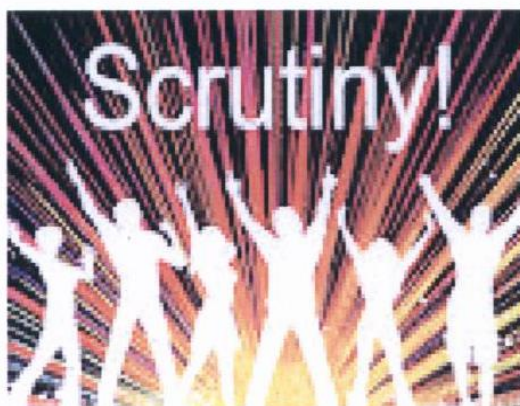


Gloucester **City Council**



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT

2013/14

Published by Democratic Services
www.gloucester.gov.uk
July 2014

Introduction from Chair



It is my privilege again as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to introduce this report on the Committee's activities during 2013/14.

The Committee has had an eventful and varied programme of work looking at wide-ranging issues from managing trees to high profile consultations on the future of Gloucestershire's Airport.

With the prospect of even tighter curbs on Local Government spending in the future, the Committee will continue to have a high profile role and the scrutiny of our partners' performance and the monitoring of the impact of budget cuts will feature predominantly in the Committee's future work programme.

I would like to thank my fellow Committee Members, the Cabinet, all Councillors who have contributed to the Task and Finish Groups, and the Democratic Services team for their support and co-operation during 2013/14 and I look forward to the challenges of the next municipal year.

Councillor Jan Lugg
Chair Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2013/14

Meet the Members



Councillor Janet Lugg
Chair



Councillor Jim Beeley
Vice-Chair



Councillor Deb Llewellyn
Spokesperson



Councillor Kate Haigh



Councillor Andrew Gravells



Councillor Susan Witts



Councillor Sebastian Field



Councillor Gerald Dee



Councillor Kathy Williams



Councillor Gordon Taylor



Councillor Said Hansdot



Councillor Tarren Randle



Councillor Paul Toleman



Councillor Declan Wilson



Councillor Chris Chatterton

The Role of Scrutiny at Gloucester City Council

Overview and Scrutiny has the powers to:

- Provide a sounding board for the Cabinet on key policy decisions.
- Hold decision makers to account.
- Challenge and improve performance.
- Support the achievement of value for money.
- Influence decision makers with evidence based recommendations.
- Bring in the views and evidence of stakeholders, users and citizens.



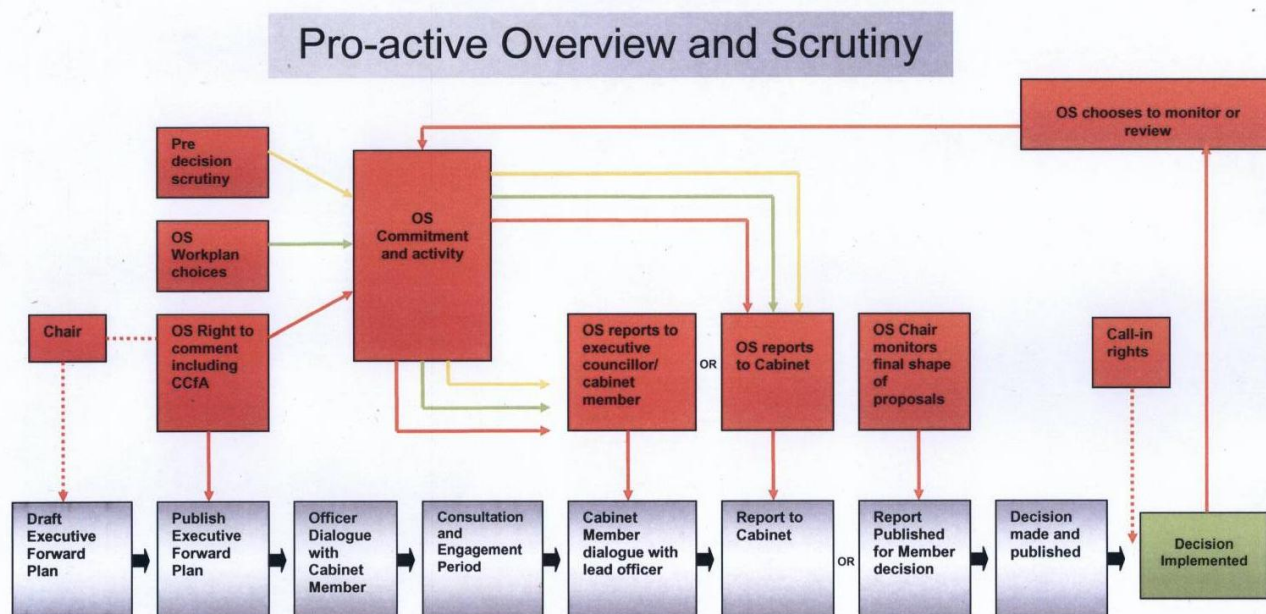
Successful scrutiny:-

- Provides a “critical friend” challenge to executive as well as external agencies.
- Reflects the concerns of the public and community (actively engage with the public).
- Takes the lead in scrutinising on behalf of the public (community leadership).
- Makes an impact on the delivery of public services (contribute to performance).



Successful scrutiny is a central element of the Council's aims and objectives and a key part of the democratic process. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee meets in public to fulfil its role of holding the Cabinet to account against the background of the administration's stated purpose, aims and objectives. However, the guiding principle for its work is that it should make a *proactive* and *positive* contribution to the development of policy and the discharge of the Council's function.

The Role of Scrutiny at Gloucester City Council (continued)



How does Scrutiny work at Gloucester City Council?

There is one Overview and Scrutiny Committee which meets monthly. The agenda usually comprises no more than 3-4 substantive items to enable meaningful and constructive debate on matters. Agenda items are taken from the Cabinet Forward Plan and the Scrutiny Work Programme. The Committee also has a 'rolling' work programme of items which crop up at specific times of the year. Cabinet Members are invited to attend for their respective items. The Committee often acts as a consultee on various strategies as is evidenced later in this report. Task and Finish Group topics are selected following discussion by the Committee and a one page scoping document is produced clearly setting out the aims and objectives of the review.

'Call In' Meetings

The Council's Constitution sets out the rights of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members to 'call in' a Cabinet decision if they feel it has not been made in accordance with decision-making principles set out in Article 12 of the Constitution. The 'call in' procedure may result in the convening of a special meeting to consider the matter unless the next programmed meeting falls within the deadlines set in the Council's Constitution.

In 2013/14 there was **one** Cabinet decision was called in and it concerned the release of covenants for Llanthony Secunda Priory. This resulted in the Committee resolving to refer the matter to Full Council where the legal documentation relating to the Priory was revised to the satisfaction of the Members who had called in the original decision.

The Role of Scrutiny at Gloucester City Council (continued)

What the Constitution says about the role of Overview and Scrutiny

The Council's Constitution sets out that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will:-

- (a) co-ordinate, champion and lead on the scrutiny of Council and Executive decisions;
- (b) have all of the functions, powers and duties conferred by Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000(as amended);
- (c) have all the powers and functions, powers and duties conferred by Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 and to act as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee;
- (d) determine the allocation of work in the event that the scope of the subject matter of a scrutiny study or investigation overlaps the role of more than one Task and Finish Group;
- (e) review the operation of the scrutiny process and work programmes of the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups and inform and advise Council in relation to priorities and the allocation of resources;
- (f) oversee and review the resources, support, training and development of Overview and Scrutiny Members;
- (g) develop a positive "critical friend" approach to the role of scrutiny of the Council and Community issues;
- (h) provide and co-ordinate the input to an annual report to Full Council on such issues or topics as the Committee sees fit;
- (i) give consideration to the management of matters called in for review under paragraph 14 of the Overview & Scrutiny Rules;
- (j) give consideration to matters referred to it by the Councillors' Call for Action;
- (k) review and scrutinise the work of the Executive;
- (l) review and scrutinise the content of the Forward Plan;
- (m) review and scrutinise the policies and proposed policies of the Council;
- (n) consider any matters which affect the authority, the City of Gloucester (or part of it) or its inhabitants (or some of them).



The Resources of Scrutiny

Officer Support and Professional Advice

Support is provided by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny Support) under the direction of the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager. The DSO works closely with the Chair, Vice-Chair and Spokesperson and takes a proactive role in managing the Committee's work programme. The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) is regarded as a focal reference point for professional advice, case studies and tips for best practice.

Networking

The Gloucestershire Scrutiny Group provides an opportunity for Scrutiny Chairs and Officers to meet others within the County in order to discuss respective workloads and share information. Additionally, the DSO has a good relationship with the County Council's Democratic Services Team and has recently shadowed its Officers at one of their Overview and Scrutiny meetings.

Budget

The Committee does not have its own dedicated budget and its work is funded from the Democratic Services team's budget.

Member Training

In November 2013, the Committee received training from Graham Russell, Independent Local Government Consultant. This was a good opportunity for new and existing Members to be reminded of the value of the role of scrutiny to the organisation. Members were also able to pick up some useful tips on questioning skills.

In February 2014, the Committee viewed a DVD on the work of Select Committees in the House of Commons which demonstrated how effective scrutiny could be with the right witnesses and preparation of lines of questioning.



The Scrutiny Year in Focus

Introduction

It has been another busy and successful year for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This section of the report highlights the key activities of the Committee. It is not an exhaustive list, but is intended to give a flavour of the Committee's work programme during 2013/14.

Challenge, Change, Improve!

The Committee views scrutiny of the performance of the City Council's partnering bodies and stakeholders as an important part of its work. Diminished financial resources continue to put pressure on our partners as they strive to meet their performance targets whilst providing a good service to the residents of Gloucester.

In 2013/14 there was robust scrutiny of our partners **Civica** (Revenues and Benefits), **Aspire** and **Gloucester City Homes**. Members were satisfied with the performance levels of these organisations and will receive an update in 2014/15. Additionally, the work of the Evictions Appeals Panel which is managed by Gloucester City Homes on behalf of the Council was reviewed and found to be satisfactory.

The performance of the Council's streetcare partner **Amey** inevitably continues to be under the spotlight as it is a highly visible service. Amey, in common with our other partners, has received a cut in the funding it receives from the City Council resulting in the need to streamline its services. In January 2014 the Committee questioned the Account Director of Amey on the organisation's activities, leading to a request for detailed performance monitoring figures to be presented to a future meeting of the Committee. It is worth mentioning here the recent work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Task and Finish Group on Recycling and Bulky Items, which recommended a number of changes to enhance and restyle the service.

Members took a keen interest in a report presented to them in December 2013 on the future of **Marketing Gloucester** when plans to co-locate it with the City Council's award winning Tourist Information Centre were discussed. The Committee raised access and equality issues for the proposed site and discussed the performance of Marketing Gloucester in general.



The Scrutiny Year in Focus (continued)

Money, Money, Money!

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee plays an important role in examining the Cabinet's budget proposals. There is early engagement with the Cabinet on its Draft Money Plan with each Cabinet Member presenting their respective portfolio to the Committee.

In December 2013, Cabinet Members were robustly interrogated on the Draft Money Plan proposals. As a result, the Committee was able to make a positive contribution to the budget consultation process and its views were submitted to Full Council in February 2014.

'Policed' to meet you!

In June 2013 the Committee met with the newly appointed Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire, Martin Surl. Members received a summary of the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan for 2013-2017 and learned of Mr Surl's aspirations for his role. In response, the Committee was able to usefully share local issues with the Commissioner.



Service Reviews

In June 2013 the Committee reviewed the Council's **Pest Control Service** following a request by the Cabinet to procure the services of an external contractor to carry out the work. There was a lively debate on these matters and as a result the Committee requested an update on the Council's gull management strategy which was presented to Members in February 2014.

The future of the Council's **Building Control Service** was explored in September 2013 when the Committee analysed proposals for entering into a shared service with two neighbouring authorities. At the meeting, Members sought assurances that the service to Gloucester residents would not suffer.

The findings of the review into the **Business Transformation and Technology Service** were examined in September 2013. The review highlighted the need for changes in service delivery and recommended entering into a tendering process for the outsourcing of the service. The Committee had a useful debate on these matters and concluded that it was important for the Council to have a modern, fit for purpose system. The service has now been outsourced to Civica and the Committee will look forward to reviewing its performance data in due course.

Speaking Up – Scrutiny’s part in consultation

Introduction

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has an important part to play in contributing to consultations which can range from in depth examination of new Government legislation, to looking at new and revised Council strategies and policies. Highlights of consultation work in 2013/14 are detailed below.

Draft Council Plan

In January 2014 the Committee was asked to comment on the Cabinet’s Draft Council Plan for the period 2014-2017. Members proposed a number of changes and enhancements to the document, which were agreed and incorporated into a further draft of the Plan which was then brought back to the Committee in March 2014.

Community Right to Bid (Assets of Community Value)

In July 2013, the Committee examined a proposed policy and procedure for dealing with applications under the Community Right to Bid for Assets of Community Value legislation. As a result, Members were able to suggest modifications to the policy and procedure and also to ensure that Ward Councillors would be engaged in the process.

Tree Management Guidelines

In March 2014 the Committee was asked to comment on revised tree management guidelines for City Council owned trees. Members were pleased to endorse the proposals.



Open Space Strategy 2014-2019

The Committee was consulted upon was the Open Space Strategy for 2014-2019. The Cabinet Member for Environment and the Leader of the Council were robustly questioned by the Committee on detailed aspects of the document. The debate prompted a request to the Cabinet to withdraw the Strategy to allow further revisions to be made. As a consequence of this intervention, the Strategy was deferred for further revision.

Speaking Up – Scrutiny’s part in consultation (continued)

Future of Gloucester City Council’s Events Co-ordination

In March 2014, the Committee welcomed the new Chief Executive of Marketing Gloucester, Jason Smith, when he attended to co-present a report which sought approval for changes to the City’s events programme and its delivery. There was a lively debate on the subject with Members airing concerns about the proposed central events team being able to cope with the large number of civic events and having the expertise to deal with the associated protocols. The Committee recommended to Cabinet that management of the Council’s civic events remained in-house.

The Future of Gloucestershire Airport

In November 2013 the Committee was consulted on the findings of a report by York Aviation on the future of Gloucestershire Airport. On this occasion the Committee had to consider the item in a private session because of the commercial sensitivity of the subject. Members contributed positively by endorsing the recommendations of the report and by adding two extra recommendations of their own which were accepted.



Guildhall 12 Month Strategy and Action Plan

In July 2013 the Committee was asked for its views on a proposed 12 month Strategy and Action Plan for the Guildhall. The subject prompted debate on evening economy matters and the Committee was able to draw on the experience of those Members who were part of the Evening Economy Task and Finish Group at that time. An outcome from the discussion was a request from the Committee for further financial data to be provided.

Speaking Up – Scrutiny’s part in consultation (continued)

Review of the ‘Call-In’ Procedure

In March 2014 the Committee was asked to examine its own Procedure Rules for ‘Call In’ as set out in the Council’s Constitution. The request had come from the Council’s Constitutional and Electoral Working Group following a review of the procedures that had been followed at the recent call in of a decision regarding Llanthony Secunda Priory in October 2013. As a result of the review the call in procedure was enhanced to include a flowchart and a proforma for making a request to call in a decision. This led to the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules being amended in the Constitution.

Rugby World Cup

The Committee was pleased, on two occasions in the year, to examine progress made on plans for delivering the Rugby World Cup in Gloucester in 2015. The Committee will be keeping a watchful eye on this topic in the lead up to this prestigious event and has tabled regular updates in its work programme.



Task and Finish Group Activity

Introduction

Task and Finish Groups are set up to look at issues in detail by gathering evidence, and talking to witnesses and service users. Site visits are also carried out where appropriate. A one page scoping document sets the scene for the Group's work. The Group's conclusions are documented in a report for the Cabinet which details its findings and recommendations. 2013/14 saw the successful conclusion of two quite different Task and Finish Groups.

Recycling and Bulky Items Task and Finish Group (concluded in December 2013)

Membership: Councillor Field (Chair), Councillor Haigh, Councillor Taylor

Ambitions for the review (identified in the scoping document):-

- To increase recycling percentages
- To make recycling more accessible to the community



Recommendations from the review:-

- **A report should be prepared to go to Cabinet within the next six months** suggesting a number of changes to the existing service with a view to implementation in two years using computer modelling. The revised scheme should coincide with the replacement of the current fleet of vehicles. Any new scheme should include the following:-
 - An analysis should be carried out of the current waste stream as the recycling profile has changed. This could be performed by examining the contents of a fleet vehicle at the Depot.
 - Consideration of a change of vehicles to a split-back refuse truck or a 'May Gurney' type vehicle similar to that used in Bristol. This would achieve a key objective of increasing the number of items that can be recycled.
 - Exploration of collecting garden waste and cardboard at the same time within a split-back truck.
 - The current rounds should be re-examined to take account of local issues and changes which have taken place since they were originally drawn up. For example, access problems in Kingsway and anti-social behaviour in Barton and Tredworth and City Centre properties caused by bins being left out on the streets on busy nights.

Task and Finish Group Activity (continued)

- Rounds should be remodelled using a computerised model approach.
- Crews and shift patterns will need to be examined and the necessary changes made.
- There should be a trial using a split-back vehicle on one round such as Tuffley for a period of three months.



- When the new service is introduced the opportunity of changing existing bin sizes can be explored bearing in mind the constraints posed to residents living in terraced properties.
- There should be a relaunch of the food waste service using '*Love Food – Hate Waste*' as a slogan so that residents are aware they can use compostable bags or newspaper to line food caddies. Local supermarkets should be encouraged to join in with the campaign and sponsor free caddy bags to residents.
- Amey should have a containerised area at the Depot for holding furniture collected via the Council's Bulky Waste Service so that local charities such as Emmaus and the Furniture Recycling Project can be invited to view it to see if it is suitable for recycling.
- The City Council's website should be updated to provide better information for residents. The message should emphasise what can be recycled, rather than what can be thrown away.

Response from the Cabinet

The Cabinet welcomed the report at its meeting in February 2014 and acknowledged that it was timely in view of the need to seek a reduction in costs. Cabinet resolved that the recommendations in the report be addressed and actioned at the earliest opportunity, with matters requiring more detailed consideration being the subject of a further report to Cabinet as necessary.

Task and Finish Group Activity (continued)

Evening Economy Task and Finish Group

Membership: Councillor Chatterton (Chair), Councillor Gravells, Councillor Field

Ambitions for the review (identified in the scoping document)

- To target specific groups to discover what they would be seeking in order to encourage them into the City Centre and Docks.
- To look at ways of linking the evening economy offer in the Quays and the City Centre.
- To 'talk up' the City.
- To identify a lead organisation to have overall co-ordination of existing Evening Economy Groups.

Recommendations from the review

Key Points

- The new Chief Executive for Marketing Gloucester should come from a professional marketing background and should be tasked with developing a long-term strategic marketing plan as a matter of urgency.
- The current Evening Economy Group should raise its profile and liaise more widely with local stakeholder groups. This will strengthen the Group's influence and foster a strong co-ordinated approach to promoting the City Centre.
- Marketing Gloucester should be actively approaching other organisations to publicise the City's attractions and not expect businesses to come to them. A regularly maintained, simple to use and comprehensive listings website would enhance the organisation's profile in this respect.
- Marketing Gloucester and the Evening Economy Group should devise a strategy to draw the potential extra visitors from the new Gloucester Quays leisure complex into the City Centre.



Task and Finish Group Activity (continued)

Pub/Club/Restaurant/Theatre/Shopping Facilities

- The development of a recognised restaurant quarter in the City Centre should be explored in common with other cities.
- Pubs and restaurants should be encouraged to offer promotions to coincide with events and ensure opening times are aligned to meet customer demand.
- Those clubs and pubs that cater for a wide range of musical tastes and live music should be encouraged to advertise more widely.
- The existing comedy clubs in the City need to build on their reputation and publicise their events.
- In respect of theatres, a niche should be found for established venues such as the King's Theatre and the Picturedrome.
- Retailers should be encouraged to co-ordinate late night shopping evenings to link with night-time markets and other key events in the City Centre.



Transport Considerations

- There should be liaison with local bus companies to ensure that available to meet demand for key events in the City Centre such as Three Choirs, Christmas Lights Switch on, etc.
- Discussions should be held with local bus companies and First Great Western to explore incorporating tickets for local attractions with journeys.
- Parking schemes and tariffs should be harmonised to give greater clarity for visitors to the City Centre.

Environmental Considerations

- Businesses should be encouraged to modify their trade refuse collection regime to ensure that bags and cardboard are not left in doorways, so that the appearance of the streetscene is improved.
- Street lighting and flood-lighting should be improved to give a feeling of security and also to illuminate and enhance the features of prominent buildings.

Task and Finish Group Activity (continued)

Gloucester Train Station

- The Leader of the Council should write to Network Rail to request them to refurbish the building
- The City Council should explore entering into a contract with the Severnside Rail Partnership to allow sponsorship of the station.
- The City Council should investigate marketing opportunities at the station, at nearby stations and on trains.



Response from the Cabinet

At a meeting of Cabinet in February 2014, the findings of the Task and Finish Group were welcomed and the Cabinet were pleased to report that some of the recommendations had already been actioned. Cabinet resolved to address and action the recommendations of the Group at the earliest opportunity and that matters requiring more detailed consideration be the subject of a further report to Cabinet as necessary.

Future Task and Finish Groups for 2014/15

At the time of publication of this report the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is looking to build on its successful Task and Finish Group activity by adopting two new topics for the forthcoming year. It is anticipated that these will also involve site visits.



Scrutiny – Challenges for the Next 12 months

Looking Ahead

In the Municipal year 2014/15 the Committee welcome a new Vice-Chair, Councillor Susan Witts, and a new Spokesperson, Councillor Andrew Gravells. The Committee also has four new Members, Councillors Hanman, Lewis, Pullen and Ravenhill.

The Committee's Work Programme is already filling up for the year and in addition to its rolling programme of work the Committee has recently been asked to carry out financial monitoring of the Council's budget on a quarterly basis.

There will continue to be robust and rigorous examination of the Council's partners and other stakeholders and a varied programme of work during the year.



Overview and Scrutiny Meetings held in 2013/14

Nature of Meeting	Date
Ordinary business	10 June 2013
Ordinary business	8 July 2013
Ordinary business	9 September 2013
Call-In meeting	14 October 2013
Ordinary business	11 November 2013
Ordinary business	2 December 2013
Budget proposals and consultation	9 December 2013
Ordinary business	6 January 2014
Ordinary business	3 February 2014
Ordinary business	3 March 2014
Ordinary business	31 March 2014

Members' Attendance Record for 2013/14

Name	Meetings attended
Councillor Janet Lugg (Chair)	10
Councillor Jim Beeley (Vice-Chair)	10
Councillor Deb Llewellyn (Spokesperson)	10
Councillor Kate Haigh	11
Councillor Andrew Gravells	8
Councillor Declan Wilson	10
Councillor Susan Witts	8
Councillor Sebastian Field	6
Councillor Kathy Williams	6
Councillor Gerald Dee	10
Councillor Gordon Taylor	10
Councillor Said Hansdot	10
Councillor Tarren Randle	6
Councillor Paul Toleman	8
Councillor Chris Chatterton	10