

Gloucester City Council

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
2016-17



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Chair's Introduction

Overview and Scrutiny is a vital part of the democratic process for any local authority, and where party politics has no place. It's imperative that members of all parties work together to ensure that the administration can deliver its plans in the best way for our residents.

Gloucester has a history of effective and efficient Scrutiny, and this year has been no exception, as the committee has continued its innovative approach. Members from all sides have acted as a critical friend to the Cabinet, in the true spirit of scrutiny, and have been able to add value to the administration's policies.

Scrutiny has had a number of significant achievements during the last civic year; the committee held a special session to scrutinise the Community Safety Partnership with representatives from the police service present. We have also looked at the important work that our partners such as Marketing Gloucester, Aspire and Amey do in partnership with the City Council, for the residents of Gloucester.

The Committee has looked constructively at proposals from Cabinet, and made valuable contributions- the committee's recommendation to keep open the City Museum's café was a particular highlight, as was the recommendation around charges for replacement wheelie bins.

We are fortunate in Gloucester to have an administration and cabinet that is open minded and receptive to Overview and Scrutiny's resolutions. I am looking forward to another year, working together with all members, to deliver the very best for every resident.

There have been achievements, but there is more that Scrutiny can do for the City Council. I hope that going forward, we will be able to draw on external witnesses to add value to the reports we hear. I'm also anticipating a year where Scrutiny takes more of a role in developing policy and improves the services we deliver.

Given the financial challenges ahead, it is absolutely vital that Scrutiny continues to play its part in delivering innovative and people powered local services.



Councillor Tom Coole

Chair of Overview and Scrutiny

Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2016-17



Councillor Tom Coole

Chair



Councillor Emily Ryall

Vice-Chair



Councillor Laura Pearsall

Spokesperson



Councillor Gerald Dee



Councillor Collette Finnegan



Councillor Kate Haigh



Councillor Neil Hampson



Councillor Lee Hawthorne



Councillor Jeremy Hilton



Councillor Andy Lewis



Councillor Dawn Melvin



Councillor Steve Morgan



Councillor Hannah Norman



Councillor Deborah Smith



Councillor Declan Wilson

How Scrutiny Works at Gloucester City Council

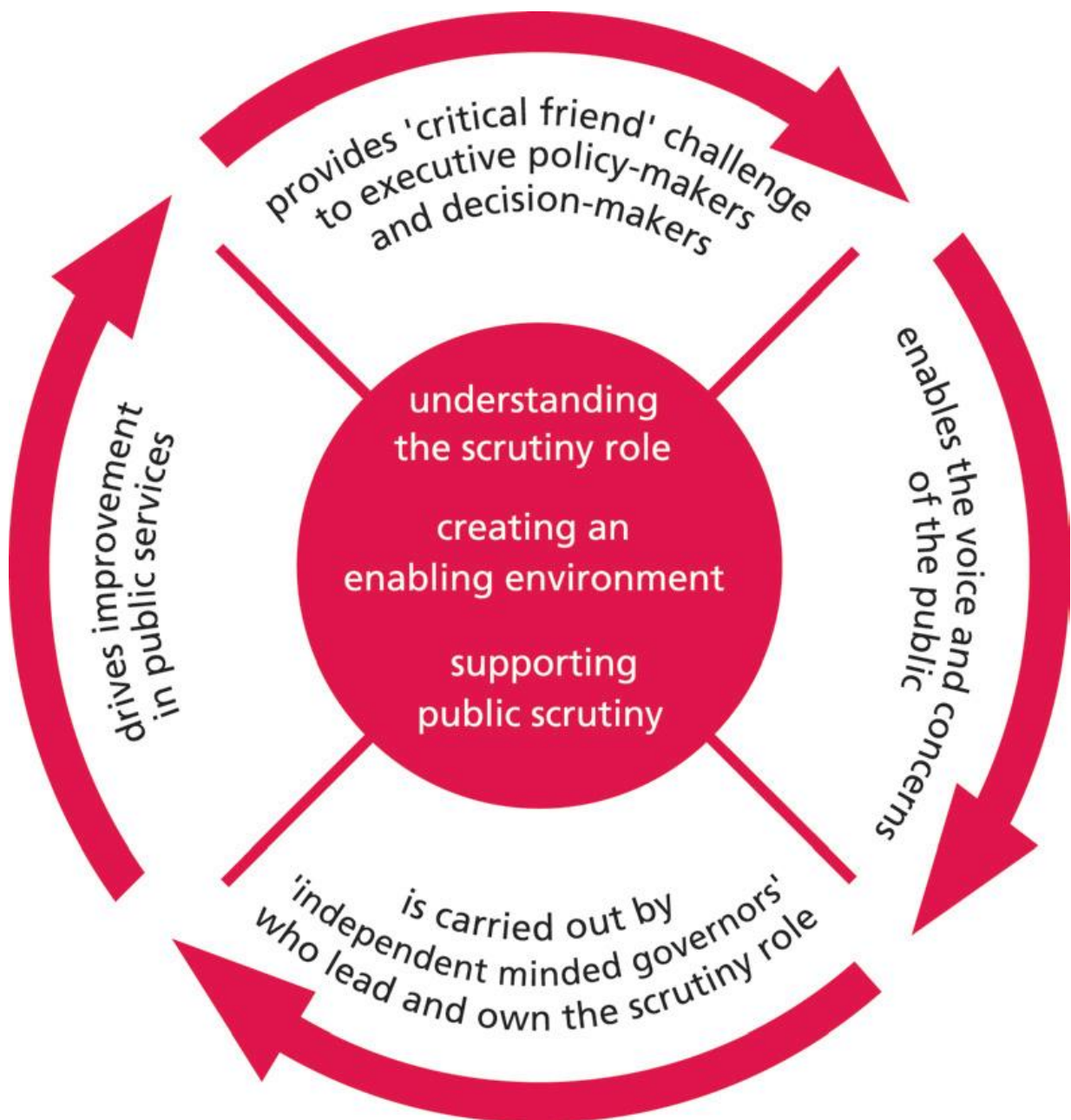
Overview and Scrutiny has the powers to:

- 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).
- Makes a difference!

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 Work of Overview and Scrutiny

Overview and Scrutiny work is Councillor led. In addition to Councillors leading on which subjects they wish to consider in depth through Task and Finish Groups they also set their own work programme which is populated with topics selected from the Cabinet's Forward Plan, matters relating to the Council's priorities and challenges, and issues of importance to local residents. They identify who they want to hear from to inform their work and decide who should attend meetings to present the information. Meetings are held monthly. The agenda usually comprises no more than 3-4 substantive items to enable meaningful and constructive debate on matters.

What Overview and Scrutiny does not do

Overview and Scrutiny does not get involved in minor matters or individual concerns which are not of wider community significance. These need to be addressed through the appropriate service unit, Ward Councillor, or the Portfolio Holder responsible for the issue. Overview and Scrutiny does not deal with individual complaints as these should be addressed through the Council's Complaints Procedure.

'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 2016-17 the 'call in' procedure was not exercised.

What the City Council's 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 COMMITTEE'S RESOURCES

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 Democratic Services Officer works closely with the Chair, Vice-Chair and Spokesperson of the Committee 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.

Budget

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

The Year in Scrutiny

Over the ten meetings which the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held during 2016-2017, a number of different topics were scrutinised. As shown in the table below :

	RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS
13 June 2016	
Catering Service Review	RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET – That the Museum of Gloucester Café continues to function in the short term pending the results of a market testing exercise which will be undertaken to gauge the interest of potential local catering operators in the business.
Review of the Waste and Recycling Services	RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET – That the report be noted.
2015-16 Financial Outturn Report	RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET – That the report be noted.
Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2015-16	RESOLVED – That the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2015-16 be endorsed to go forward to Council on 21 July 2016
11 July 2016	
Amey Annual Performance Monitoring	RESOLVED – That the Amey Annual Report for the year 2015-16 be noted.
Civica Revenues and Benefits Annual Performance Report for 2015-16	RESOLVED – That the Annual Performance report for 2015-16 for the Civica Revenues and Benefits Partnership be noted.
Civica ITO Annual Performance Report for 2015-2016	RESOLVED – That the Annual Performance report for 2015-16 for the Civica ITO Partnership be noted.
5 September 2016	
Late Night Levy Consultation	RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Question 1 of the Consultation Questionnaire in Appendix 1 to the report be reworded. 2. That 12 monthly review arrangements be included in the scheme.

Culture Board Update	RESOLVED – That the update be noted.
Financial Monitoring Quarter 1 Report	RESOLVED – that the report be noted.
King's Quarter Consultation Update	The Update was received
3 October 2016 – Meeting Cancelled	
31 October 2016	
Gloucester Playing Pitch Strategy - Delivery Update	RESOLVED – That the report be noted.
Performance Management and Reporting	RESOLVED – That the report be noted.
Public Space Protection Order: pre-consultation discussion	RESOLVED – That the update be noted.
28 November 2016	
Financial Monitoring Quarter 2	RESOLVED – That the report be noted.
Marketing Gloucester Performance Monitoring	RESOLVED – That the report be noted.
Aspire Annual Performance Monitoring	RESOLVED – That the report be noted.
19 December 2016	
Draft Money Plan 2017-22 and Budget Proposals 2017-18	RESOLVED – That the Draft Money Plan for 2017-22 and Budget Proposals for 2017-18 be noted.
9 January 2017	
Fixed Penalty Fines for Fly Tipping Offences	RESOLVED – 1. That the report be noted

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. That it be recommended to Cabinet that quarterly updates on the progress and effectiveness of the policy be received by the relevant Cabinet Member. 3. That a further report, evaluating the effectiveness and impact of the policy be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 12 months.
Proposal to Introduce a Replacement Waste Container Charging Policy	<p>RESOLVED –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the report be noted. 2. That it be recommended to Cabinet that the requirement for residents to obtain a police crime number to qualify for a replacement waste container without charge be removed from the policy. 3. That it be recommended to Cabinet that residents be required to complete a short web based form, or alternate method if appropriate to prove the theft or loss of their assigned waste container.
Garden Waste Collection Service - Review of Charges	RESOLVED- That the report be noted.
Kings Quarter Development Scheme	RESOLVED- That the report be noted.
30 January 2017	
Public Realm Strategy	RESOLVED- That the report be noted.

Festival and Events Programme	RESOLVED- That the report be noted.
"Together Gloucester" restructure Update	RESOLVED- That the report be noted.
27 February 2017	
Quarter 3 Financial Monitoring	RESOLVED- That the report be noted.
Monitoring of Task and Finish Group recommendations on Improvements to Private Sector Rented Housing	RECOMMENDED TO CABINET – That the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning delivers a report on the continued progress and development of the implementation of the Task and Finish Groups recommendations 6 months after the implementation of the Together Gloucester restructure.
Review of Safe and Attractive Streets Policy after 6 Months Implementation	RESOLVED- That the report be noted.
6 March 2017	
Update on Deployment of Resources from Community Safety Partnership and the Superintendent for Local Policing	RESOLVED – To recommend to Cabinet all Members should be consulted on any transfer of responsibility for Community Safety from a City level to a County level and before any new structures to this end are put in place

Budget Monitoring

Overview and Scrutiny Committee carries out financial monitoring on a quarterly basis looking at the City Council's budget variances, year-end forecasts, and progress made against agreed savings targets. This is an important part of the Committee's annual work programme and helps to keep the City's finances on track.

Consultation on the budget

In December 2016 the Committee welcomed all the Cabinet Members to a meeting set aside for consideration of the City Council's draft money plan for 2017-22 and budget proposals for consultation for the year 2017-18.

Each Cabinet Member presented their portfolio in turn against a background of questions from the Committee.

During their presentations, the Cabinet Members outlined the savings achieved to date and demonstrated how further savings would be achieved by reductions in partnership costs, increased efficiencies and service transformations.

The Committee robustly questioned the Cabinet Members on their proposals for achieving savings and finding new income streams.

The agenda and minutes of the meeting can be read [here](#).

Task and Finish Groups

At the Overview and Scrutiny Meeting on the 31st of October, it was decided that the committee would convene two task and finish groups to look into the following topics:

1. Sales of High Strength Alcohol and Street Drinking (3 Members)
2. Homelessness and Night Shelter Provision (6 Members)

Both of these groups created scoping documents to look at the issues facing the groups and to formalise the group's remit.

The group focussed on the sales of high strength alcohol has met twice since November 2016 and has also met with the Local Victuallers Association (LVA) to gather evidence from them regarding any concerns they may have about high strength alcohol and specifically street drinking. The group plans to speak to Off Licence holders, the police and local organisations who work in the city centre and with street drinkers in future to provide their views on the issue at hand. Currently the group is looking towards working with the Local Community Safety Partnership to explore the possibility of a PSPO for the City Centre.

The group focused on Homelessness and Night Shelter Provision has met twice since the groups inception. The first step that the group is taking to look into this topic is to invite agencies and individuals who have had experience of working with homeless people with Gloucester to provide information regarding their experiences. In order to keep the discussions focussed, key questions will be asked of each individual, which will provide a framework for the respondents.

Sterling work has been being undertaken by both these groups, and although the County Council election in May and General Election in June placed the work of these groups on hiatus, the intent of each group is to submit completed reports to the Committee before the end of the 2017 calendar year.

Partners

Throughout the year the Committee has scrutinised the performance of many of the City Council's partnering bodies, as an important part of its work. Reduced 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.

Amey

Waste and refuse collection are high on the list of priorities for residents of Gloucester and as such are high priorities for the Members of Overview and Scrutiny. Amey, the Council's partner in providing Streetcare annually appear before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to present a performance report and did so in July 2016. The assembled Members vigorously questioned the Cabinet Member for Environment; The Operations Manager at Amey and Head of Neighbourhood Services, at the meeting on the following matters;

- quality of street cleaning and the KPI for this activity
- balancing the need to achieve savings with residents' expectations
- allocation of resources
- operative training and skills
- Kingsholm Stadium and surrounding waste issues
- KPI for sickness absence

Details of the meeting can be found [here](#).

Civica UK Limited - Revenues and Benefits

In July 2016, the Committee examined Civica's performance in managing the Council's Revenues and Benefits service and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources; the Operations Director of Civica; the Partnership Director of Civica; and Gloucester City Council's Head of Finance were in attendance Members considered and probed regarding:-

- how the introduction of Real Time Information (RTI) had impacted on overpayments
- how unpaid Discretionary Housing Payments were being processed.
- communications methods between Civica and claimants
- details of "Performance Lowlights" and how these were being addressed.

Details of the meeting can be found [here](#).

Spotlight on Civica UK Limited - IT Partnership

A dynamic, adaptable and fit for purpose IT service is important for the running of a modern council and Overview and Scrutiny Committee understands the importance of this.

In July 2016 the Committee received the Civica IT Partnership performance report for 2015-2016 from Director of ITO from Civica, and the Senior ITO from Civica. The Members particularly discussed the following items:

- the need for substantial work before the next PSNA audit in September 2016
- the current status of Windows XP operating systems across the Council
- business continuity in the event of a catastrophic system failure
- threats to cyber security
- Spam filters

Details of the meeting can be found [here](#).

Marketing Gloucester Limited (MGL)

Marketing Gloucester manages destination tourism and events in Gloucester, alongside promoting and marketing Gloucester and attracting investment on behalf of the City Council. In November, the Cabinet Member for Culture and the Chief Executive of Marketing Gloucester presented a performance report to the Committee. After the report was presented the assembled Members discussed the following items:

- MGL's funding model
- Ongoing performance review
- How the success of an event was evaluated
- Diversity of events
- The interaction between MGL and the newly setup Gloucester Culture Trust

Details of the meeting can be found [here](#).

ASPIRE Sports and Cultural Trust

Progress made in 15-16 and future plans were a key theme when the Committee reviewed the progress of Aspire Sports and Cultural Trust in November 2016.

Details of the meeting can be found [here](#).

O&S Survey

Scrutiny, as any part of government, is a constantly changing area and to rest on one's laurels would be at best foolish and at worse negligent. In this spirit, The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny commissioned a survey to ascertain the performance of the Committee in 16-17 and to identify areas for improvement in the 17-18 civic year.

The survey outlined the responsibilities of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and asked the following questions:

1. How well do you feel Overview and Scrutiny has fulfilled its remit in 2016-17? and then gave the option for the surveyed to expand upon the reason for their answer
2. How could Overview and Scrutiny meetings have been improved in 2016-17?
3. What do you think was the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's finest achievement in 2016-2017?
4. What is the biggest fault or stumbling block with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee?
5. What would you like to see the Committee doing more of?
6. What would you like to see the Committee doing less of?
7. Currently the resources which Overview and Scrutiny draw on are predominantly City Council Officers. With an aim to increase the efficacy of the Committee, what outside bodies would you recommend the committee invite to attend during 2017-2018?
8. Any other comments?

Responses were gathered anonymously when the survey was circulated on the 3rd of April and again on the 25th of April to all Members of the Committee, all Members of Cabinet and all Heads of Service within the City Council.

11 responses were received, a 37% response rate, of which 90% of respondents rated the performance of the Committee Satisfactory or above.

The overall feedback from the survey was that the Committee could be improved in 17-18 by taking the following actions.

1. Reducing the number of reports and items on agendas which were intended to just be noted.
2. To move away from predominantly scrutinising cabinet reports
3. To focus on greater pre-scrutiny and policy formulation.
4. To enable a wider range of voices can be heard in Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The feedback received from responders highlighted the following items as being particularly worthy of praise in 16-17:

1. The recommendation that the Museum Cafes remain open

2. The alternate recommendation for replacement bin criteria being adopted by Cabinet
3. That the Committee is seen as an important part of the transparent and effective running of the Council.

Members Attendance Record 2016-2017

Nature of Meeting	Date of Meeting
Ordinary Business	13 June 2016
Ordinary Business	11 July 2016
Ordinary Business	5 September 2016
Ordinary Business	3 October 2016 (Cancelled)
Ordinary Business	31 October 2016
Ordinary Business	28 November 2016
Budget Proposals and Consultation	19 December 2016
Ordinary Business	9 January 2017
Ordinary Business	30 January 2017
Ordinary Business	27 February 2017
Special Meeting with Police and Community Safety Partnership	6 March 2017

Name of Councillor	Meetings Attended (Max: 10)
Councillor Tom Coole (Chair)	10
Councillor Emily Ryall (Vice-Chair)	10
Councillor Laura Pearsall	9
Councillor Gerald Dee	10
Councillor Collette Finnegan	8
Councillor Kate Haigh	10
Councillor Neil Hampson	10
Councillor Lee Hawthorne	9
Councillor Jeremy Hilton	6
Councillor Andy Lewis	9
Councillor Dawn Melvin	8
Councillor Stephen Morgan	10
Councillor Hannah Norman	9
Councillor Deborah Smith	9
Councillor Declan Wilson	9