

Barnet Council

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

2012/13

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 also 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.

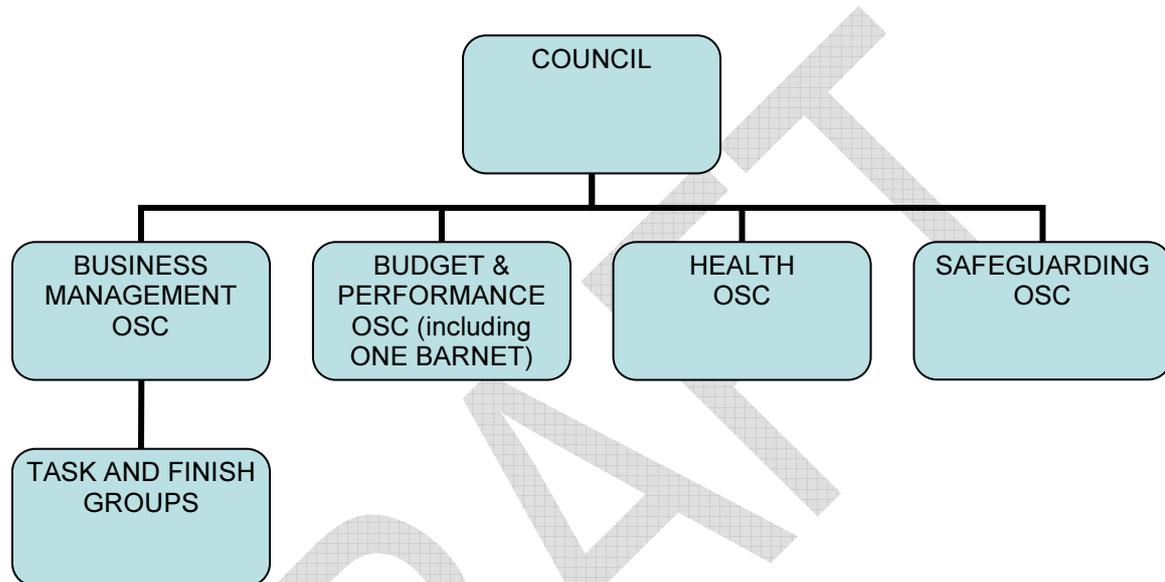
The Centre for Public Scrutiny *Good Scrutiny Guide* defines four principles of effective public scrutiny:

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 in 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 2012/13 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.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Business Management Overview & Scrutiny Committee

The Business Management Overview & Scrutiny Committee has a wide ranging remit and its terms of reference includes many of the statutory powers conferred upon overview and scrutiny committees (including call-ins, councillor calls for action and crime and disorder scrutiny) and consideration of policy and strategy not in the remit of other committees. During 2012/13 the Committee continued its management of the call-in process and, in addition, appointed to, monitored the work of and tracked the implementation of recommendations made by Task & Finish Groups and Overview & Scrutiny Panels. It also considered reports on:

- Barnet Skills, Employment and Enterprise Action Plan (June 2012)
- Housing Allocations Scheme Review (November 2012)
- Crime and Disorder Scrutiny – Update on the Implementation of the Safer Communities Strategy 2011/12 - 2014/15 (November 2012)
- Welfare Reform – Council Tax Support Scheme and Crisis Fund (December 2012)
- Saracens Controlled Parking Zone Update (February 2013)
- Town Centre Strategies for Chipping Barnet and Edgware (March 2013)

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 between 2,000 and 7,000 signatures, triggering a provision to 'call an officer to account'. Petitions were considered in relation to the following issues:

- Pedestrian Safety – East Finchley (June 2012)
- Friern Barnet Library Petition (July 2012)
- Stop the One Barnet Programme (October 2012)

In relation to the Pedestrian Safety East Finchley petition, a representative from the Walk Safe N2 campaign group was given an opportunity to address the

committee and ask questions of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways Officers, the Assistant Director of Customer Services and Libraries and the Head of Libraries. The petition raised issues about safety concerns in the area. Following the debate, the matter was referred to the Finchley and Golders Green Area Environment Sub-Committee for consideration.

In relation to the Friern Barnet Library petition, the lead petitioner was given the opportunity to address the committee and ask questions of the Cabinet Member for Customer Access and Partnerships and the Assistant Director for Customer Services. The petition requested the re-opening of the library. Following discussion on the item, the Committee referred the petition to the Cabinet (via the Cabinet Member for Customer Access and Partnerships) to respond to the issues raised.

In relation to the Stop the One Barnet Programme petition, the lead petitioner was given the opportunity to address the committee and ask questions of the Deputy Chief Executive. The petition called for a referendum on the One Barnet Programme. Following discussion on the item, the Deputy Chief Executive referred the representations made by the petitioners and the committee to the responsible Cabinet Members for response (via the officer called to account).

On 20th November 2012, the Committee received and considered the Executive response to the issues raised in the petition and asked questions of the Cabinet Member for Customer Access and Partnerships. Following consideration of the Executive response, the Committee made a submission to the Cabinet and requested details of learning from other authorities.

In addition to the petitions referred to above, on 20th November 2012 the Committee also received a six month update on the Reverse Parking Charges petition, originally considered in February 2012. The Cabinet Member for Environment addressed the committee and outlined planned changes to parking arrangements in the borough.

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 2012/13, the Business Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered 8 call-in requests. Full details of the items called in during 2012/13 are shown in **Appendix 1**.

Budget and Performance Overview & Scrutiny Committee

In 2012/13 the Budget and Performance Overview & Scrutiny Committee continued its regular scrutiny of the Council's corporate performance information and improvement initiatives, and financial performance data. The Committee also continued its scrutiny of the Strategic Outline Cases, Business Cases and Closures Reports for the projects within the One Barnet Programme.

During the year, the Committee considered reports on:

- Leisure Review Strategic Outline Case (June 2012)
- Implementation of Initiatives to Contribute to the Safer Communities Strategy (June 2012)
- Quarter 4 and Year End Financial and Corporate Performance 2011/12 (June 2012)
- Members' Item – Customer Services Transformation for Revenues & Benefits Risk Assessment (June 2012)
- Early Intervention and Prevention Strategic Outline Case (September 2012)
- Sport and Physical Activity Review Strategic Outline Case (September 2012)
- Business Planning 2012/13 – 2014/15 (September 2012)
- Members' Item – Development and Regulatory Services Project (September 2012)
- Quarter One 2012/13 Finance and Corporate Performance (October 2012)
- Commercial Property Income (October 2012)
- New Support and Customer Services Organisation: Recommendation for a Preferred and Reserve Bidder and Final Business Case (November 2012)

- Barnet Group Performance Report – April to September 2012 (January 2013)
- Quarter Two 2012/13 Finance and Corporate Performance (January 2013)
- Budget Scrutiny – Business Planning 2013/14 – 2015/16 (February 2013)
- Quarter Three 2012/13 Finance and Corporate Performance (March 2013)
- Adoption Service Performance (March 2013)
- One Barnet Programme Highlight Report (March 2013)
- Initiatives to Contribute to the Safer Communities Strategy (March 2013)

In relation to scrutiny of the council's performance against Corporate Plan performance targets, the Committee made a number of recommendations to Cabinet Members and officers in relation to areas of underperformance and associated service improvement initiatives. In addition, the Committee also had oversight of the council's Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy and made a number of recommendations in this regard.

In addition to the budget and performance scrutiny activity outlined above, the Committee scrutinised a number of project updates, output specifications, business cases and closure reports in relation to the One Barnet programme. Following consideration of these items, a number of recommendations were made to the Cabinet Resources Committee and officers.

Scrutiny of the Council's budget remained the key focus of the Committee. The September 2012 meeting was dedicated to performance against the financial savings set out in the council's Business Planning 2012/13 to 2014/15 proposals. Further scrutiny of the budget proposals took place in February 2013 and comments and recommendations made by the committee were referred to full Council for adoption in March 2013.

Safeguarding Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Throughout 2012/13 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 2012/13 the Committee considered reports on:

- Children's Centres – Update on Public Consultation (June 2012)

- Choice and Achievement – Draft Special Educational Needs and Inclusion Strategy (June 2012)
- Personalisation in Adult Social Care – Self Directed Support Position Statement (June 2012)
- Quality in Residential Care Homes for Older Adults (June 2012)
- Day Opportunities for Older People – Neighbourhood Model (September 2012)
- Barnet Multi-Agency Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2011/12 (September 2012)
- Barnet Independent Safeguarding Children’s Board Annual Report 2011/12 (September 2012)
- Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children (September 2012)
- Barnet LINK – Update Report (September 2012)
- Adult Social Care and Health: Caring for Our Future White Paper; Care and Support Bill; and Funding Reform for Adult Social Care (September 2012)
- Carers Support (December 2012)
- Exam Results and Narrowing the Gap (December 2012)
- Barnet LINK – Annual Report 2011/12 and Enter & View Reports (December 2012)
- Members’ Visits (December 2012)
- Youth Shield Presentation (March 2013)
- Barnet LINK – Enter & View Reports (March 2013)
- Barbara Langstone House: Decant Process (March 2013)
- Review of Funding for Education Provision at Northgate Pupil Referral Unit Alongside Tier 4 Mental Health (March 2013)

In considering the items above, the Committee made a number of comments and recommendations to the relevant Cabinet Members and officers.

Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had a very productive and challenging work programme in 2012/13. 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:

- London Trauma Services (May 2012)
- NHS Quality Accounts (May 2012) from:
 - The North London Hospice;
 - The Royal Free Hospital
 - Central London Community Healthcare
 - Barnet and Chase Farm Hospitals
- Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Clinical Strategy Update (September 2012)
- Developing Primary Care in Barnet (September 2012)
- Clinical Commissioning Group Implementation (September 2012)
- Urgent Care Pathway Update (September 2012)
- Maternity Services Divert Report (September 2012)
- Ageing Well (December 2012)
- Barnet and Chase Farm NHS Trust – Maternity and Accident & Emergency Services Update (December 2012)
- Barnet LINK - Patient Access to GP Services and Elysian House Enter & View Report (December 2012)
- Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Clinical Strategy – Ambulance Services (February 2013)
- Royal Free Hospital - Potential Acquisition of Barnet and Chase Farm Hospital (February 2013)
- Central London Community Health Care Foundation Trust Application – Stakeholder Engagement (February 2013)

In scrutinising the items above, the Committee made a number of recommendations to health partners on their plans / strategies and ongoing delivery of health services within the borough. In addition, Committee Members raised a number of service related issues through Members Items and sought information from health partners on these. The Committee also considered the Quality Accounts of health partners operating within Barnet and made formal comments for inclusion in the Accounts.

The Committee's Chairman and other Committee Members continued to represent Barnet at meetings of the North Central London Sector Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, alongside neighbouring Councils, Camden, Enfield, Haringey and Islington. 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.

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 timescale is flexible and 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 2012/13, one Task and Finish Group completed a review into the Effectiveness of Task and Finish Groups. This Group reported its findings to Cabinet on 18 April 2013.

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. Reporting of updates continued 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 2012/13 the Business Management Overview & Scrutiny Committee convened a Scrutiny Panel to consider the Education Strategy for Barnet.

This Panel was convened to consider the role of local authority governors in the new education landscape. As part of the evidence gathering, the Panel met with head teachers, parent governors from primary and secondary schools (both maintained schools and academies) and the Cabinet Member for Education, Children & Families and council officers. The Panel made a number of

recommendations to the Cabinet which are expected to be reported to their 18 June 2013 meeting.

2012/13 Work Programmes

For the 2012/13 municipal year, the Council has established two additional overview and scrutiny committees as follows:

- Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Contract Monitoring Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen have liaised with the council's service areas and partners in developing outline work programmes for the 2012/13 municipal year as follows. All items contained within the draft work programmes will be subject to review and change as determined by the respective Chairman and Committees:

Note: Draft work programmes for 2013/14 are currently in development and will be reported with final Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2012/13 report to Council following discussion with committee chairmen.

**Business Management
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Budget and Performance
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Contract Monitoring
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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
2012-13	8

Detail of Call ins:

Date	Item called in
11 June 2012	Delegated Powers Report 1663 – Increase in Places Offered Under the Free Education for Less Advantaged Two Year Olds Scheme
31 July 2012	Events in Parks Policy
31 July 2012	Re-shaping Day Opportunities for Older People in Barnet: Results on Consultation and Recommendations for a Future Service
31 July 2012	Consultation on Proposed Changes to the Funding Formula of Children’s Centres
24 October 2012	Delegated Powers Report 1709 (Community Right to Challenge)

Date	Item called in
24 October 2012	Infrastructure Managed Service Contract
24 October 2012	Early Intervention and Prevention Strategic Outline Case
6 December 2012	New Support & Customer Service Organisation: Recommendation for Preferred and Reserved Bidder and Full Business Case

DRAFT