

Overview
& Scrutiny
Confidence in your Council



Annual Report 2010/2011

Overview and Scrutiny Report 2010/2011

Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator

Councillor John Thomas

Scrutiny Lead Member for Pride in the Bay

Councillor Jeanette Richards
(until 2 February 2011)

Councillor Terry Manning
(from 3 February 2011)

Scrutiny Lead Member for Learning and Skills

Councillor Ruth Pentney

Scrutiny Lead Member for New Economy

Councillor Christine Scouler
(until 2 February 2011)

Councillor Beryl McPhail
(from 3 February 2011)

Scrutiny Lead Member for Stronger Communities

Councillor Robert Excell

Scrutiny Lead Member for Health

Councillor Roger Kerlake
(until 8 January 2011)

Councillor Jeanette Richards
(from 3 February 2011)

FOREWORD

The 2010/11 Annual Report of the Torbay Overview & Scrutiny Board is the final annual report to be issued prior to the Local Elections to be held on 5 May 2011. It is therefore my final report in my capacity as Overview and Scrutiny Coordinator and Chair of the Board.

After the elections a new Board will be appointed to continue with the good work that has been achieved in the past four years.

I look back over those past four years and conclude that much has been achieved by the Board on your behalf during this time. I wish to pay tribute to all members of the Board for the excellent contribution that they have made to the reviews that have been undertaken by them on your behalf. In particular, I wish to thank Cllr Julien Parrott for the excellent manner in which he chaired the Board prior to my assuming the mantle of Chairman as his successor in 2008.

It is beneficial to remind ourselves what the purpose of the Overview & Scrutiny Board really is in order that we can measure how effective (or otherwise) we are performing on your behalf.

The four Principles of Good Scrutiny are:

- i) To act as a critical friend in holding the Executive to account.
- ii) To be managed by independent minded governors.
- iii) To drive improvements in public services.
- iv) To enable the voice and concerns of the public.

These principles have been at the forefront of all of the work that your Overview and Scrutiny Board and its sub groups have undertaken.



On behalf of the Board, I wish to thank the Scrutiny Officers within Torbay Council - all of whom have freely and willingly given their full time efforts, professional advice and invaluable guidance to members of the Board.

To the Commissioners and Officers within Torbay Council I particularly say thank you for the experience, support and help that they gave to the Board - both in terms of providing information during the reviews that we undertook during the year, and in their capacity as experts in their individual fields of activity.

I also wish to thank all of the members of the Board for the time and dedication that they gave to their duties as members of this crucially important Board within Torbay Council – all for the benefit of the community we all serve in the Bay.

The Overview and Scrutiny function within Torbay Council will be in new hands after May 2011 but the common theme that will carry across from this Board to the newly constituted Board will be to continue to represent your interests as a citizen of the Bay.

Councillor John Thomas
Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator



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

ACHIEVEMENTS THIS YEAR

Following on from the Fitness Check of Overview and Scrutiny at the end of last year, the Overview and Scrutiny Board agreed to reduce the number of in-depth reviews it carried out.

Affordable Housing

This review took place against an ever-changing political backdrop which has altered the landscape against which affordable housing is delivered in terms of funding and capacity.



What has not changed is that Torbay faces unique challenges in its demographic makeup and a continuing trend of demand for affordable housing outweighing supply.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the strategic and operational delivery of the themes of the current Housing Strategy, councillors held 'Delivery Chain Workshops' which helped to identify current and future partners, gaps in the delivery chain and ways to shape the new Housing Strategy.

The report from the review contained a number of recommendations which were adopted by the Mayor, including an action plan.

The full report is available at www.torbay.gov.uk/scrutiny under 'Completed Reviews'.

Priorities and Resources 2010/2011

Building on the experience of last year, in setting its Work Programme for the current year, the Overview and Scrutiny Board established the Priorities and Resources Review Panel to give timely consideration to the emerging priorities of the Council for 2011/2012 having regard to the Community Plan.

The Interim Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board on the priorities and resources of the Council for 2011/2012 provided the Board's comments, recommendations and conclusions about the emerging strategy documents upon which the revenue and capital budgets for 2011/2012 would be based.

The second part of the Board's work concentrated on the Zero Based Budgeting (ZBB) exercise which each Business Unit of the Council undertook during the autumn of 2010 together with detailed consideration of the target budgets which had been set by the Mayor.

The Board gave detailed consideration to the reports that had been prepared by each Business Unit setting out the implications of the provisional spending targets which had been set by the Mayor in December 2010.

Each Cabinet Member was invited to attend the appropriate Review Panel meeting to share their views with the Panel and the Panel heard a number of representations from members of the community.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board asked for a number of specific items to be added back into the budget and also provided a commentary on other issues. A number of the recommendations were accepted by the Mayor when he presented his budget to the Council.



South West Devon Waste Partnership – Joint Scrutiny Panel

The Overview and Scrutiny Board published its report on the South West Devon Waste Partnership. The report provided details of the Joint Scrutiny Review (by Devon County, Plymouth City and

Torbay Councils) of the ongoing procurement of a long term solution to treat and dispose of residual waste from Plymouth, Torbay, South Hams, West Devon and parts of Teignbridge.

The Joint Review Panel focussed on four areas of questioning:

- Funding and affordability
- Population and waste stream projections
- Lessons learnt elsewhere
- Contingency plans

The Panel was clear that the main focus of each partner authority (and the associated district councils) was that waste reduction should be prioritised including re-use and recycling and the use of landfill minimised.

Local authorities have a role to play in ensuring that legislators are lobbied to make waste prevention a priority. Raising public awareness of the need to reduce waste and the reasons behind it also needs to take place.

The Panel's main recommendations were around flexibility in the 25 year contract, waste reduction and the continued improvement in recycling across the Partnership area.

The report of the Panel is available on our website.

Health Scrutiny

The Health Scrutiny Board has had a full programme of both meetings and site visits.

One example of the Board's work was to review proposed changes to St Edmunds and Fernham Care Services. As a part of the Board's consideration of whether the proposals were a major change or 'substantial variation' to services for local people, members visited both centres and met staff and service users. In response to a request from the Mayor, the Board reviewed proposed alternative services at Tweenaway Court and St Michaels Court prior to the service move from Fernham. The Board also considered proposals to close St Edmunds Intermediate Care Service permanently and re-invest in community intermediate care provision.

The Board continued to monitor work on developing proposals for Commissioning Short Breaks for Children and Young People with Physical and Learning Disabilities and on the Bay's progress implementing the Personalisation of Care.

Members of the Board have visited three of the four NHS Trusts that they are involved in scrutinising. These visits were an opportunity to find out on the ground about the challenges, responsibilities, and strategic intent of the NHS locally.

At South Devon Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, councillors focused on how the acute trust met patients' nutritional needs and the mealtime service.



At the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust councillors toured the control room and discussed the key challenges and strategic plans of the Trust. For Devon Partnership NHS Trust, Board members visited Langdon Hospital and talked with frontline staff and service users to gain valuable insights into the roles of the service and the Trust's plans.

During the year Board members also visited the facilities at Occombe House for adults with

severe learning disabilities and the adjoining Fairwinds Special Development Centre, and met key stakeholders, including relatives of the residential service users. The Board subsequently determined that Occombe House re-provision proposals were a substantial variation and the NHS would be required to consult Overview and Scrutiny. This proposed service change is expected to form a future investigation for Overview and Scrutiny in 2011/12.

Centre for Public Scrutiny – Good Scrutiny Awards 2010

Torbay Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board was commended in the Centre for Public Scrutiny's Good Scrutiny Awards in June 2010 in the category of Innovation. The Board was been recognised for its innovative work with other organisations in Torbay in holding the Children's Trust to account, for its work in securing additional funding for the concessionary bus fares scheme and for hearing the views of young people at a number of events in Local Democracy Week and during the course of its reviews.

The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator, Councillor John Thomas, said 'I am absolutely delighted that Torbay's Overview and Scrutiny Board was commended for this prestigious and highly sought after national award for excellence in scrutiny. I believe that being shortlisted is a national recognition of the improvements that have been made over the past twelve months.'

PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR

The Work Programme for 2011/2012 will be developed alongside the induction programme for the new Overview and Scrutiny Board following the Local Government Elections in May 2011.

The principles of good scrutiny will remain the framework by which the Board operates.



GOOD PUBLIC SCRUTINY

- 1. provides "critical friend" challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers**
- 2. enables the voice and concerns of the public**
- 3. is carried out by 'independent minded governors' who lead and own the scrutiny role**
- 4. drives improvement in public services**

INVOLVEMENT

- Let us know your views – use the contact details below
- Keep up to date – check out our website at www.torbay.gov.uk/scrutiny
- Join our Community Pool – be sent regular news from scrutiny and have the opportunity to become involved with reviews – again, use the contact details below

Telephone: 01803 207063

Email: scrutiny@torbay.gov.uk

Address: Overview and Scrutiny
Torbay Council
Town Hall
Torquay TQ1 3DR

Web: www.torbay.gov.uk/scrutiny

If you want to know more about overview and scrutiny at Torbay Council then please feel free to contact the Team.

This document can be made available in other languages and formats. For more information please telephone 01803 207063.