

# Overview and Scrutiny

## Annual Report 2007/2008

---



August 2008

# Contents

- 1. Introduction from the Chairman.**
- 2. What is Overview and Scrutiny?**
  - How does Overview and Scrutiny work at Harrogate?
- 3. Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Board.**
  - The Work of Overview and Scrutiny.
- 4. Organisation Improvement and Environment.**
- 5. Community and Partners.**
- 6. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny.**
- 7. The Year Ahead...**
  - Overview and Scrutiny Strategy 2007-2010
- 8. Useful Contacts.**

# Introduction from the Chairman...

This has been a significant year for Overview and Scrutiny. Members have tackled a range of issues, from a review of the Council's Planning Service to scrutiny of outside organisations such as the Primary Care Trust.

Overview and Scrutiny has welcomed public participation in its work, particularly during scrutiny of current issues such as the organisation and policing of events, parades and marches in the district.

Work has been done on the incoming Call for Action, new government legislation which is going to give local people and local communities more influence and power to improve their lives through their ward councillor. This work is high on our agenda for 2008/2009.

We have also made further progress in the effective scrutiny of the Council's Budget on behalf of local residents and this is something that will be continued in the coming year.

I look forward to the challenges of the 2008/2009, with Overview and Scrutiny continuing its role in reviewing the work of the Cabinet and external partners alike, a role which will increase with new legislation. Overview and Scrutiny is crucial to the work of the Council, ensuring public participation and transparency in the Council's work.

I would like to thank Members for their hard work and dedication throughout the year and also Mark Codman, Scrutiny Officer and Vicky Monkman, Policy Support Officer for their continuing hard work in managing and developing Overview and Scrutiny within the Council



**Councillor Caroline Bayliss**

*Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating Board.*

## WHAT IS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY?

Harrogate Borough Council has a Leader and Cabinet structure. This means that seven Cabinet members make day to day decisions on behalf of the Council at Cabinet and Cabinet member meetings.

The Council also has three Overview and Scrutiny Commissions with the following roles:

- Holding the Cabinet to account for its decisions and actions.
- Reviewing Council policies already in place and helping to develop new ones.
- Value for money reviews within the Council (Best Value).
- Reviewing external organisations whose work affects local residents

The Commissions review the quality of Council services and other local services on behalf of local residents to ensure that services provided are meeting the needs of the district.

## HOW DOES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK AT HARROGATE?

The three Overview and Scrutiny Commissions, cover all of the Council's services, functions and its partnerships. The Overview and Scrutiny Commissions are:

- Community and Partners
- Organisation Improvement and Environment
- Corporate
  - Governance Panel (audit committee)
  - Performance Panel (overall performance)

Commissions are made up of eleven Members and meet on a regular basis. Each Commission agrees its own work to complete during the year.

The Commission's views are then reported back to Council, Cabinet/Cabinet Members, Officers or external parties as appropriate.



Pateley Bridge



Studley Hall

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COORDINATING BOARD**

**The Coordinating Board coordinates the work of the three Commissions and is made up of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of all the Overview Scrutiny Commissions.**

The Board ensures that the work of the Commissions is carried out effectively. In 2007/08 the Coordinating Board met five times, considering items such as; Member training, Overview and Scrutiny performance information and Local Petitions and Councillor Call for Action.

## **THE WORK OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

**Over the last year the work carried out by each Overview and Scrutiny Commission has been varied. Items of work have ranged from restoration of the Valley Gardens to scrutiny of North Yorkshire and York Primary Care Trust and from scrutiny of the Council's budget to questioning the Chief Constable of North Yorkshire Police about policing issues in North Yorkshire.**

Each Commission has a work programme which includes scheduled items of work, such as questioning Cabinet Members on their decisions and performance management of services within the Council. In addition to these items the Commissions also consider items of work on a less formal basis – that can be suggested by a member of the public or by a partner organisation.

Overview and Scrutiny meetings are held in public, usually at the Council Offices in Crescent Gardens, Harrogate. Agendas for all meetings can be found on the Council's internet site: [www.harrogate.gov.uk](http://www.harrogate.gov.uk)

The public can also be involved in the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Commissions. They may be invited to comment upon an issue under review, or speak as an expert witness. Public attendance at meetings of scrutiny commissions is welcomed.

## **ORGANISATION IMPROVEMENT AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION.**

This Commission deals with:

- Public Health/Health Improvement.
- Local Environment.
- Highways and Traffic.
- Local Economy.
- Managing the Council/Corporate services.

## **WORK PROGRAMME 2007/2008**

**During 2007/08 the Commission held nine meetings. Highlights of the Commission's work includes:**

- Review of North Yorkshire and York Primary Care Trust's financial recovery plan.
- An in-depth review of the Council's Planning service. Using the Improvement and Development Agency as an independent assessor.
- Consideration of the Council's Diversity Action Plan.
- Review of how the Council is dealing with racial equality.



*Ripon Swimming Pool*

- Review of the Council's Budgets for the forth coming year in areas within the Commission's remit.
- Scrutiny of the organisation and policing of events, parades and marches within the district.
- A Joint Scrutiny with Scarborough Borough Council of the North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) decision to terminate the Highways agency agreements.

## External Reviews

The Commission has carried out three external reviews in the last year involving the following organisations: North Yorkshire and York PCT, North Yorkshire Police and North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC).

The Commission's scrutiny of NYCC terminating the Highways Agency Agreement. was especially significant as it involved the Co-option of Members from Scarborough Borough Council onto the Commission, the first time this has happened.

## Working Groups

A Working Group set up in 2006/07 to review the Council's Car Parking Policy has continued to meet to develop a scrutiny response on this issue after consulting nearly 2000 residents and visitors.

A second working group created to scrutinise the redevelopment of the International Centre is due to report in 2008.



**In response to public concern in April 2008 the Commission carried out a review of Harrogate Borough Council and North Yorkshire Police's policy on the organisation of events, parades and marches.**

Superintendent Alison Higgins, North Yorkshire Police's lead officer on events management attended a meeting, with officers from the Council to discuss the matter with representatives of local groups. This proved very popular with a significant number of members of the public attending. The Commission will follow this up in 2008/2009 to make sure improvements have been made.

## Commission Members 2007/08

Chairman:



Councillor Mrs Atkinson

Vice-Chairman:



Councillor Sid Hawke

Cllr Ian Galloway    Cllr Clifford Trotter    Cllr Reg Marsh  
Cllr Fred Willis    Cllr Chris Lewis    Cllr Richard Grange  
Cllr Michael Newby    Cllr Christine Willoughby    Cllr Peter Phillips

## COMMUNITY AND PARTNERS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION.

This Commission deals with:

- Culture.
- Housing.
- Public Protection/Community Safety.
- Taxation and Benefits.

### WORK PROGRAMME 2007/2008

**During 2007/08 the Commission held eleven meetings. Highlights of the Commission's work includes:**

- Scrutiny of the Restoration of the Valley Gardens – a review undertaken regarding a bid to the Heritage Lottery Grant and its use to restore the Historic Valley Gardens.
- The establishment of a Councillor Call for Action Working Group – tasked with the assessment of new government legislation and its implications for the Council
- Scrutiny of the Council's Budgets – involving the review of budgets for the forth coming year in areas within the Commission's remit.



*Valley Gardens*

- Review of the Turkish Baths and Brimhams leisure centre which included attendance information and financial performance – managers of the leisure facilities met with the Commission to discuss plans for 2008/09.
- The Chief Constable of North Yorkshire Police, Mr Grahame Maxwell attended a meeting of the Commission to provide Members with an overview of his policing strategy in North Yorkshire.

## Improving the Community

The Commission is keen to help maintain and develop the ongoing work within the Council to build relationships and initiatives with outside organisations as well as ensuring Harrogate's services to local people are maintained. During 2007/08 the Commission considered the following areas of Community interest:

- **Community Policing** - Chief Inspector Barry Smith attended a meeting to discuss issues surrounding the policing of the local area.
- **Youth Participation Plan** - how the Council works to engage young people.
- **Voluntary and Community Sector Funding Strategy** – how the Council plans to help the local voluntary and community organisations.
- **The Community Chest Application Process.** – how local organisations can apply to the Council for extra funding.



## COMMUNITY SAFETY

**Community safety is just one of the areas within the Community and Partners Overview and Scrutiny Commission remit.**

Throughout the year the Commission has continued its interest in Community Safety arrangements within the District with a view to maintaining and improving the well being and safety of Harrogate's communities.

## Commission Members 2007/08

Chairman:



Councillor Bill Hoult

Vice-Chairman:



Councillor Jayne Brotherton

Cllr Caroline Bayliss  
Cllr Trevor Chapman  
Cllr Michael Harrison

Cllr Pat Marsh  
Cllr Stan Beer  
Cllr Pauline McHardy

Cllr Jim Clark  
Cllr Andrew Goss  
Cllr Nicholas Wilson

## **CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

This Commission deals with:

- Corporate Governance  
- dealing with the Council's governance arrangements.
- Corporate Performance  
- looking at the Council's overall performance against its targets.



*Valley Gardens*

## **CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

**The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Commission meets three times a year to organise and review the work of the Commission's two panels. It also coordinates Overview and Scrutiny's formal response to major issues such as the Council's annual budget.**

The Governance Panel The Governance and Performance Panel meet quarterly to discuss issues within their remit.

---

### **Commission Members 2007/2008**

Chairman



Councillor  
Jim Clark

Vice-Chairman



Councillor  
Philip Broadbank

#### **Governance Panel**

Cllr Jim Clark  
Cllr Philip Broadbank  
Cllr John Lockhart  
Cllr Charlie Powell  
Cllr John Savage  
Cllr Simon Theakston

#### **Performance Panel**

Cllr Jim Clark  
Cllr Kevin Hawkins  
Cllr John Lockhart  
Cllr Charlie Powell  
Cllr John Savage  
Cllr Nigel Simms

## Corporate Performance Panel

The Corporate Performance Panel met six times in 2007/08 to scrutinise the Council's performance against its targets. The Panel also considered the Council's *Asset Management Plan 2007/2010* (how the Council maintains its buildings), the *Medium Term Financial Strategy 2008/09 to 2010/11* (the major financial issues and implications for the budget) and are ready for the implementation of the New Performance Framework in 2008. For the first time in 2007/2008 the Panel also received regular monitoring reports on Council spending.

## Governance Panel

The Governance Panel acts as the Audit Committee for the Council. In 2007/08 the Panel met four times, working closely with the Audit Commission and the Council's Internal Audit section to maintain and develop the Council's Governance arrangements - making sure the right things are done in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. Some of the issues considered by the Panel include:

- The Council's final accounts
- The major risks facing the Council.
- Monitoring the Council's efficiency targets and progress



## BUDGET SCRUTINY

**Every year the Council's Annual Budget is open to Scrutiny by each of the Overview and Scrutiny Commissions.**

The response of the Commissions is then reported back to the Council as they agree the budget for the forthcoming year.

This is another way in which Overview and Scrutiny works to monitor and inform the Council's actions and decisions to ensure the best service to the public.

## CALL-IN OF A CABINET/ CABINET MEMBER DECISION

**Important decisions made by Cabinet/Cabinet Members can be subject to a Call-In by Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members.**

In 2007/08 the Organisation Improvement and Environment Commission 'Called-In' one Cabinet Member Decision: *Harrogate Local Development Framework Site Allocations (Homes and Jobs) DPD: Preferred Options* for further consideration.

The Community and Partners Overview and Scrutiny Commission has had one 'call-in' of a Cabinet Member Decision, regarding the decision to delay a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the restoration of the Valley Gardens on the basis that the delay in applying for the grant could lead to the deterioration of the Gardens. This led to further consideration of the application by Cabinet.



*The Sun Colonnade, Valley Gardens*

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE

In 2007/2008 Overview and Scrutiny met all of its performance targets for the number of Cabinet items scrutinised and the number of important decisions in the Forward Plan that were subject to further review, as well as carrying out 2 in-depth policy reviews. Overview and Scrutiny also exceeded its target for public attendance at meetings with over 50 people attending throughout the year.



## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN THE YEAR AHEAD...

**This year has seen the role of Overview and Scrutiny continue to develop as an effective democratic mechanism at Harrogate Borough Council. The year ahead will see this role strengthened and expanded.**

In 2008/09, Overview and Scrutiny will see change as new Government legislation is introduced, particularly that regarding Crime and Disorder and the introduction of the Councillor Call for Action. These represent a challenge for both Members and Officers;

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY STRATEGY 2007-2010

- **Accountability** – ensure that those responsible for implementing and delivering services are held to account.

- **Policy Review/Development** – challenging the Council's policies to ensure services are improved.

- **Value for Money** – ensuring that the Council continually improves efficiency.

- **External Focus** – applying Overview and Scrutiny processes to external organisations that impact upon citizens of Harrogate District.

- **Internal Governance Arrangements** – adding value to the Council's arrangements.

- **Compliance and Professional Standards** – ensuring that Overview and Scrutiny meets statutory and professional requirements.

- **Engagement** – ensuring that the public, Members and Officers have the opportunity to participate in the work of Overview and Scrutiny.

however their aim is to increase the role of the public and their opportunity to challenge the work of the Council and its partners to make sure areas of concern are addressed.

Overview and Scrutiny will work to make sure that the aims of the agreed Overview and Scrutiny Strategy 2007/2010 are achieved. This will help to ensure the continued development of Scrutiny within the Council.

The Commissions will continue to develop their lead role in the Council's change and improvement agenda, providing a challenge to decisions where appropriate and reviewing/ developing policies with the aim of ensuring Harrogate Borough Council delivers services that make a difference to the people of the District.

This report has provided an overview of the work that has been undertaken in the last year. We will continue to involve the local community, seeking out issues of concern and areas of interest with the aim of increasing public participation in the work of Overview and Scrutiny.



## USEFUL CONTACTS

### **Councillor Caroline Bayliss**

Chairman of the Coordinating Board

Tel: (01423) 861252

[carolinebayliss@btinternet.com](mailto:carolinebayliss@btinternet.com)

### **Mark Codman**

Scrutiny Officer

Tel: (01423) 556153

[mark.codman@harrogate.gov.uk](mailto:mark.codman@harrogate.gov.uk)

### **Vicky Monkman**

Policy Support Officer

Tel: (01423) 551636

[victoria.monkman@harrogate.gov.uk](mailto:victoria.monkman@harrogate.gov.uk)

### **Harrogate Borough Council Website**

[www.harrogate.gov.uk](http://www.harrogate.gov.uk)

### **Centre for Public Scrutiny**

[www.cfps.org.uk](http://www.cfps.org.uk)

## GETTING INVOLVED!

**Overview and Scrutiny want to review issues of concern to local people.**

If you feel there is an issue or service that should be scrutinised, please do not hesitate to contact us using the details opposite or write to us at the address below:

**The Scrutiny Officer  
Department of Corporate Policy  
and Improvement  
Harrogate Borough Council  
Crescent Gardens  
Harrogate  
HG1 2SG**

### **ALTERNATIVE FORMATS**

This report is available in alternative formats including large print, audio tape, Braille or other languages.

Please contact:

Mark Codman, Scrutiny Officer:

Tel (01423) 556153