making a difference

Annual report 2009-10
Contents

1 Foreword 3
2 Our track record and vision for scrutiny 5
3 Review of 2009-10 6
4 Committee reports 2009-10 9
   a Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
   b Budget and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee
   c Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee
   d Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee
   e Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
   f Health, Community and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee
   g Great Western Ambulance Joint Health Scrutiny Committee
5 What’s coming up 23
6 Contacts 24
1 Foreword

As Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, I am pleased to present the annual report for 2009-10.
It has been a year of major change for overview and scrutiny in Gloucestershire with a new committee structure being introduced in November 2009.

Councillors had commented for some time that they would like to see committees established to cover environment, social care and community safety related issues. The new structure provides for this whilst building on the strengths of the previous arrangements. We have also taken the opportunity to make some changes to the way that we manage task groups.

If there is an urgent need to set up a task group to look at a specific issue then the lead members from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee can authorise this without having to wait until the next meeting of the committee.

Working with partners is fundamental to strengthening the overview and scrutiny process and it is particularly pleasing that a county-wide group has been set up for scrutiny chairs and officers. I am hopeful that this will allow us to work together more effectively and help us to forge closer working relationships with other public sector organisations across the county.

At a time of major change I would like to thank the chairs of the scrutiny committees, Councillors Dennis Andrewartha, Phil Awford, Chas Fellows, Andrew Gravells and Kathy Williams and the members of each committee for their efforts during the year.

I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate Councillor Andrew Gravells on receiving the scrutiny chairman of the year award at the Centre for Public Scrutiny Annual Conference in June 2009. Not only did he win this award but the Great Western Ambulance Joint Health Scrutiny Committee which he chairs won the health scrutiny award.

Margaret Sheather, Group Director for Community and Adult Care and scrutiny lead on the Chief Officers’ Management Team, left the council in December 2009. I have always appreciated Margaret’s support and I wish her well in her future career. Stephen Wood, Group Director for Business Management, has taken over Margaret’s scrutiny role and we welcome Stephen as part of the wider scrutiny team.

We welcome back Jo Bolton to the scrutiny team on a part-time basis following maternity leave and congratulate Stephen Bace on his appointment to a permanent position in the team following a successful period on a temporary contract. Sam Mongon joined the team from September to March for his first placement on the National Graduate Development Programme. He has now moved on to the Putting People First Team in the Community and Adult Care Directorate. Together with Andrea Clarke, Elizabeth Power and Simon Harper who make up the rest of the team, they have all contributed to the continued success of scrutiny at the county council.

I would like to thank them all for their never ending enthusiasm for scrutiny, their continued support to me and other councillors and their dedication to helping all of us achieve our aim – delivering better services for the people of Gloucestershire.

I hope that you will agree after reading the following pages that effective scrutiny can make, and indeed has made, a real difference to the lives of people in Gloucestershire. Although the key issues for each committee are set out in the sections that follow it should be remembered that this is only a snapshot of the work that has been undertaken by councillors and officers during the year.

Councillor Rob Garnham
Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
2 Our track record and vision for scrutiny

Gloucestershire is recognised nationally as a leading authority in scrutinising the activities of external organisations.

As mentioned in the foreword we have received two major accolades this year through the work of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Great Western Ambulance Joint Health Scrutiny Committee, both chaired by Councillor Andrew Gravells. As a result, Gloucestershire features strongly in the Centre for Public Scrutiny’s 2009 guide to successful scrutiny.

In July 2007, Gloucestershire was hit by some of the worst flooding in living memory and, in the months that followed, the council led a scrutiny inquiry into the lessons learnt and what could have been done better.

As a direct result of this inquiry, Severn Trent Water is investing £35 million in an alternative water supply for the county. The council is also taking a lead role in establishing the National Flood Forum and in recent months Councillor Rob Garnham has been closely involved in a new national network for the scrutiny of flooding.

We greatly value the role of overview and scrutiny and recognise that it is fundamental to achieving our vision of ‘working together to improve the quality of life for Gloucestershire people’. We continually strive to deliver improved services that provide choice and value for money. To achieve our vision and improve people’s lives we need to ensure that the scrutiny process:

• Provides a strong voice in identifying areas of under-performance or local concern
• Focuses on those areas that matter to local people
• Holds service providers (including the council) to account for their decisions, actions and policies
• Makes recommendations to improve existing policies and influence emerging policies of the council and its partners

However, we are not complacent and recognise that there are aspects of our overview and scrutiny process that can be strengthened. In November 2009 we introduced a new scrutiny structure and, although initial indications are that this is working well, there is much work to be done to ensure that this is successful over the longer term.
3 Review of 2009-10

Scrutiny done well can undoubtedly result in improved public services. The fresh independent thinking provided by councillors involved in the overview and scrutiny process can make a real difference for local people.

The importance of good scrutiny is becoming increasingly recognised by the council, its partners and the public. Gloucestershire County Council scrutiny therefore aims to continually improve itself, support the improvement of services, provide value for money and help develop the skills and knowledge of councillors.

a) Improved scrutiny
In order to improve scrutiny at the council a new scrutiny structure became effective from November 2009, following findings of the council’s scrutiny review group. The structure now includes two new committees, Environment and Community Safety, and has incorporated the Community and Adult Care Directorate into the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

This reflects recent legislative changes relating to local area agreement scrutiny, the formation of joint committees, councillor call for action and crime and disorder scrutiny.

The new structure will also assist members in picking topics for scrutiny that are of value and interest to the people of Gloucestershire and improve the link between the scrutiny process, the cabinet and the public. The detail of the new structure is shown on page 10.

b) Improved services
These are just a few examples of where scrutiny has made a real difference to the people of Gloucestershire.

Flooding
The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) has continued to engage with and scrutinise the delivery of flood resilience projects including Severn Trent’s £35m investment to secure an alternative water supply for the county, which resulted from the Summer 2007 Emergency Scrutiny Inquiry. The committee also worked with Severn Trent to keep the public up to date with the progress of the scheme.

NHS
The Health, Community and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee has played a vital role in reviewing changes to NHS services and holding NHS bodies to account over their performance and engagement with the public. For example the proposals by Gloucestershire Hospitals’ NHS Foundation Trust to close up to 200 beds were reviewed by the committee, which recommended that the trust put on hold its plans until it had consulted with stakeholders and the public.

Secondly the Great Western Ambulance Joint Health Scrutiny Committee continued to scrutinise the performance of ambulance response times, and has worked with the trust to improve the service, particularly to rural areas.
Corporate parenting

Although it is not a scrutiny committee, the Corporate Parenting Committee works closely with Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The committee now advises on matters regarding the council’s looked after children.

It ensures that the county council and its partner agencies have a joint commitment to achieving improved outcomes, agrees and oversees implementation of the corporate parenting strategy to drive improved outcomes and aims to narrow the achievement gap experienced by looked after children.

c) Value for money

One of the main changes that scrutiny has seen in the past year is the increase in partnership working. With initiatives such as ‘Total Place’ it is becoming more important for public sector bodies to work together to improve services in their area.

Scrutiny has reflected this through committees such as Community Safety and Health, Community and Care. The Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee for instance includes county councillors, district councillors and police authority members. The committee scrutinises the work of crime and disorder reduction partnerships, including the activities of local authorities, the police authority, Gloucestershire Constabulary and NHS Gloucestershire.

The council has also played a lead role in the establishment of a county-wide scrutiny lead members’ group. The group is a good example of partnership working as it involves scrutiny members and officers from the county and each of the six district councils. It has allowed good practice to be shared through action learning sets on resources, joint working and comprehensive area assessment.

d) Member development

After the June 2009 elections councillors were offered a comprehensive induction programme. Highlights included development sessions on decision making, strategic partnerships, finance and performance, diversity, community cohesion and safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Members were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the programme and were positive about the usefulness and appropriateness of the training.
New scrutiny structure

Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee

- + added members
  - Children & Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee
    - + 6 district councils
  - Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee
    - + police authority

- Budget and Performance Overview & Scrutiny Committee
  - + 6 district councils
    - Health, Community and Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee
      - Joint scrutiny – ambulance and specialised commissioning
    - Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee

- Time-limited task groups looking at specific issues
- Local or neighbourhood scrutiny
The committee is responsible for managing the council’s overview and scrutiny process and ensuring that it is operating effectively and is making a difference for local people.

Its role also includes commissioning task groups, determining call-ins of cabinet decisions and the overview and scrutiny of local economic issues. The committee has an important role in reviewing the effectiveness of the new overview and scrutiny arrangements.
Key areas of activity:

- **Taking scrutiny forward**
  The committee received a report in September on proposals for a new scrutiny structure. Councillors supported a structure broadly based around the themes of the local area agreement and this was later adopted by full council.

- **Severn Trent**
  Alan Payne, General Manager of Asset and Distribution, gave an update on the £35 million investment over two years to secure an alternative water supply for the county.

- **Public engagement**
  Two reports have been presented to the committee setting out options for local scrutiny that would engage with and empower local communities.

- **Gloucestershire First**
  The committee received a presentation on the role of Gloucestershire First and the key issues facing the local economy.

- **Tourism**
  Information was presented on the role and purpose of the Cotswolds and Forest of Dean Destination Management Organisation (DMO). The committee was anxious to encourage a more joined-up approach to tourism across the county and will be asking the Joint Improvement Board to take action.

- **Scrutiny task groups**
  Seven task groups were set up during 2009-10 and following the changes to the scrutiny structure in November, a new process is in place to allow task groups to be established more quickly.

- **Call-in**
  Cabinet decisions relating to the Building our Future Programme and the residents’ parking policy were called in.

- **Scrutiny task group monitoring**
  Recommendations from task groups are now monitored after 6, 12 and 18 months and progress reports were presented to the committee in September and March. This has proved to be very effective and officers from both the council and partner organisations are aware that they will be asked for regular updates.

**Committee membership**

**Councillors**
Dennis Andrewartha, Phil Awford, Chas Fellows, Rob Garnham, Andy Gravells, Ceri Jones, Steve McHale, Shaun Parsons, Gordon Shurmer, Lynden Stowe, Klara Sudbury and Kathy Williams.

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The Budget and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee provides a corporate overview of performance, the budget and service improvement. It also undertakes overview and scrutiny of those county council functions that are not covered by other scrutiny committees. These include the Chief Executive’s Support Unit, Business Management Directorate and Building our Future Programme.

Key areas of activity:

- **Benchmarking**
  The committee was informed of our comparative performance against other county councils using national benchmarking information. This is an excellent tool, accessible on members’ computers and thus available for scrutiny.

- **Monitoring of budget overspend**
  The committee received in detail the changing outturn forecast and was informed of the steps in place to address the projected overspend. The committee has highlighted the need for tighter budget control with an emphasis on contingency planning. Councillors have worked with officers to improve the quality of the data received.
• **Building our Future (BoF) Programme**

The committee has engaged with BoF throughout the year in order to understand the current progress of the project and future stages. The committee reviewed some of the LEAN work that has taken place across the council and was particularly encouraged by the way some areas, such as the Integrated Transport Unit, have embraced the changes with enthusiasm.

The committee agreed that the strategic work during the next stage of the BoF programme was vital and called for this stage to be reached as soon as possible. Members also requested that the established communication between BoF and scrutiny continues to ensure the best possible outcomes for the council and its staff.

• **Procurement**

The committee supported the progress of the procurement strategy and the need for ongoing compliance across the authority. Councillors have asked for a further update to include how the strategy has engaged with and supported the BoF programme and will review how procurement could support the council as it takes forward its climate change agenda.

• **Council and budget priorities**

The committee believes it is important that scrutiny is involved in supporting and advising throughout the budget setting process, therefore the task group was set up to advise the cabinet on council and budget priorities in the lead up to the publication of the 2010-11 draft budget.

The task group made strong recommendations to the cabinet on areas across the council including BoF, the police contract, home to school transport, road maintenance and social care.

**Committee membership**

**Councillors**

Dennis Andrewartha, Basil Booth, John Burgess, Bill Crowther, Stephen Glanfield, Sarah Lunnon, Fiona McKenzie, Shaun Parsons and Martin Quaile.

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The committee focuses much of its work on the priorities as set out in the Children and Young People’s Plan 2009-12.

Key areas of activity:

- **Safeguarding**
  This is a high risk area for the council and an issue that remains at the forefront of the committee’s work. The committee has monitored progress of, and supported the work of, the Improvement Board which was set up to strengthen the council’s safeguarding process. The committee has also received the outcome of the unannounced inspection of children’s services (January 2010), and will monitor the action plan.

- **Child poverty**
  Gloucestershire First and Job Centre Plus engaged with members on the work in place to support our vulnerable children and families. The committee acted as a critical friend to the draft strategy prior to its approval by the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership (CYPSP).

- **School funding training**
  This session presented an analysis of the dedicated schools grant (DSG). The outcomes of the analysis made it clear that there are some challenging decisions ahead for Gloucestershire. Falling rolls with an associated reduction in DSG have significant consequences for the county.

- **Performance**
  The committee is concerned with the projected overspend in the budget for the Children and Young People Directorate. Councillors are aware of the underlying reasons for this position and of the action being taken to address this position. Whilst the committee is supportive of the budget recovery plan, councillors will continue to robustly monitor this position.
The integrated children’s system (ICS) has not been delivering as expected, and has been of concern to the committee for some time. The committee supports the cabinet member’s decision to implement a new system. However, councillors are concerned that the timeline for the new system is tight and will be keeping a close eye on progress.

- **Positive activities for young people (task group)**
  This is about informing proposals for the planning of new ways of delivering positive activities. The task group recommendations will be received by the committee in May 2010 and the cabinet in June 2010.

- **Post 16 agenda**
  From 1 April 2010 the responsibility for the delivery of post 16 education transferred from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to the county council. We have received an initial overview of the responsibilities and risks, and intend to undertake more scrutiny next year.

- **Commissioning strategy for school provision**
  This is about commissioning high quality school places to meet the needs of children and their families, and providing value for money. The committee acted as a critical friend to the draft strategy prior to a decision by the cabinet member.

**Committee membership**

**Councillors**
Phil Awford, Tony Blackburn, Sonia Friend, Terry Glastonbury, Ceri Jones, Vic Rice, Brian Robinson, Charmian Sheppard and Duncan Smith.

**Added members**
Helena Arnold (Church of England Diocese), John Kyffin (Roman Catholic Diocese) and Richard Randall (primary school parent governor).

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The committee is responsible for overview and scrutiny of crime and disorder related issues and the council’s Community Safety Directorate. The committee focuses on crime and disorder issues from a public perspective and works in partnership with other agencies such as the Gloucestershire Police Authority and the six district councils in the county.

The activities of the Community Safety Directorate cover fire and rescue, trading standards, emergency management, coroners and registration.

Key areas of activity:

- **Overview**
  Members have received presentations detailing the role of the Community Safety Directorate, crime and disorder reduction partnerships, Gloucestershire Police Authority and police contract. The committee has developed its work plan based on the areas they have received overview on.

- **Raising the bar training**
  An interactive development seminar was held for committee and police authority members. This explored the key characteristics and principles of effective scrutiny and looked at how to raise the bar to a new level of success.
• **South West Regional Fire Control Centre**

Lead members wrote to the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee outlining their concerns over the continuation of the FiReControl project, including the South West Regional Control Centre at Taunton. They emphasised the value of the current emergency fire control facility and urged the committee to consider carefully the need to continue with the project.

• **Private finance initiative contract**

The project to build and maintain four community fire and rescue stations and a life skills centre was considered and conditionally supported by the committee.

• **Emergency planning**

The committee reviewed the impact of recent severe weather, how it has been handled, planned for and how it would impact on resources. They also considered the impact of the Building Our Future Programme and how the county council communicates with the public in emergencies.

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**Committee membership**

**County councillors**

Peter Braidwood, Mike Collins, David Cooksley, Terry Glastonbury, David Prince, Charmian Sheppard, Brian Tipper and Kathy Williams.

**District councillors**

Brian Calway (Tewkesbury), Gerald Dee (Gloucester), Barbara Driver (Cheltenham), John Jones (Stroud), Carole Allaway-Martin (Forest of Dean) and David Penman (Cotswold).

**Gloucestershire Police Authority**

Susan Naydorf.

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The committee is responsible for overview and scrutiny of environment related issues. Its remit covers a wide area including highways, waste management, planning, transport and climate change.

**Key areas of activity:**

- **Work plan**

  As a new committee it was important that we set the context for our work plan. With this in mind we received a presentation on what we need in place to enable a sustainable Gloucestershire. The presentation centred on the Gloucestershire Conference and the themed partnerships that underpin it.

  This was a timely reminder that the work of the Environment Directorate goes beyond the traditional view of, for example, highways and waste, but also cuts across the wider delivery of services in Gloucestershire. Partnership working is key to the successful delivery of services, and whenever possible the committee will invite key partners to engage with members in discussion and debate.

- **Climate change**

  The committee received a very informative presentation from the Severn Wye Energy Agency on current projects to support homes, schools and businesses respond to the climate change agenda. The committee has also started to look at what the council is doing to reduce its carbon emissions.
Secondary schools generate (proportionally) high levels of carbon emissions. The young energy projects in schools, led by the pupils, are therefore important given the behaviour change that they can bring to the school, the pupil’s family and the knock on effect to the wider community. We feel strongly that all members of council have a role to play in supporting the climate change agenda, both on a personal level, and across their division. Working with schools to encourage and support both pupils and teachers is one way that councillors can achieve this goal.

The committee feel that how the council can maximise its own assets to support the climate change agenda is an important issue. We are currently in the process of looking at what is in process, what is planned, and potentially identifying any other areas that need addressing.

- **Waste**
  This is a significant issue for the council. Members of the committee are aware of the concerns of the local community, and some members of council as to the possible technological solution arising from the residual waste project, and scrutiny of this project is included within the committee’s work plan. The importance of the 3 Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle) agenda must not be overlooked and the committee will also be scrutinising what is in place to support this work.

- **Highways**
  The committee has engaged in a robust debate on road condition and the highways inspection process. The next stage is to scrutinise the quality assurance process.

- **Performance**
  The committee undertakes quarterly performance monitoring, including revenue and capital budgets and uses this process to identify areas that may require more detailed scrutiny.

**Committee membership**

**Councillors**
Tony Blackburn, Basil Booth, Dr John Cordwell, Bill Crowther, Chas Fellows, Fiona McKenzie, Graham Morgan, Brian Robinson and Martin Quaile.

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The Health, Community and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for the overview and scrutiny of health related issues and the council’s Community and Adult Care Directorate. The committee focuses on health issues from a public perspective and works in partnership with other agencies to improve local health services.

The activities of the Community and Adult Care Directorate cover adult social care, libraries and information, equalities, customer services and lifelong learning.

In June 2009, Cllr Andrew Gravells was awarded the Centre for Public Scrutiny chairman of the year award.

Key areas of activity:

- **Overview**
  
  The committee has received presentations about the Healthy Gloucestershire Strategy, children’s services, practice based commissioning, world class commissioning, the prison healthcare service, the Independence Trust, the Public Protection Bureau and Putting People First.

- **NHS performance**
  
  The committee has continued to monitor the performance of NHS Gloucestershire. Areas of particular interest were the control of hospital acquired infections, waiting times in accident and emergency and cancer treatment waiting times.
• **Annual health check**

In February 2009 the committee submitted its annual commentaries on the compliance of NHS trusts in Gloucestershire with the former Healthcare Commission’s core standards. The commentaries referred to NHS Gloucestershire, Together NHS Foundation Trust, Gloucestershire Hospitals’ NHS Foundation Trust and Great Western Ambulance Service NHS Trust in the period March 2008 to April 2009.

• **Wingmoor Farm landfill site, Bishops Cleeve**

The committee has continued to scrutinise the health impact of Wingmoor Farm. In September 2009 councillors received an update on progress towards completing the key actions recommended in a community health impact assessment.

• **Dental commissioning**

Members of the committee met with the dental commissioning team as they developed the new dental commissioning strategy for Gloucestershire, to share their concerns over access to NHS dentistry.

• **Commissioning of specialised health services**

The committee has been involved with other health scrutiny committees across the South West in the development of a regional joint protocol for scrutinising the commissioning of specialised health services. These are services which are provided to a small number of people across a large geographical area, for example complex burn care, treatment for morbid obesity and cancer in children.

• **Ward reconfiguration**

The committee invited the Chief Executive of Gloucestershire Hospitals’ NHS Foundation Trust to a meeting in March 2010 to explain plans to close up to 200 beds across Gloucestershire Royal and Cheltenham General Hospitals. As a result, a detailed public and stakeholder engagement plan was implemented through March and April to fully explain the operational reasons behind the bed closures and allow the public to have their say.

**Committee membership**

**County councillors**

Ron Allen, Peter Braidwood, Andrew Gravells, Chris Pallet, Mike Skinner, Duncan Smith, Brian Thornton and Lesley Williams.

**District councillors**

Ray Apperley (Stroud), Penny Hall (Cheltenham), Sheila Jeffery (Cotswold), Jan Lugg (Gloucester), Margaret Ogden (Tewkesbury) and Marrilyn Smart OBE (Forest of Dean).

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The Great Western Ambulance Joint Health Scrutiny Committee was set up in February 2008 due to collective concerns regarding the performance of the Great Western Ambulance Services NHS Trust (GWAS). There was felt to be a need to improve the effectiveness of the scrutiny of the commissioning and delivery of ambulance services.

In June 2009 the joint committee was awarded the Centre for Public Scrutiny health scrutiny award for its innovative approach. The judges were impressed by the way that the committee was tackling a challenging issue in a new and exciting way, avoiding duplication, building consensus and improving the scrutiny of services covering a large geographic area and population.

Key areas of activity:

- **Overview**
  Councillors have received presentations about the benefits of the ambulance trust merger in 2006, thrombolysis, and angioplasty.

- **GWAS performance**
  The committee has continued to monitor performance against the national targets for category A8, A19, B19 and C calls on a county and district level.

- **Interim report recommendations**
  The committee has continued to monitor progress in implementing the recommendations made in January 2009. Primary care trusts and local authorities across the region have worked together to make changes to the way services are delivered.

- **Ambulance services in rural areas**
  Ambulance response times in rural areas have not met the national target in the last year, and the Forest of Dean and Cotswold areas have amongst the worst figures in the region. The committee commissioned a task group in October 2009 to look at ways in which councillors could assist GWAS with expanding the community first responder (CFR) scheme in rural areas.

  Task group members and GWAS officers are developing an action plan using councillors’ local knowledge and connections to promote the scheme to their local communities.

  It will be a while before the full impact of the scheme will be seen, but the committee will monitor the effect that it has on ambulance response times in the future.

**Committee membership**

Seven councils are represented on the committee and the three councillors from Gloucestershire are Ron Allen, Andrew Gravells and Sheila Jeffery.

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5 What’s coming up

2010-11 will mark the first full year of our new scrutiny arrangements and it is important that we look at those areas where we can improve services for the people of Gloucestershire. Overview and scrutiny has been subject to a raft of legislative changes over recent years and more are on the way through the new requirements relating to petitions.

The following should give you a flavour for some of the things that are coming up:

Budget and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Scrutinising the budget setting process
- Performance monitoring
- Regular updates on the Building our Future Programme

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Children with disabilities and learning difficulties
- Safeguarding

Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- The role and funding of crime and disorder reduction partnerships
- Sickness absence in the Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service
- Police contract
- Business continuity

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Road safety
- Waste management
- Climate change

Health, Community and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- The structure and purpose of the Gloucestershire Hospitals’ UTOPIA project, including 4 hour accident and emergency waiting times and ambulance handover targets
- Dual diagnosis – the approach to patients experiencing co-existing drug/alcohol and mental health disorders
- Adult social care
- Library service

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

- Monitoring scrutiny task group recommendations after 6, 12 and 18 months
- The integrated economic development strategy for Gloucestershire
- Local scrutiny including public participation in the scrutiny process
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Councillor Andrew Gravells receives scrutiny chairman of the year and health scrutiny awards

“They’re trying to do something new and quite challenging and their experience provides strong learning paths for others”

The Centre for Public Scrutiny on the Great Western Ambulance Joint Scrutiny Committee