

# Cheltenham Borough Council

**Council – 11 December 2023**

## **Annual Report on Overview and Scrutiny**

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**Accountable member:**

Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Tabi Joy

**Accountable Officer:**

Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer, Claire Hughes

**Accountable scrutiny committee:**

Overview and Scrutiny

**Wards affected:**

All indirectly

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**Key Decision:** No

**Executive Summary:**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee manages and coordinates scrutiny at the council, with scrutiny task groups carrying out the detailed work and reporting back to the main committee.

Under these arrangements the Overview and Scrutiny Committee produce an annual report for Council and this is contained in Appendix 2. This report sets out the achievements of scrutiny between April 2022 and March 2023, including the outcomes of the scrutiny task groups, as well as detailing 'what's next'.

Scrutiny endorsed the annual report at their meeting on the 4 September 2023 and welcomes the opportunity for Council to debate this report and give its views on the success or otherwise of the scrutiny arrangements.

**Recommendations:**

**Council is asked to note the Annual Report of Overview and Scrutiny 2022-23.**

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## **1. Implications**

### **1.1 Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The annual budget proposals and the scrutiny of financial performance and other budgetary issues are reviewed throughout the year by the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, as detailed in the section on Task Groups in the annual Scrutiny report.

**Signed off by: Gemma Bell, Director of Finance and Assets and Deputy S151 Officer, [Gemma.Bell@cheltenham.gov.uk](mailto:Gemma.Bell@cheltenham.gov.uk)**

### **1.2 Legal Implications**

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

**Signed off by: Head of Law, One Legal, [legalservices@onelegal.org.uk](mailto:legalservices@onelegal.org.uk)**

### **1.3 Environmental and climate change implications**

There are no direct environmental or climate change implications arising from this report.

**Signed off by: Claire Hughes, Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer  
[Claire.Hughes@cheltenham.gov.uk](mailto:Claire.Hughes@cheltenham.gov.uk)**

### **1.4 Corporate Plan Priorities**

An effective overview and scrutiny process can contribute to positive outcomes on any of the objectives in the Corporate Strategy. Increased public involvement in Overview and Scrutiny will support the council's objective to listen and respond to local communities and their issues.

### **1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications**

An equality impact assessment is not required for this report.

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**Report author: Bev Thomas, Democratic Services Team Leader,  
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#### **Appendices:**

- i. Risk Assessment
- ii. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2022-2023

The risk				Original risk score (impact x likelihood)			Managing risk		
Risk ref.	Risk description	Risk Owner	Date raised	Impact 1-4	Likelihood 1-6	Score	Control	Action	Comments as at September 2023
	If any scrutiny arrangements are not supported by a change in culture across members and officers they may not be successful in delivering the outcomes required.	Corporate director and monitoring officer	2023	3	3	9	Reduce	Ensure we take every opportunity to review our scrutiny arrangements. The scrutiny review will provide an opportunity to enhance our scrutiny arrangements where necessary.	Member training was held in May 2022. Scrutiny is covered as part of the corporate induction and Officer training is offered on a regular basis. A review of scrutiny will be undertaken Campbell Tickell undertook a review of scrutiny in 2019 and they are currently scheduled to feedback their findings to the November (2019) meeting of the committee.
	If the council cannot dedicate resources to support the scrutiny process then the O&S process will not be fully effective.	Corporate director and monitoring officer	2023	3	2	6	Accept	Optimise the use of existing resources within the scrutiny arrangements	It is acknowledged that facilitation support from Democratic Services for scrutiny task groups is important and all task groups have been supported. Resources are limited across the council so members will need to carefully prioritise all scrutiny task group reviews to ensure they make optimum use of the resources available. In 2019, Campbell Tickell suggested that the scrutiny work plan should focus on high priority areas given the limited resources available and the committee have had to consider resources when deciding what to scrutinise and how.

	If the task groups operate outside of the democratic process, then scrutiny could become disjointed and progress difficult to control and track.	Corporate director and monitoring officer	2023	3	2	6	Accept	Guidance to officers supporting task groups on keeping documentation and reporting back to Democratic Services.	See note above. In the past, task groups facilitated by officers outside of democratic services have on occasion been less well documented and more difficult to track progress of. A scrutiny guide was produced and officers are encouraged to adopt standard procedures and good practice. All task groups in the last 12 months have been supported by Democratic Services.
	If members do not put themselves forward for task groups the workload could be unevenly shared across members and be a source of potential conflict or result in task groups not having the right skill mix.	Group Leaders	2023	3	3	9	Reduce	Utilise the skills audit.  Group Leaders to manage, monitor and encourage participation.  Task groups to maintain records of attendance.	Only one task group was established during 22-23 and this provided an opportunity to introduce members, who had not previously participated in a review, to how task groups operate. It is hoped that other members will put themselves forward should a topic of interest arise.
	If scrutiny does not have any dedicated budget it will be difficult to promote public involvement and engagement	Council	2023	2	3	6	Accept	Utilise relevant project budgets  Consider allocating small budget to O&S as part of budget round	Scrutiny does not have a dedicated budget but this has not been a significant issue to date, with budget having been allocated to member training and a scrutiny review in 2019.  It could become an issue if O&S wanted to buy in some outside expertise at any point.
	If O&S does not take an active role in the major change programmes it may lose its opportunity	Chair of O&S	2023	3	2	6	Accept	O&S to include scrutiny of change programmes in its workplan and ensure it is	Member seminars continue to be held at appropriate times and the relevant Cabinet Members have been invited to discuss particular programmes and projects as necessary and additional information can be requested.

	to influence the scrutiny arrangements in any new proposed ways of working							consulted on any future scrutiny arrangements	
	If scrutiny is not carrying out the full extent of its role i.e. pre and post decision scrutiny and overview, there is a risk of a democratic deficit.	Democratic Services	2023	3	2	6	Accept	Ensure new member and staff inductions cover the full extent of the role of scrutiny.	Member training was undertaken in May 2022 and an officer overview was last delivered to all employees earlier this year via the all employee call.  Further member training will be included as part of the 2024 new member induction after the May elections.
<p><b>Explanatory notes</b>  <b>Impact</b> – an assessment of the impact if the risk occurs on a scale of 1-4 (4 being the greatest impact)  <b>Likelihood</b> – how likely is it that the risk will occur on a scale of 1-6 (6 being most likely)  <b>Control</b> - Either: Reduce / Accept / Transfer to 3rd party / Close</p>									