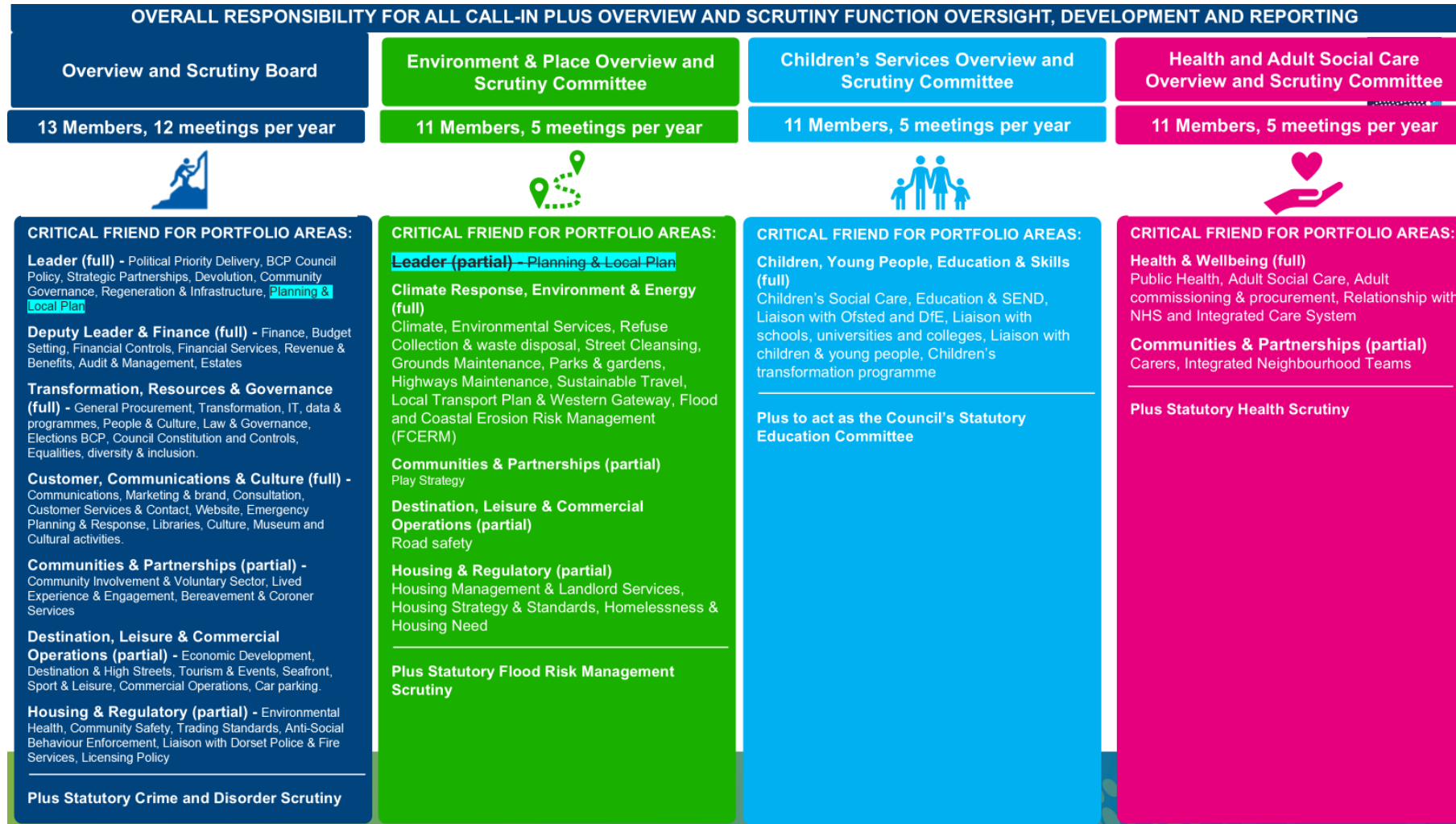


Overview & Scrutiny

2024/25 Activity

BCP Overview & Scrutiny Committee structure



The structure consists of one Board and three committees, with remits aligned to Portfolio Holder responsibilities.

The Board has additional responsibilities, but each O&S body is distinctly separate and has powers to set its own programme of work.

Recent changes to the structure are identified in highlighted text.

Overview & Scrutiny Board



**CHAIR –
COUNCILLOR
STEPHEN
BARTLETT**



**VICE CHAIR –
COUNCILLOR
SUE
AITKENHEAD**



**MEETINGS: 10
ORDINARY, 2
SPECIAL
MEETINGS**



**MEMBERSHIP: 13
COUNCILLORS**

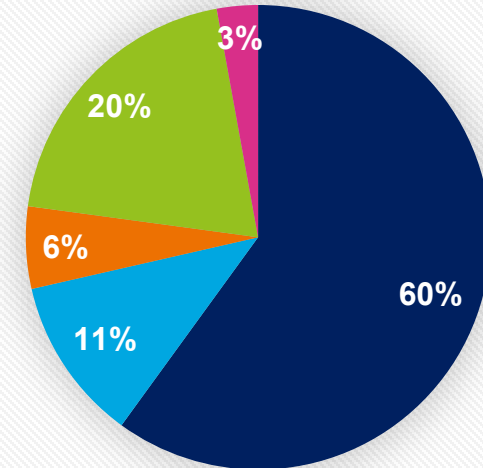


**AVERAGE
NUMBER OF
AGENDA ITEMS –
2.9**



**WORKING
GROUPS - 2**

O&S Board Agenda Item Categories

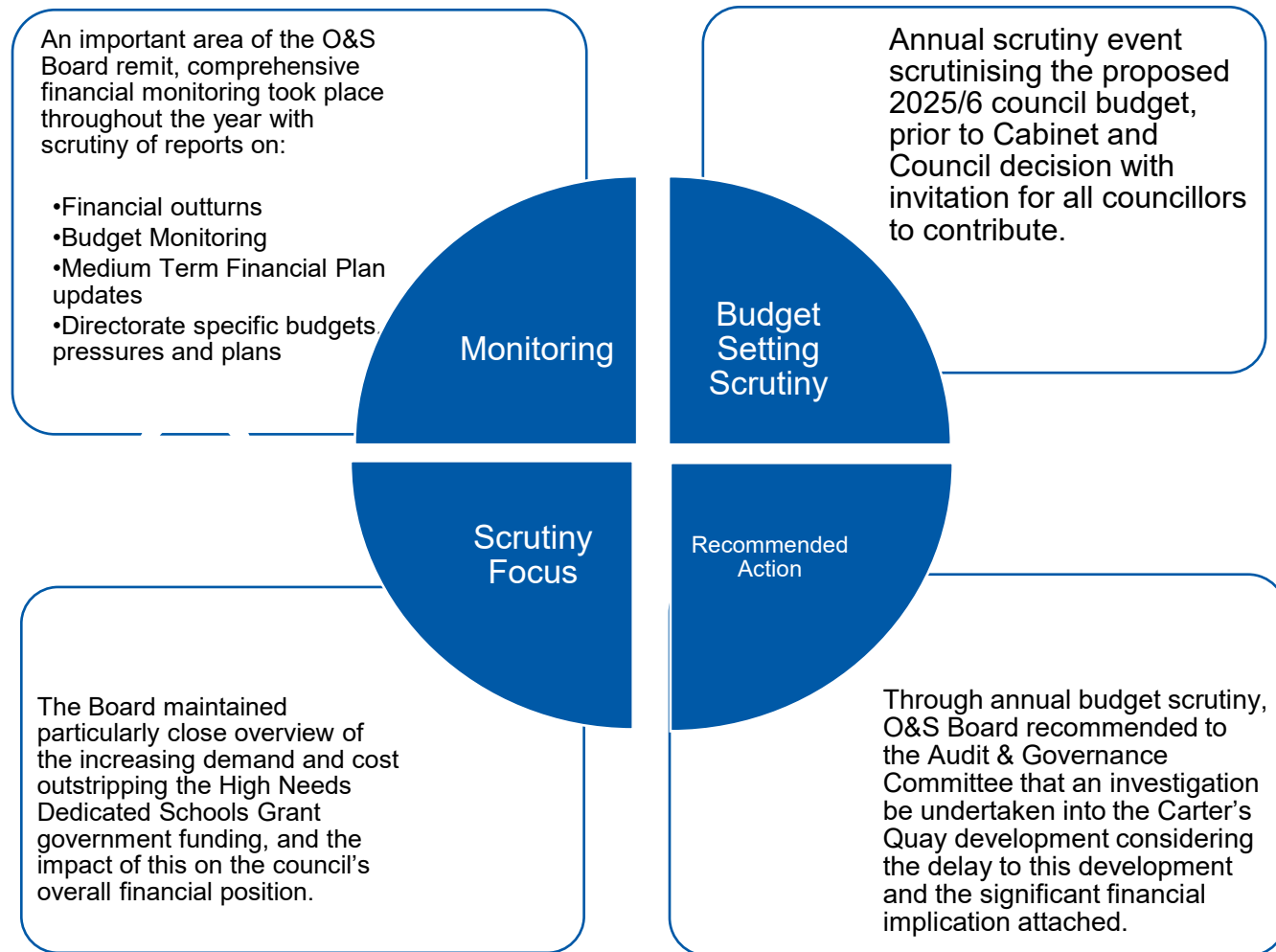


- Pre-decision scrutiny
- Reactive scrutiny
- Call-In
- Proactive scrutiny
- Update/ monitoring reports

Overview & Scrutiny Board - Scrutinising the Council's Finances



Ongoing in year monitoring of finance related Cabinet reports:



Scrutiny of the developing 2025/26 budget:

Budget Working Group

Deep dive scrutiny into budgets associated with **car parking** and the proposed **Resident's Card**.

Working group provided test, challenge and ideas to strengthen the areas selected. Working group recommendations to Cabinet included:

Car Parking

- Inflationary increases across all car parks endorsed;
- Proposal for use of surplus car parking income to accelerate the car park charging machine replacement programme;
- Exploration of options to reduce costs for the Council and make the process easier for the public to pay for car parking, in particular an option to be able to pay in advance on Council website.

Resident's Card

- Proposed small financial contribution for the Resident's Card, to make it a financially sustainable offer to residents; concessions to the charge to be considered for disadvantaged groups.

Overview & Scrutiny Board



Scrutinising Corporate Activity

The Board scrutinised key areas of council activity:

- The Council's **Transformation Programme**
- **Regeneration updates**, including scrutiny of activity of the **Bournemouth Development Company**
- **Seafront Strategy**
- Strategic use of the **Community Infrastructure Levy**
- **Pay & Reward**
included multiple update reports and one call-in meeting.
The Board determined that no scrutiny advice was required to be given to Cabinet following the call-in.
- Monitoring the impact and effectiveness of the whole O&S function through scrutiny of the **O&S Annual Report**.

Developing Policy

- Open discussion items to test, challenge & contribute views to emerging policies including:
 - **The Library Strategy**
 - **Centralised complaints policy**
 - **Community Governance Review**
 - **Devolution**
 - Discussion items in committee to consider the council's position on joining with other local authorities to form a strategic authority across a wider area.
 - O&S recommended, and Cabinet agreed, that an emergency Council meeting was required to include all councillors in this important decision.

Performance Monitoring

- Contribution to the refreshed **Corporate Plan**
- **Corporate Performance Dashboard** demo and scrutiny
- **Best Value Notice**- monitoring this improvement activity until conclusion with the lifting of the Best Value Notice.
- **Quarterly performance 'for information' reports** – regular monitoring of these reports allows scrutiny members to identify red flags and issues which may benefit from scrutiny.
- Reports circulated outside of meetings to reserve committee time for impactful scrutiny.

Overview & Scrutiny Board

Monitoring Impact



Blue Badge Service

- Monitoring reports of improvement actions following scrutiny of the service in 2023.
- Original scrutiny requested triggered by councillor and community concerns about lengthy waiting times for badge renewals and the negative impact on residents who may be left without a badge whilst waiting for a renewal.
- Update reports showed that changes in operational activities were being implemented with streamlined assessments, renewals being prioritised and good practice from other authorities being adopted in BCP.
- A final report in May 2025 highlighted that waiting times had significantly reduced.

Working Groups



Small groups of members meeting to deep dive into a specific topic:

BCP Consultation approaches

- Working group commissioned to provide test and challenge to a refreshed Consultation Framework, as it develops.

Budget working group

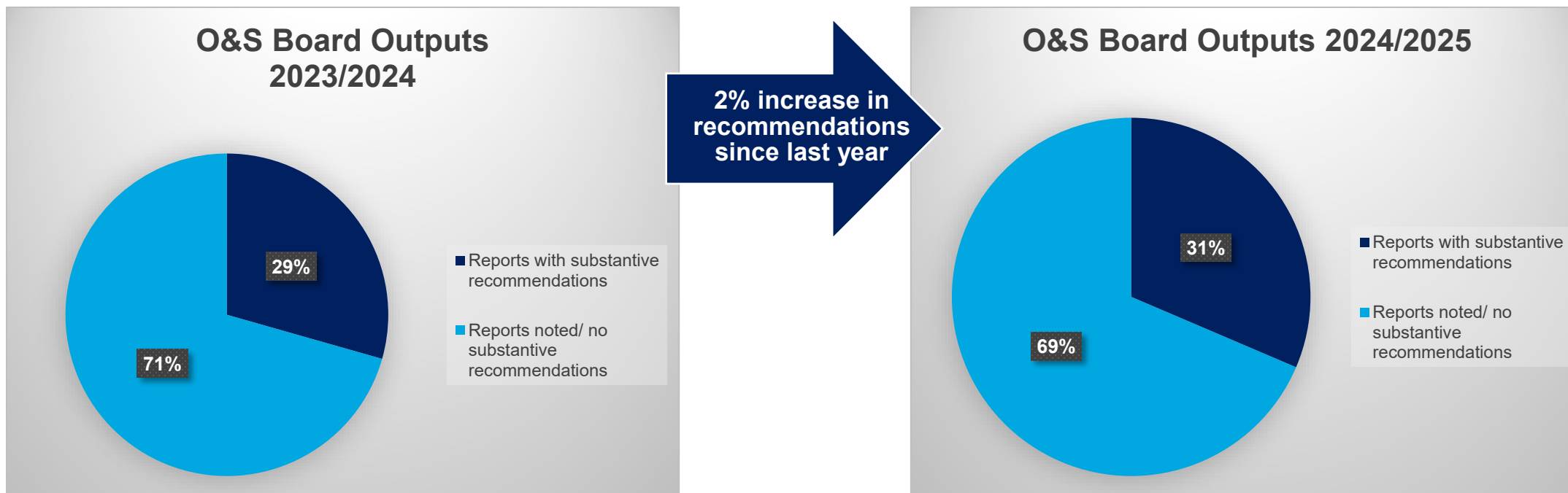
- Deep dive into the budgets associated with car parking and residents card, providing opportunity to test and challenge and influence the related 2025/26 budget as it develops.

Statutory Scrutiny



Scrutiny of the **Community Safety Partnership** – fulfilling the requirement for councils to undertake crime and disorder scrutiny annually.

Overview & Scrutiny Board



Environment & Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee



**CHAIR –
COUNCILLOR
CHRIS RIGBY**



**VICE CHAIR –
COUNCILLOR
DAVID D'ORTON-
GIBSON**



MEETINGS: 5
ORDINARY, 0
SPECIAL
MEETINGS



MEMBERSHIP: 11
COUNCILLORS



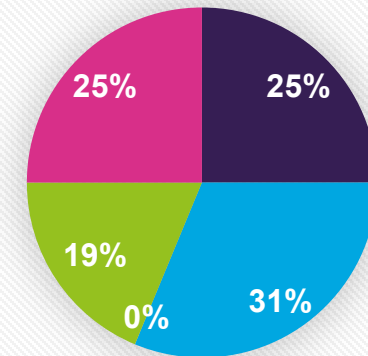
AVERAGE
NUMBER OF
AGENDA ITEMS –
3.2



WORKING
GROUPS - 2



Environment & Place O&S Agenda Item Categories



- Pre-decision scrutiny
- Proactive scrutiny
- Reactive scrutiny
- Update/ monitoring reports
- Referrals from Cabinet/ Council

Environment & Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee



Listening to Residents

Prompted by high levels of public interest, the committee held a scrutiny session dedicated to hearing views on the **trial closure to vehicles of an entrance to Poole Park**. The committee assessed a range **of views and evidence, including:**

- Over 30 public questions and statements, for and against the closure.
- The outcome of a four- week public consultation
- The impact of the trial closure on the elderly and disabled through a report by DOTS disability.
- Portfolio Holder and ward councillor views.
- An officer report outlining the purpose of the trial closure and anticipated benefits to the environment of Poole Park.

The committee recommended to Cabinet that a full Council debate and decision should be held on the topic in light of the significant public interest. This was not upheld by Cabinet and the closure was confirmed as permanent.

Climate & Nature Scrutiny

A central part of the committee's remit, the committee scrutinised a range of areas relating to climate & nature:

- Monitoring work relating to **Nutrient Neutrality** in respect of Phosphates in the River Avon.
- **Heathland Mitigation** - monitoring work that mitigates the impact of housing on Dorset's lowland heaths.
- Scrutiny of progress across the council towards reaching climate action goals through the **Climate Action Annual Report**.
- Review of the Council's new **BCP Greenhouse Gas Emissions Dashboard**, with scrutiny recommendations to strengthen targets for carbon emission reduction.
- Through the budget working group, the committee recommended that Cabinet **strengthen the corporate approach to financing the council's climate action goals**, to enable the council to meet its net zero targets by 2030.

Environment & Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee



Monitoring Improvements



- Scrutinising the performance of the **Planning Service** to monitor improvements including the reduction of the planning application backlog and stabilisation of the workforce.

Adding value through rapporteurs



The committee increased its capacity to undertake work through member-led rapporteur scrutiny.

Rapporteurs work towards an agreed remit on behalf of the committee, liaising with officers to progress issues outside of meeting and reporting activity back to the full committee

This year, Councillor Felicity Rice worked with officers to progress a Play Streets policy, which sets out how residents can close streets to make them safe for children to play and socialise. The work led to the drafting of a policy in readiness for launch.

Further rapporteurs were established in 2025 and their work will be reported in the 2025/26 annual report.

Housing Scrutiny



- **Housing Strategy review** – scrutiny of the refreshed housing strategy with recommendations made regarding the governance and monitoring of the strategy.
- **Safe Accommodation Strategy** – the committee established a working group to test, challenge and contribute to the developing strategy which outlines how the council will support residents in need of housing due to domestic abuse.

Working Groups

- Small groups of members meeting to deep dive into a specific topic:
- **Budget Working Group** – topics covered: climate & ecological emergency budget; housing temporary accommodation budget.
- Recommendations included requesting a gap analysis of the estimated total amount of spend required to reach net zero targets and including the costs within the MTFP
- **Safe Accommodation Strategy Working Group**
- Recommendations included an awareness campaign to inform residents escaping domestic abuse about the financial and housing support available to them; suggestions to strengthen the strategy itself and councillor awareness of it; suggestions for KPIs to be introduced to monitor the effectiveness of the new safe accommodation model.

Council Driven Scrutiny

The Committee saw an uplift in suggested topics for scrutiny, generated by debate at full Council meetings or portfolio holder suggestions. Topics submitted included:

Safe Accommodation Strategy

Van Life

Climate & Nature scrutiny

Cliff and Coastal erosion

Redhill paddling pool

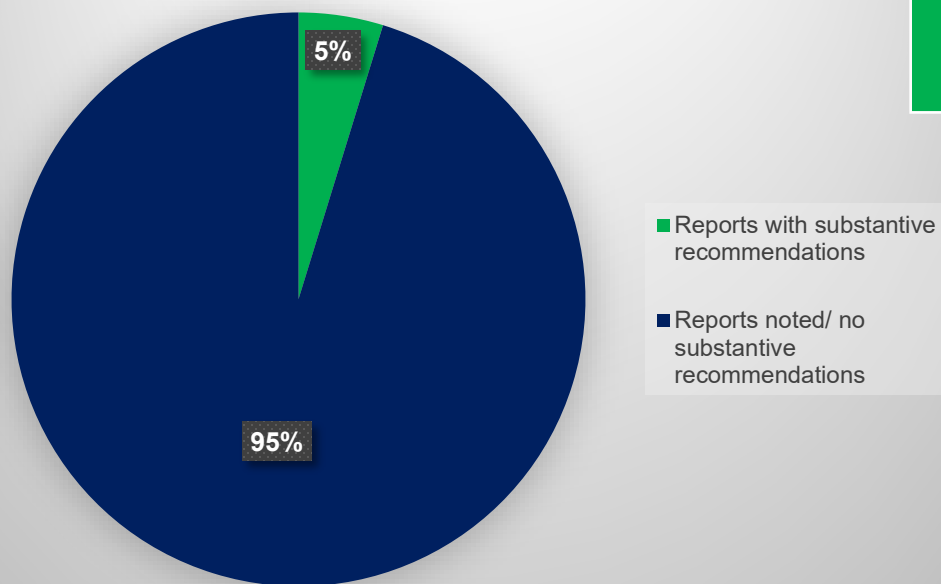
Strengthening building standards through local authority control.

A Safe Accommodation working group was established in response (see above), and other topics were added to the committee's work programme for later work.

Environment & Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee

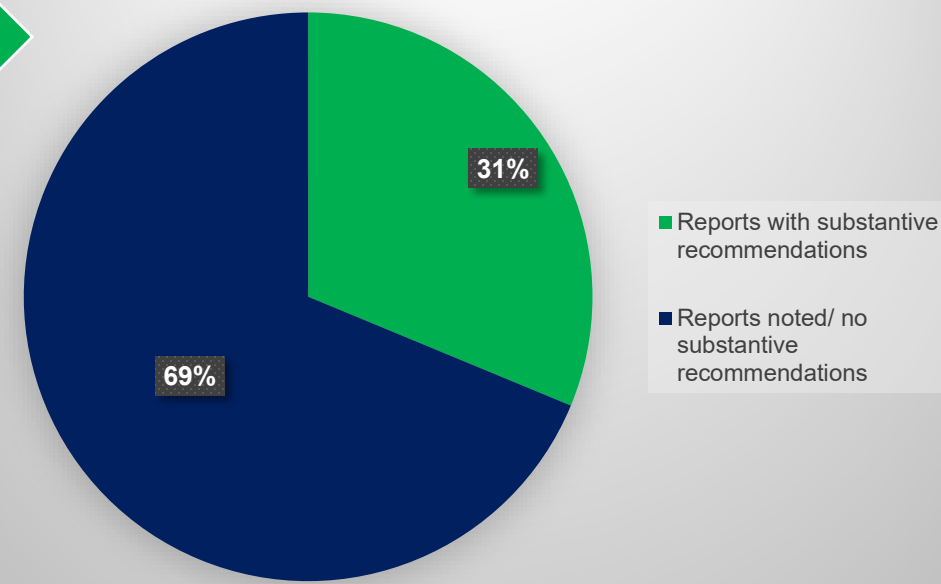


Environment & Place O&S Outputs
2023/2024



26% increase in
recommendations
since last year

Environment & Place O&S Outputs
2024/2025



Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee



**CHAIR –
COUNCILLOR
SHARON CARR-
BROWN**



**VICE CHAIR –
COUNCILLOR
SIMON BULL**



**MEETINGS: 5
ORDINARY, 0
SPECIAL
MEETINGS**



**MEMBERSHIP: 11
COUNCILLORS**



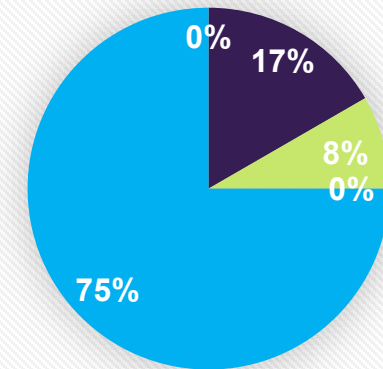
**AVERAGE
NUMBER OF
AGENDA ITEMS –
4.8**



**WORKING
GROUPS - 2**



Children's Services O&S Agenda Item Categories



- Pre-decision scrutiny
- Proactive scrutiny
- Reactive scrutiny
- Update/ monitoring reports
- Referrals from Cabinet/ Council

Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee



Scrutinising new activity

The committee scrutinised new decisions and strategies prior to adoption, applying test and challenge to strengthen outcomes:

- **Linwood Special School** – the committee scrutinised the Cabinet paper prior to decision and recommended that expansion of the school go ahead.
- **Children in care and care experienced young people sufficiency strategy** – setting out how BCP will provide sufficient, safe, secure and sustainable homes for children in care and care experienced young people between 2024-2028.
- **Children & Young People's Partnership Plan 2025-2030**- a high-level strategic plan that outlines how to support children and young people living in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole with the aim to improve outcomes for all children and young people.
- **Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2024-2025** – an evaluation of childcare places to ensure that there are enough to meet the needs of the BCP area.

Monitoring progress

In its role as a critical friend, the Committee monitored key areas of activity within children's services:

- **SEND progress updates** including discussions and continued public interest in the Safety Valve Programme.
- **Children's social care improvement journey**- in keeping with previous years' work, the committee supported this critical area of improvement in the council and closely monitored activity along the way. In 2025 the council moved from an 'inadequate' to a 'good' Ofsted rating.
- **Independent Reviewing Officer annual report.**
- **Speech and language therapy update**

Holding decision makers to account

- The committee received updates on activity from the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People, Education & Skills at every meeting, providing opportunity for questions and idea sharing.

Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee



Scrutinising the Council's Finances

The committee considered a range of financial reports to monitor budget and pressures within children's services, and the impact on children and families. This included:

- **An update on the full children's services budget**
- **Alternative Provision** – an update on the services provided to support mainstream inclusion and action being taken to positively impact the trajectory of high needs expenditure.
- **The High Needs Schools Grant Expenditure Forecast**
- **Children's Services Capital Strategy** – setting out the capital funding available to the service and improvement priorities aligned.
- The committee also recommended that Cabinet **assess the impact on children, young people and families of any potential budget overspend in the SEND service budget**, which Cabinet agreed to through a dedicated report.

Gaining insight

In addition to councillors bringing insight from their own work with residents and schools, the committee heard from:

- **Youth Parliament representatives** – a regular meeting slot to provide updates on Youth Parliament priorities and gain the views of young people on scrutiny topics.
- **NHS Dorset representative** – the introduction of a standing invitation to the Chief Nursing Officer to provide a link between children's services and health related matters and gain the insight of health professionals on topics scrutinised.

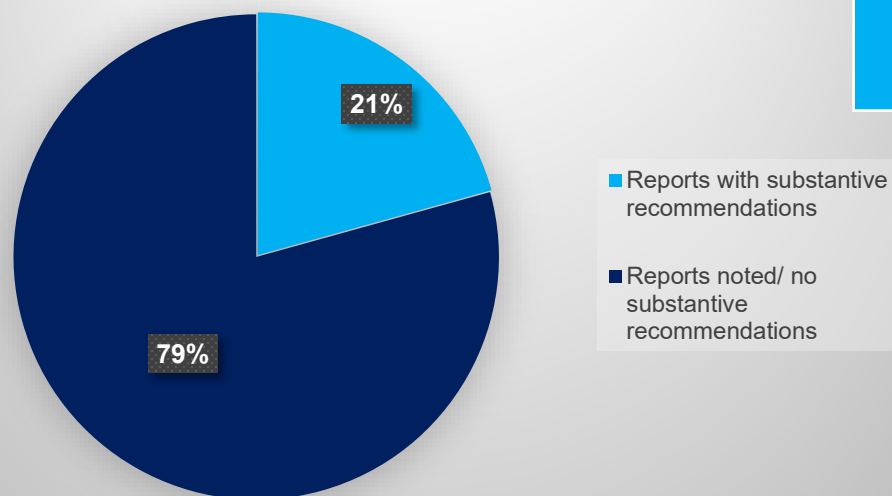
Working Groups

Small groups of members meeting to deep dive into a specific topic:

- Final report of the **Child Exploitation Working Group** (activity took place in previous municipal years). Recommendations included earlier age-appropriate education in schools regarding the risks associated with exploitation, drugs and the dangers of carrying weapons.
- **Family Hubs Working Group** – included a visit to see Family Hubs in action. Further work in progress.
- **Budget Working Group** - priority topics selected by councillors for deep dive scrutiny - **School Transport Costs** and **Care Growth Forecast**.
 - Recommendations included advocacy for:
 - the protection of non-statutory services (such as Early Help) – councillors highlighted that it is vitally important to support these services to avoid additional financial impact on statutory services.
 - the inclusion of pupils with SEND in mainstream, local schools, to reduce the need for school transport provision and associated costs.

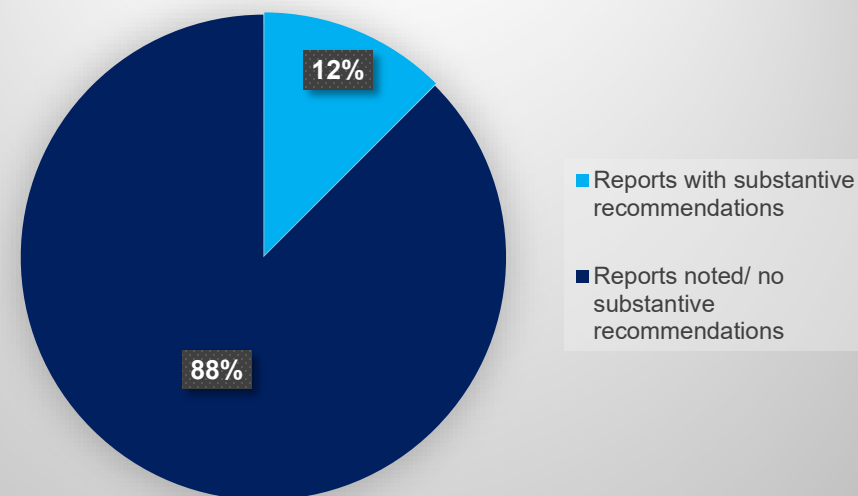
Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Children's Services O&S Outputs
2023/2024



9% decrease in
recommendations
since last year

Children's Services O&S Outputs
2024/2025



Health & Adult Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee



**CHAIR –
COUNCILLOR
PATRICK CANAVAN**



**VICE CHAIR –
COUNCILLOR
LESLEY DEDMAN**



**MEETINGS: 5
ORDINARY, 0
SPECIAL MEETINGS**



**MEMBERSHIP: 11
COUNCILLORS**

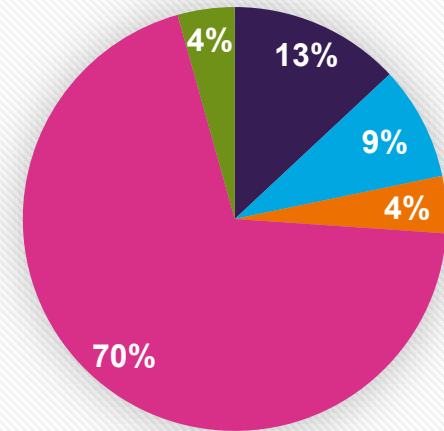


**AVERAGE NUMBER
OF AGENDA ITEMS –
4.6**



**WORKING GROUPS
- 2**

Health & Adult Social Care O&S Agenda Item Categories



- Pre-decision scrutiny
- Proactive scrutiny
- Reactive scrutiny
- Update/ monitoring reports
- Referrals from Cabinet/ Council

Health & Adult Social Care O&S Committee



Holding decision makers to account

The committee received updates on activity from the Portfolio Holder for Health & Wellbeing at every meeting, providing opportunity for questions and idea sharing.

Scrutinising new activity

The committee scrutinised new decisions and strategies prior to adoption, applying test and challenge to strengthen outcomes:

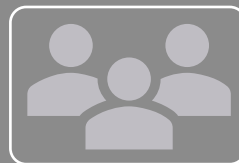
- **Adult Social Care Strategy 2025-28**– the committee made recommendations that the strategy be strengthened by the inclusion of clear targets.
- **Reconfiguration of the Public Health function for BCP**– the committee contributed views on new arrangements and received updates on progress throughout the year.
- **Transforming Urgent and Emergency Care Services** – the committee scrutinised plans for a system-wide programme to transform and improve urgent and emergency care services for Dorset residents.
- **‘Fulfilled Lives’** – the committee scrutinised the establishment of a new transformation programme for adult social care services and supported activity throughout the year through a series of briefings and update reports on specific themes within the programme.

Monitoring Progress

In its role as a critical friend, the Committee monitored key areas of activity by health providers and within adult social care:

- **Home First Development across Dorset** update report.
- **Integrated Neighbourhood Teams** update report.
- **NHS Dentistry** – update report from Healthwatch.
- **Tricuro Business Plan**
- **Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report**
- **Adult Social Care Compliments, Complaints & Learning Annual Report**
- **Adult Social Care Waiting Times** update report

Health & Adult Social Care O&S Committee



Working with Health Partners

- The committee maintained overview of key issues relating to health service provision, including:
- **Transformation of UHD hospitals**
- **UHD Maternity Services**
- **Gender Identity Disorder Services**

Gaining Insight

- In addition to councillors bringing insight from their own work with residents the committee heard from a representative of **Healthwatch Dorset** at every meeting. Healthwatch champions residents' voices in relation to their experience of health and social care services and brings this service user insight to scrutiny debates.

Working Groups

- Small groups of members meeting to deep dive into a specific topic:
- **Data Working Group** - this working group developed a Data Toolkit to enable members to more easily access data and information sources, with a view to achieving more evidence driven scrutiny. The group recommended roll-out of a similar toolkit to all O&S committees.
- **Budget Working Group**

Proactive Scrutiny

- Prompted by a publication of Healthwatch Dorset, looking at **health inequality for people experiencing homelessness**, the committee asked NHS Dorset and council officers to outline how existing services address inequalities.
- Through recommendations, the committee highlighted the issues to Cabinet and asked them to discuss the matter further, in particular funding and partnership collaboration, to ensure a robust system is in place to support the most vulnerable.

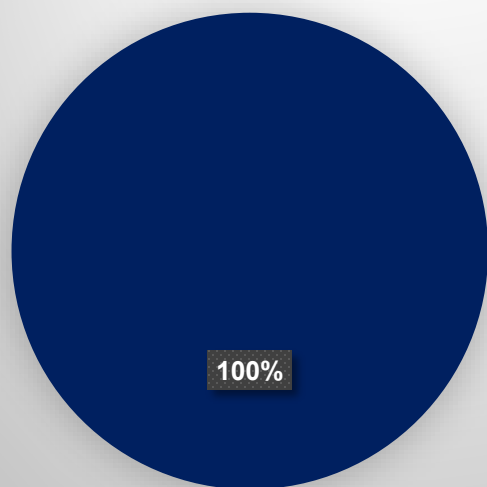
Scrutinising the Council's Finances

- The committee received an update on adult social care and public health budgets and commissioned a **Budget Working Group** to take a deep dive into financial planning for **demand management**.
- The working group made a recommendation to Cabinet that block booked-beds for long-term care provision be increased, to achieve more value for money in this budget area.

Health & Adult Social Care O&S Committee



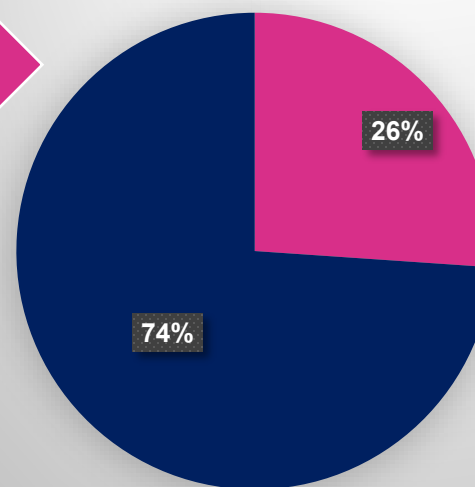
Health & Adult Social Care O&S
Outputs 2023/2024



- Reports with substantive recommendations
- Reports noted/ no substantive recommendations

26% increase in
recommendations
since last year

Health & Adult Social Care O&S
Outputs 2024/2025



- Reports with substantive recommendations
- Reports noted/ no substantive recommendations

Improvements & Successes

Strategic improvements
made across all O&S
Committees in 2024/25



Improvements & Successes- Training & Development

O&S Culture Development workshops

- Facilitated by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, three workshops were held with officers, Cabinet and O&S councillors to focus on the roles of each in underpinning a culture that enables successful scrutiny. Output – an O&S / Cabinet protocol is in development to capture agreements and good practices.

Leadership training for O&S Chairs

- All O&S Chairs have been provided LGA scrutiny leadership training, refreshed with any changes in chairing positions to ensure continuity of scrutiny expertise.

Targeted training for Children's Services O&S

- Facilitated by the LGA, a comprehensive package of support and mentoring was provided throughout 2024/25 to strengthen councillors' approach to child-centred, successful scrutiny. Councillors' knowledge of the children's services landscape was improved and focussed sessions on work planning and scoping work will enable the committee to better support and scrutinise the important services provided to support young people in the BCP area.

Regular briefings

- All committees established a series of regular briefing slots to enable them to stay informed and explore issues related to their remit. These informal slots free up committee time for value-added scrutiny topics. With standard invitations to all councillors, these regular briefings also provide opportunity for other councillors to stay informed of important issues.

*“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.” **

* Overview and Scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities

Improvements & Successes - Topics and scoping

The key to effective O&S outputs lies in the selection and scoping of topics. Improvements in 2024/25 included:

Closer working with Council	Maintaining a balance of scrutiny work	Key lines of enquiry	A lens for scrutiny
2025 saw a marked increase in recommendations from Council to O&S committees, particularly within the remit of the Environment & Place O&S Committee. This increase shows a greater council-wide understanding of the role that O&S can play in developing policy and providing critical friend test and challenge to burning issues raised at Council. Many of these topics have been raised by residents attending Council meetings, or through councillors bringing forward insight on matters of concern from their wards.	In the 2023 Best Value review, the Council was encouraged to reduce its focus on pre-decision scrutiny and increase the O&S policy development role. The imbalance of pre-decision scrutiny was successfully addressed in 2023/24 with pre decision scrutiny accounting for 21% of all scrutiny across all committees in the function. There was a small increase to 29% across the function in 2024/25. Pre-decision levels represent a higher proportion of O&S Board work as this committee aligns to the calendar of Cabinet meetings with the specific purpose of enabling pre-decision scrutiny where required.	Key lines of enquiry documents have been embedded as standard across all committees for use when scoping work topics. These encourage focus on lines of enquiry that will lead to valuable outcomes and ensure that O&S councillors' enquiries are clearly captured and officers have clarity on the ask of scrutiny.	Statutory guidance encourages the establishment of a clear and communicable role for scrutiny, over and above statutory rights and the role of holding decision makers to account. Three out of four O&S committees have now established lenses for their committees to more clearly identify their role and to help with topic choices and scrutiny enquiry lines.

*“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” **

* Overview and Scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities

Improvements & Successes - Governance & Leadership

Call-In levels remain stable

- 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. There was one call-in item considered during 2024/25, in keeping with an average of one call in per year during the 2019-24 period. The level of call-in items in BCP indicates that call-in is not used 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-Cabinet members to ask question in O&S meetings and Cabinet meetings.

Regular O&S Chairs meetings

- O&S Chairs and Vice Chairs meet regularly to oversee the function, discussing cross-cutting topics, resource, training and development needs, successes and challenges.

Strengthened links to Audit

- The Chair and Vice Chair of Audit & Governance Committee have now been made standing invitees to O&S Chairs meetings to strengthen the links between O&S & Audit providing opportunity for alignment of work programmes to ensure the council's governance arrangements in this respect are robust.

Greater member- led approach

- Scrutiny councillors have taken a more active role in leading O&S enquiries. Rapporteurs have been established on specific topics, to undertake detailed enquiries independently, and report back to committee, successfully encouraging action on topics selected. Coupled with strong committee leadership from Chairs and Vice Chairs this is in keeping with one of the founding principles of O&S that scrutiny should be councillor led. A proactive member-led approach is also a vital tool for O&S members to share the workload across committee members and progress issues of importance to them despite resource constraints.

*“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.” **

* Overview and Scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities

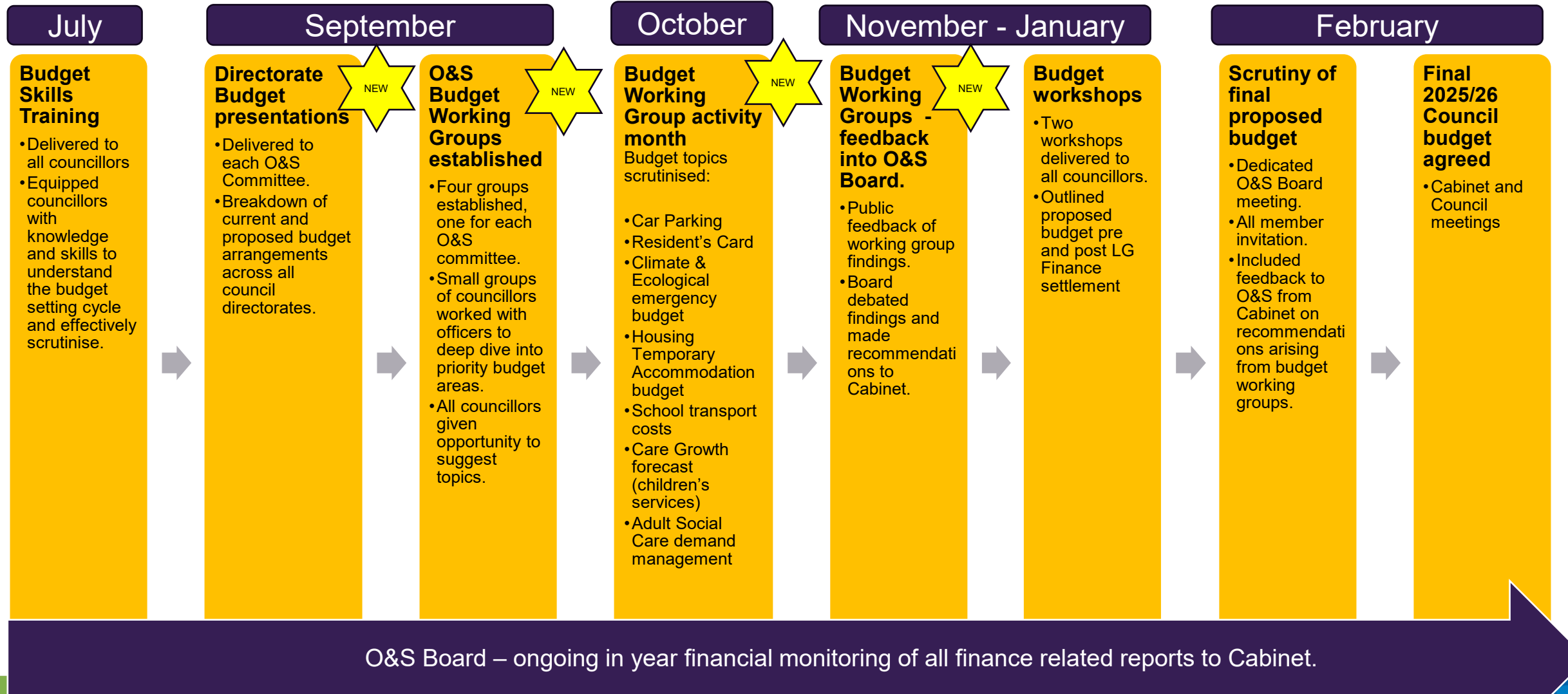
Improvements & Successes –

Proactive Budget Scrutiny

-
- Budget scrutiny opportunities were increased in 24/25. Scrutiny councillors provided test, challenge and ideas on the developing budget for the following year.
 - Proactive scrutiny was timed to give councillors the chance to input during development stages of the budget – not at the end when proposals are fully developed and impact is limited.
 - The enhanced model was recognised by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny as an example of excellence in proactive budget scrutiny.



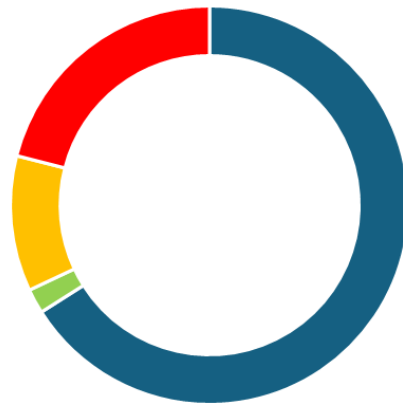
Improvements & Successes - Proactive Budget Scrutiny ctd.



Improvements & Successes – O&S Action Plan

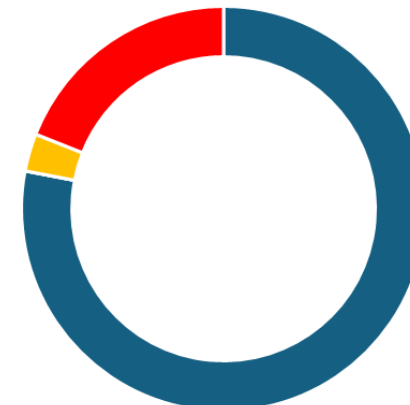
- The O&S Action Plan was agreed by Council in 2023 and contains strategic actions to improve O&S activity and bring it into line with statutory guidance.
- Progress made against the O&S Action Plan in 2024/25 took it to over 75% complete.
- Notable actions completed this year related to officer and member training to improve the culture needed to support effective scrutiny and targeted support to the Children's Services O&S Committee.
- The Action Plan has been progressed as resources allow, and after core O&S activity is resourced. It will continue to be progressed on this basis and reported annually to Council with this report. O&S lead members also monitor the Action Plan on a regular basis.

23/24 Progress against Action Plan



■ Completed ■ On track ■ Some delay ■ Significant delay

24/25 Progress against Action Plan



■ Completed ■ On track ■ Some delay ■ Significant delay

Future Aims



Planned improvements to strengthen the practices and value of scrutiny

These are focussed on two clear aims:

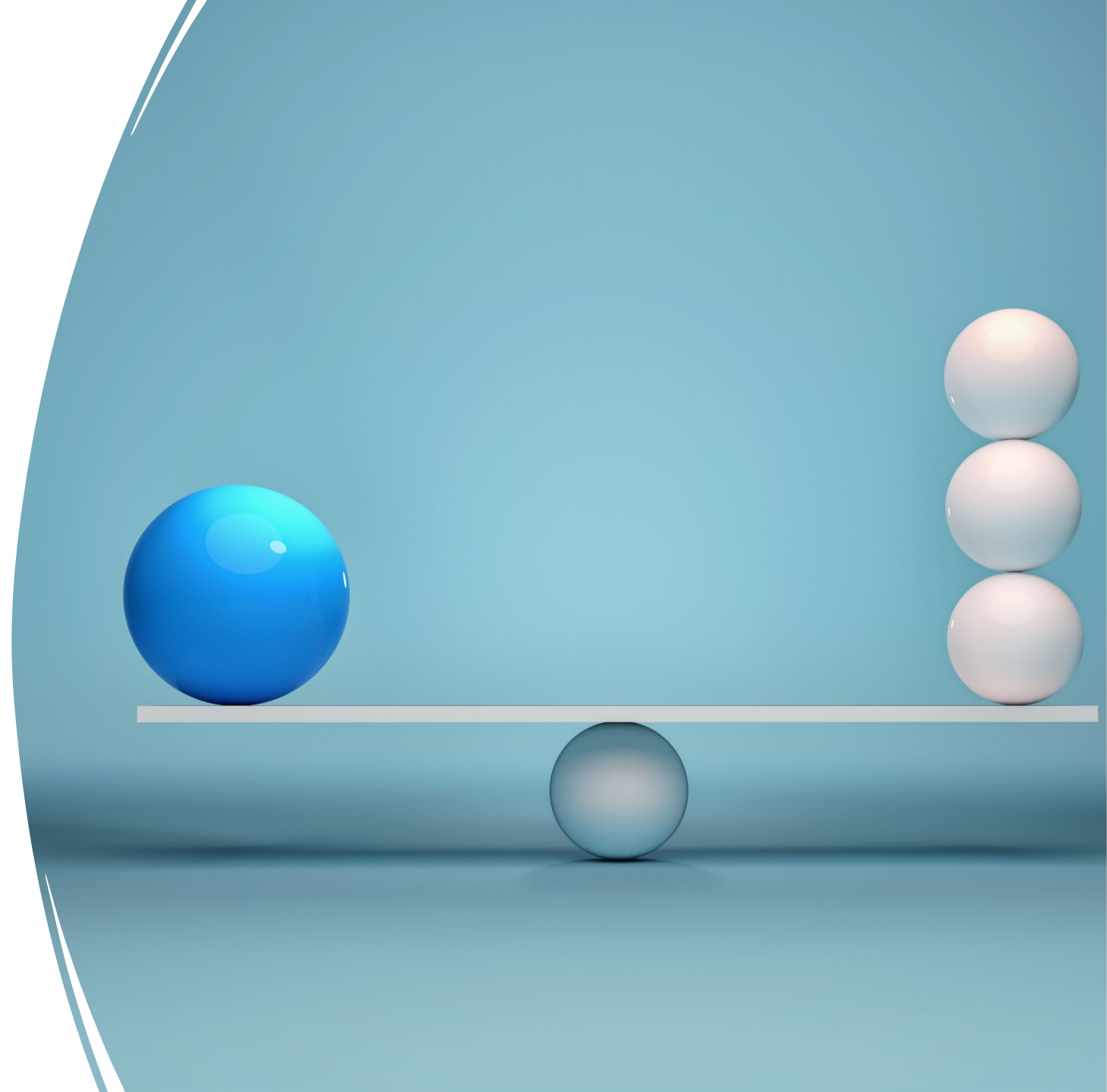
- **Maximising Resource**
- **Value added scrutiny**

Future Aims – Maximising Resource

“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.” **

* Overview and Scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities



Future Aims – Maximising Resource

The biggest challenge to overview and scrutiny is how to use its resources for maximum impact. Resource to support Overview and Scrutiny work is limited and to have the most influence, must be used innovatively and targeted towards the topics that will have the most likelihood of tangible change and improvements for residents. **Measures suggested to maximise resource in 2025/26 include:**

Streamlining working groups

- It is recommended that the council move to a quality over quantity approach, with one O&S working group taking place at a time (previously up to 4 concurrently). This will encourage a focus on progressing the highest importance working groups and enable the work to progress in a timely way, before moving on to the next topic. O&S Chairs and Vice Chairs will play a role in determining the priority order of working groups.

More test and challenge of topic suggestions and scopes

- As O&S leads, the O&S Chairs and Vice Chairs group are well placed to provide peer test and challenge to the topics and scopes suggested for scrutiny across all committees with the aim of ensuring that those selected are likely to lead to meaningful outcomes. Chairs and Vice Chairs meet regularly throughout the year and will add this to their oversight role.

Scoping champions

- In addition to added challenge from Chairs and Vice Chairs, it is recommended that any topic agreed for scoping will be assigned a committee member to liaise with other councillors and officers to ensure scopes will add value. Member championing will ensure that the issues of highest interest to committees are driven forward at pace by passionate members keen to explore issues of interest.

Matrix for prioritising topics

- In consultation with O&S Chairs, a topic prioritisation matrix will be introduced to assist committees in their work programming choices. A scored matrix will provide a more evidence-based method for councillors to assess and prioritise topics with the greatest likelihood of impact.

“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.” * Overview and Scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities

Future Aims – Maximising Resource ctd.

Other measures that will maximise O&S resource:

Rapporteurs –

Embedding the use of rapporteurs across all committees will enable individual members to champion issues of interest, monitor, progress and report back on issues to the full committee, freeing up committee time. This model has already been used successfully in some committees.

Self-serve councillor access to data –

Following the implementation of a Data Toolkit to assist Health & Adult Social Care O&S Committee members navigate the complex health data landscape, a similar toolkit has been developed for Children's Services O&S members. Corporate performance data and will also be shared with all O&S committees on a regular basis. This will enable O&S members to horizon scan data on a self-serve basis, raising red flags into committee and using data to inform scrutiny topics choices.

Keeping agenda items low –

Attempting to scrutinise too many items in committee meetings can dilute the benefit of scrutiny and limit meaningful outcomes. Maintaining a focus on a maximum of 3 items per committee agenda and reducing from the levels seen in 2024/25 will ensure that each topic can be explored in sufficient depth to lead to valuable recommendations. Using other scrutiny mechanisms to receive information items and selecting only the topics where the committee can have the most influence will be essential to making the most of O&S resource.

Future Aims – Value added scrutiny

Scrutiny topics should impact positively on the work of the Council and, through this, BCP residents. Understanding and demonstrating this impact is an identified action within the O&S action plan. Planned measures to strengthen this include:

☐ **Introducing recommendation trackers**

- to enable O&S committees to track the recommendations made and ask for updates on implementation, ultimately assisting committees in understanding the impact that recommendations have had and how recommendations could be strengthened to maximise impact.

☐ **Annual surveys to gather insight on added value and impact**

- gathering feedback from councillors and officers on their perception of impact to help inform future work planning choices.

☐ **Regular monitoring of impact**

- reflecting on the value and success of scrutiny topics and methods through Chairs and Vice Chairs meetings.

Listening to Residents

☐ **Topic suggestion form**

- an improved user-friendly form will be provided on the council website for residents to make scrutiny topic suggestions.

☐ **Increase resident driven scrutiny topics**

- scrutiny committees can become overwhelmed by internal focussed reports such as budget and performance reports. By making space on agendas for topics that either respond to burning issues for residents, are generated by resident suggestions or include listening opportunities to hear from the public, scrutiny will ensure that it is aligning to and serving the needs of residents. Listening sessions are already planned in 2025/26 for topics such as 'Van Life', to understand the needs of those who live in vehicles in BCP through choice or necessity.

