

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2024/2025

April 2025



Contents

Foreword	4
1. Key information about Overview and Scrutiny	5
The operation of overview and scrutiny	5
Scrutiny's Role.....	6
Residents and stakeholders can get involved by:	6
2. Snapshot of scrutiny development in 2024/2025	7
Focusing on the issues which matter	7
Equal importance placed on policy development.....	7
Complementing the work of the Cabinet.....	7
Pre-Briefings and Work Planning.....	8
3. Overview and Scrutiny in Numbers 2024/2025	9
4. Snapshot of some of the Key Achievements 2024/2025	10
Overview and Scrutiny Board	10
Spotlight Review of Drainage and Flooding.....	10
Continued to Support Children's Services Improvement Journey	10
Continued Focus on Children and Adolescent Mental Health.....	11
Scrutiny of Adult Social Care and Health	11
Director of Public Health Annual Report – Women's Health	12
6. Topic List	13
Overview and Scrutiny Board	13

Children and Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board.....	14
Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board	14
Panels.....	15
7. Current and Future Work Programme.....	15
8. Call-in of decisions	16
9. Community involvement	16
10. Councillor Call for Action.....	16
How to get involved in overview and scrutiny	17

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Foreword

This year has been another busy year for Overview and Scrutiny, who have and continued to respond to the issues affecting Torbay's residents and visitors, as well as working with our communities and partners to make improvements in respect of services for our children as well as holding partners in health to account and being a critical friend to our adult social care service through the main Board and the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board and Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board.

We continued to take a leading role in the Leader and Cabinet's Budget development for 2025/2026 and I am pleased that most of our recommendations informed the final budget proposals. In addition to the budget, the Board and its Sub-Boards have investigated several issues and I believe has made a notable difference in some of the key decisions made by the Cabinet, the public and private sector partners.

This report gives details of the work which has been undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny over the course of the 2024/2025 Municipal Year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has played a part in contributing towards the work of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Boards, Sub-Boards and Panels. Particular thanks should go to Councillor Steve Darling, Councillor Yvonne Twelves and Councillor Mark Spacagna who have all ably Chaired the Board prior to my appointment in February 2025. Overview and Scrutiny, the Cabinet and our key partners in Health, the voluntary and community sectors and Police have continued to work together to try to make a positive difference for the people of Torbay.

Councillor Swithin Long
Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator

1. Key information about Overview and Scrutiny

The operation of overview and scrutiny

There have been a number of changes to the Leadership and membership of Overview and Scrutiny over the past year.

Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator:

Councillor Steve Darling until 20 June 2024

Councillor Yvonne Twelves from 20 June until 18 July 2024

Councillor Mark Spacagna from 18 July 2024 to 27 February 2025

Councillor Swithin Long from 27 February 2025

The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator is supported by Scrutiny Lead Members:

- Councillors Fellows and Law – Children’s Services;
- Councillors Tolchard and Johns – Adult, Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities;
- Councillors Twelves, Hutchings and Cowell – Housing, Finance and Corporate Services; and
- Councillors Foster and Carter – Place Development, Economic Growth and Culture.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board meets monthly with Task and Finish Panels created to consider topics in greater detail. During the last year the following Members have served on the Overview and Scrutiny Board: Councillors Atiya-Alla, Brook, Carter, Cowell, Steve Darling, Mandy Darling, Douglas-Dunbar, Fellows, Foster, Fox, Hutchings, Johns, Law, Barbara Lewis, Long, Maddison, Spacagna, Strang, Tolchard, Twelves and Virdee.

There are two dedicated Sub-Boards:

The Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board provides greater focus on issues in relation to adult social care and health and fulfils the statutory health overview and scrutiny function and normally meets monthly.

This Board comprised of five Councillors and was Chaired by the Scrutiny Lead for Adult, Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities - Councillors Tolchard/Johns. During the last year the following Members have served on the Sub-Board: Councillors Brook, Douglas-Dunbar, Foster, Fellows, Johns, Barbara Lewis, Long, Maddison and Tolchard. Representatives from Healthwatch Torbay and the Voluntary Sector Network were appointed as non-voting co-opted members on the Board to help provide independent expert advice.

The Children and Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board is responsible for overview and scrutiny of Children’s Services and meets bi-monthly.

This Sub-Board comprised of five Councillors and was Chaired by the Scrutiny Lead for Children’s Services – Councillors Fellows/Law. During the last year the following Members have served on the Sub-Board: Councillors Fellows, Foster, Law, Nicolaou, Tolchard and Twelves. Representatives from Devon and Cornwall Police, Play Torbay, Voluntary and Community Sector and Alternative Provision (Education) as well as the Statutory Co-opted Members from the Church of England Diocese and a Primary Parent Governor also help provide the voice of the child or young person and provide independent expert advice.

Scrutiny’s Role

To make recommendations to the Cabinet, Council or key partners 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 Cabinet should seek to complement one another.
- All Councillors should have the opportunity to help shape policy decisions at an early stage.

Meetings:

- Are open to the public to attend.
 - Typically last 2-3 hours.
 - Meet regularly (during the daytime and evenings).
 - Have a formal structure, but are run in an accessible way.
 - Papers are published on the Council’s website at [Committee structure \(torbay.gov.uk\)](https://www.torbay.gov.uk/committees).
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Residents and stakeholders can get involved by:

- Attending public meetings;
 - Giving evidence to one of the Panels, Boards/Sub-Boards; and
 - Sending in comments about a review.
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2. Snapshot of scrutiny development in 2024/2025

Focusing on the issues which matter

The Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board has undertaken the statutory health scrutiny duty (on behalf of the main Board) providing oversight of health services in Torbay and clinical services across the peninsula and has also taken part in masterclass sessions run by Devon County Council. It has held our health partners to account including Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust, One Devon and NHS England for delivery of services to the residents of Torbay.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board continued to receive regular reports on the Council's revenue and capital budgets and monitor key performance indicators, this now includes monitoring performance and compliance of all of the Council's housing stock and former TorVista Homes housing stock. It has closely monitored and challenged the performance and outcomes for children holding the Cabinet and our key partners to account through the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board.

Equal importance placed on policy development

The Overview and Scrutiny Board and its Sub-Boards provided feedback during the development of the following Council's key Policy Framework Documents.

- Annual Review of the Events Strategy as aligned with Destination Management Plan
- Local Transport Plan 4 Consultation (Note: since the review of this document it has been removed from the Policy Framework list as it is now the responsibility of the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority.)
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2024 – 2030

Complementing the work of the Cabinet

The Overview and Scrutiny Board continue to seek to complement the work of the Cabinet, with Quarterly Overview and Scrutiny Leadership meetings held between the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator, Overview and Scrutiny Board Vice-Chairman, Group Leaders and Chairman of the Audit Committee to review work programmes and determine where Overview and Scrutiny can add value. The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator also met with Group Leaders and Deputy Group Leaders monthly via the Council Leadership Group meetings to keep them informed of the work of Overview and Scrutiny, review the current Work Programmes and give them an opportunity to suggest topics for inclusion.

Pre-Briefings and Work Planning

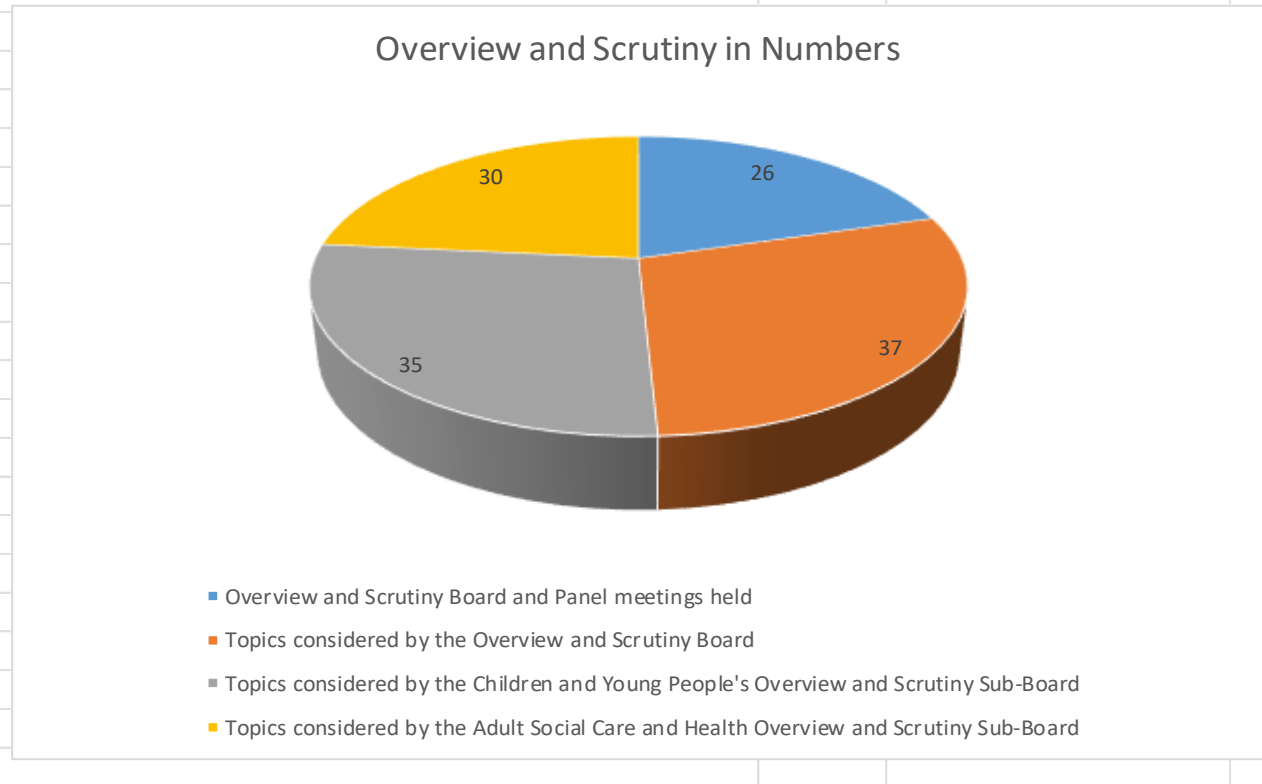
Monthly briefings have enabled better member engagement and more focussed debate at Board meetings, developing key lines of questioning and exploring upcoming items to ensure relevant items are considered at the right time with key attendees invited to contribute towards discussions. They have also monitored implementation of recommendations and received updates on topics to determine if they should be included in the Work Programmes, which freed up capacity for the main Board to focus on delivering its Work Programme. The Forward Plan was also used as a tool to identify key issues for consideration by the Board and Sub-Boards.

Workshops were held during March to develop the draft Work Programmes for the main Overview and Scrutiny Board and the two Sub-Boards for Children and Adults. These were open to all Councillors, Directors and Co-opted Members of the Sub-Boards to enable them to contribute and share ideas on the focus Overview and Scrutiny in 2025/2026.

3. Overview and Scrutiny in Numbers 2024/2025

Key

Overview and Scrutiny Board and Panel meetings held	26	
Topics considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board	37	
Topics considered by the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board	35	
Topics considered by the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board	30	



4. Snapshot of some of the Key Achievements 2024/2025

Overview and Scrutiny Board

Over the last 12 months Overview and Scrutiny has focussed on delivering its main Work Programme with meetings dedicated to spotlight reviews rather than undertaking longer task and finish groups, except for the annual Priorities and Resources Review Panel which considered the Cabinet's draft Budget Proposals for 2025/2026. Members found that this enabled a greater focus on a single topic with key stakeholders invited to contribute. Quarterly meetings focussed on monitoring the Council's Revenue and Capital Budget and key Performance Indicators which helped to hold decision makers to account for delivery of the budget and Community and Corporate Plan.

Spotlight Review of Drainage and Flooding

Further to the successful Spotlight Review of South West Water in 2023, the Overview and Scrutiny Board held a Spotlight Review on issues of concern regarding drainage and flooding. The Panel heard evidence from the Regulatory Manager (Water) (Environment Agency), Head of Environmental Performance for Wastewater Services (SWW), Head of Networks for Drinking Water Services (SWW), Corporate Community Engagement Officer (SWW), Director of Asset Management (SWW), Head of Service Insight (Customer Services) (SWW). The Review resulted in:

- improved communication and greater public engagement with the Council, residents and South West Water (SWW) regarding the Seasonal Tariff Pilot, with more information being provided to explain the rationale and where to get help. Members of the Board were invited to give their views on letters to residents before they were circulated;
- improved relationships between the Council and Environment Agency and South West Water;
- the Chairman and Vice-Chairman were invited to Centre for Resilience and Environment, Water and Waste (CREWW) a joint venture between South West Water and Exeter University, researching the challenges facing the water sector in the UK and beyond; and
- local Members of Parliament asking questions in Government on plastic wet wipes and raising awareness of the impact they cause on blocking drains and sewers.

The full details on this Spotlight Review can be viewed at [Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Board on Tuesday, 8 October 2024, 5.30 pm.](#)

Full details of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Board can be viewed at [Committee details - Overview and Scrutiny Board.](#)

Continued to Support Children's Services Improvement Journey

The Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board has had a busy year working with and holding to account the Director of Children's Services and Cabinet Member for Children's Services and our key partners across a wide range of topics.

Continued Focus on Children and Adolescent Mental Health

Following a Spotlight Review on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in 2023, the Sub-Board have continued to raise awareness and challenge what was being done to support children and young people with their mental health in all aspects of their work. This was evident through their discussions at their meeting held on 10 March 2025 on the following:

- Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI); and
- Update on the Local Government Association Peer Review of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Full details of the work of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board can be viewed at [Browse meetings - Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board](#).

Scrutiny of Adult Social Care and Health

Over the past year, the Adult Social Care and Health Sub-Board has focused on understanding the complexities of Adult Social Care and Health. This included the new Care Quality Commission regulations and the new Integrated Care Organisation and Board arrangements.

Holding Partners to Account

The Sub Board continued to hold the Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust to account for the delivery and quality of services at Torbay Hospital and received regular updates in relation to the implementation of the capital programme and redesign of Torbay Hospital, including the Government's New Hospital Programme which resulted in the new Torbay Hospital development being delayed to around 2033/2035. The Sub-Board received the following praise for their work from the Trust:

"I would like to personally thank you for the support the Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board has given us over the last few years as we developed our plans. I really appreciate everything you have done to help raise awareness of the estates' issues at Torbay Hospital and the critical need for investment. It is now even more important than ever that we continue to work together to deliver the modern hospital that our people and communities in Torbay and South Devon deserve and need. "

Full details of the work of the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board can be viewed at [Browse meetings - Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board](#).

Rowcroft Hospice

Following a spotlight review on Dementia Services carried out in March 2024, Members of the Sub-Board visited Rowcroft Hospice to learn about their future plans as a specialist nursing home for dementia patients and how the Council could support and work with the Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust and other local authorities to implement this important project for the residents of Torbay.



Director of Public Health Annual Report – Women’s Health

The Sub-Board helped to shape the 2024 Director of Public Health’s Annual Report on Women’s Health and suggested the following should be included:

- development of flexible and inclusive employment practices to reflect and encourage women into education and employment;
- raising awareness of the impact of domestic abuse on women who experience it, and the sensitivity of response needed to meet their needs;
- improvement to access, experience and outcomes for women’s healthcare through Torbay’s women’s health hub;
- recognition and support of grass roots women’s groups and activities as integral components of mental health and wellbeing provision;
- development of integrated service delivery pathways for women’s health care, reducing the need to attend multiple appointments for routine health care; and
- development of inclusive approaches that facilitate and support girls and women to become more physically active.

More details on the Sub-Board’s discussions can be found at [Agenda for Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board on Thursday, 5 September 2024, 2.00 pm.](#)

The final report incorporating the decision of the Cabinet can be found at [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 17 December 2024, 5.30 pm.](#)

6. Topic List

Overview and Scrutiny Board

- Annual Review of Key Performance Indicators for the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Local Area Strategy
- Update on the Implementation of the Review of Planning Services Fit for the Future
- Review of Council Procurement Policies and Food and Music Festival
- Call-In of Cabinet's Decision on Next Steps Properties at Ryan Place
- Torbay Place Leadership Board
- SWISCo Green Space Management and Engagement – Update
- Economic Growth Strategy Action Plan
- Budget Monitoring Outturn 2023/24
- Performance Report - Quarter 4 2023/2024
- Budget Monitoring Quarter 1 2024/2025
- Performance Q1 Performance 2024/2025
- A Greener Way for our Bay Framework and Action Plan Update
- Plymouth and South Devon Freeport Status - Impact on Torbay
- Commercial Policy
- Torre Abbey Business Plan 2024
- Annual Review of the Events Strategy as aligned with Destination Management Plan
- Spotlight Review – Drainage and Flooding
- Safer Torbay Annual Review which included:
 - Strategic Assessment
 - Prevent
 - Modern Slavery
 - Serious and organised crime
 - Domestic abuse and sexual violence
- Torbay Combatting Drugs Partnership
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and work with Local Government Association
- Performance Monitoring Quarter 2 2024/2025
- Budget Monitoring 2024/2025 April to September 2024 Revenue and Capital Outturn Forecast
- Local Transport Plan 4 Consultation
- Multiple Complex Needs (MCN) Alliance Review
- Torbay Food Strategy
- Update on Operation Brighter Bay and Operation Town Centres
- Quarterly Housing Audit and Compliance Report
- Revenue and Capital Budget 2025/2026 - Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board
- Budget Monitoring 2024/2025 - Quarter 3
- Performance Report 2024/25 - Quarter 3
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- Rent and Service Charge Policy and proposed changes to Social Housing Rents
- Torbay Council Climate Change Action Plan
- Housing Audit and Compliance Framework
- Update on Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Needs Assessment Refresh
- Food Strategy Action Plan
- Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2024/2025
- Initial Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2025/2026

Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board

- Care Experienced, Including Housing for Care Experienced Young People
- Youth Justice
- Exclusions and Absence
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Update (SEND)
- Exploitation and Children Missing
- Young Carers Strategy
- Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Action Tracker
- Youth Provision in Torbay
- 0 to 25 Services Procurement
- Torbay Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Self Evaluation Framework (SEF)
- Our Promise to You - The Torbay Pledge to care for and care experienced children/young people - Revised Children's Pledge
- Fostering Annual Report
- Regional Adoption Agency Joint Scrutiny Board
- Ofsted Annual Conversation Letter
- Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Action Tracker
- Home to School Transport
- Early Years Sufficiency Duty Report
- Sufficiency Strategy Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
- Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Programme and Sustainability
- 0 to 25 Provision
- Safeguarding Children Annual Report
- Children's Continuous Improvement Board Update

- Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Action Tracker
- Councillor Call to Action - St Margarets and Spires Hearing Unit Closures
- Update on UNICEF work to be a Child Friendly Torbay
- Adopt South West Annual Report 2023/2024
- Youth Justice
- Exploitation and Children Missing
- Our Promise to You - The Torbay Pledge to care for and care experienced children/young people
- Virtual School Annual Report 2023/2024
- Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Action Tracker
- Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI)
- Schools Capital Programme Review
- Update on Local Government Association Peer Review of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Action Tracker

Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board

- Peninsula Acute Sustainability Programme (PASP) draft Case for Change
- Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2024 – 2030
- Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Action Tracker
- Director of Public Health Annual Report - Women's Health
- Building Heart Healthy Communities in Torbay
- Healthwatch Annual Report

- Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Action Tracker
- Torbay and South Devon NHS Trust Quality Account 2024
- New diagnostic unit in Market Street – 2024
- Infection prevention and control - incorporating vaccine preventable illnesses and antimicrobial resistance (AMR)
- Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Action Tracker
- Annual Review of Dentistry Provision in Torbay
- Adult Social Care Peer Challenge
- Annual update on Domiciliary Care
- Adult Social Care, Memorandum of Understanding between Torbay Council and Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust
- Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Action Tracker
- Pharmacy First - Update/outline of new strategy
- Adult Social Care, Memorandum of Understanding between Torbay Council and Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust
- Adult Social Care Improvement Board - Co-production update
- Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Action Tracker
- Annual Public Health Report 2025 on Healthy Ageing
- Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge Action Plan
- Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Action Tracker
- Annual Review of Building a Brighter Future
- Peninsula Acute Sustainability Programme (PASP)
- Test for change on out-of-hours on-call Primary Percutaneous Coronary Intervention (PPCI) services

- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan
- Residential Care Homes and Nursing Homes
- Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Work Programme 2025/26
- Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board Action Tracker

Panels

- Priorities and Resources Review Panel

7. Current and Future Work Programme

The Overview and Scrutiny work programme needs to be flexible in order to address any issues that arise throughout the Municipal Year. A number of new topics were added to the programme during the year and the timing of some of the items was varied to enable key items to be considered in a timely manner.

The Work Programmes for 2025/2026 will be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Board on 9 April 2025 and then to the subsequent Sub-Boards.

Overview and Scrutiny will continue with its flexible approach to work programming to ensure that it is able to react to issues as they arise and in respect of Task and Finish Review Panels and Spotlight Reviews, which will be subject to available staff resources.

8. Call-in of decisions

The call-in process is one of the mechanisms which can be used to hold the Cabinet to account. The purpose of a call-in is to examine the decisions reached by the Cabinet (or other decision makers) 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 in their view, the decision was appropriate and make recommendations accordingly.

There was one call-in during 2024/2025.

- Call-In of Cabinet's Decision on Next Steps Properties at Ryan Place – the outcome of the call-in was no further action.

9. Councillor Call for Action

Any Member of the Council can ask for Overview and Scrutiny to request officers to prepare a report on a topic for overview and scrutiny. There was one Councillor Call for Action in the past twelve months:

- Councillor Call to Action - St Margarets and Spires Hearing Unit Closures

10. Community involvement

The Overview and Scrutiny Boards and Panels engage with a wide selection of groups, organisations and individuals. We welcome the opportunity to hear from members of the public at our meetings whose input is important in understanding the concerns and needs of our communities. To support this approach and in addition to the statutory education co-opted members the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board includes a number of non-voting co-opted members to provide independent expert advice and help represent the voice of the child and young person.

Representatives from Healthwatch Torbay and the Voluntary Sector Network were also appointed as non-voting co-opted members on the Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board to help provide independent expert advice together with relaying a service user perspective.

How to get involved in overview and scrutiny

- **Attend meetings** – our scrutiny meetings are open to the public and you are welcome to come along and listen to the debate and discussion. Please note that reports may be considered in private if they contain confidential information.
- **Ask a question or make a point** – if you would like to make a representation at a meeting, please email governance.support@torbay.gov.uk at least two days before the meeting so that we can let the Chairman know in advance. It is helpful to know what you would like to raise in order for it to be considered at the appropriate time during the discussions.
- **Request a review** – if there is something you think scrutiny could look at, then let us know via governance.support@torbay.gov.uk
- **Consultation and participation** – you could be asked for your views on an issue or be invited to provide specialist knowledge you might have by being a witness in a scrutiny review.

Contact Us

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