

Notice of Council (Reconvened from 15 October 2024)



Date: Monday, 4 November 2024 at 7.00 pm

Venue: Council Chamber, BCP Civic Centre, Bournemouth BH2 6DY

Chairman:

Cllr L Dedman

Vice Chairman:

Cllr S Bull

Cllr C Adams
Cllr S Aitkenhead
Cllr H Allen
Cllr M Andrews
Cllr S Armstrong
Cllr J Bagwell
Cllr S Bartlett
Cllr J Beesley
Cllr P Broadhead
Cllr D Brown
Cllr O Brown
Cllr R Burton
Cllr J J Butt
Cllr P Canavan
Cllr S Carr-Brown
Cllr J Challinor
Cllr A Chapmanlaw
Cllr B Chick
Cllr J Clements
Cllr E Connolly
Cllr P Cooper
Cllr M Cox
Cllr D d'Orton-Gibson
Cllr B Dove
Cllr M Dower

Cllr M Earl
Cllr J Edwards
Cllr G Farquhar
Cllr D Farr
Cllr A Filer
Cllr D A Flagg
Cllr M Gillett
Cllr C Goodall
Cllr A Hadley
Cllr J Hanna
Cllr E Harman
Cllr R Herrett
Cllr P Hilliard
Cllr B Hitchcock
Cllr M Howell
Cllr A Keddie
Cllr M Le Poidevin
Cllr S Mackrow
Cllr R Maidment
Cllr A Martin
Cllr D Martin
Cllr G Martin
Cllr J Martin
Cllr C Matthews
Cllr S McCormack

Cllr P Miles
Cllr S Moore
Cllr A-M Moriarty
Cllr B Nanovo
Cllr L Northover
Cllr M Phipps
Cllr K Rampton
Cllr Dr F Rice
Cllr J Richardson
Cllr V Ricketts
Cllr C Rigby
Cllr K Salmon
Cllr J Salmon
Cllr P Sidaway
Cllr P Slade
Cllr V Slade
Cllr M Tarling
Cllr T Trent
Cllr O Walters
Cllr C Weight
Cllr L Williams
Cllr K Wilson
Cllr G Wright
Vacancy

All Members of the Council are summoned to attend this meeting to consider the items of business set out on the agenda below.

The press and public are welcome to attend or view the live stream of this meeting at the following link: <https://democracy.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Mid=6260>

If you would like any further information on the items to be considered at the meeting please contact: Democratic Services on 01202 096660 or democratic.services@bcpCouncil.gov.uk

Press enquiries should be directed to the Press Office: Tel: 01202 118686 or email.press.office@bcpCouncil.gov.uk

This notice and all the papers mentioned within it are available at democracy.bcpCouncil.gov.uk

GRAHAM FARRANT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

25 October 2024

**DEBATE
NOT HATE**



Available online and
on the Mod.gov app



Maintaining and promoting high standards of conduct

Declaring interests at meetings

Familiarise yourself with the Councillor Code of Conduct which can be found in Part 6 of the Council's Constitution.

Before the meeting, read the agenda and reports to see if the matters to be discussed at the meeting concern your interests



What are the principles of bias and pre-determination and how do they affect my participation in the meeting?

Bias and predetermination are common law concepts. If they affect you, your participation in the meeting may call into question the decision arrived at on the item.

Bias Test

In all the circumstances, would it lead a fair minded and informed observer to conclude that there was a real possibility or a real danger that the decision maker was biased?

Predetermination Test

At the time of making the decision, did the decision maker have a closed mind?

If a councillor appears to be biased or to have predetermined their decision, they must NOT participate in the meeting.

For more information or advice please contact the Monitoring Officer
(janie.berry@bcpcouncil.gov.uk)

Selflessness

Councillors should act solely in terms of the public interest

Integrity

Councillors must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships

Objectivity

Councillors must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias

Accountability

Councillors are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this

Openness

Councillors should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing

Honesty & Integrity

Councillors should act with honesty and integrity and should not place themselves in situations where their honesty and integrity may be questioned

Leadership

Councillors should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs

AGENDA

Items to be considered while the meeting is open to the public

PLEASE NOTE: This meeting of the Council has been convened to deal only with the items of business not dealt with at the adjourned meeting of the Council on the 15 October 2024.

1. Apologies

To receive any apologies for absence from Councillors.

2. Declarations of Interests

Councillors are requested to declare any interests on items included in this agenda. Please refer to the workflow on the preceding page for guidance.

Declarations received will be reported at the meeting.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

Recommendations from the Cabinet and Committees

Please refer to the recommendations detailed in item 3 below.

3. Cabinet 2 October 2024 - Minute No. 62 - Constitution Hill Road, Poole, Dorset, BH14 0QA

7 - 20

RECOMMENDED that Council: -

- 1. Approve a further £995k for design, planning and demolition of existing buildings;**
- 2. Approve the delegation to the Chief Operations Officer in conjunction with the Director of Finance and the Director of Law & Governance authority to enter a contract for demolition providing all key parameters (including delivery within approved capital budget) are met;**
- 3. Appropriate the site for housing purposes under section 19 of the Housing Act 1985; and**
- 4. Transfer the site to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) from the General fund at an appropriate certified value of the land.**

Note - resolution 5 was a resolved matter by the Cabinet.

4. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

21 - 110

This is the annual report of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer on Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) activity within BCP Council. There is a requirement to report on the work of O&S to Council, to ensure good visibility of the function and Council ownership of activity and any improvements required.

The annual report contains a summary and analysis of O&S activity during 2023-24, reflections on working practices and an action plan identifying strategic improvements to the O&S function.

All O&S committees received the annual report for consideration, providing opportunity for comment prior to the supply of the final report to Council.

5. Questions from Councillors

The deadline for questions to be submitted to the Monitoring Officer is Monday 7 October 2024.

6. Notices of Motions in accordance with Procedure Rule 10

Bournemouth Women's Refuge

The following motion submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 10 of the Meeting Procedure Rules has been proposed by Councillor D Farr and seconded by Councillor H Allen: -

There has been no scrutiny of the decision to close Bournemouth's only Women's Refuge for those fleeing abusive relationships.

We ask the decision be reversed and the council's policy on social care for vulnerable individuals escaping domestic violence must be fully scrutinised before committee.

Council Elections Voting System

The following motion submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 10 of the Meeting Procedure Rules has been proposed by Councillor J Salmon and seconded by Councillor Oliver Walters.

This Council believes that the current First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) electoral system used for local elections does not fully reflect the diverse political preferences of our electorate. We propose that the Leader of the Council contacts the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and requests that BCP Councils 2027 local elections are used as an opportunity to trial an alternative Single Transferable Vote (STV) system.

Background:

1. Electoral Fairness:

- The FPTP system often results in disproportionate representation, where the distribution of seats does not accurately reflect the share of votes each party receives.
- STV is a proportional representation system that aims to allocate seats more fairly, ensuring that the majority of votes contribute to the election outcome.

2. Voter Empowerment:

- Under FPTP electors are frequently pressured to vote for candidates they do not favour out of fear of one they dislike even more being successful.
- Under FPTP any votes cast for the candidate who is not successful are simply ignored.
- STV allows voters to rank candidates in order of preference, reducing wasted votes and empowering voters to express nuanced preferences.

3. Encouraging Positive Campaigning:

- FPTP can encourage negative campaigning as parties focus on winning narrow pluralities.
- STV incentivizes positive campaigning, as candidates must seek not only first-choice votes but also second and third preferences from a broader electorate.

4. Successful Implementation Elsewhere:

- STV is already successfully used in several other democracies and in various elections within the United Kingdom, such as the Northern Ireland Assembly and local elections in Scotland.

Proposal:

- 1. This Council instructs the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government requesting that legislation be passed to allow the trial of STV in the 2027 local elections noting that BCP Council would be happy to pilot STV.***

Changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance and protecting pensioners from fuel poverty

The following motion submitted in accordance with Procedure Rule 10 of the Meeting Procedure Rules has been proposed by Councillor P Broadhead and seconded by Councillor B Dove: -

Council Notes:

- **The Labour Government's recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of means-tested benefits like Pension Credit, as announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves.**
- **The estimated impact of this decision, which in the BCP Council area alone could see 75,627 pensioners lose their fuel allowance, and which Age UK says will mean 2 million pensioners across the UK who badly need the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it.**
- **The significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping older residents of the BCP Council area and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.**
- **The criticism from Age UK, the Countryside Alliance and other charities, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this sudden policy change.**
- **The additional strain this decision will place on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible, further exacerbating their financial hardship.**

Council believes:

- **That the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely**

to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.

- While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many thousands across the BCP Council region sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance.
- The decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our poorest older residents.
- The government's approach fails to consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.

Council resolves to:

- (a) Bring forward a Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit which in some respects will help access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need.**
- (b) Request that the Council Leader write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty.**
- (c) Commit the Council to signing the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK and write to all members offering them the opportunity to sign the petition themselves.**
- (d) Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole are supported in claiming their entitlement.**

7. Urgent Decisions taken by the Chief Executive in accordance with the Constitution

To consider any urgent decisions taken by the Chief Executive in accordance with the Constitution.

No other items of business can be considered unless the Chairman decides the matter is urgent for reasons that must be specified and recorded in the Minutes.



Report subject	Constitution Hill Road, Poole, Dorset, BH14 0QA
Meeting date	2 October 2024
Status	Public
Executive summary	<p>The Constitution Hill Housing project is proposing to deliver c98 new residential homes to the Poole area.</p> <p>The project is currently proposed as, c98 homes made up of 76 Social Rent, 10 Temporary Accommodation and 12 Specialist Accommodation.</p> <p>Due to the increased build costs impacting the construction sector, the Council has revised its funding strategy required to support the increased budget. The revised funding strategy detail is included within paragraphs 12 to 18 (and appendix 1) of this report.</p> <p>Previous approvals were to the value of £430k (Officer Decision Record). This report requests a further £995k to secure planning approval and demolition of the seven existing buildings (a total spend of £1.425m, requiring Council approval). The full business case for the new build budget will be presented to Council at later date.</p>
Recommendations	<p>Cabinet recommends to Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve a further £995k for design, planning and demolition of existing buildings. 2. Approve the delegation to the Chief Operations Officer in conjunction with the Director of Finance and the Director of Law & Governance authority to enter a contract for demolition providing all key parameters (including delivery within approved capital budget) are met. 3. Appropriate the site for housing purposes under section 19 of the Housing Act 1985. 4. Transfer the site to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) from the General fund at an appropriate certified value of the land. <p>Cabinet Approval:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Approve the delegation to the Service Director to vary site security measures.
Reason for recommendations	To enable the proposed affordable housing scheme to progress through to demolition and planning application stage, enabling us to progress the project.

Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr Kieron Wilson, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Regulatory Services
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Corporate Director	Glynn Barton (Chief Operations Officer)
Contributors	Amena Matin, Director, Investment and Development Jonathan Thornton, Head of Housing Delivery Remi Oshibanjo, Housing Development Manager Gemma Parry, Development Project Manager
Wards	Parkstone
Classification	For Decision

Background

Site background information

1. Constitution Hill is owned by BCP Council and consists of the former Bournemouth and Poole College site purchased in 2015. It was brought into the General Fund as well as land which was surplus to the Ocean Academy school development. The site contains 7no. educational buildings including Lady Russell Cotes House, which is locally listed.
2. The site has been vacant for several years and has been subject to anti-social behaviour including arson and vandalism. Located away from main roads, the existing buildings are not overlooked. There are a high proportion of trees (covered by a blanket Tree Preservation Order), making the site vulnerable to anti-social behaviour. As a result, the Council has incurred significant costs to keep the site secure with 24 hour on-site security and installing hoarding, to maintain the safety of the buildings and adjacent neighbour properties.
3. Following recent and increasingly frequent incidents of antisocial behaviour and damage to property, it has become necessary to increase additional security onsite. This may involve increasing the frequency of visits, instructing security personnel to visit in pairs and enhancing the hoarding the fencing within and around the site. There has been a number of concerns raised from neighbours. There is an intention to install steel palisade fencing to reduce unauthorised entry on to the site in the period leading up to demolition and beyond.
4. By proceeding with the demolition, subject to planning, this will reduce the ongoing concerns and costs of security and unlock much needed land for new homes to reduce pressures on the housing service. The proposed scheme will provide high quality energy efficient housing to increase the Council's housing stock and to help reduce the numbers of families in need of suitable housing. The proposed self-contained Temporary Accommodation will assist in reducing the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation for homeless families.

Proposed scheme

5. The development will provide a total of circa 98 new homes on the Constitution Hill site and Brownsea Centre site. Plans for the proposed scheme are included in Appendix 5. The mix includes apartments for Social Rent, Temporary Accommodation, Specialist Housing and houses for Affordable Rent. The Temporary Accommodation and Specialist Housing includes appropriate communal spaces. The Temporary Accommodation and Specialist Housing rents are currently calculated as being capped at the Local Housing Allowance.
6. The proposal includes demolishing the remaining 7no. former education properties on the site. Broughton Housing (Building 1) was demolished, following an arson attack in February 2023. Retrospective planning consent has since been granted.
7. Below is an indicative programme for the project. The intention is to return to Cabinet and Council with a full business case in May 2025.

Indicative Programme

Milestones	Indicative End Date
Submission of Prior-Demolition Application	September 2024
Demolition of Existing Properties	January 2025
Enter into PPA	December 2024
Receive Full Planning Decision	May 2025
Cabinet/Council Approval of full Business Case	May 2025
Tendering of Build Works	June 2025
Start on Site	November 2025
Practical Completion	September 2027

8. The current recommendation requests £995k of total funding to cover the following:

Item of works	Cost	Date to complete (or completed)
Architectural design & Principal Designer	£304.1k	£70.1k spent to date. Architect fees - on hold.
Structural design (Lady Russell Cotes House only)	£6k	June 2024
Asbestos Surveys	£5.4k	June 2024
Ground Investigation	£14.2k	Completed
Arboricultural Surveys	£3.8	Completed
Topographical Survey	£30k	Completed
Ecological surveys including PEA (Bat survey and Badger survey)	£42k	July 2024
Employers Agent fees	£67.6k	On going
Planning fee including PPA	£72.3k	December 2024
Fire Consultant	£15.8k	December 2024
Demolition of existing buildings (including tree protection works)	£460k	January 2025
Asbestos removal	£40k	December 2024
Electric, Gas and water isolation and meter removals	£50k	December 2024
Valuation fee	£0.9k	Completed
Historic Costs (Future Places)	£79.7k	Completed
Bat Building and associated works (including design fees)	£100k	December 2024
Sub total	£1.291m	

10% Contingency	£129.2k	
Total	£1.425m	
Less previous approved fee	£430k	
Total funding required	£995k	

Quality build standards

9. The cost estimate allows for the provision of energy efficient homes to help address the BCP Council declared Climate and Ecological Emergency 2019. The development will contribute to the Council's commitment to achieving a net zero carbon emission target.
10. A carbon reduction statement has been completed which measures the sustainability of the development through carbon savings. The statement provides details of the carbon reduction figures and is included at Appendix 5.
11. All homes will be built to high sustainability standards delivered through excellent fabric first and airtightness measures. This standard offers the benefit of low carbon heating requirements, high levels of energy efficiency and an off-gas heating system.

Financial Strategy

12. The scheme currently has an approved budget of £430k, funded by prudential borrowing. This report seeks approval to increase this sum to £1.425m, by an additional amount of £995k. Of the additional monies being requested £460k relates to demolition of the existing buildings. The remainder relates to additional costs to get us to the Planning stage.
13. The site complexities, planning constraints and additional reports required to work up a planning application have added additional spend to the scheme. The £430k was made up from an Officer Decision Record (ODR) approved in January 2023 of £350k plus £42k for Future places and an additional ODR approved in August 2023 of £38k.
14. Both the £430k (existing budget) and £995k (proposed additional budget) are included within the overall proposed scheme estimate at £28.535m shown in Appendix 1, funding for which is shown as external grant funding, borrowing and use of Right To Buy receipts originally earmarked for Princess Road. The Princess Road scheme will be re appraised in the future without this current Right To Buy funding.
15. The total cost for demolition and planning stage of £1.425m will be financed by prudential borrowing.
16. The initial appraisal shows a viable scheme with a modest subsidised cash flow over 30 years averaging at £10,156 per year based on the assumptions in the table (see Appendix 2). These assumptions will be further reviewed in drafting the full business case.
17. The appropriation of the land between the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account, at an appropriate certified value, will be implemented immediately. The borrowing costs in respect of the £1.425m for demolition and planning stage costs will be incurred in or transferred to the HRA. Consequentially the HRA's level of indebtedness as measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) will be increased by both the land transfer value and the £1.425m.
18. The full build business case will require and increase in the Council overall threshold for borrowing. The Audit and Governance Committee will therefore be asked to recommend to Council an increase the level of borrowing following the production of both the full business case and a 30-year HRA business plan demonstrating that the debt is affordable.

Risks to the HRA

19. In the event the scheme becomes unviable, the total cost incurred up to that point will be written off in the HRA bearing the full cost of the write off. The HRA will then possess the land which it can dispose or use for other benefits.
20. The full business case will need to demonstrate that the scheme is fully viable based on the assumptions at that time in the context of a 30 year business plan if any subsidy is required. The full business will also confirm the certified value of the land to be used in the transfer of debt between the General Fund and the HRA and therefore as part of the business case and viability assessment.
21. It should be recognised that there are still challenges to this scheme as the Council have no confirmation of government grant approval and assumptions made in the initial model may change (e.g. Government policy re social rent increase, baseline inflationary estimates, market forces, regulatory changes, etc.)

Benefits to the Council

22. The Council will benefit from less cost of temporary accommodation. There will be less borrowing in the General Fund and there will be an increased supply of affordable and specialist homes.

Taxation and Public Sector Subsidy (Subsidy Control)

23. Generally, the construction of residential dwellings does not attract VAT, although VAT can be charged on professional fees such as those for architects, surveyors etc. However, this VAT can be mitigated using a design and build contract (with the advantage being that the design services could also benefit from VAT zero-rating as following the liability of the principal supply of construction services). Whilst outside of a main contract we have allowed for design related VAT costs.
24. Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) is not applicable to the land transfer between General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), as the transfer will not constitute a transaction chargeable to tax for SDLT purposes.
25. Subsidy Control is applicable as State resource is given to the Council, in terms of grant from MHCLG and Homes England.

Value for Money

26. The construction costs are based on a projected build cost of £2,670m2 including abnormals (demolition, asbestos and on costs). At this level the scheme remains viable in with a modest subsidy in terms of costs, and a 10% contingency budget has been included in the financial appraisal.
27. Value for money is represented by the following:
 - a) Fabric first specification, including off gas heating/hot water, heat pump technology, to achieve lower energy bills for tenants
 - b) 100% affordable housing, proving homes for people on the housing waiting list
 - c) Savings to the General Fund Revenue Account on future security costs at c£42k per annum.

Consultation

28. Portfolio Holder and Ward Councillor consultation has continued from scheme inception.
29. We intend to carry out a full public consultation exercise once we have feedback from the pre-app planning process (which will establish the pattern of development). This will be undertaken prior to a full planning application being made, to allow for appropriate adjustment of the plans in response to the results of the public consultation.

Approval Conditions

30. Should the build cost increase across the scheme, the Prudential Borrowing would need to be increased to maintain a near steady state for the long-term cash flow. Should costs reduce, typically the funding will reduce proportionately.

Summary of legal implications

31. There Section 9 of the Housing Act 1985 empowers the Council to erect buildings for the purpose of providing housing accommodation where this is undertaken on land acquired for this purpose. The land can be treated as if “acquired for this purpose” by appropriating the land under Section 19 of the same Act.
32. Accordingly, the Council may exercise its statutory power to build the housing scheme once the properties are demolished and the site has been appropriated for housing purposes under section 19 of the 1985 Act.
33. Following the appropriation, the Council must make the requisite adjustments to the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account as detailed above (section 24, Town and Country Planning Act 1959; section 74(1)(b), Local Government and Housing Act 1989).
34. The council is empowered to borrow under S1 Local Government Act 2003 for any purpose relevant to its functions. The report sets out that the borrowing will be required to enable the delivery of housing.
35. The Council will need to comply with all relevant procurement requirements in undertaking the proposals contained within this Report and the Council will seek further procurement and legal advice in that respect.

Summary of human resources implications

36. The existing Housing Delivery Team will oversee the delivery of this scheme alongside the other new build schemes in the pipeline. Following a previous market procurement exercise the specialist role of Employers Agent and Cost Consultancy is already in place with Ward Williams if the construction phase of the project is to proceed.

Summary of DIA impact

37. The DIA number is 238.

Summary of public health implications

38. The housing scheme will create a sustainable good quality housing development and bring many benefits to the residents and the wider community. The proposed scheme gives careful consideration to the wider issues, such as trees, to help create an attractive area which improves the wellbeing of the community.

Summary of equality implications

39. The EIA number is 2024/30.

Summary of risk assessment

40. The following key risks have been identified alongside mitigating actions:

Overall Project Risk Rating		
Key Project Risks	Gross Risk Rating	Mitigating Actions
Rising construction costs render the project unaffordable	Low	Good project management will enable the close monitoring of progress and any issues that may arise will be dealt with promptly.
Planning approval for the scheme.	Low	The site is specifically identified for residential development in the emerging Local Plan. We intend to use a Pre-Planning Agreement (PPA) approach to work collaboratively with the Planning Team, a draft PPA document has been drawn up and the cost included in the financial appraisal.
Presence of Bats. Impact: Bats found post Bat Survey being completed. Outcome: Project delay due to removal of bats. Description: Bats potentially in existing buildings. Will require mitigation if found.	Low	Work with ecologist / bat consultant to understand what requirements / effects of bats being found are. Scope out and undertake surveys. Seek to sequence works around this.
Impact of Trees: Impact: Trees populate area for new development. Outcome: Trees needing to be relocated / removed. Design change around protected trees. Description: Site is densely populated with trees. These may be protected so have to be relocated, or the design changed around these.	Low	Ensure adequate programme / cost allowance. Ensure project description allows for these works. Engagement throughout with arboriculturist. Design team to consider position of existing trees to minimise works required to trees.
Ground Conditions Impact: Different foundations to those allowed for in cost plan. Potential Ground subsidence, etc. Outcome: Specialist foundations (e.g. piles) required	Low	Undertake further GI to ground once hardstanding and existing buildings are removed. GI undertaken at the earliest opportunity; this will enable the designers to modify design in line with ground conditions.
Fall in housing need for accommodation tenure provided caused by changes to the housing market or economy	Low	Monitor through construction period requirement for tenure with the Strategic Housing Options team. Should a particular need reduce the Housing Delivery Team can appraise and suggest changes to tenure to suit need and financial viability as required.
Insufficient funding available, such as failure to secure funding from Homes England	Low	The Housing Delivery Team are raising the scheme proposal with Homes England in order to gauge their appetite for funding the scheme. However, past experience indicates that provided the grant levels requested can be justified and within an acceptable range, Homes England are likely to be interested in funding the scheme once delivery is more certain (i.e. once it has received planning consent). Should Homes England funding not be made available, internal funding would be investigated. If insufficient funding were available, schemes will be prioritised and potentially some schemes put on hold until sufficient funding became available.
Increased fire risk during construction phase	Low	Design and construction will be closely monitored by the Housing Delivery Team, Employers Agent, and the principal contractor to minimise any risk. Plots will be constructed at different times to provide adequate fire distance breaks, etc.

Property development activity involves inherent risks	Low	A cautious approach has been adopted here to minimise these risks as much as possible. Financial contingencies have been included and significant consultation has been undertaken to date to help ensure a sustainable scheme.
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Background papers

41. [Council Newbuild Housing Acquisition Strategy CNHAS 2023-2028](#)
& [Historic England listing rejection report \(Lady Russell Cotes House\)](#).
42. [Approval](#)

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Income and Expenditure Summary
- Appendix 2: Summary of Funding Assumptions
- Appendix 3: Programme
- Appendix 4: Site layout
- Appendix 5: Carbon Reduction Statement (Ward Williams)

Appendix 1 - Financial Summary for Constitution Hill

				Comment
Homes Prudential Borrowing Period				
HRA September 2024				
76	12	10	98	
Social Rent £000s	Specialist Acc £000s	Temp Acc £000s	TOTAL £000s	
16,325	2,359	2,367	21,051	
932	143	127	1,202	
1,633	235	237	2,105	
41	61	67	169	
3,257	471	472	4,200	
22,188	3,269	3,270	28,727	
-9,880	-900	-1,080	-11,860	
-2,000	0	0	-2,000	
0	0	0	0	
0	0	0	0	
0	0	0	0	
(11,880)	(900)	(1,080)	(13,860)	
10,308	2,369	2,190	14,867	
20,010	1,950	2,250	24,210	
Total Scheme Cost				
Total Scheme Funding (as Cabinet and Council Approved)				
Net Cost shown as Shortfall if +ve				
Total scheme value				
Scheme Costs				
Works				
FCAs				
Other costs (Contingency at x%)				
Interest (during Build Phase)				
Land Acquisition costs				
Scheme Funding				
Homes England Grant - TBC Affordable Housing Grant				
- Capital Funding - 1 for 1 Right to Buy Receipts				
- Capital Funding - Reserve allocation				
Prudential Borrowing - additional borrowing				
OPE funding				
Funding rate (per unit)				

Parameters	Assumption description
Rental income inflationary increase	3% (CPI+1%) for social rent units (76) 2% (CPI) for temporary and specialist accommodation units (22)
Running costs inflationary increase	2% (CPI)
Loss of rental income due to voids	2% for social rent units 6% for temporary accommodation 10% for specialist accommodation
Management costs for HRA	5.5%
Repairs and renewals	£783 per annum per unit
Major repair allowance	0.66% from year 10 after completion (Allowing for cost of infrastructure)
Financing costs	Interest on maturity basis – 4.61% with 0.4% discount for HRA No Minimum Revenue Payment assumption for HRA scheme
Certified value of land appropriation between General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	£4.3m based on 2020 valuation for a mixed private rented sector and affordable housing accommodation. A new valuation is in progress as the certified value of the land is expected to reduce for a 100% HRA scheme.

Appendix Three



Project Title:
Constitution Hill
Project Lead:
Gemma Parry

Historic Progress

End date

Task

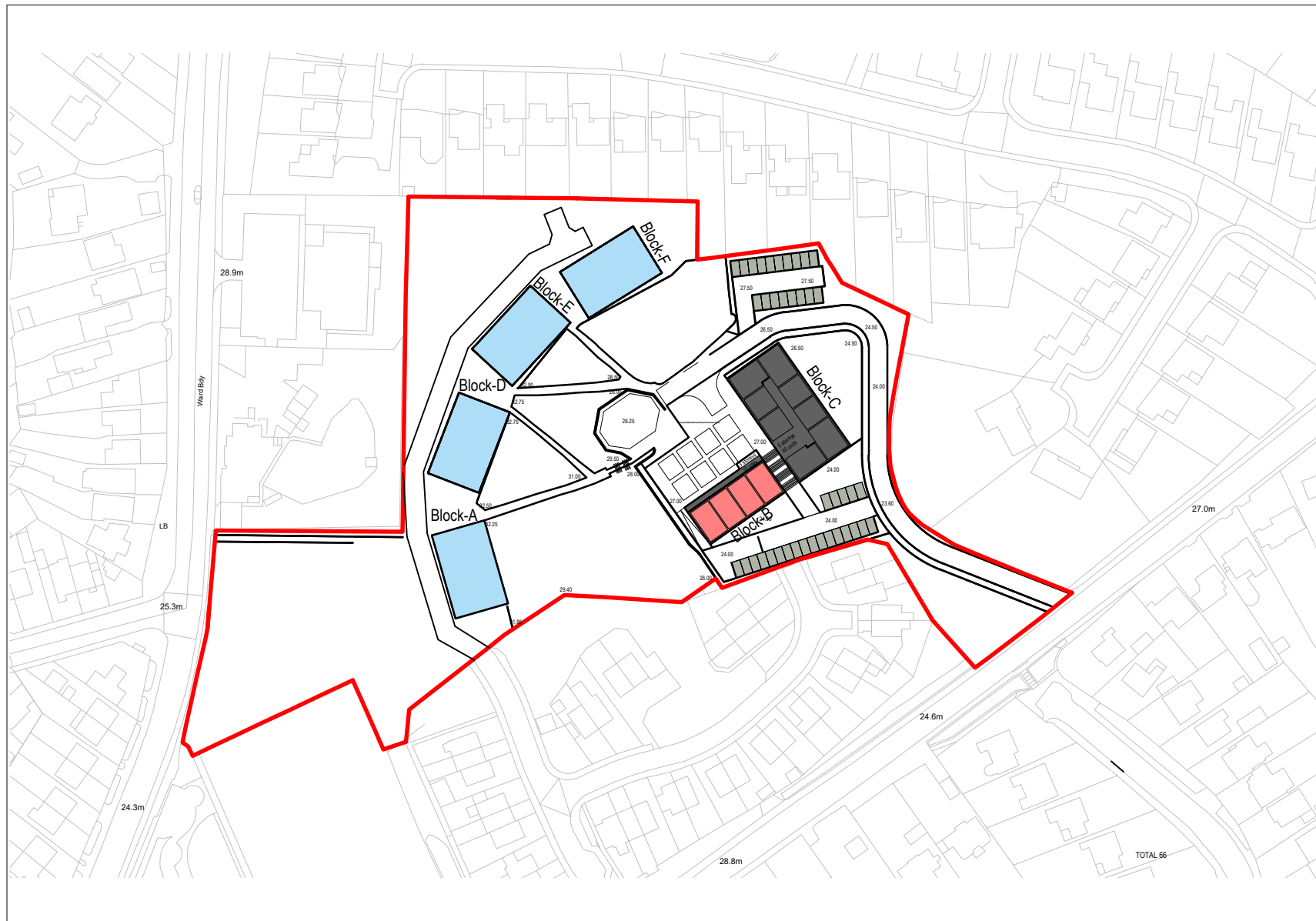
Site investigations (surveys & reports)	01/07/24
Design stage - concept design	01/05/24
Cost analysis - Employers agent	07/04/24
Bat/ Badger Surveys	31/08/24
Planning - Prior demolition application.	25/10/24

Planning/ Design/ Demolition Stage

Task

Cabinet report submitted and decision	31/10/24
Disconnect the Utilities	01/03/25
Bat works	01/12/24
Demolition Stage	02/01/25
PPA stage / Design stage	01/03/25
Planning stage	02/06/25
Tender stage	02/06/25

Appendix Four



Baseline Carbon Assessment Dashboard

1. Project Summary

This carbon assessment is for a 10, 1 bed, 3 storey apartment block on a wider mixed residential scheme . The project comprises of the construction of a mixed residential development, the archetype is residential. The project is currently at RIBA Stage 1, and this represents the first carbon assessment.

The intention is that the Carbon Assessment is developed further along with the Cost Estimate at the next design phase. The baseline assessment would benefit from additional detail regarding external enclosure and proposed services.

This Carbon Baseline Assessment has been based upon initial drawings issued. The project is at feasibility stage, therefore information is limited and assumptions have been made within this Carbon Baseline Assessment that are outlined in Section 3.0 of the Cost estimate and in addition exclude Operational Carbon.

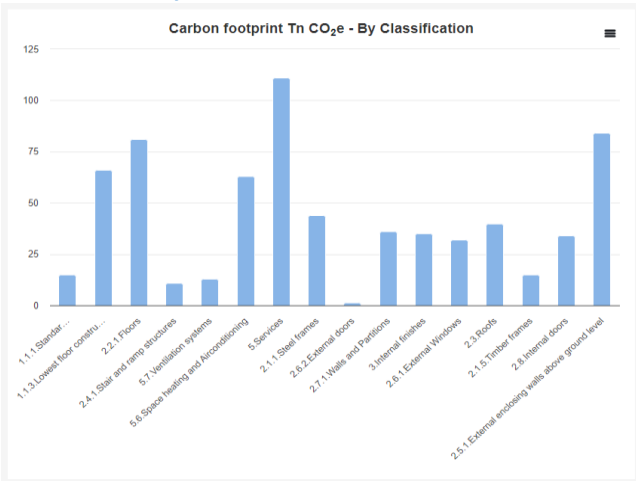
2. Whole Life Carbon Reporting and Baseline Assessments: Introduction and Purpose

Climate change is the greatest environmental challenge we face, and the Government has responded to calls to mandate whole-life carbon assessments for buildings.

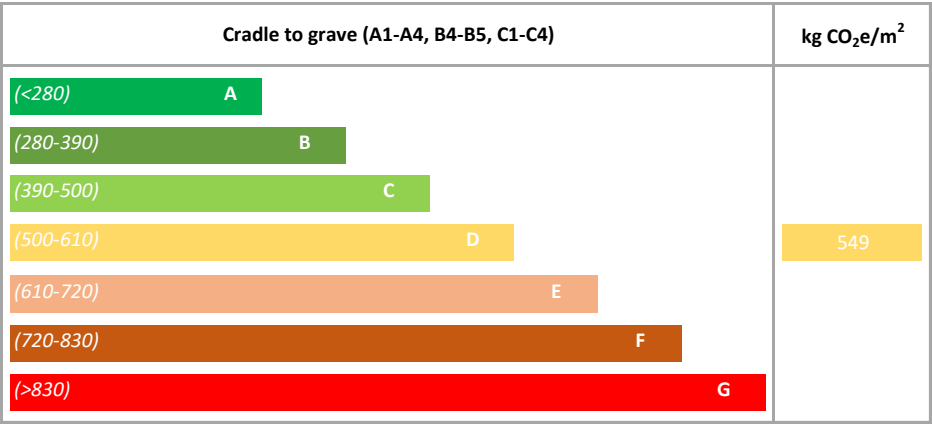
WWA utilise the OneClick Life Cycle Assessment software to assess the carbon performance (and environmental impact) of a building over the course of its' anticipated lifecycle. A key aspect of this is ensuring assessments are undertaken in sufficient time so as to be able to influence the developing design to best maximise environmental performance alongside other project specific constraints.

The baseline carbon assessment studies allow early stage assessments to be made based on developing information, to ensure decisions are made with carbon performance considered at all times.

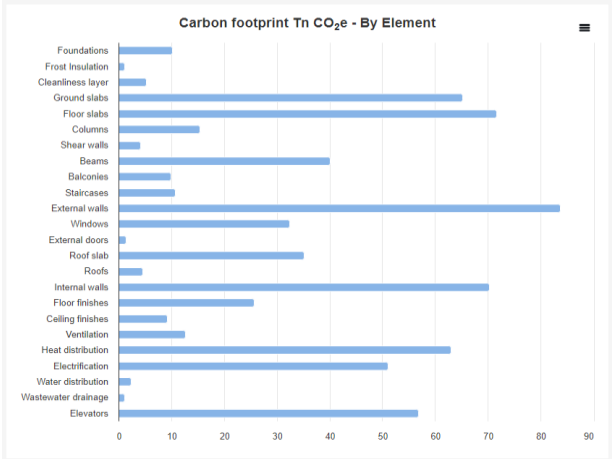
3. Key Project Carbon Contributors by Classification



4. Carbon Performance Benchmarks



5. Carbon footprint Tn CO2e By Element



6. Commentary, Suggestions and Next Steps

More detailed input/specification is required for:

- * The external enclosure make up
- * The specification of the integrated services for the building
- *Foundation type

Key material review required for more sustainable alternatives once more detailed specification received.

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COUNCIL



Report subject	Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report
Meeting date	15 October 2024
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>This is the annual report of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer on Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) activity within BCP Council. There is a requirement to report on the work of O&S to Council, to ensure good visibility of the function and Council ownership of activity and any improvements required.</p> <p>The annual report contains a summary and analysis of O&S activity during 2023-24, reflections on working practices and an action plan identifying strategic improvements to the O&S function.</p> <p>All O&S committees received the annual report for consideration, providing opportunity for comment prior to the supply of the final report to Council.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Council consider and comment on the annual report and associated action plan. 2. Council approve the proposed minor revisions to the O&S committee structure illustrated at figure 1b within this report.
Reason for recommendations	<p>The Constitution requires the Statutory Scrutiny Officer to report to Council on an annual basis on the work of Overview and Scrutiny, including recommendations for any changes that may be required to ensure the function remains fit for purpose. The report has been informed by consultation with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the O&S committees and referred to the four O&S committees for awareness and comment. Consideration of the annual report by the O&S committees and Council upholds principle b) of good scrutiny, as outlined in the Constitution, that O&S shall 'be a Councillor led and owned function that seeks to continuously improve through self-reflection and development'.</p>

Portfolio Holder(s):	Not applicable – Overview and Scrutiny is a non-executive function.
Corporate Director	Graham Farrant - Chief Executive
Report Authors	Lindsay Marshall – Overview and Scrutiny Specialist
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

Background

The Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

1. [‘Overview and Scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils and combined authorities’](#) by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) recommends that councils report annually on their Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) function and activity. The purpose of the report is to outline the activity and output of the O&S function over the previous year, and to identify improvements for the function to ensure it remains fit for purpose. This report is based on the municipal year of May 2023 - April 2024.
2. This is the report of the council's Statutory Scrutiny Officer, who is responsible for supporting and promoting O&S activity. Contribution has been made by other officers who provide support to O&S and Chairs and Vice Chairs of O&S committees.
3. The report was received by all O&S committees and is now supplied to Council for consideration and comment. Comments raised on the annual report during O&S committee consultation included:
 - support for the revisions to the O&S committee structure remits as set out at paragraphs 8-10 of this report.
 - the importance of the independence of the O&S function within the council.
 - acknowledgement that in some committees the number of agenda items had been reduced to be in keeping with good practice levels, allowing more time for impactful scrutiny to take place.
4. Provision of the report to the O&S committees and Council was delayed by the requirements of the pre-election period of the 2024 Parliamentary election, which necessitated the cancellation of public council meetings.

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

5. The purpose of overview and scrutiny, principles of good scrutiny and its role in supporting the ambitions and values of the council is set out in Appendix 1.

Summary - 2023/24 strategic O&S activity

6. During summer 2023, 36 new councillors were inducted into BCP Council following May 2023 local elections. O&S activity focussed on supporting these councillors with training and skills development, along with targeted support to those in chairing positions, many of whom were new to O&S chairing. The administration agreed that all O&S chairs would be drawn from opposition groups in line with good practice, to enhance the independence of O&S.

7. In September 2023, Council agreed revisions to its O&S committee structure, to remove the Corporate & Community O&S Committee and replace this with the O&S Board, along with some adjustments to the membership, remit and meeting frequency of committees. O&S committee remits were adjusted to align to the revised Cabinet Portfolios which changed following the May 2023 elections. The O&S Board also took on overall responsibility for all call-in matters and for O&S function oversight, development and reporting, previously the responsibility of O&S Chairs collectively.
8. In July 2024, Council agreed a new Leader and further changes were made to the number and remit of Cabinet portfolios. Although this occurred after the reporting period for this report, the council's Constitution makes provision for any changes to the O&S committee structure to be proposed to Council as part of this annual report. As the designation of functions across the four O&S committees is based on the division of Portfolio Holder responsibilities, adjustments to the wording and remit of O&S committees are now proposed to maintain an efficient fit and clear lines of accountability between O&S committees and Cabinet portfolios.
9. The changes proposed to the O&S committee functions are minor. All changes within the proposed revised structure reflect amended responsibilities and wording expressed within each Cabinet portfolio. All amended portfolio responsibilities have been included within the same O&S committee as per previous arrangements, with the exception of those items listed under the Environment & Place O&S Committee in red text. These were previously included within the O&S Board responsibilities. These changes are intended to provide a more effective fit with other similar responsibilities within the remit of this committee.
- 10. Figures 1a and b below illustrate the current O&S committee structure alongside the proposed revised structure. Council is asked to approve these changes. O&S committees were asked to comment prior to Council approval of the structure and were content with the proposed revisions.**

Figure 1a – Current Overview & Scrutiny Committee Structure

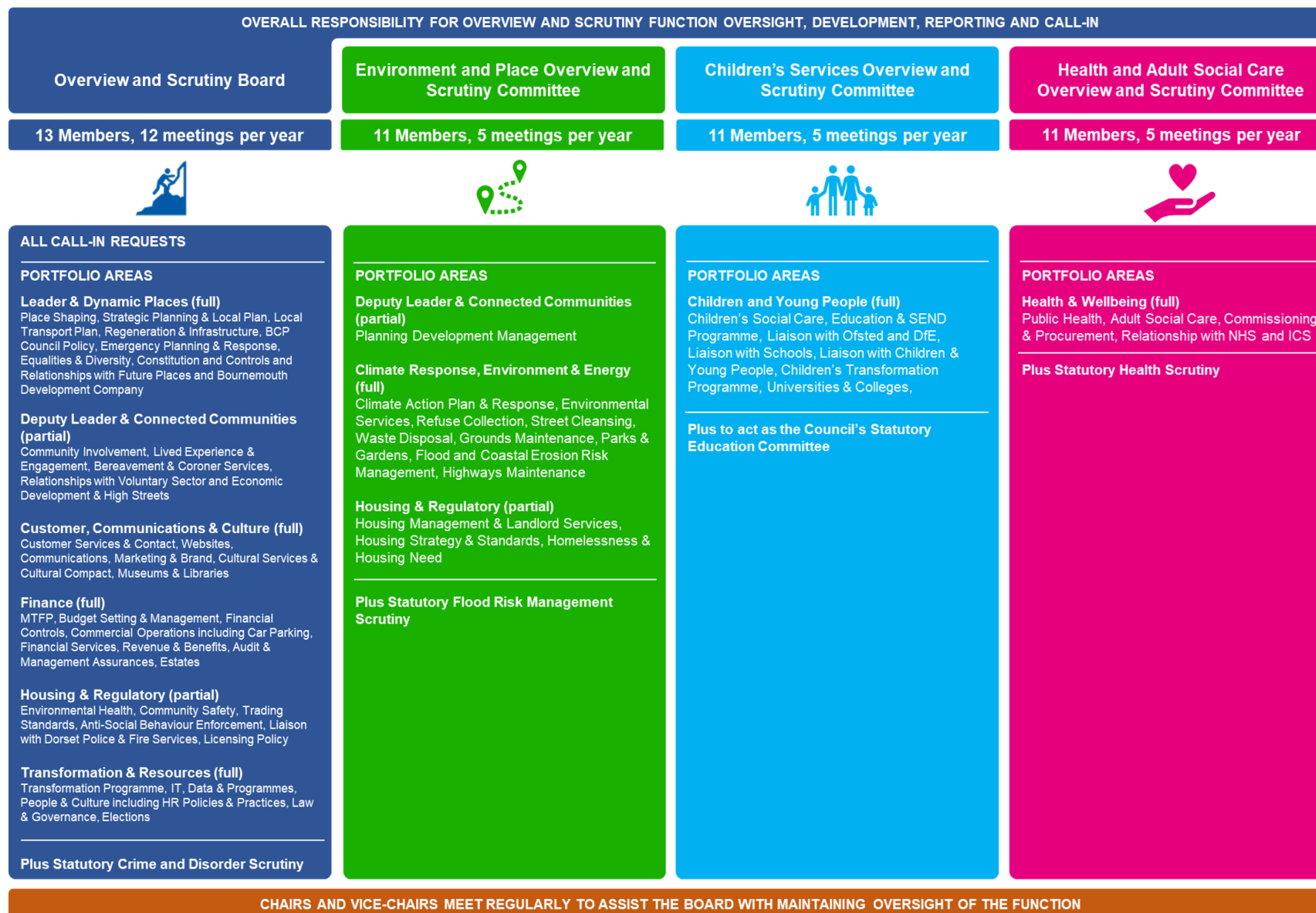
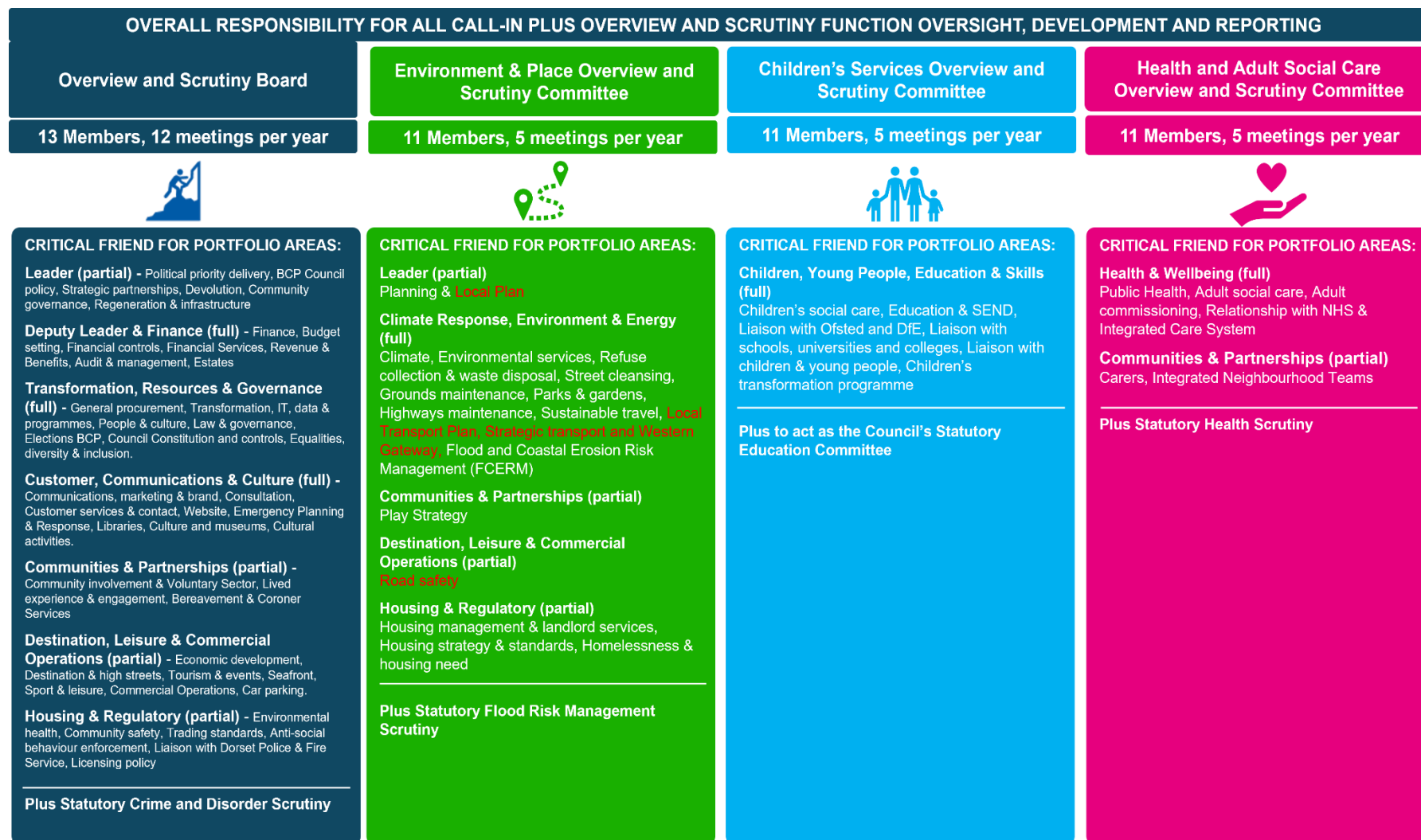


Figure 1b – Proposed Overview & Scrutiny Committee Structure



11. The most significant of the committee revisions in September 2023 was the establishment of monthly meetings for the O&S Board, enabling better opportunity for the tracking of Cabinet activity and recommendations to Cabinet on forthcoming decisions. This change increased the overall scheduled O&S meeting numbers from 20 per year to 27, an uplift of 35%. The resourcing implications associated with this change are outlined in paragraphs 55 to 66 below.
12. All committees undertook annual work programming. Following O&S committee changes, the O&S Board and the newly named Environment and Place O&S Committee benefitted from supported action/learning workshops, led by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. The aim of this activity was to:
 - Develop O&S members' work programming skills to equip them to create work programmes rooted in good practice.
 - Refine the approach to scrutiny by articulating a more refined role for O&S. This saw the establishment of a 'sustainability lens' and a 'resident impact lens', to be used by the Environment and Place Committee and O&S Board respectively. The committees also developed a framework setting out their approach to topic selection.
 - Specifically address a recommendation arising within the council's Best Value Notice Action Plan to reduce the level of pre-decision scrutiny on O&S work plans and include more policy development work. Work was targeted towards these committees as they previously undertook the highest level of pre-decision scrutiny.
 - Generate a work plan based on the above good practices.

The framework developed through this work is attached at Appendix 2. This provides a mechanism to support future work programming in all O&S committees, and communicate the aims of O&S to the wider council and stakeholders. The learning captured through this work will be applied to the other O&S committees in their next round of work programming.

13. Work was progressed against the O&S Action Plan, agreed by Council in September 2023. The action plan sets out strategic improvements required to bring O&S activity in line with statutory guidance. This work is secondary to the support of core functions for O&S such as supporting committee meetings and working groups in accordance with the constitution. Progress against the action plan is set out in more detail in paragraphs 47-54 below.
14. Chairs and Vice Chairs were supported in their leadership roles through regular meetings to share good practice, challenges and to provide strategic monitoring to the O&S function.

Summary - 2023/24 committee activity, statistics and analysis

15. A summary of work undertaken across all O&S committees is attached to this report at Appendix 3. Highlights included working groups on blue badge waiting times and the use of data to strengthen scrutiny; a focus on the safety valve programme relating to children's services, and a focus on climate change and sustainability.

Committee Statistics

16. Committee activity has been assessed to provide an understanding of the breakdown of work undertaken during 2023/24, the resulting outputs and potential areas for development. The following data is set out below:

- Average number of agenda items per committee, to assess against good practice levels.
- Working groups undertaken.
- Agenda item categories, to provide a breakdown of the type of work undertaken by each committee.
- Outputs – an assessment of the number of agenda items leading to substantive recommendations.

These have been analysed to provide a commentary on areas that align to good practice and those where further development is recommended to enhance the value provided by the O&S function.

17. It should be noted that this data provides an indication of where O&S has directed its resources in 2023/24 and the resulting output, however not all O&S benefit can be assessed in this way and reflected through data. Some O&S outcomes can be 'softer', for example:

- Public demonstration of test and challenge on matters of community importance or concern.
- Comments raised through scrutiny may be reported by O&S Chairs to Cabinet but not formulated into recommendations.
- Actions raised through meetings and tracked by committees may not be captured as formal recommendations. Action tracking is particularly used by the Health and Children's O&S committees who undertake a closer monitoring role with their respective service areas.
- Informal discussions between decision makers and O&S members can influence the early direction of travel for a policy.
- The intention alone of an O&S committee to provide scrutiny to a certain area can trigger further work prior to reporting that can strengthen decision making.

Agenda item levels

18. The average number of agenda items, 'for information' items and working groups for each committee during the period is set out in table 1 below.

Table 1 – Agenda Items per O&S committee, 2023/24			
O&S Committee	Average number of agenda items	'For information' items, circulated outside of committee (annual total)	Working Groups
Overview and Scrutiny Board	2.1	0	1
Environment & Place	1.6	0	0
Children's Services	4.1	8	0
Health and Adult Social Care	4.0	3	1
Corporate & Community	1.5	0	0

Analysis

19. Attempting to scrutinise a large number of items can dilute the benefit of scrutiny. A 'deep dive' approach to a smaller number of items is encouraged over a 'broad brush' approach to a larger number of items. For this reason the recommended maximum number of items per committee agenda is two to three.
20. Prior to the 2023 local elections, legacy O&S Committees in BCP often held lengthy meetings with multiple agenda items, creating unmanageable workloads and in some cases additional monthly meetings as standard to accommodate the O&S work timetabled. This was particularly seen in the area of work covered by the O&S Board, with 33 additional meetings held by the previous O&S Board during 2019-21.
21. It is evident that the approach to scrutiny selection has changed in both the O&S Board and Environment & Place O&S Committee with levels falling into line with good practice. This is a significant improvement against previous years of O&S activity.
22. Children's Services and Health & Adult Social Care O&S Committees would benefit from refining workloads further to keep to the recommended levels and maximise the effectiveness of scrutiny undertaken with a greater focus on 'deep dive' work on a smaller number of topics.
23. Two investigative working groups were undertaken during 2023/24, on the topics of blue badge waiting times and data use in overview and scrutiny work. Both working groups led to a number of recommendations. The constitution allows for one working group to be undertaken per committee at a time, with this form of scrutiny work

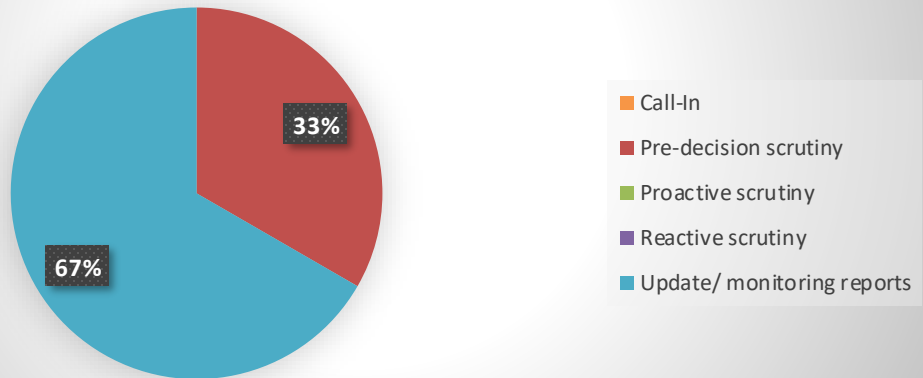
being an ideal approach for proactive work which is likely to lead to the most valuable outcomes. Committee time can be used flexibly, for example as an evidence session to contribute to the scope of a working group, or in the form of an inquiry day, which may condense the inquiry of a working group into a focussed session. Proactive work of this nature is resource intensive and must be balanced against overall resources available to support the O&S function but should be prioritised wherever possible as a form of scrutiny that is likely to lead to more impactful outcomes.

O&S work categories

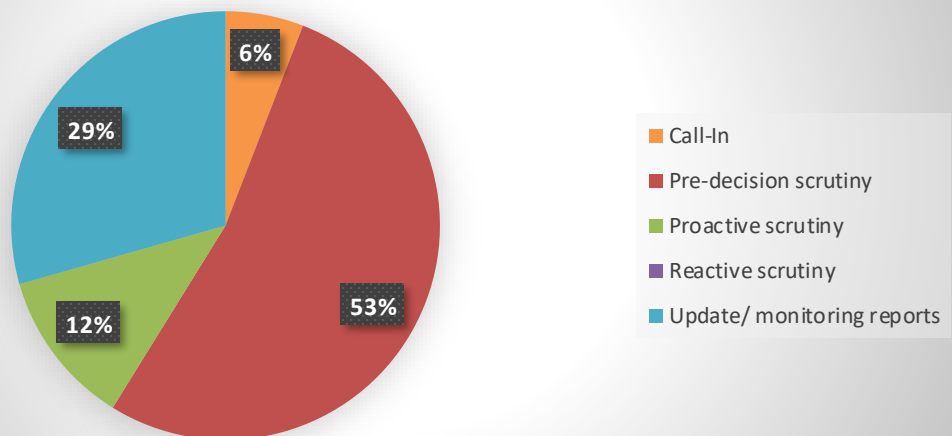
24. A breakdown of the categories of scrutiny items considered by each committee are set out in the diagrams below. These are broken down as follows:

- **Call-in**
Reports relating to the statutory right of O&S to 'call-in' an executive decision that has been made but not yet implemented. Revision to the remit of scrutiny committees placed all call-in responsibility with the O&S Board from September 2023 onwards.
- **Pre-decision scrutiny**
Scrutiny of a report close to the point of decision making – eg. a Cabinet report.
- **Proactive scrutiny**
Early policy development work and exploration of future options for service delivery.
- **Reactive scrutiny**
Scrutiny of emerging issues that arise throughout the year and can't easily be planned for in advance.
- **Update/monitoring reports**
Information giving reports.

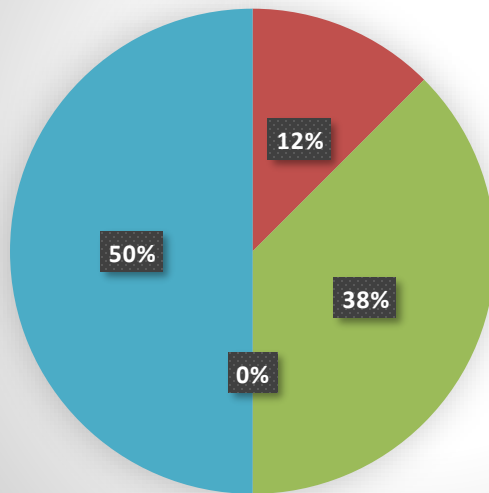
Corporate & Community O&S Agenda Item Categories (decommissioned September 2023)



O&S Board Agenda Item Categories (established September 2023)

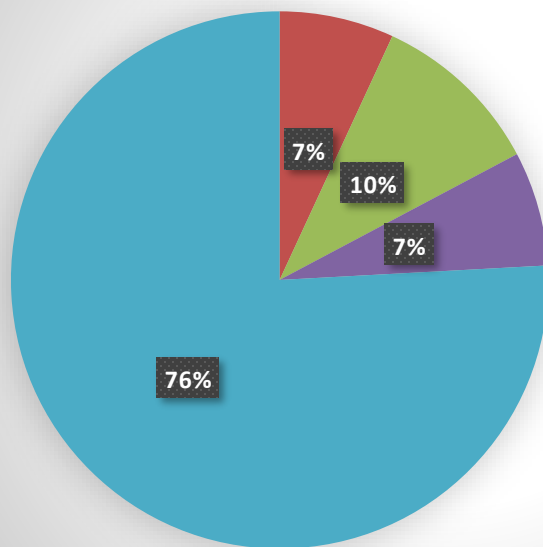


Environment & Place O&S Agenda Item Categories

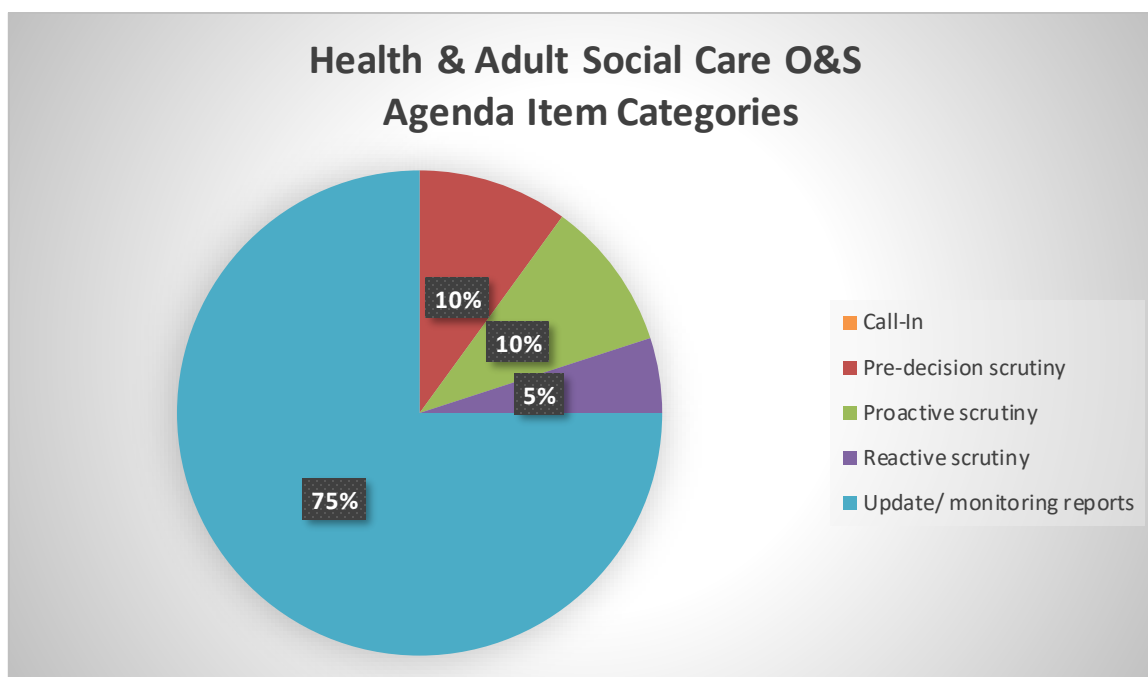


- Call-In
- Pre-decision scrutiny
- Proactive scrutiny
- Reactive scrutiny
- Update/ monitoring reports

Children's Services O&S Agenda Item Categories



- Call-In
- Pre-decision scrutiny
- Proactive scrutiny
- Reactive scrutiny
- Update/ monitoring reports



Analysis

Call-In

25. O&S call-in should be used as a last resort where there is a concern that a decision has not been made in keeping with budget and policy framework of the council or the principles of decision making as set out in the council's constitution.

26. O&S guidance states:

"Scrutiny committees do have the power to 'call in' decisions, i.e. ask the executive to reconsider them before they are implemented, but should not view it as a substitute for early involvement in the decision-making process or as a party-political tool."

27. There was one call-in item considered during 2023/24, in keeping with an average of one call in per year during the 2019-23 period. The level of call-in items in BCP therefore does not of itself indicate a concern with existing governance arrangements, or excessive use of call-in as a party-political tool. Low call-in levels may be an indication that governance arrangements in the council offer appropriate alternative opportunities to test and challenge decision making, such as a suitable level of pre-decision scrutiny opportunities and flexibility for all non- executive councillors to ask questions in O&S meetings and Cabinet meetings.

Pre-decision scrutiny

28. In 2023/24, greater refinement of O&S topics was strongly encouraged through work induction training, work programming activity and through ongoing support to chairs and committees. The aim was to create a more even balance between pre-decision scrutiny items and proactive scrutiny items.

29. The levels of pre-decision scrutiny in 2023/24 are now far lower than in previous years. Although these weren't assessed in the same way during the 2019-23 period it is known that, in some committees, pre-decision scrutiny dominated work programmes. The highest level of pre-decision scrutiny is now just under 50%, for O&S Board work. This is to be expected as the Board remit relates to a higher proportion of service areas and items which generate Cabinet decisions. Board meetings also align to the Cabinet timetable to specifically allow opportunity for pre-decision scrutiny before every Cabinet meeting.
30. A specific action to reduce the level of pre-decision scrutiny was incorporated into the council's Best Value Notice Action Plan and has now been completed as a result of the reduction in levels seen in committees.

Proactive scrutiny

31. Proactive scrutiny levels are limited across all committees and could be increased. Good practice indicates that proactive, 'deep dive' scrutiny is the form of scrutiny activity most likely to provide value-added outcomes. All scrutiny committees should aim to prioritise proactive scrutiny wherever possible.
32. The O&S Board and Environment and Place O&S Committee focussed heavily on proactive work suggestions during their annual work programming activity, and it is expected that these levels will increase in 2024/25 for these committees. The remaining O&S committees will be encouraged to take a similar approach during their next round of work programming.
33. Effective annual work programming, with minimal changes throughout the year and a reduction in the overall number of items considered by O&S would provide time to scope and undertake proactive work effectively.

Update/ monitoring reports

34. Reducing the level of update/ monitoring reports received by all committees would release capacity for more proactive work.
35. Monitoring reports took up the largest proportion of the work plan for four out of five committees operating during the 23/24 period. However good practice is for all information-based reports to be received outside of a committee setting, reserving committee time for value-added scrutiny that is likely to lead to recommendations. All committees should aim to reduce this level by receiving information items in other ways. Officers are actively encouraging this approach.

Reactive scrutiny

36. Reactive scrutiny is minimal but has occurred in some committees. An example of this is the Children's Services O&S Committee work on the Safety Valve Programme. All committees are encouraged to reserve room within their annual plans to provide flexibility to respond to arising issues throughout the year.

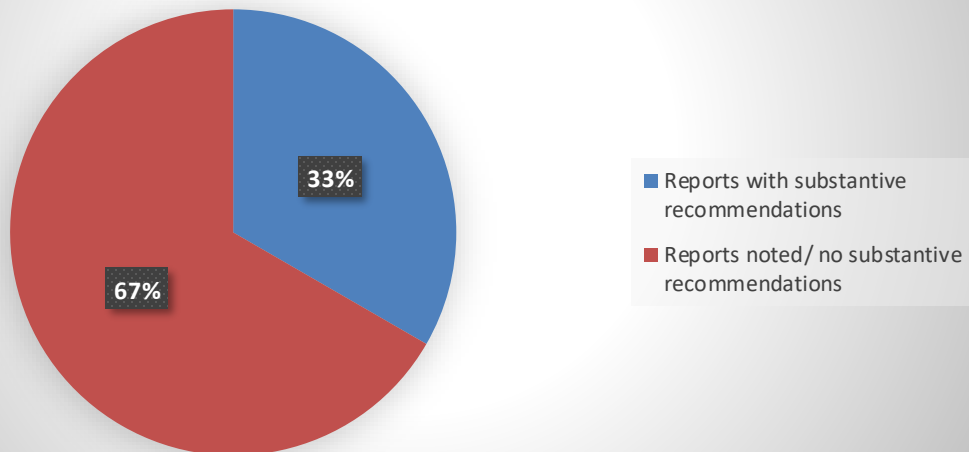
Outputs

37. O&S agenda item outputs are set out in the charts below. These were assessed across all committees to establish:
- reports generating substantive recommendations to Cabinet, portfolio holders, officers or partners of the council;

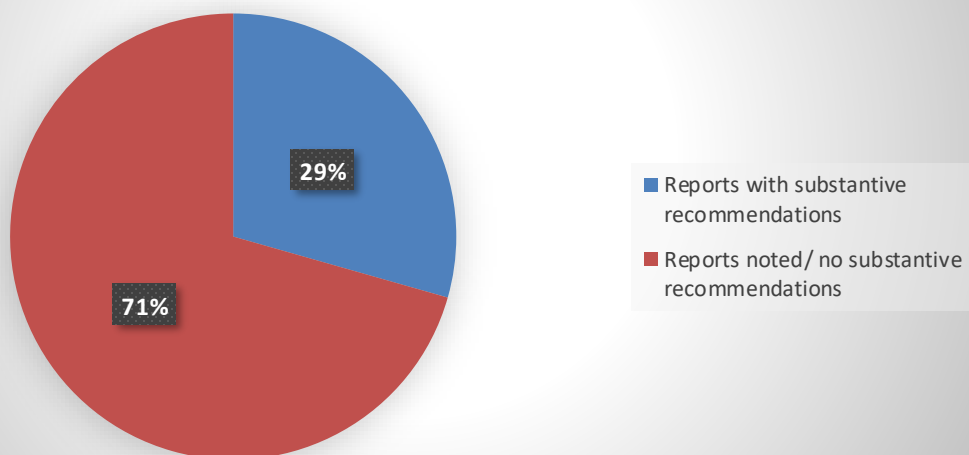
- reports that were noted or led to no substantive recommendations.

It should be noted that actions and comments raised by O&S, rather than formal recommendations, are not captured in the below data.

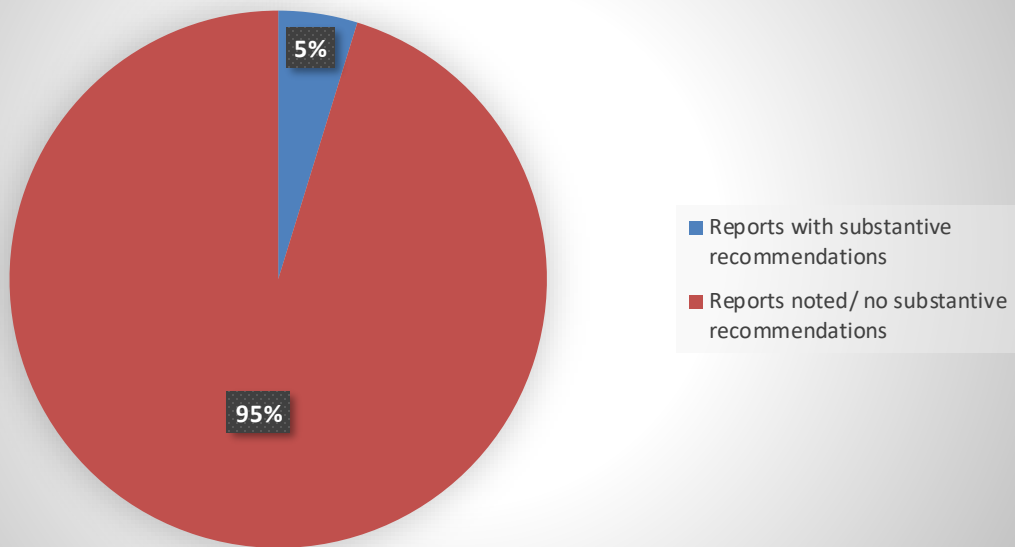
Corporate & Community O&S outputs (decommissioned September 2023)



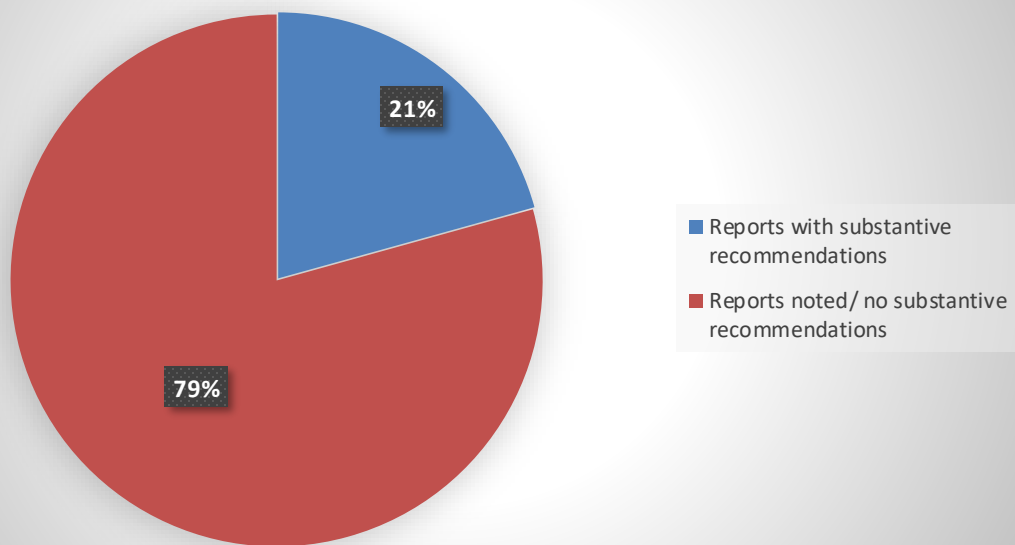
O&S Board outputs (established September 2023)

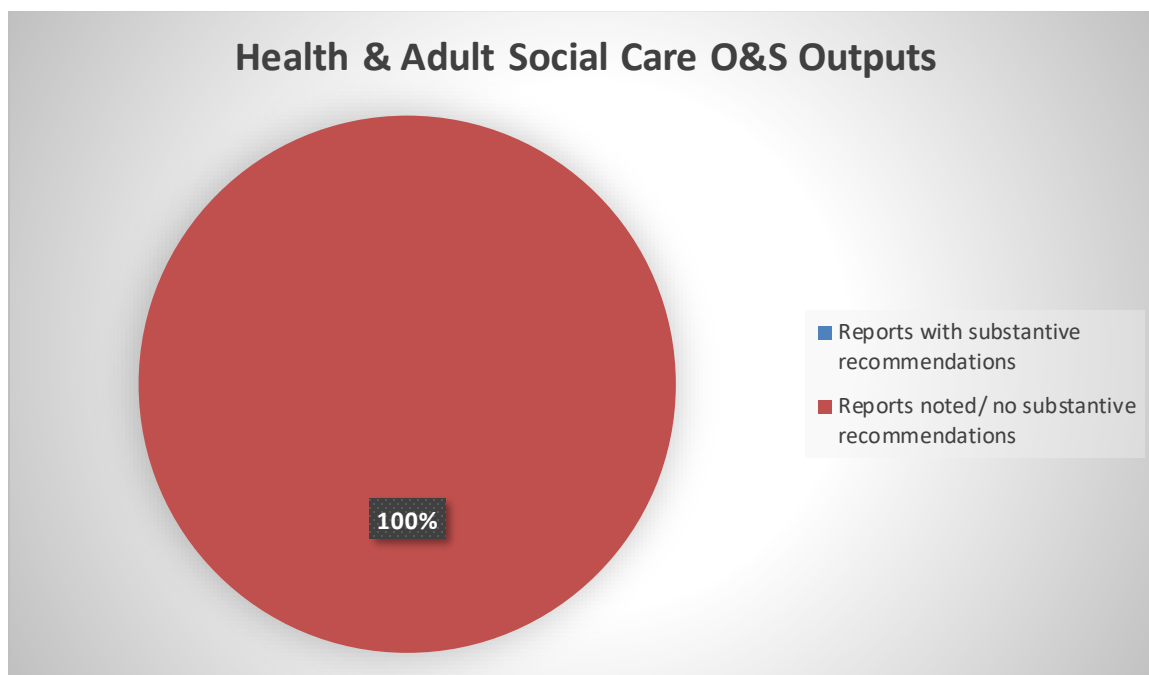


Environment & Place O&S Outputs



Children's Services O&S Outputs





Analysis

38. The highest level of substantive recommendations was generated by Corporate and Community O&S Committee at 33%, with the lowest generated by Health and Adult Social Care O&S Committee at 0%. To provide value through the work of O&S, all committees should look to increase the level of agenda items leading to substantive recommendations.
39. O&S comments gathered through pre-decision scrutiny may be reported to Cabinet to give a 'flavour' of councillor views to inform decision making. These may not always be captured by committees as formal recommendations and will not be reflected in the charts provided above. Where possible, committees should seek to strengthen comments into recommendations, to give weight to the view provided to Cabinet and clearer demonstrable output from O&S work. Clarifying the key lines of enquiry for scrutiny of a report can assist with the generation of clearer recommendations. This is explored further in paragraph 44 below.
40. A close alignment of proactive O&S work to the priorities of the council is likely to lead to the most value-added recommendations and outcomes. Substantive recommendations, and the resulting added value provided by the O&S function, could therefore be increased by a strengthened 'whole council' approach towards O&S in BCP Council. Work suggestions from Cabinet and Council to O&S were minimal during 2023/24, with proactive O&S work during this period largely driven by O&S member suggestions. By working more closely with the executive to identify opportunities for contribution to developing policy, O&S can have greater impact through its work, using unique statutory powers to surface issues, bring together stakeholders, explore issues in depth and test and challenge solutions. This approach has the potential to strengthen the decision and policy landscape of the council and support decision makers. Effective communications between O&S leads and executive members are essential for these opportunities to be identified, supported by a proactive approach to O&S engagement from lead officers. This is

in keeping with the strongest message set out in statutory guidance, that the culture of the council is fundamental to the success of the function:

“The prevailing organisational culture, behaviours and attitudes of an authority will largely determine whether its scrutiny function succeeds or fails. While everyone in an authority can play a role in creating an environment conducive to effective scrutiny, it is important that this is led and owned by members, given their role in setting and maintaining the culture of an authority.”

41. O&S members have been provided with training and regular guidance on work prioritisation and should continue to bear good practices in mind when considering the likely impact of work selected. Items that are not likely to generate substantive recommendations should wherever possible not be included within work programmes. This approach is encouraged by officers through annual work programming activity and regular support to committees when reviewing work programmes throughout the year. Topic prioritisation can be particularly difficult in a council with a wide range of political views and priorities and requires O&S members to make tough decisions, with Chairs and Vice Chairs leading in this respect. This robust approach to work programming could be strengthened across all committees.

42. Establishing a clear role and focus for O&S can be key to ensuring that work selected will add value to the organisation. O&S has wide ranging powers but guidance states that these are likely to be too wide to be meaningful if not refined to a key focus or set of priorities:

“... authorities should take steps to ensure scrutiny has a clear role and focus within the organisation, i.e. a niche within which it can clearly demonstrate it adds value. Therefore, prioritisation is necessary to ensure the scrutiny function concentrates on delivering work that is of genuine value and relevance to the work of the wider authority – this is one of the most challenging parts of scrutiny, and a critical element to get right if it is to be recognised as a strategic function of the authority.”

43. Acting on this good practice, the O&S Board and Environment & Place O&S Committee have now established lenses of ‘resident impact’ and ‘sustainability’ for their work respectively. This narrows the scope through which the committees intend to select and approach work with the aim of establishing a clearer role for the committees. This more refined focus for these committees was developed through action/ learning work supported by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) and targeted specifically at these committees to embed good practices following the change in the O&S committee structure. The learning from this work will now be rolled out to Children’s Services O&S and Health and Adult Social Care O&S Committees and strongly encouraged for all committees going forward to give clarity of purpose to the work of O&S.

44. All committees would benefit from refining the scope for all work items using documentation of Key Lines of Enquiry. This will ensure that the information request from O&S committees is considered, clear and is scoped with a likelihood of generating impactful outputs. This approach is now being encouraged with all committees. Through this process, the angle to be taken by scrutiny, and the possible outcomes of the work should be considered in advance to determine if recommendations will be likely. Even items of apparent high importance should not be prioritised if there is no likelihood of having impact through the scrutiny provided.

45. Pre-meetings, led by O&S Chairs, can encourage a clearer focus on Key Lines of Enquiry during committee debate, and provide another mechanism to clarify in

advance the intended outcome of the scrutiny sessions planned. This approach is regularly discussed with O&S Chairs as a way of strengthening O&S outcomes and has been adopted by the Environment & Place O&S Committee. All committees would benefit from the use of pre-meetings.

46. Some committees undertake a greater monitoring role than others. Whilst committee members may become well informed through monitoring reports, if the level of this is too high there is little work plan capacity remaining for proactive, value-added scrutiny. This is a particular challenge for the Health & Adult Social Care O&S Committee which receives information from both within the council and from partners such as the NHS on service design and delivery. Similarly, the Children's Services O&S Committee closely monitors the improvement journey within the children's services area. Establishing a critical set of monitoring areas and incorporating more diverse ways of working will help these O&S members to remain informed in priority areas, whilst reserving committee time for value added scrutiny. Alternative methods for information receipt could include:

- informal briefings,
- independent research and horizon scanning
- receiving 'information reports' outside of meetings
- establishing rapporteurs to maintain an overview of designated areas and report back to committee by exception.

A mix of these information sharing methods have been used across committees, and a more consistent approach to information sharing will be encouraged in 2024/25, with the aim of reducing the overall level of 'for noting' reports across all committees.

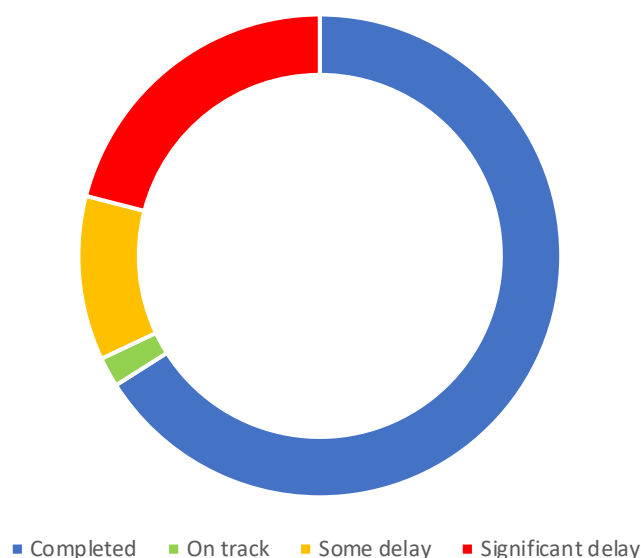
O&S Action Plan

47. An O&S Action Plan was developed in 2023 to provide detail on strategic actions identified to improve O&S activity in BCP Council and bring practices in line with statutory guidance for O&S. The action plan was agreed by Council in September 2023.
48. The action plan also addresses O&S areas for development as identified through work which responds to the 'Best Value Notice' that was issued to the Council by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) in August 2023. This was in response to the completion of an external assurance review carried out by DLUHC. The findings were in line with those of the Chief Executive's internal assurance review and all activity was monitored through the BCP Council Best Value Notice Action Plan. The recommendations have been welcomed in dealing with historical issues and setting a new tone for the Council. All actions relating to O&S within the Best Value Notice Action Plan have now been completed.
49. To establish improvement actions for O&S, all practices within the O&S function were assessed against the standards set out in 'Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities' (2019) in a desktop exercise undertaken by the Statutory Scrutiny Officer in Spring 2023. The guidance provides a benchmark for good working practices in O&S and is statutory, meaning that guidance should be followed unless there is a good reason not to.
50. Much of the statutory guidance relates to ways of working and the council-wide approach to O&S. The clearest message is the need for a strong organisational

culture in which there is a collective ownership of the success of O&S, parity of esteem for O&S and value placed on the challenge that O&S can provide.

51. The O&S action plan follows the themes of the statutory guidance. All relevant paragraphs of the guidance have been included within the action plan, to aid reader's understanding of why actions have been identified, and the resulting plan for improvement is comprehensive. There are a total of **120** actions, some of which overlap. Where actions are similar (e.g. reflecting different aspects of councillor training required) they remain split into separate actions to demonstrate how these will uphold the statutory guidance. It should be noted that for this reason the action plan is highly detailed and serves as an operational tool to progress actions as well as for reporting on progress.
52. The action plan at Appendix 4 provides a detailed update against each of the actions as of June 2024. 66% of the actions have now been completed, a 21% increase since December 2023. Of the remaining actions, there has been an increase to those that are now significantly delayed with 21% now within this category. 11 % have experienced some delay and 2% are on track to complete as planned.

Progress against actions



53. Improvement actions identified within the plan were set over a period of one year for completion. This time frame was ambitious and whilst good progress has been made in many areas, some actions have been impacted upon by other O&S activity taking place concurrently and have not progressed. In particular, the increase in meeting numbers following the changes made to O&S committees in September 2023 has impacted on resources available to progress strategic improvements to the O&S function. Core O&S functions such as support to committee meetings will continue to be prioritised during 2024/25 and work against the action plan will be progressed where resources allow.
54. Responsibility for monitoring the O&S Action Plan sits with the O&S Board, which is supported in this role by regular monitoring in O&S Chairs/ Vice Chairs meetings.

Progress on the Action Plan will also be reported annually to Council through this report.

Resourcing O&S

55. Council agreed revisions to the committee structure in 2023 which formally increased O&S committee meeting numbers. Along with special meetings called by committees to respond to urgent business, a total of 27 meetings were held during 2023/24.
56. Historically, O&S meeting levels have been high as a result of additional special meetings called by committees, however formalised committee meeting numbers are now at the highest level since the start of BCP Council. By the end of the reporting period, planned meetings per year were 35% higher than the level of O&S meetings planned for the same period in 2022/23.
57. Resources to support O&S are stretched. The Democratic Services team provides direct officer support to the O&S function. There has been no increase in officer resource to support the increase in O&S meeting numbers agreed by Council in September 2023.
58. The Democratic Services structure was designed to support the service approved by the Shadow Authority which anticipated 22 O&S meetings per year with a larger Democratic Services team to support this. Since the establishment of BCP Council, the officer support available to O&S has not been adequate for the level of O&S meetings held by the council, which, through many changes to the O&S committee structure, have predominantly been above the level anticipated by the Shadow Authority. In 2021 the service budget was reduced by 14.9% to support the corporate budget pressures. Following the most recent changes to the O&S structure the service is now considered to be operating above maximum capacity. Taking into account the increased meetings and reduction in manpower resources, the ratio of meetings per equivalent officer FTE to provide support has increased by over 28%. This is excluding any additional special meetings called by committees. This has an impact on the level of support that can be provided to the O&S function and the resulting outputs.
59. To illustrate the officer support available to O&S, activity has been broadly split into a range of areas in the following priority order:
 - a. core functions of the service such as the servicing of meetings, agendas, minutes, advice and guidance, ongoing work planning support;
 - b. support to proactive scrutiny such as annual work programming for all committees, scoping and research, working group support, planning and supporting evidence sessions;
 - c. strategic improvements to the function in line with the O&S Action Plan.
60. An increase in meeting numbers without a match in the level of officer resource has required that support is diverted from activities within the 'b' and 'c' categories above, to ensure that core, statutory requirements within category 'a' are met. This will vary throughout the year according to additional pressures upon the team, which supports all decision-making bodies of the council in addition to O&S committees.
61. Additional O&S meetings also have implications council-wide for officer attendance and support to scrutiny activity.
62. Under the constitution, all O&S committees may undertake one working group at a time. These fall under category 'b' of the activity outlined above. In line with good

practice, working groups and other 'deep dive' inquiry mechanisms are encouraged as a means of providing the most effective O&S outcomes, however, it is fortunate that not all committees have chosen to take up this option during 2023/24 as this would have had a further impact on resources.

63. A 'whole council' approach to O&S, with working groups more fully scoped and overseen by service areas across the council rather than Democratic Services, would provide greater resource to support O&S work. It should be noted that service area - led approach to scrutiny carries a risk that the independent approach of scrutiny will be affected, as service areas will have an inherent viewpoint which may impact on the investigations undertaken by O&S.
64. In summary, councillors should note that the overall impact of the O&S function will continue to be limited by the dedicated levels of resource available to support it. Statutory guidance states:

"The resource an authority allocates to the scrutiny function plays a pivotal role in determining how successful that function is and therefore the value it can add to the work of the authority. Ultimately it is up to each authority to decide on the resource it provides, but every authority should recognise that creating and sustaining an effective scrutiny function requires them to allocate resources to it."

65. Councillors can take some action to mitigate the resource pressures upon the O&S function and promote valuable outputs:
- Strong and realistic work planning, with minimal revisions and retained capacity for arising issues, will limit the need for additional meetings over and above the 27 planned per year.
 - Flexibility of approach to O&S resource, with committee meetings used for more deep dive work – such as to support a working group through a public evidence gathering session.
 - Monitoring reports can be received in other ways, outside of committee to free up meeting time for value- added scrutiny.
 - O&S councillors can undertake a higher level of research and horizon scanning independently, to review data and policy sources, maintain an overview of council activity and bring an evidence-led approach to their scrutiny. A [Data Use Toolkit](#) has been developed by the Health & Adult Social Care O&S Committee to support councillors in this respect with the aim of rolling out a similar toolkit for all other O&S committees.
 - Informal relationships with executive members and officers can be strengthened and shared across committees through the use of rapporteurs. This will keep O&S councillors informed of developing policy or concerns which may benefit from scrutiny and encourage the regular information sharing that is necessary to understand where the most value-added scrutiny opportunities lie.

These actions are in line with the principle that the O&S function should be member-led.

66. The benefit of effectively resourcing scrutiny is explored in further detail within O&S guidance and set out more fully in the Action Plan at Appendix 4.

Options Appraisal

67. The Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report is for information and comment. An options appraisal is not relevant to this report.

Summary of financial implications

68. There are no direct financial implications related with the production of this report. The report explores the implications of resourcing O&S in paragraphs 55 to 66 above.

Summary of legal implications

69. Overview and Scrutiny is a statutory function of all councils operating an executive model of decision making. Improvements to the function, outlined in the report, will ensure that the work of O&S Committees in BCP Council complies with relevant legislation and upholds statutory guidance.

Summary of human resources implications

70. There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

Summary of sustainability impact

71. There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

Summary of public health implications

72. There are no public health implications arising from this report.

Summary of equality implications

73. There are no equality implications arising from this report.

Summary of risk assessment

74. The improvements identified for O&S, as set out in the O&S Action Plan at Appendix 4, will ensure that statutory Government guidance is upheld. There is a risk that the guidance will not be properly upheld by the Council if actions identified are not taken.

Background papers

Published works:

[‘Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities’](#),
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)

[Best Value Notice Action Plan 2023/24](#)

[Corporate plan – ‘A Shared Vision for Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole, 2024-28’](#)

[O&S Data Use Toolkit](#),

Health & Adult Social Care O&S Committee

Appendices

Appendix 1– Overview and Scrutiny statutory powers and BCP context

Appendix 2 – Overview & Scrutiny framework, developed by E&P O&S Committee and O&S Board.

Appendix 3 - Summary of O&S Activity 2023-24.

Appendix 4 – Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY STATUTORY POWERS AND BCP CONTEXT

WHAT IS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY?

1. Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) is an integral part of the Council's governance structure and is a statutory requirement for BCP Council. All councils operating executive arrangements must have at least one O&S committee. In BCP Council, O&S activity is carried out by four O&S committees formed of councillors and co-opted members. These are:
 - The Overview and Scrutiny Board
 - Environment and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee
 - Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
 - Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee
2. The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and Committees is to help develop policy, to carry out reviews of Council and other local services, and to hold decision makers to account.
3. O&S committees are not decision-making bodies but can influence decisions through powers to obtain information, require attendance from council officers and members and to make recommendations. Under the [Local Government Act 2000](#), O&S committees have the right to scrutinise '*any matter affecting the local authority area or the inhabitants of the area.*'
4. Additional powers to scrutinise NHS services and review the work of the local community safety partnership mean that O&S committees have an important role in acting as a 'check and balance' to decisions made both within the council and in external organisations.
5. The overall aim of O&S activity is to impact in a tangible way on the council and the residents it serves. The Ministerial foreword of '[Overview and Scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils and combined authorities](#)' by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) states:

"The role that overview and scrutiny can play in holding an authority's decision-makers to account makes it fundamentally important to the successful functioning of local democracy.

Effective scrutiny helps secure the efficient delivery of public services and drives improvements within the authority itself. Conversely, poor scrutiny can be indicative of wider governance, leadership, and service failure."

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD SCRUTINY

6. The majority of councils base their O&S arrangements on commonly held principles of good scrutiny. These are set out in the [BCP Constitution](#), which states that the O&S committees shall:
- a) contribute to sound decision making in a timely way by holding decision makers to account as a 'critical friend';
 - b) be a Councillor led and owned function that seeks to continuously improve through self-reflection and development;
 - c) enable the voice and concerns of the public to be heard and reflected in the Council's decision-making process;
 - d) engage in decision making and policy development at an appropriate time to be able to have influence;
 - e) contribute to and reflect the vision and priorities of the Council; and
 - f) be agile and be able to respond to changing and emerging priorities at the right time with flexible working methods.

Through their work, O&S councillors should seek to uphold these principles.

SUPPORTING THE AMBITIONS AND VALUES OF THE COUNCIL

7. O&S can support the high level aims of the council by aligning its work to the priorities identified within the council's corporate plan entitled '[A Shared Vision for Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole, 2024-28](#)'. The plan was refreshed in May 2024. With the remit of O&S committees spanning all service areas of the council, O&S activity has the potential to support the following vision and priorities identified within the corporate plan:

Our vision:

- Where people, nature, coast and towns come together in sustainable, safe and healthy communities.

Our priorities:

- Our place and environment: Vibrant places, where people and nature flourish, with a thriving economy in a healthy, natural environment.
- Our people and communities: Everyone leads a fulfilled life, maximising opportunity for all.

This could be achieved through alignment of O&S work plans to policy areas earmarked for development within the corporate plan. O&S can also provide benefit by monitoring the progress of the council against the ambitions set out in the corporate plan, through engagement with the relevant aspects of performance dashboards.

1. Development of this framework and its application by O&S Committees

Workshops were held with members of O&S committees across December 2023- February 2024, supported by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS). The aim of the workshops was to develop an approach to work programming at BCP for 2024/25 and beyond that is based on good practice and addresses improvements already identified for O&S as set out in [Assurance Review Action Plan](#) and the [O&S Action Plan](#). One output of this work is the framework set out below.

During 2024, the O&S Board and Environment and Place O&S Committee have been following the principles set out in this framework. The same good practices will be rolled out to all O&S committees in 2024 and used to support future annual work programming.

2. Using a lens to select and approach scrutiny topics

O&S statutory guidance recommends that a 'lens' or key set of priorities be established by O&S committees, to clearly communicate their role and how they will add value to the work of the organisation. The statements also clarify the role of the committee to the public.

Established lenses provide a tool to assist O&S members in work programming, to sift suggestions for work into a realistic annual work programme for each committee and should be referred to throughout the year as arising suggestions for work are made.

O&S Board and Environment and Place O&S Committees agreed lenses in 2024. Children's Services and Health and Adult Social Care O&S Committees have not yet considered the application of lenses to their work. Lenses are set out below. It is suggested that these lenses be reviewed annually to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

The **O&S Board** will approach work through a lens of **RESIDENT IMPACT AND EXPERIENCE**, such as considering:

- benefits that could be brought to residents by **delivering services** in different ways
- how the areas of highest **financial risk** for the council may impact on residents
- the council's **relationship with the public** and work that can be done to strengthen this.

The **Environment & Place O&S Committee** will approach work through a lens of **SUSTAINABILITY**, with a specific focus on the following priorities, drawn from the Corporate Strategy:

- **Climate change** is tackled through sustainable policies and practice
- Our **green spaces flourish** and support the wellbeing of being people and nature
- Our communities have pride in our **streets, neighbourhoods and public spaces**
- **Good quality homes are** accessible, sustainable and affordable for all

The **Children's Services O&S Committee** will approach work through a lens ofTBC

The **Health and Adult Social Care O&S Committee** will approach work through a lens ofTBC

3. Using a framework to structure O&S activity:

A framework for supporting different types of scrutiny work is set out in the table below. Scrutiny is split out into **proactive work**, **reactive work** and **pre-decision scrutiny**. When developing this framework, O&S councillors gave a clear steer that they wish to continue to undertake all these elements of scrutiny through their work programmes.

As with the lenses outlined at 2 above, the scrutiny framework will also be used to communicate the role and intentions of the committees to the wider council and the public. It is suggested that the framework be reviewed annually to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

Proactive Scrutiny

What is it?

- Early policy work - work focused on policy development and exploring options for the future. Also described as 'overview work' in BCP.
- Framed as a series of questions or 'key lines of enquiry', to which O&S seeks answers. These are found through the gathering of evidence, with a view to informing future policy.
- Driven by the O&S committee itself, or may be in response to a suggestion from councillors, community or decision makers.
- Less likely to directly align to another piece of work already underway in the council, eg. a cabinet report.
- Fulfils BCP principles of good scrutiny:

'O&S engages in decision making and policy development at an appropriate time to be able to have influence'

'O&S is a member led and owned function'

'O&S enables the voice and concerns of the public to be heard and reflected in the Council's decision-making process'

Examples

Cllr suggestions based on their understanding of local needs, eg:

- What more can we do to meet local people's housing needs?
- To what extent do we as a council as a community understand the likely challenges of climate change, and what action do we need to take?

Method for undertaking scrutiny:

- Either "in committee", as a whole-meeting challenge session followed up by agreement of recommendations at the next meeting, or a short and sharp working group with a group meeting two or three times between meetings.
- Outcomes are unlikely to be met by an officer report – proactive scrutiny relies on councillors scoping and directing the work and asking for specific data, information and evidence to be brought by relevant stakeholders.
- Recommendations are made, usually to Cabinet or Portfolio Holders. They must respond to these recommendations.

Pros and Cons

- ✓ Potential to add significantly more value than other work by using powers to gather evidence from stakeholders, investigate an issue in depth and find solutions. These may be used to inform policy in a significant and meaningful way.
- ✓ Potential to select and scope topics to have maximum positive impact on the communities of BCP.
- ✓ Can generate a clearer set of recommendations that can be communicated in the council and to the public.
- ✓ Easier for O&S to own the programme of work and not be affected by other factors (eg. movement of decisions on the Cabinet Forward Plan).
- ✗ Resource intensive for officers and councillors.
- ✗ May require committee to work more flexibly to find capacity for the depth of work, eg. swapping committee meetings to undertake working group meetings instead.

Method for selection of proactive scrutiny topics:

- Invite suggestions from councillors annually (through work programming workshops)
- Invite suggestions from decision makers for O&S to contribute to developing policies/ decisions.
- Invite suggestions from the public annually (consider how to incorporate into methodology for 2025 work programming)
- Sift suggestions according to the priorities of lenses as set out above ('resident impact and experience' / 'sustainability')
- Agree, scope and plan topics to add maximum value.
- Plan all proactive work on an annual basis to ensure it can be undertaken by an appropriate time to add value and in within resources available.

Pre-decision Scrutiny

What is it?:

- Scrutiny of a report close to the point of decision making – eg. a Cabinet report.
- Predominantly driven by the Cabinet Forward Plan.
- Sits between 'proactive' and 'reactive' scrutiny. Some councils undertake a minimal level of pre-decision scrutiny in favour of greater levels of deep dive investigations. BCP councillors have said that pre-decision scrutiny is an important part of the scrutiny process which they are keen to see stay in place.
- Fulfils BCP principle of good scrutiny:

'O&S contributes to sound decision making in a timely way by holding decision makers to account as a 'critical friend'.

Examples

Scrutiny of Cabinet reports on:

- BCP Local Plan
- BCP 2024/25 budget scrutiny & MTFP update reports
- Various policies prior to Cabinet/ Council decision

Method for undertaking scrutiny:

- In committee, consideration of a report already written for Cabinet. Report considered approximately 10 working days prior to the Cabinet meeting.
- Any recommendations or comments made on the report are formally passed to the next Cabinet meeting.
- The O&S Chairman will attend the Cabinet meeting to report recommendations and/or give a summary of comments made at O&S.
- Cabinet must consider any **formal recommendations** made and respond.

Pros and Cons

- ✓ Publicly demonstrates that decision makers are held to account.
- ✓ Less resource intensive – reports already written for Cabinet.
- ✗ Reactive – hard to plan agendas and relies on a well populated Cabinet Forward Plan to timetable work.
- ✗ Limited impact vs time spent. O&S is unlikely to be able to have much influence on fully developed policy and decisions.
- ✗ Potential to establish a ‘shadow cabinet’ and for meetings to become political, which must be managed effectively by O&S Chairs.
- ✗ Potential for Cabinet scrutiny to overwhelm agendas - can lead to additional/ long meetings which can limit effectiveness of scrutiny.
- ✗ Potential to duplicate other scrutiny opportunities – eg. full council debate.

Method for selection of pre-decision scrutiny topics:

- Establish a programme of informal, Teams based briefing sessions at a frequency which can be accommodated by O&S members and support officers. Schedule briefings to provide O&S with information on the key aspects of developing decisions. Aim to hold these as early as possible and at least 3 months prior to the decision to be made. Chairs and Vice Chairs take the lead in this, using the Cabinet Forward Plan and informal discussions with decision makers.
- Using the information provided at briefings and the agreed O&S lenses to determine which forthcoming Cabinet decisions will benefit from a councillor maintaining a watching brief and reporting back (rapporteur) or ultimately pre-decision scrutiny at committee.
- Give notice as early as possible of those items required for pre-decision scrutiny, to enable report authors to work to the relevant O&S timescales.
- Provide regular reporting on out of committee activity into a committee meeting via Chair, to maintain transparency of O&S activity.
- Note – this framework for selecting pre-decision scrutiny is expected to significantly reduce the number of Cabinet reports being considered by O&S committees but will require a commitment from decision makers to share information with O&S in a different way that is both open and timely. The proposed format will also provide decision makers with the opportunity to surface issues with the wider membership of the council prior to decision making and to gather informal input to shape direction of policy.

Reactive Scrutiny

What is it?:

- Emerging issues that arise throughout the year and can't easily be planned for in advance.
- Usually a significant issue of concern or risk to the council, residents or external bodies (eg. Ofsted or Government department)
- Fulfils BCP principles of good scrutiny:

'O&S contributes to sound decision making in a timely way by holding decision makers to account as a 'critical friend';
'O&S is agile – able to respond to changing and emerging priorities at the right time with flexible working methods'
'O&S Contributes to and reflects the vision and priorities of the council';

Examples

- Targeted scrutiny on council finances at the end of 2022 following concerns about in-year budget
- Safety valve scrutiny at Children's O&S Committee
- Best Value and Assurance Review reports.
- Decisions 'called in' by O&S

Method for undertaking scrutiny

- O&S Councillors review a suite of information regularly outside of the committee space – eg. corporate performance reports, medium term financial plan updates, complaints data or resident surveys.
- 'Red flags' are elevated to committee for more formal scrutiny to take place. Usually, a report is requested from officers.
- Any recommendations or comments made on the report are formally passed to the relevant decision maker, usually Cabinet/ Council.
- Cabinet/ Council must consider the recommendations made and respond.
- O&S may ask to receive regular updates outside of committee, to maintain a closer eye on the matter until it is resolved.

Pros and Cons

- ✓ Important governance mechanism to assist the council in resolving issues of concern.
- ✓ Provides public demonstration of scrutiny on issues that may be causing press interest or community concern and gives opportunity for public to engage.
- ✗ Limited impact vs time spent. O&S may ask decision makers to reconsider an issue or make recommendations expressing concerns but cannot change a decision.
- ✗ Can disrupt workplans owing to the need to scrutinise a matter quickly.
- ✗ Potential to duplicate other scrutiny opportunities – eg. full council debate.

Method for selection of reactive scrutiny topics:

- Committee members 'horizon scan' by reviewing a suite of information on a regular basis in their own time. These are provided by email or in a designated webspace. Rapporteurs may be established to monitor designated areas of interest, sharing the load across the committee.
- Emerging trends or red flags are raised by committee members informally to the Chair & Vice Chair.
- Chair and Vice Chair take the lead in raising concerns with relevant decision makers and seeking more information. Using this information and the lenses established by committees, they determine which matters warrant elevating to committee.
- In all cases, O&S will prioritise work where it can have the most value and will avoid duplicating efforts underway elsewhere in the council to resolve arising issues. Priority will therefore be given either to those areas of highest concern and which are generating significant public and media attention; where data trends indicate that concerns are at risk of becoming embedded, or where attempts to find solutions by Cabinet or service areas have not worked.

- For these matters, a report is requested to the next available committee meeting for more formal and forensic scrutiny to take place. Work plans may be adjusted to make room for this arising work within existing resources.
- Following formal scrutiny, O&S may ask to receive regular updates outside of committee, to maintain a closer eye on the matter until it is resolved.
- Nb. 'Call-in' decisions will follow a separate process as outlined in the constitution.

4. Next steps

- The O&S Board and Environment and Place O&S Committees have adopted this framework and agreed lenses for their work.
- In 2024, all remaining O&S committees will be asked to adopt this framework and establish lenses or a limited set of high-level priorities.
- The framework will accompany all work programme reports to committee and should be referred to as a structure to underpin ongoing work programming activity.
- The framework will be reviewed annually by O&S Chairs, and lenses reviewed annually by O&S Committees in annual work programming, to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

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Corporate & Community O&S Committee

(May-September 2023, then decommissioned)



Chair – Councillor Stephen Bartlett

Vice Chair – Councillor Sue Aitkenhead

- **Meetings:** 2 ordinary, 0 special meetings
- **Membership:** 11 councillors
- **Average number of agenda items** – 1.5
- **Working Groups** - 0
- **'Call-Ins' considered** – 0

In these meetings the committee received an update on the council's Pay and Reward project and provided pre-decision scrutiny to the Cabinet report regarding Future Places Ltd, which undertook regeneration activity on behalf of the council. The committee supported the recommendation to Cabinet that regeneration activity be brought back in house, and also recommended that any decision on the disposal of the previous civic offices at Christchurch and Poole be deferred for further consideration. These recommendations were accepted by Cabinet.

This committee held two final meetings, prior to being disbanded in September 2023 and replaced by the O&S Board.

Overview & Scrutiny Board (established 30 September 2023)



Chair – Councillor Stephen Bartlett

Vice Chair – Councillor Sue Aitkenhead

- **Meetings:** 7 ordinary, 1 special meeting
- **Membership:** 13 councillors
- **Average number of agenda items** – 2.1
- **Working Groups** – 1 (informal, member led working group)
- **'Call-Ins' considered** – 1

Following changes to the O&S committee structure in September 2023, the Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Board was established. This took on the previous remit of the Corporate & Community O&S Committee, along with an overarching responsibility for the O&S function and all scrutiny 'call-in' responsibilities. Board meetings were programmed monthly, to track Cabinet and allow for recommendations on pre-decision scrutiny to be reported to Cabinet in a timely way.

The Board began its work with the only Call-In meeting of the municipal year, relating to the detail of a Public Space Protection Order to be applied across beaches, heathland, parks and recreational areas. After consideration of the call-in request, no recommendations were made to Cabinet and the decision was implemented.

Statutory crime and disorder scrutiny responsibilities were fulfilled through the scrutiny of the BCP Community Safety Partnership annual report and the Board fulfilled its new responsibilities to monitor the overall O&S function through update reporting on the O&S Action Plan, agreed by Council in September 2023.

O&S induction training was provided to all councillors in Summer 2023. Mindful of good practices highlighted through this training, Board members made significant efforts to maintain a focus on 2/3 substantive items per agenda, to provide more effective and targeted focus to those topics selected. The average agenda items of 2.1 per meeting demonstrate a significant improvement compared to previous years where the number of agenda items selected by legacy committees were numerous and meetings lengthy. The Board expressed a wish to focus on matters of the highest risk or priority for the council, along with those that may have a significant impact on residents.

The Board was mindful of the significance of the Best Value Notice, issued to the Council in August 2023 and the work being undertaken by the council to make identified improvements. Through test and challenge, the Board supported the Best Value improvement journey by focussing on the following critical areas of council activity:

- Transformation Programme update,
- Medium Term Financial Plan updates,
- Best Value Notice action plan monitoring,

- A Shareholder Governance Review of council owned companies
- Scrutiny of the 2023/24 BCP budget
- Corporate Performance Reporting

Decisions with significant financial implications attached were also scrutinised, such as the disposal of land at Wessex Fields.

Spotlight on... Resident Impact

Along with scrutiny of internal / corporate priority areas, the Board focussed on those matters which it felt would be of highest importance to residents. This included pre-decision scrutiny of proposals for 20mph speed limits in the BCP area; development of a Library Strategy, and the draft BCP Local Plan, scrutiny of which resulted in a number of recommendations to Cabinet.

An informal, member led working group was also undertaken to understand the causes of long waiting times for Blue Badge applications to be processed. Members agreed to progress this work after becoming aware of resident concerns. Mindful of limited resources, three O&S members undertook their own background research, meeting with officers for informal discussions which established that application processes are complex and driven by the strict rules that are set nationally and must be rigorously observed to prevent fraud. The work done by the council to communicate effectively with applicants was examined along with the fees and resources associated with running the service.

The group reported its findings to full committee, which determined that further scrutiny work would not add value to this matter but offered several suggestions to officers for potential improvements to the service. This informal member-led research allowed for quicker progression of the matter and an informed decision to be made on whether the investment of scrutiny resource would be impactful. The Board recognised that this would be a valuable tool for future scrutiny work.

Environment & Place O&S Committee



Chair – Councillor Chris Rigby

Vice Chair – Councillor Richard Herrett

- **Meetings:** 5 ordinary, 0 special meetings
- **Membership:** 11 councillors
- **Average number of agenda items** – 1.6
- **Working Groups** - 0
- **'Call-Ins' considered** – 0

Following changes to the O&S committee structure in September 2023, the Place O&S Committee was renamed 'Environment & Place' to reflect an intended greater focus on environmental and sustainability matters. The committee also agreed to recruit two independent co-opted members to its membership, to provide additional expertise and challenge to this priority area of work. At time of writing, this recruitment is in process.

Work activity included proactive scrutiny on planning reforms, families in B&Bs and the development of the BCP Green Spaces Play and Wheeled Play Strategy. Monitoring reports included an update on the Schools Streets programme, with the committee scrutinising this from an environmental perspective, endorsing further roll out of the scheme to encourage management of traffic around schools in a way that is particularly beneficial for children and their families travelling to schools on foot or by other active modes.

Other activity included monitoring improvements being made to the council's planning service and the committee has indicated a wish to support this improvement journey through further monitoring updates.

Spotlight on...Climate Change and Sustainability

The council made changes to the committee in recognition that addressing climate change and improved sustainability is a central tenet of the council's aims. In addition to enhancing the breadth of challenge and expertise through seeking additional co-opted members, the committee agreed to approach all its work through a lens of sustainability.

The council's annual climate progress report was scrutinised by the committee in early 2024, providing an update on progress towards commitments made in the BCP Council Climate and Ecological Emergency Declaration, made in July 2019.

To support work in this important area, the committee expressed an intention to align its future work plan to those council policies and decisions where it may add value through a sustainability lens. This will be established through an assessment of the sustainability aspects of the revised Corporate Strategy and delivery plans accompanying this.

Children's Services O&S Committee



Chair – Councillor Bobbie Dove

Vice Chair – Councillor Simon Bull

- **Meetings:** 5 ordinary, 2 special meetings
- **Membership:** 11 councillors, plus 4 co-opted members and 4 Youth Parliament reps
- **Average number of agenda items** – 4.1
- **Working Groups** - 0
- **'Call-Ins' considered** – 0

In keeping with the previous year, close monitoring of the improvement journey in children's services remained a priority for the committee, with themed meetings relating to the improvements in Children's Social Care, SEND and Education & Skills. All Ofsted Monitoring Visits were also reported on to the committee. This committee also received portfolio holder updates at each meeting with opportunity for questions and discussion. Two additional meetings of the committee were called to focus on safety valve scrutiny.

Spotlight on... Safety Valve

During winter 2023 the council was invited by the Department for Education's Safety Valve programme which is an initiative focussed on helping local authorities to tackle overspending on SEND services. A proposal was submitted to the DfE to join the initiative and in March 2024 the council was informed that that the DfE could not enter into an agreement with BCP Council on the basis of the proposal made at this time.

Whilst negotiations were taking place between the council and the DfE, the O&S committee undertook three targeted scrutiny sessions on Safety Valve, including two special meetings. Scrutiny included input from residents, families and schools, along with lead officers and the portfolio holder. The committee particularly focussed on the potential impact for families and schools if the council were to join the initiative and received many public questions and statements in relation to this.

Through its work the committee made recommendations to the portfolio holder for there to be as wide as possible member engagement in any final decision relating to Safety Valve. Further, well-timed scrutiny on the matter was welcomed by the portfolio holder and a full council resolution was also made that all members of the council would have the opportunity to consider any potential future decision to join the Safety Valve programme, should this come forward as a formal proposal at a future date.

Health & Adult Social Care O&S Committee



Chair – Councillor Patrick Canavan

Vice Chair – Councillor Jackie Edwards

- **Meetings:** 5 ordinary, 0 special meetings
- **Membership:** 11 councillors, plus regular Healthwatch attendance
- **Average number of agenda items** – 4
- **Working Groups** - 1
- **'Call-Ins' considered** – 0

The committee's work included pre-decision scrutiny on the Adult Day Opportunities Strategy with views raised in committee reported by the Chair into Cabinet. Monitoring reports included the annual report from the Safeguarding Adults Board, the annual report on Adults Social Care Complaints and monitoring of the implementation of the Carer's Strategy, one year on from its approval.

The committee considered local service provision including access to GP practices and NHS Dentistry Provision in the BCP area. Background briefings were also provided into committee to provide a good understanding of policy and issues which may inform future work planning. These included briefings on Health Inequalities, Suicide Prevention and the updated Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. This committee also received portfolio holder updates at each meeting with opportunity for questions and discussion.

Spotlight on... Achieving Data Driven Scrutiny

Acknowledging that the data and policy landscape in the health and adult social care arena is extensive and complex, and with many new councillors joining BCP Council in 2023, the committee established a Data Working Group to better understand the various data sources and how these could provide a wider evidence base for the work of scrutiny.

The group was supported by expert officers and data analysts from both within the council and Public Health and the NHS. Data and policy sources were demonstrated and compared. The group was keen to encourage a member led approach to the inclusion of data in scrutiny and isolated those sources suitable for 'self-serve' research compared to those which enhance deeper dive scrutiny work and may require the support of data analysts to access and interpret.

A standard expectation of data provision to accompany committee reports was also agreed with officers during the work of the group. These findings were brought together in a data toolkit, with the aim of providing current and future councillors with a user guide to accessing data, and to ultimately improve the evidence base for scrutiny by the committee. This approach could be mirrored by other O&S committees to improve the overall evidence base underpinning scrutiny activity at BCP.

Introduction

This action plan outlines improvement activity for BCP Council's Overview and Scrutiny function. This activity has been identified as appropriate to bring O&S practices to the level outlined in the Government's [Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities](#)

The actions also address recommendations arising from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities' (DLUHC) [external assurance review](#) and [Best Value Notice](#), issued on the 3 August as well as the Chief Executive's own [internal assurance review](#) conducted in Spring and updated in Summer 2023. The resulting [Assurance Review Action Plan](#) has been established by the Council to respond to these recommendations.

Guidance Note

This action plan follows the themes of the statutory guidance which are categorised as follows:

- Culture • Resourcing • Selecting Committee Members • Power to Access Information • Planning Work • Evidence Sessions

All relevant paragraphs of the guidance have been included within the action plan, to aid reader's understanding of why actions have been identified. Please note that where actions are similar (eg. reflecting different aspects of councillor training required) they remain split into separate actions to demonstrate how these will uphold the statutory guidance. It should be noted that for this reason the action plan is highly detailed and serves as an operational tool to progress actions as well as for reporting on progress.

Actions are grouped and action leads identified as per the coding set out in the key below. Where actions are duplicated, the update is provided against the first arising action. A RAG rating is used to show progress against actions along with a commentary, with the latest updates provided in blue text.

Key		
Code	Description	Action Lead
MT1	Member Training – induction and refresher	Democratic Services Team
MT2	Member Training – Chairs	
MT3	Member Training – ongoing programme of training	
OT1	Officer Training	
RD1	Role Descriptions for O&S leads	
CM1	Chairs’ Meetings	
WS1	Work Selection and Scoping	
CI1	Community Insight	
WP1	Web Presence	
WM1	Working Methods	
TOR1	Terms of Reference for O&S Committees	
CR1	Constitution Review	
L1	Library of O&S Resources	
P1	Protocol and Tool Development	
AR1	Annual Reporting on O&S	
R1	Resourcing	Democratic Services Team
COM1	Communications	
CMT1	Corporate Management Team Action	Corporate Management Team
C1	Cabinet Action	Cabinet
CL1	Chief Executive/ Leader Action	Chief Executive/ Leader
CS1	Supporting Children’s Services O&S	Democratic Services Team
RAG Rating		
Significant delay likely to affect action completion		
Some delay likely to affect action completion		
Action on track to complete as planned		
Action completed		

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Relevant Extract from: Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
Culture				
Scrutiny is Member Led				
<i>The prevailing organisational culture, behaviours and attitudes of an authority will largely determine whether its scrutiny function succeeds or fails. While everyone in an authority can play a role in creating an environment conducive to effective scrutiny, it is important that this is led and owned by members, given their role in setting and maintaining the culture of an authority.</i>	1a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – O&S in BCP is Member led	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	1b	Role descriptions to be developed for Councillors in leading O&S roles to clarify expectations for this role Not started. Completion likely to be delayed to Autumn 2024.	Autumn 2023	RD1
	1c	Establish calendar of meeting dates for O&S chairs for collective leadership and oversight of the effectiveness of the O&S function.	Complete	CM1
Scrutiny is understood and recognised across the organisation				
<i>Recognising scrutiny's legal and democratic legitimacy – all members and officers should recognise and appreciate the importance and legitimacy the scrutiny function is afforded by the law. It was created to act as a check and balance on the executive and is a statutory requirement for all authorities operating executive arrangements and for combined authorities.</i>	2a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Background and statutory powers of O&S, to raise the profile and importance of the scrutiny function within the organisation.	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	2b	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – Background and statutory powers of O&S, to raise the profile and importance of the scrutiny function within the organisation Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.	Winter 2023	OT1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Relevant Extract from:	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
Scrutiny draws on community insight and selects topics of community relevance				
<i>Councillors have a unique legitimacy derived from their being democratically elected. The insights that they can bring by having this close connection to local people are part of what gives scrutiny its value.</i>	3a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Councillors bring community insight to their scrutiny work	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	3b	Strengthen O&S work selection criteria, as set out in the constitution, to include consideration of the impact and value to the public when selecting work programme topics. Review for use in annual work programming for O&S Committees. O&S scrutiny request forms ask councillors to outline the value to be added to BCP Council, the area or its inhabitants of a proposed scrutiny topic. Use of this form is becoming embedded by councillors and is being used as part of annual work programming. O&S work programmes now include more work balanced towards the impact on BCP residents. O&S Board has selected resident impact as a lens by which to plan and approach its work. Officers will continue to encourage selection of O&S topics that have tangible benefit to residents and monitor work programmes.	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1
	3c	Use is made of community insight through the selection of work topics that are driven by community need, evidence sessions, use of subject experts and data providing the view of residents and community groups. O&S Board and Environment & Place O&S have now planned annual work programmes based on councillor suggestions generated by issues of significance to communities.	Complete, monitor long-term and revisit in annual work programming for all committees.	CI1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Relevant Extract from:	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)		Greater use of subject experts and community insight have been included in O&S since May 2023. Examples include a subject expert on the Safety Valve programme, developer input to Local Plan discussions and regular Healthwatch contributions at HASC O&S Committee. The terms of reference of the Environment & Place O&S Committee was amended by Council in September 2023, to include additional insight on sustainability matters in the form of two non-voting member independent members. Recruitment to these positions is in process. Use of community insight and evidence could be developed further still and officers will encourage at the scoping stage of forthcoming work.		
	3d	Develop O&S web pages to clarify public role in O&S, ways to engage and improve ease of access for topic suggestion. Not started.	Autumn 2024	WP1
Scrutiny has a clear role and focus				
<i>Identifying a clear role and focus – authorities should take steps to ensure scrutiny has a clear role and focus within the organisation, i.e. a niche within which it can clearly demonstrate it adds value. Therefore, prioritisation is necessary to ensure the scrutiny function concentrates on delivering work that is of genuine value and relevance to the work of the wider authority – this is one of the most challenging parts of scrutiny, and a critical element to get right if it is to be recognised as a strategic function of the authority</i>	4a	Scrutiny committees agree a clear communicable role or focus for the year when planning their work programme in order to assist in topic selection and in ensuring that stakeholders can anticipate which topics are likely to be of interest to scrutiny, and plan accordingly for engagement. This may be in the form of a 'lens' (eg. risk) through which to scrutinise topics, or a key priority or set of priorities for a committee (eg. 'budget' or 'ofsted improvement plan') HASC O&S and Children's Services O&S Committees planned work for the 2023/24 municipal year but did not agree a role or priority focus. These committees would benefit from establishing a more defined lens or communicable focus for the 2024/25 work programmes. The O&S Board and Environment & Place O&S Committee engaged in action/ learning workshops to plan their work programmes for 23/24. These were led by CfGS and based on	Autumn 2023	WS1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Relevant Extract from: Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
		<p>good practice. Both committees established a lens and a scrutiny framework to more clearly refine and communicate their role and areas of priority.</p> <p>This approach to be rolled and maintained by all O&S committees in future work programming.</p>		
	4b	<p>Committees carefully consider the type and balance of work undertaken to ensure that work aims can be met within the meeting capacity available. This will require a determined focus to undertake work in diverse ways eg.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> receiving information based reports outside of meetings, establishing O&S rapporteurs (topic champions) to maintain oversight of an issue and report back to committee on exceptions reducing the level of Cabinet decision scrutiny to free up capacity for more overview work. <p>O&S Committees have received targeted training and support throughout the year to assist in this aim. There has been significant progress in reducing the level of Cabinet pre-decision scrutiny across committees, which previously dominated some work programmes. Committees are planning more manageable work programmes. Three additional O&S meetings were called during 23/24 to accommodate arising issues.</p> <p>All committees would benefit from reducing update items reported to committee, which usually generate limited substantive recommendations. Analysis of 23/24 work outputs across all committees show an overbalance of this type of work, with this taking up the majority of work for 4 out of 5 committees operating in this period. This is taking up time that could be used for other value-added scrutiny.</p>	Autumn 2023	WM1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Relevant Extract from:	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)		Good practice is for all information based reports to be received in other formats. Greater use could be made of other methods, such as rapporteurs, to maintain overview of information otherwise reported into committee. This approach will continue to be encouraged across all committees.		
	4c	Develop user friendly terms of reference documents for each O&S committee based on split of responsibility set out in constitution. Updated terms of reference are now circulated with the forward plan paper for each O&S Committee.	Complete	TOR1
There is a clear distinction between scrutiny and audit				
<i>Authorities should ensure a clear division of responsibilities between the scrutiny function and the audit function. While it is appropriate for scrutiny to pay due regard to the authority's financial position, this will need to happen in the context of the formal audit role. The authority's section 151 officer should advise scrutiny on how to manage this dynamic</i>	5a	Division of responsibility already established within the Articles of the Constitution.	Complete	CR1
	5b	A&G chair invitation to be scheduled into annual programme of O&S Chairs meetings A&G Chair has been invited to attend meetings during 2024/25.	Complete	CM1
<i>While scrutiny has no role in the investigation or oversight of the authority's whistleblowing arrangements, the findings of independent whistleblowing investigations might be of interest to scrutiny committees as they consider their wider implications.</i>	6	Develop a library of O&S oversight information, provided in an online format for Councillors to access independently, to include – The findings of independent whistleblowing investigations HASC O&S has developed a data toolkit, which gathers oversight information in a digestible format for O&S members. This to be rolled out to all committees to include whistleblowing information.	Spring/ Summer 2024	L1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
<i>The relationship between scrutiny and the executive is effective</i>				
<i>Ensuring early and regular engagement between the executive and scrutiny – authorities should ensure early and regular discussion takes place between scrutiny and the executive, especially regarding the latter's future work programme.</i>	7a	Portfolio Holders attend O&S meetings when requested, or send deputies <i>Attendance of Portfolio Holders at O&S when requested is now well established and will continue to be encouraged.</i>	Complete, monitor long-term.	C1
	7b	The Cabinet Forward Plan is regularly updated with sufficient notice of forthcoming priorities to enable O&S to engage effectively at an early stage in policy shaping. <i>Populating the Cabinet Forward Plan is a work in progress, with priorities currently identified approximately 3 months ahead. The Leader has committed to populating the plan 6 months ahead. The O&S Specialist met with CMB in November 2023 to outline the implications on O&S of Forward Planning by the Cabinet.</i> <i>Although the Cabinet Forward Plan is still in development, other activities have taken place which will support O&S/ executive work to be effective:</i> <i>Quarterly meetings between the Leader, Chief Executive, Statutory Scrutiny Officer and O&S Chairs are planned and will allow opportunity for discussion of O&S engagement in forthcoming policy work.</i> <i>Delivery plans attached to the refreshed Corporate Strategy set out the policy and decision making plans for the council for the forthcoming 2 years. This will assist O&S planning and consideration of this document as a horizon scanning tool is being encouraged with all committees.</i>	Immediate and ongoing request to Cabinet	C1

Relevant Extract from:	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)	7c	The Constitution sets out that it is good practice for there to be regular, informal dialogue between O&S leads and Portfolio Holders in order that O&S can understand developing Cabinet priorities, discuss and assess the value that Overview and Scrutiny can provide and contribute in a timely way to policy development (O&S Procedure Rule 8.3). <i>Officers regularly encourage this action.</i>	Complete, monitor long-term.	CR1
	7d	Role descriptions to be developed for Councillors in leading O&S roles to clarify expectation that scrutiny chairs establish informal working arrangements with relevant Portfolio Holders. <i>Development of role descriptions has been delayed, however, lead O&S members are encouraged on a regular basis to develop informal working arrangements with relevant Portfolio Holders.</i> <i>Completion of role descriptions likely to be delayed to Autumn 2024.</i>	Autumn 2023	RD1
	7e	Lines of accountability between scrutiny committees and Portfolio Holders were agreed by Council in April 2022- review after election when any change to Cabinet portfolios are known and document these in a more granular way than is captured within the constitution to aid transparency. <i>Changes were made to O&S Committees by Council in September 2023. New lines of accountability are identified in updated terms of reference documents, providing clarity on lines of accountability. These are circulated with each O&S agenda.</i>	Complete	TOR1
	7f	Maintain a review of the Portfolio/ O&S Committee alignment to ensure that it is fit for purpose, with amendments to be suggested via O&S annual report to Council, as required.	Complete, monitor annually through	AR1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Relevant Extract from:	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)		Changes were made to O&S committee remits in September 2023. No further changes suggested in 2024 annual report.	annual report process.	
<i>The executive should not try to exercise control over the work of the scrutiny committee. This could be direct, e.g. by purporting to 'order' scrutiny to look at, or not look at, certain issues, or indirect, e.g. through the use of the whip or as a tool of political patronage, and the committee itself should remember its statutory purpose when carrying out its work. All members and officers should consider the role the scrutiny committee plays to be that of a 'critical friend' not a de facto 'opposition'. Scrutiny chairs have a particular role to play in establishing the profile and nature of their committee</i>	8a	O&S considers work requested by Cabinet or Council using the criteria written into the constitution - Criteria already exists in constitution and is used to assess requests.	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1
	8b	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – All Political Groups be reminded of the incompatibility of the whip with O&S, and the forms that this may take. The message was reinforced in training and the CEx has had written confirmation from every Group Leader that the party whip, or similar, will not be applied around the Overview and Scrutiny functions.	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	8c	O&S chairs to be opposition members, where practicable, to reduce risk of executive control being exercised over O&S – referral to Constitution Review Working Group for consideration of any appropriate Constitution changes to set out this good practice - prior to May 2024 O&S Chairs elections. Since May 2023 all O&S Committees have appointed a Chair, and in most cases, a Vice-Chair, from outside of the Administration. O&S Board has confirmed a wish to include this advice within the constitution. Package of work to review constitution to strengthen areas around O&S has not yet started and will be progressed as resources allow.	Spring 2024	CR1
	8d	Role descriptions to be developed for Councillors in leading roles to clarify expectation that scrutiny chairs establish informal committee pre-meetings, to assist the committee in working towards its aims and taking a cross-party approach to scrutiny.	Autumn 2023	RD1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Relevant Extract from: Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
		Development of role descriptions has been delayed, however, some O&S Chairs have established pre-meetings successfully, and officers continue to encourage these. Completion of role descriptions likely to be delayed to Autumn 2024.		
	8e	O&S Chairing skills training to be delivered to include the benefit of pre-meetings, and management of political dynamics in scrutiny to avoid a de facto opposition approach. Chairing skills training provided in Summer 2023 induction. O&S leadership training provided via LGA workshops in Feb 2024. LGA leadership training to be offered to all new O&S chairs, as and when changes in positions occur.	Complete, monitor long-term.	MT2
<i>The chair of the scrutiny committee should determine the nature and extent of an executive member's participation in a scrutiny committee meeting, and in any informal scrutiny task group meeting</i>	9a	Clarity of O&S powers in determining attendees and participation already written into constitution at O&S Procedure Rule 9.1	Complete	CR1
	9b	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Clarity of scrutiny's powers in determining attendees and participation in O&S.	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	9c	Scrutiny committees to be asked to consider appropriate invitees when scoping a piece of work and to consider where more value may be added by an officer/ scrutiny session as opposed to a Cabinet member scrutiny Appropriate invitees are considered in the planning stage for all O&S work. Since May 2023 there has been a noticeable shift in emphasis within the Council, with officers being invited to contribute on specific issues at scrutiny as appropriate. The range of inquiry from councillors to both portfolio holders and officers is much improved and this will continue to be encouraged.	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Relevant Extract from:	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
Managing disagreement				
<i>Effective scrutiny involves looking at issues that can be politically contentious. It is therefore inevitable that, at times, an executive will disagree with the findings or recommendations of a scrutiny committee. It is the job of both the executive and scrutiny to work together to reduce the risk of this happening, and authorities should take steps to predict, identify and act on disagreement. One way in which this can be done is via an 'executive-scrutiny protocol' which can help define the relationship between the two and mitigate any differences of opinion before they manifest themselves in unhelpful and unproductive ways. The benefit of this approach is that it provides a framework for disagreement and debate, and a way to manage it when it happens. Often, the value of such a protocol lies in the dialogue that underpins its preparation. It is important that these protocols are reviewed on a regular basis.</i>	10	Executive members and O&S Chairs group to consider the value for BCP in preparing an executive – scrutiny protocol. <i>O&S Chairs have discussed executive – scrutiny protocol and asked to review further information on the benefits.</i> Agreement in place for quarterly meetings between Leader, Chief Executive and O&S Chairs to share information and address any barriers to effective scrutiny. To be scheduled following Chairmanship elections of Summer 2024. The value of preparing an executive – scrutiny protocol to be raised through this group.	Winter 2023	C1/ CM1
<i>Scrutiny committees do have the power to 'call in' decisions, i.e. ask the executive to reconsider them before they are implemented, but should not view it as a substitute for early involvement in the decision-making process or as a party-political tool.</i>	11	Use of call-in be monitored and reflected within annual report to Council. <i>Call-in use analysed and included in 2024 annual report.</i>	Complete, monitor annually through annual report process.	AR1
Ensuring impartial advice from officers				
<i>Authorities, particularly senior officers, should ensure all officers are free to provide impartial advice to scrutiny committees. This is fundamental to effective scrutiny. Of particular importance is the role played by 'statutory officers' – the monitoring officer, the section 151 officer and the head of paid service, and where relevant the statutory scrutiny officer. These individuals have a</i>	12	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – The importance of impartial advice to O&S <i>Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.</i>	Winter 2023	OT1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Relevant Extract from:	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
<i>particular role in ensuring that timely, relevant and high-quality advice is provided to scrutiny.</i>				
Communicating scrutiny's role and purpose to the wider authority				
<i>The scrutiny function can often lack support and recognition within an authority because there is a lack of awareness among both members and officers about the specific role it plays, which individuals are involved and its relevance to the authority's wider work. Authorities should, therefore, take steps to ensure all members and officers are made aware of the role the scrutiny committee plays in the organisation, its value and the outcomes it can deliver, the powers it has, its membership and, if appropriate, the identity of those providing officer support.</i>	13	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – The identity of those providing officer support to O&S. Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.	Winter 2023	OT1
Maintaining the interest of full Council in the work of the scrutiny committee				
<i>Part of communicating scrutiny's role and purpose to the wider authority should happen through the formal, public role of full Council – particularly given that scrutiny will undertake valuable work to highlight challenging issues that an authority will be facing and subjects that will be a focus of full Council's work. Authorities should therefore take steps to ensure full Council is informed of the work the scrutiny committee is doing.</i>	14a	Report annually to Council on the work of scrutiny, and progress on actions to improve scrutiny. Annual report to be received by committees in Sep/ Oct 2024 (delayed owing to pre-election period).	Complete, repeat annually.	AR1
<i>One way in which this can be done is by reports and recommendations being submitted to full Council rather than solely to the executive. Scrutiny should decide when it would be appropriate to submit reports for wider debate in this way, taking into account the relevance of reports to full Council business, as well as full Council's capacity to consider and respond in a timely manner. Such reports would supplement the annual report to full Council on scrutiny's activities and raise awareness of ongoing work.</i>	14b	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – The appropriate route for recommendations to full Council or Cabinet	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	14c	Consideration be given to any amendments required to constitution to clarify reporting routes from O&S - referral to Constitution Review Working Group for consideration. Package of work to review constitution to strengthen areas around O&S has not yet started and will be progressed as resources allow.	Spring 2024	CR1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Relevant Extract from:	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64) Communicating scrutiny's role to the public				
<i>Authorities should ensure scrutiny has a profile in the wider community. Consideration should be given to how and when to engage the authority's communications officers, and any other relevant channels, to understand how to get that message across. This will usually require engagement early on in the work programming process</i>	15a	Consideration be given to the promotion of outcomes via Communications Team at the scoping stage of O&S work. <i>Some O&S activity relating to high profile decisions is already promoted by the Communications Team. Greater use could be made of promotion opportunities to raise the profile of O&S work. Resources have not been available for a comprehensive approach to this through annual work programming. Consideration of this will instead be encouraged on an ongoing basis at the scoping stage for all O&S work, as resources allow.</i>	In annual work programming for O&S Committees – Autumn 2023	COM1
	15b	O&S webpage development - See action 3d above. <i>Not started</i>	Autumn 2024	WP1
Ensuring scrutiny members are supported in having an independent mindset				
<i>Formal committee meetings provide a vital opportunity for scrutiny members to question the executive and officers. Inevitably, some committee members will come from the same political party as a member they are scrutinising and might well have a long-standing personal, or familial, relationship with them.</i> <i>Scrutiny members should bear in mind, however, that adopting an independent mind-set is fundamental to carrying out their work effectively. In practice, this is likely to require scrutiny chairs working proactively to identify any potentially contentious issues and plan how to manage them.</i>	16a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – The importance of an independent mind-set to O&S	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	16b	O&S Chairs are supported by Officers to identify and plan for contentious issues through Chairs briefings. <i>Chairs are well supported by officers in regular briefings to scope and plan the level of interest anticipated in O&S work and any necessary adjustments. Briefings were held for all meetings in 23/24 municipal year and will be planned for all meetings in 24/25.</i>	Complete, monitor long-term	WS1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
	16c	Establish calendar of meeting dates for O&S chairs to include-monitoring the independence of O&S Calendar of meetings planned for 2024	Complete	CM1
Resourcing scrutiny				
<p><i>The resource an authority allocates to the scrutiny function plays a pivotal role in determining how successful that function is and therefore the value it can add to the work of the authority.</i></p> <p><i>Ultimately it is up to each authority to decide on the resource it provides, but every authority should recognise that creating and sustaining an effective scrutiny function requires them to allocate resources to it.</i></p> <p><i>When deciding on the level of resource to allocate to the scrutiny function, the factors an authority should consider include: • Scrutiny's legal powers and responsibilities; • The particular role and remit scrutiny will play in the authority; • The training requirements of scrutiny members and support officers, particularly the support needed to ask effective questions of the executive and other key partners, and make effective recommendations; • The need for ad hoc external support where expertise does not exist in the council; • Effectively-resourced scrutiny has been shown to add value to the work of authorities, improving their ability to meet the needs of local people; and • Effectively-resourced scrutiny can help policy formulation and so minimise the need for call-in of executive decisions</i></p>	17	<p>Consideration be given to the level of officer resource available to support scrutiny and that this is appropriate to ensure effective outputs that add value to the organisation – discussion with O&S chairs group, with views to be passed to Corporate Management Team.</p> <p>Resources to support O&S are stretched. The Democratic Services team provides direct officer support to the O&S function. There has been no increase in officer resource to support the increase in O&S meeting numbers agreed by Council in September 2023. The Democratic Services structure was designed to support the service approved by the Shadow Authority which anticipated 22 O&S meetings per year with a larger Democratic Services team to support this.</p> <p>Since the establishment of BCP Council, the officer support available to O&S has not been adequate for the level of O&S meetings held by the council, which, through many changes to the O&S committee structure, have predominantly been above the level anticipated by the Shadow Authority. In 2021 the service budget was reduced by 14.9% to support the corporate budget pressures. Following the most recent changes to the O&S structure the service is now considered to be operating above maximum capacity. Taking into account the increased meetings and reduction in manpower resources, the ratio of meetings per equivalent officer FTE to provide</p>	<p>Resource monitoring completed in 23/24.</p> <p>To be continued on same basis, ongoing.</p>	R1/ CMT1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Relevant Extract from:	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)		<p>support has increased by over 28%. This is excluding any additional special meetings called by committees. This has an impact on the level of support that can be provided to the O&S function and the resulting outputs.</p> <p>Resourcing implications set out above were highlighted to CMB and Council in September 2023 when a decision was taken to increase the overall number of O&S meetings. A bid for additional staff to support the increase in O&S meeting numbers was not approved.</p> <p>Resource pressures caused delay to strategic actions in 2023, such as work programming, and limited the amount of support that could be provided to scoping and supporting effective scrutiny. The highest level of substantive recommendations generated by an O&S committee in 2023/24 was 33%. The lowest level was 0%. These levels should be higher to demonstrate that value is being added by the O&S function.</p> <p>There will continue to be a risk that scrutiny cannot be supported to plan effective work with meaningful outputs without sufficient resources. The level of resources available to support O&S will continue to be monitored through the O&S Chairs group, O&S Board and the annual reporting process to Council.</p>		
<i>Authorities should also recognise that support for scrutiny committees, task groups and other activities is not solely about budgets and provision of officer time, although these are clearly extremely important elements. Effective support is also about the</i>	18a	<p>New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include –</p> <p>Use of resource, and effective wider authority engagement in O&S</p>	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
<i>ways in which the wider authority engages with those who carry out the scrutiny function (both members and officers).</i>	18b	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – Use of resource, and effective wider authority engagement in O&S Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.	Winter 2023	OT1
	18c	As required by the constitution, all requests for O&S committees to undertake work are considered by Committees against the current resource levels available to support the request All committees are asked to take account of resources when considering requests for work, especially commissioned work such as working groups and additional meetings. 2 working groups were held during 23/24 and 3 additional meetings called. It was fortunate that not all committees commissioned working groups during this time as overall resource to support the function was limited by the increase in committee meetings, agreed by council in September 2023. O&S Board and Environment & Place O&S Committee in particular have adapted practices to work within resources available with more manageable committee agendas, meeting duration and greater level of member led work taking place outside of committee. All committees would benefit from retaining clear capacity within their annual work programmes to ensure space exists to respond to arising issues throughout the year without exceeding resource. Mechanisms are in place to monitor resource availability, including through this action plan, and on a regular basis through Chairs and Vice Chairs meetings. Officers will continue to provide guidance to support an O&S function that is as effective as possible within the resources available.	Complete in 23/24 – continue to monitor long-term.	R1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
	18d	Establish calendar of meeting dates for O&S chairs to include-monitoring the total level of resource available across the O&S function Calendar of meetings planned for 2024.	Complete	CM1
Statutory scrutiny officers				
<p><i>Combined authorities, upper and single tier authorities are required to designate a statutory scrutiny officer, someone whose role is to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• promote the role of the authority's scrutiny committee;</i> <i>• provide support to the scrutiny committee and its members; and</i> <i>• provide support and guidance to members and officers relating to the functions of the scrutiny committee.</i> 	19a	Statutory scrutiny officer is appointed and sits within the Democratic Services Team.	Complete	R1
	19b	The Statutory Scrutiny Officer role is set out in the constitution to aid authority wide understanding - referral to Constitution Review Working Group for consideration. Package of work to review constitution to strengthen areas around O&S has not yet started and will be progressed as resources allow.	Winter 2023	CR1
	19c	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – The role of the statutory scrutiny officer, to increase visibility	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	19d	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – The role of the statutory scrutiny officer, to increase visibility. Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.	Winter 2023	OT1
	19e	Consider the interface of the statutory scrutiny officer role with Corporate Management Team to ensure that planning for engagement with scrutiny can be considered for significant forthcoming decisions.	Complete	CMT1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)		Statutory Scrutiny Officer met with CMB in November 2023 and agreed quarterly reporting of O&S Forward Plans through CMB, and encouraged directorates to consider potential O&S engagement in all significant forthcoming decisions. Quarterly meetings of Council Leader, Chief Executive, Statutory Scrutiny Officer and O&S Chairs has been agreed by all parties. This will also assist with planning for scrutiny engagement in significant forthcoming decisions.		
Officer resource models				
<i>Authorities should ensure that, whatever model they employ, officers tasked with providing scrutiny support are able to provide impartial advice. This might require consideration of the need to build safeguards into the way that support is provided. The nature of these safeguards will differ according to the specific role scrutiny plays in the organisation.</i>	20	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – The importance of impartial advice to O&S. Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.	Winter 2023	OT1
Selecting Committee Members				
<i>Selecting the right members to serve on scrutiny committees is essential if those committees are to function effectively. Where a committee is made up of members who have the necessary skills and commitment, it is far more likely to be taken seriously by the wider authority.</i> <i>When selecting individual members to serve on scrutiny committees, an authority should consider a member's experience, expertise, interests, ability to act impartially, ability to work as part of a group, and capacity to serve.</i>	21a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Appropriate selection of committee members, in order that this can be taken account of by political groups when establishing their committee representation.	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Relevant Extract from:	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
<p><i>Authorities should not take into account a member's perceived level of support for or opposition to a particular political party (notwithstanding the wider legal requirement for proportionality)</i></p> <p><i>Members invariably have different skill-sets. What an authority must consider when forming a committee is that, as a group, it possesses the requisite expertise, commitment and ability to act impartially to fulfil its functions.</i></p>	21b	<p>A programme of ongoing scrutiny skills training to be developed for delivery to O&S Councillors throughout municipal year 2023/24.</p> <p>Following induction training, a range of development opportunities have been provided to councillors through the LGA, the South West Scrutiny Network and the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. This has included skills development around work planning, finance scrutiny, chairing, O&S leadership and scrutinising data & performance. Arising opportunities free training through scrutiny networks will continue to be promoted to O&S councillors and additional bespoke training planned according to need and budget availability.</p> <p>O&S Chairs meetings retain training as a standard item on agendas, to review arising training needs.</p>	Complete, monitor long-term	MT3
<p><i>Authorities are reminded that members of the executive cannot be members of a scrutiny committee. Authorities should take care to ensure that, as a minimum, members holding less formal executive positions, e.g. as Cabinet assistants, do not sit on scrutinising committees looking at portfolios to which those roles relate.</i></p> <p><i>Authorities should articulate in their constitutions how conflicts of interest, including familial links between executive and scrutiny responsibilities should be managed, including where members stand down from the executive and move to a scrutiny role, and vice-versa.</i></p>	22a	<p>Review Constitution rules for clarity on the principle of Executive lead members sitting on O&S referral to Constitution Review Working Group for consideration.</p> <p>Constitution identifies that Executive lead members cannot sit on O&S.</p>	Complete	CR1
	22b	<p>Review constitution to consider providing further clarity on how to manage conflicts of interest, including when Councillors move between roles - referral to Constitution Review Working Group for consideration.</p> <p>Package of work to review constitution to strengthen areas around O&S has not yet started and will be progressed as resources allow.</p>	Winter 2023	CR1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
Selecting a chair				
<i>The Chair plays a leadership role on a scrutiny committee as they are largely responsible for establishing its profile, influence and ways of working.</i>	23a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Appropriate selection of committee chairs, in order that this can be taken account of by political groups when establishing their proposed chair nominees	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
<i>The attributes authorities should and should not take into account when selecting individual committee members also apply to the selection of the Chair, but the Chair should also possess the ability to lead and build a sense of teamwork and consensus among committee members.</i>	23b	O&S Chairing skills training to be delivered to include - leadership skills. Chairing skills training provided in Summer 2023 induction. O&S leadership training provided via LGA workshops in Feb 2024. LGA leadership training to be offered to all new O&S chairs, as and when changes in positions occur.	Complete, monitor long-term	MT2
<i>Given their pre-eminent role on the scrutiny committee, it is strongly recommended that the Chair not preside over scrutiny of their relatives</i>	24	Review constitution to consider providing further clarity on the Chair not presiding over scrutiny of relatives- referral to Constitution Review Working Group for consideration. Package of work to review constitution to strengthen areas around O&S has not yet started and will be progressed as resources allow.	Winter 2023	CR1
<i>The method for selecting a Chair is for each authority to decide for itself, however every authority should consider taking a vote by secret ballot.</i>	25a	Secret ballot method vote for Chair and Vice Chair is already in place within constitution at Meeting Procedure Rule 19.	Complete	CR1
	25b	See 8c above 'opposition chairs'	See relevant action above.	CR1
The role of the chair				
<i>Chairs should pay special attention to the need to guard the committee's independence. Importantly, however, they should take</i>	26	O&S Chairing skills training to be delivered to include – independence of O&S, and the need to avoid de facto opposition role.	Complete, monitor long-term	MT2

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
<i>care to avoid the committee being, and being viewed as, a de facto opposition to the executive.</i>		Chairing skills training provided in Summer 2023 induction. O&S leadership training provided via LGA workshops in Feb 2024. LGA leadership training to be offered to all new O&S chairs, as and when changes in positions occur.		
Training for committee members				
<i>Authorities should ensure committee members are offered induction when they take up their role and ongoing training so they can carry out their responsibilities effectively. Authorities should pay attention to the need to ensure committee members are aware of their legal powers, and how to prepare for and ask relevant questions at scrutiny sessions.</i> <i>When deciding on training requirements for committee members, authorities should consider taking advantage of opportunities offered by external providers in the sector.</i>	27a	See action 2a above - new Councillor and refresher training on statutory powers of O&S	See relevant action above.	MT1
	27b	A programme of ongoing scrutiny skills training to be developed for delivery to O&S Councillors throughout municipal year 2023/24, to include – questioning skills training. Some questioning skills training was incorporated into O&S induction training. O&S Chairs meetings retain training as a standard item on agendas, to review arising training needs. Currently, Chairs have not indicated a pressing need for additional questioning skills training. Arising opportunities for free training through scrutiny networks will continue to be promoted to O&S councillors and additional bespoke training planned according to need and budget availability.	Complete, monitor long-term	MT3
	27c	Training to be delivered by external facilitators as appropriate and according to budget available. A mix of in-house support and external facilitators have been used in training and development to date to provide additional O&S expertise and insight to specific training areas as appropriate. This approach will continue to be used according to need and budget availability.	Complete, monitor long-term.	MT3

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
<p><i>While members and their support officers will often have significant local insight and an understanding of local people and their needs, the provision of outside expertise can be invaluable. There are two principal ways to procure this:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Co-option – formal co-option is provided for in legislation.</i> <p><i>Authorities must establish a co-option scheme to determine how individuals will be co-opted onto committees; and</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Technical advisers – depending on the subject matter, independent local experts might exist who can provide advice and assistance in evaluating evidence</i> 	28a	Facility to use external experts by O&S is already set out in constitution at Article 6, Rule 6.6.	Complete	CR1
	28b	<p>Consideration be given to the appropriate use of external experts at the scoping stage of O&S work.</p> <p>Greater use of subject experts and community insight have been included in O&S since May 2023. Examples include a subject expert on the Safety Valve programme, developer input to Local Plan discussions and regular Healthwatch contributions at HASC O&S Committee. The terms of reference of the Environment & Place O&S Committee was amended by Council in September 2023, to include additional insight on sustainability matters in the form of two non-voting member independent members. Recruitment to these positions is in process.</p> <p>Use of community insight and evidence could be developed further still and officers will continue to encourage at the scoping stage of forthcoming work.</p>	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1
Powers to Access Information				
<p><i>A scrutiny committee needs access to relevant information the authority holds, and to receive it in good time, if it is to do its job effectively.</i></p> <p><i>This need is recognised in law, with members of scrutiny committees enjoying powers to access information. In particular, regulations give enhanced powers to a scrutiny member to access exempt or confidential information. This is in addition to existing rights for councillors to have access to information to perform their</i></p>	29a	Enhanced rights of O&S in relation to access to information are already set out in Constitution at Access to Information Procedure Rule 24.	Complete	CR1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Relevant Extract from: Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
<p><i>duties, including common law rights to request information and rights to request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.</i></p> <p><i>When considering what information scrutiny needs in order to carry out its work, scrutiny members and the executive should consider scrutiny's role and the legal rights that committees and their individual members have, as well as their need to receive timely and accurate information to carry out their duties effectively.</i></p>	29b	<p>New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – enhanced rights of O&S in relation to access to information</p>	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
<p><i>Scrutiny members should have access to a regularly available source of key information about the management of the authority – particularly on performance, management and risk. Where this information exists, and scrutiny members are given support to understand it, the potential for what officers might consider unfocused and unproductive requests is reduced as members will be able to frame their requests from a more informed position.</i></p>	30a	<p>Develop a library of O&S oversight information, provided in an online format for Councillors to access independently, to include -</p> <p>Performance, Management, Finance, Risk, Complaints, Business Cases and Ombudsman information.</p> <p>This will assist in 'horizon scanning' to enhance the effectiveness of O&S work planning.</p> <p><i>Some committees maintain oversight of key information on a regular basis, but this is determined by committee and not currently available to committees in a standard accessible format.</i></p> <p><i>HASC O&S has developed a data toolkit, which gathers oversight information in a digestible format for O&S members. This has been welcomed by O&S members as an effective way to provide horizon scanning information to members allowing 'self-serve' and minimising impact on wider committee resources.</i></p> <p><i>This approach to be rolled out to all committees as resources allow.</i></p>	Spring/ Summer 24	L1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
	30b	A programme of ongoing scrutiny skills training to be developed for delivery to O&S Councillors throughout municipal year 2023/24, to include – Interpretation performance, management and risk information, and its application to O&S work programming. LGA training opportunities in February and March 2024 on 'Data and Managing Council Performance' was promoted to all councillors. Arising opportunities free training through scrutiny networks will continue to be promoted to O&S councillors and additional bespoke training planned according to need and budget availability.	Complete, monitor long-term	MT3
<p><i>Officers should speak to scrutiny members to ensure they understand the reasons why information is needed, thereby making the authority better able to provide information that is relevant and timely, as well as ensuring that the authority complies with legal requirements.</i></p> <p><i>Regulations already stipulate a timeframe for executives to comply with requests from a scrutiny member. When agreeing to such requests, authorities should:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• consider whether seeking clarification from the information requester could help better target the request; and</i> <i>• Ensure the information is supplied in a format appropriate to the recipient's needs.</i> 	31	<p>Support scrutiny committees to be clear in identifying information needs and to scope larger pieces of work effectively so that information expectations can be met by officers and executive members.</p> <p>– In annual work programming for O&S Committees and ongoing, during work programming discussions at each meeting.</p> <p>During 23/24, where matters were scrutinised that were not already the subject of a report (eg. Cabinet report), scoping meetings were arranged between Chairs and report authors to clarify requirements. O&S Chairs engaged committee members to seek input into this.</p> <p>This process has been strengthened by the development of a Key Lines of Enquiry proforma, for completion for all new scrutiny items. This captures key questions and data requests and is being rolled out to all committees, providing a clearer audit trail for both committees and information providers.</p> <p>HASC O&S completed a working group on data and produced a Data Toolkit to capture its findings. This includes clear</p>	Complete – monitor long-term	WS1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
		guidance on a standard data request for HASC O&S committee reports - a process that can be mirrored by the other committees.		
<i>While each request for information should be judged on its individual merits, authorities should adopt a default position of sharing the information they hold, on request, with scrutiny committee members.</i>	32	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – Default position of sharing information with O&S Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.	Winter 2023	OT1
<i>The law recognises that there might be instances where it is legitimate for an authority to withhold information and places a requirement on the executive to provide the scrutiny committee with a written statement setting out its reasons for that decision. However, members of the executive and senior officers should take particular care to avoid refusing requests, or limiting the information they provide, for reasons of party political or reputational expediency. Before an authority takes a decision not to share information it holds, it should give serious consideration to whether that information could be shared in closed session</i>	33a	Situations where information may be withheld from O&S, and actions to communicate this, are already set out in the Constitution at Access to Information Procedure Rule 24.	Complete	CR1
	33b	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Default position of sharing information with O&S, and situations where information may be withheld.	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	33c	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – Default position of sharing information with O&S, and situations where information may be withheld. Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.	Winter 2023	OT1
<i>Committees should be aware of their legal power to require members of the executive and officers to attend before them to answer questions. It is the duty of members and officers to comply with such requests.</i>	34a	Requirement for Cabinet members and officers to attend O&S when requested is already set out in constitution at O&S Procedure Rule 9.	Complete	CR1
	34b	Identification of attendees and formal requests to Cabinet and officers to attend is required by the constitution and an embedded practice.	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1
	34c	Portfolio Holders attend O&S meetings in response to requests, or send deputies. Attendance of Portfolio Holders at O&S when requested is now well established and will continue to be encouraged.	Complete, monitor long-term.	C1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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	34d	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Requirement of Cabinet members and officers to attend scrutiny when requested	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	34e	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – Requirement of Cabinet members and officers to attend scrutiny when requested. <i>Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.</i>	Winter 2023	OT1
Seeking information from external organisations				
<i>Scrutiny members should also consider the need to supplement any authority-held information they receive with information and intelligence that might be available from other sources, and should note in particular their statutory powers to access information from certain external organisations</i>	35	Develop a library of O&S oversight information, provided in an online format for Councillors to access independently, to include - Information from external organisations, as appropriate, to support individual work items and annual work programming <i>Some committees maintain oversight of key information on a regular basis, but this is determined by committee and not currently available to committees in a standard accessible format.</i> HASC O&S has developed a data toolkit, which gathers oversight information in a digestible format for O&S members. This has been welcomed by O&S members as an effective way to provide horizon scanning information to members allowing 'self-serve' and minimising impact on wider committee resources. <i>This approach to be rolled out to all committees as resources allow.</i>	Spring/ Summer 24	L1
<i>When asking an external organisation to provide documentation or appear before it, and where that organisation is not legally obliged to do either, scrutiny committees should consider the following:</i>	36a	Guidelines for scrutinising external organisations is already included within the Council's Constitution at O&S Procedure Rule 10.	Complete	CR1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
<p>a) <i>The need to explain the purpose of scrutiny – the organisation being approached might have little or no awareness of the committee's work, or of an authority's scrutiny function more generally, and so might be reluctant to comply with any request;</i></p> <p>b) <i>The benefits of an informal approach – individuals from external organisations can have fixed perceptions of what an evidence session entails and may be unwilling to subject themselves to detailed public scrutiny if they believe it could reflect badly on them or their employer. Making an informal approach can help reassure an organisation of the aims of the committee, the type of information being sought and the manner in which the evidence session would be conducted;</i></p> <p>c) <i>How to encourage compliance with the request – scrutiny committees will want to frame their approach on a case by case basis. For contentious issues, committees might want to emphasise the opportunity their request gives the organisation to 'set the record straight' in a public setting; and</i></p> <p>d) <i>Who to approach – a committee might instinctively want to ask the Chief Executive or Managing Director of an organisation to appear at an evidence session, however it could be more beneficial to engage front-line staff when seeking operational-level detail rather than senior executives who might only be able to talk in more general terms. When making a request to a specific individual, the committee should consider the type of information it is seeking, the nature of the organisation in question and the authority's pre-existing relationship with it.</i></p>	36b	<p>Develop a user-friendly protocol to assist committees with approaching, preparing for and scrutinising external organisations.</p> <p><i>Not started. To be progressed as resources allow.</i></p>	Summer 2024	P1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
Following 'the Council Pound'				
<p><i>Scrutiny committees will often have a keen interest in 'following the council pound', i.e. scrutinising organisations that receive public funding to deliver goods and services.</i></p> <p><i>Authorities should recognise the legitimacy of this interest and, where relevant, consider the need to provide assistance to scrutiny members and their support staff to obtain information from organisations the council has contracted to deliver services. In particular, when agreeing contracts with these bodies, authorities should consider whether it would be appropriate to include a requirement for them to supply information to or appear before scrutiny committees</i></p>	37	<p>Officer refresher training to be provided to include – Support to scrutiny committees in respect of scrutinising organisations that receive public funding to deliver goods and services</p> <p>Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.</p>	Winter 2023	OT1
Planning Work				
<p><i>Effective scrutiny should have a defined impact on the ground, with the committee making recommendations that will make a tangible difference to the work of the authority. To have this kind of impact, scrutiny committees need to plan their work programme, i.e. draw up a long-term agenda and consider making it flexible enough to accommodate any urgent, short-term issues that might arise during the year.</i></p>	38a	<p>O&S committees agree a work programme annually drawing ideas from relevant sources, that enables reports to be prepared and brought to the committee in a timely way.</p> <p>All O&S committees completed annual work programming in 2023/24, basing suggestions on a variety of relevant sources. To be repeated annually.</p>	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1
	38b	<p>Work programmes are based on realistic assessment of resources available to O&S, also retaining capacity for some arising issues to be accommodated.</p> <p>All committees are asked to take account of resources when considering requests for work, especially commissioned work such as working groups and additional meetings. 2 working groups were held during 23/24 and 3 additional meetings called. It was fortunate that not all committees commissioned working groups during this time as overall resource to support</p>	<p>Complete to varying levels of effectiveness in 23/24.</p> <p>Stronger approach to this to be encouraged in 24/25,</p>	R1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)		<p>the function was limited by the increase in committee meetings, agreed by council in September 2023.</p> <p>O&S Board and Environment & Place O&S Committee in particular have adapted practices to work within resources available with more manageable committee agendas, meeting duration and greater level of member led work taking place outside of committee.</p> <p>All committees would benefit from retaining clear capacity within their annual work programmes to ensure space exists to respond to arising issues without exceeding resource.</p> <p>Mechanisms are in place to monitor resource availability, including through this action plan, and on a regular basis through Chairs and Vice Chairs meetings. Officers will continue to provide guidance to support an O&S function that is as effective as possible within the resources available.</p>	with ongoing monitoring.	
	38c	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Effective O&S Work programming and best use of resources	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	38d	Feedback is gathered on O&S outputs and a tool developed to measure the success of O&S. Not started. To be progressed as resources allow.	Summer 2024	P1
<i>Authorities with multiple scrutiny committees sometimes have a separate work programme for each committee. Where this happens, consideration should be given to how to co-ordinate the various committees' work to make best use of the total resources available.</i>	39a	Each O&S committee may establish separate work plans, with responsibility for monitoring use of resource across all work plans sitting with O&S Board, supported by O&S Chairs. This is set out in the Constitution.	Complete	CR1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
	39b	Establish calendar of meeting dates for O&S chairs to include collective leadership monitoring of O&S resource Calendar of meetings planned for 2024	Autumn 2023	CM1
Being clear about scrutiny's role				
<i>Scrutiny works best when it has a clear role and function. This provides focus and direction. While scrutiny has the power to look at anything which affects 'the area, or the area's inhabitants', authorities will often find it difficult to support a scrutiny function that carries out generalised oversight across the wide range of issues experienced by local people, particularly in the context of partnership working. Prioritisation is necessary, which means that there might be things that, despite being important, scrutiny will not be able to look at.</i> <i>Different overall roles could include having a focus on risk, the authority's finances, or on the way the authority works with its partners.</i> <i>Applying this focus does not mean that certain subjects are 'off limits'. It is more about looking at topics and deciding whether their relative importance justifies the positive impact scrutiny's further involvement could bring.</i>	40	See actions 4a, b and c above – O&S 'focus', working methods and terms of reference.	See relevant actions above	WS1/ WM1/ TOR1
<i>When thinking about scrutiny's focus, members should be supported by key senior officers. The statutory scrutiny officer, if an authority has one, will need to take a leading role in supporting members to clarify the role and function of scrutiny, and championing that role once agreed.</i>	41a	Senior officers and the statutory scrutiny officer support committees in selecting priorities that are of relevance and can add value to the organisation. – In annual work programming for O&S Committees and ongoing, during work programming discussions at each meeting. Committees are well supported by senior officers in their selection of topics on a meeting-by-meeting basis with potential	Complete, monitor long-term	WS1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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		<p>areas for value-added scrutiny identified by officers through service based training at first meetings of all committees and in annual work programming.</p> <p>The O&S Board and Environment & Place O&S Committee engaged in action/ learning workshops to plan their work programmes in 2023/24. These were led by CfGS and based on good practice. Both committees developed a lens and framework in liaison with the statutory scrutiny officer, which clearly identifies their role and mechanisms for engaging with the wider organisation on policy development and decisions. This will assist with communicating and championing the role of scrutiny to stakeholders. This approach to be used by all committees in future work programming.</p> <p>All committees would benefit from regularly assessing the value that has been added by their work, to inform future work planning.</p>		
	41b	<p>Statutory scrutiny officer to ensure that scrutiny priorities are promoted to Executive members and the wider officer corps via Corporate Management Board and information sharing with Cabinet members.</p> <p>All annual work programmes have been developed and are shared with each O&S committee agenda.</p> <p>Mechanisms are in place for promoting scrutiny priorities within the organisation:</p> <p>CMB has agreed to receive all O&S work programmes on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>The Leader and Chief Executive of the council have agreed to hold quarterly meetings with all O&S chairs to promote effective information sharing between O&S and executive to provide a mechanism for overcoming any barriers to effective working between the two.</p>	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
		O&S lead members are regularly encouraged to form effective informal relationships with cabinet members for information sharing purposes.		
Who to speak to				
<p><i>Evidence will need to be gathered to inform the work programming process. This will ensure that it looks at the right topics, in the right way and at the right time. Gathering evidence requires conversations with:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The public -</i> <p><i>It is likely that formal 'consultation' with the public on the scrutiny work programme will be ineffective. Asking individual scrutiny members to have conversations with individuals and groups in their own local areas can work better. Insights gained from the public through individual pieces of scrutiny work can be fed back into the work programming process. Listening to and participating in conversations in places where local people come together, including in online forums, can help authorities engage people on their own terms and yield more positive results</i></p> <p><i>Authorities should consider how their communications officers can help scrutiny engage with the public, and how wider internal expertise and local knowledge from both members and officers might make a contribution.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The authority's partners –</i> <p><i>relationships with other partners should not be limited to evidence-gathering to support individual reviews or agenda items. A range of partners are likely to have insights that will prove useful:</i></p>	42a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Sources of input to annual work programming, to include community insight to their scrutiny work, partner information and Cabinet forthcoming priorities	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
	42b	See 3C above – use of community insight in O&S work	See relevant action above.	CI1
	42c	Statutory scrutiny officer to work with communications team to establish how scrutiny can promote its work priorities and gather public insight. To include proactive work with communications team in Spring 2024 to gather public insight to inform future annual work programming in Summer 2024. Not started.	Spring 2024	COM1
	42d	See 35 above: Develop a library of O&S oversight information, provided in an online format for Councillors to access independently, to include – Information from external organisations, as appropriate, to support individual work items and annual work programming	See relevant action above.	L1
	42e	Cabinet is asked to provide input to annual O&S work programming to indicate forthcoming areas of work where O&S can add value.	Complete, encourage greater engagement	C1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
<p><i>o Public sector partners (like the NHS and community safety partners, over which scrutiny has specific legal powers);</i></p> <p><i>o Voluntary sector partners;</i></p> <p><i>o Contractors and commissioning partners (including partners in joint ventures and authority-owned companies);</i></p> <p><i>o In parished areas, town, community and parish councils;</i></p> <p><i>o Neighbouring principal councils (both in two-tier and unitary areas);</i></p> <p><i>o Cross-authority bodies and organisations, such as Local Enterprise Partnerships; and</i></p> <p><i>o Others with a stake and interest in the local area – large local employers, for example.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The executive –</i> <p><i>a principal partner in discussions on the work programme should be the executive (and senior officers). The executive should not direct scrutiny's work, but conversations will help scrutiny members better understand how their work can be designed to align with the best opportunities to influence the authority's wider work.</i></p>		All Portfolio Holders were asked to contribute O&S annual work planning by providing information on forthcoming priorities to enable O&S to plan work that can align and add value. Responses to this request varied and would benefit from becoming a more widely promoted and embedded practice in the next round of annual work programming.	in next round of annual work-programming.	
	42f	See 7b above: The Cabinet Forward Plan is regularly updated with sufficient notice of forthcoming priorities to enable O&S to engage effectively at an early stage in policy shaping	See relevant action above.	C1
	42g	See 7d above: Role descriptions to be developed for Councillors in leading O&S roles to clarify expectation that scrutiny chairs establish informal working arrangements with relevant Portfolio Holders to ensure scrutiny can be informed of Cabinet priorities in a timely way.	See relevant action above.	RD1
Information sources				
<p>Scrutiny will need access to relevant information to inform its work programme. The type of information will depend on the specific role and function scrutiny plays within the authority, but might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance information from across the authority and its partners; • Finance and risk information from across the authority and its partners; 	43a	See 30a above: Develop a library of O&S oversight information, provided in an online format for Councillors to access independently, to include - Performance, Management, Finance, Risk, Complaints, Business Cases and Ombudsman information. This will assist in 'horizon scanning' to enhance the effectiveness of O&S work planning.	See relevant action above.	L1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Corporate complaints information, and aggregated information from political groups about the subject matter of members' surgeries;</i> • <i>Business cases and options appraisals (and other planning information) for forthcoming major decisions. This information will be of particular use for pre -decision scrutiny; and</i> • <i>Reports and recommendations issued by relevant ombudsmen, especially the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.</i> <p><i>As committees can meet in closed session, commercial confidentiality should not preclude the sharing of information. Authorities should note, however, that the default for meetings should be that they are held in public</i></p>	43b	<p>Presumption is made that library of information for O&S Councillors is public, with non- public information shared in appropriate alternative environment to ensure Councillors can remain informed.</p> <p>The presumption for information shared with O&S to be public is already an embedded practice, with appropriate consideration given on an arising basis to O&S requests for non-public information.</p>	Complete, monitor long-term.	L1
<p>Scrutiny members should consider keeping this information under regular review. It is likely to be easier to do this outside committee, rather than bringing such information to committee 'to note', or to provide an update, as a matter of course.</p>	44	<p>Support committees to work in more diverse ways to maintain oversight of key information, including circulating information outside of meetings and the use of rapporteurs or champions for particular topics. This will free up committee resource for value added scrutiny.</p> <p>O&S Committees have received targeted training and support throughout the year to assist in this aim. O&S Board have made use of the member-led rapporteur model in work on Blue Badge waiting times. Other committees have agreed information which can be circulated outside of meetings to free up committee time and/or have held informal briefings for information only items. This approach could be significantly strengthened further across all committees.</p> <p>Analysis of 23/24 work outputs across all committees show an overbalance of monitoring/update reports, with this taking up the majority of work for 4 out of 5 committees operating in this period. This is taking up time that could be used for other value-added scrutiny.</p>	In annual work programming for O&S Committees – Autumn 2023	WM1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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		<p>Greater use could be made of other methods, such as rapporteurs, to maintain overview of information otherwise reported into committee. This approach will continue to be encouraged across all committees.</p> <p>Being more greatly aligned to a performance and oversight role, Children's Services and HASC O&S Committees would particularly benefit from an ongoing rigorous approach to committee agenda planning, to ensure that all information sharing items are received in other ways. Officers will continue to support this approach.</p>		
Shortlisting topics				
<p><i>Approaches to shortlisting topics should reflect scrutiny's overall role in the authority. This will require the development of bespoke, local solutions, however when considering whether an item should be included in the work programme, the kind of questions a scrutiny committee should consider might include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• Do we understand the benefits scrutiny would bring to this issue?</i> <i>• How could we best carry out work on this subject?</i> <i>• What would be the best outcome of this work?</i> <i>• How would this work engage with the activity of the executive and other decision-makers, including partners?</i> 	45a	<p>Extend the use of the 'scrutiny request form' already in place for commissioned items, to encourage consideration of the value to be added by all reports, such as scrutiny's consideration of Cabinet pre-decision items and officer proposed items.</p> <p>– In annual work programming for O&S Committees and ongoing, during work programming discussions at each meeting.</p> <p>The use of the 'scrutiny request form' is embedded for councillor requests. It is not currently used for requests to consider other items such as Cabinet items or officer proposed items. O&S Chairs have confirmed that they do not feel a documented process for officer or cabinet requests is necessary.</p> <p>Careful consideration of the likely benefits of all intended work prior to commencement, regardless of origin, will continue to be encouraged by officers that support O&S.</p>	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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<p><i>Some authorities use scoring systems to evaluate and rank work programme proposals. If these are used to provoke discussion and debate, based on evidence, about what priorities should be, they can be a useful tool. Others take a looser approach. Whichever method is adopted, a committee should be able to justify how and why a decision has been taken to include certain issues and not others.</i></p> <p><i>Scrutiny members should accept that shortlisting can be difficult; scrutiny committees have finite resources and deciding how these are best allocated is tough. They should understand that, if work programming is robust and effective, there might well be issues that they want to look at that nonetheless are not selected.</i></p>	45b	Review 'scrutiny request form' and update as appropriate to incorporate all suggested areas referenced in O&S guidance. Not started. To be progressed as resources allow.	Autumn 2023	P1
	45c	See 18c above: As required by the constitution, all requests for O&S work are considered by Committees against the current resource levels available to support the request	See relevant action above.	R1
Carrying out work				
<p>Selected topics can be scrutinised in several ways, including:</p> <p>a) As a single item on a committee agenda – this often presents a limited opportunity for effective scrutiny, but may be appropriate for some issues or where the committee wants to maintain a formal watching brief over a given issue;</p> <p>b) At a single meeting – which could be a committee meeting or something less formal. This can provide an opportunity to have a single public meeting about a given subject, or to have a meeting at which evidence is taken from a number of witnesses;</p> <p>c) At a task and finish review of two or three meetings – short, sharp scrutiny review are likely to be most effective even for complex topics. Properly focused, they ensure members can swiftly reach conclusions and make recommendations, perhaps over the course of a couple of months or less;</p>	46a	Methods of carrying out O&S work are set out within the Constitution at Article 6, Rule 6.9.	Complete	CR1
	46b	Support committees to actively consider diverse ways of working other than committee reports to secure most effective outputs. O&S ways of working were considered through O&S work planning activity for all committees. Officers also encourage consideration of diverse ways of working on an ongoing basis as work programmes are revised.	Complete, monitor long-term	WM1
	46c	Review and develop task and finish/ working group scoping document, protocol and joint working group protocol Not started. To be progressed as resources allow.	Summer 2024	P1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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<p>d) Via a longer-term task and finish review – the 'traditional' task and finish model – with perhaps six or seven meetings spread over a number of months – is still appropriate when scrutiny needs to dig into a complex topic in significant detail. However, the resource implications of such work, and its length, can make it unattractive for all but the most complex matters; and</p> <p>e) By establishing a 'standing panel' – this falls short of establishing a whole new committee but may reflect a necessity to keep a watching brief over a critical local issue, especially where members feel they need to convene regularly to carry out that oversight. Again, the resource implications of this approach means that it will be rarely used.</p>				
Evidence sessions				
<p>Evidence sessions are a key way in which scrutiny committees inform their work. They might happen at formal committee, in less formal 'task and finish' groups or at standalone sessions.</p> <p>Good preparation is a vital part of conducting effective evidence sessions. Members should have a clear idea of what the committee hopes to get out of each session and appreciate that success will depend on their ability to work together on the day.</p>	47	<p>Consider the appropriateness of conducting evidence sessions to scrutinise particular topics when planning annual work programmes. These will need proactive planning to ensure that sufficient resource can be made available to support effective sessions.</p> <p>Some committees invited evidence into scrutiny from additional sources during 23/24 but evidence sessions were not widely used. Initial plans are in place for a joint O&S housing related inquiry day to take evidence from a variety of sources, during 24/25.</p> <p>Planning and conducting evidence sessions is resource intensive and support is limited to support this owing to the high volume of committee meetings planned for O&S and associated core work. The approach will therefore continue to be promoted as an effective form of scrutiny to be taken up as resources allow.</p>	Action will progress as resources allow.	WM1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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How to plan				
<i>Effective planning does not necessarily involve a large number of pre-meetings, the development of complex scopes or the drafting of questioning plans. It is more often about setting overall objectives and then considering what type of questions (and the way in which they are asked) can best elicit the information the committee is seeking. This applies as much to individual agenda items as it does for longer evidence sessions – there should always be consideration in advance of what scrutiny is trying to get out of a particular evidence session.</i>	48	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Evidence led approach to O&S, and how to conduct an effective evidence session	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
<i>Chairs play a vital role in leading discussions on objective-setting and ensuring all members are aware of the specific role each will play during the evidence session.</i> <i>As far as possible there should be consensus among scrutiny members about the objective of an evidence session before it starts. It is important to recognise that members have different perspectives on certain issues, and so might not share the objectives for a session that are ultimately adopted. Where this happens, the Chair will need to be aware of this divergence of views and bear it in mind when planning the evidence session.</i>	49	O&S Chairing skills training to be delivered to include how to plan for and lead evidence sessions, establish aims and manage different objectives from committee members Chairing skills training provided in Summer 2023 induction. O&S leadership training provided via LGA workshops in Feb 2024. LGA leadership training to be offered to all new O&S chairs, as and when changes in positions occur.	Complete, monitor long-term.	MT2
<i>Effective planning should mean that at the end of a session it is relatively straightforward for the chair to draw together themes and highlight the key findings. It is unlikely that the committee will be able to develop and agree recommendations immediately, but, unless the session is part of a wider inquiry, enough evidence should have been gathered to allow the chair to set a clear direction.</i>	50	O&S Chairing skills training to be delivered to include how to draw together themes and highlight key findings at the end of evidence sessions – this approach to be extended to all O&S work items to ensure Chairs can provide transparent summary of discussions. Chairing skills training provided in Summer 2023 induction. O&S leadership training provided via LGA workshops in Feb 2024. LGA leadership training to be offered to all new O&S chairs, as and when changes in positions occur.	Complete, monitor long-term	MT2

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<i>After an evidence session, the committee might wish to hold a short 'wash-up' meeting to review whether their objectives were met and lessons could be learned for future sessions</i>				
Developing recommendations				
<i>The development and agreement of recommendations is often an iterative process. It will usually be appropriate for this to be done only by members, assisted by co-optees where relevant. When deciding on recommendations, however, members should have due regard to advice received from officers, particularly the Monitoring Officer.</i>	51a	Officer refresher training to be provided to include – Officers to provide timely, transparent advice to committees in all areas of O&S work, as appropriate. <i>Planned for Summer / Autumn 2024.</i>	Winter 2023	OT1
<i>The drafting of reports is usually, but not always, carried out by officers, directed by members.</i>	51b	For longer pieces of O&S work, a lead officer to be identified at the scoping stage who will support report drafting - include this within relevant protocols listed at 46c above. <i>This is included as standard within scoping documents for O&S working groups.</i> <i>Wider piece of work to review protocols (46c) not yet started.</i> <i>To be progressed as resources allow.</i>	Immediate, as arising (WS1/R1) Protocol review Summer 2024 (P1)	WS1/R1/P1
<i>Authorities draft reports and recommendations in a number of ways, but there are normally three stages:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>i. the development of a 'heads of report' – a document setting out general findings that members can then discuss as they consider the overall structure and focus of the report and its recommendations;</i> <i>ii. The development of those findings, which will set out some areas on which recommendations might be made; and</i> <i>iii. the drafting of the full report.</i> <i>Recommendations should be evidence-based and SMART, i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timed. Where appropriate, committees may wish to consider sharing them in draft with interested parties.</i>	52	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – Consideration of appropriate recommendations and reporting route for O&S work, to include consideration of what SMART recommendations may look like. Consideration of this to take place at the scoping stage of O&S work, to ensure scope is clear enough and to provide an indication of the value that is likely to be added by the work undertaken.	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
<i>Committees should bear in mind that often six to eight recommendations are sufficient to enable the authority to focus its response, although there may be specific circumstances in which more might be appropriate.</i>				
<i>Sharing draft recommendations with executive members should not provide an opportunity for them to revise or block recommendations before they are made. It should, however, provide an opportunity for errors to be identified and corrected, and for a more general sense-check</i>	53	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided to include – The role of executive member consultation during draft reporting stages.	Complete. Monitor the need for refresher training.	MT1
Chief Executive's Assurance Review, June 2023 – recommendations and comments relating to O&S				
<i>In a No Overall Control council it is useful to ensure there is an opportunity to elect a Chair from outside of the administration to each Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to ensure appropriate scrutiny and holding the Executive to account.</i>	54a	Since May 2023 all O&S Committees have appointed a Chair, and in most cases, a Vice-Chair from outside of the Administration.	Complete – monitor long term.	CL1
<i>Opposition councillors have recently been given a majority of positions on the principal Overview and Scrutiny committees as a result of changes in the political balance calculations. Opposition councillors appear to be content to keep Conservative councillors as Chairs for the Committees where they are already in place, for the remainder of this Council term.</i>	54b	Action relating to potential constitutional changes to clarify the good practice of opposition chairs outlined at 8c above.	See relevant action above.	CR1
<i>Overview and scrutiny committees are to be encouraged to take evidence and contributions from officers as well as portfolio holders, to ensure a more informed basis to O&S recommendations.</i> <i>There is still a marked reluctance amongst the broader overview and scrutiny committees to ask questions directly of officers and</i>	55	Multiple actions relating to O&S powers to question, skills training, and planning of evidence sessions are outlined above. These will all assist with encouraging evidence and contributions from officers as well as portfolio holders, to increase the effectiveness of scrutiny sessions. See 9a, 9b, 9c, 27b and 48 above.	See relevant actions above	See relevant actions above

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

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<p><i>there are regular comments that leading councillors do not give clear answers to questions, but other councillors do not seek that clarity from officers, which they could.</i></p> <p><i>Since June there has been a noticeable shift in emphasis within the Council, with officers being invited to contribute on specific issues in Cabinet and this need needs to be extended to O&S committees</i></p> <p><i>Continue to encourage full participation and clarity of answers in all meetings, and incorporate into training for Overview and Scrutiny committee members.</i></p>				
<p><i>Overview and scrutiny committees should continue to increase their focus on policy development and engagement rather than pre-Cabinet scrutiny.</i></p>	56a	<p>Update text lifted from Assurance Review Action Plan:</p> <p>Prior to the May 2023 elections there was little movement in the focus of the two new Overview and Scrutiny committees (Place and Corporate & Community) that replaced O&S Board, with an ongoing focus on pre-Cabinet scrutiny. At the end of 23/24 this had changed to a maximum level of 53% of items being within the pre-decision scrutiny category for O&S Board, with all other committees at a lower level.</p> <p>Since the elections the administration sought to restructure Overview and Scrutiny, to establish a closer link to the Cabinet cycle for one O&S Committee but keeping the other 3 committees removed from the Cabinet cycle. This was implemented in September 2023.</p> <p>The policy development role for O&S was incorporated into training for Overview and Scrutiny committee members, to foster a wider role for Overview and Scrutiny committees, underpinned by officer encouragement. O&S forward plans now show a more balanced mix of work, an example of this is a</p>	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1

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		<p>recent O&S investigation into blue badge waiting times with a view to establishing necessary policy changes.</p> <p>Officers should encourage, raise awareness and provide training on an ongoing basis to ensure that the O&S function focuses on a balance of work including policy development. CMB has agreed to regularly receive O&S work plans to provide opportunity to encourage policy development, and the Scrutiny Officer encourages regular communication with O&S chairs to assist in identifying these opportunities.</p> <p>The changes to the O&S structure introduced ability for the Environment and Place O&S Committee to appoint two independent members establishing an opportunity to scrutinise from a fresh perspective.</p> <p>To give a wider set of input the O&S Board has also taken evidence from other organisations, including two representatives of the private development industry when considering the draft Local Plan.</p> <p>Three workshops were held with CfGS support to develop work programming approaches to include more proactive scrutiny work. The E&P O&S Committee and O&S Board have developed a framework for how they will approach and include a balance of pre-decision, proactive and reactive scrutiny into their work plans.</p>		
	56b	<p>Ongoing support to promote a balance of O&S work is identified through multiple actions above.</p> <p>Encouraging an effective balance of scrutiny work involves many factors including effective engagement with Cabinet and senior officers to ensure O&S understanding of forthcoming</p>	See relevant actions above	See relevant actions above

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Relevant Extract from: Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
		<p>priorities; training; work planning actions and monitoring and reporting on scrutiny outputs to ensure Council ownership of the balance of O&S work.</p> <p>These actions will embed a practice of selecting topics which generate meaningful outcomes and balance policy engagement with pre-Cabinet scrutiny.</p> <p>See actions 1c, 4b,7b,7c,7d, 14a, 38c, 38d, 41, 42e, 43a, 45a above.</p>		
<p><i>Overview and scrutiny committees should consider putting more focus into corporate performance reporting, challenging the executive to ensure that improvement plans are having an effect and improving the services that are missing their targets.</i></p> <p><i>There is an opportunity to strengthen the focus of O&S on performance management, through the overview and scrutiny committees.</i></p> <p><i>Incorporate into training for Overview and Scrutiny committee members and monitor agendas, encouraging Overview and Scrutiny Committees to focus on performance management information.</i></p>	57	<p>See 30a and 30b above relating to the provision of performance management information and associated training.</p>	See relevant actions above	See relevant actions above
<p><i>Need to ensure the party whip is not applied to O&S functions. This message needs to be reinforced and the situation monitored.</i></p> <p><i>There has been no recent evidence of the party whip being applied to O&S functions, but this needs to be monitored. A positive statement will be sought from Group Leaders.</i></p>	58	<p>Actions relating to training, chairing and monitoring the independence of O&S are set out above. See 8b, 8d,8e, 16a and 16c and 26 above.</p>	See relevant actions above	See relevant actions above

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Relevant Extract from:	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
DLUHC External Assurance Review of BCP Council, August 2023 – recommendations and comments relating to O&S				
<i>The Council reviews the Transformation programme and agrees a realistic and deliverable programme by October 2023. The Council sets up effective mechanisms for Member oversight and monitoring of the delivery of the programme by June 2023</i>	59	O&S to consider and establish its role in this member oversight and monitoring. A mechanism for O&S oversight has been established. The O&S Board Chair and Vice Chair are members of the cross-party councillor working group now established to monitor the Transformation Programme. This provides a mechanism for O&S to maintain oversight of assurances or concerns relating to the programme with red flags able to be raised to committee by exception. When available, Cabinet reports monitoring the Transformation Programme are also received by the O&S Board.	Complete, monitor long-term.	WS1
<i>The Council establishes a sound budget setting process and begins preparations for the 2024/25 budget as soon as possible after the local government elections and has proposals drafted for a sustainable MTFP and three-year budget by the end of September 2023</i>	60	O&S to consider and establish its role in the budget setting process The O&S Board monitors any areas of risk and concern within the MTFP through regular reporting at committee. The 2024/25 budget was considered by the O&S Board in January 2024 with invitation to other O&S Chairs to contribute on budget matters relating to services within their committee remit. Early plans are in place for a more active role for O&S in the budget setting process for 2025/26, with input through the year as the budget develops. This is in line with refreshed guidance on good practice from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. This has been discussed with O&S Chairs, relevant portfolio holders and senior officers and there is good support to this approach. This will be advanced throughout 2024/25, as permitted by resources available.	In annual work programming for O&S Committees – Autumn 2023	WS1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Relevant Extract from:	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
<i>The Council, with the active leadership of the respective group leaders, uses the opportunity of a new Council to reset the Member / Member and Member / officer culture and relationships. The new Council must use the support offered by the LGA and set up a comprehensive programme of Member induction and an on-going programme of Member training. The induction programme should be in place by June 2023 and the ongoing programme by July 2023</i>	61a	New Councillor and refresher training to be provided. Complete. See all actions coded MT1 above.	See relevant actions above.	MT1
	61b	See 21b above - A programme of ongoing scrutiny skills training to be developed for delivery to O&S Councillors throughout municipal year 2023/24.	See relevant action above.	MT3
	61c	See 23b above – O&S Chairing and leadership skills support to be provided.	See relevant action above.	MT2
	61d	LGA training opportunities to be taken up. The LGA has been widely engaged to provide support to O&S since May 2023. This includes Leadership Academy training, in-house delivery of support for O&S work programming and promotion of LGA online training courses to councillors.	Complete. Continue to take up opportunities on an ongoing basis.	WS1
<i>The Council puts in place a regular annual cycle for the business plans, mid-year reviews and year end reviews of all its companies to be reported to the appropriate scrutiny and decision-making bodies. This should be in place by June 2023 to begin the 2024/25 process</i>	62	O&S to consider and establish its role in this review process. This has not yet been established. To be revisited with O&S Board Chair.	In annual work programming for O&S Committees – Autumn 2023	WS1
<i>The Council has four scrutiny committees – Corporate and Community; Children's Services; Health and Adult Social Care, and Place. Scrutiny has focused rather heavily on pre scrutiny of Cabinet decisions rather than having a broader focus or looking at policy development. I was told by a range of people that politics has got in the way of effective scrutiny. When scrutiny has looked at wider issues the feedback has been more positive – I was told of</i>	63	See 56a and 56b above.	See relevant actions above	See relevant actions above

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Relevant Extract from:	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)				
<p><i>a good example of scrutiny inviting the Police and Crime Commissioner and neighbourhood watch representatives to a scrutiny committee. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny summarise scrutiny's role as providing a space to bring critical friend challenge and support to decision making; providing a way of challenging and supporting partner organisations; bringing issues that matter to local people and the local community into decision making; and surface issues that the Council should be engaging with but which are not yet part of formal decision making.</i></p> <p><i>From what I have seen there is an opportunity at BCP – as there is with many other councils – to develop the scrutiny role along the lines above rather than simply to focus on pre-cabinet scrutiny. There is an opportunity with a new Council to ensure that Councillors have training and support to enable them to develop their role in overview and scrutiny. This should be built into the Member induction and ongoing training programme.</i></p>				
<p><i>The DfE Advisor has commented that the Scrutiny Committee [Children's Services O&S] and particularly its Chair (prior to the elections) have been engaged in a proper and appropriate way. The Chair of scrutiny prior to the elections has now been appointed as the Cabinet Member and therefore the Statutory Lead Member for Children's Services. Given the position of children's services the change in both the Cabinet Member and Scrutiny Chair roles will need careful management and both Members will need focussed support to discharge these key roles.</i></p>	64a	<p>Work programming support provided summer 2023. Further support to be provided to complete annual work programming. <i>All Children's Services O&S work planning now complete.</i></p>	Complete in 23/24. To be repeated annually on ongoing basis.	CS1
	64b	<p>Focussed support provided by service area lead to identify and provide relevant performance information to support the committee in its role. <i>Service area lead for performance and governance has provided support to Children's O&S Chair and committee. This is well established and provided on an ongoing basis.</i></p> <p><i>Offer of regular meetings between Director of Children's Services to the Chair of Children's O&S Committee was made.</i></p>	Offer of support completed in 23/24 – will continue to be offered with take-up monitored on an	CS1

Overview and Scrutiny Action Plan 2023-24

Relevant Extract from:	ID	Action for BCP Council with updates (Latest updates December 2023 in blue text)	RAG and timescales	Code
Statutory Guidance on O&S (ID 1-53) Chief Executive's Assurance Review (ID 54-58) DLUHC Assurance Review (ID 59 – 64)			ongoing basis.	
	64c	Ongoing training plan for the Committee in development. The committee held a training and development session to support work programme priorities and officers have supported ongoing information based training needs as arising. Offer of LGA training and support to full committee has been refreshed in summer 2024 and will be promoted to the committee by officers. A programme of briefing slots will be planned in for 2024/25 to be used as required. Along with other scrutiny network training opportunities, this should be drawn together in a documented package of development to ensure all necessary areas are covered.	Autumn 2023	CS1
	64d	Establish links with O&S Chairs in other authorities that have experience of similar improvement journey. Links established and provided to the Chair summer 2023.	Complete, monitor take-up of opportunities ongoing.	CS1
	64e	LGA development opportunities promoted to Chair. LGA hosted Children's Services Leadership training provided to Chair in Autumn 2023. This is in addition to the Chairing and leadership skills training identified at 61c and 61d above. Attendance at the National Children and Adult Services Conference was also supported in Autumn 2023 to provide learning and networking opportunities to chair. Offer of LGA training and support to full committee, including mentoring support for chair, has been refreshed in summer 2024 and will be promoted to the committee by officers.	Complete. Development opportunities will continue to be promoted and take-up monitored on ongoing basis.	CS1

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