



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

**Annual Report of the Overview and
Scrutiny Committees 2006/07**

Report Reference: OS 06/07

April 2007

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. But most significantly 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 and at the start of this civic year increased them to seven. This has 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 at the start of each new civic year 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:

Committee	Main Areas of Responsibility
Community	Leisure, Culture and Heritage, Sustainable Communities, Housing
Corporate Resources	Finance, Performance Management, Assets, Learning and Development
Infrastructure	Economic Development and Enterprise, 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. Chairmen 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:

Committee	Chairman	Vice-Chairman
Management Committee	Councillor Earp	Councillor Bradley
Corporate Resources	Councillor Stevenson	Councillor Fisher
Community	Councillor Boaden	Councillor Hendry
Infrastructure	Councillor Allison	Councillor Rutherford

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. Additionally chairmen are encouraged to undertake IDeA and/or INLOGOV specialist training.

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 two part-time Scrutiny Support Officers. This represents an increase of one part-time post which has been provided to reflect the fact that the Head of Scrutiny and Emergency Planning Services has, since the coming into force of the Civil Contingencies legislation, devoted more of his time to his emergency planning duties. 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 Chairman's 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 under the Cumbria Joint Scrutiny Overview Group (comprising a senior scrutiny member from each of the seven Cumbrian authorities).

This Cumbria Joint Scrutiny Overview Group has now established three task and finish groups undertaking joint scrutiny on strategic waste disposal, Local Area Agreement and Parking Policy. Carlisle's scrutiny support staff share in supporting this joint scrutiny activity.

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, Improvement Reviews, 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 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. In 2005/06 as a result of scrutiny committee's comments and work on the O&S Improvement Plan 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 for the most now proactively planning for O&S involvement in taking issues forward. To reinforce these improvements it was agreed during the current year that the Forward Plan would become a standing agenda item on both Senior Management Team and Joint Management Team agendas to ensure consistent effective use of the plan and act as an ongoing quality control.

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 worked to a clear set of priorities and this coupled with improved performance management arrangements has helped to facilitate improvement in this area of work. The adoption of a new Corporate Improvement Plan this year will further assist the direction of this work.

There are a number of actions in the O&S Improvement Plan which focus on this area of work. Most significantly it is intended that O&S committees will direct more questions to portfolio holders rather than officers, on policy and performance matters. Some progress has been made on this, initially by Corporate Resources Committee in relation to the budget, but also by other committees, for example in relation to waste policies and Carlisle Renaissance. More remains to be done and it is hoped that this progress can be built upon in the coming year .

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 this year including crime and disorder, waste, risk, procurement and equalities policies. Improvements continue to be made in this important area of work and again actions are included in the Improvement Plan.

9. IMPROVEMENT REVIEWS

Improvement Reviews have superseded Best Value Reviews and O&S committees are responsible for conducting such reviews with each first being the subject of a "scoping" exercise by the Senior Management Team to give

direction to that review. The number of these reviews is likely to grow as improvement planning work undertaken within the overall CPA framework develops. The first such review is currently underway and involves Community Development Services.

One of the problematic areas of improvement review activity used to be effective member engagement; experience to date with Best Value Reviews has shown that this has been addressed successfully by these being done by Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Members play an effective part in reviews and the committees are fully engaged with the use of workshops being a particularly valuable tool for this work.

10. 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. These improvements have resulted in more effective scrutiny focussing on key areas, by exception, and with more useful contextual and supporting operational information. Committees also focus on priority areas with improvement potential by undertaking in-depth work to secure action plans to drive improved performance. A particularly good example of this being Corporate Resources Committee's work on sickness absence.

11. 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 2006/07 was as follows: -

Anti-Social Behaviour (completed at start of year after being delayed by 2005 flood), Asset Review (eventually abandoned when Executive resolved to implement a new policy approach), Planning Obligations.

A number of more focussed and one-off review sessions were also undertaken including Access to Sport and Carlisle Bus Issues.

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

Task and Finish Groups have continued to develop successfully during the year including particularly that on the Parish Charter. There is, however, still room to expand further on this activity and with this in mind a comprehensive guidance document has been produced during the year.

When completed these reviews are 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.

12. CALL-INS

There has been only one decision called-in during this year. This was on the Asset Review by Corporate Resources Committee and this did not proceed to a formal meeting as the Executive agreed that its decision would not be actioned until the committee had first had the opportunity to scrutinise and comment upon it.

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.

13. BUDGET SCRUTINY

The Corporate Resources Committee provides scrutiny of the budget and its associated reports and processes. Community and Infrastructure Committees' input in relation to the service impacts of the budget 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 as with last year further improvements have been identified for next year. Portfolio Holders were questioned directly on the policy implications and on the Executive's Budget Proposal.

14. 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.

In order to assist us to meet best practise we undertook an external review by 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 subsequently developed and agreed a three-year O&S Improvement Plan which also has the support of the Council's Executive. This has been the first full year of this Improvement Plan and, as it is the most important aspect of O&S development work for this year, it is included in full in this report as Appendix 2 (in the form of the latest progress report against the agreed actions).

Progress with the Improvement Plan has been good with the majority of actions being addressed within the eighteen months since it was agreed. Highlights include establishment of scrutiny web-pages, an agreed Communications Plan for scrutiny, the completion of formal guidance documents on Task and Finish Groups and a comprehensive guide on Managing Business and Prioritising for Scrutiny Chairmen and Committees. The issue of working in new and informal ways is also an important one where considerable progress has been made, particularly the greater and more effective use of both workshop sessions and interactive presentation sessions. Further emphasis and development of these will continue in the coming year. A Task and Finish Group is also working on a protocol for relations between scrutiny and the Executive which was one the key recommendations of Dr Snape's review. Joint informal meetings between O&S Management Committee and Executive have been established but the format and content of these remain to be developed further before they become an effective tool. The conclusion of the above protocol will assist this process.

15. 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.

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 externally led review was both timely and positive, and members response to its findings was also very positive.

The resulting Improvement Plan, whilst ambitious, has proved to be realistic with good progress to date. There are further challenges ahead in the coming year but it is hoped that it will continue to take the authority forward towards excellence.

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APPENDIX 1

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2006/07

Review/Issue	Portfolio Holder & Lead Officer	Reporting Date(s)
Community O&S Committee		
<i>Monitoring BV Action Plans</i>		
Democratic Engagement	Councillor Knapton/David Taylor	18/01/07
Bereavement Services	Councillor Bloxham/June Carswell	
Improvement Reviews		
Community Development Improvement Review	Councillor Prest/Mark Beveridge	21/03/07 Workshop
<i>Performance Monitoring</i>		
Performance Monitoring Reports (PI's)	All/Carolyn Curr	20/07/06 18/10/06 15/02/07
Crime & Disorder	Councillor Prest/Steven O'Keeffe	08/06/06 (Constitution) 31/08/06 Strategy 18/01/07 (Strategy)
Carlisle Leisure Limited	Councillor Knapton/Mark Beveridge	
Tullie House Visitors	Councillor Knapton/Mark Beveridge	15/02/07

Subject Reviews/Inquiries		
Anti-social Behaviour	O&S Support	20/07/06 15/02/07 29/03/07 (responses)
Evening and Night-time Economy	All/Ian McNichol	08/06/06 (Licensing Aspects) 31/08/06 — Late night shopping 18/01/07 Licensing Update 07/06/07
Access to Sport	Councillor Knapton/Mark Beveridge	Workshop 14/12/06
Reports Requested		
Monitoring CHA Contract	Councillor Prest/Simon Taylor	18/10/06 — inc CHA/Member Protocol 15/02/07 — (report format) June 2007 November 2007
Local Air Quality – Air Quality Action Plan	Councillor Bloxham/David Ingham	08/06/06 23/11/06 19/07/07
Sheepmount Monitoring	Councillor Knapton/Mark Beveridge	TBA
Museums Development Plan	Councillor Knapton/Mark Beveridge	
Homelessness & Hostels Review	Councillor Prest/Simon Taylor	Workshop Phase 2 — 21/09/06 23/11/06
Housing Team Structure	Councillor Prest/Simon Taylor	23/11/06
Post Flood - Unoccupied Properties	Councillor/Prest/Allan Dickson	29/03/07
References from Executive, Management Committee & Consultations		
Monitoring Rural Strategy	All/David Beaty	29/03/07

Parish Charter T&F Group	All/Claire Rankin	
Draft Parish Charter	All/Claire Rankin	23/11/06
Cumbria Sub-regional Housing Strategy	Councillor Prest/Simon Taylor	20/07/06
Housing Strategy Action Plan Update	Councillor Prest/Simon Taylor	20/07/06 29/03/07 Presentation
Housing Renewal Policy	Councillor Prest/Allan Dickson	23/11/06 update following workshop
Mandatory Licensing of HMO's	Councillor Prest/Allan Dickson	For information only by letter - July
Partnership Approach to Homeless Accommodation	Councillor Prest/Simon Taylor	31/08/06
Housing Capital Programme Update	Councillor Prest/Simon Taylor	31/08/06 18/10/06
Amendments to Regulatory Reform Order	Councillor Prest/Simon Taylor	18/01/07
Housing Supply	Councillor Prest/Simon Taylor	29/03/07
Budget	Councillor Jefferson/Angela Brown	23/11/06
Equality & Diversity Policy	Councillor Geddes/Lesley Dixon	08/06/06 31/08/06 — update report 16/11/06 — Draft Disability Equality Scheme Draft Comprehensive Equality Policy, Gender Equality Duty 15/02/07 & 29/03/07
Talkin Tarn	Councillors Bloxham/Knapton/Mark Beveridge	20/07/06 18/10/06 site visit Business Plan 18/01/07
Raffles Vision	Councillor Prest/ Mike Battersby	18/10/06
Licensing – Gambling Policy	Councillor Bloxham/Jim Messenger	18/10/06

BV Performance Plan	Councillor Jefferson/Carolyn Curr	08/06/06 15/02/07 29/03/07 07/06/07
Food Service Plan	Councillor Bloxham/Ruth Harland	20/07/06
Carlisle Renaissance	All/Ian McNichol	NWDA Programme 18/01/07 29/03/07 07/06/07 30/08/07 11/10/07 17/01/08 Economic Strategy (Joint with Infrastructure) 16/11/06 01/03/07
Sports Feasibility Study	Councillor Knapton/Mark Beveridge	20/07/06 23/11/06
Neighbourhood Forums	All/Mike Battersby	08/06/06 Workshop TBA
Health and Safety Work Plan – Food, Health and Safety Team	Councillor Bloxham/Mike Battersby	18/10/06 15/02/07 Presentation
Sure Start	Councillor Prest/Rob Burns	20/07/06
Theatre/Arts Centre Feasibility Study	Councillor Knapton/Mark Beveridge	23/11/06
Corporate Plan/BVPP	Councillor Jefferson/Carolyn Curr	15/02/07 29/03/07 07/06/07
Dog Control Order	Councillor Bloxham/Mike Battersby	18/10/06
Community Plan	Councillor Mitchelson/Carolyn Curr	23/11/06 15/02/07
Local Area Agreement	All/John Egan	23/11/06
St Martins Flood Recovery Research		15/02/07
Sustainable Energy Centre	Councillor Prest/Allan Dickson	29/03/07
Potential Cycle Track - Sheepmount	Councillor Knapton/Mark Beveridge	29/03/07
Yewdale Post Office	Councillor Prest/Rob	29/03/07

	Burns	
Multi-use Games Area – Play Raffles	Councillor Knapton/Mark Beveridge	07/06/07
Vacant Houses 103-107 Dalton Avenue	Councillors Prest & Bloxham/Catherine Elliot	07/06/07

Corporate Resources O&S Committee

Monitoring BV Action Plans			
Customer Contact Centre Update	Councillor Geddes/John Nutley/Mark Beveridge	14/06/07	
Monitoring Corporate Risk Register	Councillor Jefferson/Jason Gooding	06/04/06 27/07/06 19/10/06 11/01/07 12/04/07	
Revenues and Benefits	Councillor Jefferson/Peter Mason		
Performance Monitoring			
Performance Monitoring Reports (PI's)	All/Carolyn Curr	27/07/06 19/10/06 22/02/07	
Lower Quartile PI's Sickness Absence	Councillor Geddes/David Williams	27/07/06 11/01/07	
FOI Monitoring	Councillor Jefferson/Fiona Musgrave		
Member Training Annual Report	Councillor Geddes/David Williams	07/12/06	
Corporate Complaints Annual Report	Councillor Geddes/Penny Crack	27/07/06	
Subject Reviews/Inquiries			
Asset Review	Councillor Jefferson	27/07/06 05/10/06 12/04/07	
Willowholme T&F Group	Councillor Bowman	10/07/06	
Council Budget			
Budget	Councillor Jefferson/Angela Brown	07/09/06 07/12/06 11/01/07	
Budget Monitoring	Councillor Jefferson/Angela Brown		
Provisional Outturn	Councillor Jefferson/Angela Brown	29/06/06 14/06/07	
Capital Strategy & Asset Management Plan	Councillor Jefferson/Angela Brown	29/06/06 14/06/07	
Medium Term Financial Plan & Corporate Charging Policy	Councillor Jefferson/Angela Brown	29/06/06 14/06/07	
Capital Special Building Maintenance Projects	Councillor Jefferson/Angela Brown	29/06/06	

Capital Projects Board Progress Report	Councillor Jefferson/Angela Brown	11/01/07
Use of Resources	Councillor Jefferson/Angela Brown	12/04/07

<i>Reports Requested</i>		
Procurement Policy Monitoring	Councillor Jefferson/Angela Brown	19/10/06
<i>References from Executive, Management Committee & Consultations</i>		
Pay & Workforce Strategy	Councillor Geddes/David Williams	11/01/07
ICT Strategy	Councillor Bloxham/John Nutley	
Corporate Governance Action Plan	All/Jason Gooding	
Carlisle Renaissance	All/Ian McNichol	
Local Strategic Partnership Constitution	All/John Egan	15/06/06
Transfer of Land for Northern Development Route	Councillor Jefferson	27/07/06
Energy Surveys – Improving our Buildings	All/Gordon Nicholson	27/07/06
Employee Opinion Survey Improvement Plan	Councillor Geddes/David Williams	27/07/06 07/12/06 12/04/07

Shared Services	Councillor Geddes/Jason Gooding	27/07/06 19/10/06 Workshop 07/12/06 11/01/07 Procurement 11/01/07
Skills for Life Strategy	Councillor Geddes/David Williams	07/09/06 19/10/06 Training Session 07/12/06
Staff with Disabilities/from Ethnic Minorities	Councillor Geddes/David Williams	07/09/06 19/10/06
Corporate Plan/BVPP	Councillor Jefferson/Carolyn Curr	22/02/07 12/04/07 14/06/07
Carlisle Renaissance	All/Ian McNichol	Overview 11/01/07 12/04/07 NWDA Bid 22/02/07 Rickergate 07/12/06
Community Plan	Councillor Mitchelson/Carolyn Curr	07/12/06 22/02/07
Protocol for Member/Officer Relations		07/12/06
Vexatious Complaints Policy	Councillor Jefferson/Carolyn Curr	12/04/07
Internal Communications Strategy	Councillor Mitchelson/Carolyn Curr	12/04/07

Infrastructure O&S Committee

Monitoring BV Action Plans		
Performance Monitoring		
Performance Monitoring Reports (Pis)	All/Carolyn Curr	03/08/06 26/10/06 08/03/07
Subject Reviews/Inquiries		
Abandoned Vehicles	Councillor Bloxham/ Mike Battersby	22/06/06
Environmental Performance of the Council	Councillor Bloxham/ Rachel Osborn	22/06/06 14/09/06 30/11/06
Possible Subjects for 2006/2007	O&S Support	03/08/06
Planning Obligations	Councillor Bloxham/Chris Hardman	Workshop: 15/01/06
Carlisle Bus Issues	O&S Support	25/01/07
Tourism Issues	Cllr Marilyn Bowman/David Beaty	Next Civic Year
Reports Requested		
Travel Plan – Issues Paper	Councillor Bloxham/ Mike Battersby	19/04/07
Making Space for Water	Councillor Bloxham/ Mike Battersby	08/03/07

References from Executive, Management Committee & Consultations		
Integrated Service Delivery on an Area Basis	Councillor Bloxham/ Mike Battersby	03/08/06
Budget	Councillor Jefferson/Angela Brown	30/11/06
Local Plan	Councillor Bloxham/ Chris Hardman	08/03/07 05/04/07
Alternate Weekly Collections (Waste Minimisation)	Councillor Bloxham/ Mike Gardner	22/06/06 30/11/06
Concessionary Fares	Councillor Bloxham/ Peter Mason	26/10/06
Draft Design Statements	Councillor Bloxham/ Chris Hardman	26/10/06 TBC
Community Plan	Councillor Mitchelson/ Carolyn Curr	30/11/06 08/03/07
Corporate Plan/BVPP	Councillor Jefferson/Carolyn Curr	08/03/07 19/04/07
Cumbria Wind Energy Supplementary Planning Document and Sustainability Appraisal	Councillor Bloxham/ Chris Hardman	TBC
Carlisle Renaissance - Development Framework and Movement Strategy - Draft Final Document	All/Ian McNichol	14/09/06 30/11/06 14/02/07 05/04/07

**Carlisle City Council
Overview and Scrutiny Improvement Plan
2005-2007
Progress Report January 2007
Report OS02/07**

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 the original implementation timescale. Progress to date is then outlined.

	Recommendation/Issue	Comment/Action	Lead	Risk, Priority and original timescale agreed	Progress
	Chairing of Overview & Scrutiny Committees				
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	<p>Comment – Appointment of chairmen a matter for Council and Political Groups. Support and training important.</p> <p>Action – Review of Member Induction Programme and Training and Development (including chairing skills).</p>	Maggie Mooney, John Egan, David Williams	<p>High 1</p> <p>By end December 2005</p>	<p>There were 3 new O&S chairmen this Civic year. ACE programme included an IDeA event for O&S Chairmen but only one was able to attend. A countywide seminar by Prof Steve Leach was attended by two chairmen and one vice-chairman.</p>

					One chairman attended the INLOGOV training event for O&S Chairmen, one having previously attended that event. Members Learning and Development Programme includes relevant opportunities including chairing skills.
2	New leadership roles to be produced by more use of task & finish groups	<p>Comment - Task & Finish Groups an important way forward.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Form pool of officers to support T&F groups</p>	All chairmen, O&S Support CMT	Medium 2 By end of Civic year	T&F Groups in operation in all committees now. Guidance Agreed and being applied.

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			No actions agreed
	Moving out of Traditional Committee Mode				
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	Progress continues but more to be done. O&S Support will promote during 2007.
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 'model' reports;	Comment – Current format of agenda's and minutes strongly supported. Action – See 4 above regarding reports.			See 4 above. It is also intended to review report formats during 2007, capacity in both O&S Support and Committee Administration has not yet permitted this.
6	O&S committees should at times experiment with holding meetings in different venues (this links to public	Comment – Previous lack of success with this relevant, not viewed as a priority.		Low 3	Sheepmou nt and

	& partner engagement);	Action – When suitable topics arise committees should hold meetings elsewhere, target of 2 before end of Civic Year.	O&S Support, Committee Administration	When suitable opportunity arises	Talkin Tarn used last year. Chairmen and O&S Support will actively seek opportunities. Also covered in agreed O&S Communications Plan.
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	Completed
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	Medium 1 By start of new Civic Year	Completed

			Services		
	Re-considering the Role Profile				
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;	<p>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 responses to O&S recommendations and referrals. External scrutiny not viewed as high priority.</p> <p>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.</p>	O&S Support. CMT. Executive .	High 1 By start of new Civic year	To be included in work of Protocol T&F Group. This years budget proposal scrutiny by CROS was more focussed on portgolio-holders.
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;	<p>Comment – O&S involvement in Improvement Planning needs to be built in to process.</p> <p>Action – Develop process which specifically includes O&S and allows for informal interactive input.</p>	Jason Gooding	Medium 2 By start of new Civic year	Deputy Chief Executive has agreed to include O&S in Improvement Planning as outlined. Community O&S will be closely involved in Community Development

					Improvement Review.
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	Guidance Document agreed, success so far patchy, chairmen to be asked to be more proactive when agreeing draft agendas
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	Guidance Document agreed, see 11 above.
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	Guidance Document agreed, criteria are being considered by chairmen.
	Relating to the Executive				
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	Commencing with discussion taking	Completed

				Improve Plan forward.	
15	A Protocol to be developed to guide the relationship 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).	Comment – Supported see 9 above. Action – Protocol to be developed in joint workshop session between O&S Management Committee and Executive.	O&S Support	Medium 1 During current Civic year	Protocol T&F Group has met once and meets again shortly.
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	Guidance Document agreed.
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	Database established, further work will be ongoing to develop and refine appropriate reporting and analysis as resources in both O&S Support and Committee Administration permit.

	Engaging Public, Partners & Media				
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	O&S Communications Plan agreed.
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 newspaper and staff newsletter; the production of an O&S newsletter to be distributed to partners and at libraries, council offices (and other locations); O&S road shows at supermarkets and shopping centres; Co-option of partner, user & 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	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	O&S Communications Plan agreed. Website established. Use of external witnesses continues where appropriate.
20	Strategic & Performance Services to develop, in	Comment – Regarded as essential.	Strategic	Medium	O&S

	discussion with O&S members and the direct officer support unit, a PR & Communications strategy for O&S (and then to deliver this strategy).	Action – Communications Strategy to be developed.	& Performance Services	1 By start of new Civic year	Communications Plan agreed.
	Officer Support to O&S				
21	The Council to strengthen officer support to O&S, principally through an enlarged officer support unit, an enhanced role for Legal & Democratic Services, a more substantive role for Strategic & Performance Services and the creation of a pool of managers to work on in-depth task and finish subject reviews.	Comment – Supported Action – O&S Support and role of Strategic and Performance Services to be addressed as part of reorganisation (stage 2)	Town Clerk & Chief Executive	By start of new Civic year	Additional officer for O&S Support not agreed, a part-time post funded from Civil Contingencies Budget to backfill additional time spent on Emergency Planning by Head of Scrutiny and Emergency Planning. That post now vacant. Some progress on other

					aspects following formation of PPP Directorate . O&S part-time vacancy to be filled by joint post with Policy Team.
22	The Council to consider the appropriate level in the officer structure for the head of the direct support unit.	Comment – Supported Action- To be addressed as part of reorganisation (stage 1).	Town Clerk & Chief Executive	High 1 By start of new Civic year	Completed
23	The Council to consider a more appropriate 'location' for the O&S direct support unit, if a reorganisation of the Council is undertaken.	Comment – Supported Action- To be addressed as part of reorganisation (stage 1).	Town Clerk & Chief Executive	High 1 By start of new Civic year	Completed
Capturing Outputs & Outcomes of O&S					
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	Resources have not yet permitted progress. Will revisit during 2007.
25	In undertaking this work, the Council may wish to review the work in this area by: the Centre for Public Scrutiny,	Comment – Some of these authorities measures considered of marginal value,			

	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.	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.			Guidance Document agreed.
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	See 24 above.
	Lack of Substantive Role for O&S Management Committee				
28	O&S Management Committee to take strategic responsibility for developing a more effective relationship with the executive.	Comment – Supported. Action – See 14 above.			Completed
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.			Completed
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.	Comment – Improvement Plan and relationship with Executive to be sole focus of Management Committee. Action – Future agendas structured accordingly.	Committee Administration	High 1 By end November 2005	Process complete, monitoring and driving Improvement Plan ongoing
31	O&S Management Committee to consider meeting on a quarterly basis.	Comment – Management Committee (with business as in 30 above) to meet only as required. Action – Council is recommended to amend constitution accordingly.	John Egan	High 1 By end 2005	Completed

