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ANNEX



OVERVIEW
AND
SCRUTINY HANDBOOK
(January 2017)

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Who is this handbook for?

This handbook is a guide for Councillors and Officers at Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) on how to carry out Overview and Scrutiny, and may also be useful to anyone with an interest in what TVBC's Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSCOM) does.

Please read this guide together with the Council's Constitution, which contains the operating procedures, scope and protocols for the Committees within the Council.

1.2 What is this handbook for?

This handbook will help Members and Officers understand how OSCOM carries out its work, decides on what work it does, and what role both Members and Officers play in Overview and Scrutiny.

The sections in this handbook look at

- The principles and objectives of carrying out Overview and Scrutiny
- The mechanics of Overview and Scrutiny at Test Valley Borough Council
- A guide for Members on their role
- A guide for Officers on their role

Further Information

If you would like any further information about this Handbook, or Overview and Scrutiny at Test Valley Borough Council, please contact:

~~Head of Administration~~ Democratic Services Manager

Test Valley Borough Council
Beech Hurst
Weyhill Road
Andover
Hants
SP10 3AJ

Telephone: 01264 368000

Copies of this handbook can be made available in an alternative format on request.

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2. WHAT IS 'OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY'?

~~"Overview and Scrutiny is potentially the most powerful and exciting element of the entire local government modernisation process. It places non-Cabinet Members at the heart of policy-making and at the heart of the way in which Councils respond to the demands of modernisation."~~

The Development of Overview and Scrutiny, ODPM, September 2002

The national advisory body, the Centre for Public Scrutiny, defines 'scrutiny' as follows:

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" Public scrutiny is an essential part of ensuring that government remains effective and accountable. Public scrutiny can be defined as the activity by one elected or appointed organisation... examining and monitoring all or part of the activity of a public sector body with the aim of improving the quality of public services."

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Scrutiny ensures that decision-making processes are clear and accessible to the public and that the people taking decisions are held accountable for those decisions.

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2.1 Overview and Scrutiny – the legal framework

Overview and scrutiny was introduced by the Local Government Act 2000, as part of the modernisation of local government. Councils were required to implement a new, more streamlined structure for decision-making. At most Councils this resulted in the creation of a Cabinet (or Executive) of up to 10 councillors, responsible for taking the day-to-day decisions on running the authority within the budget and policy framework agreed by the full Council. The majority of councillors were given the new role of overview and scrutiny, which was designed to act as a check and balance, holding the Cabinet to account and contributing to policy development.

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Scrutiny work is focussed around its four main roles:

- holding the Cabinet to account
- policy development and review
- performance review and monitoring to ensure continuous improvement
- external scrutiny, such as health - investigating issues affecting the wider community

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Scrutiny also provides opportunities for community involvement and democratic accountability. Engagement with service users and with the general public can help to improve the quality, legitimacy and long-term viability of recommendations made by scrutiny bodies.

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Overview and Scrutiny is part of the way in which local government works, and aims at ensuring continuous improvement by monitoring and reviewing performance. The Local Government Act 2000 (LGA 2000) replaced traditional

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~~committee-based decision-making with a Cabinet, which makes most of the service-based decisions.~~

~~To balance Cabinet powers, the LGA 2000 introduced Overview and Scrutiny. The task is to ensure that decision-making is efficient, transparent and accountable, and that the Cabinet makes the best decisions in the interests of the people of At Test Valley Borough, Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSCM). OSCOM is the Committee charged with carrying out the Overview and Scrutiny function, supported by a number of permanent and temporary panels. Cabinet Members are unable to serve on OSCOM or any scrutiny panels as there needs to be a separation of roles, and its Members must not be a Cabinet Member.~~

~~Test Valley Borough Council has one Overview and Scrutiny Committee, supported by a number of permanent and temporary panels~~

2.234 Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000

Overview and Scrutiny **must:**

- Be given the power to review or scrutinise decisions or actions taken in respect of any function of the Council, apart from Planning and Licensing decisions;
- Be given the power to make reports or recommendations to the Authority or the Cabinet in respect of any functions of the Council;
- Be given the power to make reports or recommendations to the Authority or the Cabinet in respect of matters which affect the Local Authority's area or its inhabitants;
- Meet in public except where legislation allows the press and public to be excluded, and
- Ensure that any Member of OSCOM can place a matter relevant to the remit of the Committee on its agenda, and have the matter discussed at a meeting of the Committee.

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Overview and Scrutiny **may**:

- Following a call-in, recommend that a Cabinet decision not be implemented, and be reconsidered;
- Make arrangements following a call-in for the Full Council to review or scrutinise a decision (when it is a Full Council responsibility). *NB. Full Council can make only recommendations to the Cabinet on areas for which the Cabinet is responsible.*
- Conduct Reviews, and other tasks;
- Delegate to a Scrutiny Panel;
- Have non-voting co-opted Members;
- Exclude the press and public where legislation allows;
- Require Members and Council Officers to appear before OSCOM and give evidence or answer questions. *(It is a legal duty to comply with such a requirement, except that they cannot be required to answer questions that they would be entitled to refuse in a Court of Law), and*
- Invite any other person or body to attend and give evidence or answer questions.

Overview and Scrutiny **cannot**:

- Undertake any functions other than those specified by the Act;
- Make or implement decisions, or
- Include any Cabinet Member as a Member of the Committee.

Overview and Scrutiny **is not**:

- An alternative to normal appeals procedures, in respect of planning and development control, licensing, registration, consents and other permissions, and should therefore not become involved in reviewing decisions on individual applications, or
- A means of making a complaint against the Council. The Council's complaints procedure can be found on the Council's website at www.testvalley.gov.uk, or in writing at the Council offices.

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2.342 What are the aims and objectives of Overview and Scrutiny?

Overview and Scrutiny seeks to ensure that the Council has the best policies in place and makes the best decisions for local people. It also acts as the focus for people's concern about other issues in the local area, [demonstrated by the fact that](#) ~~as~~ Overview and Scrutiny may examine the work of organisations that are not part of the Council.

It is the job of Overview and Scrutiny to look at the Council's key decisions, policies and service delivery. It is at the heart of the principle of open and transparent decision-making in local government and the drive for greater public involvement. Local people can be involved as co-opted Committee Members, providers of evidence, or can suggest topics for review.

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OSCOM cannot make decisions about policy or services, or alter those already made or prevent them being implemented. However, it can make recommendations based on evidence gathered, about how services could be better delivered, or policies changed or developed, or decisions altered.

These recommendations are passed to Cabinet or Full Council as appropriate, who may accept or reject them.

2.453 What are the key functions of Overview and Scrutiny?

There are ~~four~~ five key functions of Overview and Scrutiny in local authorities:

- Holding the Cabinet to account
- Policy ~~development and review~~ Review
 - Policy Development
 - Performance Review ~~and monitoring~~
- External scrutiny

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These functions are carried out either by looking at individual decisions or whole policies and strategies. Councillors can develop new policies and look at service delivery through performance management information. Issues can be investigated in depth, or be looked at over one meeting, or be for information only.

All Members of the Council also have the right to 'call-in' a decision of the Cabinet. This means they can challenge a decision before it is implemented and ask the Cabinet to reconsider.

OSCOM cannot make decisions, but can make recommendations to the Cabinet or Full Council as appropriate.

2.564 What is the scope of Overview and Scrutiny?

OSCOM has a very wide range of issues it can investigate. Within the Council, OSCOM can look at all decisions and policies, although there are rules that may require some items to be considered in private, and some decisions can be exempted from call-in. (See Annex 2 Paragraph 15 of this Handbook and p.290 of the TVBC Constitution).

As well as scrutinising Cabinet decisions and key decisions delegated to Officers, Local Authority Overview and Scrutiny also has the power to scrutinise external bodies such as the Police ~~and Health services Authority, the Constabulary, Primary Care Trusts,~~ or any public, private or local organisation with or without the agreement of that body. It should be an issue that affects the authority's area or its residents, but OSCOM cannot compel people from other organisations to cooperate with a review. The guiding principle of Overview and Scrutiny is to avoid confrontational ways of working.

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2.675 **Principles of Overview and Scrutiny**

The Centre for Public Scrutiny has developed four key principles that should govern effective Overview and Scrutiny, which can be found in its Good Scrutiny Guide.

They are:

- To be a 'critical friend' in challenging Cabinets and other authorities and agencies;
- To reflect the voice and concerns of local people and communities;
- To lead and own the Overview and Scrutiny process, and
- To make an impact on service delivery.

In practical terms, these principles can guide the ways in which OSCOM carries out its work.

The Critical Friend

OSCOM should use an evidence-based method of working to arrive at its recommendations. The emphasis is on constructive challenge, not opposition politics. The Committee should conduct reviews, seeking information from as many sources as possible from a broad variety of opinions, and conduct its own research if necessary. Meetings should be non-aggressive and conducted in a manner that seeks out information, rather than places blame. Ways of working will be looked at in more detail later in this Handbook.

Reflecting the local voice

Overview and Scrutiny seeks to involve local people in several different ways. In planning what to scrutinise, the Committee consults, where appropriate, different groups to identify areas of concern to local people. In reviews, local people ~~sometimes often~~ provide evidence, sometimes in writing, or directly to Committee Members at a meeting.

OSCOM aims to work in different ways to traditional Committees, and may use different venues outside the Council offices, and more informal styles of meetings.

Lead and own the process

OSCOM decides its own agenda, the reviews that it will carry out, and will consult as appropriate to find out which issues are of most concern. To have meaningful reviews, the Committee looks at issues within the context of corporate priorities, as well as trying to ensure that the Committee does not ~~duplicate double up on issues under~~ reviews s being undertaken elsewhere.

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OSCOM is also required by the Constitution to consider requests from Cabinet and Full Council to review issues and add them to the Committee's work programme.

Make an impact

With an evidence-based approach, the Committee can make recommendations about how services should be delivered, or how policies or decisions could change. When identifying issues for scrutiny and making recommendations, the Committee should have regard to the timing of any activity, desired outcome, work being undertaken elsewhere and best practice in the sector. Recommendations will follow SMART principles : Recommendations should be SMART, that is:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Timely/time-specific

OSCOM should also ensure that recommendations are followed up, to measure their impact. see what has happened since they were made. All OSCOM recommendations are monitored, recording whether or not they are accepted by Cabinet or Council. However well conducted a review, it serves no purpose if it has no impact on how the Council or other agencies deliver services.

2.7

2.8

What are the benefits of Overview and Scrutiny?

OSCOM:

- Provides meaningful Member oversight and improvement of service performance;
- Complements the work of decision makers - Cabinet and Officers;
- Encourages greater public involvement in political management arrangements, contributing to an improved relationship between local communities and the Council;
- Develops deeper, more knowledgeable relationships with partner organisations, through involving them in the Committee's work;
- Contributes significantly to the Council's community leadership and planning roles;
- Helps develop better-informed Members, adept at investigating below the surface of policies and strategies, with the requisite skills and support, and
- Provides a full and valued role for non-Cabinet Councillors.

Successful Overview and Scrutiny will mean:

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- All the relevant stakeholders, partners and the public will be engaged;
- The community will benefit from effective policy development and initiatives;
- Transparency and a high level of awareness of what Overview and Scrutiny is and does;
- Non-partisan working, putting local people and their needs first;
- Better democratic decision-making, with greater public involvement, Councillor motivation and better debate;
- Open-mindedness, and an ability to challenge where necessary;
- Meaningful change in policy and services, and
- Adding value by building consensus on the best courses of action

3. THE MECHANICS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AT TEST VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

TVBC has one Committee (OSCOM) to carry out the Overview and Scrutiny role. This is supported by various temporary Panels, and the Budget and Audit Panels (which have distinct roles in the Overview and Scrutiny process).

3.1 Committee Membership

OSCOM has 17 Members, and must reflect the political proportionality of the Full Council. Members of the Cabinet cannot serve on OSCOM.

3.2 Committee Meetings

OSCOM meets 4-weekly, usually one week after Cabinet, throughout the municipal year. The Committee can call extra meetings should it wish, and also holds informal workshops and forums. It has a business calendar (its rolling Work Programme) which sets out when routine items are to be considered. Throughout the year, the Committee monitors progress on the Work Programme and adds or defers items as necessary. It also holds an informal annual Away Day.

Work Programme

OSCOM's rolling programme of work is maintained and updated as required by the Chairman and agreed by OSCOM Members. At each meeting, the Committee reviews the Work Programme and adds new items or defers items where appropriate. Items on the Work Programme are then incorporated into the Business Calendar. On occasion, Cabinet will refer an item to the Committee for detailed consideration and report back.

No item will be accepted onto the Work Programme unless a justification is given and a clear idea of the expected outcome of the review is provided.

3.3 Help and Support

OSCOM is allocated appropriate officer support as required.

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This support will include:

- Assisting with Agenda planning and Work Programme co-ordination;
- Assisting with scoping and planning reviews;
- Project-managing reviews;
- Preparing briefing notes;
- Carrying out research for Committee reviews;
- Drafting reports for Committee reviews;
- Assisting Members with monitoring the progress of recommendations;
- Keeping Council informed about what the Committee is doing;
- Advising Members, Officers and contributors about the Overview and Scrutiny process;
- Liaising with Officers across the Council about the Committee's work;
- Working with partner agencies and voluntary organisations to inform them about Overview and Scrutiny work;
- Keeping up to date with best practice in Overview and Scrutiny, and
- Organising training for Members.

Senior Officers also support the Overview and Scrutiny function with information and reports about review subjects, appearing as contributors for reviews or the scrutiny of decisions, and providing technical advice.

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4. HOW TO CARRY OUT THE **FOUR**IVE KEY FUNCTIONS

This chapter looks at the **four**ive key functions of Overview and Scrutiny and the ways in which they are carried out.

4.1 Holding **decision makers to the Cabinet to Account**

OSCOM is responsible for examining decisions made by the Cabinet as a whole, and individual Portfolio Holders, as well as key decisions delegated to Senior Officers. With each agenda, the Committee receives copies of the [Cabinet Work Programme](#)~~Forward Plan~~. The Committee can then decide if it wishes to look at a decision in more detail, or use pre-scrutiny for forthcoming decisions on the [Cabinet Work Programme](#). ~~Forward Plan~~.

Scrutiny of decisions follows the same principles as for in-depth reviews. As well as hearing from the decision-maker and relevant Officers, OSCOM can invite external contributors to the meeting for additional information, and receive written evidence. The meeting is conducted to ensure that all available evidence is heard, and that questions focus on evidence. The Committee may make recommendations at the same meeting, or consider them later to have more time to look at the evidence.

Call-in

~~OSCOM is responsible for hearing 'call-ins'.~~
~~One of the tools open to Members is 'call-in'.~~

All [key](#) decisions taken by the Cabinet are subject to call-in and there is a criterion to be satisfied before a call-in can be accepted. [Call-ins that meet the criteria are considered by OSCOM.](#) ~~It should be noted that d~~Decisions of the Cabinet will not become effective until the call-in period has expired. [If a decision is called-in during the designated period it cannot be implemented until it has been reviewed by OSCOM.](#)

[Further details of the](#) ~~For full details of the~~ call-in procedures [are set out in Part 4 of the Constitution, Overview and Scrutiny procedure rules.](#)

[\(Insert link\)](#)

~~, see paragraph 15 of Annex 3 of this document.~~

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4.2 Standing Panels

OSCOM has two standing panels, Audit and Budget, for which Lead Members are appointed annually.

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4.3 Corporate Priority Reviews

On 21 March 2012, the Committee approved a report to align OSCOM's activities with the Corporate Plan "Doing Things Differently", and its four priorities.

Comment [BD1]: No longer undertaken. New work programme form makes this implicit in selection of topics etc.

As well as this alignment, the report also recommended a process by which the Committee was empowered to discuss and decide the focus of scrutiny of each of the four Corporate Priorities. Details of the process are outlined in Annex 2. Currently, the Corporate Priorities are:

- Developing a Competitive Local Economy;
- Enhancing and Preserving our Natural and Built Environment;
- Improving Access to a Decent Home, and
- Encouraging all our Communities to reach their Full Potential.

Members undertake a minimum of 2 reviews of each Corporate Priority, and maintain a watching brief over related activities. In addition, they contribute to the Chairman's Annual Letter, submitted to Council.

4.34 Policy Review and Development

Policy review often leads to policy development, that is, suggestions for better service delivery or areas where policy could change.

There have been several studies on how best to carry this out, and set out below is a ten-stage process developed by INLOGOV, at the University of Birmingham. Many of these ways of working are relevant to any piece of work carried out by OSCOM.

The work done on the review takes place separately from the Committee, but the working group and the officer team involved in the review report back regularly to the Committee.

Performance monitoring is an OSCOM responsibility, and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman receive the Council's quarterly performance management information. This allows them to see whether there are any issues with performance that they may wish to look at more closely.

4.45 External Scrutiny

This is a wide-ranging function, allowing Councils to review other public agencies, voluntary or private sector organisations, [providing public services](#). It is based on the principle of community leadership by the Council, and the idea that Councils can voice the concerns of local people about issues beyond the Council's own responsibilities.

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External review has tremendous potential, but also gives rise to issues as to whether it is meaningful and produces a useful outcome. It is important to remember that OSCOM has no power to compel contributors to attend meetings or cooperate with a review. External review can also be resource intensive, and therefore any topics need to be carefully considered before being reviewed.

Factors to consider include:

- Public interest - is this an issue that local people are concerned about?
- Partnership links - is this an issue that affects Council services in any way?
- Will the review receive cooperation from the organisation being reviewed?
- What is the review seeking to achieve?

In carrying out reviews of this type, the same process is used as for policy review. It can be very useful to involve other agencies from the outset, in looking at terms of reference, timetable, access to information etc., as well as building positive relationships to help ensure that the review is a success.

4.56 **Getting the Public Involved**

One of the main aims of Overview and Scrutiny is to become forward-looking and engage with local people and organisations. There are several ways to achieve this, for example:

Topics for review

As part of the development of the annual Work Programme, the Committee consults widely about the issues that local people want the Council to review. This is done through a variety of sources, including Parish Councils. The Committee uses the results to inform their choice of topics for review.

Involvement in reviews

People have been able to contribute evidence in the following ways:

- As contributors during the review process;
- As participants in a public debate;
- Signing petitions, which are then presented to the Committee;
- Attending meetings;
- Asking questions at meetings;
- As presenters at a public debate;
- As members of organisations that the Committee has dealt with, and
- As co-opted members of the Committee for a particular review.

Going out and about

Meetings can be held outside the Council Offices, using venues such as community centres, church halls, etc. This also helps break down the old traditional Committee culture that is discouraged in Overview and Scrutiny.

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4.67 **Tracking Recommendations (See Annex 5)**

For Overview and Scrutiny to have an impact, it is important that recommendations are followed up. The Constitution lays down the procedure for presentation of recommendations to the relevant body or individual decision-maker, and also on the response deadlines to those recommendations. At each meeting OSCOM considers follow-up action as part of the review of the Work Programme.

For each recommendation, OSCOM should know either what action will result from an accepted recommendation, or if it is not accepted, the reasons why. It should be pro-active in tracking what happens to recommendations.

The Committee must follow up accepted recommendations at reasonable intervals to see what progress the Council has made towards implementation, and once implemented, whether people have seen any changes as a result. All follow-up actions requested by the Committee are reported back to the next Committee meeting as part of the review of the Work Programme.

5. GUIDANCE FOR COUNCILLORS

5.1 Ways of Working

Scrutiny provides Councillors with an opportunity to question Cabinet Members, Officers and others in order to gain knowledge about an issue and make effective, evidence-based recommendations. It also provides an opportunity to represent the views of local constituents and to provide community leadership.

The principles of effective scrutiny should aspire to be:

- **Member-led**
This means that OSCOM determines its own Work Programme and decides what evidence to seek. Members take an active role in the scrutiny process, for example by going on visits and consulting with service users, residents and local organisations.
- **Consensual**
Non-party-political and consensus-based, focussed on the needs of service users and residents.
- **Evidence based**
Taking evidence from a wide range of sources to develop a rounded view of the issue under consideration.
- **Relatively informal**

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OSCOM should aim to be less formal than other Council committees, to create an atmosphere that fosters open discussion with Officers and other witnesses. It's particularly important to put invited witnesses at ease to encourage them to share their views with the Committee.

5.2 **Members' interests**

Councillors are expected to declare any interest that is known to them at the start of meetings in the normal way. If such an interest becomes evident during a meeting, Councillors are expected to declare it immediately and say whether they consider that interest prejudicial. It may be appropriate for them to leave the meeting at that point.

Councillors must also bear in mind that a fundamental principle of scrutiny is the separation of executive and scrutiny functions, so that Councillors must not be involved in scrutinising a decision they have made or are about to make. It also applies to Councillors working with a Cabinet Member in an advisory capacity, or with members of external decision-making bodies.

6. **GUIDANCE FOR OFFICERS**

6.1 **How are topics decided?**

OSCOM decides its own agenda for meetings, having received advice from Officers about important items coming up that the Committee may want to discuss. The draft agenda is sent to the Chairman and Vice Chairman to look at and agree any changes.

The Committee also decides its Work Programme, which is at the core of its agenda. Throughout the municipal year the Committee receives information about what local citizens want them to address, as well as ideas from Officers, Members, the Mayor and the Cabinet. Items can be classified as either full reports or briefings for information or consultation. This programme builds in flexibility to allow for topics to be added during the year.

6.2 **How is Overview and Scrutiny carried out?**

OSCOM takes an evidence-based approach in looking at all topics, and bases its recommendations on that evidence.

Officers are involved in every stage, from the selection of items, project planning, providing information, evidence and then advising on possible recommendations being achievable and credible.

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The Senior Committee Officer will liaise between Officers and the Committee, assisting in the review process and co-ordinating the gathering of evidence and progress of reviews. The Senior Committee Officer also manages reviews, advises on best practice, and ensures that everyone is kept informed about the work done by the Committee. This includes agenda planning and updating work programmes.

6.3 **How long do I have to produce evidence for the Committee?**

OSCOM will allow time for Officers to produce the information required. If Officers have concerns about this, they should approach their Line Manager, or the Senior Committee Officer.

Overview and Scrutiny should not be seen as secondary to the Cabinet.

Officers need to take a 'two-hatted' approach in supporting both the Cabinet and OSCOM, as they are both part of the Council's decision-making process.

6.4 **How should I prepare and what should I include?**

OSCOM should inform Officers about not only the topic in question, but also possible areas of interest, such as progress on service delivery, customer comments or options available. Although the Committee aim is not to surprise Officers, questions will always arise as discussion takes place. Officers can offer a written answer where appropriate, or come back to the Committee later.

The Senior Committee Officer will contact Officers about the meeting and advise on what OSCOM wishes to discuss. The Senior Committee Officer can also ask the Committee for clarification and more detail.

Some items will require briefing notes that inform Members about the current position, or simply an oral report to update Members, whilst other items may require more detailed information. Officers can also make presentations to the Committee. OSCOM Members do not receive options for recommendations in the same manner as the Cabinet, but it can be useful to explain why a particular document is being presented to the Committee. Any written information such as briefing notes provided to the Committee should be regarded as reports in the legal sense.

6.5 **Will I need to attend?**

Appropriate Officers are required to appear before OSCOM. As part of a review, the Committee may also meet with Officers outside Committee meetings, such as at on-site visits. Officers will always be informed if a site visit is to take place.

6.6 **What will I be asked?**

Members should only ask Officers about factual and technical information, delegated decisions they are responsible for, and service delivery issues. Officers are not expected to comment on decisions made by the Cabinet, but may be asked about accompanying reports they have written, for example,

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- What consultation took place?
- What other options have been looked at?

Questioning should comply with the Member/Officer protocol, [as set out Part 5 of the Constitution.](#) – (See TVBC Constitution, Part 5 page 360). Officers are entitled not to answer particular questions if they are of a political nature or not to account for the reasons that a decision has been taken (if the Officer did not take that decision). These questions should be addressed to the decision-maker/s.

The type of information provided could be:

- Background information or advice on a service area/issue/responsibility;
- To explain decisions Officers have been involved in, or accompanying reports, or
- Explanations of implementation of Council policy, or Performance Indicators for their areas of responsibility.

6.7 **What feedback will I get?**

Any information from Officers included in a review or report by OSCOM will be checked with the relevant Officers to ensure correct interpretation of evidence by the Committee. The Senior Committee Officer is also available to provide feedback about the meeting or information provided.

6.8 **Checklist for People Giving Evidence to OSCOM**

- Make sure you are certain of the topic and what the Committee is seeking. Speak to the Senior Committee Officer if you are unsure of what the Committee have asked for.
- Discuss your contribution with the Senior Committee Officer, especially if you haven't given evidence to OSCOM before.
- If you are making a presentation or a verbal report, or presenting papers at the meeting, check with Committee Services how many copies are required for Committee Members.
- OSCOM does not consider traditional reports recommending actions, implementation or additional expenditure. Expect to be asked your opinion on the best way of doing things, why a particular action or policy was recommended to the Cabinet, and how a service might be improved.
- The organisation of the report is largely up to the presenter, and can vary according to the subject matter. However, there should normally be a section on Background, the Issues and any proposals for consideration by the Committee. If the Committee has not initiated the item, explain why it is being brought before Members, and what is wanted from them.

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- Don't include large documents or previously published material as part of the evidence unless requested to do so. Instead, make reference to it, and where it can be found.
- All information given to OSCOM, including any other reports you might refer to, will be in the public domain and will be posted on the TVBC Website. If information being presented to OSCOM is confidential, discuss this with Committee Services well in advance of the meeting, and before the distribution of agenda papers.
- Don't assume that the Committee has specialist knowledge, but don't talk down to the Members.
- Don't be overly defensive. Overview and Scrutiny is about understanding and recommending improvements, not about confrontation or blame.

7. USEFUL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

7.1 Websites

Name	Link	Description
Local Government Association	www.lga.gov.uk	The LGA represents the interests of local authorities across the country
Improvement & Development Agency	www.idea.gov.uk	IDeA is an organisation dedicated to seeking improvement and sharing best practice in local government.
Centre for Public Scrutiny	www.cfps.org.uk	The main organisation for excellence in public scrutiny across all types of non-Cabinet functions, from regional assemblies to local government.

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Information for Local Government	www.info4local.gov.uk	Information on websites of central government departments, agencies and public bodies.
Directgov	www.direct.gov.uk	The portal for links to all government departments and agencies, as well as local authorities. Also, provides information about individual subjects.
The Greater London Assembly	www.london.gov.uk	This website also has information about its arrangements for scrutinising the Mayor of London's decisions.

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ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND **INFORMATIONNEXES**

Annex 1: Guidance for Contributors to OSCOM [link](#)

Annex 2: Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules (including the Call-in Procedure.) [and Call-in form](#)

Annex 3: Job Description and Key Skills for Members [link](#)

Annex 4: Items for Work Programme, Scoping and Outcomes

Annex 5: Role Definition (Chairman of OSCOM)

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GUIDANCE FOR CONTRIBUTORS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

When the Local Government Act 2000 came into force, Test Valley chose to have a Leader with a politically proportionate Executive of 10 Members as the main decision-making body of Test Valley Borough Council. This changed to a single party, 7-Member Cabinet in May 2008.

The Act also introduced the idea of 'Scrutiny and Overview' to balance the powers of the Cabinet. Councils could choose how they would carry this out. Scrutiny focusses on the Cabinet's decisions, whilst Overview engages in policy review work and in-depth studies of issues that concern the local community, whether or not they are part of the Local Authority's responsibilities.

Test Valley Borough Council has one Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSCOM) of 17 Members, from which are selected several permanent or temporary Panels of up to 5 Members each. The Audit and Budget Panels are permanent, while Members of temporary Panels are appointed as and when required by the Committee.

Being invited to a Committee meeting - what to expect and how it works

OSCOM Councillors are keen to hear what people in Test Valley Borough have to say about the place where they live and the services they receive. As part of the policy review process, the Committee will invite people to meetings as contributors to assist them in their work by providing information and expert advice.

If you are invited to attend a meeting, you will receive copies of relevant information such as the Review's terms of reference, and guidance about the particular area of interest which the Committee would like to discuss with you. If you think there are documents such as leaflets or reports that may be of interest to the Committee under the Review's terms of reference, these are also very welcome. An Officer will contact you before the meeting to discuss any questions you may have.

Meetings are held in public, so anyone can attend, including the media. The Senior Committee Officer keeps written notes of the proceedings. Once the minutes of a Committee have been agreed, they are available to the public.

Time and Place

OSCOM meetings usually take place in either the Council Chamber at the Council Offices, Beech Hurst, Andover, or Crosfield Hall, Broadwater Road, Romsey, beginning at 5.30pm. Meetings are relatively informal, with the Committee Members sitting in a boardroom layout. The Senior Committee Officer will be available to answer any questions and make introductions prior to the start of the meeting.

After the Meeting

If your evidence is used in the final report of a Scrutiny Review, you will be sent a copy of the minutes and asked for your comments. We are also keen to hear what contributors thought of the process, both positive and negative.

Contacts

The Senior Committee Officer supports OSCOM's work and assists in project planning and administration, arranges for contributors to attend meetings, assists with report work and fulfils a wide variety of support roles for the Committee. This Officer also provides a contact point for any queries about Scrutiny and Overview in Test Valley Borough Council. Please feel free to get in touch with any questions about the meeting you have been invited to attend.

Caroline Lovelock

Senior Committee Officer
email: clovelock@testvalley.gov.uk

01264 368014

ANNEX 2

Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules*

1. What will be the number of and arrangements for Overview and Scrutiny Committee(s)?

The Council will appoint one or more Overview and Scrutiny Committees to discharge the functions conferred by section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and regulations under section 32 of the Act. The number, size and composition of these committee(s) will be determined by Council from time to time as it sees fit.

The terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee(s) will be:

- (i) The performance of all Overview and Scrutiny functions on behalf of the Council;
- (ii) The appointment of such sub-committees as it considers appropriate to fulfil those Overview and Scrutiny functions;
- (iii) To approve an annual Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme, including the programme of any sub-committees it appoints, to ensure that the committees' time is effectively and efficiently utilised, and
- (iv) To consider any items called in by members and to make recommendations to the Cabinet on this.

2. Who may sit on Overview and Scrutiny Committee(s)?

All Councillors, except members of the Cabinet, may be members of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. However, no member may be involved in scrutinising a decision which he/she has been directly involved in.

3. Co-optees

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSCOM) shall be entitled to recommend to Council the appointment of a number of people as non-voting co-optees.

4. OSCOM Meetings

At least 6 ordinary OSCOM meetings shall be programmed for each year. In addition, extraordinary meetings may be called from time to time. An OSCOM meeting may be called by the Chairman, by any 6 Members of the Committee in writing to the Democratic Services Manager, or by him/her if he/she considers it necessary or appropriate.

****Extract from TVBC Constitution, Part 4 – Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules pp.299-305***

5. Quorum

The quorum for OSCOM shall be as set out for committees in Rule 27 of the Council Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution.

6. Who chairs OSCOM meetings?

Council, in appointing members to OSCOM, will also appoint a Chairman. (*OSCOM appoints its own Vice-Chairman*).

7. Work programme

OSCOM will be responsible for setting its own Work Programme.

8. Agenda items

- (a) Any Member of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or sub-committee shall be entitled to give notice to the Democratic Services Manager that he/she wishes an item relevant to the functions of the Committee or sub-committee to be included on the agenda for the next available meeting of the Committee or sub-committee. On receipt of such a request the Democratic Services Manager will ensure that it is included on the next available agenda.
- (b) Any Members of the Council who are not Members of OSCOM may give written notice to the Democratic Services Manager that they wish an item to be included on the OSCOM agenda. If the Democratic Services Manager receives such a notification, then he/she will include the item on the next available OSCOM agenda for consideration by the Committee.
- (c) OSCOM shall also respond, as soon as their Work Programme permits, to requests from the Council and the Cabinet to review particular areas of Council activity. Where they do so, OSCOM shall report their findings and any recommendations back to the Cabinet and/or Council.
- (d) OSCOM will have access to the Cabinet's Forward Plan and timetable for decisions and intentions for consultation.

9. Policy review and development

- (a) The role of OSCOM in relation to the development of the Council's budget and policy framework is set out in detail in the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules.
- (b) In relation to the development of the Council's approach to other matters not forming part of its policy and budget framework, OSCOM or sub-committees may make proposals to the Cabinet for developments in so far as they relate to matters within their terms of reference.

- (c) OSCOM may hold enquiries and investigate available options for future direction in policy development, and may appoint advisers and assessors to assist them in this process. They may make site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission research and do all they reasonably consider necessary to inform their deliberations.

10. **Reports from OSCOM**

Recommendations from OSCOM will be reported to the next available meeting of the Cabinet or, in the case of a matter referred to it directly by Council, to the next available meeting of the Council.

11. **Rights of OSCOM Members to documents**

- (a) In addition to their rights as Councillors, Members of OSCOM have the additional right to documents, and to notice of meetings as set out in the Access to Information Procedure Rules in Part 4 – page 107-115 of the Constitution.
- (b) Nothing in this paragraph prevents more detailed liaison between the Cabinet and OSCOM as appropriate.

12. **Procedure at OSCOM Meetings**

- (a) OSCOM and sub-committees shall consider the following business:
- (b) Minutes of the last meeting;
- (c) Declarations of interest (including Whipping declarations);
- (d) Consideration of any matter referred to the Committee for a decision on Call-in of a decision, and
- (e) The business otherwise set out in the agenda for the meeting.
- (f) Where OSCOM conducts investigations (e.g. with a view to policy development), the Committee may also ask people to attend to give evidence at meetings conducted in accordance with the following principles:
- (g) That the investigation be conducted fairly and all members of the Committee be given the opportunity to ask questions of attendees, and to contribute and speak;
- (h) That those assisting the Committee by giving evidence be treated with respect and courtesy, and
- (i) That the investigation be conducted so as to maximise the efficiency of the investigation or analysis.

13. Members and Officers giving account

- (a) OSCOM or its sub-committees may scrutinise and review decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any Council functions. As well as reviewing documentation, in fulfilling the Scrutiny role it/they may require any member of the Cabinet, other Member, the Head of Paid Service and/or a Head of Service to attend before it to explain in relation to matters within their remit:
 - (i) Any particular decision or series of decisions;
 - (ii) The extent to which the actions taken implement Council policy, and/or
 - (iii) Their performance. It is the duty of those persons to attend if so required.
- (b) Where any Member or Officer is required to attend OSCOM under this provision, the Chairman will inform the Democratic Services Manager. The Democratic Services Manager shall inform the Member or Officer in writing giving at least 5 working days notice of the meeting which he/she is required to attend. He/she may incur reasonable expenditure in so doing.

The notice will state the nature of the item on which he/she is required to give account and whether any papers are required for the Committee. Where the account to be given will require the production of a report, then the Member or Officer concerned will be given sufficient notice to allow for preparation of that documentation.

- (c) Where, in exceptional circumstances, the Member or Officer is unable to attend on the required date, the Democratic Services Manager shall in consultation with the Chairman of OSCOM and the Member or Officer arrange an alternative date for attendance.
- (d) Where someone requested to attend is genuinely unable to attend, then he or she may nominate another Member or Officer who is able to speak on the topic to attend
- (e) Speakers shall be entitled to a copy of any draft minute or other record taken of their contribution for comment. Should they feel that such record is not accurate, they can make a written representation asking for a correction to be submitted to the next meeting of OSCOM.
- (f) OSCOM meetings shall be open to the press and public except where they are considering matters which would give rise to the disclosure of confidential or exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

14. Attendance by others

OSCOM may invite people other than those referred to in paragraph 13 above to address it, discuss issues of local concern and/or answer questions. It may for example wish to hear from residents, stakeholders and Members and Officers in other parts of the public sector and may invite such people to attend. They may incur reasonable expenditure in so doing.

15. Call-in

1. 'Call-in' by whom

An individual Member may, with the support of another Member who is a Member of OSCOM, and with the agreement of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of OSCOM, call-in a decision of the Cabinet.

Alternatively, an individual Member may call-in a decision of the Cabinet if it directly concerns his/her ward or at least 3 Members acting together may call-in a decision not specifically ward-related, provided the call-in request meets the criteria under 3 below.

2. 'Call-in' to whom?

A request for a decision of the Cabinet to be "called-in" will be made in the first instance to the Democratic Services Manager who will notify the Monitoring Officer who will decide whether a request falls within the criteria. No judgement on the merits, or otherwise, of the request will be made.

Where a call-in request is to be rejected the OSCOM Chairman shall be consulted before a final decision is reached.

3. 'Call-in' Criteria

3.1 A Cabinet decision will be called-in:

If the Member(s) calling it satisfy the Monitoring Officer that one or more of the following conditions apply:

- The decision has been made without compliance with Standing Orders;
- The decision is outside the Terms of Reference of the Cabinet;
- The decision is in conflict with existing policy or the Corporate Plan;
- There is no budget, or insufficient budget provision to implement the decision, or
- That information contained within the report, and/or considered by the Cabinet which would have been likely to have affected the decision, was incomplete or inaccurate.

In all cases the Member(s) must provide reasons to support the belief which has given rise to the call-in request, or, if the belief is that the information was inaccurate or incomplete, must provide details of the alleged inaccuracies or missing information.

It will not normally be possible to call in a decision simply because a Member or Members do not agree with it.

However, a decision may be called in for this reason, or any other reason, if the request for call-in is made by at least one-half of all Members collectively. Decisions called in on this basis will be referred to full Council and not to OSCOM.

4. 'Call-in' Procedure

All Members will receive the reports which go to the Cabinet at least 3 clear days before the appropriate meeting.

A list of the decisions of the Cabinet will then be distributed to all Members by the second day after each meeting.

Members who wish to 'call-in' a decision must do so, in writing, to the Democratic Services Manager by noon on the 6th working day after the meeting of the Cabinet.

The Democratic Services Manager will receive the request and notify the Monitoring Officer who will either:

- (a) Accept the request as being in accordance with the criteria, or,
- (b) Following consultation with the Chairman of OSCOM, reject the request on the grounds that it is not in accordance with the criteria.

Notes:

- (i) In both cases the Member(s) who made the request, the Chairman of the Cabinet, the Chairman of OSCOM, the Management Team, the author of the report and the appropriate Committee Administrator will be advised accordingly.
- (ii) To assist Members, action lists will contain dates for call-in.

5. Effect of Call-in

Decisions of the Cabinet will not become effective until the call-in period, set out in sub paragraph 4 above, has expired (unless the urgency procedure applies). Further, if a matter is properly called-in, the decision will not become effective until considered by OSCOM or dealt with under the call-back arrangements.

6. 'Call-Back'

At the discretion of the Cabinet Chairman, it will be possible for the Cabinet to "call-back" a decision without it first going to OSCOM. This may occur:

- (a) At the request of the Cabinet because further information has come to light, or
- (b) When the Chairman of the Cabinet, having heard the reason for the call-in request, considers that it would be appropriate to look again at its decision.

7. Other Procedural Matters

- (a) In the event of a "called in" matter remaining unresolved between the Cabinet and OSCOM, the matter shall be the subject of a report to Council, and Council will determine the issue.
- (b) Councillors who have "called in" a matter shall have the right to attend and address OSCOM, but not to vote.

16. Call-In and Urgency

The call-in procedure set out above shall not apply where the decision being taken by the Cabinet is urgent. A decision will be urgent if any delay likely to be caused by the call-in process would *for example* – seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interests. The record of the decision, and notice by which it is made public, shall state whether in the opinion of the decision-making person or body, the decision is an urgent one, and therefore not subject to call-in.

The Chairman of OSCOM must agree both that the decision proposed is reasonable in all the circumstances and to it being treated as a matter of urgency. In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman's consent shall be required. In the absence of both, the Head of Paid Service's or his/her nominee's consent shall be required. Decisions taken as a matter of urgency must be reported to the next available meeting of the Council, together with the reasons for urgency.

The operation of the provisions relating to call-in and urgency shall be monitored by the Appeals and Ethics Committee, and a report submitted to Council with proposals for review if necessary.

17. The Party Whip

When considering any matter in respect of which an OSCOM Member is subject to a Party Whip, the Member must declare the existence of the Whip, and the nature of it before the commencement of the committee's deliberations on the matter. The declaration, and the detail of the Whipping arrangements, shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

JOB DESCRIPTION AND KEY SKILLS FOR MEMBERS

This section draws together advice about the key skills that Overview and Scrutiny requires and provides a brief guide on some of the most important. Training is available if required. Please contact the Committee Section for more information.

1 Questioning Technique

Most questions are either open or closed. Both have their uses, but open questions will gather more information.

Open Questions

These are the type of questions that encourage the contributor/respondent to provide information and detail. They are usually the 'who, what, why, when, where and how' type of questions.

Table 1 Examples of Open Questions

<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Examples</i>
To establish rapport	Introductory questions to put respondent/contributor at ease
To show interest and encouragement	"and then?..." "I see..." "That's interesting"
To seek further information	"why?" "why not?" comparison explain further hypothetical (not ideal for evidence-based working)
To explore in detail	"how do you feel about...?" "What do you think about...?" "To what extent do you feel/think...?"
To make sure you've understood	"As I understand it..." "So what you are saying is..."

Closed questions

These tend to be very focussed on gaining specific information, such as:

- 'how many?',
- 'how long?',

An open question would be: "Tell me about your holiday"

A closed question would be: "Where did you go on holiday?"

Most people will add information to a closed question, but it may not be the information you want.

Be careful to avoid:

- Leading questions – “You must admit that...”, or “Isn't it a fact that...”
- Several questions in one - this will confuse the respondent, and you may not get all the answers.
- Ambiguous questions - these are very broad and unfocussed, leaving the respondent unsure what is being asked.
- Rhetorical questions - don't answer your own questions!
- Discriminatory questions - this is where an assumption is made, or the question may suggest the questioner is judging the answer and therefore the respondent, e.g. in a job interview, asking “When do you intend to start a family?” is discriminatory.

Given the need to think carefully about questions, it can be useful to plan what you want to ask, either as individuals or as a Committee, prior to a meeting. This does not have to be exclusive or exhaustive, but can be a useful framework to ensure you get all the information you need for your review / investigation.

It is also important to consider how non-verbal communication can affect a respondent. For example, asking a question but then looking away could suggest to the respondent that you are not actually interested in their answer.

Be clear, relevant, concise and open in your questions. Avoid using jargon or acronyms. Think about the order of questions, to put the respondent at ease, and to find out more basic information before getting into detail.

Tips for Effective Questioning

- Keep questions short, simple and succinct - think through the aim or purpose of the question, and what you want to find out.
- Plan your questions to structure the inquiry and make sure you get the information needed.
- Use different types of questions.
- Use questions that draw out as much information as possible - not that reinforce your own views.
- Plan the questions to start with open questions, then ask for more detail later.
- You can be searching, but avoid appearing argumentative or critical.
- Make sure you are clear and concise.
- Build on the work of other Members.
- Ask for clarification if you have not understood something (chances are that you are not the only one).
- Don't ask questions designed to show how much you know.

Tips for Effective Listening

- Be prepared to work hard at listening - try to concentrate on the speaker and not become distracted. Don't give up on difficult material, but work at understanding.
- Demonstrate interest and involvement - don't fiddle with pens etc., don't interrupt, and keep an open and relaxed posture.
- Do withhold judgment and evaluation until the speaker has finished - don't jump to conclusions.
- Judge content, not delivery - concentrate on the information, rather than the manner of delivery.
- Listen for ideas and overarching themes - avoid focussing on individual facts.
- Keep an open mind - don't debate, or react to controversial ideas. Don't listen selectively to only those points you agree with.
- Note bias, both in the contributors, and in yourself.
- Don't fill the silence - allow speakers to develop their comments, and let people use brief silences to think about their answers.
- Help speakers get their point across - let them know how much information is needed.
- Clarify and summarise - ask speakers to check that you have grasped what they have said, and admit if you failed to catch something.

2. Chairing OSCOM

The Chairman has a different role in Overview and Scrutiny Committees from the traditional style of meetings. The Chairman needs to be clear about the purpose of the meeting and ensure that Members are also aware. S/he also needs to keep in mind the protocols for Overview and Scrutiny, especially in relation to questioning people at meetings, and the preparation for meeting people. Specialist training for Overview and Scrutiny chairmen is available.

The Role of Scrutiny Chairman

- The Chairman is proactive and creative.
- The Chairman is responsible for ensuring a proper understanding of the topic, and for ensuring the Committee works effectively and efficiently. S/he continually reviews the working of the Committee.
- The Chairman stimulates debate and ensures that Committee Members participate.
- The Chairman considers what background information or research might be required, who might be invited to give evidence, what questions might be asked, and the frequency and location of meetings. Officer support and advice is available.
- The Chairman ensures that people giving evidence are briefed, and that they are aware that their evidence will be made public unless they ask for confidentiality to be considered.
- The Chairman ensures that Officers understand that they are giving evidence, not presenting formal recommendations for implementation or action. Officer presentations reflect this.

- The Chairman considers informal invitations to the Leader, Cabinet Members, and relevant Officers to sit in on meetings as observers even if they have not been called to give evidence.
- The Chairman ensures that the Committee does not become confrontational or adversarial with people giving evidence. Overview and Scrutiny is about understanding the issues and recommending improvements, not about confrontation or blame.
- The Chairman encourages the Committee to reach a consensus on the recommendations, which should clearly reflect the work undertaken and the spread of views expressed.
- Clear recommendations are presented that don't simply recommend more expenditure without real justification. The Chairman is responsible for producing an Annual OSCOM Letter to Council. Minutes from the meetings act as background along with other evidence considered. The Chairman works closely with the Officers over the content of the final report and is selective as to what is included. Officers can offer advice on presentation and format.
- The Chairman presents the Annual OSCOM Letter to Council.

The role of the Chairman of the Committee is a key position in ensuring that Overview and Scrutiny is effective and will involve:

Providing leadership to the Committee by:

- Keeping it focussed and 'on track' in pursuit of its priorities.
- Building good working relationships with Cabinet Members and Senior Officers, through securing their engagement in discussions about the Work Programme and keeping them informed of progress in carrying this out.

Preparation for the meeting:

The Chairman must have:

- Knowledge of the terms of reference of the Committee and the area covered, and
- Knowledge of the Members and the advisory Members.

Opening the meeting:

- Start the meeting on time.
- Welcome those attending, and clarify roles and responsibilities.
- Create a powerful first impression: gain commitment to the agenda, and focus on what the meeting must achieve.
- Establish ground rules and enforce them.
- Agree when the meeting will end (experience shows that meetings should not normally last more than 2 hours).

Managing the business:

- Ensure agenda items are not too heavy and are discussed in a logical, structured way.
- Avoid becoming personally involved, concentrating on managing the process.

- Manage time to ensure that agenda items receive the appropriate level of discussion.
- Manage personalities, making sure everybody has a chance to speak.
- Handle conflict positively to channel energy or commitment.
- Summarise to confirm agreement and ownership of actions/decisions/important points. At key stages, refocus discussions.

Closing the meeting:

- Clarify how outstanding issues will be resolved.
- Confirm arrangements for follow-up documentation.
- Agree details for the next meeting.
- Ending on a positive note, thank everyone for his or her contribution.

Post-meeting follow up:

- Review the effectiveness of the meeting.
- Identify opportunities for improvement.
- Review the action points - developing implementation plans.
- Actively follow up progress on action points with those who accepted ownership.
- Ensure key people are kept informed of progress, maintaining their support.

3. The Role of Committee Members

The role of a Committee Member will involve some or all of the following activities:

- Agreeing a manageable Work Programme with other Members of the Committee.
- Receiving and examining information regarding service areas.
- Monitoring the performance of services, including participating in best-value reviews as appropriate.
- Taking an active role in reviews, which could include research, site visits, questioning contributors and developing SMART recommendations.
- Participating in working groups set up to develop policy or practice in specific areas or to scrutinise particular services or practices in detail.
- Ensuring that the principles of equality and fairness are integral to all actions and policies of the Council.
- Holding Cabinet Members and Senior Officers to account and ensuring that agreed decision making and consultation processes are followed in respect of decisions.
- Taking a full part in training and development programmes to ensure that this role is undertaken as effectively as possible.

4. **Research Methods**

Members need to familiarise themselves with the different research methods available to them, and the benefits and limitations of each type. They can be broken down into two groups: quantitative (statistics) and qualitative (interpretation of information). The table below lists some of the commonest types of research used in Overview and Scrutiny, the type of information that can be gathered, and the benefits and limitations of each one.

Whatever the review, often more than one technique will be used. Committees need to think about the most suitable and most cost-effective. The Officers supporting the Scrutiny process will be able to advise on this.

Table 2 Research Methods

Type of Research	When to use it	Benefits/Limitations
Statistical methods (Quantitative)	For looking at large quantities of numerical data. For example, how many people own one car or more, which can be broken down by age, gender, area, economic indicators etc. One of the most familiar forms of this type of research is the Census.	Requires specialist knowledge to produce meaningful results. Only suitable if large quantity of data is available to analyse or else the results are not robust.
Questionnaires (Qualitative)	When looking for views of lots of people about a subject. Useful for a quick response and reaching many people.	Questions should be carefully thought through. If asking questions that require a detailed response, coding and analysing results will take time. It is also difficult to prove that the questionnaire is representative of the population as a whole. Use of the Citizens Panel is recommended. It can be costly and time-consuming to produce a useful questionnaire.
Focus Groups (Qualitative)	When looking for opinions and views about issues from particular groups	This is a very popular method, but must be carefully carried out to ensure robust results. It is resource and time intensive. Results will not necessarily be representative, but can be very informative. Requires training in convening, carrying out and analysing.

Mystery Shopper (Qualitative)	For a random check on a service e.g. response to a query.	This can be a great ‘quick-hit’ tool, and easy to carry out. It can highlight areas that might need more detailed analysis.
Desk-based/archival research	To seek out other research and reports available.	This is often done at the first stage of a review, and will look for relevant reports etc published about the topic. It is most productive if the results are summarised and annotated for their value e.g. bias of authors, date when produced.
Ask the experts	To inform the review	Committees may find it useful to use experts to contribute to the review, either through questions in a meeting, or as co-opted Members to ask more specialist questions and analyse detailed complex evidence. It is important to select the experts with care.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY CHECKLIST SOME DO'S AND DON'TS

Do's

- Remember the 'critical friend' role, and take a positive approach.
- Take an overview and keep an eye on the wider picture.
- Check performance against national and local standards and targets.
- Ask informed questions based on what you have learned.
- Take account of local needs, priorities and policies.
- Be persistent and inquisitive.
- Ask effective questions.
- Be open-minded.
- Listen to a wide variety of views, and seek out opinions not often heard.
- Praise success and good practice.
- Think about consequences of challenge.
- Review your own performance.
- Seek improvement and enhanced performance.
- Provide feedback to those who have been involved in the review and to stakeholders.
- Anticipate difficulties in Members challenging colleagues from their own party and Officers challenging their colleagues.
- Ensure that a consensus view is reached before accepting items for the Work Programme.

Don'ts

- Overview and Scrutiny should not be a witch-hunt or punishment.
- Party politics should not dominate.
- Don't stifle initiative, risk-taking or creativity.
- Don't dismiss Overview and Scrutiny or treat it as a sideline.
- Don't get tangled up in detail.
- Don't assume everyone knows the details.
- Don't get sidetracked.
- Don't take overlong on one review.
- Don't be afraid of failure - it can provide valuable lessons for improvement.
- Don't be frightened of asking basic questions.
- Don't undertake too many issues in insufficient depth.
- Don't start without a clear brief and remit.
- Don't underestimate the task.
- Don't lack sensitivity towards other stakeholders.
- Don't succumb to organisational inertia.
- Don't accept reports or presentations that don't get straight to the point.

Items for Work Programme, Scoping and Outcomes

Part 1 – Items to be added to Work Programme

<u>Business Item/Issue</u>		
<u>Proposed by</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Number</u>
<u>Reason(s) and evidence for Proposal</u> Why has this topic been proposed for discussion/review		
<u>Desired Outcomes/Benefits</u> What would we wish to achieve, is it likely and why? <i>(Information Only, Hold to account, Current Performance, Change policy, Discuss any changes etc)</i>		

Official use only – complete as appropriate

Accept Reject	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<u>Any additional information</u>
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Part 1 - page 2

Overview and Scrutiny Criteria Holding to Account <input type="checkbox"/> Performance Management <input type="checkbox"/> Policy Review <input type="checkbox"/> Policy Development <input type="checkbox"/> External Scrutiny <input type="checkbox"/>	What type of report Full report <input type="checkbox"/> Briefing note <input type="checkbox"/> Round table discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Panel <input type="checkbox"/>
Democratic Services Support Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Details of support requested Attendance at Meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Help with writing report <input type="checkbox"/>
Responsible Officer/s	
Officer support required Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Details of support requested Attendance at Meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Writing report <input type="checkbox"/> More than one officer <input type="checkbox"/>

Part 2 - Scoping Form

Test Valley Borough Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee Panel Reviews - Scoping Template

1	Corporate Priority/Service Area (may be more than one)											
2	Lead Member(s)/Chairman of Panel Panel members <table border="1"> <tr> <td rowspan="4">Panel members</td> <td>North</td> <td>South</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>			Panel members	North	South						
Panel members	North	South										
3	Portfolio Holder(s)											
4	Key Areas of Focus											
5	What will be developed or reviewed?											
6	Rationale – Why now/why at all?											
7	Anticipated Benefits											
8	Resource Implications											
9	Are there any Partner Organisations involved in the Project? If so, which											

10	Does the Project require Public Involvement?
11	How will the Project assist the achievement of a Corporate Priority or Priorities?
12	What do you want OSCOM to do now?

<i>Number of panels Requested</i>	<i>Start Date Month</i>	<i>Interim Month</i>	<i>Finish date Month</i>
Approximate no. of hours required:			
Democratic Services Support	No Panels Estimated Hours	Report writing Estimated Hours	TOTAL Hours
Officer support required	No Panels Estimated Hours	Report writing Estimated Hours	TOTAL Hours

Part 3 – Background Documents and Results

<u>Decision Date</u>	<u>Report</u>	<u>Officer Report</u>	<u>Minutes</u>
	Link to agenda	Link to agenda	Link to agenda

Report template guide – for full template please contact Democratic Services

ITEM

Report of the Head of (Portfolio:)

Recommended:

1. (Note: Set out in the recommendations exactly what you want the Committee to agree to, having regard to the objectives you have set out in the report).

SUMMARY: (Note: This summary should contain the main points of the report, including the alternative options considered and rejected)

-
-

- 1 **Introduction** (Note: Why is the report being written?)
- 2 **Background** (Note: Set out a brief history of the topic under discussion – how did we get here and why?)
- 3 **Corporate Objectives and Priorities** (Note: Why are we doing it at all? How does it fit with what we are trying to achieve?)
- 4 **Consultations/Communications** (Note: What do the stakeholders think? To what extent have we asked their opinion and taken it into account?)
- 5 **Options** (Note: What are the issues that need to be addressed, and what options are available – with individual resource and legal implications if necessary)
- 6 **Option Appraisal** (Note: What are the advantages/disadvantages of each option?)
- 7 **Resource Implications** (Note: The resource implications of the recommended option)
- 8 **Legal Implications (Note: Of the chosen option)**
- 9 **Equality Issues**
- 10 **Other Issues**
 - 10.1 Community Safety

- 10.2 Environmental Health Issues
- 10.3 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate
- 10.4 Property Issues
- 10.5 Wards/Communities Affected
- 11 Conclusion** (Note: Include here the reasons for report recommendations)

Part 4 - Outcomes

Recommendation to Cabinet (CC) or full Council (FC)				
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
Recommendation	Agreed	Implementation Date	Not agreed	If not, reason
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

Part 5 – Action Tracking

Report on									
	Agreed			Disagreed			Start Date	Progress Update	Completion date
Recommendation	OSCOM	Cabinet	Council	OSCOM	Cabinet	Council			

Round Table Discussion

- Open to all Members
- Officer/s present
- No public allowed
- Open discussion re subject
- Guest speakers may be given a topic or specific information that Members wish to be briefed on
- May lead to a briefing note or agenda item.

Briefing Note

- Provided by Officers upon request from Members
- Sent out to OSCOM Members by email and put on Members' Portal.
- Members alerted about briefing notes via MIB
- Does not appear on OSCOM agenda.

Full Report

- Officers and Portfolio Holders in attendance
- Detailed document with supplementary information
- Officers present report
- Report discussed and actions agreed
- Recommendations to Cabinet (if any) agreed

Status Report

- Update of what has happened since last OSCOM
- Included with meeting agenda
- Can be brought to future OSCOM agenda with Officer attendance
- Progress reports will continue until reporting process signed off by OSCOM

Holding to Account

The strength of resolve to hold others to account for agreed targets and to be held accountable for delivering a high level of service.

Performance management

An ongoing process of communication to help support the accomplishment of the strategic objectives of the organization, and ensuring that goals are consistently being met in an effective and efficient manner.

Policy Review

A formal assessment of something with the intention of instituting change if necessary.

Policy Development

Suggested process steps for developing a policy, including identifying and defining the problem or issue that necessitates the development of a policy.

External Scrutiny

Inviting independent organisations to attend, so that their operations can be looked at in greater detail.

ANNEX 5

CHAIRMAN OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chairman of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee will have the following responsibilities over and above that of other Chairmen.

Overall Role

To chair the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and develop and maintain a working knowledge of the practices, procedures, services and functions which fall within the terms of reference of the Committee and to monitor the progress of the work programme.

Main Responsibilities:

- To take a lead role in scrutinising policy decisions and in liaison with appropriate senior officers to contribute to the agenda for the meetings.
- To contribute actively to the formation and scrutiny of the authority's policies, budget strategies and service delivery.
- To lead the scrutiny of policy proposals referred to the Committee by the Council or Cabinet by guiding the Committee in obtaining preliminary background information and determining a timetable of scrutiny.

I confirm that I accept the responsibilities set out above in my capacity as Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Test Valley Borough Council.

Name

Signed

Dated