

Overview & Scrutiny

Confidence in your Council



Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2011/2012

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

Councillor John Thomas (Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator)
Councillor Neil Bent (People Scrutiny Lead)
Councillor Mark Kingscote (Place Scrutiny Lead)
Councillor Ruth Pentney (Business Scrutiny Lead)
Councillor Jane Barnby (Health Scrutiny Lead)
Councillor Dave Butt (until 3 February 2012)
Councillor Steve Darling
Councillor Ray Hill (from 3 February 2012)
Councillor Julien Parrott
Councillor Mark Pountney (from 26 July 2012)

Members of the Health Scrutiny Board

Councillor Jane Barnby (Chair)
Councillor Neil Bent (from 18 July 2011)
Councillor Stephen Brooksbank (until 18 July 2011)
Councillor Bobbie Davies
Councillor Ian Doggett
Councillor Matthew James
Councillor Beryl McPhail
Councillor Julien Parrott
Councillor John Thomas

Foreword

I have been privileged to yet again act as Overview and Scrutiny Coordinator and Chairman of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board during 2011/2012.

This is the first Annual Report since the local elections held in May 2011 and, as you may be aware, all local authorities across the country have been subjected to swingeing reductions in their funding from Central Government. Torbay Council is no different and as a consequence, your Council will have to find up to 28% in spending reductions on the services that it provides in the four years commencing 2011.

This has inevitably meant that every one of the 700 different services that your Council provides have inescapably had to come under the microscope. Your Overview and Scrutiny Board represents your interests in the Council and exists to hold the Mayor and Executive Leads to account on all matters including the budgetary decisions that they make. Your Overview and Scrutiny Board has therefore set as a key theme for its review of spending cuts, the protection of the vulnerable and the disadvantaged in the



Bay. Your Board has held the “budget makers” to account on every item that has been affected by the inescapable reductions in funding and have managed to reinstate or reduce some of the reductions, or reallocate the reductions to alternative areas of activity that may be considered to have a lesser effect on the public.

This does not make for an easy life as the reality is that there are few areas of Council activity that can escape some reduction in financial support.

Sadly, the cuts that have been made in the past two years are only the start of the journey as further cuts are certain in the two years ahead of us.

I wish to express my appreciation to all elected members who sit on the Overview and Scrutiny Board and for the many reviews that they have undertaken with skill and in forensic detail in a particularly difficult financial environment. This Annual Report gives but a glimpse of the work that has been undertaken by your Board and I commend it to your reading.

Finally, should you at any time have a subject that you feel would be worthy of review by your Board please do contact the Overview and Scrutiny Team at the Town Hall.

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

This report gives details of some of the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and the Health Scrutiny Board since May 2011.

Anti-Social Behaviour and Private Sector Housing

A review panel was established with the objectives of gaining an understanding of the anti-social behaviour issues associated with private sector housing, to identify the underlying issues and contributing factors and to examine the range and effectiveness of the policies and initiatives aimed at tackling and reducing anti-social behaviour.

The review panel heard of changes in how anti-social behaviour was tackled in Torbay, the various initiatives which were in place to tackle the issue and the recognition of this work through the award of a Purple Flag for Torquay town centre.

In conclusion, the panel found that there was excellent proactive and reactive work being undertaken to minimise the impact of anti-social behaviour and to tackle poor

quality accommodation although the reduced resources available were a limiting factor.

The panel will present a business case to the Mayor for further targeted intervention to address some of the hotspots in Torbay.

Levels and appropriateness of methylphenidate (including Ritalin) prescribed for children and young people in Torbay

The Overview and Scrutiny Board supported a Councillor Call for Action raised by Councillor Parrott on the prevalence of Ritalin prescription in Torbay. The request was made as there was a research proven link between socio-economic group, incidences of ADHD diagnosis and the prescribing of methylphenidate (including Ritalin). The British Psychological Society had stated that poverty and unemployment are amongst the biggest causes in such cases. Councillor Parrott hoped that, given the levels of deprivation in some parts of Torbay, the national correlation between social struggles and Ritalin prescription would not be present within the area.

The Director of Public Health presented a report to the Board which gave background information and answered the specific questions which had been raised. The report concluded that diagnosis of ADHD and treatment is undertaken in Torbay by consultant-level medical staff in line with current national guidelines from NICE. Treatment may include Ritalin but this is not the only regimen available.

It was noted that there is no data available in Torbay on total population prevalence or numbers diagnosed or medicated that could be used for comparative purposes and that this data is not collected in other areas. A review of the literature had been used to provide potential parameters for the Torbay population and that there was no evidence that Torbay exceeds these parameters.

Budget Scrutiny 2012/2013

The Overview and Scrutiny Board undertook budget scrutiny over a number of meetings in January where Executive Leads and officers were challenged about their proposals for the forthcoming year. Members of the public were also invited to share their views at these meetings.

Health Scrutiny

The Health Scrutiny Board continued to monitor the implementation of planned service changes at Occombe House and the John Parkes Unit. The Board also received reports on the establishment of regional networks for trauma care and the progress of the personalisation of health and social care in Torbay.

Plans for next year

The Work Programme for 2012/2013 will be developed to take account of where overview and scrutiny can add the most value.

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

Contact Us

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