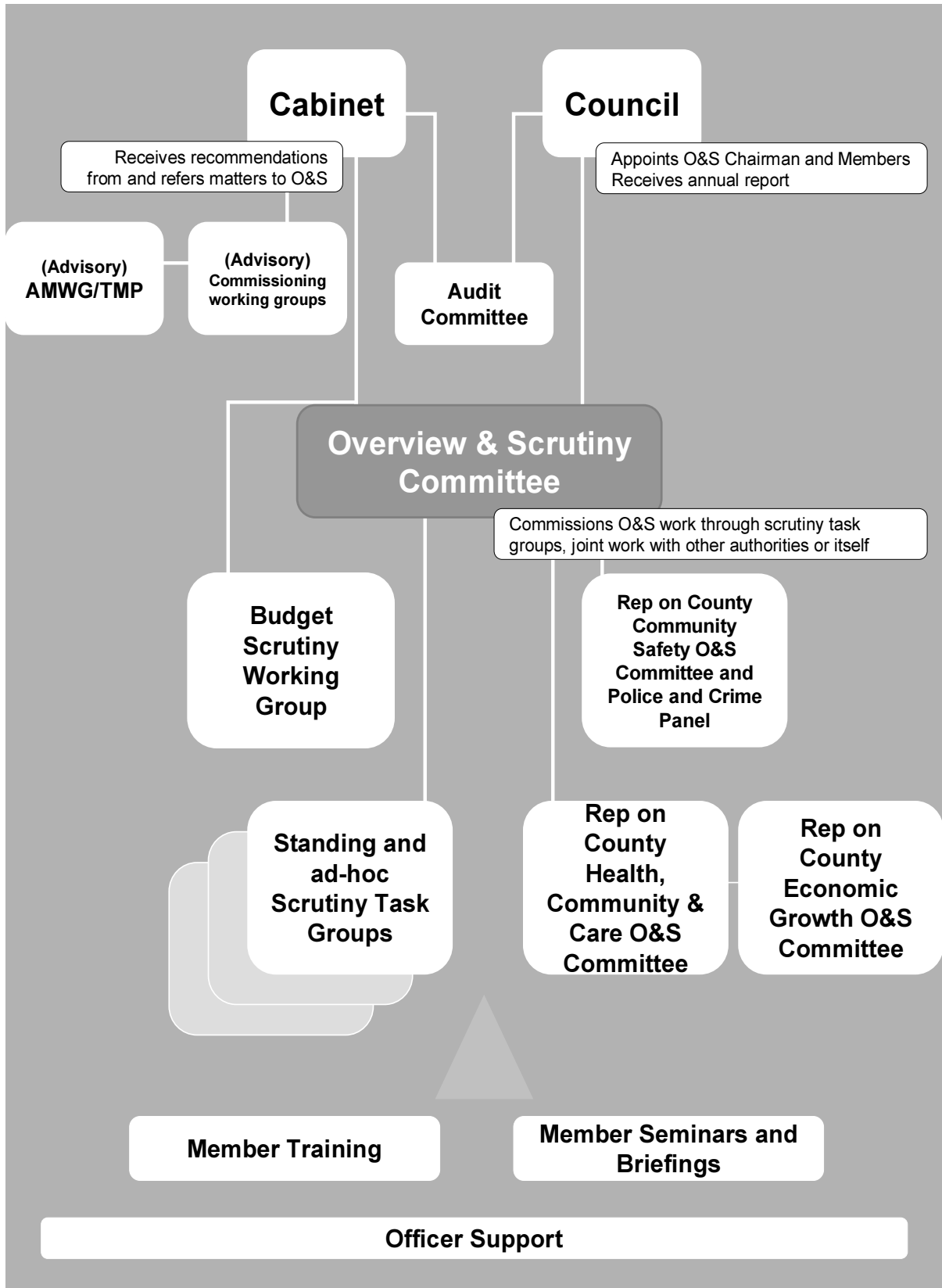
Overview and Scrutiny has a good record of recommendations being taken forward by Cabinet - for example the new procedures recommended by the Events task group are now in operation. I feel that Cabinet has been much more engaged in the scrutiny process but there is still scope for refining the process so that expectations are clearly understood by all parties. One of the important roles for the main committee is the follow up of recommendations once they have been to Cabinet and ensure that positive outcomes are achieved for the town.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will have a new Chair following the elections. I will give them my personal support in this challenging role and I hope that scrutiny can build upon its strengths to make the council even more effective, transparent and accountable. To help the council in that aim I have initiated an LGA peer review which will take place in September this year. Part of their terms of reference will be to look at our scrutiny arrangements and wider decision making including behaviours and governance and they will seek views from members, officers and partners. One of the

strands of their work will be to focus on how effective the council is at identifying and tackling the big issues and challenges that affect the borough, and the role Overview and Scrutiny can play in this process. I look forward to hearing their feedback.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Duff', written in a cursive style.

3. Overview and Scrutiny Structure



4.0

Budget Scrutiny Working Group

Chair: former Councillor Rob Garnham



Task group members:

Councillors Chris Coleman, Tim Harman, Rob Garnham, Dianne Hibbert, Paul Massey and Klara Sudbury

Officer support:

Mark Sheldon and Rosalind Reeves

The budget scrutiny working group forms a permanent part of the scrutiny arrangements at Cheltenham Borough Council. The rationale being that the budget is a complex area that cannot be scrutinised effectively as a one-off exercise. Members of this working group have built their expertise and understanding of financial matters so that they can review the budget strategy, the bridging the gap programme and be in a position to respond to the budget proposals as well as scrutinising the business cases of major projects within the commissioning framework.

Key Findings and recommendations:

Chair of the working group, Councillor Rob Garnham said that the focus for the group this year had been to "allow more time to understand and consider the financial pressures facing the council over the longer term and to scrutinise some of the proposals for bridging the financial gap which feed into the budget setting process."

The working group considered the budget proposals at their meeting on 9 January 2014 and as a result made a number of recommendations to O&S which were forwarded to Cabinet. These recommendations covered their views on the use of the New Homes Bonus, the council tax freeze, pooled business rates and increase in rents for council tenants. They were all taken account of in the final budget proposals to Council in February.

During the year the budget scrutiny working group also scrutinised the following:

- The accommodation strategy
- The commissioning of Revenues and Benefits
- The business case for the ICT commissioning review
- The financial aspects of the leisure and culture commissioning review
- Funding for the Cheltenham Development Task Force
- Regular reviews of the Bridging the Gap strategy and budget projections
- ICT Restructuring and financial savings
- UBICO – potential for future savings
- New Homes Bonus projections
- Financial update re Glos. Airport

Has it made a difference?

The scrutiny group works closely with the Cabinet Member Finance, Councillor John Rawson, and he regularly attends their meetings. In his budget speech to Council in February the Cabinet Member Finance, Councillor John Rawson gave thanks to the

members of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group for the valuable contribution they had made to the budget process.

The Director of Resources also commented that " this has been a very valuable process which has added value. The financial position is very challenging and it is very helpful to have a forum for deeper consideration of the issues facing the council and the strategy for dealing with it."

4.1

JCS Planning and Liaison Scrutiny Task Group

Chair: Councillor Tim Harman



Task group members:

Councillors Ian Bickerton, Tim Harman, Andy Wall, Les Godwin, Helena McCloskey and Simon Wheeler

Officer support:

Tracey Crews and Judith Baker

This task group was set up in July 2012 to engage with elected members on the joint core strategy and other strategic development issues in light of the changes to the planning framework.

In 2012 they were set a very specific task by Council to evaluate the alternative methods of assessing household formation rates over the period of the JCS plan and feedback their conclusions and recommendations to the JCS Member Steering Group on 31 January 2013. The Member Steering Group thanked the Scrutiny Task Group for their hard work and accepted their recommendations which have fed into the formation of the strategy around Objectively Assessed Need which underpins the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy (JCS).

Following the completion of this work it was agreed that continued scrutiny of the JCS was important and that the role of the group should be extended to include scrutiny and support of the Cheltenham Plan.

Key Findings and recommendations:

Outputs of the Scrutiny task Group have included:

Joint Core Strategy

- Feedback to CBC representatives on the JCS Member Steering Group on drafts of the JCS
- Providing framework for wider member engagement on JCS via member seminars
- Consideration of Objectively Assessed Need
- Overview of JCS outputs

Cheltenham Plan

- Agreement of programme
- Drafting of vision and objectives
- Agreement of Cheltenham Plan Scoping document
- Consideration of public consultation comments received to Cheltenham Plan Scoping document
- Consideration of Community Infrastructure Levy – early stages of preparation

Has it made a difference?

Head of Planning, Tracey Crews said "From an officer perspective the Planning and Liaison Scrutiny Group has been invaluable. The Group has challenged at key stages which has added value to the plan preparation process, it offers an opportunity to take soundings from members in a structured way. I very much hope the group will continue and help steer the work programme over the year ahead".

4.2

Dog fouling Scrutiny Task Group

Chair: Councillor Penny Hall



Task group members:

Councillors Nigel Britter, Jacky Fletcher, Penny Hall, Helena McCloskey and Suzanne Williams

Officer support:

Jane Griffiths and Beverly Thomas

A review of dog fouling in Cheltenham was initiated by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2013, this was in response to local residents, community organisations and some Parish Councils expressing concern to local Councillors with increasing dog fouling of streets and green spaces in the Borough.

Key findings and recommendations :

The scrutiny task group (STG) met on 3 occasions and site visits were also undertaken to Pittville Park and Beeches playing field with community protection officers and bin emptying operatives on patrol. In addition members visited the Depot, King George V playing field and Clyde Crescent for the CBH Fido Fiestas. During their work the STG received some press coverage in the Gloucestershire Echo. This led to BBC Radio Gloucestershire choosing dog fouling as a morning discussion topic first interviewing Penny, Chair of the STG, Cheltenham Animal Shelter General Manager Peter Newcombe and dog owners in Pittville Park . The discussion was extremely well supported by listeners and many rang to give their views and Penny was invited to a second interview to respond and explain the STG's work.

The STG also reviewed a variety of evidence including verbal accounts of the work that community protection officers carry out, updates from the Environmental Maintenance Manager and the Managing Director, Ubico, responses to questionnaires distributed

amongst Residents' Associations, Community Groups and Parish Councils and to attendees of events attended by certain members of the STG, Risk Assessments for the emptying of dog bins by bin emptying operatives, research from other local councils. Having gathered the evidence a range of recommendations were made which should go some way towards alleviating the problem in the town.

These were :

1. Ensuring press releases are issued to provide information about the council's efforts to tackle dog fouling and successful enforcement action to include the level of fine each offender is ordered to pay and whether additional costs were incurred.

2. Introduce bin stickers to highlight that bagged dog waste could be disposed of using standard public litter bins / investigate sponsorship opportunities of bins

3. Increase the use of dog floor stencils /blue spray circling

4. Investigate funding streams or sponsorship to reintroduce free dog waste bags in targeted hot spot areas

5. Initiate hard-hitting anti-dog fouling campaigns

6. Provide better information on website/use social media to get the anti-dog fouling message across

7. Continue to encourage and attend community organised events

8. Introduce a regular programme of visits and work by Community Protection Officers in schools

9. Encourage public involvement in tackling dog fouling/Build on the Partners and Communities Together (PACT) initiative

10. Trial a Multi-agency approach-undertake some joint patrols with CPOs and PCSOs to demonstrate positive cross service support for the exercise; work together with Cheltenham Borough Homes on this issue

11. Investigate opportunities to use mobile CCTV in dog fouling hotspot areas ; Improve signage along with targeted enforcement in hotspot areas

12. Ensure the Community Protection Team has the resources to fulfil its duties in this area including seeking external sources of funding

13. Publicise the good work Community Protection Officers undertake across the borough

Has it made a difference?

The recommendations were considered by Cabinet in April 2014. All agreed that dog fouling was an issue that affected every ward in the town and that there were hotspot areas which required particular attention. The Cabinet Member responsible highlighted the partnership working which officers were involved in and many of the recommendations would be picked up through this work. All of the recommendations of

the group were taken on board by Cabinet, subject to the service planning and delivery requirements of the commissioning review on the new Environmental and Regulatory Services Division.

Cllr Penny Hall, Chair of the STG, firmly believed that the work of the scrutiny task group was a clear demonstration that scrutiny can work well. The enthusiastic support of the work by Cabinet was welcomed.

A review of the implementation of the recommendations will take place in 12 months time.

4.3 Deprivation Scrutiny Task Group

Chair: Councillor Chris Coleman



Task group members:

Councillors Barbara Driver, Chris Coleman and Paul McLain and Bernice Thompson (co-optee)

Councillor Jon Walklett (observer as relevant ward member)

Officer support: Richard Gibson and Sam Howe

The review came about due to elected members becoming increasingly aware of the issues of deprivation that affect those people living in the town centre. Although it is well known that there are areas of "multiple deprivation" in Cheltenham (with parts of St. Pauls, St. Marks and Hesters Way in the 10% most deprived areas nationally), as the numbers of people living in the town centre are much smaller, this does not get picked up in the maps of deprivation. Hence the title – "hidden deprivation."

At its meeting on 18 February November 2013, Overview & Scrutiny Committee initiated a review of Hidden Deprivation in our Town Centre and a scrutiny task group was set up.

Key findings and recommendations:

The task group reported their findings to O&S in April 2014. During their review they had covered a lot of ground and their recommendations covered the areas of:

- Crime and disorder
- Housing
- environmental quality
- community integration

The O&S committee commended the task group for their work and felt they had achieved a detailed understanding of the issues. They felt that some of the recommendations needed more work and also debated whether the task group should also report back on health and education matters which they had not had time to cover.

The chair requested that the task group be given clear terms of reference before commencing any new work and resources allocated to facilitate the group, preferably from Democratic Services.

This will be an issue for the new O&S committee to review in July.

4.4 Performance measures at the cemetery and crematorium (now and in the future) Scrutiny Task Group

Chair: Councillor Chris Ryder



Task group members:

Councillors Chris Ryder, Helena McCloskey, Barbara Driver and Rob Reid

Officer support: Rob Bell (UBICO), Rob Hainsworth, Tom Mimmagh, Mark Woodward and Rosalind Reeves

This review of the Cheltenham Cemetery and Crematorium was initiated in November 2013 following a request from Councillor Chris Ryder who felt that performance measures at the crematorium needed to be reviewed urgently. Councillor Ryder had been made aware of the serious concerns of some local funeral businesses regarding the operation of the new cremators installed at Cheltenham crematorium.

Key findings and recommendations:

The task group met on five occasions between November and March and provided regular updates to the main committee due to the seriousness of the concerns about the crematorium. During the course of their review they met with the local funeral directors, they carried out a review of the project documentation including tender documents, examined risk assessments and gained a full understanding of the current status from officers as well as seeing the issues for themselves through on-site visits. From the start their aim was to understand what had taken place and try and learn lessons for the future rather than lay blame. With that in mind they produced a range of recommendations which would enable better outcomes from similar maintenance projects in the future. Their recommendations covered the following areas:

- Criteria and process for recruiting expert consultants
- Cabinet Member involvement in procurement and tendering stage
- recording of decisions at key stages
- the management of risks
- keeping the public and elected members informed when problems do occur
- a series of ideas for improving the crematorium including online booking and improved parking and drop-off facilities and a policy on overhanging trees.

Has it made a difference?

Whatever the final outcome of the review, the initiation of this review as a scrutiny topic immediately brought it to the attention of the public, the media, elected members and senior management. The Cabinet member and the Senior Leadership Team had regular briefings and updates on status and risks. This in itself provided focus in resolving the issues.

The recommendations were considered by Cabinet on 24 June 2014. The new Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, Councillor Chris Coleman, commended the

report for its detail and highlighted some important learning points for the future. He was keen to move forward in a spirit of openness and involve staff, customers and all members in the future options for the crematorium. He intended to provide a full response to the scrutiny task group recommendations in September 2014.

Councillor Chris Ryder said she was encouraged by the Cabinet response to their report and would welcome working with the Cabinet Member. The task group would continue to keep a watching brief on the situation which was so important to the people of Cheltenham.

Scrutiny task groups revisited: what's happened since?

5.0 Sex Trade in Cheltenham Scrutiny Task Group Chair: former Councillor Barbara Driver

Task group members:

Councillors Andrew Chard, Paul Massey, Anne Regan and Diggory Seacome

Officer support: Andrew North, Rosalind Reeves and Sidgoree Nelson (County Council)

The task group was set up by the Council following concerns raised in the media that Cheltenham might be a potential "hotspot" of activity for the illegal trade of sexually exploited young or vulnerable people. It was felt that stories like this could damage the reputation of the town.

Key Findings and recommendations:

After talking to senior police officers and representatives from a range of agencies, the task group were pleased to establish that sex trafficking was not a significant issue for the town and the level of sexual exploitation of vulnerable children and adults was no more prevalent than in other similar towns. However all agencies were aware that "the stone remains unturned" and there were no room for complacency.

When Cabinet received the task group report on the 16 April 2013, they felt that the issue needed a multi agency approach and referred all the recommendations to the Positive Lives Partnership with a request that they report back to Cabinet.

What's happened since?

The Cabinet Member Housing and Safety, Councillor Peter Jeffries, gave his response to the task group report at Cabinet in September 2013. This outlined the Partnership work which was taking place in response to the recommendations set out in the task group report. He reported that both the Positive Lives Partnership and Cheltenham Safeguarding Forum had taken responsibility for moving forward those recommendations which required a partnership approach.

The Cabinet Member highlighted work which had been undertaken on emergency housing in terms of raising awareness among partners of the new service to support vulnerable people which should include those who have experienced sexual violence specifically as a result of the sex trade. He also referred to the positive socialising, living and relationships "safeguarding weeks" which aimed to raise awareness of safeguarding

issues.

The Cabinet welcomed the partnership approach which represented the right way forward. The Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan said "this was a good demonstration of how scrutiny worked in practice in terms of raising issues which could be worked on together."

5.1 ICT Scrutiny Task Group

Chair: Councillor Colin Hay

Task group members:

Councillors Andrew Chard, Simon Wheeler and Andy Wall (although he was not able to attend any of the meetings)

Officer support: Mark Sheldon, Matt Thomas and Rosalind Reeves

The task group was set up in July 2012 to assess whether the current ICT service was resilient and fit for purpose and to help define the outcomes for the ICT commissioning exercise which was about to start.

In November 2013 they were reconvened following a debate at Council on issues arising from the public service network compliance issue. The council's main concern had been with the risk assessment which had been the root cause of the initial rejection of the council's submission by the Cabinet Office who felt the council had not gone through a proper risk assessment process. There would have been serious consequences if the council had been taken out of the public service network.

Key Findings and recommendations:

The task group were assured that the council was now following the Cabinet office recommended risk management process and there was an action plan in place to address the gaps identified in the PSN submission process. They were satisfied that the council was now far more aware of its approach to corporate risk assessment regarding ICT required by the Cabinet office and these were monitored by the Security Working Group. Consequently the task group did not feel the need to make any recommendations to Cabinet or Council.

What's happened since?

There has been no further requirement for the group to meet.

5.2 Allotments Scrutiny Task Group

Chair: Councillor Anne Regan

Task group members:

Councillors Nigel Britter, Colin Hay, Helena McCloskey, Charlie Stewart and Duncan Smith

Officer support: Emma Burton, Adam Reynolds and Beverly Thomas

The task group was set up in July 2012 following a petition submitted to Council against a preliminary proposal for the development of an allotment site on part of Weavers Field in the borough. This petition had raised various issues, not least the process for identifying the need for allotment sites in Cheltenham. In addition the council had

received a number of queries from the public on unattended allotments and it was agreed that the council's allotment strategy needed to be reviewed.

Key Findings and recommendations:

Having spoken to the allotments officer and green space manager, the Cheltenham and District allotments association, transition town Cheltenham and the Cabinet Member responsible for allotments and having visited two allotment sites managed by the council and a potential new allotment site, the task group came up with 11 recommendations to Cabinet.

These included:

- Maintaining dialogues with parish councils in terms of their responsibilities for addressing allotment waiting lists
- reviewing the enforcement of uncultivated plots to alleviate pressure on waiting lists
- pursuing the development of council owned land at Priors Farm in the north of the borough into allotments
- reviewing current lines of communication with allotment stakeholders and council officers
- ensuring consideration is given to allotment provision in the emerging Cheltenham Local Plan
- investigating opportunities to work in partnership with organisations such as Cheltenham Borough Homes, Gloucestershire Association for Voluntary and Community Action and Cheltenham Community Projects, to facilitate a scheme to distribute surplus produce to those in most need in the town.

Chair of the task group, Councillor Anne Regan said "We hope these recommendations will lead to a more effective and enhanced service within the borough council".

Upon receipt of the task group's report the Cabinet Member Sustainability Roger Whyborn welcomed its "constructive recommendations". The majority of recommendations of the task group were accepted by Cabinet subject to feasibility and resources.

What's happened since?

The Cabinet Member reported back to O&S in March 2014 and provided detailed progress against the recommendations. Members welcomed the level of progress which had been achieved.

Since then, work to increase allotment provision in the town has moved forward with additional allotment allocation in a planning application for a large proposed development in Leckhampton. This is the area with the highest level of unmet demand.

Efforts by the volunteer site wardens to encourage people to think more carefully about the commitment required to manage an allotment are paying off. Through issuing leaflets and conversing with potential plot-holders at plot viewings, they are able to ascertain time and capacity to manage a plot and are able to allocate plots accordingly or even postpone the decision. Take-up of allotments has dropped as people have had more opportunity and encouragement to consider the level of commitment required. Additional plot splitting has taken place to enable those who can only manage a small plot to take on an appropriate piece of ground. The waiting list for an allotment is now

under 280 people and actual take up of plots at some sites is less than 50% so lists should continue to fall, given current rates of application. The waiting list for some sites is now a matter of months or even weeks, although in the south of the borough, there is still a 3 or 4 year wait for plot allocation.

A new allotment strategy is due in 2015 and this should provide a good opportunity to review again and to consult on the direction and management of allotments for the next 10 years.

5.3 Grass verge cutting Scrutiny Task Group Chair: Councillor Penny Hall

Task group members:

Councillors Nigel Britter and Jacky Fletcher

Officer support: Jane Griffiths, John Rees, Tony McNamara and Chris Riley (County Council)

This scrutiny task group was one of the first to be set up under the new arrangements following some dissatisfaction with the way some grass verges in the town had been maintained during the summer months. Their terms of reference asked them to look at the policies and service level agreements between the council and Gloucester County Council who carried out the work. They also wanted to understand how customer service issues are handled and make any recommendations for improvement.

Over four meetings they spoke to a range of people and examined a variety of evidence.

Findings and Recommendations

At the conclusion of the review, the task group recognised that the weather was a big factor with the summer of 2012 being one of the wettest on record. They came up with 10 wide ranging recommendations which included:

- continuing to cut grass in wet weather whenever feasible
- regular contract management meetings
- the current frequency of cutting should continue but officers from CBC/Ubico and Gloucestershire County Council should meet to consider the biodiversity opportunities for verges within the town
- including grass verges in the green space strategy
- encourage the county council to take action on illegal parking on verges
- the website should be updated as a matter of urgency to ensure that service standards are specified and that the website is updated daily during service disruption
- quality audits

The task group report was considered by Cabinet in December 2012. The Cabinet Member Sustainability, Councillor Roger Whyborn welcomed the report and said "that the review had been thorough and he recommended that Cabinet accept all the recommendations. He looked forward to increased liaison with Gloucestershire Highways and Ubico via monthly meetings".

What's happened since?

The Cabinet Member reported back to O&S in September 2013. Members were pleased

that their recommendations had been progressed and indeed officers valued the review as it has led to a better working relationship with the county council who hold the verge maintenance contract.

At the meeting Councillor Penny Hall said that as a ward councillor she had noticed that the level of complaints regarding grass verges had gone down. Although this may have been partly due to the weather, she complimented officers on how nice the verges looked

Officers from Ubico, CBC and GCC were now meeting on a monthly basis. These meetings have been productive as they enable issues to be resolved quickly and for all parties to share plans and report progress. They have been seen as a positive outcome from the review and there is now a better understanding between all parties.

The website had been updated and discussions are taking place with Glos. Highways, the council and Ubico for the sowing of wildflower mixes on larger grass verges.

These are just some of the positive outcomes from the review and the recommendations from the task group will be further considered when reviewing the green space strategy.

5.4 Events Scrutiny Task Group

Chair: Councillor Penny Hall

Task group members:

Councillors Nigel Britter, Diane Hibbert, Anne Regan, Diggory Seacome and Klara Sudbury

Officer support: Jane Griffiths, Louis Krog, Sarah Clark, Saira Malin and Rosalind Reeves

How do councillors and the public find out about and have their say on major events being planned in the town which could have a potential impact on communities or the town's reputation if not managed correctly?

That was the question posed to the Events scrutiny task group which was set up in 2012.

Key Findings and recommendations:

Many other councils had established some form of multi-agency Safety Advisory Group as a tool in planning the safety of community and other public events and they were recognised nationally as good practice. The working group were very keen that councillors should be involved and have their say on proposed events and therefore they went one step further and recommended the establishment of an Events Consultative Group (ECG). In addition to recommending the formation of a Cheltenham Safety Advisory Group.

The Cabinet received the report of the task group in February 2013 and after further work by officers assessing the implications, the Cabinet agreed in July that Events Consultative Groups should be set up together with a Cheltenham Safety Advisory Group.

What's happened since?

Councillor Penny Hall updated the O&S committee in April 2014 on progress. She advised that the newly adopted events process had significantly improved the way the Council deals with events and had been welcomed by the members who had attended ECGs in their wards.

The new process had also been welcomed by officers. Louis Krog, as the officer chairing the ECG, said "the newly adopted events process had significantly improved the way the Council deals with events". In 2013 the Council was notified of 104 events via the new process and up to April 2014 there had been 21. He advised that for the vast majority of events officers were able to deal with them informally with about 1 in 5 requiring an ECG meeting. The new procedure had also resulted in better managed/run events because the event organisers have the benefit of an audience with professional officers who can advise, answer questions and direct people.

5.5 Ubico Scrutiny Task Group

Chair: Councillor Andrew Chard

Task group members:

Councillors Tim Harman, Jacky Fletcher, Charlie Stewart, Pat Thornton and Suzanne Williams

Officer support: Jane Griffiths and Saira Malin

The newly commissioned waste service from Ubico came into operation on 1 April 2012 and six months on the task group was set up to review the service level agreements and whether the benefits were being realised. They also wanted to examine the service from the customer's point of view and understand how the service was being monitored.

Key Findings and recommendations:

Given the importance to the public of the service disruption the working group reported their finding on this matter to the O&S committee in February and members thanked the working group for their report. They concluded that no councillors would feel comfortable about the events that had taken place and therefore it was important for the Cabinet Member Working group on Waste and Recycling to be given time to carry out a full review and put in place the necessary improvements.

The scrutiny task group presented their final report and recommendations to Cabinet on 16 April 2013. Although some of the recommendations related to Ubico, many of their findings related to the way in which the council was managing the service contract. They made a number of practical recommendations regarding customer service, communications strategy, waste and recycling literature and they also challenged the decision not to nominate any borough councillors as voting members of the Ubico Board. They identified lessons to be learnt from the service disruption in January, highlighting the needs for clear accountability and responsibility in a commissioner/provider environment and effective communication with the public and members.

What's happened since?

Members had a very positive response to their report from the Cabinet Member who asked officers to do further work on a number of recommendations. The commissioning director for UBICO, Jane Griffiths, attended the O&S committee in January 2014 to give

them an update. The majority of their recommendations had been implemented and lessons had been learnt from the adverse weather conditions.

Rob Bell, the managing director of UBICO, attended the committee in April to update members on the company's annual performance report and he has been invited back to give a further update to O&S in the Autumn.

7. Overview and Scrutiny Development – what's next?

- An introduction to Overview and Scrutiny was held in June as part of the Members Induction programme and further sessions are planned later in the year to develop members' skills and understanding of the scrutiny process. We will be involving officers too.
- We will be encouraging new members and the public to suggest new topics for scrutiny.
- We will be fine tuning the process for scrutiny task groups reporting to Cabinet
- We would welcome any suggestions or thoughts on how we can make the overview and scrutiny process. Please contact one of the Democratic Services team.

8. Contacts

Rosalind Reeves

Democratic Services Manager
rosalind.reeves@cheltenham.gov.uk
01242 774937

Saira Malin

Democracy Officer
saira.malin@cheltenham.gov.uk
01242 775153

Beverly Thomas

Democracy Officer
beverly.thomas@cheltenham.gov.uk
01242 775049

Annette Wight

Democracy Assistant
annette.wight@cheltenham.gov.uk
01242 264130

Postal address

Democratic Services
Cheltenham Borough Council
Municipal Offices
The Promenade
Cheltenham
GL50 9SA

Email : Democratic.services@cheltenham.gov.uk

SCRUTINY TOPIC REGISTRATION



Do YOU have a topic that you think Cheltenham Borough Council should scrutinise? Please fill out the following form and return to Democratic Services.

Date:	
Name of person proposing topic:	
Contact details: email and telephone no:	
Suggested title of topic:	
What is the issue that scrutiny needs to address?	
What do you feel could be achieved by a scrutiny review (outcomes)	
If there a strict time constraint?	
Is the topic important to the people of Cheltenham?	
Does the topic involve a poorly performing service or high public dissatisfaction with a service?	
Is it related to the Council's corporate objectives?	
Any other comments:	