

DRAFT

Annual Report 2010/11

Chair's Foreword



**Chair of the Committee:
Councillor Diane Thomas**

I am proud to report that Overview and Scrutiny in Redditch has made real progress this year.

The areas of weakness that were identified in last year's annual report have all been addressed during the year. This has included making changes to the Portfolio Holder Annual Report process, changes to budget scrutiny and increasing public engagement in scrutiny. Also, for the first time this year Short, Sharp Reviews have taken place in Redditch and these have provided Councillors with an opportunity to identify solutions to local problems in a small space of time.

Scrutiny is important, not only for holding the Executive Committee to account but also as a way to improve and develop policies. Through scrutiny Councillors can check what is working well as well as what is not working so well at both the Council and in the wider community.

I would like to thank all the members of the Committee and of the various review groups for their hard work this year. I would also like to thank all the expert witnesses who have attended meetings and provided evidence for their input. Without their help scrutiny would not work well.

I remain convinced that Overview and Scrutiny is more effective than the old Committee system because it allows Councillors to get to the heart of the matter. I therefore hope that the Council and my fellow Councillors will continue to take scrutiny forward in future years.

Councillor Diane Thomas, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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Annual Report 2010/11

Introduction

There is an annual requirement for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to produce a report outlining its work and achievements during the previous year. The report also contains information about the reviews that have been undertaken by Task and Finish Groups, Short Sharp Review Groups and the work of the new Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel.

The Annual Report provides an opportunity for Members to consider future work programmes and amended working methods. The report also reflects on the measures that have been taken to address the areas that were identified as potential weaknesses in the previous Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report.





Recommendations about how to further improve the Overview and Scrutiny process in future years have been incorporated into this document. These recommendations have been developed via a process of consultation with the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and relevant Officers.

Significantly, for the first time the strengths of the Overview and Scrutiny process in Redditch were recognised in the Centre for Public Scrutiny's (CfPS) Good Scrutiny Awards 2010. Redditch Borough Council was awarded a commendation for a review of the Neighbourhood Groups conducted the previous year.

This report has been produced by the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officers in conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Members, particularly the Chair of the Committee.

Four Key Principles of Scrutiny

Members at Redditch Borough Council aim to ensure that the Overview and Scrutiny process complies with the four key principles of scrutiny identified by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), the organisation set up to promote effective scrutiny in local government. The four key principles of effective scrutiny are:

-  to provide a critical friend challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers;
-  to enable the voice and concerns of the public and its communities;
-  for scrutiny to be carried out by independent minded governors who lead and own the scrutiny process; and
-  to drive improvement in public services.

These symbols will feature, where relevant, throughout the report to demonstrate how the Overview and Scrutiny process at Redditch Borough Council has complied with these four principles during the year 2009/10.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Membership 2010/11

Councillor Diane Thomas (Chair)

Councillor Anita Clayton (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Peter Anderson (from August 2010) Kath Banks (until August 2010), Bill Hartnett, Robin King, William Norton, Brenda Quinney, Mark Shurmer and Graham Vickery.

Commissioning Body Role

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Redditch Borough Council is designed to act as a commissioning body. The Committee has the power to authorise policy reviews and to scrutinise issues of local interest in depth.



This year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has commissioned a number of strategic reviews that have been conducted by Task and Finish Groups. It has also undertaken a number of shorter reviews at the Committee level over a series of meetings.

There are nine members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee meets approximately every three weeks, convening a week after a meeting of the Executive Committee. This provides Members with an opportunity to monitor the work of the Executive and to ensure that decision-making processes remain transparent and accountable.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Baroness Sally Hamwee presents the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Diane Thomas, and Jess Bayley, Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer, with a certificate of commendation during the Good Scrutiny Awards event in 2010.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

CfPS Good Scrutiny Awards



This year Redditch Borough Council received a commendation in the CfPS Good Scrutiny Awards 2010. This was the first time that Redditch Borough Council had received recognition in the Good Scrutiny Awards process. Redditch Borough Council was one of only two Councils based in the West Midlands to be short listed for an award.

The Council was short listed for a Community Influence award for a review of the Neighbourhood Groups that was completed in 2009. The review had involved a significant amount of consultation with approximately 1,650 members of the public, though had also required Councillors to work closely with partners in the West Mercia Police Force and Worcestershire County Councillors.

“This review impressed with highly motivated scrutiny members instigating a short, powerful and valuable piece of work which aimed to bring the public closer to the Council” (CfPS, June 2010).

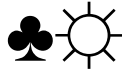
Further Recognition



The Council’s success in the Good Scrutiny Awards attracted wider interest from other local authorities keen to learn about best practice in Overview and Scrutiny. Indeed, in October 2010 Councillors from Stratford District Council visited Redditch Borough Council to interview Redditch Councillors and to observe a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in action.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Work Programme Planning Event 2010



In July 2010 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee organised a Work Programme Planning Event.

The purpose of the event was to provide Members with an opportunity to consider and develop the scrutiny work programme for 2010/11. The event also provided Councillors with an opportunity to propose actions that could be taken to resolve problems that had been identified in previous years: budget scrutiny; the Portfolio Holder Annual Report process and public awareness of scrutiny.

14 Councillors, both scrutiny members and members of the Council's Executive Committee attended the event. All Councillor participated in a series of interactive group activities.

At the end of the event 17 topics had been proposed as potentially suitable for review. This included the suggestion that work experience opportunities available to young people living in the Borough should be scrutinised and a proposal to review appropriate ways to more effectively market Redditch. These topics have both been the subject of detailed Task and finish reviews during the course of the year.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Work Programme Planning Event 2010



Councillor Kath Banks delivers a presentation for the consideration of other councillors during the Work Programme Planning Event.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Pre-Scrutiny

Pre-scrutiny is a process whereby Overview and Scrutiny Members review subjects or reports prior to their consideration by the Executive Committee or full Council.



This year the following areas have been subject to pre-scrutiny:

- Business Centres (June 2010)
- REDI Centre Options (July 2010)
- Older Persons Housing Strategy (July 2010)
- Joint Climate Change Strategy (August 2010)
- Sub Regional Choice Based Lettings (September 2010)
- Arrow Valley Countryside Centre (September 2010)
- Pitcheroak Golf Course – Operational Options (September 2010)
- Council Plan 2011-14 (October 2010 and March 2011)
- Dial-a-Ride (October 2010)
- Garden Waste Collection (October 2010)
- Campaign to discourage dog fouling (November 2010)
- Sustainable Community Strategy (February 2011)
- Children and Young People’s Plan (March 2011)

Unfortunately, Councillors have expressed some frustration with their ability to influence Executive decision making through pre-scrutiny this year. The timing of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings the week after Executive Committee meetings has been unfortunate in this respect. Many reports due for consideration

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Pre-Scrutiny



Councillor Peter Anderson at an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting, February 2011

by the Executive have been inaccessible to scrutiny because the Committee have been meeting in advance of the completion of draft reports. It is anticipated that changes to the Committee meeting cycle from 2011/12, whereby the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will meet a week before the Executive Committee, should help to resolve these difficulties.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Portfolio Holder Annual Reports



During the year the six Portfolio Holders that sit on the Council's Executive Committee were invited to present their Annual Reports before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The objective of this exercise was to ensure that the decision making process was transparent and democratically accountable. This arrangement also enabled the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide a critical friend challenge to the Executive Committee.

This year the Portfolio Holder Annual Report process was altered slightly, after concerns were expressed in that the process did not hold the Portfolio Holders effectively to account in 2009/10. To address this problem the Annual Report process has been delivered in two stages in 2010/11. A written report has been produced outlining the performance of each of the services within the remit of each Portfolio Holder. A series of questions have then been proposed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, based on the content of the written report, for the Portfolio Holder to address in his / her Annual Report at the following meeting of the Committee.

The feedback received from both members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Portfolio Holder's about this new arrangement has been largely positive to date. There has been general agreement that the process is much more rigorous than in previous years and helping to hold Executive Portfolio Holders to account. However, there is always the potential for improvement and attempts will be made to continue to develop the process in future years.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Portfolio Holder Annual Reports



Councillor Gandy, Portfolio Holder for Community Leadership and Partnership delivered her Annual Report for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2011. Seated at the table during the course of this presentation are (from left to right) Jayne Pickering, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources, Councillor Gandy, Matthew Bough, Housing Policy Manager and Elise Hopkins, Housing Options Manager.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Budget scrutiny



This year the Committee's process for budget scrutiny was significantly expanded. Central to this was the undertaking of the inaugural Budget Scrutiny Workshop in November 2010 that enabled Committee Members to question each of the responsible Portfolio Holders and relevant senior Officers on the Council's budget plans on a one-to-one basis and to receive direct feedback.

The general consensus from Members was that the Workshop represented an improvement on budget scrutiny in previous years and would be worth revisiting in the future. Members also made a number of suggestions for improvement to help make future workshops more effective and inclusive.

The Committee was also presented with the opportunity to review the position of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan 2011-14 and to recommend changes on the draft budget proposals, enabling the Committee to have a real input into the budget setting process. The Committee has expressed an interest in reviewing the Council's fees and charges policies for forthcoming years.

These initiatives have built upon the Committee's existing practices for budget scrutiny, including receiving and considering quarterly budget and performance monitoring reports from each of the Council's Directorates. Going forward, the Committee is expected to build upon the progress it had made during 2011/12 for budget scrutiny and to draw upon the lessons learned to help make budget scrutiny a more effective process.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Public Engagement with Scrutiny



Promotion of the Overview and Scrutiny process to the public and the Council's partner organisations was identified within the Committee's previous Annual Report as an area for further work.

A review into how the Committee's arrangements for facilitating public engagement compared with that of other local authorities was consequently undertaken. This found that the Committee's own arrangements was broadly consistent with those held by the 15 local authorities across the country that were researched for the purposes of the study. The study satisfied Members that the Committee's own arrangements were sufficient in promoting its scrutiny process to the public and Council's partner organisations.

Meetings of the Committee during 2010/11 have attracted a one hundred per cent increase in public attendance compared to the previous municipal year. This could be largely attributed to public interest in specific items considered by the Committee.

The Committee has also received increased media interest in its work during the course of the year. This has been reflected by regular press attendance at Committee meetings and articles on Committee business often appearing in local media publications.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Petitions



This year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee assumed responsibility for considering certain types of petitions which enhanced the potential for Councillors to focus on issues that matter to the local community.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for considering any petitions that have received between 10 and 399 signatures as well as petitions calling a senior Officer to account that has received 200 or more signatures. The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to monitor relevant procedures pertaining to the subject of the petition and to make any recommendations considered appropriate.

The Committee received three petitions during the course of 2010/11. The first of these petitions related to concerns about anti-social behaviour in Lowlands Lane Park in Winyates. Based on the evidence provided during the course of a Committee meeting Councillors recommended that a multi-agency approach should be adopted to resolve the problems in the park.

Two petitions were received which requested action in relation to housing allocations processes. These petitions contained confidential information relating to the particular circumstances of Council housing tenants. These petitions presented greater challenges as established housing allocations processes and relevant legislation ultimately determined the outcome of these petitions.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Petitions (cont)

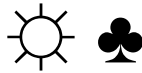


Lessons have been learned during the year regarding scrutiny of petitions. The Committee recognises that appropriate arrangements need to be in place at every scrutiny Committee meeting to ensure that petitioners feel comfortable when presenting their petition. Frequently, lead petitioners will not be familiar with Committee processes and may find the environment intimidating. Every attempt should therefore be made to accommodate the needs of the lead petitioner and to ensure that the role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to considering petitions is clearly understood.

Based on experiences during the year alterations have also been made to the Council's petitions process. From 2011/12 onwards the Committee will no longer be required to consider petitions relating to issues that are the subject of pre-existing procedures, particular individuals or other confidential business. This should ensure that in future the majority of petitions received by the committee can be considered in public and result in recommendations that will have a positive impact on the local community.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monitoring responses to scrutiny recommendations



The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for monitoring the implementation of approved scrutiny recommendations. During the course of 2010/11 the Committee monitored implementation of recommendations that had been made by four separate Task and Finish Groups between 2008 and 2009.

Firstly, the Fees and Charges Task and Finish Group produced a Charging Policy for the Council which was approved in 2008. It was intended that this Charging Policy would direct the Council's fees and charges setting process from 2009/10. Following the introduction of the Policy the fees and charges levied by the Council for particular services had been reviewed by the Executive Fees and Charges Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee had proposed significant changes to charging arrangements, particularly for Leisure Services. Furthermore, charges had been introduced for a number of services, which had either previously been free at the point of delivery or were new services. The Council had also worked with Deloitte to compare the fees and charges levied by the Council with the fees charged for similar services delivered by other local authorities.

Secondly, many of the Council Flat Communal Cleaning Task and Finish Group's recommendations, published in 2009, were monitored during the year. The Group was advised that action had been taken to implement a number of the recommendations, and as such air fresher dispensers had been installed in stairwells and no smoking signs secured in appropriate locations in Council properties. A second monitoring stage for this review, pertaining to the Council's cleaning contract,

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monitoring responses to scrutiny recommendations (cont)



is due to take place in April 2011. The monitoring arrangements were divided in this fashion because, whilst some actions could be implemented relatively quickly, changes to the Council's standard cleaning arrangements could only be undertaken following renegotiation of the contract in early 2011.

In the third place, the implementation of the Neighbourhood Groups Task and Finish Group's recommendations was monitored in 2010. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was advised that the main proposal from Councillors, that the Neighbourhood Groups should be disbanded, had been enforced by the Council. Members of the public had been advised about the changes and about alternative PACT (Partners and Communities Together) arrangements that residents could participate in and use to raise concerns and matters of interest.

Finally, the Committee monitored the outcome of actions that had been taken in response to the National Angling Museum Task and Finish exercise that took place in 2009. Councillors were advised that an exhibition of fishing tackle had taken place at Forge Mill Needle Museum in October – November 2010. Unfortunately, this had not been well attended, indicating that there was a limited level of interest amongst residents and the wider public in a bespoke angling museum. However, whilst an angling competition had not taken place in the Borough at the same time as the exhibition as requested, due to concerns that this was not the most appropriate time to participate in fishing activities, it was anticipated that this competition could take place in due course and might attract considerable public interest.

Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel

Chair's Foreword



**Chair of the Panel:
Councillor Bill Hartnett**

The Panel has responded well to what has been a challenging first full year of our existence. We have developed and implemented a process that has enabled the Panel to deliver on our core function of scrutinising the Community Safety Partnership, the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP). The Panel has also been successfully integrated into the Council process and has seen all of our recommendations approved.

The Panel has commented on a range of issues and has received a number of informative and interesting presentations relating to community safety. This has enabled the Panel to play a part in raising the local profile and widen the debate on a number of very important issues, including on alcohol related hospital admissions and on the causes and consequences of violence against women. We have also been able to respond in detail to governments' consultation papers which fell within our remit.

A core Panel membership from within and outside the council has been established, whilst the Panel also regularly attracts attendees (from the magistrates and Police) on our invitation list. Local media has also been in attendance and has reported on our activities.

I would like to conclude by thanking other Panel Members for their hard work during the course of the year, expert witnesses for helpfully accommodating our requests for information, and to Officers for their professional support and timely advice. I look forward to progress the positive start the Panel has made during 2011/12.

Councillor Bill Hartnett, Chair of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel.

Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel

Membership 2010/11

Background



Councillor W Hartnett (Chair)

Councillors S Chalk, A Clayton, R Hill (from January 2011) and W King.

The Police and Justice Act 2006 required every local authority in England and Wales from April 2009 to have a designated Committee with the responsibility for scrutinising the work of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP). This legislation was designed to provide local Councillors with a more enhanced role in relation to the work of CDRPs. CDRPs are statutory bodies which have a significant remit covering: crime and disorder matters; anti-social behaviour and community safety.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered possible arrangements for scrutinising the Redditch Community Safety Partnership, the local CDRP, in 2009. The Committee agreed that it would not be appropriate for this work to be undertaken by them because the Committee's Work Programme was already extensive and would not provide Members with an opportunity to devote sufficient time and resources to crime and disorder scrutiny. The Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel was therefore established. Members concurred that this would provide an opportunity for a group of non-executive Councillors to develop expertise in relation to both a complex subject and partnership scrutiny.

Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel

Terms of Reference



The Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel has been established as a Sub-Committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Chair of the Panel is a member of the Committee. The Chair is required to deliver regular updates on the work of the Panel at meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure that the Panel is held to account. The Panel is scheduled to meet four times per year, though may hold additional meetings when required.

In accordance with guidance issued by the Home Office the Panel will be scrutinising the work of the Redditch Community Safety Partnership, not the work of individual partner organisations. The Panel will be required to forward draft policy review reports to relevant partner organisations prior to publication to ensure that any misinterpretations and questions can be raised before the report is published. The Panel will forward copies of reports and recommendations directly for the consideration of the Community Safety Partnership.

The Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel has a number of roles and responsibilities which include:

- commissioning policy reviews from Task and Finish Groups;
- scrutinising the performance of the partnership and recommending actions for improvement;
- acting as a critical friend to the partnership;
- identifying and promoting areas of good practice;

Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel

Terms of Reference



- helping to promote examples of positive work undertaken by the Redditch Community Safety Partnership;
- consulting with residents to identify crime and disorder priorities for the local area;
- identifying and challenging people's perceptions of crime and disorder in the local area; and
- considering any crime and disorder related CCfAs.

Work Programme



This year the Panel has considered the following items:

- minutes from meetings of the Redditch Community Safety Partnership's Strategic Board;
- the Redditch Community Safety Plan;
- a summary of the Annual Strategic Assessment, which informs the contents of the Community Safety Plan;
- the possible establishment of a Sexual Assault Referral Centre in Worcestershire
- Policing White Paper – Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting Police and the People
- the causes and consequences of violence against women and girls
- alcohol related hospital admissions

Task and Finish Groups

Task and Finish Groups



This year a number of Task and Finish Reviews and Short, Sharp Review Groups were commissioned or completed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Each Group was chaired by a member of the Committee and completed in accordance with terms of reference provided by the Committee.

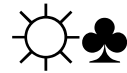
Task and Finish Groups review subjects in detail and often scrutinise documentation, interview expert witnesses and undertake site visits to observe practices in action. These reviews provide non-executive Councillors, who have not been appointed to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with an opportunity to participate in the scrutiny process.

Short, Sharp Reviews have also been commissioned by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee this year. The benefits of a Short, Sharp Review are that Councillors can assess an issue and propose recommendations to resolve any problems in a relatively short space of time. There is the potential to complete many more Short, Sharp Reviews in future years. However, there are also some challenges presented by Short, Sharp Reviews. In particular, Councillors and Officers need to be prepared to provide and assess information in a short space of time and must be available to meet frequently in order to complete reviews according to schedule.

A flexible approach to working and willingness to prioritise the reviews should help Councillors to address these challenges in future years.

Task and Finish Groups

Task and Finish Groups



Councillors discussed suitable topics for review during the course of the Scrutiny Work Programme Planning event in July 2010. Featured at this table are (from left to right) Councillor Robin King, Councillor Carole Gandy, Leader of the Council, Councillor Anita Clayton, Vice chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Andrew Brazier and Councillor Mike Chalk.

Task and Finish Groups

Dial-a-Ride Task and Finish Group: Completed Review



Membership 2010/11

**Councillor Robin King (Chair)
Councillors, Anita Clayton, William Norton and Graham Vickery.**

The Dial-a-Ride Task and Finish review was launched in April 2009. The Group was established to: determine the Council's collective long term vision for the service; assess the current framework and parameters of the service; undertake a value for money audit of the service; review the framework and indicators used to monitor the performance of the service; and investigate and recommend ideas for delivering the service at the most efficient cost to the Council.

During the course of the exercise an Officer-led review of the Dial-a-Ride service was undertaken at the Council. The conclusions that were reached in this review were scrutinised by the Group and formed the basis for the Group's final recommendations.

The Group were keen to ensure that Dial-a-Ride remained in operation, having recognised that the service was invaluable for many customers. To reduce the financial costs without impacting on the quality of the service the Group suggested that further consideration should be given to arrangements for both the continuing use of the existing fleet of Dial-a-Ride vehicles as well as fleet replacement. In addition, the Group urged the Council to set the fee for each journey at a level that would not require those customers to identify a significant amount of small as this was considered to be more convenient for the customer.

Task and Finish Groups

External Refurbishment of Housing Stock Short, Sharp Review: Completed Review



Membership 2010/11

**Councillor Graham Vickery (Chair)
Councillor William Norton.**

The short, sharp review of the external refurbishment of housing stock was completed in October 2010. The review focused on the external condition of Council houses in the Borough and actions that could be taken to improve the appearance of these houses. The Group were concerned that when the exterior appearance of houses, garages and local amenities was unappealing this could have a negative impact on residents' aspirations and community pride.

As part of the process a walkabout was conducted in Woodrow. However, whilst some of the recommendations related specifically to the conditions of the housing stock in Woodrow many of the Group's recommendations applied more generally to Council housing estates located in other parts of the Borough.

The majority of the Group's recommendations were approved by the Council's Executive Committee in November 2010. Indeed, the Executive Committee praised the Group's work and requested further work from relevant Officers to enable the Council to address some of the barriers that prevented immediate delivery of a couple of the requested actions.

Task and Finish Groups

**External
Refurbishment of
Housing Stock Short,
Sharp Review :
Completed Review**



Councillors identified a number of disused garages located in Wishaw Close during the walkabout in Woodrow on 6th October (right).



The brown garage doors, stain on the rear wall, and concrete retaining wall to the rear of 1-12 Martley Close were considered to present an unappealing view to local residents (left).

Task and Finish Groups

Local Strategic Partnership Task and Finish Group: Completed Review



Membership 2010/11

Councillor W Norton (Chair)

Councillors J Cookson, A Fry, G Hopkins and D Thomas.

The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Task and Finish review was completed in August 2010, although the Group presented an interim report detailing a number of recommendations for the consideration of the Executive Committee on 31st March. This initial report contained proposals relating to the accountability of the partnership and measures that could be utilised to improve public engagement with the LSP.

The final report was presented for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in August 2010. This report contained a series of recommendations relating to monitoring the performance of the partnership and actions that could be taken to improve the operation of the Partnership. Every recommendation apart from one proposed by the Group was approved by the Council's Executive Committee and the Redditch Partnership.

The Group concluded that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had an important role to play in relation holding the Partnership to account. The Committee was also allocated a role for both pre-scrutinising the Redditch Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and monitoring the impact of the strategy during implementation.

Task and Finish Groups

Joint Worcestershire Hub Task and Finish Group: Completed Review



**Redditch Borough Council's representatives:
Councillor Gay Hopkins (Until August 2010)
Councillor Roger Hill (From August 2010).**

The Joint review of the Worcestershire Hub was launched in January 2010. The review was initiated by Worcestershire County Council following a notice of motion in June 2009 which noted the increasing 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 is a shared service that is utilised by all the local authorities based in the county, though separate Hub branches operate in different parts of Worcestershire.

The Group completed their review in November 2010 and proposed that a number of actions be taken to improve the performance of the Worcestershire Hub in future years. The Redditch Overview and Scrutiny Committee submitted evidence for the consideration of the Group as part of the process and Councillors were pleased to learn that their suggestions had been taken into account as part of the review.

Unfortunately, members had some concerns about the review, particularly the number of recommendations that had been presented and the potential to monitor these recommendations. However, the Committee was pleased to observe that many of the actions proposed were already being implemented by the Hub in Redditch and it should be possible to implement any further changes as suggested.

Task and Finish Groups

**Promoting Redditch
Task and Finish
Group:
Completed Review**



The Arrow Valley Park has been identified as one of the Unique Selling Points of Redditch by the Promoting Redditch Task and Finish Group.

Task and Finish Groups

Promoting Redditch Task and Finish Group: Completed Review



**Councillor Graham Vickery (Chair).
Councillors Andy Fry, Brenda Quinney and Derek Taylor**

The Promoting Redditch Task and Finish Review was completed in March 2011. The objectives of the review were: to assess the outcomes of the Redditch It's My Place Pride Campaign, scrutinise current approaches to promoting Redditch, identify the strengths that created a positive image of the town as well as the weaknesses that encouraged a negative impression of the town; to assess the appearance of the Borough; to identify at least three key themes to promote in relation to Redditch; and to identify the town's unique selling point (USPs).

The review was short but focused. Evidence was gathered from a variety of sources including: business representatives; tourism and marketing experts; relevant partnership representatives; other local authorities; local students; community representatives; Borough Councillors and Council Officers.

The Group has proposed a number of ways in which the profile of the town could be better promoted. In particular, the Group is suggesting that the Arrow Valley Park and shopping facilities available in the town should be promoted as USPs to leisure tourists and that the Council should focus on promoting the town and leisure attractions to families. The Councillors have also concluded that Redditch has a separate USP which appeals to businesses: the central location of the town.

Task and Finish Groups

Gritting Short, Sharp Review: Ongoing Review



**Councillor Graham Vickery (Chair).
Councillors Simon Chalk, Roger Hill and Robin King.**

The Gritting Short, Sharp Review was launched in February 2011. The review was launched following a period of inclement weather in Redditch in the winter of 2010/11 which impacted on the road conditions in the Borough.

Gritting formed the basis of a scrutiny exercise at Worcestershire County Council in 2010 and a number of recommendations were reached as a result of this review. The Short, Sharp Review will focus on the implementation of these recommendations in Redditch, residents experiences during the recent inclement weather and whether any further changes need to be made to ensure that road conditions within the Borough remain safe during future winter periods.

The Group has recognised that it is likely that this subject will be of interest to local residents. The Group is therefore intending to consult with local residents during the review.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was keen to ensure that this review be completed relatively quickly so that any findings and recommendations can be considered by Worcestershire County Council's Highways Department and lessons can be learned prior to next winter.

Task and Finish Groups

Work Experience Opportunities Task and Finish Group: Ongoing Review



**Councillor Peter Anderson (Chair).
Councillors Andrew Brazier (from January 2011) Andy Fry, William Norton
(Until January 2011) and Mark Shurmer.**

The Work Experience Opportunities Task and Finish Group was launched in September 2010. The review was precipitated by concern that Redditch possessed a disproportionately high number of young people aged between 16 and 18 who are neither in education, employment, nor training (NEET). Concerns existed that this problem would exacerbate during the current economic climate unless appropriate action was taken.

In her role of Portfolio Holder for Community Leadership and Partnerships, Councillor Carole Gandy met with young people who were classified as NEET and was informed that the creation of more opportunities to undertake work experience might significantly improve their prospects of re-entering education, employment, or training.

The Group subsequent set out to review the current provision of work experience placements in Redditch and how this is administered at the County level. The Group has met with a range of expert witnesses which will help inform the development of the Group's final recommendations for how to increase opportunities for young people to undertake work experience placements.

The Group is due to conclude its review in May 2011.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Member development and Training



Members and Officers have attended the following scrutiny related training courses and conferences outside the Borough in 2010/11

- CfPS Conference 2010 – attended by Councillor Diane Thomas, Jess Bayley, Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer and Steve Skinner, Democratic Services Manager.
- CfPS Induction for Chairs – attended by Councillors Diane Thomas and Anita Clayton.
- Worcestershire County Council, Learning Curve Scrutiny Skills – attended by Councillors Peter Anderson, Kath Banks, Mark Shurmer and Diane Thomas and Michael Craggs, Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer.
- CfPS Conference, the Future of Overview and Scrutiny – attended by Councillor Brenda Quinney.
- CfPS Parliamentary Seminar, Live Select Committee – attended by Councillors Andrew Brazier and Graham Vickery.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Member Development and Training



Training was also delivered at Redditch Borough Council. This included:

- Making a Difference Through Scrutiny, training delivered by Mr David McGrath (June 2010). This training exercise encompassed training on the subject of Call-in as requested by Members the previous year and was attended by 11 Councillors including every member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- An Introduction to Scrutiny (June 2010, delivered by Jess Bayley, Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer). 13 Members attended this training, including each of the 6 new Councillors who were elected in May 2010.
- Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Training (June 2010, delivered by Jess Bayley and Angie Heighway, Head of Community Services). Five Councillors attended this training event and every member of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel has received Crime and Disorder Scrutiny training.
- Work Programme Planning event (July 2010) attended by 14 Councillors.

Further training relating to Overview and Scrutiny could be delivered by Officers internally at the request of Members.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Member development and Training



Featured on the top table during this training event are (from left to right) Ivor Westmore, Member and Committee Support Services Manager, Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services, Jess Bayley, Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer, Councillor Diane Thomas, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Anita Clayton, Vice-Chair of the Committee.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Outcome of recommendations 2010/11



During the course of the 2010/11 year (up to and including its meeting on 9th February 2011), the Committee made forty-six recommendations to the Executive. Thirty-seven recommendations were approved, six declined, while three remain pending.

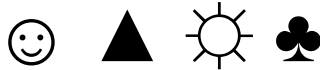
In terms of pre-scrutiny recommendations, nine of the Committees recommendations were approved by the Executive, while five were declined.

In terms of the recommendations emerging from task and finish group reviews, sixteen recommendations were approved, one was declined, while three remain pending.

Fourteen draft recommendations from the Promoting Redditch Task and Finish Group remain to be considered.

Conclusion

Scrutiny in the future



The Committee feels that this year it has undertaken some very thorough reviews and has made a significant number of recommendations to the Executive Committee.

The Committee is becoming more effective at: undertaking policy reviews and contributing to policy development; holding partners to account; and conducting short sharp reviews at the Committee level. However, the Committee recognises that there are still areas of scrutiny that could be developed and improved.

During the coming year, Members and Officers have identified the following issues for further work:

- consideration of petitions;
- constructive pre-scrutiny of reports prior to consideration by the Executive Committee; and
- ensuring that budget scrutiny is more inclusive.

Membership Gallery

Chair and Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee



**Councillor Diane Thomas, Chair
of the Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**



**Councillor Anita Clayton,
Vice-Chair of the Overview and
Scrutiny Committee**

Membership Gallery



**Councillor Peter
Anderson**



**Councillor Bill
Hartnett**



**Councillor Robin
King**



**Councillor William
Norton**



**Councillor Brenda
Quinney**



**Councillor Mark
Quinney**



**Councillor Graham
Vickery**

Expressions of Gratitude

Expert Witnesses

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would like to thank the following expert witnesses for their contributions during the year:

Wayne Arthur, Worcestershire County Council;
Andy Baker, Worcestershire County Council
Ms Kelly Griffin, Wychavon District Council;
Inspector Ian Joseph, West Mercia Constabulary; and
PC Paul Kennedy, West Mercia Constabulary.

The Committee would also like to thank Ms Harriet Ernstsons from the Redditch Standard for attending a number of meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the year and for helping to raise the public profile of scrutiny activities.

Expressions of Gratitude

Officers

A number of Officers have been particularly supportive of the Overview and Scrutiny process in 2009/10. Although it is not possible to acknowledge all Officers in this report the following individuals deserve recognition for their outstanding contributions to the scrutiny process this year.

Helen Broughton, Redditch Partnership Manager
Hugh Bennett, Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships
Trish Buckley, Member Services Officer/ Co-opted Unison Representative
Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Sharon Forest, Economic Development Assistant
Georgina Harris, Economic Development Support Officer
Angie Heighway, Head of Community Services
Bev Houghton, Community Safety Manager
Teresa Kristunas, Head of Finance and Resources
Sam Morgan, Financial Service Manager
Jayne Pickering, Executive Director Finance and Corporate Resources
Steve Skinner, Democratic Services Manager
Liz Tompkin, Head of Housing

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would also like to thank the Print Unit for all their hard work producing Committee reports and agendas during the year.

Special thanks are due to Janice Smyth, Member and Committee Support Services Assistant, Denise Sunman, Committee Services Officer, and Ivor Westmore, Member and Committee Support Services Manager, who all provided additional support to the Committee whilst there was only one Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer in post.

Overview and Scrutiny Support



Featured in this picture are (from left to right) Councillor Diane Thomas, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and Michael Craggs, Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer.

Overview and Scrutiny Contact Details

For additional copies of this report, or to find out more about Overview and Scrutiny at Redditch Borough Council please contact:

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Further information about the Overview and Scrutiny process at Redditch Borough Council can also be found on the Council's dedicated web pages. To access these web pages please use the web address attached here and then follow the links:

<http://redditch.whub.org.uk/cms/council-and-democracy/councillors-and-committees/overview-and-scrutiny.aspx>

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