

## **BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL**

### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Overview and Scrutiny is a statutory role fulfilled by Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet in an authority operating a Leader and Cabinet model. The role of the overview and scrutiny committees is to help develop policy, to carry out reviews of Council and other local services, and to hold decision makers to account.

#### **PRINCIPLES OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

The Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Overview and Scrutiny function is based upon six principles:

1. Contributes to sound decision making in a timely way by holding decision makers to account as a 'critical friend'.
2. A member led and owned function – seeks to continuously improve through self-reflection and development.
3. Enables the voice and concerns of the public to be heard and reflected in the Council's decision-making process.
4. Engages in decision making and policy development at an appropriate time to be able to have influence.
5. Contributes to and reflects the vision and priorities of the Council.
6. Agile – able to respond to changing and emerging priorities at the right time with flexible working methods.

#### **MEETINGS**

There are four Overview and Scrutiny Committees at BCP Council. Each Committee meets 5 times during the municipal year:

- Corporate and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The date and time of meetings will be set by full Council and may only be changed by the Chairman of the relevant Committee in consultation with the Monitoring Officer. Members will adhere to the agreed principles of the Council's Code of Conduct.

Decisions shall be taken by consensus. Where it is not possible to reach consensus, a decision will be reached by a simple majority of those present at the meeting. Where there are equal votes the Chair of the meeting will have the casting vote.

## MEMBERSHIP

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees are appointed by full Council, and each has 11 members. No member of the Cabinet may be a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, or any group established by the Committees. Lead Members of the Cabinet may not be a member of Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee may not be a member of any Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The quorum of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees shall be one third of the total membership (excluding voting and non-voting co-optees).

No member may be involved in scrutinising a decision in which they been directly involved. If a member is unable to attend a meeting their Group may arrange for a substitute to attend in their place in accordance with the procedures as set out in the Council's Constitution.

Members of the public can be invited to attend and contribute to meetings as required, to provide insight to a matter under discussion. This may include but is not limited to subject experts with relevant specialist knowledge or expertise, representatives of stakeholder groups or service users. Members of the public will not have voting rights.

**Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee** - The Committee must statutorily include two church and two parent governor representatives as voting members (on matters related to education) in addition to Councillor members. Parent governor membership shall extend to a maximum period of four years and no less than two years. The Committee may also co-opt one representative from the Academy Trusts within the local authority area, to attend meetings and vote on matters relating to education.

The Committee may also co-opt two representatives of The Youth Parliament and, although they will not be entitled to vote, will ensure that their significant contribution to the work of the Committee is recognised and valued.

## FUNCTIONS OF THE O&S COMMITTEES

Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee is of equal status and has responsibility for:

- Scrutinising decisions of the Cabinet, offering advice or making recommendations, considering decisions that have been called-in,
- Offering any views or advice to the Cabinet or Council in relation to any matter referred to the Committee for consideration;

- General policy reviews, and making recommendations to the Council or the Cabinet to assist in the development of future policies and strategies;
- Assisting the Council in the development of the Budget and Policy Framework by in-depth analysis of policy issues;
- Monitoring the implementation of decisions to examine their effect and outcomes;
- Referring to full Council, the Cabinet or appropriate Committee/Sub-Committee any matter which, following scrutiny a Committee determines should be brought to the attention of the Council, Cabinet or other appropriate Committee;
- Preparation, review and monitoring of a work programme;
- Maintaining oversight of the training needs of the Committee.
- Establishing such commissioned work as appropriate after taking into account the availability of resources, the work programme and the matter under review;

**Figure 1 below provides an outline of the responsibilities of each Committee.**

The remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees is based on the division of Portfolio Holder responsibilities. Portfolio Holders may report to more than one Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Portfolio Holder responsibilities are changeable and from time to time it may be necessary to modify the designation of functions across the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

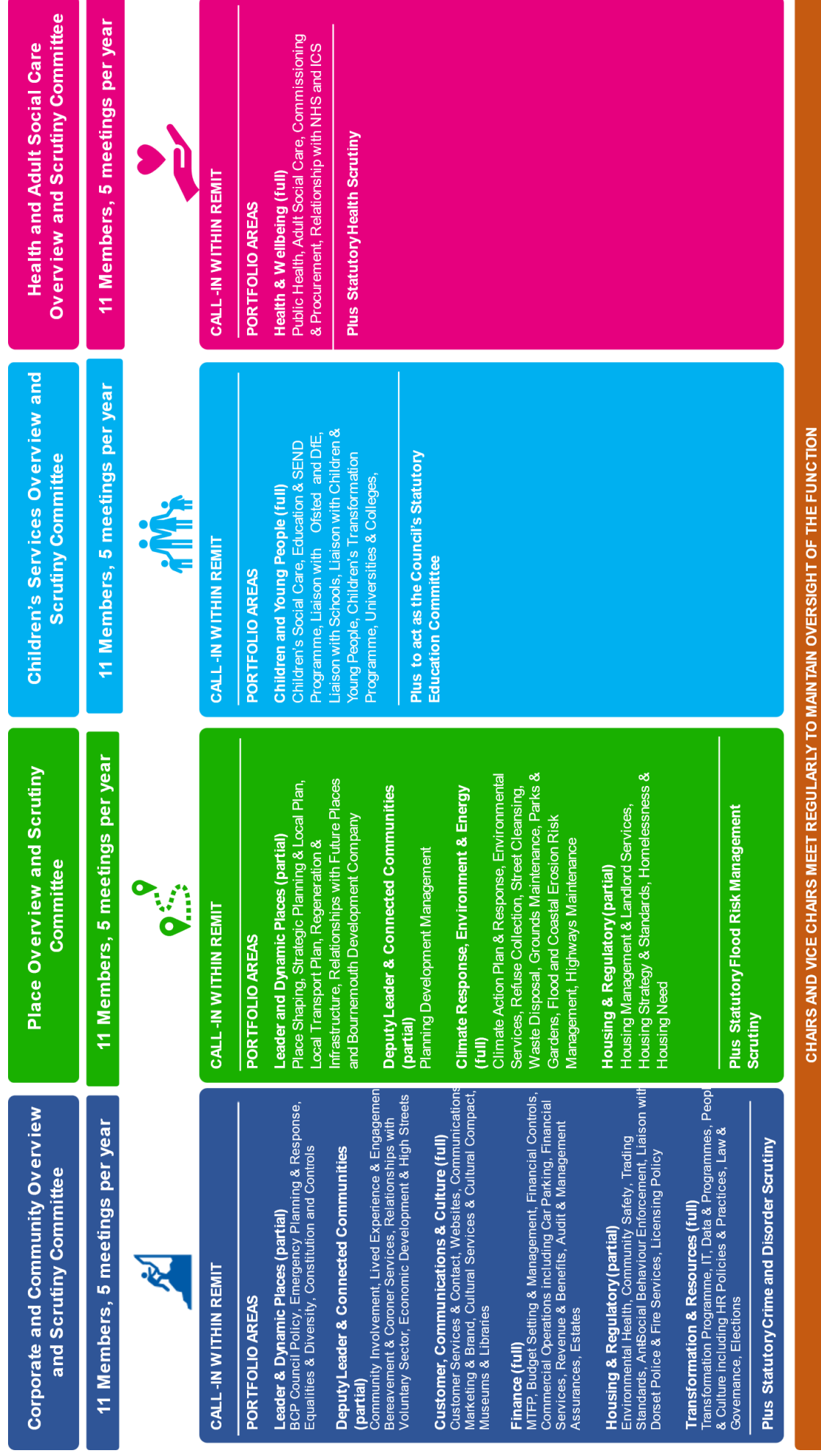


Figure 1 – Overview and Scrutiny Committee Structure, July 2023.

## COMMISSIONED WORK

In addition to Committee meetings, the Overview and Scrutiny Committees may commission work to be undertaken as it considers necessary after taking into account the availability of resources, the work programme and the matter under review.

Each Committee is limited to two commissions at a time to ensure availability of resources.

**a) Working Groups** – a small group of Councillors and Officers gathered to consider a specific issue and report back to a full Committee, or make recommendations to Cabinet or Council within a limited timescale. Working Groups usually meet once or twice, and are often non-public;

**b) Sub-Committees** – a group of Councillors delegated a specific aspect of the main Committee's work for ongoing, in-depth monitoring. May be time limited or be required as a long-standing Committee. Sub-Committees are often well suited to considering performance-based matters that require scrutiny oversight. Sub-Committees usually meet in public;

**c) Task and finish groups** – a small group of Councillors tasked with investigating a particular issue and making recommendations on this issue, with the aim of influencing wider Council policy. The area of investigation will be carefully scoped and will culminate in a final report, usually with recommendations to Cabinet or Council. Task and finish groups may work over the course of a number of months and take account of a wide variety of evidence, which can be resource intensive. For this reason, the number of these groups must be carefully prioritised by scrutiny members to ensure the work can progress at an appropriate pace for the final outcome to have influence;

**d) Inquiry Days** – with a similar purpose to task and finish groups, inquiry days seek to understand and make recommendations on an issue by talking to a wide range of stakeholders and considering evidence relating to that issue, within one or two days. Inquiry days have similarities to the work of Government Select Committees. Inquiry days are highly resource intensive but can lead to swift, meaningful outcomes and recommendations that can make a difference to Council policy; and

**e) Rapporteurs or scrutiny member champions** - individual Councillors or pairs of Councillors tasked with investigating or maintaining oversight of a particular issue and reporting back to the main Committee on its findings. A main Committee can use these reports to facilitate its work prioritisation. Rapporteurs will

undertake informal work to understand an issue – such as discussions with Officers and Portfolio Holders, research and data analysis. Rapporteur work enables scrutiny members to collectively stay informed of a wide range of Council activity. This approach to the provision of information to scrutiny members also avoids valuable Committee time being taken up with briefings in favour of more outcome-based scrutiny taking place at Committee.

**These terms of reference should be read in conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules outlined in Part 4C of the Council's Constitution.**