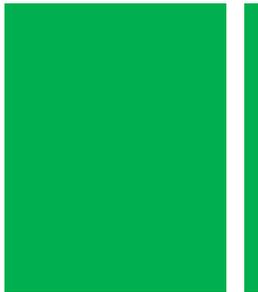
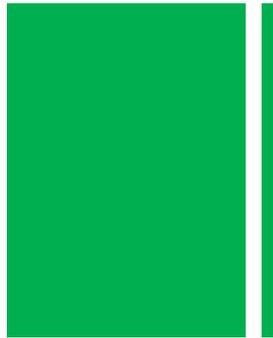


# Scrutiny Annual Report 2016 – 2017 (A summary of highlights)



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## 1. Foreword

### Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Councillor Tim Harman



I am pleased to present the Overview and Scrutiny annual report 2016-2017.

The committee co-ordinates the Overview and Scrutiny function of the Council; which it does by maintaining an overview of performance and commissioning scrutiny task groups to carry out detailed work. It is also responsible for receiving call-ins of Cabinet decisions and determining how they should be dealt with, though there were no call-ins in 2016-17.

Again this year, the committee has given focus to people and organisations that play a key role in the town, having welcomed, Julie Finch from the Cheltenham Trust, Kevan Blackadder on behalf of the Cheltenham Business Improvement District, Louise Emerson from Cheltenham Festivals and Rupert Cox, the Managing Director of Stagecoach West, amongst others. In each case members were able to learn more about current performance and activities and garner details about future plans and potential obstacles. On behalf of the committee I would like to extend my thanks for these organisations for continued support.

As well as ongoing monitoring of performance across the council, the committee has continued to play a key role in shining a light on issues of concern for the town. Amongst them, the task group which reviewed the issue of 'street people' and culminated in the recommendation that the Council adopt an integrated, coordinated, multi-agency approach with close partnership working. In April 2017, Cabinet agreed that Cheltenham would join the Solace Partnership and the committee look forward to receiving a progress report later in 2017.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the lead members from the other groups, Councillors Walklett and Payne for their contributions, particularly in relation to the work planning process and to Officers for their support over the last year. Thanks on behalf of the Committee must go to Saira Malin, Democracy Officer, for her ongoing support to the Committee and the scrutiny process as a whole.

Looking ahead to 2017-18, can I remind members that if there are areas that they feel may benefit from attention from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, that they should raise this with Democratic Services.

## 2. Pat Pratley Chief Executive (formerly Head of Paid Services)

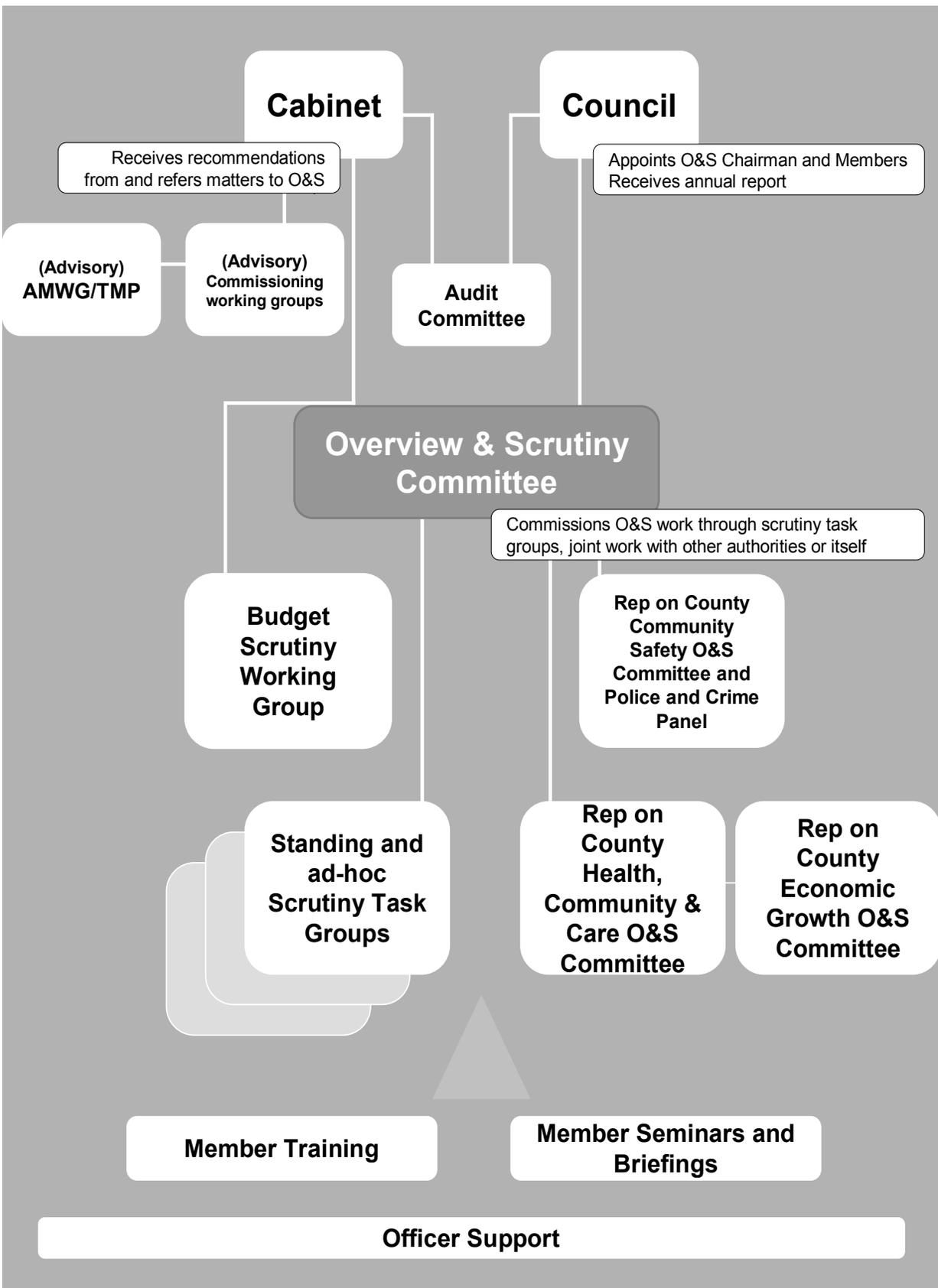


As I mentioned in my commentary to last year's report the overview and scrutiny committee has continued to play an active role and take an active interest in issues of importance to Cheltenham as a town and a place; a place which we all wish to see as having a prosperous and vibrant future.

The committee, and its task groups, have tackled some key issues for the town and provided a forum to listen and hear from the experiences of others, be that the voices of communities of place and/or interest, agencies and other organisations, all of whom have a vested interest in Cheltenham's successful future. The work of the committee has resulted in a number of recommendations being proposed and taken forward which have, as the chairman has stated, added value to the decisions that the authority has taken.

The role that the committee plays in local democracy in holding to account both members and officers is as important as ever, as the authority, the town, and in fact the whole country, continues to experience a period of significant change. It will therefore be important for the overview and scrutiny committee to continue to question, challenge and probe and provide that challenge which adds so much value to our democratic decision making process and the decisions taken by members.

### 3. Overview and Scrutiny Structure



## Scrutiny Task Groups 2016-17

### 4.0 Budget scrutiny working group

Chairman: Councillor Chris Nelson

**Task group members:** Matt Babbage, Chris Nelson, John Payne, Klara Sudbury and Jon Walklett.

**Officer support:** Bev Thomas

The Budget Scrutiny Working Group is a small but effective gathering that keeps a careful watch on in-year spend and the developing budget for the following year. Over the last year we have concentrated on recycling matters, car parking and housing issues. In particular, we have pressed for a new car parking strategy and better estimation of car park income. Our council resources are tight and the group was disappointed in the changes to the 2020 programme, leading to the need to find additional savings measures to balance the budget. Moving forward, it was hoped that the council would find a way to pursue more property investment to generate additional income and improve our community services.

The Chief Financial Officer commented that " this has been a valuable process which has given members an opportunity to input into the development of the budget proposals and key initiatives which has added value to the process. BSWG have also provided an independent review of the financial performance of the council during the year, as well as considering the final outturn position. The financial position remains challenging and it is both helpful and important to have a forum for deeper consideration of the issues facing the council and wider member influence over the strategy for dealing with it."

### 4.1 Devolution Scrutiny Task Group

Chair: Councillor Chris Mason

**Task group members:** Chris Mason, Tim Harman, Colin Hay, John Payne, Suzanne Williams, Paul McCloskey and Parish Councillor Mike Palmer.

**Officer support:** Rosalind Reeves

The scrutiny task group devolution was set up following a suggestion by the Leader of the Council at the 21 September 2015 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to identify the opportunities for Cheltenham that Members would want explored in any devolution arrangements for Gloucestershire. The group could also act as a sounding board for Members as the devolution bid develops and review any governance and scrutiny arrangements being proposed.

The group met several times in 2015 when devolution arrangements for Gloucestershire were being progressed and the Gloucestershire Bid was being prepared. They were keen to engage as a critical friend and in particular assess what was good for Cheltenham in any negotiations taking place particularly with regard to local decision making on transport issues.

The task group last met in January 2016 and government then delayed any announcements on the Gloucestershire Bid in the Chancellor's budget statement in March that year. The results of the referendum meant that further work on the Devolution bid has been put on hold as the government's focus has been on progressing

existing devolution deals with Whitehall capacity diverted towards the process for leaving the EU.

Leadership Gloucestershire have tasked officers to produce a resourcing plan to deliver on key elements that could be progressed without a formal devolution deal - in particular the planning and infrastructure work needs to be scoped because it is considered that this work will require the most significant additional resource. A group of officers is leading on this scoping work led by the Chief Executive of Tewkesbury Borough Council and including CBC's Director - Planning.

Any options with regard to any public service reform which may emerge from the current work on devolution, would be subject to consultation before any changes were implemented. The scrutiny task group could be reconvened at any point to review any recommendations.

## 4.2 Broadband Scrutiny Task Group (joint with Gloucester City Council)

Chair: Councillor Roger Whyborn

**Task group members:** Councillors Matt Babbage, Nigel Britter, Neil Hampson (Gloucester City Council), Gordon Taylor (Gloucester City Council) and Roger Whyborn

**Officer support:** Annette Wight and Rosalind Reeves

In October 2015 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee set up a task group to undertake joint scrutiny with Gloucester city Council, of broadband in Cheltenham and Gloucester. Their terms of reference were as follows:

- To establish what areas in Cheltenham and Gloucester require improved broadband service
- To understand the reasons why this service has not already been improved in those areas
- To lobby the relevant organisations to see what can be done

The group met with Fastershire (who are tasked with improving broadband delivery to Gloucestershire and Herefordshire using government funding) and BT, who were able to identify problem areas in Cheltenham and Gloucester. The group then struggled however, to clarify the responsibilities of Fastershire and BT for resolving some of the problem areas. The group requested officer support from Gloucestershire County Council, but in August 2016 were advised that the county council could no longer provide officer resources to support the scrutiny task group and instead they would be reporting to the Gloucestershire Economic Growth O&S Committee.

The group drafted an interim report for the O&S committee to consider at their September 2016 meeting, which set out a number of options on the way forward for addressing this important issue for Cheltenham. The O&S committee agreed that the most appropriate action for them to take was to write to the chair of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth O&S Committee to highlight some of the issues that had been identified.

## 4.3 Street People Scrutiny Task Group

Chair: Councillor Louis Savage

**Task group members:** Councillors Colin Hay, Chris Nelson, Dennis Parsons, John Payne, Louis Savage and Simon Wheeler

**Officer support:** Saira Malin

Set-up in response to concerns from members of the public and local businesses that there had been an increase in the number of 'street people' in Cheltenham, the group were tasked with: establishing the extent and nature of the problem in Cheltenham; understanding the responsibilities and powers of Cheltenham Borough Council and; assessing whether the existing support networks could be more effective.

The task group met on three occasions and spoke to council officers and representatives from other agencies and organisations. From the data that was presented it was evident that there had been an increase in the numbers of 'street people' and that a large proportion of these individuals were not in fact homeless. They were instead, begging to fund a drug addiction or to buy alcohol and/or causing a nuisance (littering, urinating and defecating).

Discussions had touched on some of the successes that Gloucester City Council had achieved in addressing this very issue through Project Solace. Having met with representatives from Project Solace the group agreed that it represented a proven means of successfully dealing with the issue, and one that Officers at Cheltenham Borough Council had voiced support for.

Prior to the task group submitting their final report to the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee, Cabinet resolved that Cheltenham Borough Council should join the Solace Partnership to tackle priority anti-social behaviour. This decision was welcomed by the task group, not only because it planned to make this very recommendation, but for the fact that the decision represented a solution to the issues that the task group had identified as part of its review.

Having considered the final report of the task group in June 2017, O&S Committee endorsed the recommendations and commended the task group for producing a report which they felt demonstrated the sensitive and measured approach that the task group had adopted when undertaking the review.

The STG recommendations were accepted by Cabinet on the 11 July 2017 and a progress report was scheduled on the O&S work plan for late 2017.

## Other scrutiny successes

### 5.0 Accessibility Report

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee held their September 2016 meeting at St Vincent's and St Georges Association on Winchcombe Street. The committee were given a tour of the facilities and a presentation by two wheelchair users who shared their experiences of disabled access and facilities in the town. The Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment advised the committee that he had reviewed Cheltenham's provision of disabled toilets and had identified two possible locations for a Changing Places Accessible Toilet (Pittville Park and Montpellier Gardens) and funding options were currently being considered.

The committee appreciated the insight that had been offered to them and felt that Cheltenham Borough Council should be doing more in relation to some of the issues raised. In December 2016, the committee submitted a report to Cabinet which recommended that the appropriate officers be asked to look at what actions the council could take in areas where it had direct control of access to toilet facilities.

The Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment formally responded to the recommendations in March 2017. He reported that the council had been successful in securing the capital cost of installing two Changing Places Accessible Toilets, on the basis that one would be at the Pittville Park play area and the second facility within the town centre. He confirmed that a number of local organisations would be consulted on the town centre location to ensure the facility met the needs of residents and visitors and noted that identification and securing of funding for future maintenance and cleaning of the two facilities was still required.

The committee welcomed the news that funding for two Changing Places Accessible Toilets had been secured and would look forward to future updates.

### 5.1 Q&A with Cabinet Member Corporate Services

The committee receives Cabinet briefings at each meeting; outlining anything Cabinet feel would be of particular interest to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In addition to this, from time to time they invite particular Cabinet Members along to discuss specific issues.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services attended a Q&A session on 2020, following his announcement that Revenues and Benefits and Customer Services would not be included in the shared arrangements.

Many members of the committee were unsure about the strength of the arguments for not including these services in 2020 and unconvinced that any alternatives would provide the resilience and opportunities that the shared arrangements of 2020 would have offered. The committee suggested that this decision needed to be revisited.

In October 2016, having revisited the decision not to include the two services, the decision by Cabinet ultimately remained unchanged.

## 5.2 Cheltenham Business Improvement District

The Director of the Cheltenham Business Improvement District (BID) gave a short PowerPoint presentation which set out progress to date, future plans and how success would be measured.

The committee were pleased with what had been achieved and asked for similar updates in the future.

## 5.3 Cheltenham Festivals

Louise Emerson, the Chief Executive of Cheltenham Festivals, gave a presentation which outlined current performance and future aspirations.

As part of her presentation she raised the issue of being able to use other parts of the Gardens and the committee asked that the relevant officers follow up the point about the viability of any relocation within the Gardens.

## 5.4 Place and Economic Development

The recently appointed Managing Director of Place and Economic Development reported on economic development, tourism and car parking. He felt that these were areas that had been neglected over many years and consequently there were gaps in skills and resources and a need for investment. He considered that his appointment was a confirmation by the council that they now wanted to take some action in these important areas.

The committee would look forward to future updates.

## 5.5 Stagecoach

In October 2016, Council considered a petition regarding changes, by Stagecoach, to the C Service; namely the removal of the service to Springbank Way in its entirety. During the debate it was decided that the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee should consider bus services in general and how they could be better delivered in Cheltenham.

Rupert Cox, Managing Director for Stagecoach (West), attended the 28 November 2016 meeting of the O&S Committee and gave a presentation which outlined some of the challenges being faced by Stagecoach. Some of the key points included:

- The biggest challenge facing Stagecoach was congestion. The knock on impact of a journey taking 5-10 minutes longer than it should ultimately resulted in a journey not operating, currently measured at 0.5% of journeys. Bus priority measures would not only allow bus journeys to be speeded up but they would also be more predictable as the bus would journey unhindered. Tewkesbury Road in particular would benefit from a bus lane, and whilst unpopular with the public, the business case for the A40 scheme had merit.
- North West Cheltenham was, in Stagecoach's view, a good area for development as there was potential to add a park and ride service. This would allow for existing services to be made more frequent and given the size of the site, allow for new services: to the Hospital and/or train station for example. It was suggested that affordable housing should be located closer to bus stops and that it was not advisable to build initial phases at the back of a site and furthest away

- from existing bus stops.
- The cost of parking in Cheltenham for two hours was the same as it had been 10 years ago. Stagecoach, were willing to work in partnership with the council and develop a written agreement that if parking charges increased, bus fares would be reduced. Nottingham City Council had introduced a Workplace Parking Levy (WPL); a charge on employers who provide workplace parking, a type of congestion charging scheme. Money raised from the WPL goes towards the extension of the existing tram system, the redevelopment of Nottingham Rail Station and also supports the Link bus network.

The O&S Committee felt that these were areas where there was scope to explore the options within existing projects/initiatives, such as when planning the North West Development and reviewing the car parking strategy for council. The committee suggested that Council may like to instruct Officers to ensure these areas were covered in relevant project scopes and request that Gloucestershire County Council investigate further, the congestion issues that had been raised.

## **5.6 Everyman Theatre**

In January 2017, the committee welcomed Geoffrey Rowe from the Everyman Theatre. He talked about current performance, repairs which had been undertaken in 2016 and planned improvements to the canopy from Regent Arcade car park, front of house and the catering areas, as well as some of the outreach work it was involved in.

The committee took the opportunity to thank Geoffrey, who would be leaving the Everyman at the end of March, for his 11 years of dedicated service at the Theatre and to the town.

## 6. Overview and Scrutiny – what's next?

- The Police and Crime Commissioner, is scheduled to attend the June meeting.
- Cheltenham Guardians have been invited to discuss their work with the Committee.
- Representatives from the Charlton Kings Flood Action Group will outline some of the flood management work which has been undertaken to date and discuss any concerns.
- Peter Hatch, the Executive Director for Property and Communities at Cheltenham Borough Homes will come and discuss issues of interest to the members of the Committee.
- The new Managing Director of Ubico will talk the committee through performance, the new recycling collection scheme and future priorities.
- We are always looking for ways to improve what we do and would welcome any thoughts on how we can make the O&S process better. Please contact one of the Democratic Services team.

## 7. Contacts

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## 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.

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