

LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

**ANNUAL REPORT
2006/07**

March 2007

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Foreword from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

This year has seen the role of Overview and Scrutiny continue to develop and strengthen at this Council. The effective way of working that has been established was pressed home to me when we hosted the Lancashire Scrutiny Network. Members from other authorities were impressed by the knowledge and enthusiasm of our committees. The theme of the conference was member engagement; we can be reassured by the way in which our Scrutiny is non-political and member led.

There have been a number of issues raised by Overview and Scrutiny Committees this year, which I wish to highlight in this forward:

Pre-decision Scrutiny continues to be a strength of this Council. As this report shows this has allowed the number of call ins at this Council to be maintained at a low level. In November Overview and Scrutiny Committee met with their Cabinet colleagues to discuss issues that were important for the future within each portfolio area. This was a useful meeting and has led to the creation of Task Groups to look at individual pieces of work. Budget and Performance have seen the development of Escendency as a useful tool for scrutiny of the Council's performance.

Areas of Scrutiny have been diverse this year; homelessness, cemeteries, fly tipping, pollution in Morecambe Bay, Civic affairs, the impact of the Licensing Act, alcohol related problems, car parking enforcement - to name just a few. However, one theme has become increasingly clear - that the Council is working more and more in partnership with others. This presents a challenge and an opportunity for Overview and Scrutiny. The White Paper will increase this role - and it is one we are in a good place to be prepared for. It will form one of the focuses for development during the next year.

May I thank the members of Overview and Scrutiny, Budget and Performance, Task Groups and officers for their hard work through out the year. Together we have made sure that the Council continues to grow in strength and reputation in this area.

Councillor Stuart Langhorn
Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Statistics and Overview

This report sets out the work undertaken by Lancaster City Council under the Scrutiny powers (as set out in the Local Government Act 2000) during the municipal year 2006/07. The Act also places a duty on local authorities' Overview and Scrutiny functions to produce an Annual Report which this document represents.

Key Achievements

- Maintaining a reduced number of Call-ins
- Greater support from Service departments to the Overview and Scrutiny work programme.
- Reduction in Task Group reporting time
- Work programme developing.
- Increase in number of Members involved in Task Groups
- Task Group scoping improved.

Key Areas for Improvement

- Scrutiny of Partnership working.
- Further development of pre-decision Scrutiny.
- Reducing the response times to Overview and Scrutiny requests.
- Improved Scrutiny of budget and voluntary sector grants.
- Increased press coverage
- Further involvement of the public in Overview and Scrutiny, particularly with regard to Task Group working.

This Annual Report has been produced on behalf of the whole Overview and Scrutiny process and maps the work of Overview and Scrutiny against the Council's objectives and core values, and highlights where work has been carried out to underpin and support each of these elements.

Statistics 2006/07

STATISTIC	TOTAL 2004/5	TOTAL 2005/6	TOTAL 2006/7
No. of Meetings (incl. Budget and Performance Panel and Task Groups)	31	41	53
No. of Site Visits	Not collected 2004/5	5	5
No. of Call-ins	6	2	3
No. of Issues for Pre-Decision Scrutiny	2	2	12
No. of Referrals from Cabinet	Not collected 2004/5	4	2
No. of Referrals to Cabinet/Council	22	15	11
No. of Cabinet Members held to account	Not collected 2004/5	1	8
Percentage of Recommendations adopted from Scrutiny Reviews and Task Groups	91%	86%	88%

Pre-Decision Scrutiny

Pre-decision scrutiny is the process where, based primarily on study of the Forward Plan (the Council's published plan of all 'Key Decisions' for the year, updated monthly) and information provided by Cabinet Liaison Councillors, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee selects issues that it would like to consider before a decision is taken.

There are many benefits to this process, particularly that it can help to add value to decisions at the pre-decision stage, can widen consultation to include Non-Executive Councillors and it can also help to minimise the use of Call-in (a last resort).

In order to assist the development of this process, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has appointed one of its Members as Pre-decision Scrutiny Champion to lead on this area. This year Councillor Susan Bray has undertaken this role and has met with Scrutiny Support Officers each time a Forward Plan has been published in order to identify potential issues for pre-decision scrutiny. Following this meeting contact has been made with the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Cabinet Liaison Members or Directors with a request to obtain further information regarding the decision. Issues have, where possible been built into the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and brought to Committee for discussion.

'The Forward Plan is discussed on a regular basis and questions are asked of Officers. We are now getting a quicker and more positive response'

Councillor Susan Bray – Pre-Scrutiny Champion

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomes Officers providing the opportunity for the Committee to submit a response during the consultation phase of a decision, and would encourage this approach where appropriate.

The other element, which still requires some development, is the role played by Cabinet Liaison Councillors in identifying and obtaining further information on issues. It is intended that this will be assisted through the development of job descriptions for the new scrutiny roles such as Cabinet Liaison Members, Pre-decision Scrutiny Champion and Task Group Link Member, which will be available in the revised Scrutiny Handbook due to be published in May 2007.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Membership: Councillors Stuart Langhorn (Chairman), David Kerr (Vice-Chairman) Evelyn Archer, Susan Bray, Ken Brown, Rebekah Gerrard, Emily Heath, David Kerr, Robert Redfern, and Peter Robinson

Introduction

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has overall responsibility for the performance of all Overview and Scrutiny functions (under Local Government Act 2000) on behalf of the Council. The Committee has the power to scrutinise all Council functions and decisions that are not within the Terms of Reference of the Budget and Performance Panel. It also has the power to call-in any decisions that Members feel have not been made in accordance with the Council's decision-making principles as set out in Article 13 of Lancaster City Council's Constitution.

Other major functions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee include:

- Consideration of Cabinet decisions after they have been put into effect.
- Consideration of the Forward Plan and commenting on Key Decisions.
- Conduct of reviews of policies, services and aspects of services where there is an identifiable need, by itself or through setting a Task Group.
- Working with other local authorities and organisations to carry out joint scrutiny.
- Assisting the Cabinet in the development of the Budget and Policy Framework.
- Creating Task Groups and setting their Terms of Reference.
- Reviewing and scrutinising the performance of the Cabinet, Cabinet Committees and appropriate Officers and receiving reports and updates.

“Over the course of this year I have met with members of many other authorities. We can take pride that this authority is widely recognised as having an effective scrutiny process. This is down to the hard work and commitment of all the members and officers involved”

**Councillor Stuart Langhorn
Chairman Overview &
Scrutiny**

Overview and Scrutiny at Lancaster City Council is fortunate in having a budget of £4,000 to support the work of the whole Overview and Scrutiny process. Due to the differing resource requirements of the annual Overview and Scrutiny work programme, spend against this budget varies and in the past has been fully spent securing the services of expert witnesses.

During 2006/07 the Committee has called-in 3 decisions, scrutinised a number of Council decisions and issues, and has established 4 Task Groups. More information on a number of these items can be found on page 28, which examines how the Scrutiny function in Lancaster has contributed to the Council's Corporate Objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan. The 3 Call-ins by the Committee are listed in the 'Call-in' section of the report on page 9. An indication of the Committee's Work Programme for 2006/07 is set out below and further information can be found in the Overview and Scrutiny minutes available on the Council's website.

Impact of the Licensing Act in the District

The Committee invited Councillor Blamire (Cabinet Member with responsibility for Legal and Licensing) to discuss the impact of the Licensing Act in June 2006 amid concerns that extended opening hours could have a detrimental affect on incidents of anti-social behaviour. The Committee noted that there had been a reduction in the number of incidents of alcohol related crime in the district and requested Councillor Blamire to provide a further progress report in January 2007. Members of the public attended the meeting and it became apparent that there was not awareness of the appeals procedure. It was agreed that a press release be issued inviting observations from the public on the impact of the Licensing Act and incorporating guidance with regard to the appeals procedure.

CCTV Extension – Review of Effectiveness of CCTV from a Cost Benefit Perspective

Councillor Blamire (Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Safety) provided the Committee with an insight into the effectiveness of CCTV as a means of identifying criminal behaviour. A number of issues requiring further clarification emerged from this presentation and a briefing note was requested to address this. The Head of Property Services attended a subsequent meeting to provide clarification with regard to costs, assessment criteria, displacement of crime and staffing and Members were provided with a demonstration. Members resolved to advise Cabinet (through the consultation on draft coalition priorities) that in the view of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, CCTV appeared to offer good value for money in achieving community safety objectives.

Neighbourhood Policing

Chief Inspector Julian Platt provided the Committee with an update on neighbourhood policing. It was noted that the district was now at the forefront of neighbourhood policing. Concerns were expressed with regard to policing underage drinking and it was agreed that an alcohol policy intervention update would be considered at a later meeting.

Reducing Alcohol Related Harm in the District

Jacqui Thompson, Head of Public Health Development, North Lancashire PCT led a discussion with regard to alcoholic harm in the district. Members were advised that an alcohol partnership had been established to implement the government strategy, focusing on 4 areas, education and communication, identification and treatment, alcohol-related crime and disorder and supply and industry responsibility. The Committee agreed to maintain an interest in this issue and were keen to ensure participation from the Council in a North Lancashire PCT consultation.

Electoral Administration Act

Members received a presentation from the Head of Democratic Services and the Elections Officer with regard to the implications of the Electoral Administration Act. All Members were invited to this presentation, which provided an overview of the many changes to procedures and how these would impact on the work of Democratic Services at forthcoming elections.

Presentation on the PCT Vision

Ian Cumming, Chief Executive of North Lancashire PCT was invited to deliver a presentation outlining the PCT's vision for the district. This invitation was extended following the merger of the PCTs in order to seek reassurance with regard to future arrangements for the district. In view of the interest in this topic, an invitation was extended to all Members and there was an opportunity for questions.

Promenade and Seashore Byelaws

The Committee considered the process to review and revise the Promenade and Seashore Byelaws with particular attention to the access of horses, cyclists and skateboarding activities. Dealing with each aspect separately the Committee made a number of amendments to the recommendations in order to reconcile the safety of the public and the needs of responsible horse riders, cyclists and skateboarders.

In addition, Members have received reports and taken part in discussions in relation to:

- Lancashire Locals – discussions led by the Leader of Lancashire County Council
- Local Strategic Partnership – presentation delivered by the Chairman of the LSP Executive
- Carnforth Area Regeneration Partnership – presentation by the Head of Economic Development and Tourism
- Rural Proofing of Council Policies – presentation by Cabinet Member with responsibility for Rural Affairs
- Consultation Strategy – presentation by the Head of Corporate Strategy
- Agreement of the Civic Task Group Report
- Agreement of the Fly Tipping Report



The issue of Cycling on the promenade was considered in connection to revisions to Bye-laws

Call-in and Holding Cabinet to Account

Call-in is only one of a number of ways in which Overview and Scrutiny can hold the Executive to account.

The choice to 'Call-in' a Cabinet decision is used sparingly at Lancaster City Council, and with care. The procedure ensures that, if necessary, decisions or proposals made by the Cabinet, a Cabinet Member, a Cabinet Committee, an Officer with delegated authority, or under joint arrangements can be thoroughly examined, amendments proposed, and full debate entered into by all Members.

Call-in at Lancaster is 'now at the right level and effective.'

Steve Leach, Professor of Local Government, De Montfort University

It is the view of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that Call-ins are only used in **exceptional circumstances**. 'Exceptional circumstances' are where Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have evidence which suggests that the decision in question has not been made in accordance with the principles set out in Article 13 'Decision Making' of the Council's Constitution.

Call-ins 2006/07

Canal Corridor Development Agreement – August 2006

Members called in a Cabinet decision on the grounds that it had not been made in accordance with three of the principles of Decision Making, in particular due consultation and the taking of professional advice from officers, a presumption in favour of openness and the options that were considered and the reasons for arriving at the decision. Signatories to the Call-in suggested that the decision was made in the absence of information available to Cabinet Member on the household consultation, inadequate consideration of the potential damage to Morecambe's regeneration ambitions, to the financial viability of Lancaster market and its implications for the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the impact of extra traffic on traffic congestion on the gyratory system.

After a thorough examination of the facts, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee decided not to refer the decision back to Cabinet to reconsider, however a recommendation was made to Cabinet to include a representative from Overview and Scrutiny to monitor the work of the Canal Corridor Cabinet Liaison Group. This recommendation was endorsed by Cabinet.

Playground Provision – September 2006

Members called in a decision with regard to playground provision on the basis that the decision had not been made in accordance with two of the principles of Decision Making, respect for human rights and a presumption in favour of openness. It was suggested that the decision did not respect the human rights of those in parished areas to be considered on equal terms with those in the urban core in access to funding opportunities and the fact that some rural playgrounds had not been considered in the report suggested a lack of openness. The decision had been called-in following Cabinet's acceptance of an amendment to allow community

groups to be considered for match funding for playground provision and the belief that this should be extended to include parish councils.

The Committee recommended that Cabinet insert 'Parish Councils' into its resolution on Playground provision, i.e. on the same basis as Community Groups. Cabinet reconsidered its decision but decided against the recommendation as it did not agree with the view that through adopting the amendment the decision on playgrounds was fairer for the whole of the district including parished areas. In addition, the Committee recommended that the Chief Executive be requested to ensure that all reports affecting rural areas were rural proofed.



The Play area at Galgate – an example of playground provision in the rural areas

Storey Institute – October 2006

Cabinet's decision in relation to the Storey Institute was called-in on the basis that the decision had not been made in accordance with four of the principles of Decision Making; proportionality (i.e. the action must be appropriate to the desired outcome), due consultation and the taking of professional advice from officers, respect for human rights and aims and desired outcomes be clearly expressed. The signatories to the Call-in requested clarification with regard to whether Cabinet's decision would lead to a thriving Storey Institute, the impact of Cabinet's decision on grant funding identified for the project, whether interested parties had been given the opportunity to be fully involved, the criticism of the Heritage Lottery Fund in its rejection of the funding bid as well as an explanation with regard to the future of the Institute.



The Storey Institute – the future of this building was the subject of a Call-in

After discussions a number of recommendations were tabled by the Committee:

- (1) That Cabinet agrees to pursue option 1 as set out in the report.
- (2) That Cabinet allocates leeway funding of £0.5m to the SCIC, which could be reduced if other funding becomes available.
- (3) That Officers take the necessary financial and procedural steps to amend the capital programme and secure the necessary external grant funding for the SCIC.
- (4) That the Chief Executive considers what lessons can be learnt in terms of:
 - Project management and project champions
 - Conflicts of interest of Cabinet Members
 - Involving people with relevant expertise throughout project planning and delivery.

In response, Cabinet identified funding from the Industrial aid provision, SRB underspend and estimated revenue savings arising from concessionary travel and treasury management to make up the £500,000 shortfall in funding.

Holding Cabinet Members to Account

Over the past year, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee continued to hold Cabinet Members to account. This has taken place both in the course of Call-in and considering items of business at Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Budget and Performance Panel and Task Groups, but also through arranging for Cabinet Members to come to a meeting to discuss issues and developments within their portfolios. It is proposed to continue this procedure in the new Municipal Year.

Additionally Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee continue to undertake the role of Cabinet Liaison Member. This helps to keep the Committee informed of

issues within individual Cabinet portfolios. Cabinet Members with corresponding Cabinet Liaison Members for 2006/07 are set out below:

Cabinet Member

Councillor Ian Barker
Councillor Jon Barry
Councillor Eileen Blamire
Councillor Abbott Bryning
Councillor Gina Dowding
Councillor Janice Hanson
Councillor John Gilbert
Councillor Pat Quinton
Councillor Ron Sands
Councillor Alex Stone (until November 2006)

Cabinet Liaison Member

Councillor Stuart Langhorn
Councillor Susan Bray
Councillor Robert Redfern
Councillor Emily Heath
Councillor Stuart Langhorn
Councillor Evelyn Archer
Councillor Peter Robinson
Councillor Ken Brown
Councillor Evelyn Archer
Councillor Rebekah Gerrard

This year measures have been taken to further improve the Cabinet liaison process with Cabinet being invited to November's Overview and Scrutiny meeting to consider possible ideas for the future work programme by highlighting areas within portfolios which might benefit from scrutiny.

5 Cabinet Members attended

this joint meeting and a number of issues were identified for future scrutiny including affordable housing in the rural areas, making the coast vibrant and how the Council encourages local Shops.

"I do think that such joint meetings and exchanges are useful and helpful." **(Cabinet Member Councillor Ron Sands)**

"A very worthwhile exercise, it gave members of the committee the opportunity to emphasize to Cabinet members the importance of the decisions they make, and gave an insight to what in their portfolio the Cabinet members feel are most important. I think it was an exercise that we should repeat" **(Councillor Evelyn Archer, Overview & Scrutiny Committee)**

Urgent Business

The Call-in procedure does not apply where the decision being taken is urgent. A decision is considered urgent if any delay likely to be caused by the Call-in process would seriously jeopardise the Council's or the public's interests. The Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee must both agree that the decision proposed is reasonable in all the circumstances, and to it being treated as a matter of urgency.

Statistics

Since the last annual report and the writing of this report, the procedure of waiving the right to Call-in decisions as a matter of Urgent Business by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny has been utilised on 11 occasions:

- ❑ Flying the Belarusian flag to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Chernobyl
- ❑ Link Age Pilot
- ❑ Flying the flag of St George during England's matches in the World Cup
- ❑ Single Non emergency Number
- ❑ Provision of public conveniences at the Arndale and Clock Tower
- ❑ On Street parking places prohibition and restriction of waiting (No 2)
- ❑ On Street parking places prohibition and restriction of waiting (No 3)
- ❑ Lease of accommodation within Morecambe Town Hall
- ❑ Council Offices, Market Street, Carnforth
- ❑ Land at Carr House Farm
- ❑ West End Waste Strategy.



The lease of accommodation within Morecambe Town Hall to Lancashire County Council was treated a matter of urgent business

Budget and Performance Panel

Membership: Councillors Keith Budden (Chairman), John Day (Vice Chairman), Jim Blakely, Tina Clifford, Mike Greenall, Tony Johnson, Stuart Langhorn (until December 2006), Roger Mace (from January 2007), Roger Sherlock and John Whitelegg

The Budget and Performance Panel have responsibility for carrying out Overview and Scrutiny in respect of the Council's Budget and Performance at both the Strategic and Service level. In accordance with the Council's objectives and core values, the Panel helps to ensure that the management of financial affairs is efficient, prudent, and works best for the residents of the District and that there is effective monitoring of Council performance that leads to continuous improvement in services. Areas which the Panel has scrutinised this year include Open Source Software and IT Cost Analysis, progress on the Consultation Strategy, Backlog Repairs to Corporate & Municipal Buildings, Decriminalised Parking Enforcement, Housing Service Level Agreements and Disability Discrimination and Race Equality Compliance as well as receiving a presentation on the Budget and Policy Framework Proposals.

"The Panel has considered a number of issues this year. I'm pleased to report that improvements to the Performance management System have provided more up-to-date information which has been of great assistance to the Panel."

**Councillor Keith Budden
Chairman of Panel**

Other major functions of the Budget and Performance Panel include:

- Monitoring and reviewing Services in achieving their Business Plans.
- Scrutinising the Council's performance in budgetary management and targets, treasury management, property and asset acquisition and disposal, capital programme and evaluating the effectiveness of its financial and operational policies and procedures.
- Reviewing the Council's strategic performance and monitoring Performance Indicators and benchmarking.
- To review and monitor external Service Level Agreements and other contracts that the Council has entered into.
- Performing the Overview and Scrutiny function in relation to all of the Council's Corporate Performance and Best Value activity.
- To assist and monitor the Cabinet in the continued development of a medium term budget strategy.

Performance Management Framework

It was reported in the last Annual report that the Panel's work would be advanced and supported by Cabinet's establishment of Performance Review Teams, particularly with regard to Service Business Plan performance and financial monitoring. The Performance Review Teams provide quarterly monitoring with commentary to the Panel, thereby reducing the amount of paperwork that Panel Members need to wade through and reduce the likelihood of requesting the attendance of Service Heads to Budget and Performance Panel meetings.

The new Performance Management Framework enables standard quarterly traffic light reporting with performance management information produced in a standard format for all users, and this information is available to all Members on the intranet. Presented by the Leader, the quarterly Performance Monitoring Corporate Reports have highlighted areas that have not achieved their targets and outlined actions to rectify this. Following on from the presentation of these reports, the Panel has identified areas for further scrutiny and requested briefing notes in relation to the following areas:

- A briefing note on Air Quality control
- A briefing note on the uptake and impact of concessionary travel
- A briefing note in relation to Off-street parking

Complementing the Performance Management Framework, steady progress has been made with regard to the roll out of the Escendency Performance Management software, which as outlined in last year's Annual Report, will provide real time data and enable advances in the area of performance scrutiny. It is anticipated that the roll out of Escendency to all services will be completed by summer 2007.

Budget and Performance Panel Members together with Cabinet Members attended the 'launch' of Escendency at Infolab, Lancaster University in October. Following on from this, several Members have received training on the use of this performance management software and are now in a position to confidently access this from their laptops, enabling them to identify any potential areas for concern.

Councillor Tony Johnson
Escendency:

"An excellent tool for examining the competence or otherwise of any of the Council services, this will allow resources to be targeted which should improve efficiency."

In addition to presenting the quarterly monitoring reports, the Leader of the Council has presented regular progress reports in relation to the Council's Star Chamber process (the Cabinet's rolling efficiency programme) and this year a 'special' Budget and Performance Panel meeting was arranged for the Panel to consider the Leader's presentation on the Budget and Policy Framework Proposals. All Non-Executive Members and Economic Stakeholders were invited to attend.

A number of Service Heads and Officers have attended Budget and Performance Panel meetings throughout the year and provided reports or presentations for consideration including Health and Strategic Housing, City Council (Direct) Services, Legal and Human Resources, Property Services, Planning, Economic Development & Tourism and Financial Services. These discussions have led to further work being undertaken in a number of areas.

More recently, the Panel considered a report in relation to overspends in connection to regeneration projects in Dalton Square and Luneside East. Following lengthy discussions and questioning of Officers and the Corporate Director (Regeneration), the Panel suggested several revisions to the recommendations including that Members receive a briefing on LAMP (Lancaster City Council approach to Managing Projects) methodology in the new municipal year.

It was reported in the last Annual Report that the Panel had formally adopted the role of scrutiny for the Council's Value for Money / Efficiency Strategy arrangements and the monitoring of achievements of targets included in the Council's Annual Efficiency Statements. Different components of the strategy have been scrutinised at each meeting as outlined below:

- ❑ Forward Annual Efficiency Statement – Gershon Targets
- ❑ Procurement Strategy
- ❑ Transformational Government Strategy (formerly e-government)
- ❑ Risk Management Strategy
- ❑ Human Resources Strategy Review Consultation
- ❑ Consultation Strategy
- ❑ Corporate Property Strategy Update

Consideration of these reports has led to requests for further information including a report following the development of the Transformational Government Strategy and Vision, an example of how sustainability is built into the procurement strategy, processes and contracts, and an indication of how the corporate Property and Energy Strategy has contributed to the Gershon/MTFS savings targets.



Luneside East – Overspends relating to this project were considered by the Budget and Performance Panel

Task Groups

Task Groups are established to undertake specific project work, policy development, a specific task, consultation, review, investigation or similar activity.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee decides whether a Task Group should be formal and report directly to the Cabinet or Council such as the Grants Task Group or informal and report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee such as the Fly Tipping Task Group. Task Groups normally consist of nine Councillors on a Proportional Representation basis.

It was intended that the majority of the Task Groups would operate for three months and produce one Final Report during their lifetime. However, due to the complexity of some of the tasks that have been taken on, this time-scale has had to be extended and, on occasions interim reports have been produced in order to meet other external factors such as the budget process. In last year's Annual Report reference was made to the emerging recommendations of the Civic Task Group and the Cemeteries Task Group; both of these Task Groups made final reports during this year.

CIVIC TASK GROUP

Members: Councillors Susan Bray (Chairman), Evelyn Archer, Shirley Burns, Sheila Denwood, John Gilbert, John Harrison, Janet Horner, Janie Kirkman and Catriona Stamp.

This informal Task Group first met in November 2005 with the final meeting held in September 2006, and was established in order to review the current civic programme, establish a vision for the future and to create a Civic Programme based on this vision. Concern had been expressed that the Council was not using its civic events and related budgets as effectively as it might. This is supported by the low attendance at Civic events and perceived lack of community involvement in civic life. The report was considered by full Council in November 2006.

Recommendations supported included:

- The establishment of an award scheme including the Mayor's Special Award.
- A Civic and Citizenship Panel consisting of Councillors, dignitaries and community representatives be established to support the mayoralty.
- The creation of an honorary post of Mother/Father of the Council.
- Mayor-making becoming a weekend long community-orientated event with Annual Council being held on a Friday.
- Revision of the Freeman's oath.



The Great Mace – gifted to the Corporation of Lancaster in 1702

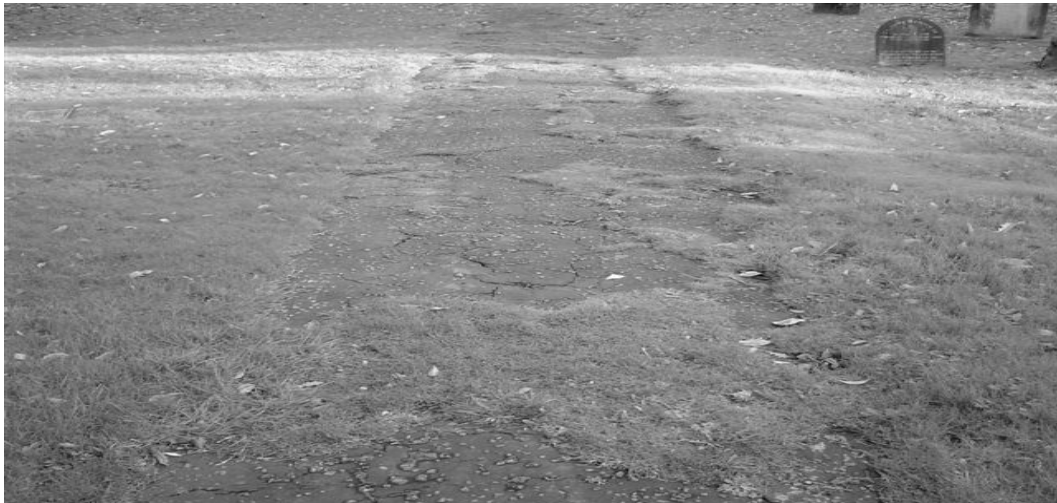
CEMETERIES TASK GROUP

Members: Councillors David Kerr (Chairman), Evelyn Archer, Susan Bray, Sheila Denwood, John Harrison, Helen Helme, Janie Kirkman, Robert Redfern, Catriona Stamp.

An Interim Report was presented to Cabinet in January 2006 with the Final Report considered in July 2006. One of the recommendations in the Interim Report, adopted prior to the Final Report, was that Health and Strategic Housing assumed management responsibility and budgetary control of both cemetery income and expenditure.

The Final Report made a number of recommendations which included:-

- ❑ Improvements to the signage within the cemeteries.
- ❑ Improvements to the existing woodland burial sections.
- ❑ The establishment of a pilot Friend's Group.
- ❑ An assessment of and repairs to the paths in all cemeteries.



The Cemeteries Task Group recommended an assessment of, and repairs to the paths in the Council's cemeteries

'As a Member of the Cemeteries Task Group I would like to comment on the helpfulness of the Cemeteries Officers who provided valuable and continued support to the Task Group.'

**Councillor Susan Bray,
Cemeteries Task Group**

'A Friends' Group has now been formed at Torrisholme Cemetery. A Chairman and Committee have been appointed and a draft constitution has now been approved.'

**Councillor David Kerr,
Chairman Cemeteries
Task Group.**

FLY TIPPING TASK GROUP

Members: Councillors James Airey (Chairman), Chris Coates, Sheila Denwood, Mike Greenall, Janie Kirkman, Roger Mace, Robert Redfern and Roger Sherlock.

This informal Task Group was established to assess the current situation regarding fly tipping in the district and provide recommendations as to how to reduce future incidents. The Task Group met on 5 occasions between June and November 2006.

The Task Group's Final Report made a number of recommendations including:

- Improved signage at the Council's bring sites.
- Raising public awareness with regard to the legal disposal of waste and dangers and costs of fly tipping.
- CCTV surveillance of 'hotspots.'
- More effective enforcement to demonstrate the Council is serious in its intent to tackle fly tipping.

HOMELESSNESS TASK GROUP

Members: Councillors Peter Robinson (Chairman), Ken Brown, Rebekah Gerrard, Mike Greenall, Sylvia Rogerson, Joyce Pritchard, John Whitelegg, Rob Smith and David Kerr

This formal Task Group first met in May 2006 and had its final meeting in February 2007. The Task Group was established following the presentation of a report to the Budget and Performance Panel in 2004, which highlighted the high level of homelessness, particularly with regard to young and single adults, when compared with other districts in Lancashire.

Recommendations made by the Task Group include:

- That savings relevant to homeless services made by Health and Strategic Housing be diverted back into homeless prevention initiatives.
- That the provision of temporary supported accommodation be made a top housing priority.
- An increase in the allocation to the Homeless Prevention Fund.
- Creation of a 12-month post in the Council's Homeless Unit to provide better co-ordination.

GRANTS TASK GROUP

Members: Councillors Stuart Langhorn (Chairman), Roger Mace, Sarah Fishwick, David Kerr, Tina Clifford, Emily Heath and David Whitaker

This Task Group first met in November 2006 in order to consider ways to implement the recommendations from the Draft Discussion Document on Non-Housing Voluntary Organisations Service Level Agreements. This discussion document had been produced in order to examine the Council's role in supporting voluntary organisations with a view to clearer guidelines and rationale for support. Representatives from many of the organisations with service level agreements with the Council have attended and contributed in discussions at the meetings.

Among the recommendations within the final report, which is in the process of being completed are:

- ❑ Revision of the Grants web pages
- ❑ Detailed proposal for a criteria based application form process
- ❑ A review of the Local Compact

POLLUTION IN MORECAMBE BAY TASK GROUP

Members: Councillors Keith Budden (Chairman) Anne Chapman, Tina Clifford, Sarah Fishwick, Paul Gardner, David Kerr, Tony Johnson, Rob Smith and David Whitaker

Established in April 2006 in order to investigate the impact of abandoned vehicles and fishing/cockling debris on pollution, the terms of reference of this Task Group were amended in order to focus on the long-term pollution/navigation/public safety problems posed by plastic fishing/cockling debris and the impact of this on the environment. During their research it became apparent that the Isle of Man Government were also addressing plastic pollution in the sea and both the Chairman of the Task Group and the supporting officer, Jenny Kay were invited to deliver a presentation at their Marine Litter Awareness Day in September. This was the subject of a great deal of coverage in the local media and was featured on BBC North West Tonight, greatly enhancing the profile of scrutiny at Lancaster in the process.

Emerging recommendations include:

- ❑ That Lancaster City Council takes a lead in recognising the impact of plastic on marine life and the environment
- ❑ Support for the 'Fishing for Litter' campaign
- ❑ That Lancaster City Council seeks support of other local authorities with a sea boundary including Isle of Man Government, Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament to lobby the UK and European Parliament to address this issue.



The Pollution in Morecambe Bay Task Group have become only too aware of the adverse effect of balloons on the environment and wildlife

Media and Public Relations

Over the year, approximately £4,618.00 worth of free publicity has been generated through the use of Press Releases circulated by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Press Releases were issued to the *Visitor*, *Lancaster Guardian*, *Lancaster and Morecambe Citizen*, *Bay Radio*, *Radio Lancashire* and a local news website, *Virtual Lancaster*. However, the value does not take into account the cost of air time given by the two local radio stations and the space taken up by the website.

The figures have been generated by 'Newsflash' which is a media monitoring software operated by Council's Communications Services and relate to the period 1st April 2006 to 22nd January, 2007.

Date	Title	Take up	Equivalent Advertising Value	Website hits from 27.07.06 (when facility installed)
24.04.06	Committee considers promenade Bye-laws	4	586.00	1
09.05.06	O/S Committee discuss Promenade and other Bye-laws and make recommendations for consideration by Council	0	-	13
24.05.06	New Chairman for Overview and Scrutiny	0	-	4
24.05.06	O/S Committee to consider impact of Licensing Act	1	240.00	-
06.06.06	O/S meeting rearranged	2	184.00	-
17.07.06	Impact of Licensing Act scrutinised	2	336.00	4
24.07.06	O/S Your Chance to make a difference	1	340.00	17
26.07.06	Mayor plants tree at Hale Carr Cemetery to launch Friends Group Initiative	3	560.00	33
06.10.06	Council talks plastic in the Isle of Man	4	2,468.00	55
18.12.06	Revamp of Council's civic role and duties underway	3	88.00	73
TOTAL EAV			£4,618.00	

Public Relations

Effectively engaging the public remains a challenge for Overview and Scrutiny nationally. Over the last year this has improved, with significant public involvement

being generated through press coverage. This has been particularly noticeable with regard to the Call-in decisions of the Canal Corridor and Storey Institute which attracted a great deal of public interest. In addition, members of the public attended the Overview and Scrutiny meeting which considered the impact of the Licensing Act, returning to hear a progress report some months later. Public interest in Task Groups including Cemeteries, Grants and Pollution in Morecambe Bay has been reflected through telephone enquiries as well as attendance at, and participation in, Task Group meetings. In addition, the BBC website includes a page entitled 'Bay tackles sea pollution problem' which can be accessed through the following hyperlink: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/em/fr/-/1/hi/england/lancashire/6037487.stm>

Training and Development

An Overview and Scrutiny Development Day was held in May 2006, with a presentation delivered by Steve Leach, Professor of Local Government at De Montfort University. The presentation entitled 'Overview and Scrutiny – National Trends and Developments' was attended by Members and Officers and invitations were extended to other local authorities including representatives from Blackpool Borough Council, Hyndburn Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Cumbria County Council and South Lakes District Council. With regard to the Lancaster Scrutiny Handbook, Steve Leach commented that he was, 'impressed with the structure' and the handbook was, 'the best' he had seen and it was worthy of a good practice award.

Additionally Members and Officers have attended training provided by the Institute of Local Government in Birmingham in relation to Scrutiny of Partnerships. As Members of the Scrutiny Champions Network, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Principal Democratic Support Officer continue to receive updates and guidance from the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS). In addition Lancaster City Council continues to contribute its scrutiny reports to the CfPS database where they can be accessed and downloaded by others. This year the Council has yet again utilised the resources of the Centre for Public Scrutiny, with Councillor Stuart Langhorn and Liz Bateson (Senior Democratic Support Officer) attending the Annual Scrutiny Conference in London.

In addition, the services of Frances Taylor (formerly of INLOGOV and Head of Scrutiny, Cumbria County Council and now a freelance trainer), have been secured to provide an introduction to scrutiny to all members following the district elections in the new municipal year. Other authorities have expressed an interest in participating in this training day and arrangements are in hand.

With regard to Performance Management, the Audit Commission will undertake a training session in June 2007 for Members of the Budget and Performance Panel, and an invitation to this will also be extended to all Members.

One to One Support

Many Councillors have taken up the offer of meeting with Scrutiny Support Officers to discuss Overview and Scrutiny and their role within it. These discussions have included successful Call-ins, questioning approaches, how to scrutinise different issues, setting up Task Groups, Pre-decision Scrutiny, Performance and Financial

Scrutiny and one-to-one support for Councillors in carrying out various Scrutiny activities. This approach continues to be effective and has been used for the Forward Plan, Call-in preparation and Task Group development.

Health Scrutiny

Councillor David Kerr – as a representative of Lancaster’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee – has sat on both the Joint Cumbria and Lancashire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Lancashire County Council Health Equalities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Potentially, health is the area of Overview and Scrutiny that has the most influential role, with statutory powers under the Health and Social Care Act 2001, to veto service configurations through referring them to the Secretary of State for Health. The specific functions of the Joint Committee include to critically examine the proposals of the Morecambe Bay Primary Care Trust and their evidence base, and to take account of the evidence and views of user, carer and public interest.

This year the Cumbria and Lancashire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee has responded to the NHS Public Consultation with regard to the Acute Medical Services Review in Morecambe Bay, recommending that the Hospitals Trust and PCT should only proceed if a number of modifications were incorporated, including a re-examination of planned bed numbers and a review of financial control systems to avoid a recurrence of financial problems.

Lancashire Scrutiny Network

Lancaster representatives have been regular attendees at the Lancashire Scrutiny Network. The network was founded in 2004 to aid the development of Overview and Scrutiny in Lancashire authorities. These meetings provide a networking opportunity and help clarify Councillor and Officer roles. Providing an opportunity to share best practice, the partnership exists to share work programmes and highlight where joint working could take place, the meetings improve links between District and County Council.

In November Lancaster hosted a meeting of the Lancashire Scrutiny Network and officers delivered a presentation on ‘Member Engagement – Owing the Scrutiny Process’. This was well attended by both Members and scrutiny officers and councillors from neighbouring authorities. In keeping with the theme of Member Engagement, Councillor Langhorn hosted the day with Councillors Heath and Robinson leading the workshop sessions which were facilitated by Members from Overview and Scrutiny and Budget and Performance Panel who attended.

In addition, Councillors Kerr, Gerrard, Robinson, Archer and Redfern and two officers attended a Communities and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee meeting in November, following an invitation from the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny at Hyndburn Borough Council. The agenda included a presentation on the work of the Lancashire Economic Partnership and a report on Close Circuit Television, which included a demonstration of mobile surveillance equipment. This visit provided Members with an opportunity to meet with Hyndburn Councillors as well as providing an insight into the scrutiny process in another authority. We intend to repeat this reciprocal networking with another authority in the year ahead.

Northwest Scrutiny Officer Network

Officers from Lancaster City Council have attended several meetings of the Northwest Scrutiny Officer Network. The group comprises of officers who support the Overview and Scrutiny function (representing all the local authorities in the North West of England). The group exists to share best practice issues, to avoid duplication and maximise the resources available to assist in the development of Scrutiny. The membership of the group includes authorities such as Tameside, Stockport, Liverpool, Cumbria and Lancashire and thus has access to significant expertise and knowledge. Recent meetings have included presentations on the introduction of a scrutiny qualification through the University of Chester, Services for Children and Young People and Health Scrutiny in view of the new regional structures. Proposed future areas for discussion include good practice, scrutiny partnerships, performance monitoring and self-evaluation.

Appointments to Other Bodies

At the request of Council, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee continues to make a number of appointments to other bodies. These appointees have attended meetings and kept the Overview and Scrutiny process informed of developments. These appointments are:

Local Strategic Partnership:

- Community Safety Strategy Group – Councillor Peter Robinson
- Regeneration Building Block – Councillor Emily Heath (*appointment made but Regeneration Building Block has not met)
- Health and Well-being Group – Councillor David Kerr
- Children and Young People Group – Councillor Peter Robinson
- Sustainability Partnership – Councillor Emily Heath
- Equality & Diversity Building Block – Councillor Emily Heath
- Life Long Learning – Councillor Susan Bray

Other Bodies:

- Homelessness Forum – Councillor Peter Robinson
- Lancashire County Council Health Equalities Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Councillor David Kerr
- Lancaster, Morecambe and District Fairtrade Steering Group – Councillor David Kerr
- Museums Advisory Panel – Councillor Evelyn Archer
- Older People's Partnership Forum of the Local Strategic Partnership – Councillor Peter Robinson

"With the emergence of the 50 Forward Pilot scheme, the Older People's Partnership has mushroomed in size meeting every two months.

Led by the Older Person's Forum, each meeting looks at a specific aspect of life in the 'Third Age' (which now begins at 50). The OPP is now part of the Health & Well Being Building Block of the LSP."

Councillor Peter Robinson
Older People's Forum

"The next Homelessness Forum is being structured into several workshops, each facilitated by an 'expert' from one of our partner agencies.

Designed as a 'review' of the Homelessness Strategy, it is hoped that a number of priorities will emerge to draft an achievable action plan."

Councillor Peter Robinson
Homelessness Forum

Performance Review

A number of key areas for improvement were outlined in last year's Annual Report. Progress in improving these areas is illustrated below:

Task Groups

With the increase in the number of Task Groups established a greater number of topics are now being scrutinised in detail, which is a positive move. In addition, this increase has enabled a greater number of non-executive Councillors to have the opportunity to be directly involved with Overview and Scrutiny. However, the reporting time for Task Groups has continued to be affected by the time required in obtaining information, availability of Officers and indeed Members.

Further involvement of the public in Overview and Scrutiny, particularly with regard to Task Groups

Noticeable progress has been made in this area with members of the public having attended a number of Task Group meetings including the Cemeteries Task Group, both of the Overview and Scrutiny meetings which considered the Impact of the Licensing Act, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which considered the Byelaws, and several Call-ins including Canal Corridor and the Storey Institute. The Committee continues to develop further ways in which public involvement can be increased in the scrutiny process. It is hoped that by issuing further press releases to generate public interest and encourage public participation, further improvements can be made.

Increasing the support to the Overview and Scrutiny work programme from Service departments

Services have been required to allocate 52 days per year for support to Overview and Scrutiny. Since the publication of the last Annual Report, significant progress has been made in this area.

It was highlighted in last year's report that an additional post was being created which would alleviate some of the pressures within Democratic Services. This has enabled increased resources to the Scrutiny process to support the development of a Work Programme that contributes effectively to the Council's Corporate Objectives.

Further development of Pre-decision Scrutiny

There has been a marked improvement in Officer responses to pre-decision scrutiny enquiries, enabling the Pre-decision Champion to identify and seek clarification on areas of concern, and provide necessary feedback to Members.

Improved Scrutiny of budget and voluntary sector grants

A formal Grants Task Group was established in November 2006 following consideration of a discussion document with recommendations to ensure the Council's grants process was efficient, robust and transparent and in line with the Council's Corporate Priorities. Amongst the remit of the task group is identifying ways of improving the monitoring role of the Budget and Performance Panel. Emerging recommendations include appointing a panel of three Budget and

Performance Panel Members to monitor the SLAs in conjunction with Democratic Services, including possible site visits to the larger recipients of funding.

Conclusion

The Overview and Scrutiny system continues to make steady progress and this report has highlighted many of these achievements. Members of Overview and Scrutiny are confident that with continued support and access to information the scrutiny process will continue to deliver further benefits to the Council and residents of the District.

The Committee are continuing to raise the profile of Overview and Scrutiny within and outside of the City Council. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee are eager to learn from the best practice methods adopted in other authorities and, where possible, to share best practice with other authorities.

Future Direction

Both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Budget and Performance Panel have begun to consider items for their Work Programmes for 2007/08.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The possible establishment of Task Groups in relation to:

- Council Assets, Heritage and Historic Buildings at risk
- Old People's Task Group
- Affordable Housing in the Rural areas
- A Vibrant Coast

Other areas for scrutiny include:

- Developing scrutiny of Partnerships – particularly in view of the White Paper
- Rationale for appointing Overview and Scrutiny Members to other bodies
- The implication of the Criminal and Justice Bill for scrutiny at Lancaster
- Community Call for Action (CCfa)



Queen Victoria Statue, Dalton Square – A Grade II* example of the City's heritage which may feature in a future Task Group

Budget and Performance Panel

- ❑ Integrating the Scrutiny of outside bodies into the work programme
- ❑ Audit Commission Quality of Life Area Profiles
- ❑ Performance Management Training

Acknowledgements

Overview and Scrutiny Councillors and Officers would like to thank the following for their contribution to the Scrutiny process during 2006/07:

- Cabinet Members who have appeared before Overview and Scrutiny bodies;
- All members of the Democratic Services team;
- Staff who have participated in Overview and Scrutiny reviews;
- Members of the public who have attended meetings or submitted evidence as part of the ongoing work of Scrutiny.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer Support Team

To contact the Overview and Scrutiny Support team, or to make suggestions for issues you would like to see included in the Overview and Scrutiny Work programme, e-mail scrutiny@lancaster.gov.uk

Name and Position	Responsibility	Contact Details
Mark Cullinan Chief Executive	Overall responsibility for Overview and Scrutiny	(01524) 582011 chiefexecutive@lancaster.gov.uk
Roger Muckle Corporate Director (Finance & Performance)	Corporate Director with responsibility for Budget and Performance	(01524) 582022 rmuckle@lancaster.gov.uk
James Doble Principal Democratic Support Officer	Responsibility for overall management and development of Overview and Scrutiny process	(01524) 582057 jdoble@lancaster.gov.uk
Liz Bateson Senior Democratic Support Officer	Responsibility for day-to-day management of Overview and Scrutiny (including Call-in), and Task Group support	(01524) 582047 ebateson@lancaster.gov.uk
Jon Stark Democratic Support Officer	Budget and Performance Panel and Task Group support	(01524) 582132 jstark@lancaster.gov.uk

Appendix A

CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

How does the Scrutiny function contribute to the Council's Corporate Objectives?

Issues Considered	Corporate Objectives									
	Meeting essential needs	Taking part	Care and Respect for Everyone	Life Long Learning	Travel and Access	Fun Creativity and Leisure	Using Resources Wisely	Protecting Wildlife and Landscapes	Economy and Work	Positive Planning and Development
Electoral Administration Act	√			√			√			
Promenade and Seashore Byelaws	√	√	√			√		√		
Reducing Alcohol Related Harm	√		√	√		√	√			
CCTV extension	√		√				√			√
Impact of the Licensing Act	√		√			√				
Non Voluntary Organisations Service Level Agreements and Funding for 2005/06 and beyond	√	√	√				√			
Neighbourhood Policing		√	√							
Consultation on the Primary Care Trust Structure within the District	√	√	√				√			
Canal Corridor Call in	√	√	√				√	√	√	√
Playground Provision Call in	√	√	√		√	√	√			√
Storey Institute Call in	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√
Star Chamber Process	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Best Value Performance Plan	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Performance Management	√						√			
Partnership Monitoring	√						√			
Business Plan Monitoring	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Corporate Finance	√						√			
Budget 2006/07	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Corporate Grants Service Level Agreements	√	√	√		√	√	√			
Value for Money/Efficiency Strategy	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Open Source Software							√		√	
Overspends – Luneside East/Dalton Square							√		√	√
Grants Task Group	√						√			
Cemeteries Task Group	√		√				√	√		
Civic Task Group		√					√	√		
Pollution in Morecambe Bay Task Group	√		√					√		
Fly Tipping Task Group	√		√				√	√		
Homelessness Task Group	√		√			√				