



**A Report from the Head of Scrutiny and  
Emergency Planning Services**

**Annual Report of the Overview and  
Scrutiny Committees 2005/06**

**Report Reference: OS 02/06**

**April 2006**

## 1. CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION

The Council has established three Overview and Scrutiny Committees and an Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

Briefly, the Management Committee's responsibilities are, where necessary, to decide which committee will deal with a cross-cutting issue, if required, to allocate work referred by the Executive or Council, to drive the development of Overview and Scrutiny, promote scrutiny in the authority and as part of that foster good relations with the Executive.

When first established in 2001/02 the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees (Community, Corporate Resources, Infrastructure) each had responsibility for functions exercised by two or more Executive Portfolio Holders. Subsequently, however, the Leader of the Council (who determines the number and responsibilities of portfolios under the Council's Constitution) reduced the number of portfolios from eight to six. This resulted in portfolios which cross Overview and Scrutiny committee's areas of responsibility. The terms of reference of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee are set out in detail in Part 4 on the Council's Constitution. For ease of reference they are also analysed in a report showing which Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for each individual policy or service area.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the principal areas for which they are responsible are set out below:

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Main Areas of Responsibility</b>
Community	Community Activities, Health and Wellbeing and Culture and Recreation
Corporate Resources	Corporate Resources, Finance and Best Value
Infrastructure	Economic Prosperity and Infrastructure Environment and Transport

Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee has 8 Members and is politically balanced. Each of the 3 political groups (Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat) hold a chair of one of these committees, whilst the Managing Committee is chaired by a Member of the controlling group. The operational committees meet on a 6 weekly cycle, whilst the Management Committee meets quarterly

The minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Committees are reported to full Council where each of the chairmen also presents a personal report on that period's business in respect of his or her committee.

Where Overview and Scrutiny Committees make recommendations, references or comment to the Executive, these are individually itemised on the Executive Agenda. Chairs are also invited to attend Executive meetings to speak to referred items if they so wish.

The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the respective committees are currently as follows:

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Chairman</b>	<b>Vice-Chairman</b>
Management Committee	Councillor Prest	Councillor Bradley
Corporate Resources	Councillor P Farmer	Councillor Prest
Community	Councillor Boaden	Councillor K Rutherford
Infrastructure	Councillor Mallinson	Councillor Dodd

It is a constitutional requirement that the committees review ways of working and produce an Annual Report the requirement reads as follows:

"Overview and Scrutiny Committees must report annually to full Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate."

## **2. MEMBER TRAINING**

As it is still a relatively new function and continues to evolve it is particularly important that training is available and encouraged. If Members are to fulfil their various roles a programme to meet their needs is essential.

As in previous years the following Member training was made available: Induction for New Overview and Scrutiny Members, Overview and Scrutiny Specialist Skills, chairing skills.

Individual Members needs are identified and addressed via the Framework for Member Development. Key core skills for Overview and Scrutiny will continue to be made available within this framework.

## **3. OFFICER SUPPORT**

From the outset the Council agreed that Overview and Scrutiny required senior, experienced and dedicated Officer support. This is provided by the Head of Scrutiny and Emergency Planning Services and a Scrutiny Support Officer. National studies into the effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny have shown that adequate support is a key factor in determining success. Dr Snape's review of the function (referred to in detail later) made a number of recommendations in relation to staff support and whilst these have been reflected in the O&S Improvement Plan they have not yet been fully addressed.

A budget of £5,000 has been provided to support research, consultation, expert witnesses and other direct expenses associated with Overview and Scrutiny.

## **4. NETWORKING AND JOINT ACTIVITY**

In order to provide a vehicle to share experiences as Overview and Scrutiny develops, to disseminate best practice and to share training and development opportunities the North West Employers Organisation facilitates an O&S Chairs network in which the council participates. This meets approximately quarterly.

On a local level the Head of Scrutiny and Emergency Planning Services initiated and administers an Officer Group for authorities in Cumbria to compliment the Northwest Practitioners network. This acts as a forum for discussion of common issues including problem solving, joint working and external scrutiny. The group has organised cost-effective joint training events for all seven Cumbrian authorities. The group are also supporting the development of joint scrutiny activity between Cumbrian local authorities.

The Scrutiny Support Officer has supported a scrutiny review of the Cumbria Strategic Waste Partnership. This work is novel as it is being carried out by a working group comprising Members from all seven councils in Cumbria. The review is now being used to develop guidance for carrying out future reviews in this way.

## **5. FUNCTIONS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

The main functions of Overview and Scrutiny under Carlisle City Council's Constitution can be summarised as follows:

Holding the Executive to Account, Call-In, Policy Development, Best Value Reviews, Monitoring Best Value Improvement Plans, Subject Based Reviews/Inquiries, Consultative (both internal and external), and Performance Monitoring.

## **6. WORK PROGRAMMING**

Each committee develops a work programme for the year which is then approved by the Management Committee and reviewed at each individual meeting to monitor progress, schedule future work, consider any additional proposals and review workload issues.

A simple tabular presentation of these work programmes is used which shows specific items of business under functional headings. It also identifies Portfolio Holders and Lead Officer(s) and reporting dates. The current overall work programme is included within this report as Appendix 1.

The next sections of this report give a brief review of the work undertaken under each of the Overview and Scrutiny functional headings.

## **7. HOLDING THE EXECUTIVE TO ACCOUNT**

O&S committees consider and comment on many individual Key Decisions and the Executive listens to their views, whether or not they are taken on board. Last year big improvements were made to the Forward Plan, there are no longer standing items or holding reports. The format is greatly improved with clarity of O&S information and officers are now proactively planning for O&S involvement in taking issues forward.

Whilst these improvements have facilitated better scrutiny of individual key decisions, the Executive are not yet being effectively held to account at an outcome level. During this year the Council has agreed a clear set of priorities and this coupled with improved performance management arrangements should help facilitate improvement in this area of work. There are a number of actions in the O&S Improvement Plan which focus on this area of work.

## **8. POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

The improvements to Forward Planning made last year, have aided O&S input to policy reports as they make their way to Executive. There are a number of examples where this has been productive including the Housing Strategy and Equalities policies.

There is still improvement to be made in this important area of work and again actions are included in the Improvement Plan.

## **9. BEST VALUE REVIEWS**

Each committee is responsible for conducting such reviews with each first being the subject of a "scoping" exercise by the Management Committee to give direction to that review. The number of such reviews has declined as a consequence of improvement planning work undertaken within the overall CPA framework. The authority will be reviewing its Best Value programme during the coming year. The following reviews have been completed during the year:-

**Corporate Resources Committee** has completed a BV Review of Revenues and Benefits which has identified a wide range of improvements, most of these have been implemented as the review has progressed.

**Infrastructure Committee** completed the BV Review of Planning Services and similarly many of the identified improvements have been actioned during the review process.

One of the problematic areas of BV Reviews used to be effective member engagement; experience to date continues to show that this has been addressed successfully by BV Reviews being done by Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Members play an effective part in Review Teams and the committees are fully engaged with the use of workshops being a particularly valuable tool for this work.

## **10. MONITORING BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLANS**

Upon completion each Best Value Review produces an Improvement Plan, which will usually include planned improvements for both short and medium term. It is obviously good practise to monitor these and each Improvement Plan is reviewed on a six-monthly basis for up to two years after approval. Monitoring of the following Improvement Plans has been carried out during this year:- Democratic Engagement, Bereavement Services, Risk Management, and Customer Contact.

## **11. PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

The committees continue to consider quarterly Performance Indicator reports. The authority has reviewed its performance management systems and reporting arrangements and the resulting changes have provided better quality reports and information. Performance Indicators themselves are under review with O&S committees' active participation. These improvements will allow more effective scrutiny focussing on key areas, by exception, and with more useful contextual and supporting operational information.

## **12. SUBJECT REVIEWS/INQUIRIES**

This is a particularly important aspect of Overview and Scrutiny and one which is widely accepted as a critical success factor for this function. However, in order that these potentially time-consuming reviews do not dominate their work and/or the resources available each committee sets its priorities and usually undertakes only one such review at a time. The first step in each review is a background report that sets the scene and leads to setting of terms of reference and direction for the conduct of that review.

These reviews in particular allow contribution from external witnesses, which can be very helpful and indeed inspirational. They also allow the committees to be flexible and innovative in their approaches. Members can find this work particularly rewarding and that they can be powerful tools to influence change. These reviews often also include or are predominantly focussed on external scrutiny.

The programme set for 2005/06 was as follows: -

Anti-Social Behaviour (at draft report stage), Industrial Estates Policy (delayed due to floods), Waste Minimisation (completed), and Implementation of Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (ongoing).

In addition committees have continued to monitor progress in relation to the following previous reviews in particular: - Evening and Night-time Economy, Environmental Performance of the Council, Transport – Modal Balance and Streetworks.

Task and Finish Groups have developed successfully during the year and whilst more progress is required their contribution is already evident.

When completed these reviews have been the subject of formal Overview and Scrutiny reports (in the style of this document). These provide both a record of the committee's work and a clear focus for the views and recommendations which came out of the review. It also enables circulation and publication of this work to other interested authorities and external partners.

### **13. CALL-INS**

There have been three decisions called-in during this year in each case the agreed protocol was used to aid the process.

The first call-in related to the proposed transfer of Talkin Tarn Estate, where Community O&S Committee referred the decision to full Council who subsequently confirmed the Executive's earlier decision. The second one related to Willowholme Options Appraisal and after consideration by the Corporate Resources O&S Committee it was agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group to consider the project in depth. The third call-in related to the giving of a grant to Greystone Community Centre Community O&S Committee referred the matter back to the Executive who amended their decision

Occasionally where members have considered calling a matter in the Head of Scrutiny and Emergency Planning Services has been able to provide background information; or bring members and officers and/or members and portfolio holders together. This has obviated the potential call-in as greater understanding or a mutually acceptable way of proceeding has resulted.

### **14. BUDGET SCRUTINY**

The Corporate Resources Committee provides scrutiny of the budget and its associated reports and processes. Community and Infrastructure Committees' input was again built into the programme. Although volumes of paper were still inevitably considerable, officers put great effort into structuring agendas and removing duplication and further improvements have been identified for next year.

### **15. DR STEPHANIE SNAPE'S REVIEW AND O&S IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

It is well recognised nationally that Overview and Scrutiny is still a developing function and this is also the case here in Carlisle. We have continued to make progress but still need to put significant effort into development issues.

Our first CPA report made the following comments on O&S: -  
*'O&S has been set up to provide both challenge and policy development support to the Executive. While this role is not yet fully understood and embedded, there are some early examples of engagement of O&S in*

*monitoring service delivery, driving best value reviews and challenging the Executive.'*

*' O&S Committees have been involved in identifying poor performing areas, such as sickness absence and planning turnaround times, and developing action plans to address them. O&S Committees have also played a key role in driving performance through best value reviews.'*

In order to assist us to meet best practise O&S Management Committee agreed to commission a review of O&S Development by an external consultant. We were fortunate to secure the services of Dr Stephanie Snape of Warwick Business School who is a nationally recognised expert in this field. Dr Snape's review was completed in June 2005 and O&S Management Committee have subsequently developed and agreed a three year O&S Improvement Plan which also has the support of the Council's Executive. Since this plan is the most important aspect of O&S work for this year it is included in this report as Appendix 2.

## **16. CONCLUSION**

Carlisle City Council aspires to be high performing in its Overview and Scrutiny function. Also recognising that this is, both nationally and locally, still a developing and challenging function. Members and officers have together responded well to these challenges.

Our first CPA Report acknowledged that Overview and Scrutiny is making a strong contribution to the authority's corporate agenda yet, crucially, is also acting as a critical friend.

The decision to undertake an externally led review was both timely and positive, members response to its findings was also very positive and the Improvement Plan whilst ambitious is still realistic and will take the authority forward towards excellence.

There have been some early successes with important aspects of the Improvement Plan committee layouts and working and Task and Finish Groups being two good examples. A progress report on all agreed actions will be prepared for an early meeting of the Management Committee who will also then review key actions for the coming year

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**APPENDIX 1**

**Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2005/06**

Review/Issue	Portfolio Holder & Lead Officer	Reporting Date(s)
<b>Community O&amp;S Committee</b>		
<b><i>Flood Recovery Monitoring</i></b>		
Community & Housing Recovery	All/Gill Connolly/Simon Taylor	09/06/05 21/07/05
<b><i>Monitoring BV Action Plans</i></b>		
Democratic Engagement	Councillor Knapton/ Carolyn Taylor, David Taylor	24/11/05 <b>23/11/06</b>
<b>Bereavement Services</b>	<b>Councillor Knapton/June Carswell</b>	09/06/05
<b><i>Performance Monitoring</i></b>		
Performance Monitoring Reports (PI's & Business Plans) Culture, Leisure & Sport Environmental Protection E&CD - Community	All/Carolyn Curr	01/09/05 16/02/06
Crime & Disorder	Councillor Bloxham/Steven O'Keeffe	21/07/05 13/10/05 24/11/05 12/01/06 30/03/06
Carlisle Leisure Limited	Councillor Knapton/Mark Beveridge	12/01/06 16/02/06
<b><i>Subject Reviews/Inquiries</i></b>		
Evening & Night-time Economy	O&S Support	09/06/05
Anti-social Behaviour	O&S Support	01/09/05 13/10/05 29/11/05
Access to Sport?	?	?
<b><i>Reports Requested</i></b>		
Monitoring CHA Contract	Councillor Bloxham/Simon Taylor	01/09/05 16/02/06
Local Air Quality	Councillor Bloxham/David Ingham	09/06/05 12/01/06

		08/06/06
Sheepmount Monitoring	Councillor Knapton/Mark Beveridge	09/06/05 28/06/05 21/07/05 24/11/05 TBA Jan/Feb 2006
Sheepmount Bridge	Councillors Knapton & Bloxham/Mike Battersby	21/07/05 01/09/05 13/10/05
Museums Development Plan	Councillor Knapton/Mark Beveridge	21/07/05 12/01/06
Changes to CHA Contract	Councillor Bloxham/Simon Taylor	21/07/05
Homelessness & Hostels Review	Councillor Bloxham/Simon Taylor	01/09/05 16/02/06
<b><i>References from Executive, Management Committee &amp; Consultations</i></b>		
City Council Priorities	<b>All/Maggie Mooney</b>	21/07/05
Monitoring Rural Strategy	<b>All/David Beaty</b>	13/10/05 08/06/06, CALC also
<b>Parish Charter T&amp;F Group</b>	All/Claire Rankin	12/01/06 T&F Group 21/02/06 20/03/06
<b>Draft Parish Charter</b>	All/Claire Rankin	31/08/06
<b>Housing Strategy Action Plan</b>	Councillor Bloxham/Simon Taylor	21/07/05 24/11/05
Housing Renewal Policy	Councillor Bloxham/Allan Dickson	<b>13/10/05</b> 22/02/06 Workshop
Supporting People Regime	Councillor Bloxham/Simon Taylor	<b>21/07/05</b>
Budget	Councillor Firth/Angela Brown	<b>29/11/05</b>
Diversity Policy	Councillor Knapton/Lesley Dixon	01/09/05 12/01/06 16/02/06
Talkin Tarn	Councillor Knapton/Mark Beveridge	28/06/05 TBA (on site)
BV Performance Plan	Councillor Jefferson/Carolyn Curr	09/06/05 30/03/06 08/06/06

Clean Neighbourhood & Environment Act	Councillor Bloxham/Mike Battersby	<del>01/09/05</del>
Food Service Plan	Councillor Bloxham/Ruth Harland	<del>01/09/05</del> 20/07/06
Downagate Community Centre	Councillor Knapton/Rob Burns	<del>21/07/05</del>
Children's Act 2004	Councillor Bowman/John Egan	<del>24/11/05</del>
Play Area Strategy	Councillor Knapton/Mark Beveridge	30/03/06
Carlisle Renaissance	All/Ian McNichol	<del>16/02/06</del>
PCT Consultation	Councillor Knapton/Maggie Mooney	<del>16/02/06</del>
Sports Feasibility Study	Councillor Knapton/Mark Beveridge	08/06/06
Neighbourhood Forums	All/Mike Battersby	30/03/06

## Corporate Resources O&S Committee

<b><i>Flood Recovery Monitoring</i></b>		
Emergency Plan Review	Councillor Geddes/JohnMallinson	<del>16/06/05</del> 06/04/06
Public Assets (including the Civic Centre)	Councillor Firth/David Atkinson	<del>16/08/05</del>
Financial Implications of the Flooding	Councillor Firth/Angela Brown	
<b><i>Best Value Reviews 2002/03</i></b>		
<b>Risk Management Policy</b>	Councillor Firth/Jason Gooding	<del>16/06/05</del>
<b><i>Best Value Reviews 2004/05</i></b>		
Revenues and Benefits	Councillor Firth/Peter Mason	<del>28/07/05</del> <del>20/10/05</del> <del>01/12/05</del>
<b><i>Monitoring BV Action Plans</i></b>		
Customer Contact Centre Update	Councillor Geddes/John Nutley	23/02/06
Monitoring Corporate Risk Register	Councillor Jefferson/Jason Gooding	06/04/06
<b><i>Performance Monitoring</i></b>		
Performance Monitoring Reports (PI's & Business Plans) Finance Member Support & Employee Services Strategic & Performance Services Revenues & Benefits Customer & IT Legal & Democratic Property	All/Carolyn Curr	<del>08/09/05</del> <del>23/02/06</del>
Lower Quartile PI's Sickness Absence	Councillor Geddes/David Williams	<del>01/12/05</del> 23/02/06
FOI Monitoring	Councillor Geddes/Fiona Musgrave	20/10/05
Member Training Annual Report	Councillor Geddes/David Williams	20/10/05
<b><i>Subject Reviews/Inquiries</i></b>		
<b>Asset Review</b>	Councillor Firth/David	<del>16/08/05</del>

	Atkinson	
Willowholme T&F Group	Councillor Bowman/David Atkinson	T&F Group 14/02/06
<b><i>Council Budget</i></b>		
Budget	Councillor Firth/Angela Brown	06/12/05 19/01/06
Budget Monitoring	Councillor Firth/Angela Brown	20/10/05 23/02/06
Provisional Outturn	Councillor Firth/Angela Brown	23/06/05
Capital Strategy & Asset Management Plan	Councillor Firth/Angela Brown/David Atkinson	23/06/05
Medium Term Financial Plan & Corporate Charging Policy	Councillor Firth/Angela Brown	23/06/05
Annual Efficiency Statement	All/Jason Gooding	16/06/05
Special Projects Fund	Councillor Firth/Angela Brown	23/02/06 06/04/06
Renewals Reserve & Updated Replacement Plan	Councillor Firth/Angela Brown	06/04/06
<b><i>Reports Requested</i></b>		
Implementing Electronic Government	Councillor Geddes/John Nutley	16/06/05 08/09/05
Prince 2	Councillor Jefferson/Jason Gooding	23/08/05
Procurement Policy Monitoring	Councillor Jefferson/Angela Brown	06/04/06
<b><i>References from Executive, Management Committee &amp; Consultations</i></b>		
<b>City Council Priorities</b>	All/Maggie Mooney	16/06/05
<b>BV Performance Plan</b>	Councillor Jefferson/Carolyn Curr	07/06/05 06/04/06 15/06/06
<b>Pay &amp; Workforce Strategy</b>	Councillor Geddes/David Williams	16/06/05
<b>ICT Strategy</b>	Councillor Geddes/John Nutley	08/09/05
<b>Local Council Tax Discounts</b>	Councillor Firth/Peter Mason	29/06/05
<b>City Vision Review</b>	Councillor Jefferson/Gill Connolly	20/10/05 01/12/05
<b>Council Restructure</b>	All/Maggie Mooney	23/08/05
<b>Improving services by</b>	Councillor Firth/David	01/12/05

<b>Sharing Accommodation</b>	Atkinson	
<b>Corporate Governance Action Plan</b>	All/Jason Gooding	?
<b>Carlisle Renaissance</b>	All/Ian McNichol	<del>23/02/06</del>
<b>Corporate Assets – 5 Year Repair and Maintenance Programme</b>	Councillor Firth/Mike Battersby	<del>23/02/06</del>
<b><i>Audit Committee Matters</i></b>		
Audit Plan	Councillor Firth/Ian Becket	<del>16/06/05</del> <del>23/02/06</del>
Final Accounts	Audit Commission	<del>08/09/05</del>
Annual Audit Letter	Audit Commission	<del>23/02/06</del>
SAS610 Statement	Audit Commission	
Internal Audit Progress/Outturn Reports	Councillor Firth/Ian Becket	<del>08/09/05</del> <del>20/10/05</del>
Audit Commission Inspection Plan	Councillor Firth/Ian Becket	

## Infrastructure O&S Committee

<b>Monitoring BV Action Plans</b>		
<b>Planning</b>	<b>Councillor Bloxham / Chris Hardman</b>	15/09/05 09/03/06
<b>Performance Monitoring</b>		
Performance Monitoring Reports (PI's & Business Plans) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning;</li> <li>• Economic and Community Development (Tourism and Economic Development);</li> <li>• Commercial and Technical Services</li> </ul>	All/Maggie Mooney	04/08/05 09/03/06
BV Performance Plan	Councillor Jefferson/Carolyn Curr	20/04/06 22/06/06
<b>Subject Reviews/Inquiries</b>		
Waste Minimisation	O&S Support/CTS	Workshop: 12/10/05 Workshops: 18/01/06 24/01/06
Implementation of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act	O&S Support/CTS	<b>Workshop: 10/04/06</b> (Joint workshop with Community: 12/12/05)
Evening & Night-time Economy	O&S Support	23/06/05 08/12/05 09/03/06 20/04/06
<b>Abandoned Vehicles</b>	Councillor Bloxham/ Mike Battersby	15/09/05
<b>Environmental Performance of the Council</b>	Councillor Bloxham/ Mike Battersby	23/06/05 26/01/06 20/04/06
Streetworks	Councillor Bloxham	23/06/05 26/01/06
<b>Reports Requested</b>		
Possible Subject Review Topics	O&S Support	04/08/05

<b>References from Executive, Management Committee &amp; Consultations</b>		
<b>City Council Priorities</b>	All/Maggie Mooney	<b>23/06/05</b>
<b>Integrated Service Delivery on an Area Basis</b>	Councillor Bloxham/ Mike Battersby	<b>20/04/06</b>
<b>Budget</b>	Councillor Firth/Angela Brown	<b>22/11/05</b>
<b>Three Rivers Strategy</b>	Councillor Bloxham/ Mark Beveridge	<del>23/06/05</del> <del>08/08/05</del> <del>27/10/05</del>
<b>Local Plan</b>	Councillor Bloxham/ Chris Hardman	TBC
<b>Draft Regional Spatial Strategy</b>	Councillor Bloxham/ Chris Hardman	<b>TBC</b>
<b>Performance Plan</b>	Councillor Firth/Carolyn Curr	<del>08/06/05</del>
<b>Flood Defences Scheme</b>	Mike Battersby	<del>23/06/05</del>
<b>Carlisle Renaissance</b> - Development Framework and Movement Strategy	Ian McNichol	Workshop <del>27/02/06</del>

**Carlisle City Council  
Overview and Scrutiny Improvement Plan  
2005-2007**

## **Introduction**

Carlisle City Council aspires to have a high performing Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) function. Since its introduction O&S has tried to seek out and adopt best practise. As part of this approach and to assist continued development of O&S Management Committee agreed to an independent evaluation of progress by Dr Stephanie Snape, one of the leading experts in this field nationally.

## **Dr Snape's Evaluation**

The overall aim of the evaluation was:

*'To review the overview and scrutiny arrangements at Carlisle City Council in order to identify key achievements, remaining challenges and to provide recommendations for further improvement'.*

The fieldwork took place between October 2004 and March 2005 and included analysis of key documents, observations at O&S Committee meetings, interviews and focus groups with members and officers.

## **Achievements**

Dr Snape identified good progress including:-

- O&S bedded down & developed, members understanding deepened
- Good approach to in-depth reviews
- Good system for Best Value Reviews
- O&S structure essentially sound
- Impressive start on Task & Finish Groups
- Good Member commitment & cross party working
- Quality outside contributions especially by partners
- Good reports with comprehensive recommendations
- O&S Support Unit's valuable contribution

### **Key Areas for Improvement**

The evaluation highlighted the following areas for improvement:-

- Improve chairing and leadership
- Review conduct of meetings
- Shorter agendas and consequent prioritisation
- Pursue innovative ways of working
- More Task & Finish Groups
- Enhance O&S Status and resources
- Develop performance management, especially measurement of Outputs and Outcomes
- Improve relations with Executive
- Enhance Community Engagement
- Achieve greater media exposure
- Redefine role of Management Committee

### **Improvement Plan**

Dr Snape's Report made recommendations for improvement and these were the subject of a full-day's workshop by O&S Management Committee which developed the following Improvement Plan designed to deliver those recommendations. As proposed by Dr Snape the plan covers a three year period (2005-07) during which all identified changes are to be achieved.

### **Plan Format**

The plan is in tabular form and for each recommendation there is a Comment (based on the Management Committee's views), Actions (as agreed at the workshop), a person or group to Lead that action, Risk to successful O&S development (High, Medium or Low), Priority (1,2 or 3; 1 being high) and a timescale for implementation.

	<b>Recommendation/Issue</b>	<b>Comment/Action</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Risk &amp; Priority</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
	<b>Chairing of Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committees</b>				
1	The chairing weaknesses with both Corporate Resources & Infrastructure to be urgently addressed. It is the firm recommendation of this evaluator that each Committee needs new, strong chairmen for the council year 2005/06	Comment – Appointment of chairmen a matter for Council and Political Groups. Support and training important. Action – Review of Member Induction Programme and Training and Development (including chairing skills).	Maggie Mooney, John Egan, David Williams	High 1	By end December 2005
2	New leadership roles to be produced by more use of task & finish groups	Comment - Task & Finish Groups an important way forward. Action – Chairmen to promote use, O&S Support to produce brief guidance document. Each committee to initiate at least one T&F group before end of year. Form pool of officers to support T&F groups	All chairmen, O&S Support CMT	Medium 2	By end of Civic year
3	Experiments to be conducted in developing a small number of individual member champions for O&S	Comment – Not viewed as a priority Action – Review again in 2006/07			
	<b>Moving out of Traditional Committee Mode</b>				
4	Officers from business units providing reports to O&S to consider the specific role and nature of O&S, in particular to provide one side of A4 which summarises the main issues in the report & explicitly states what is expected from the O&S committee;	Comment - More reports should be prepared specifically for O&S. Reasons for consideration by O&S and expectations of the committee must be included. Action – Report formats be reviewed to provide for this approach. CMT to undertake quality assurance role on reports to O&S.	John Egan  CMT	Medium 1	End November 2005
5	Direct officer support unit to work with O&S members, Legal & Democratic Services and officers from business units to ensure that agenda, minutes & reports are in an appropriate, useful format for O&S committees. This may involve the development of new proformas or	Comment – Current format of agenda's and minutes strongly supported. Action – See 4 above regarding reports.			

	'model' reports;				
6	O&S committees should at times experiment with holding meetings in different venues (this links to public & partner engagement);	Comment – Previous lack of success with this relevant, not viewed as a priority. Action – When suitable topics arise committees should hold meetings elsewhere, target of 2 before end of Civic Year.	O&S Support, Committee Administration	Low 3	When suitable opportunity arises
7	The layout of the tables and chairs for O&S Committees should be given greater consideration and should be varied according to the purpose of the meeting. For example brainstorming workshops could be held with a round or square table format (and away from the formality of the committee rooms). Select committee style formal hearings should have a horseshoe or U-shaped table layout, with the members and direct support officers of a committee clearly labeled and separate from officers providing evidence and other witnesses. There should also be a separate but distinct public seating area (with spare copies of the agenda and papers on these seats);	Comment – Proposal supported. Action – Workshop sessions in Slupsk Room , new layout for meetings and evidence sessions in Flensburg Room.	Committee Administration	High 1	Immediately
8	The physical environment of the committee room used for O&S also requires attention in a number of aspects, including audibility.	Comment – Improvements required. Action – Review of heating, air-conditioning and provision of a sound system.	Committee Administration and Commercial and Technical Services	Medium 1	By start of new Civic Year
	<b>Re-considering the Role Profile</b>				
9	The O&S function needs to consider developing a more balanced role profile, ensuring that external scrutiny, holding the executive to account and pre-decision scrutiny are not neglected;	Comments – Portfolio Holders should be more clearly accountable for policy. Involvement in policy development should be at early stage. Requires improved relationship with Executive. Executive must give reasoned		High 1	By start of new Civic year

		responses to O&S recommendations and referrals. External scrutiny not viewed as high priority. Action – Include Portfolio Holders accountabilities and reasoned Executive responses in protocol under 15 below. Officers to plan for early O&S involvement in policy development. Executive to give fuller and reasoned responses to O&S.	O&S Support. CMT. Executive .		
10	Such a wider role balance would take into account emergent new roles, in particular, the role of O&S in the improvement planning process;	Comment – O&S involvement in Improvement Planning needs to be built in to process. Action – Develop process which specifically includes O&S and allows for informal interactive input.	Jason Gooding	Medium 2	By start of new Civic year
11	A more balanced role profile has to be linked to realistic, achievable work programmes and shorter agendas for committees;	Comment - Supported. Action – Chairmen to take strong line, consider guidance on maximum number of substantive agenda items.	Chairmen , O&S Support	High 1	End November 2005
12	This will involve greater prioritisation of work items;	Comment – Accepted role of chairmen, Action – Chairmen to take forward. Prepare guidance on criteria for such prioritisation. Aim to be 2 hour focussed and productive meetings.	Chairmen , O&S Support	High 1	December 2005
13	In undertaking prioritisation consideration must be given – at least in part – to the council's priorities and those of the communities it serves.	Comment – Priorities important criteria but not sole one. Action – Include priorities in criteria under 12 above	Chairmen	High 1	December 2005
	<b>Relating to the Executive</b>				
14	As discussed later, O&S Management Committee to take strategic responsibility for developing a more effective relationship with the executive.	Comment – The changed role and meeting arrangements for Management Committee supported. Action – Executive to be invited to joint discussion with Management Committee twice yearly.	Jason Gooding	High 1	Commencing with discussion on taking Improvement Plan forward.
15	A Protocol to be developed to guide the relationship	Comment – Supported see 9 above.		Medium	During

	between the Executive and O&S. (The process of development of a Protocol is as valuable, if not more valuable than, the written document itself).	Action – Protocol to be developed in joint workshop session between O&S Management Committee and Executive.	O&S Support	1	current Civic year
16	As discussed later, O&S to ensure SMART recommendations to their work.	Comment – Need for clarity and sharpness in resolutions accepted. Action – Chairmen to sum up as carefully and clearly as possible. Training to be provided. Use of SMART recommendations to be included in protocol under 15 above.	Chairmen David Williams	Low 3	During next Civic year
17	Legal & Democratic Services to develop in partnership with the O&S support unit a robust system for tracking the response to O&S recommendations.	Comment – Supported but not a priority Action – System to be developed	Committee Administration, O&S Support	Low 3	During next Civic year
<b>Engaging Public, Partners &amp; Media</b>					
18	O&S to develop specific measures to: publicise the work of O&S more widely amongst partners and the public; ensure that they contribute more effectively to the O&S agenda; and participate more fully in O&S processes;	Comment – Supported but on selective, cost effective basis. Action – Limited range of initiatives to be developed.	O&S Support, Strategic & Performance Services	Medium 3	During next Civic Year
19	O&S may wish to consider some of the following initiatives undertaken in other authorities in addressing the above: the development of a number of attractive scrutiny web pages on the Council website (to include an electronic form for raising issues for O&S to consider in their work programmes); the production of a range of information leaflets on O&S, tailored to different audiences; the inclusion of a regular O&S column in the Council	Comment – Newsletter and Road shows not considered appropriate or cost effective. Co-operation with Universities supported. Neighbourhood forums could be useful vehicle especially for consultation. Action – See 18 above.	As 18	As 18	As 18

	<p>newspaper and staff newsletter;  the production of an O&amp;S newsletter to be distributed to partners and at libraries, council offices (and other locations);  O&amp;S road shows at supermarkets and shopping centres;  Co-option of partner, user &amp; community representatives on task and finish groups;  Stakeholder analysis to determine which partners/public to invite to provide oral evidence and/or written evidence;  Expansion in the use of expert witnesses, drawn from universities, consultancies and national user/lobbying groups</p>				
20	<p>Strategic &amp; Performance Services to develop, in discussion with O&amp;S members and the direct officer support unit, a PR &amp; Communications strategy for O&amp;S (and then to deliver this strategy).</p>	<p>Comment – Regarded as essential.  Action – Communications Strategy to be developed.</p>	<p>Strategic &amp; Performance Services</p>	<p>Medium 1</p>	<p>By start of new Civic year</p>
	<p><b>Officer Support to O&amp;S</b></p>				
21	<p>The Council to strengthen officer support to O&amp;S, principally through an enlarged officer support unit, an enhanced role for Legal &amp; Democratic Services, a more substantive role for Strategic &amp; Performance Services and the creation of a pool of managers to work on in-depth task and finish subject reviews.</p>	<p>Comment – Supported  Action – O&amp;S Support and role of Strategic and Performance Services to be addressed as part of reorganisation (stage 2)</p>	<p>Town Clerk &amp; Chief Executive</p>	<p>High 1</p>	<p>By start of new Civic year</p>
22	<p>The Council to consider the appropriate level in the officer structure for the head of the direct support unit.</p>	<p>Comment – Supported  Action- To be addressed as part of reorganisation (stage 1).</p>	<p>Town Clerk &amp; Chief Executive</p>	<p>High 1</p>	<p>By start of new Civic year</p>
23	<p>The Council to consider a more appropriate 'location' for the O&amp;S direct support unit, if a reorganisation of the Council is undertaken.</p>	<p>Comment – Supported  Action- To be addressed as part of reorganisation (stage 1).</p>	<p>Town Clerk &amp; Chief</p>	<p>High 1</p>	<p>By start of new Civic year</p>

			Executive		
	<b>Capturing Outputs &amp; Outcomes of O&amp;S</b>				
24	O&S direct support unit, with support and advice from the performance management section of Strategic & Performance Services, to develop a robust system for measuring outputs and outcomes.	Comment – Support for a limited number of PI's. Action – Proposals for PI's and collection system be developed.	O&S Support, Strategic & Performance Services	Medium 2	During next Civic year
25	In undertaking this work, the Council may wish to review the work in this area by: the Centre for Public Scrutiny, Birmingham City Council, Tameside Borough Council and South Ribble Borough Council. The Council may also wish to consider pooling resources with a neighbouring Council to develop such a system.	Comment – Some of these authorities measures considered of marginal value, selective approach needed. Action – See 24 above.			
26	O&S Committees to work to ensure that recommendations from its reports or meetings are SMART (specific, measurable, accurate, realistic and timely).	Comment – Smarter where possible, clarity main issue. Action – See 16 above.			
27	Information on impact and performance (i.e. performance indicators) to be included in scrutiny pages on the Council website and in the Annual Report for O&S.	Comment – Supported Action – Scrutiny web pages to be developed.	Strategic & Performance Services	Low 3	During next Civic Year
	<b>Lack of Substantive Role for O&amp;S Management Committee</b>				
28	O&S Management Committee to take strategic responsibility for developing a more effective relationship with the executive.	Comment – Supported. Action – See 14 above.			
29	O&S Management Committee to have a joint meeting with the Executive Committee on a twice yearly basis to discuss respective work programmes, barriers to an effective relationship, and so on;	Comment – Supported. Action – See 14 above.			

30	O&S Management Committee to discuss, determine, drive and monitor an Improvement Plan for the O&S function on the basis of this report and its recommendations.	<p>Comment – Improvement Plan and relationship with Executive to be sole focus of Management Committee.</p> <p>Action – Future agendas structured accordingly.</p>	Committee Administration	High 1	By end November 2005
31	O&S Management Committee to consider meeting on a quarterly basis.	<p>Comment – Management Committee (with business as in 30 above) to meet only as required.</p> <p>Action – Council is recommended to amend constitution accordingly.</p>	John Egan	High 1	By end 2005