

**Gloucestershire County Council**  
**Scrutiny Annual Report**  
**2013/14**

# Contents

- 1.** Foreword: Cllr Brian Oosthuysen and Jane Burns
- 2.** Scrutiny Structure
- 3.** Scrutiny Committees
- 4.** Looking back: Scrutiny making a difference
- 5.** Looking ahead: Taking Scrutiny forward at GCC

## Foreword

**Brian Oosthuysen**  
**Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny**  
**Management Committee**



With a new Council, and a new scrutiny structure, 2013-14 has been a year of significant change. Scrutiny is responding to those changes by working in different ways. Whilst we still have dedicated scrutiny committees covering all aspects of the Council's work, we have also found new ways of looking at important local issues.

Scrutiny at Gloucestershire County Council is built on strong foundations. For example, it has been recognised

nationally by the Centre for Public Scrutiny Good Scrutiny awards for the work on the Severn Estuary.

Following the County Council elections in May 2013, the Council changed to no overall control. This year, co-operation has been key, with members from all parties working together to make a difference for the people of Gloucestershire. Scrutiny has become more sophisticated and influential. I will highlight four examples here:

We can point to the example of the Living Wage, where scrutiny consideration and recommendations led to a budget amendment agreed by Council to pay a Living Wage supplement to GCC staff.

Gloucestershire has a good reputation for external scrutiny, holding public sector partners to account, and once again this has been demonstrated in members' consideration of the issue around flooding in parts of the Cotswolds.

Members have not been afraid to question the cost of democracy, with the Local Government Structure task group bringing members and officers from all Gloucestershire councils together to consider what work can take place to drive efficiencies.

As always, it is scrutiny work with a strong public mandate which holds most value and this has been shown most visibly through work looking at the social and economic impact of the badger cull.

I would like to thank all members who have been involved in scrutiny in whatever form, but particularly the Chairs of all the committees: Cllr Steve Lydon (Health and Care), Cllr Rob Bird (Environment and Communities), Cllr Tim Harman (Children and Families) and Cllr Nigel Robbins (Audit and Governance) for their hard work and support. I must also recognise the work of the Police and Crime Panel, particularly its Chair Cllr Brian Calway. I look forward to working with the new Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee, chaired by Cllr Colin Hay.

I would also like to thank the officers throughout the County Council for the support they provide to members in the role of scrutineers.

**Jane Burns**  
**Director: Strategy and Challenge**  
**Corporate Lead for Scrutiny**



Following the County Council elections in May 2013, the County Council has 53 divisions, each with a single County Councillor. The political makeup is one of no overall control. The Conservatives have formed the administration. There have been a number of changes to the Council's governance arrangements, which reflect a willingness among politicians to work together constructively.

Scrutiny has a vital role to play. As well as embracing a new, streamlined structure of committees, members work in flexible and creative ways. This includes time-limited task groups,

working groups, and advisory panels, which allow them to take a detailed look at an important issue, or invite in partners and others to give an external perspective; and, importantly, to work in the best interests of the people of Gloucestershire.

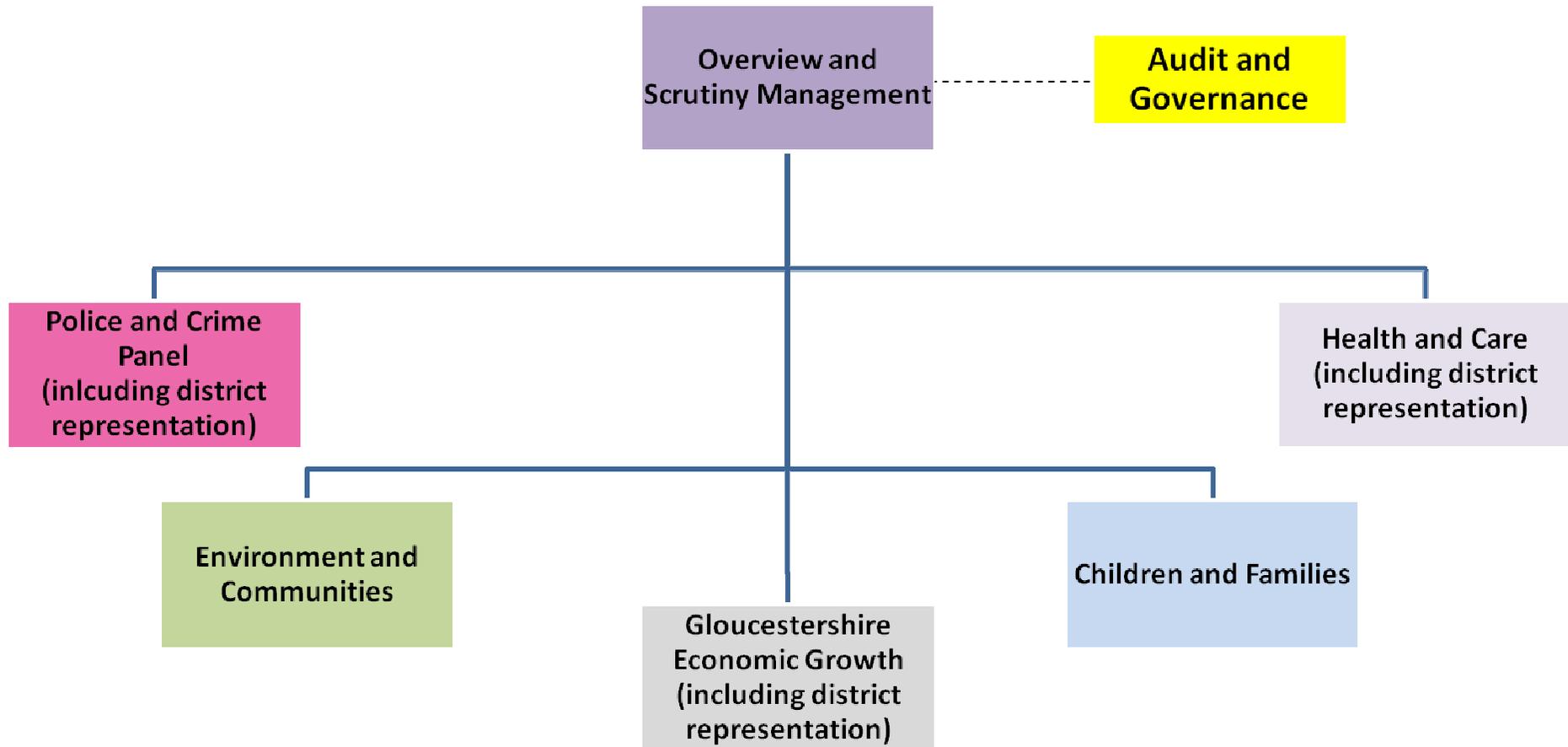
A wide range of officers work with members in their scrutiny roles. The scrutiny environment is open and constructive. The more flexible structure provides opportunities for more officers to get exposure to members. I believe this is a vital part of effective member/officer working.

We welcomed the LGA Peer Review in 2013 as an opportunity to reflect on the progress we have made, but also to learn from others, receive constructive challenge and test our ambitions. The positive comments from the review assured us that we are on the right track. They also encouraged us to develop scrutiny's role and understanding in relation to our 'commissioning council' approach.

Scrutiny chairs have also been part of some development sessions facilitated by the Centre for Public Scrutiny and involving peer members. They are keen to stretch scrutiny's role and

impact. This fits in well with the stock-take and review we are about to launch.

# Scrutiny Structure



## Scrutiny Committees

### Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee

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. The membership of the committee includes the chairs of the other overview and scrutiny committees and they report on their committee's activities at each meeting. The role of the committee also includes commissioning task groups, determining call-ins of cabinet decisions and considering appeals against petition responses.

Chair- Cllr Brian Oosthuysen  
Lead Members – Cllr Guyton, Cllr Hay, Cllr Parsons

Senior Democratic Services  
Adviser - Stephen Bace  
[stephen.bace@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.bace@gloucestershire.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01452 425075

Jane Burns, Director: Strategy and Challenge

### Children and Families Scrutiny Committee

The committee is responsible for overview and scrutiny of matters relating to children and young people. Its remit covers a wide area including schools, children's centres, adoption and fostering, child protection, childcare, early years education and advice to families.

Chair – Cllr Tim Harman

Lead Members – Cllr Lesley Williams, Cllr Chris Coleman, Cllr Richard Leppington

Senior Democratic Services  
Adviser – Andrea Clarke  
[andrea.clarke@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:andrea.clarke@gloucestershire.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01452 425237

Linda Uren, Commissioning Director; Children and Families

### Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee

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. It also includes scrutiny of the Fire and rescue service, emergency management, trading standards, registration service and coroners, as well as libraries and lifelong learning.

Chair – Cllr Robert Bird  
Lead Members – Cllr John Cordwell and Cllr Graham Morgan.

Senior Democratic Services  
Adviser – Joanne Moore  
[joanne.moore@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:joanne.moore@gloucestershire.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01452 425005

Nigel Riglar, Commissioning Director: Communities and Infrastructure

## Health & Care Scrutiny Committee

The committee is responsible for the overview and scrutiny of health and adult social care services and public health. The committee (on behalf of the local authority) is a statutory consultee for any significant health service change proposals in Gloucestershire. When (health) service changes are proposed the committee will offer constructive challenge to ensure that proposals are properly thought through, in particular that they are clinically led, to ensure that they are to the benefit, not detriment, of the people of Gloucestershire.

The committee has co-optees from all the district councils.

Chair – Cllr Steve Lydon

Senior Democratic Services Adviser – Andrea Clarke  
[andrea.clarke@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:andrea.clarke@gloucestershire.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01452 425237

Margaret Willcox, Commissioning Director: Adults

## Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel

The Police and Crime Panel is a joint body of the local authorities served by Gloucestershire Police. The Panel is to maintain a regular check and balance on the performance of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The functions of the panel are to be exercised with a view to supporting the effective exercise of the functions of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The panel is under a duty to support, as well as challenge, the commissioner.

The local authorities have appointed thirteen councillors to be Panel members. The panel has also co-opted two independent members. Gloucestershire County Council is host local authority for the panel and will provide administrative and other support to the panel and its members.

Chair – Cllr Brian Calway  
Vice Chair – Cllr David Penman

Senior Democratic Services Adviser – Stephen Bace  
[stephen.bace@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.bace@gloucestershire.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01452 425075

Stewart Edgar, Operations Director

## Audit and Governance Committee

The committee provides independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment. It assesses the Authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the Authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment. The committee also oversees the financial reporting process and ensures that Members maintain high standards of probity in their public life by carrying out investigations in respect to allegations of misconduct by a Member or co-opted Member.

Chair – Cllr Nigel Robbins

Democratic Services Adviser – Andrea Griffiths  
[andrea.griffiths@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:andrea.griffiths@gloucestershire.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01452 425005

Jo Walker, Director Strategic Finance

**Gloucestershire Economic  
Growth  
Scrutiny Committee**

*(To be established October 2014)*

The committee will be responsible for reviewing the decisions of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee. It will also be responsible for reviewing the overall impact and delivery outcomes of the Gloucestershire Strategic Economic Plan and to make recommendations to the Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Community Interest Company and Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee on issues and improvements. All district councils have co-opted on to the committee.

Chair – Cllr Colin Hay

Senior Democratic Services

Adviser – Joanne Moore

[joanne.moore@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:joanne.moore@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

Tel: 01452 425005

Nigel Riglar, Commissioning

Director: Communities and

Infrastructure

## Looking back: Scrutiny, making a difference

Over the course of 2013/14, members have been using the new scrutiny structure to examine issues where they can add value. This has taken the form of items at committee meetings, time-limited task group work and cross-party working groups that follow scrutiny principles to involve members in the decision making process. This report contains a few examples, detailing outcomes from the work and demonstrating where scrutiny has made a difference.

### Audit and Governance

Members have carried out work across a wide remit, including approval of the Annual Statement of Accounts for 2012/13 and the Annual Governance report from Grant Thornton, the council's external auditors.

Officers were asked to act upon recommendations within external audit reports on Gloucestershire County Council and the Pensions Fund, with the committee ensuring transparency and accountability following up on progress.

Further work has been carried out considering the Internal Audit Charter, the IA Code of Ethics, together with a Freedom of Information and Data Protection report and an investigation into the Cotswold Water Park. The committee also received a report detailing the Council's arrangements for handling complaints including the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review.

### Badger Cull Task Group

Following a motion at Full Council in January 2014, a task group was set up to undertake a review of the social and economic impact of the badger cull and to identify lessons that should be learnt. From the outset, it was agreed that the review would not consider the reasons why the Government decided to undertake a pilot cull in Gloucestershire and it would not engage in the scientific debate surrounding the cull.

Gloucestershire County Council does not have a direct involvement in the cull, but it does have a community leadership role in ensuring that it responds to the concerns of local residents. The task group met on five occasions from April to June and heard evidence from a variety of individuals and organisations. These included the Police and Crime

Commissioner, the Chief Constable, the National Farmers' Union, the anti-cull community, Natural England, local farmers, Avon & Somerset Constabulary, Forest of Dean Federation of Small Businesses, parish councils, district councils and local members. Evidence was also taken from GCC officers covering highways, public rights of way and the Asset and Property Management Service.

The task group received no evidence to suggest that there has been any significant impact on the economy in Gloucestershire. Members found that the social impact of the cull, while quite significant, was very localised. Where there was an impact, it affected small pockets of communities rather than a wider impact across the county. A picture emerged of communities caught in the middle of the tension that had grown between those carrying out the cull, farmers, their families, protestors, individuals alleged to have acted unlawfully, and the Police.

A series of recommendations were made to public bodies setting out a number of simple actions which, if acted upon quickly, would do much to address the concerns of local people. Central to these recommendations is that there should be a single body providing

strategic leadership which takes overall ownership and responsibility for the cull. The task group suggested that Defra should provide that leadership, but this should in no way compromise the independence and impartiality of the Police in upholding the law. Further recommendations centred on clear lines of communication with public agencies and the public, particularly around the start and end date of the cull, and a multi agency approach. Recommendations were also addressed towards Gloucestershire Constabulary, the NFU and Natural England. A recommendation was made to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Flood to ensure that all public rights of way in the cull area are inspected on a regular basis and that additional signage is provided to landowners.

### **Budget Scrutiny – helping to develop the budget**

One of the challenges facing scrutiny has been to add value to the budget setting process in light of new governance arrangements, including the introduction of opposition group spokespersons or 'shadows'.

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee has been well placed to examine the budget alongside strategic

performance information at each meeting as the committee includes the chairs of the other scrutiny committees who can provide their expertise around particular areas of the budget. Members have identified topics throughout the year for further consideration by the service specific committees on their work plan.

The committee hosted awareness raising sessions for all non-executive members to attend, including a sessions with the Leader of Council and Chief Executive as well as Commissioning Directors, the Chief Operating Officer, Support Services Directors and the Chief Fire Officer.

Where members brought up individual concerns in Full Council, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee was the forum to discuss these issues with wider consideration of the budget. An example of this was the consideration of introducing a Living Wage supplement.

### **Cotswold Area Flooding**

Members responded to the concerns of residents through the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee independent review of flooding issues in Cotswold District. The aim of the review

was to develop an understanding of the issues as well as to define the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders. Invitations to a multi agency review were extended to the Environment Agency, Thames Water, Gloucestershire Highways and Cotswold District Council, as well as County members of divisions within the district.

Each of the stakeholders present outlined their specific responsibilities and updated on their positions in addressing flooding and drainage issues in the area, including any steps taken since December 2012. The consensus at the meeting was for the various agencies to work together to resolve current issues and prevent a repetition of circumstances in the future. Following recommendations by the committee, a multi-agency action group has been established, involving representatives from key organisations. In addition, a series of flood project group meetings have been held throughout June 2014 reporting back to the action group, with action group meetings to be held in October and December.

### **Customer Access**

OSMC members have engaged with the Council's Customer Programme on numerous occasions. Most recently, in

January 2014, members were asked to give their input/steer on the principles that should be within the Customer Access Model. In March members were provided with the draft model for their final views and they will continue to look at the way in which the Council reaches its 'customers' at future meetings of the committee.

### **Emergency and Urgent Care – Monitoring the service change at Cheltenham General Hospital**

In February 2013 the then Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust (now Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (GCCG)) put forward for consultation service change proposals across three service areas, including Emergency and Urgent Care. The statutory process was duly followed and in June 2013 the Health and Care Scrutiny Committee received the outcome of the consultation. The committee supported the service change proposals but applied qualifications to the Emergency and Urgent Care proposal. This was to enable members to closely monitor this change over the following twelve months to check that the expected outcomes were being achieved and to understand the impact on the Acute Hospitals. In particular in-depth

reviews at 6 and 12 months were requested to be undertaken. To complement this monitoring work some committee members have visited the urgent care pathways at both the Acute Hospitals to inform their understanding of how the process works. The committee will receive the 12 month review in September 2014.

### **Fire and Rescue Service**

The responsibility for scrutinising the Fire and Rescue Service sits within the remit of the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee. In order to monitor the service, updates are provided in the Commissioning Director's report at each meeting. The Chief Fire Officer gave a detailed presentation on current activities at the meeting in July 2014 including details on the framework for moving forward and development of the Integrated Risk Management Plan. At the meeting in September, members will consider how best to take the process forward.

### **Highways working group**

The cross-party highways advisory group was set up following the County Council

meeting in May 2013 to provide member input into the highways contract retendering and evaluation process. A frequent 'post-bag' issue for members, the contract renewal, coincided with a desire amongst councillors to engage in more focused scrutiny of the delivery of a service used by all the people of Gloucestershire. It was followed by simultaneous processes of demobilisation of the current contract and mobilisation of the new contract.

Members were involved every step of the way, and in particular provided constructive challenge to the tendering and evaluation processes to ensure that they were sound and fair. Ultimately this resulted in the group making a well-received recommendation to Cabinet in November 2013 advising that the contract be awarded to the winning tender. Other positives included: keeping other members informed of the progress of the contract; working with the winning contractor during mobilisation to define how members would be engaged throughout the life of the contract; and the development of a members' guide to the contract with the group's input, that has now been extended to Parish and District Councillors as well.

The contribution the group made to the successful procurement and mobilisation

of the new contract was recognised by both the Leader of Council and the Cabinet Member for Highways and Flood. Officers have also acknowledged the group's positive role, and consequently it was agreed that the group would continue to allow members to retain a role in monitoring the embedding of the new contract, while also having an active involvement in advising on the forthcoming procurement of LED street lighting.

### **Living Wage Supplement**

The Living Wage was raised by members at Full Council and passed to Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to consider the potential costs and the full implications on the pay structure of its implementation. Scrutiny was seen as the appropriate forum for members to debate this significant budget issue before making a recommendation to Council. Members spoke with the Director of People Services and received an in-depth information pack. The recommendation of scrutiny members to consider a Living Wage supplement was passed on to Full Council with the supplement subsequently being agreed as part of the 2014/15 budget at the meeting in February 2014.

### **Local Government Structure**

Following a motion at Full Council in September 2013, an all party scrutiny task group was set up to investigate the options of unitary working arrangements in Gloucestershire. The task group held an 'open conversation' with district councils to seek their views on local government reorganisation. The group welcomed the Leaders, Chief Executives and representatives from all the District and Borough Councils. The group concluded that it was evident that it would not be possible to reach a common position in Gloucestershire at the present time. Members were concerned at the unsettling nature of discussions regarding a unitary structure and believed that it was important to draw the inquiry to a close. Efforts should concentrate on improving public services through co-operation between organisations.

### **Minerals Local Plan**

There is a standing item at each Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee on the Local Plan with an in-depth presentation on the plan and Draft Policy Framework already received by

members. Where necessary, the Commissioning Director: Communities and Infrastructure will establish an informal member forum to consider specific issues.

### **Police and Crime Panel**

As a joint scrutiny body of the seven councils, the Police and Crime Panel has a number of functions and responsibilities to hold the Police and Crime Commissioner to account, including considering the proposed police precept (with a power of veto), senior appointments, the Police and Crime Plan and the Annual Report, as well as responsibility for handling complaints against the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Since its formal establishment in November 2012, members have held budget discussions with the Commissioner and his office leading up to the setting of the precept in February each year, and have held confirmatory hearings for the appointment of the Chief Constable and interim Chief Executive positions. In addition, a sub-committee is in place to hear complaints against the Commissioner which have been unable to be resolved. The Panel has also led the way nationally in scrutinising the Commissioner's Plan holding meetings

with priority leads who have outlined progress against the six priorities.

The Panel has carried out work through a time-limited task group considering ways for better engagement between the Commissioner and the public. The group looked strategically at police engagement within this changing policing landscape and fed into the development of the Engagement and Communication Strategy. While recognising the progress that had already been made, members made recommendations around the need to build on existing networks and utilise the local member in reaching 'hard to reach' communities.

### **Pupil Premium**

The purpose of the Pupil Premium is to address the significant underachievement of children from low income families. Effective use of the funding can support improved educational outcomes and 'narrow the gap'; Ofsted inspections now have a sharper emphasis on the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. The Children and Families Scrutiny Committee, using a 'Select Committee' approach, met with Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors of two primary schools and one secondary school (which had been

identified as delivering 'best practice') to understand how this funding is used in their schools. The session identified that key factors in utilising this funding effectively is to match (evidence based) interventions with the needs of the pupils; and to monitor these schemes to ensure that they are delivering the expected outcomes for pupils. It was clear that the support given to disadvantaged pupils extended beyond educational support into social care. The committee recognised that there is a significant challenge around how best to support schools within the context of limited resources.

Now that it has a baseline to work from, the committee will consider how best to engage with other schools to understand whether this best practice is replicated across the county.

### **Residual Waste Working Group (Plan B)**

This working group was set up to advise the county council on the approach it should take to manage Gloucestershire's residual waste in the event that the contract with Urbaser Balfour Beatty (UBB) to deliver an energy from waste facility at Javelin Park fails.

Council felt it was important to ensure that a viable 'fallback strategy' or 'plan b'

was in place to deal with this potential outcome of UBB's planning appeal.

Over the past year members of the group have engaged in an extensive exploration of all things waste. They have received information on: the range of technologies available to treat and dispose of waste; risk; bankability etc. They have also had presentations from independent experts in the field, and gone on site visits. Members have used this learning process to explore potential ways of delivering affordable residual waste solutions for Gloucestershire.

Existing in an advisory capacity following scrutiny principles, the group does not have decision making powers, but is currently in the process of finalising recommendations to Council should they be required. The group continues to demonstrate how non-executive members can add value to long term planning in key areas of the council's work.

### **Road Safety on the A48 Highway**

Following a series of fatal accidents on the A48 Highway, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Flood, requested that scrutiny consider the issue. A short review was undertaken at Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee,

with local councillors invited to outline their concerns before representatives from the Gloucestershire Road Safety Partnership and Gloucestershire Highways. Gloucestershire Constabulary provided an overview of key issues and supporting evidence.

It was suggested that Gloucestershire Road Safety Partnership take the lead on setting up an informal meeting from which interested parties could participate at the A48 Forum including county and parish councillors along with other relevant representatives. Following the meeting in May 2014, actions were proposed including proposed use of a mobile activated sign van, proposed use of speed radar gun, promotion of activities to support increased use of social media and marketing and writing to Network Rail requesting assistance to maintain railway embankments adjacent to the highway. Network Rail attended a subsequent meeting of the committee and agreed to investigate what action could be taken to cut back overgrown vegetation.

### **Safeguarding Children and Adults**

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility; and the members of the Children and Families (CFOSC) and Health and Care Scrutiny (HCOSC)

Committees take this responsibility seriously.

The CFOSC has agreed a Safeguarding Framework from which to work to understand and scrutinise the effectiveness of safeguarding services in the county.

Both committees undertake regular performance monitoring against safeguarding activity holding the Director of Children Services and Director of Adults Services to account as appropriate.

Both committees also meet with the Independent Chairs of the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Boards (Children and Adults) to discuss the Boards Annual Reports.

### **Severn Estuary Flood Risk**

Following on from successful task group work, Environment and Communities Scrutiny members have continued to monitor the development of the Environment Agency's Severn Estuary Flood Risk Management Plan, feeding into the consultation on the plan and being provided with regular updates from the Environment Agency.

The Environment Agency continues to work closely with affected communities

and local members to consider options and solutions from which to address flood risk along the river Severn.

### **South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWAST) – Response times in the rural areas**

Members of this council have been concerned about ambulance response times in the rural areas of this county for many years. When the Great Western Ambulance Service (GWAS) was in operation a Joint Health Scrutiny Committee was established (in 2008) involving all the local authorities covered by GWAS to address this issue. This committee is still in place but following the acquisition of GWAS by SWAST it now monitors SWAST performance.

The Health and Care Scrutiny Committee has developed a constructive working relationship with SWAST. SWAST officers regularly attend committee meetings to engage with members on this matter.

To complement this work, some committee members have visited one of SWAST's Clinical Hubs to meet staff and see for themselves how 999 calls to the service are managed. Cllr Roger Wilson has also undertaken an ambulance ride-a-long to gain a greater understanding of the challenges faced by the service.

## **Looking ahead: Taking Scrutiny forward at GCC**

**Simon Harper  
Head of Democratic Services**

This report clearly demonstrates the value of overview and scrutiny. It is important that we not only build on our strengths but also look for opportunities for improvement.

We made a commitment that one year into the new Council we would review how things were going. We are working closer with our district colleagues in all aspects of overview and scrutiny and we will ensure that they are involved in the review process.

### **Review of scrutiny**

The timeline for the review is detailed below:

#### 18 September-OSMC meeting

Discussion on what has worked well and what needs improvement

#### October - County Scrutiny Group

Feedback on scrutiny from County and District scrutiny chairs.

#### October- Scrutiny event

Invitation to all members  
Feedback on what had worked well and

what needs improvement.  
Identify areas for further scrutiny through committees/ task groups – scrutiny café

#### 21 November – OSMC meeting

Scrutiny review report

#### 26 November – Council

Annual report including scrutiny review

### **Topics for further scrutiny**

In addition to the review of scrutiny, some topics have already been identified for scrutiny.

#### Budget Scrutiny

Members will agree a process to allow scrutiny to feed into the formulation of the draft 2015/16 budget.

#### Apprenticeships

It was agreed at Full Council to create a cross-party 'Apprenticeship Task Group' that will invite businesses, apprentices and schools for a report to be compiled and recommendations brought to a full Council meeting within the next six months.

#### Mental health services for young people

It was agreed at full council to establish a cross party task group through the Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Board, to understand the provision of

Tier 4 Mental Health Services for young people in Gloucestershire. The work of this task group will form part of the scheduled update on this issue to be received by the Board in October 2014.