



# Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

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# Introduction

Overview and Scrutiny in Huntingdonshire comprises two Panels, the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Panels in 2024/25 were:



Councillor Cath Gleadow  
Chair of the Performance and  
Growth Panel



Councillor Julie Kerr  
Chair of the Environment,  
Communities and Partnerships



Councillor Sally  
Howell  
Vice Chair of the  
Performance and  
Growth Panel

Until January 2025



Councillor Nic Wells  
Vice Chair of the  
Performance and  
Growth Panel

From February 2025



Councillor Nathan Hunt  
Vice Chair of the  
Environment,  
Communities and  
Partnerships Panel

# **Introduction from Councillor Cath Gleadow, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny, Performance and Growth Panel.**

Since being elected in 2022 I have been privileged to be appointed to the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance and Growth Panel. In the first few months, it was a pretty steep learning curve understanding the processes and adjusting to local government procedures. However, with the help of officers I soon learned and appreciated the transparency of the process.

Huntingdonshire District Council, experienced significant changes in 2022 when control of the Council changed from being managed by a single political party to a Joint Administration of four political parties/groups, for the first time ever. Inevitably, new approaches were introduced to make the Council more accountable to residents by increasing transparency and visibility of the decision making processes which resulted in live video recording of all committee meetings in the Council.

Over the intervening years further improvements have been introduced to enhance the scrutiny process by the introduction of additional training for Overview and Scrutiny members to increase their effectiveness and expand knowledge in areas such as Finance and Treasury management as well as additional tools and techniques to be used to fine tune their interrogation and analysis skills. The Panels have been encouraged to make recommendations and changes to policy and processes for further consideration. In addition, the Panels have also taken ownership of their agendas as well reintroducing the Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report. There is also a desire from the Panels to align with our values identified in the Corporate Plan as good scrutiny allows us to do the Council's core work well. It is recognised that this process is iterative in nature and there are ongoing discussions to look for continued improvement of the process

Change is a constant feature of life and 2025 saw the publication of the government White Paper on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). This has major implications for all English Councils and Huntingdonshire is no exception. I know that the Panels will continue to play their part in ensuring that the decision making process is robust and will ensure that the right decisions are made for the people of Huntingdonshire

This report summaries the Panels' activities over the year and contains illustrations of their impact through the outcomes and results they have achieved.

# Overview and Scrutiny in Huntingdonshire

Scrutiny can be many things. It can:

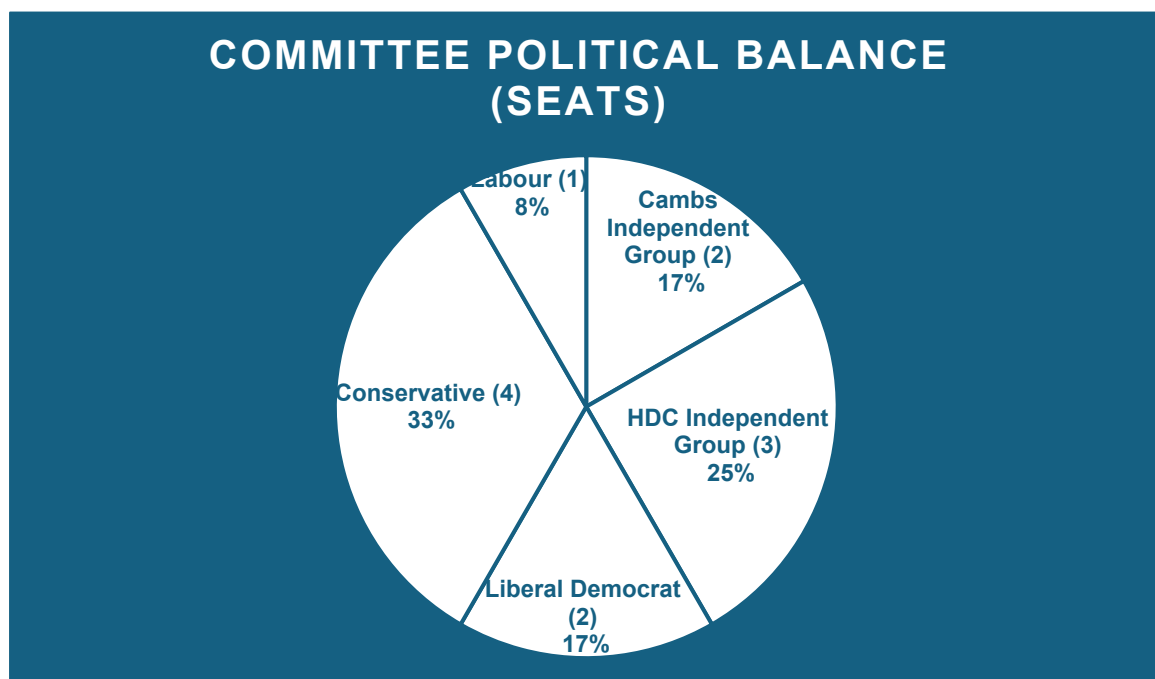
- Hold the Executive to account
- Review existing policies and procedures
- Identify new policies to recommend to the Executive (Scrutiny cannot make policy decisions)
- Consider reports before decisions have been made by Executive (a review of the Key Decisions and pre decision scrutiny)
- Scrutinise partnerships and partners
- Carry out service specific scrutiny
- Address referrals/requests from Council/Executive
- Make proposals to the Executive for developments in so far as they relate to the matters within the committees Terms of Reference
- Address Councillor Calls for actions
- Exercise functions relating to Call In
- Consider any matter affecting the area or its residents.

Both of the Scrutiny Panels may exercise responsibility for the finances, in relation to the roles and remits of each Panel.

# Overview and Scrutiny Panel

## (Performance and Growth)

- Councillor Catherine Gleadow (Chair)
- Councillor Nic Wells (Vice-Chair) (from February 2025)
- Councillor Sally Howell (Vice-Chair) (until January 2025)
- Councillor Ann Blackwell
- Councillor James Catmur
- Councillor Barry Chapman
- Councillor Stephen Corney
- Councillor Ian Gardener
- Councillor Andrew Jennings
- Councillor Ross Martin
- Councillor Dr Marcus Pickering
- Councillor Ben Pitt (from February 2025)
- Councillor Doug Terry



### Topics Scrutinised during the municipal year 2024/25

The reports considered by the Panel included:

- Corporate Performance Report 2023/24 Quarter 4
- Corporate Plan Targets 2024/25

- CCTV Shared Service Agreement
- Community Infrastructure Levy Governance Review
- Finance Performance Report 2023/24 Quarter 4
- Treasury Management Outturn Report 2023/24
- Market Towns Programme Summer Update
- Huntingdonshire Place Strategy Update
- Productivity Plans
- East Park Solar Farm
- Local Plan: Further Issues and Options
- Local Plan: Land Availability Assessments
- Local Plan: Initial Sustainability Appraisal
- Fens and Lincs Reservoirs Update
- 3C ICT Shared Service Review
- Finance Performance Report 2024/25 Quarter 1
- Corporate Performance Report 2024/25 Quarter 1
- Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge
- Corporate Performance Report 2024/25 Quarter 2
- Finance Performance Report 2024/25 Quarter 2
- Treasury Management 6 Month Performance Review 2024/25
- Commercial Investment Property Portfolio
- Affordable Housing Delivery
- Market Towns Programme Update
- 2025/26 Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (2026/27 to 2029/30) including the Capital Programme
- 2025/26 Treasury management, Capital and Investment Strategies
- Corporate Performance Report 2024/25 Quarter 3
- Market Towns Programme – Spring Update
- Market Towns Update Report
- Community Infrastructure Levy Spend Allocation
- Land Availability Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal for Additional Sites Submitted Between 1st August 2024 and 31st January 2025
- Planning Enforcement
- Corporate Plan Refresh 2025
- Corporate Peer Challenge Actions Update

### **Call-ins considered during the municipal year 2024/25**

No call-ins have been considered by the Panel this municipal year.

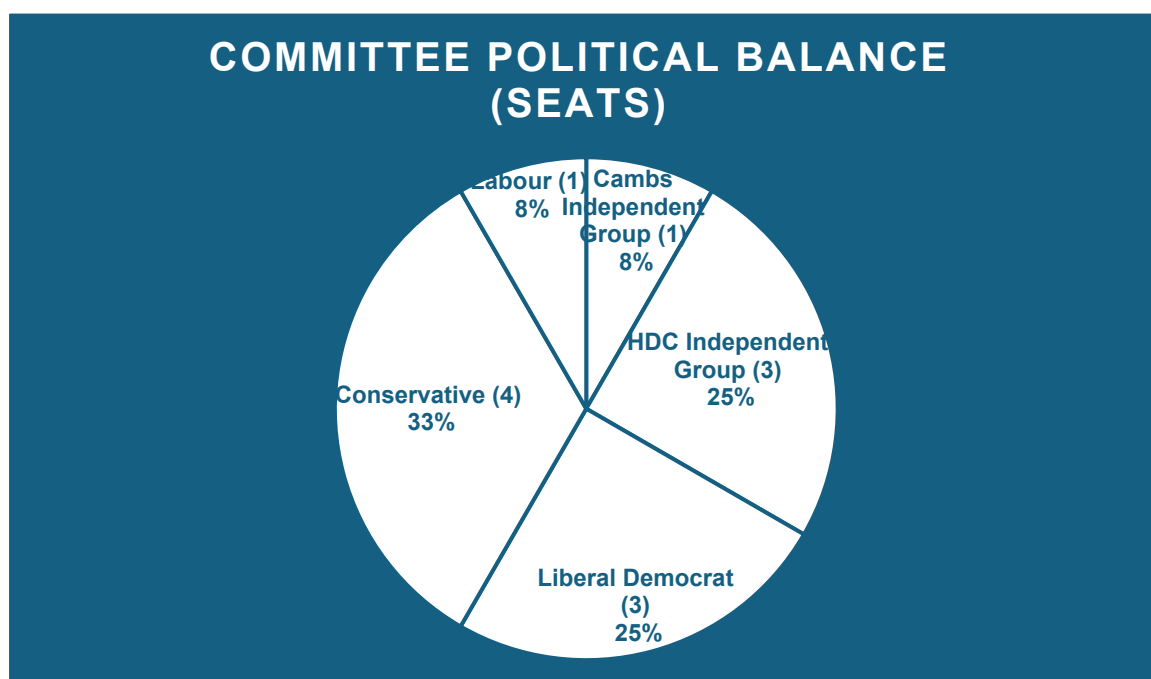
### **Task and Finish Groups Established during the municipal year 2024/25**

No Task and Finish Groups have been established by the Panel this municipal year.

# Overview and Scrutiny Panel

## (Environment, Communities and Partnerships)

- Councillor Julie Kerr (Chair)
- Councillor Nathan Hunt (Vice-Chair)
- Councillor Tim Alban
- Councillor Simon Bywater
- Councillor Steve Criswell
- Councillor Martin Hassall (from July 2024)
- Councillor Marion Kadewere
- Councillor Charlotte Lowe
- Councillor Steve McAdam
- Councillor Shariqa Mokbul
- Councillor Dave Shaw
- Councillor Clare Tevlin
- Councillor Graham Welton (until June 2024)



### Topics Scrutinised during the municipal year 2024/25

The reports considered by the Panel included:

- Annual Climate Review
- Electrical Vehicle Charging in Huntingdonshire



- Home Energy Update
- Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3
- Civil Parking Enforcement in Huntingdonshire
- Local Area Energy Plan
- Garden Waste Subscription Service Update
- Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy Principles
- Priority One Delivery Update Quarter One
- Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy
- Huntingdonshire Priority Natural Landscapes
- Council Tax Premiums
- Council Tax Support 2025-26
- One Leisure PV Solar Installs
- Priority One Delivery Update Quarter Two
- Business Rates – Rural Settlement List
- Net Zero Villages Project Proposal 2024-25
- Business Rates – Discretionary Rate Relief Policy
- Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil Trial
- Procurement of Vehicles and Containers for Weekly Food Waste Collection Service
- Garden Waste Incentive Schemes
- Leisure Opportunities
- CPE Update and Off-Street Parking Places Order
- Huntingdon Sport and Health Hub Feasibility Report

### **Additional Recommendations made to Cabinet during the municipal year**

An additional 15 recommendations were submitted to Cabinet for consideration during the municipal year.

### **Appointment to the Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee**

The Panel appointed Councillor Clare Tevlin as a non-voting co-opted Member to the Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee and Councillor Julie Kerr as substitute.

### **Call-ins considered during the municipal year 2024/25**

No call-ins have been considered by the Panel this municipal year.

### **Task and Finish Groups Established during the municipal year 2024/25**

A Task and Finish group looking at Disabled Facilities Grants was established by the Panel this municipal year.

# **Overview and Scrutiny Training and Development**

## **Proposals for improved working methods**

Following a successful training session in September 2024, the Overview and Scrutiny Panels expressed a desire to take more ownership of their agendas. An additional agenda planning session was added to the schedule for January 2025 and this has already been planned for the calendar for January 2026. Members of the Panels are encouraged to submit topics to be considered at meetings and a process chart is then applied to establish a way forward, this can be viewed in Appendix B.

The Panels have also undertaken considering alternative or additional recommendations where appropriate on reports and have passed these forward to Cabinet to consider. An additional 15 recommendations were submitted to Cabinet for consideration during the municipal year.

# Overview and Scrutiny in Huntingdonshire in 2025/26

Between them, the Panels have begun to develop a programme of work for 2025/26 and preparation is underway for the first member suggested topics which have been submitted through the new suggestion process.

Topics already identified for possible inclusion are:

- Hinchingsbrooke Hospital – Update on redevelopment works, linking with preventative and integrated care.
- Hinchingsbrooke Country Park – Update on development plans
- Community Safety Partnerships
- Right To Grow
- Community Health and Wealth Strategy
- Food Waste Collection Scheme
- Refuse Collections – understanding financial aspects of green waste collection
- Market Towns Programme – lessons learned following project completion

Working Groups are scheduled to consider:

- Disabled Facilities Grants
- Food Waste Collection Scheme – Communications plan

# **Participating in the Overview and Scrutiny Process**

All Councillors are able to suggest topics for scrutiny. If you wish to do so, please do so via the topic suggestion form which may be obtained from Democratic Services.

When submitting your ideas for scrutiny, please supply any ideas that are suitable for an information briefing or supporting information to allow for consideration for a future review.

Democratic Services will use the Institute of Local Government Studies (Birmingham University) prioritisation guide to help screen out topics that will not result in positive change. Officers will consider topic viability and timescales when adding to the Work Programme.

# **Looking Forward to the 2025/26 Municipal Year from Councillor Nathan Hunt, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny, Environment, Communities and Partnerships Panel.**

Over the 3 years of this administration's term, Overview and Scrutiny has been on a long journey.

When I joined the (then) Customers and Partnerships panel as Vice Chair in 2022 as a brand new Councillor, the process we inherited felt like a rubber stamp - providing little input to what seemed like a conveyor belt of decisions.

Since then, it has been a major goal of mine, and this administration, to build a scrutiny process that matters, which provides meaningful input from members to draft policy, at a meaningful stage. This has been a long road, and over the past twelve months we have taken the next major steps towards this.

In this time, we have already seen the first member-led items come through the Scrutiny process, including the Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy, which has allowed members to truly input into the delivery of the scheme. Following the workshop earlier in 2025 preparations are underway for the first topics that have been submitted through the topic suggestion process to be brought in front of the panel.

We have also reviewed how and when items are coming to the scrutiny panels - ensuring that items are considered and discussed at a time where genuine input can be made - with this helping to ensure that decisions and policies are as robust as possible. The impact of this change can already be seen with the increasing number of recommendations being made by the panels to the cabinet.

I'm incredibly proud of the role I've been able to play in these large steps forward while serving as Vice Chair of the Environment, Communities and Partnerships Panel, and I look forward to continuing to drive this change as Chair of the Panel. I would like to

thank Cllr Kerr for the work that she has done as Chair over the past year, and positive input that Panel members have made over the past twelve months.

Finally, I would also like to recognise the support from officers that the Environment, Communities, and Partnerships panel has received over the past year - especially from Beccy Buddle and John Taylor.

The changes which we have made and are continuing to make are helping this Council be as transparent and democratic as possible - helping to make sure that we are delivering for residents.