

# Annual Report 2017/2018



## Foreword

Once again it has been a busy year for the Overview and Scrutiny Board, as can be seen from the following report. As always we have taken a leading role in scrutinising the Elected Mayor's Budget. I am pleased to say he listened to our recommendations this year and took them all into account and accepted them before setting the budget. In addition to the budget, the Board has investigated a number of issues and I believe has made a difference in some of the key decisions made by the Mayor and Council.

I would like to thank all the officers at the Town Hall for their help and assistance during our busy year. In particular I would like to thank Kate Spencer on behalf of the Board for her help, dedication and assistance throughout the year.

Thanks must also go to all the Members of the Board, they have all taken an active role and played their part in the work of overview and scrutiny. Three Members have left the Board during the past year – Cllrs Alan Tyerman, Anna Tolchard and Jackie Stockman. A big thank you to Cllr Stockman who was my Vice Chairman and has been a long standing member of the Board. We welcome Cllr Steve Darling back as Vice Chairman and Cllr Lynn Sykes as a new member of the Board.

The coming year will be a difficult one for overview and scrutiny as there will be some major issues coming before the Board. Not least the annual budget which gets harder as each year goes by. I am sure all Members of the Board will play their part as they have done this year.

Councillor Chris Lewis  
Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator

## Introduction

Overview and scrutiny...

- is one of the ways the Council improves services and the quality of people's lives in Torbay
- acts as the Council's "watchdog" and challenges decisions taken by the Mayor and looks at decisions in more detail
- reviews existing policies and issues of concern
- is a constructive and independent way of looking at an issue, highlighting areas that work well and suggesting where improvements can be made.

The Council agreed that the overview and scrutiny should operate in accordance with following principles:

- Focusing on the issues which matter:
- Policy Development is of equal importance to “holding to account”
- The Forward Plan is the key tool for managing the decision making process
- The relationship between overview and scrutiny and the executive should seek to complement one another
- All Councillors should have the opportunity to help shape policy decisions at an early stage

This report gives details of the work which has been undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Board over the course of 2017/2018.

### **The operation of overview and scrutiny**

The Council re-appointed Councillor Chris Lewis as the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator in May 2017. He is supported by Councillors Barnby, Bent, Darling (S) and Stocks as Overview and Scrutiny Lead Members.

The membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Board over the course of the year has comprised Councillors Barnby, Bye, Bent, Darling (S), Lewis (C), Sykes, Stockman, Stocks, Tolchard and Tyerman.

### **Focusing on the issues which matter**

The Overview and Scrutiny Board has continued to undertake its healthy scrutiny duty and has maintained oversight of the implementation of the Sustainability and Transformation Plan for Devon. This has included receiving updates on the ongoing review of acute services, the development of the accountable care system and the establishment of a Local Care Partnership for Torbay and South Devon.

With the impact of the Government’s austerity measures, the Board has continued to receive regular reports on the Council’s revenue and capital budgets and has been monitoring the implementation of the Children’s Services Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Council’s Transformation Programme is ensuring that that efficiencies, income and savings are maximised whilst maintaining services and creating resilience. The Board has provided assurance within this Programme through reviewing the proposals in relation to library services, public toilets and CCTV.

## **Equal importance placed on policy development**

The Board provided feedback during the development of a number of policies over the course of the year, including:

- Children and Young People Plan
- Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy
- Heart of the South West Productivity Strategy
- Annual Agreement between Torbay Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group and the Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust.

## **Complementing the work of the executive**

The Overview and Scrutiny Board continue to seek to complement the work of the Mayor and his executive. It regularly reviews the Forward Plan in order to identify issues which it would wish to consider ahead of final decisions being made.

The Board has paid particular attention to ensuring that the momentum of the Town Centre Regeneration Programme is maintained in order that the community can enjoy the benefits of revitalised town centres.

Members of the Board and other non-executive members have received briefings on the work that is continuing on reducing street homelessness in Torbay.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board held a series of meetings to discuss the Mayor's proposals for the budget for 2018/2019.

## **Shaping policy decisions at an early stage**

The Board established a task-and-finish group at the start of the year to provide guidance on the issues which should be included in the Council's Economic Strategy. The report from the group was provided to the Mayor as part of his consultation process. The Board subsequently reviewed the final draft of the Strategy ahead of consideration by the Council.

Arising from this, the Board considered challenges facing coastal communities and supported the proposal to create and pilot a Coastal Enterprise Zone in Torbay. This work is now being progressed through the Heart of the South West Joint Committee.

## **Call-ins**

The call-in process is one of the mechanisms which can be used to hold the Mayor to account.

The purpose of call-in is to examine the decisions reached by the Mayor (or other decision maker) and the reasoning behind those decisions. The process enables further public debate to be held on the subject. The Overview and Scrutiny Board can then consider whether the decision was appropriate and make recommendations accordingly.

Over the course of the year, the Overview and Scrutiny Board have considered two call-ins.

## **Operation of Overview and Scrutiny**

Two Monitoring Working Parties for Children's Services and Adults and Public Health continue to meet as does the Liaison Group for the Joint Operations Team.

Feedback from the Monitoring Working Parties and the Liaison Group is provided at the Overview and Scrutiny Briefings. The Overview and Scrutiny Board will continue to meet on a monthly basis. By having earlier discussions, the annual review of the Mayor's budget proposals is now more focused and, as a result, takes place with fewer meetings.

Task-and-Finish Groups continue to be established to review specific issues with formal reports and recommendations being agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

The structure of the Council's overview and scrutiny function is shown at the end of this document.

## **Future Work Programme**

The Board will continue to set its Work Programme with the Forward Plan being the key tool for managing the decision making process. In focusing on the issues that matter, the Board will take an active role in ensuring that the Council's Transformation Programme is delivered. The Board will continue to respond to the Mayor's consultations on his proposals for the Policy Framework.

The Council continues to be in a financially challenging position and the Board will maintain its focus on ensuring that prioritised action continues at pace to deliver the changes that are needed to be made. In accordance with the Principles of Overview and Scrutiny, the Board will seek to involve all members in forthcoming issues from an early stage and to complement the work of the executive. It hopes that the Mayor and Executive will abide by these Principles as well.

The formal Work Programme will be agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board at its meeting in May 2018 although it will continue to have the flexibility to react to issues as they arise, including holding the Mayor and Executive to account for their decisions and performance.

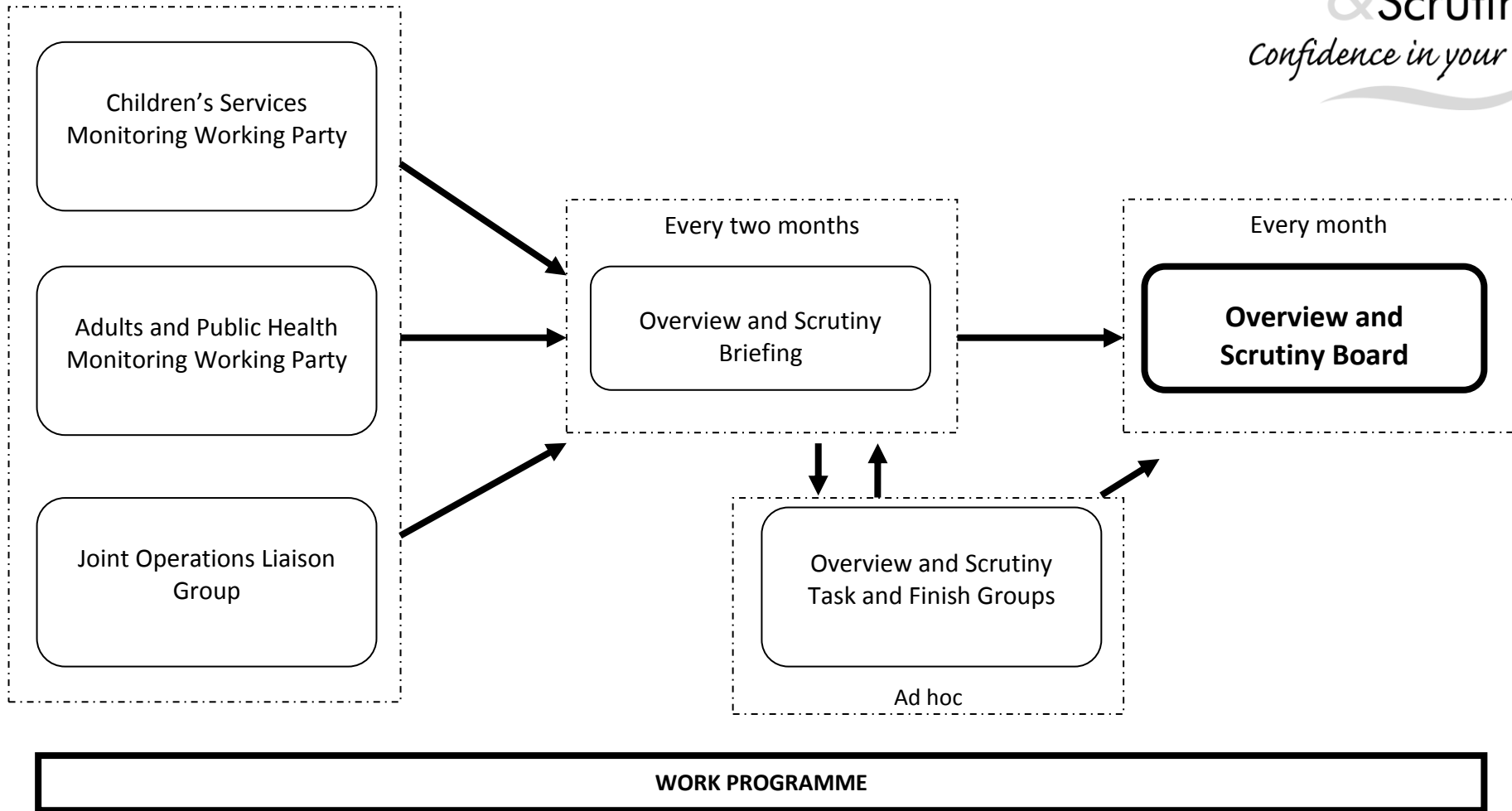
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## Operation of Overview and Scrutiny in Torbay



## Review of Priorities and Resources

