



Overview and Scrutiny **Annual Report**

2010-2011



Bromsgrove
District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk



DRAFT

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11

CONTENTS

	<u>Page Number</u>
Introduction	1
Membership	2
The Role of the Overview and Scrutiny Board	4
The Overview and Scrutiny Process	6
Board Investigations Completed in 2010/11 -	9
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Inquiry into the Alvechurch Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA)▪ Medium Term Financial Plan▪ Scrutiny of Crime and Disorder▪ Planning Policy Development Process▪ Joint Climate Change Strategy▪ Garden Waste Future Developments▪ Worcestershire Older People's Strategy▪ Bromsgrove Urban and Rural Transport (BURT)▪ Review of Street Trading Consent Policy▪ Sports Provision Review▪ Annual Civic Bonfire Event	
Reviews of Previous Overview and Scrutiny Investigations -	16
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Older People Task Group▪ Community Involvement in Local Democracy Task Group	
Joint Overview and Scrutiny Investigation –	19
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Worcestershire Hub	
Current and Future Overview and Scrutiny Board Work	20
Developments during 2010/11	21
Looking to the Future	23
Further Information	24

DRAFT

INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to present the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report which outlines our work during 2010/11 and provides general information on the overview and scrutiny processes at Bromsgrove District Council.

Following a review of the authority's governance arrangements including the roles of Committees and Boards, it was agreed at full Council on 19th January 2011 that the Overview Board, Scrutiny Board and Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board cease to exist and their functions be allocated to a new Overview and Scrutiny Board. Following on from this, the opportunity also arose to make changes to the Task Group Procedure Notes. These ceased to form part of the Constitution and were replaced by a more informal and flexible protocol, which was agreed and endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board at the meeting, held on 1st March 2011.

It was also agreed at the full Council meeting held on 19th January 2011 that the Performance Management Board would cease to exist. It was however acknowledged that non-executive Members still needed to be able to hold the Executive to account for the strategic direction of the Council and its performance. It was therefore agreed that a range of documents previously considered by the Performance Management Board would be examined by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

DRAFT

MEMBERSHIP

The Board was made up of 13 Members from February to April 2011



Cllr. Steve Colella (Chairman)



Cllr. Dave Pardoe (Vice-Chairman)



Cllr. Richard Deeming



Cllr. Mrs. Rita Dent



Cllr. Mrs. June Griffiths



Cllr. John Ruck



Cllr. Chris Scurrall



Cllr. Mrs. Caroline Spencer



Cllr. Kit Taylor



Cllr. John Tidmarsh



Cllr. Les Turner

(There were two vacancies on the Overview and Scrutiny Board)

Former Overview Board Membership
May 2010 to January 2011

S R Colella (Chairman)
Mrs. M. Bunker (Vice-Chairman)
Mrs. R. L. Dent
Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths
Mrs. C. J. Spencer
L. J. Turner
(one vacancy)

Former Scrutiny Board Membership
May 2010 to January 2011

D. L. Pardoe (Chairman)
C. B. Taylor (Vice-Chairman)
A. N. Blagg
R. J. Deeming
C. R. Scurrall
C. J. Tidmarsh
(one vacancy)

Former Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board Membership
– May 2010 to January 2011

S R Colella (Chairman)
D. L. Pardoe (Vice-Chairman)
A. N. Blagg
Mrs. M. Bunker
R. J. Deeming
Mrs. R. L. Dent
Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths
C. R. Scurrall
Mrs. C. J. Spencer
C. B. Taylor
C. J. Tidmarsh
L. J. Turner
(two vacancies)

THE ROLE OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Overview and Scrutiny is a key part of the Council's political structure and it plays a vital role in improving the services that people of the District use, whether a resident, employed here or just visiting. It does not just look at the way the Council does things, it can look at anything which affects the lives of people within the District and it allows citizens to have a greater say in Council matters.

Overview and Scrutiny allows Councillors to review and scrutinise decisions, look at existing practices and make recommendations to help ensure the residents of Bromsgrove District receive excellent services. The aim is to ensure overview and scrutiny adds value to the Council's decision-making process and makes a positive contribution towards policy development.

Following the changes that were agreed at the full Council meeting held in January 2011 the Overview and Scrutiny Board combines the roles of the 3 former Boards (as detailed below) together with overall responsibility for monitoring performance improvement. There are also several standard items on the Work Programme which were previously reviewed by the Performance Management Board, full details of these can be found at page 23 of this report.

The terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Board also include the following:

- Overall responsibility for monitoring performance improvement.
- Identifying unsatisfactory progress or performance and making recommendations on remedial action to the Cabinet.
- Overall responsibility for monitoring the Council Plan and the Sustainable Community Strategy and making recommendations to the Cabinet.

Former Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board joined up the work of the Overview Board and Scrutiny Board and undertook some important cross cutting work of its own. It was responsible for receiving Councillor Calls for Action, scrutiny of the Council budget, to receive petitions and the scrutiny of crime and disorder.

Former Overview Board

The role of the Overview Board was to take an overview of Council and community services and make recommendations for improvement. The Overview Board was forward looking and it monitored the Key Decisions due to be taken by or on behalf of the Cabinet as published in the Council's Forward Plan.

Former Scrutiny Board

The role of the Scrutiny Board was to review Council and community services, to hold the executive to account and to make recommendations for improvement. It also reviewed executive decisions referred through the Call In process. It took a post-decision role and concentrated on service review and decisions already taken by the Cabinet, to help the council and community partners achieve their objectives and to provide greater democratic probity.

Number of Meetings

The Overview and Scrutiny Board and the former Scrutiny Board and Overview Board each met on a monthly basis during 2010/11. The former Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board met at least quarterly with additional meetings arranged when necessary.

From May 2010 to January 2011 there were a total of 15 meetings of the former Boards: 5 meetings of the Overview Board, 4 meetings of the Scrutiny Board (the final meeting due to take place in January 2011 was cancelled) and 6 meetings of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board has met on 3 occasions between February and April 2011.

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCESS

Overview and Scrutiny Work Planning

In October 2009 an Overview and Scrutiny Work Planning Workshop was held to consider possible topics for consideration during the remainder of the municipal year and to prioritise them. The highest prioritised topics were then scheduled into the work programmes of the 3 Boards and each Board agreed its own work programme for 2009/10. Many of the topics on the work programmes, which had not been investigated, remained relevant to the new municipal year and therefore were carried over to the Work Programmes for 2010/11. Several new topic proposals were also put forward by Members, which were incorporated within the Work Programmes for 2010/11.

In order to identify the key issues for the Council and the community, all elected Members and the Council's Corporate Management team were invited to submit proposals, for consideration.

With effect from February 2011 the work programmes of the 3 former Boards, together with specific items from the Performance Management Board work programme, were combined to create the Work Programme for the new Overview and Scrutiny Board.

Topic Proposals

Any Councillor, member of the public or officer can submit an overview and scrutiny proposal. The Board will then make a decision whether or not the suggested topic will be included on the work programme. In making that decision, the Board considers points such as:

- Reasons given and supporting evidence as to why the subject needs to be considered
- Links to Council priorities
- Possible key outcomes that the proposer anticipates could be achieved.

Other relevant points that are taken into account are whether it is of key interest to the public, if it is a poorly performing service, contributes to the Council Plan, an area of concern identified by internal or external audit, a review that could render significant savings or value for money or identified as a key issue in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Approach to Investigations

Overview and Scrutiny investigations can take a variety of different approaches. The Board can decide to undertake a "short, sharp inquiry" through meetings of the Board or by setting up a Task Group, which meets outside of the formal committee process and which may involve other non-Executive Members of the Council.

Task Groups can be more flexible in their timing and approach to an investigation and can take a longer or shorter time, depending on the issue. Task Groups are often able to consider an issue in more detail and take the investigation outside of the formal committee process to look at what is happening on the ground, by undertaking research and interviewing key stakeholders in a more informal setting.

Receiving Evidence

Overview and Scrutiny investigations receive evidence from which their conclusions and recommendations may be drawn. Evidence may be received during a formal Board meeting, in writing to Members of the Board or during a Task Group investigation. Evidence may include written reports from Council officers, written testimonials from interested parties, background papers, oral evidence from witnesses and site visits to look at particular places and events on the ground.

Overview and Scrutiny Inquiries and Recommendations

At the end of an investigation, conclusions are drawn up and recommendations made to the Cabinet and any other relevant local decision makers. The conclusions and recommendations, together with the relevant evidence, may be presented in a report or sometimes just recorded in the minutes of the Board meeting. Reports and recommendations are agreed by the Board before referral to Cabinet for consideration.

Recommendations may also be made to the full Council (policy and budgetary decisions) or to external agencies where the council does not have the power to act.

Executive Response

Overview and Scrutiny reports and recommendations are referred to Cabinet to make executive decisions in respect of each Overview and Scrutiny recommendation and to provide an Executive Response to the Board. The Cabinet is asked to agree, reject or amend each recommendation and to provide an indicative implementation date by which time the agreed recommendations are to be carried out.

The relevant Portfolio Holder is expected to attend the Board Meeting to present the Cabinet Response and answer any questions. If a recommendation is made to any other agency they may also be asked to provide an executive decision and response.

Tracking the Outcomes of Recommendations

Ultimately Overview and Scrutiny is about making a difference. The Overview and Scrutiny Board tracks all recommendations made to and agreed by Cabinet through Quarterly Recommendation Tracker reports. In depth investigations and task groups

are usually reviewed 12 months after their report has been considered by the Cabinet. The purpose of this is to check if the agreed recommendations have been implemented and to see what outcomes have been achieved.

With effect from February 2011 the Quarterly Recommendation Trackers of the 3 former Boards, were combined to create the Quarterly Recommendation Tracker for the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

Short, Sharp Inquiries

A “short sharp inquiry” is carried out through a mix of both formal Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings and informal meetings involving all Members of the Board and chaired by the Overview and Scrutiny Board Chairman. This type of inquiry can be used for the investigation of a topic already on the Board’s work programme or a topic on the Forward Plan which the Board felt warranted a more in depth investigation being carried out. However, it can also be used to consider matters of local concern, that have not been scheduled on either the work programme or Forward Plan but which Members feel would merit inclusion and further investigation.

Task Groups

If it is felt that a more in depth and detailed inquiry is required, the Overview and Scrutiny Board can appoint task groups which are separate from the Board and can include Members who are not Members of the Board (Members of the Cabinet cannot join a task group) to consider issues outside of the formal committee process or to allow an in depth overview and scrutiny investigation. Task groups carry out investigations and report back with their findings. The task groups can use a variety of methods to gather evidence and can invite relevant officers, representatives from external organisations and members of the public who have an interest and would like to put their views forward.

Following the review of the authority’s governance arrangements the Task Group Procedure Notes ceased to be part of the Council’s Constitution and more informal flexible guidelines were agreed and endorsed at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 1st March 2011.

BOARD INVESTIGATIONS COMPLETED 2010/11

➤ **Inquiry into the Alvechurch Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA)**

On 15th June 2010 the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board received 3 petitions on the Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) at Swanslength in Alvechurch. One petition called for the MUGA to be removed and claimed that it attracted anti-social behaviour into the local neighbourhood. The two others supported the MUGA facility as a community resource that should remain at its present location.

The Board agreed to carry out an inquiry into the future of the MUGA facility to investigate the reported crime and disorder issues and the future options for the MUGA and to make recommendations to Cabinet.

The Swanslength MUGA was installed in June 2008 by the Council following a request from the Alvechurch Local Neighbourhood Partnership to increase access to youth facilities in the village. Available funding enabled the installation of additional equipment in the form of a climbing facility to complement the MUGA facility. The installation of the MUGA had, in the opinion of a number of residents, had a negative impact on the well-being and quality of life of residents who lived closest to the facility.

Members of the Board on a site visit to the MUGA.



The Inquiry considered written and oral evidence from key stakeholders and conducted site visits to the MUGA site. At the beginning of the Inquiry, an open invitation was made for people to submit written evidence to contribute to the investigation and Members of the Inquiry received a substantial amount of correspondence and submissions of written evidence from local residents, both for and against the MUGA and all submissions were taken into account.

At the meeting held on 15th June 2010 each of the petition organisers were allowed up to 5 minutes to introduce their petition and answered questions put to them by the Board. On 22nd July 2010 Members of the Inquiry heard evidence from a range of key witnesses including the police, Bromsgrove

District Council community safety officers, ward councillors, local residents representatives, Bromsgrove District Housing Trust and Worcestershire County Council Youth Support.

At the Board meeting held on 31st August 2010, Members discussed and considered all the evidence they had received and the options available to them including costs and feasibility implications before making recommendations for inclusion in the Board's final report on the investigation.

The final report, which recommended the MUGA be left in situ, together with ten further recommendations, was approved by the Board at its meeting on 5th October 2010 and submitted to the Cabinet for consideration.

One of the recommendations was for the full length of the perimeter wall to be removed and the ground re-banked to stop it being used as make shift seating.



The Portfolio Holder for Community Services presented the Cabinet Response to the Board meeting held on 4th January 2011. He advised the Board that subject to the amendment of the wording on some of the recommendations, Cabinet had agreed them and had been pleased with the in depth report that the Board had produced.

➤ **Medium Term Financial Plan 2011/12 – 2013/14**

Overview and Scrutiny committees have a role in helping the Council achieve value for money services by scrutinising the Council Budget. This can be through consideration of particular topics throughout the year, examining how the resources are being spent and through scrutiny of the Council's draft Medium Term Financial Plan.

This has proved difficult this year due to the delay in the Council not actually receiving the final grant settlement figure until 31st January 2011. However, the former Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board was kept up to date of the position and received several informal briefings from the Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Resources. The Overview and Scrutiny Board received a presentation on the Draft Medium Term Financial Plan for 2011/12 – 2013/14 together with details of Revenue and Capital bids, at its first meeting held on 1st February 2011.

Following this presentation the Board made recommendations to the Cabinet in respect of the reprioritisation of several Revenue and Capital bids from “high” to “medium”.

➤ **Scrutiny of Crime and Disorder**

The former Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board was designated as the Crime and Disorder Committee in accordance with the Police and Justice Act 2006. The Overview and Scrutiny Board has now taken over this role.

At the meeting of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 5th October 2010 Members received a presentation from the Senior Community Safety Project Officer which gave an overview of the 2010/11 Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership Plan (CSPP). The CSPP identified the key local, regional and national drivers for the strategy, the membership of the Community Safety Partnership, priorities for tackling crime and disorder and the parameters within which the partnership works. There were several areas which Members wished to consider investigating further, town centre management, overview of violent crimes in the District and domestic violence, these were added to the Work Programme for further consideration.

At that same meeting the Board also received a report on the draft Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Protocol and the appointment of a Crime and Disorder advisor to the Board. The draft protocol set out guidance to the Board and to the Community Safety Partnership on how the scrutiny of crime and disorder partnerships would operate. The Chairman of the Bromsgrove Community Safety Partnership was present at the meeting and welcomed the protocol and confirmed that it would be considered by the Partnership at its next available meeting. Home Office guidance also suggested that crime and disorder scrutiny committees either appoint a co-optee or an advisor on crime and disorder and that for district authorities the preferred option was the appointment of an advisor. A candidate had been identified through the West Mercia MPA and it was agreed at the meeting that Councillor Brandon Clayton be appointed as an Advisor on Crime and Disorder to the former Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board.

➤ **Planning Policy Development Process**

The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board received a presentation on the Planning Policy Development Process from the Head of Planning and Regeneration at the meeting held on 5th October 2010. She explained that local planning policy is framed through a Local Development Framework which included various planning documents, particularly the Core Strategy. All future planning decisions would be made in accordance with the Core Strategy so it was very important that the strategy reflected local planning preferences.

The key sections of the Core Strategy, which cover a development strategy, housing development, business development, town centre development and

environmental and health issues, were discussed in detail and Members were encouraged to attend informal meetings which had been set up to allow input from Councillors and for them to also encourage public participation in the forthcoming consultation period.

➤ **Joint Climate Change Strategy**

At an informal meeting of the Overview Board held on 10th August 2010 Members received a presentation from the Climate Change Manager on the joint climate change strategy which set out a framework in which Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils could reduce their own and the communities carbon footprint, mitigate against the future climate change and identify how to adapt for the risks and opportunities future climate change would bring.

Members discussed several areas of concern in detail including energy efficient buildings, the use of wind turbines and solar panels to generate electricity, waste and recycling and transport. After further discussion at a formal meeting of the Board held on 31st August 2010 Members agreed that climate change should feed into all areas within the Council and made 8 recommendations to the Cabinet.

➤ **Garden Waste Future Developments**

The Head of Environmental Services and the Portfolio Holder for Community Services attended the Overview Board meeting held on 4th January 2011 to present a briefing paper on Garden Waste – Future Developments. The purpose of this paper was to update Members on the 2010 collection service and to brief them on developments for the 2011 collections and future years. The Council has one of the largest paid for garden waste services in the country and other councils who were considering moving to a paid service were now looking to the Council for guidance in setting up such a service.



Members were provided with an update on the costs of providing the service compared to the income generated, staffing of the scheme and the possibility of providing an annual service and the costs attached to this, together with information on the vehicles used and maintenance of them. The Board were satisfied with the responses received from the Head of Environmental Services and the Portfolio Holder to questions put to them and the report was noted.

➤ **Worcestershire Older People's Strategy**

Following the completion of the Older People's Task Group, it was noted that there was no district representative involved in the development of the Worcestershire Older People's Strategy. It was agreed that the Director for Policy, Performance and Partnerships and his team would liaise with staff at Worcestershire County Council (WCC) to contribute to the consultation process. As part of this process the Overview Board received a presentation from the Lead Commissioning Manager and Joint Commissioning Officer at WCC on 27th July 2010.

The Worcestershire Older People's Strategy would be effective from 1st April 2011 and would cover setting strategic objectives and priority actions, securing "buy in" of key partners, managing expectations and defining the balance of responsibilities and building on the success of other strategies and service developments. Members were informed that there would be key roles for the districts, including supported housing and extra care, community development and social networks and community transport and community safety. The Strategy would have a strong focus on wellbeing and social care and support in order to maintain independence for older people as long as possible.

The outcome of the discussions was that the Board recommended that the Cabinet support officer representation during the consultation process with WCC in order to shape the development of the new strategy.

➤ **Bromsgrove Urban and Rural Transport (BURT)**

Over the course of several meetings the Board received information on the Bromsgrove Urban and Rural Transport (BURT) scheme. This was following the receipt of an Overview and Scrutiny proposal put forward, which was concerned with the future of BURT and the financial implications to the Council in providing the service. At the Scrutiny Board meeting held on 13th July 2010 Members put together a number of questions for consideration by the Head of Community Services. The Head of Community Services responded to these questions at the next meeting of the Board, held on 28th September 2010 when Members also discussed take up and availability of the service (which had at that time been in place for 12 months), the vehicle used and associated maintenance costs.

The launch of BURT in September 2009.



At the meeting of the Board held on 26th October 2010 the Head of Community Services confirmed to Members that she would be carrying out a full and comprehensive review of the service and looking at alternative funding options with a view to minimising the cost to the Council. As a consequence of this review the Board agreed to take no further action on the proposal.

➤ **Review of Street Trading Consent Policy**

In October 2009 Members had asked officers to provide further information on the licensing of mobile hot food outlets in the District (this was following an investigation into Hot Food Takeaways). At the meeting of the Scrutiny Board held on 24th November 2009 this was provided and in light of a number of concerns raised, Members then agreed to review the new policy after it had been in place for 6 months. The Street Trading Consent Policy was formally adopted in January 2010 and reviewed with a modification in May 2010.

Members provided the Licensing Manager with a number of key questions and were given the opportunity to raise any particular issues or concerns in their Ward and the Licensing Manager responded to these at the Board meeting held on 26th October 2010. Members' main concerns had been whether mobile hot food takeaway vehicles met food hygiene regulations and disposed of waste appropriately and whether the fee structure was in line with other areas. The Licensing Manager confirmed that checks were made to ensure hygiene regulations were met prior to issuing Street Trading Consent and that the fee structure had been calculated by taking an average of the fees charged by all districts throughout Worcestershire.

➤ **Sports Provision Review**

A review of Sports Provision had been put forward by the Leader at the Chairmen's quarterly meeting with him and the topic had been agreed by the Scrutiny Board for inclusion in its Work Programme for 2010-11. The terms of reference for the investigation were "*to consider the value for money of sports provision and explore any potential savings, alternative options and improvements*". A comprehensive report was provided and the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services attended to respond to questions from Members.

Members considered the business aims and objectives for sports provision contained in the Service Business Plan 2009/10 and the Sports and Active Recreation Strategy 2009 to 2012 and how these linked to the Council priority CO3 (One Community). Members also considered the headline performance of Leisure and Cultural Services and sports services based on usage. The budget for sports provision, including details of revenue and capital spend and the need to develop the volunteering base in the community in the delivery of sports projects.

It was the view of the Board that the delivery of sports provision in Bromsgrove represented good value for money and was a valued and important part of facilities for the community, contributing to both community well being, leisure and healthy living.

➤ **Annual Civic Bonfire Event**

At the meeting held on 1st March 2011 the Board received a presentation from the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services which provided a summary of the financial position relating to the Civic Bonfire Event. Members were concerned about several areas but in particular that opportunity for sponsorship of the event was not being capitalised on and that not the entire district benefited from the event. These concerns were included within the three recommendations made by the Board together with a review of the Civic Bonfire Event in future years in the context of budget constraints.

DRAFT

REVIEWS OF PREVIOUS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY INVESTIGATIONS AND TASK GROUP REVIEWS

Older People Task Group

Background

At the meeting of the Overview Board held on 3rd February 2009, it was agreed that a Task Group be established to scrutinise issues relating to Older People. A press release was issued informing the public that the Task Group had been set up and members of the public were encouraged to submit their views, comments and suggestions for consideration by the Task Group.

The final report of the Task Group, which included 20 recommendations in total, was approved by the Board at its meeting on 2nd February 2010 and considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 3rd March 2010 when the Leader acknowledged the detailed work which had been undertaken by the Task Group together with the excellent quality of the final report. The recommendations were considered in detail by the Cabinet and approximate timescales for implementation of the recommendations, where appropriate were subsequently included in the response which was received by the Board at its meeting held on 30th March 2010.

Terms of Reference

The role of the Older People Task Group was:

- To carry out a scrutiny exercise to identify existing services and how they can be accessed.
- To identify any gaps and consider how they can be addressed or signposted to other agencies.
- To identify positive initiatives and make general recommendations for strengthening services offered for Older People and share best practice with partner agencies and the voluntary sector.
- To seek the view of statutory, voluntary and community organisations supporting older people services.

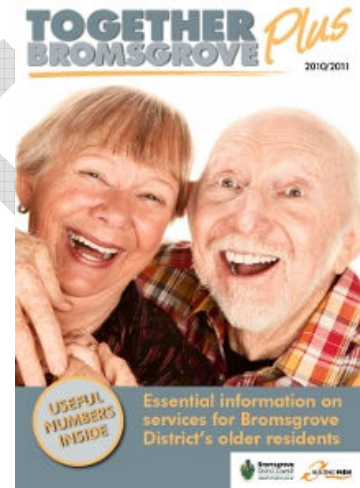
Position 12 months On

The Older People Task Group Members reconvened on 9th March 2011 to review what progress had been made over the past 12 months in relation to the recommendations that were approved. The Members of the Task Group felt that it would be helpful if further recommendations were put forward to the Board in order to enhance the work which had already been carried out. This included recommending that the Board included a review of Worcestershire County Council's Older People's Strategy to ensure that this included the views of people at district level and that the Council work more closely with the Older People's Forum on such

projects as a “mystery shopper” exercise specifically aimed at older people’s services.

The minutes of that meeting were considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board at the meeting held on 5th April 2011, when it was noted that the majority of the recommendations had been completed and that the additional recommendations be carried out.

One of the recommendations of the Task Group was the creation of an Older People’s Directory, this was successfully launched in October 2010.



Community Involvement in Local Democracy Task Group

Background

At the meeting of the Overview Board held on 3rd November 2009, it was agreed that a Task Group would be established to consider ways to improve community involvement in the democratic process and preparations for Democracy Year 2010-2011 following completion of a Scrutiny Proposal form by Councillor S. R. Colella.

The final report of the Task Group was approved by the Board at its meeting held on 1st June 2010 and considered by the Cabinet at its meeting held on 30th June 2010 when the 16 recommendations within the report were welcomed, and it was explained that some complemented and extended the work already being undertaken by officers from a number of departments within the Authority and in partnership with colleagues from Worcestershire County Council. Concern was however, expressed regarding the current and forthcoming programme of work to be carried out by officers and the potential impact of the additional recommendations.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, having discussed the proposals with the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services was satisfied that in the main, existing projects and programmes could be extended to include the recommendations from the Task Group and that the resources required were largely internal with officer time and activity able to be redirected.

Terms of Reference

To consider ways to improve community involvement in the democratic process and preparations for Democracy Year 2010-11, including the following objectives:

- To review the information provided to the local community on how local governance works and what councils and councillors do.
- To review the ways in which the Council and its community partners facilitate more active civic participation and community involvement in the democratic process.
- To review the ways in which the Council promotes local democracy, the role of a councillor, how to become a councillor and the activities of elected members to the general public.
- To review the arrangements for Democracy Year 2010-11.

Position 12 months On

At the Board meeting held on 5th April 2011 Members received a presentation from the Senior Corporate Policy and Performance Officer which highlighted the work that had been carried out in both Local Democracy Week and Democracy Year 2010/11, and which had formed a part of the recommendations put forward by the Community Involvement In Local Democracy Task Group in May 2010.

Local Democracy Week had been timed to lead into the local election and had brought together colleagues from different departments within the Council and external partners, with a particular focus on young people through schools, youth centres and the local college.

The majority of the recommendations from the Task Group had been successfully completed and the Board were informed that an evaluation of the activities which had taken place, would be carried out and those which had been most successful and had the most benefit to the Council would be built upon for future years and it was anticipated that a similar exercise, wherever possible, would be carried out in 2011/12 and 2012/13.

One of the Task Group's recommendations was that an emblem be designed for the Democracy Year campaign and for it to be used on all communications for the year.



JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION ON THE WORCESTERSHIRE HUB

Background

The Joint review of the Worcestershire Hub was launched in January 2010. The review was initiated by Worcestershire County Council (WCC) following a notice of motion in June 2009 which noted the increased frustration of residents attempting to access and obtain a response from the Worcestershire Hub. It was considered appropriate to undertake this review as a joint scrutiny exercise because the Worcestershire Hub was a shared service that was utilised by all the local authorities based in the county, though separate Hub branches operated in different parts of Worcestershire. Evidence hearings were held between January and July 2010 with 9 Task Group meetings and site visits.

Final Report and Recommendations

The former Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board received the final report on the Worcestershire Hub at its meeting held on 23rd November 2010. The report outlined the review of the Worcestershire Hub and made 22 recommendations to WCC Cabinet, including some which related to the County's statutory partners, including BDC. The report was received by WCC Cabinet on 25th November 2010.

Lessons Learnt re: Joint Overview and Scrutiny Working

At the meeting of the Board held on 23rd November 2010 Members discussed concerns around the process for the consideration of joint scrutiny reports. It was explained that through both the Worcestershire Scrutiny Officers Network and the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen's Network a Joint Scrutiny Protocol was being devised. However, in itself this was proving to be a long drawn out process. It was not clear what process was expected by WCC in this case as no process had been provided or was available.

The Governance of the Worcestershire Hub was very complicated and there had been some confusion amongst Members of the Task Group throughout the process, which had been very difficult in itself as there had been problems in obtaining key information and some of the Members of the Task Group were in fact Members of the Hub Shared Services Governance Board, which appeared to be a conflict of interest. The Board felt that, as a joint scrutiny, the process should not be followed again in the future.

CURRENT AND FUTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK

Topics already included on the Board's work programme for 2011/12 are as follows:

- The Corporate Safeguarding Policy (Children and Vulnerable Adults)
- Alcohol and Anti-Social Behaviour
- Shared Services
- Joint Scrutiny in Worcestershire
- Continued Scrutiny of Crime and Disorder

The following are standard items which are reviewed at regular intervals by the new Overview and Scrutiny Board and scheduled into the work programme for 2011/12:

- Quarterly Recommendation Tracker
- Forward Plan of Key Decisions
- Council Plan
- Council Annual Report
- Sustainable Community Strategy
- Sustainable Community Strategy Annual Report
- Performance Management Strategy
- Quarterly Finance and Performance Monitoring Report

DEVELOPMENTS DURING 2011/12

Overview and Scrutiny Structure

Although it is early days for the changes to the Overview and Scrutiny structure, the signs to date are very positive and the streamlining of the Boards has resolved an area which was often problematic, that of deciding which areas were scrutiny and those which were deemed to be overview.

It has also given Members the opportunity to rationalise processes, such as that of Task Groups and to introduce formal guidelines for “short, sharp inquiries”, which had proved a successful investigation process previously.

Work continuing

Examples of work which will continue during 2011/12 are:

- Specific **scrutiny training events** for Overview and Scrutiny
- **Improved Call-In Procedure** and Guidance for Members (this is reviewed by the Board annually).
- **Dedicated web pages** for Overview and Scrutiny informing the public what it is all about and how to get involved. It also includes work completed and ongoing and is updated on a regular basis. (Go to www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/scrutiny) Following the changes to the Board the web pages will receive a full review in May/June 2011.
- **Dedicated email address** for scrutiny for the public to use: scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk
- **Joint overview and scrutiny working** with other local authorities (e.g. the Worcestershire Hub Scrutiny).
- Good **partnership working** with various agencies who have provided evidence and/or attended meetings as a witness at the Overview and Scrutiny Board.
- After the Cabinet has considered an Overview and Scrutiny Report, the relevant Portfolio Holder attends the next available Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting to present the **Cabinet’s Response** and answer any questions to help build the relationship between Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny.
- The **Overview and Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker** has been modified in order to provide more outcome based information and to better enable the Board to monitor the implementation of Cabinet approved recommendations.

- Members participation within the **Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen Worcestershire Network**. This gives Members a chance to find out what other Overview and Scrutiny Committees are doing at neighbouring authorities and we are looking to continue this in 2011/12.
- Officer participation within the **Scrutiny Officer Worcestershire Network**. This gives scrutiny officers across the County the opportunity to work together to discuss good practice and different ways of working to help us improve.

DRAFT

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

New Legislation

The Localism Bill 2010-11

The Localism Bill was presented to Parliament on 13th December 2010; the Bill had its Second Reading debate on 17th January 2011 and was committed to a Public Bill Committee, and continues to be considered in this arena. It proposes changes to a large number of aspects of local public service provision and in particular greater flexibility in council governance arrangements.

Specific provisions relating to overview and scrutiny can be found in Schedule 2 of the Bill. The Bill seeks to consolidate a wide range of scrutiny legislation into a single place (although provisions relating to crime and disorder remain in the Police and Justice Act 2006). It will replace the relevant provisions in the 2000 Act in full.

The Public Health White Paper

The Public Health White Paper 'Health Live, Healthy People: Our Strategy for Public Health in England' was published on 30th November 2010 followed by consultations on the funding and commissioning routes for public health and the public health outcomes framework. The consultations run until March 2011 and Worcestershire County Council are already beginning to consider its expanding role in public health and the key role that District Councils could play within that.

Final Word

It is important that it is understood that scrutiny is an essential element of good governance and provides an opportunity for non-Cabinet Members to engage in the work of the Council and help improve outcomes for the people we serve.

There are a lot of good procedures which are now in place for overview and scrutiny and these will be reviewed on a regular basis, particularly in light of new legislation. However, we still have much to do to ensure overview and scrutiny is operating effectively at Bromsgrove District Council and both Members and officers are committed to strengthening and improving the overview and scrutiny function much further.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Overview and Scrutiny Board Meetings

Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings are open to the public. To find out more visit our website at www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/scrutiny or telephone 01527 881288 and ask to speak to the Committee Services Officer.

Public Involvement

If you would like to have your say on issues being considered by Overview and Scrutiny or to suggest a topic for consideration you can email scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk or complete the form on the Council's website www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/scrutiny

Giving Evidence

Members of the public or organisations with a special interest or knowledge about a particular topic being considered by Overview and Scrutiny can put forward evidence to a committee or appear as a witness to give evidence for an investigation. If you think you or your organisation might be able to participate in an issue currently under review, please contact us.

If you have a personal issue with a council service you may find it more useful to contact your local ward councillor who can help you decide the best way to take it forward.

Contact Overview and Scrutiny

If you would like to find out more about any aspect of the Overview and Scrutiny Board then you can email scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk or telephone 01527 881288 and ask to speak to the Committee Services Officer.

Further information can also be found on the Council's website. Please go to www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/scrutiny

**Overview and Scrutiny
Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Bromsgrove District Council
The Council House
Burcot Lane
Bromsgrove B60 1AA**



**This report can be provided
in large print, braille, CD, audio tape
and computer disc.**

"Need help with English?" Contact Worcestershire HUB, Bromsgrove 01527 881288

'Potrzebujesz pomocy z angielskim?' Skontaktuj się z Worcestershire HUB, Bromsgrove, tel.: 01527 881288

"İngilizce için yardıma ihtiyacınız var mı?" 01527 881288 numarayı arayıp Worcestershire HUB, Bromsgrove ile irtibata geçin

"ইংরাজির জন্য সাহায্য চাই ?" 01527 881288 নম্বরে উস্টাশায়ার হাব [HUB] ব্রমস্‌গ্রভ [Bromsgrove]-এ টেলিফোন করুন

"ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਵਿਚ ਮੱਦਦ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ?" ਵੁਰਸੈਸਟਰਸ਼ਾਇਰ ਹੱਬ [HUB] ਨੂੰ ਬਰੋਮਸਗ੍ਰੋ [Bromsgrove] ਵਿਖੇ 01527 881288 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ

"انگریزی میں مدد چاہتے ہیں؟" ورسیسٹر شائر ہب [HUB]، برومزگرو [Bromsgrove] میں 01527 881288 پر رابطہ کریں



**Bromsgrove
District Council**

www.bromsgrove.gov.uk



Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services

Bromsgrove District Council, The Council House, Burcot Lane, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B60 1AA.

Telephone: (01527) 881288, Fax: (01527) 881414, DX: 17279 Bromsgrove

e-mail: scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk