

Barnet Council

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

2011/12

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

The Overview and Scrutiny function was formally introduced in local authorities by the Local Government Act 2000, and later extended under the Health and Social Care Act (2012) for (Health Scrutiny), as part of the, then, government's modernisation agenda.

Overview and Scrutiny is delivered through a committee structure and Councillors who are not part of the Executive sit on these Committees. Overview and Scrutiny Committees hold the Council's Cabinet to account by examining various functions of the Council, asking questions about how decisions have been made and considering whether service improvements are needed. Overview and Scrutiny raises issues that are important to local people and scrutinises the performance of the Council and partner organisations. It is a key mechanism for driving forward service improvement.

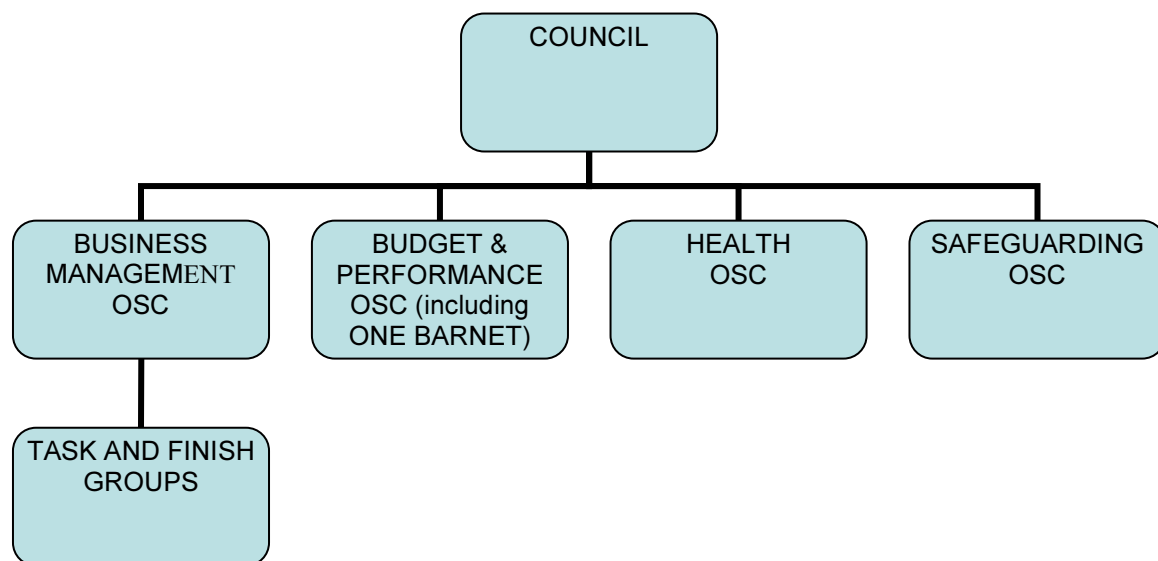
The Centre for Public Scrutiny *Good Scrutiny Guide* defines four principles of effective public scrutiny:

1. **Challenge:** to provide a "critical friend" challenge to executive policy-makers, external authorities and decision-makers
2. **Engagement:** to reflect the voice and concerns of the public and its communities
3. **Leadership:** to support Community leadership and effective representation
4. **Performance Improvement:** to drive improvement in public services

Overview and Scrutiny at Barnet

The London Borough of Barnet has 63 Councillors. The Executive (or Cabinet) is made up of the Leader of the Council and nine other Councillors. The other remaining non-executive Councillors are appointed to sit on Overview and Scrutiny Committees or other committees (e.g. planning or licensing committees) which are responsible for carrying out a range of governance functions for the Council.

In 2011-12 Scrutiny was delivered under the following structure:



Under this structure there are two committees which deal with statutory matters (Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Business Management Overview & Scrutiny Committee) and two other committees (Budget & Performance Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Safeguarding Overview & Scrutiny Committee). This structure was implemented in May 2011 following a review of the scrutiny arrangements introduced in May 2009.

Task and Finish Groups

Task and Finish Groups comprise five elected councillors who work together to undertake in-depth reviews of a service, policy or issue of concern to local people. Task and Finish Groups are time limited and normally complete their review within three months of being established, although this is flexible dependent on the topic under review.

The Business Management Overview & Scrutiny Committee is responsible for coordinating and monitoring the work of Task and Finish Group. The Committee consider topics suggested by non-Executive Members and determine which will progress to review. Once a review has been convened, political groups nominate councillors to serve on each Task and Finish Group. Task and Finish Groups are empowered to determine their own terms of reference and what evidence they wish to receive. At the conclusion of a review, the Task and Finish Group will make evidence based recommendations to the Cabinet or relevant partner organisation.

During 2011/12, five Task and Finish Groups have completed reviews into topics agreed by the Business Management Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The Task and Finish Groups completed this year include:

- Early Intervention and Prevention (Children's Services);
- Fostering and Adoption Recruitment;
- Contract Monitoring and Community Benefit;
- Carbon Footprint; and
- Health and Social Care Integration.

The Health and Social Care Integration Task and Finish Group which reported its findings to Cabinet on 4 April 2012, was a pre-decision scrutiny study. It is anticipated the findings of the Task and Finish Group will be used to inform the Strategic Outline Case for Health and Social Care Integration projects taking place with the Council and health partners.

During 2011/12, the Scrutiny Office introduced a mechanism to track the progress made by the council (or public sector partners) in implementing recommendations made by Task and Finish Groups which had been accepted by the relevant decision making body. Updates are regularly reported to the Business Management Overview & Scrutiny Committee, providing Scrutiny Members with an opportunity to monitor the outcomes of their work and challenge areas where they feel inadequate progress has been made. Further improvements to these arrangements will be delivered during 2012/13.

Overview and Scrutiny Panels

Scrutiny Panels operate in a similar way to Task and Finish Groups but comprise seven members (with substitutes) and some of their meetings are held in public. Scrutiny Panels also review services, policies or issues of concern to local people. In 2011/12 the Business Management Overview & Scrutiny Committee convened a Scrutiny Panel to consider the Supply of Secondary School Places in the borough.

This Panel was convened to respond to parental concerns about a lack of co-educational, non-selective secondary community school places in the south of the borough. In conducting the review, the Panel sought to engage with as many parents as possible who were considering options for secondary schools. As part of the evidence gathering, the Panel commissioned a survey of Year 5 parents in Barnet schools (both state and private) to identify the most important factors for parents in selecting a secondary school. In addition, written and oral submissions from parents and parent governors from local primary schools to hear about the issues parents were facing. Parents were also given an opportunity to address the Panel, Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families and the Director of Children's Services.

A site visit was undertaken to an undersubscribed secondary school to speak to the Head Teacher about recent improvements in standards and his vision for the school.

Findings of the review were reported to Cabinet on 20 February 2012 and the Scrutiny Office will monitor outcomes arising through the recommendation tracking mechanism.

Pre-Decision Scrutiny

In 2011/12, all Overview and Scrutiny Committees regularly reviewed the Cabinet Forward Plan at their meetings to determine if there were any decisions that they wished to examine or comment upon before they were made. This involved Overview and Scrutiny Committees requesting reports, questioning Officers and Cabinet Members, and raising the concerns of local people and stakeholders. In some cases, Overview and Scrutiny Committees made comments and recommendations to the Cabinet or Cabinet Resources Committee which were considered in advance of the decision being taken.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Business Management Overview & Scrutiny Committee

The Business Management Overview & Scrutiny Committee continued its management of the call-in process, appointed to and monitored the work of five Task and Finish Groups and an Overview and Scrutiny Panels, and undertook pre-decision scrutiny of the Cabinet Forward Plan. It also considered reports on:

- Hendon Football Club
- Strategic Library Review / Library Strategy
- Regeneration Strategy
- Housing Strategy
- Finchley Church End Town Centre Strategy
- One Barnet – Future of Housing Services
- One Barnet – Local Authority Trading Company Business Case

Petitions

Following legislative changes arising from the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, the Committee took on additional responsibility for considering petitions which had received in excess of 2,000 signatures, triggering an provision to 'call an officer to account'. Petitions were considered in relation to the following issues:

- Hampstead Garden Suburb Library
- Friern Barnet Library
- Reverse Parking Charges Petition
- Pedestrian Safety, East Finchley

Call in

The Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the (statutory) power to 'call-in' a qualifying key decision before it is implemented. Calling-in a decision allows Overview and Scrutiny Members to review and challenge key decisions after they have been taken, but before implementation. Cabinet Members and Officers regularly attend the Business Management Overview &

Scrutiny Committee to answer questions and provide information to the Committee members.

Only key decisions as defined by Article 13 (b) (i) of the Constitution may be called in under Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000.

A key decision under Article 13 (b) (i)

- a. must involve expenditure or savings in excess of £500,000 as well as otherwise being significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates, or
- b. to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the borough

In 2010/11, the Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered 17 requests call-ins. Full details of the items called in during 2011/12 are shown in Appendix 1.

Budget and Performance Overview & Scrutiny Committee

In 2011/12 the Budget and Performance Overview & Scrutiny continued its regular scrutiny of the Council's corporate performance information and improvement initiatives, and financial performance data. During the year, changes were made to the methodology for reporting corporate performance and financial outturn information, enabling Committee Members to pre-select issues of concern and receive briefings from Cabinet Members and officers. These revised arrangements will be kept under review in 2012/13, with adjustments made as appropriate.

During the year, the Committee considered reports on:

- Achieving Independence for Older People
- Waste and Recycling Performance
- Cashless Parking Operations
- Future of the Parking Service: Business Case
- One Barnet – New Support Organisation and Customer Services Organisation: Business Case
- One Barnet – Youth Offer Closure Report
- One Barnet – Adults In-House Service Review: Project Update

- Barnet Homes Quarter Four Performance Report
- One Barnet – New Support / Customer Services Organisation Output Specification
- One Barnet – Passenger Transport Service Delivery Recommendations
- Corporate Performance Results 2011/12
- Self Directed Support and Personal Budgets
- Development and Regulatory Services
- Parking Services
- Members Item – One Barnet Costs and Savings Breakdown
- One Barnet – Programme Highlight Report
- Quarter 3 2011/12 Corporate Performance
- Number of New Dwellings Started on Regeneration Schemes – Performance Update
- Barnet Homes Performance Report, April – December 2011
- Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training

Scrutiny of the Council's budget remained the key focus of the Committee. The November 2011 meeting was dedicated to scrutinising the proposals contained in the Cabinet report on Business Planning 2012/13 to 2014/15. Representatives from the Council's three other Overview and Scrutiny Committees were invited to attend and make representations to Cabinet Members on the budget proposals. Detailed and robust questions were put to Cabinet Members on the proposals relating to their service areas and recommendations were made for the Cabinet to take into account before the final budget was agreed by Council.

Safeguarding Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Throughout 2011/12 the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee continued its scrutiny of the work of the Independent Safeguarding Children's Board, and Barnet's Multi- Agency Safeguarding Board. The Committee's work programme reflected the work taking place to drive improvements in the provision of education and social care for children and young people and adults in need of social care support.

In 2011/2012 the Committee scrutinised reports on:

- the Council's Child Protection Performance,
- Implications of the Special Educational Needs Green paper
- The Local Authority's changing relationship with Schools.
- Plan to address the recommendation of the Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children
- Children's Services Governance Structures
- Annual Complaints 2010/11(Adult Social Care)
- Local Account of Adult Social Care Services
- Transforming Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in Barnet, Enfield and Haringey

The Committee also considered a joint Adult and Children's Services report on the Council's current safeguarding governance arrangements including levels of activity and the Council's Safeguarding responsibilities. Further scrutiny of the changing workforce approach to Safeguarding following the Munroe Review of Child Protection and its implications for Children's Services social work teams was also undertaken by the Committee.

Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had a very productive and challenging work programme in 2011/12. The work programme reflected changes facing local NHS services and the wider national health reforms. The Committee scrutinised the Quality Accounts of Barnet's health providers and provided statements for inclusion in each. The Committee also received reports on:

- Developing Dementia Services at the Royal Free Hospital
- Deep Vein Thrombosis
- Alzheimer and Dementia Services
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Barnet's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Fracture Clinic (Barnet General Hospital)
- Mental Health and Carers Procurement and Finances

- Mental Health Quality, Innovation, Productivity and Prevention Programme (QIPP)
- Elysian House / Springwell Centre
- Ear, Nose and Throat Services
- Maternity Services at Barnet and Chase Farm Hospital – Response to Care Quality Commission Review
- Cancer Care Model
- Barnet Hospital Parking
- Update on the Barnet Health and Wellbeing Board
- Barnet Clinical Commissioning Group
- Barnet Local Involvement Network Annual Report
- Barnet and Chase Farm Hospitals Update Report
- Health and Well Being Strategy

In January 2012, the Committee received support from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) for developing a scrutiny framework for the Ageing Well Programme. A CfPS Expert Advisor assisted Scrutiny Members to develop and use a framework for evaluating potential scrutiny topics to ensure that only items of genuine public concern were included on the Committee work programme. The Scrutiny Office will work with Member on developing the Ageing Well framework, and developing a scrutiny framework that can be applied to the work programmes of all of the Council's scrutiny committees.

The Committee's Chairman and Vice Chairman continued to represent Barnet at meetings of the North Central London Sector Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, alongside neighbouring Councils, Enfield and Haringey. These meetings were attended by Senior Staff of NHS services across the North Central London sector where trends, pressures and priorities were regularly discussed. Minutes of the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee are now included in agenda for the Barnet Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure that Barnet Members have an effective oversight of this work.

Appendix 1 – Call-ins

Total Number of Call-ins by Year:

Year	Number
2006-07	53
2007-08	45
2008-09	40
2009-10	11
2010-11	24
2011-12	17

Detail of Call ins:

Date	Item called in
1 June 2011	Fairer Contributions Policy
1 June 2011	Adults In-House Business Case
11 July 2011	Safeguarding in Barnet
11 July 2011	Draft Corporate Plan 2011-13
11 July 2011	New Support and Customer Services Organisation Business Case
11 July 2011	Graham Park Area Regeneration Project
5 September 2011	Strategic Library Review

Date	Item called in
5 September 2011	Re-provision of Parking Services
16 November 2011	Housing Strategy
16 November 2011	Regeneration Strategy
16 November 2011	North London Waste Authority Inter- Authority Agreement
9 January 2012	Ex Hendon Football Club Ground and adjoining land Claremont Road, Hendon – Sale of Freehold Interest to Montclare Developments Ltd
9 January 2012	Award of Contract – Parking Enforcement and Related Services
9 January 2012	Environment, Planning and Regeneration Fees and Charges for 2012/13
29 February 2012	New Support and Customer Services Organisation: Business Case Update and Shortlist for Dialogue 2
29 February 2012	Community Library Process
29 February 2012	Governance of Strategic Partnerships