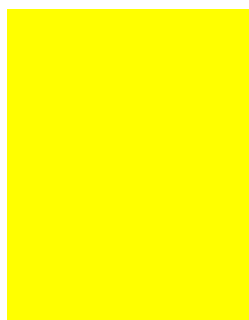
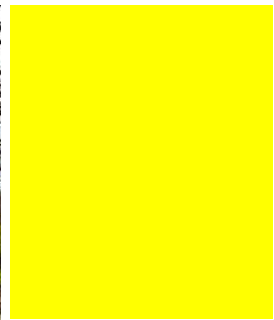


**CHELTENHAM BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

**SCRUTINY ANNUAL
REPORT
2018-2019**

A SUMMARY OF HIGHLIGHTS



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1.

Foreword

Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Chris Mason

As the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, I am pleased to present the Annual Report for 2018/19.



I would like to thank my vice-chair Councillor Klara Sudbury and Councillor Payne for their support during my first year as Chair.

The committee is responsible for co-ordinating the Overview and Scrutiny function within the authority. 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 call-ins of Cabinet decisions should be dealt with.

I believe 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 in helping to develop new policies and ideas. Most important to me is that scrutiny makes a difference and achieves positive outcomes for the people of Cheltenham.

“As well as ongoing monitoring of performance across the council and having a direct input into the draft corporate plan, over the course of the year O&S has scrutinised the following issues:

- The Lead Commissioner Community Infrastructure, Gloucestershire County Council and the County Council Cabinet Member Environment and Planning were invited to attend the September meeting of the committee to discuss the parking strategy in Cheltenham and Members had the opportunity to raise a number of issues and ask questions.
- Colleagues from Gloucestershire County Council were welcomed again at the October meeting to provide an update on the Cheltenham Transport Plan. This meeting attracted 15 public questions and a full audience. Committee Members were able to raise a number of issues relating to the ongoing Boots Corner trial. At the same meeting O&S received a follow up on the resolutions which came out of the call in regarding Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle policy for Hackney Carriages.
- As a result of a motion passed at Council in January 2019 a matter was referred to Overview and Scrutiny in relation to general surgery proposals put forward by Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. At its meeting in February representations from Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust as well as from doctors opposing the proposals were heard by the committee.

We have also requested regular updates on important projects such as the crematorium and leisure@ as well as receiving a presentation from Publica on their annual performance.

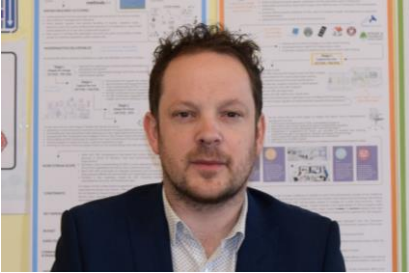
The committee continued to play a key role in shining a light on issues of concern for the town. Amongst them, the task group which reviewed the issue of urban gulls ensured that an additional £10,000 has been allocated for nest identification and egg oiling. An urban gulls strategy and fully costed action plan is being developed.

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.

Finally, special thanks go to Democratic Services who support all our meetings and continue to work behind the scenes to make scrutiny happen and we could not achieve what we have done without all their support.

2.

Darren Knight Executive Director of People & Change



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 wider work of the Council.

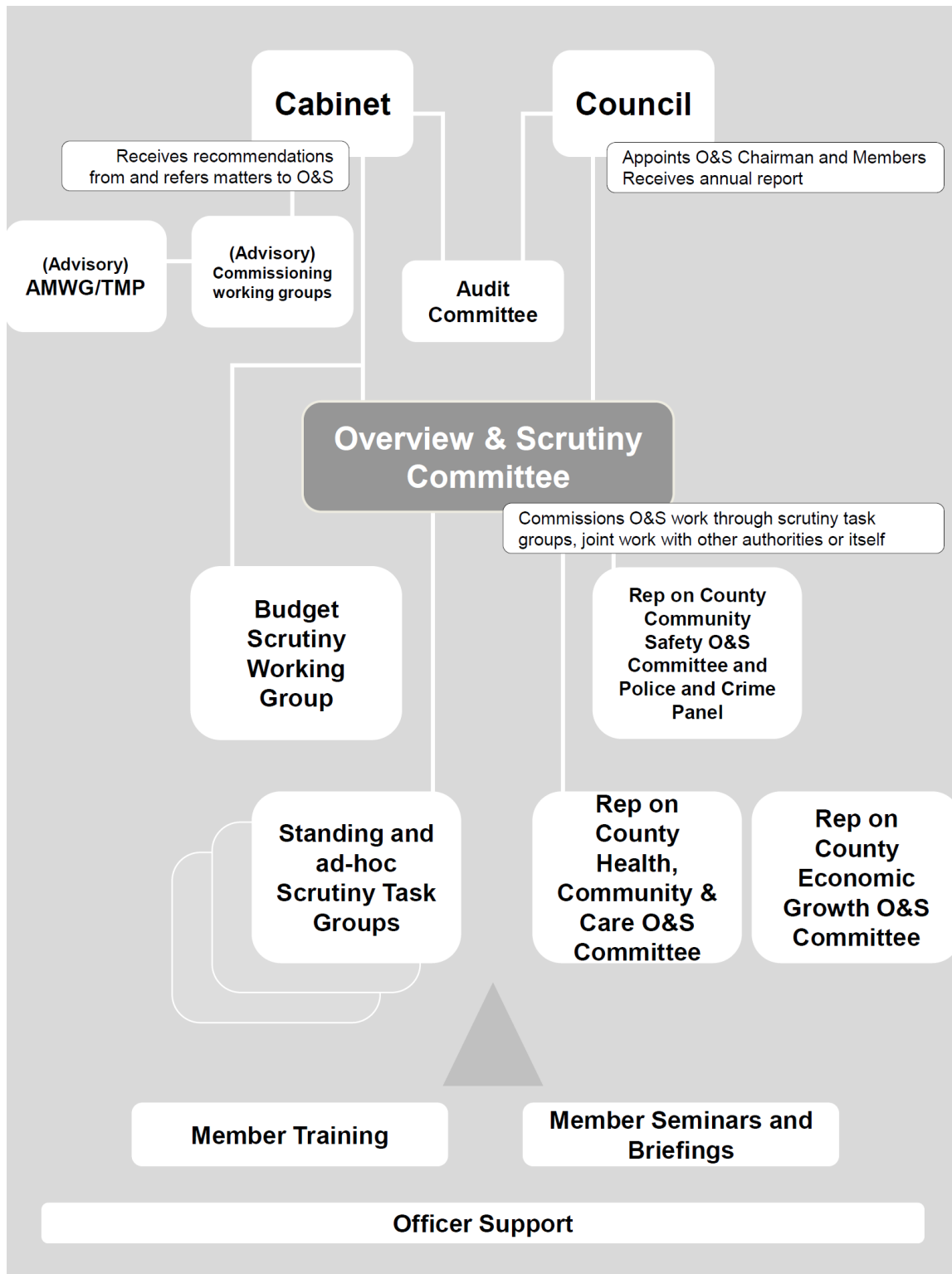
We have looked to review and continue to improve how we support the role of O&S, which has included:

- Increased Officer resource to the Committee to ensure the committee has the right level of support
- Training for Committee Members to help develop their skills and understanding of the scrutiny process
- Several improvements in how the Committee plan and organises its work plan items to give members more time for questions, discussion and debate

These changes will help put the Committee in a stronger place for the following year.

In conclusion, it is always good to continue to review the way we do things. I really value the work that scrutiny has done over the past year and as the lead Director I will ensure that we will continue to give the members our full support.

3. Overview and Scrutiny Structure



4. Scrutiny Task Groups

4.1 Budget scrutiny work groups

Task group members: Matt Babbage (Chair), Victoria Atherstone, Nigel Britter, Martin Horwood, John Payne

Officer support: Sarah Didcote, Bev Thomas

The Budget Scrutiny Working Group (BSWG) is a small but effective group that keeps a careful watch on in-year spend and the developing budget for the following year. Input from the group is particularly important since the council is now diversifying the way in which it raises income to support services it provides in light of the significant central government funding cuts.

During the year we took an active interest in all budget areas. We had our usual opportunities to consider the quarterly budget monitoring reports and the financial outturn report and to scrutinise the General Fund and HRA budget proposals for 2019/20. We acknowledged the difficult economic conditions the council was operating in, recognising the uncertainty in future New Homes Bonus and how business rates would look going forward. Achieving a balanced budget continues to be a challenge for this Council and therefore there remains a continuing role for the budget scrutiny working group throughout the year.

I would like to put on record my thanks to Sarah Didcote for supporting this group over the years and wish her all the very best for her new life in Spain.

We look forward to working with Andrew Knott from Publica who will be supporting this group going forward.

The Executive Director – Finance and Assets 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 and our approach to commercialisation. 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 Urban Gulls Task Group

Task group members: Councillors Klara Sudbury, Dilys Barrell, Diggory Seacome, Tim Harman

Officer support: Mark Nelson and Duncan Turner

A review of Urban Gulls was initiated by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2018, following a high level of dissatisfaction about the Council’s response to controlling the urban gull population in residential areas.

The group considered the key problems caused by urban gulls including noise nuisance, potential health risk and damage to buildings from gull droppings, as well as the

challenges in finding and treating their nests. The group considered a range of evidence and spoke to a number of key partners, including Ubico and the Cheltenham Business Improvement District (BID) as well as looking at best practice from Gloucester City and Bath & North East Somerset Councils. They also consulted with 64 local residents and business owners via an online survey and drop-in session to understand the extent of the problem.

The group concluded that key to addressing the issues was denying habitat, making successful nesting in Cheltenham less easy through treating more gulls eggs each year and encouraging businesses and residents to gull-proof their own properties. The group also made a series of recommendations with regards to the planning process in order to 'design out' opportunity sites for gulls to nest on new buildings. In addition, the need to reduce access to food sources, including food waste and litter, highlighted the importance of Cheltenham Borough Council taking a strategic lead, working alongside partners, residents and businesses to tackle the problem.

The recommendations made by the task group were considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2018 and at the Cabinet meeting in December 2018. Cabinet commended the task group for producing a comprehensive and detailed report and requested officers look at the details and come back to Cabinet with an officer view of the proposals. At the Cabinet meeting in March 2019 Cabinet agreed a £10k additional budget allocation for 2019-20, funded from additional income generated in 2018-19 and instructed the Enforcement Manager to develop and implement a costed action plan, within identified resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member.

5. Other successes

Between April 2018 and March 2019, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee also undertook the following work:

Parking Strategy – the County Council attended a meeting in September 2018 to discuss the parking strategy in Cheltenham and members got the opportunity to raise a number of issues and ask questions.

Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Policy for Hackney Carriages – as part of the committees follow up on the call-in relating to the taxi and private hire licensing policy in March 2018, the committee considered the Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Policy for Hackney Carriages.

General Surgery proposals – this matter was referred to the committee by Council. Members considered representations from Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust as well as from doctors opposing the proposals.

Projects – the committee received regular updates on important projects such as the crematorium, leisure at and the high street development.

Travellers and other unlawful occupants of council land – the committee instigated a Members' Seminar, providing all members with an opportunity to better understand the issue and ask questions.

Monitoring performance – throughout 2018/19 the committee monitored the performance of the council, as well as reviewing the Public Annual Report.

6. Cabinet Member Working Groups

In 2018, when our Annual Report was taken to Council, it was suggested that we also mention the work of non-Executive Members on Cabinet Member Working Groups.

Cabinet member working groups are fundamentally different to scrutiny task groups in that they are set up and chaired by the Cabinet Member and their aim is to assist the Cabinet Member in formulating their final report to Cabinet. By contrast scrutiny task groups are scrutiny led and can only make recommendations to Cabinet or Council or another body. However what they do have in common is that very often Cabinet Member working groups are helping to formulate new policy and offer challenge which are both key parts of the overview and scrutiny function. Both involve non-Executive Members.

The working groups this year included:

Asset Management Working Group
Planning and Liaison Member Working Group
Housing Supply
Members' ICT

7. Overview and Scrutiny – what's next?

Please note that this report looks back over the work undertaken by the committee between April 2018 and March 2019 and as such, this section may refer to events which have already taken place and which will be covered in more detail in the 2019/20 Annual Report.

- Refresher training was held in May 2019.
- The Chairman of the O&S Committee called in a decision relating to proposed changes to bring bank sites. The committee considered the 'call-in' at the 1 July meeting.
- The Police and Crime Commissioner is scheduled to attend the September 2019 meeting.
- A scrutiny task group has been established to look at events.
- A review of Overview and Scrutiny will be undertaken in 2019.
- 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.

8. Contacts

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Democracy Officers:

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Sophie McGough

Harry Mayo

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Cheltenham Borough Council

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Cheltenham

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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.

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:	