



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 2025/26 were:



Councillor Cath Gleadow
Chair of the Performance and
Growth Panel



Councillor Nathan Hunt
Chair of the Environment,
Communities and Partnerships



Councillor Simone
Taylor
Vice Chair of the
Performance and
Growth Panel



Councillor Ben Pitt
Vice Chair of the
Environment,
Communities and
Partnerships Panel

Overview and Scrutiny in Huntingdonshire

Scrutiny can be many things. It can:

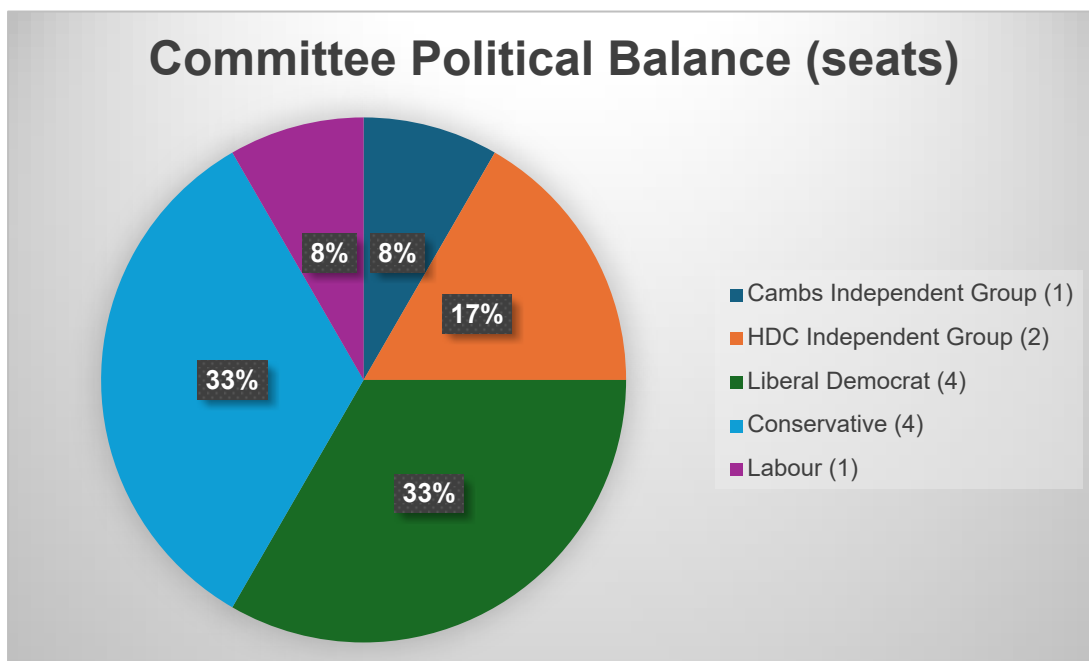
- Hold the Executive to account
- Review existing policies and procedures
- Identify new policies to recommend to the Executive (Scrutiny cannot make policy decisions)
- Consider reports before decisions have been made by Executive (a review of the Key Decisions and pre decision scrutiny)
- Scrutinise 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 Committees 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 Simone Taylor (Vice-Chair)
- Councillor Ann Blackwell
- Councillor James Catmur
- Councillor Barry Chapman
- Councillor Stephen Corney
- Councillor Ian Gardener
- Councillor Andrew Jennings
- Councillor Patrick Kadewere (From March 2026)
- Councillor Steve McAdam (Until February 2026)
- Councillor Ross Martin
- Councillor Dr Marcus Pickering
- Councillor Clare Tevlin



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

I assumed the role of Chair at a time of significant change, with a new administration comprising four political groups that came together to work for the common good of the people of Huntingdonshire.

There have been many challenges and successes along the way. We have introduced new and enhanced scrutiny processes, alongside dedicated training for members to strengthen their analytical skills and knowledge, enabling them to effectively interrogate the reports presented. I am pleased to say that every member of the Panel has embraced these opportunities for development and applied them with commitment and professionalism.

Panel members have worked collaboratively throughout, demonstrating respect and consideration for one another and operating in a collegiate manner for the benefit of all residents. This has contributed to a more efficient use of resources and stronger decision-making. This report summarises the Panels' activities over the year and contains illustrations of their impact through the outcomes and results they have achieved.

We have scrutinised some very significant and complex topics, particularly over the past year, including the Economic Growth Strategy, the 2026/27 Budget and the 2026/27 Corporate Plan. These reports following their approval by Cabinet and Council have a significant impact on both the day to day running of the Council and the future direction it takes, and by properly scrutinising and providing a politically independent review of the proposed plans, ensures the best way forward for the Council and Huntingdonshire's residents.

It is also important to recognise that the effectiveness of the Panel is fundamentally supported by the officers who provide guidance and expertise on a continual basis. Their professionalism, experience, and dedication are essential to ensuring that the scrutiny function operates effectively. As I write this report reflecting on the past four years, it has been a privilege to serve the Council and the Committee.

Finally, scrutiny is, by its very nature, an evolving and iterative process. It must continue to adapt and respond to future needs and challenges. I am confident that future members will build on this foundation, continuing to enhance and develop the process.

Topics Scrutinised during the municipal year 2025/26

The reports considered by the Panel included:

- Economic Growth Strategy
- Garden Waste Finance
- Corporate Performance Report 2024/25 Quarter 4
- Financial Performance Report 2024-25 (Quarter 4)
- Corporate Plan - New Performance Indicator Targets and Tolerances
- Discretionary Fees - Planning & Public Protection
- Treasury Management Outturn Report 2024/25
- Shared Services Agreement Renewal
- Corporate Peer Challenge Update 2024/25 Q4
- Regeneration Opportunities
- Increasing Affordable Housing – Inspired Solutions
- Local Plan engagement review
- Corporate Peer Challenge Update 2025/26 Q1
- Planning Enforcement
- Local Government Outcomes Framework Initial Consultation Response
- Corporate Performance Report 2025/26 (Quarter 1)
- Commercial Investment Strategy.
- Community Infrastructure Levy Funding
- Corporate Performance Report 2025/26 (Quarter 2)
- Transformation Report
- Corporate Peer Challenge Update 2025/26 Q3
- Corporate Plan Refresh 26/27
- Empty Homes Strategy
- 2026/27 Revenue Budget & Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2027/28 to 2029/30); including the Capital Programme
- CIL Governance - Phase 2 - Strategic Allocation
- Community Infrastructure Levy Funding
- Corporate Performance Report 2025/26 (Quarter 3)
- Housing Strategy Refresh
- Great Ouse Valley Trust

Call-ins considered during the municipal year 2025/26

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

Task and Finish Groups Established during the municipal year 2025/26

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

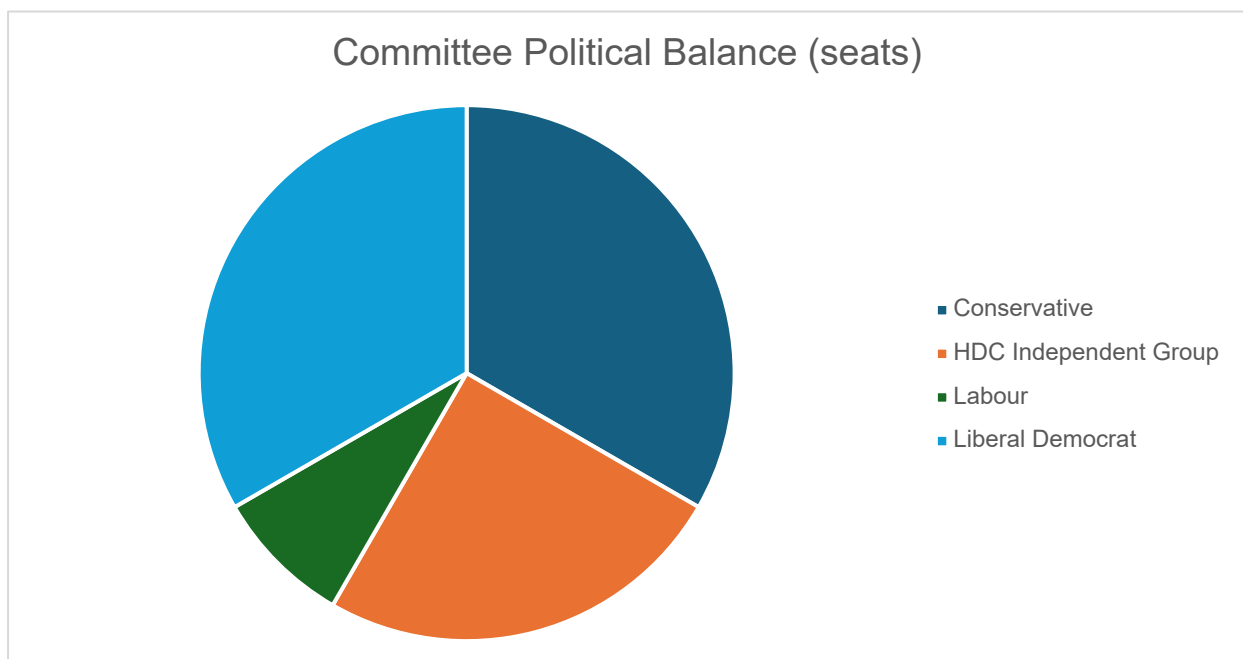
Additional Recommendations made to Cabinet during the municipal year

An additional 7 recommendations were submitted to Cabinet for consideration during the municipal year.

Overview and Scrutiny Panel

(Environment, Communities and Partnerships)

- Councillor Nathan Hunt (Chair)
- Councillor Ben Pitt (Vice-Chair)
- Councillor Tim Alban
- Councillor Simon Bywater
- Councillor Steve Criswell
- Councillor Martin Hassall (until January 2026)
- Councillor Marion Kadewere
- Councillor Charlotte Lowe
- Councillor Shariqa Mokbul
- Councillor Dave Shaw
- Councillor Doug Terry
- Councillor Clare Tevlin (from February 2026)
- Councillor Nic Wells



Introduction from Councillor Nathan Hunt, Outgoing Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny, Environment, Communities and Partnerships Panel.

When I was first elected in 2022, I became Vice Chair of the (then) Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Customers and Partnerships, stepping up into the role as a brand-new Councillor. I remember (nervously) taking up that role and chairing the first ever council committee meeting I ever attended.

Back then, the scrutiny process at HDC relied largely on pre-decision scrutiny, with limited input into policy formation or post-decision scrutiny. This was not the most effective use of the scrutiny process and did not fully utilise the positive opportunities which scrutiny panel members can provide.

In the four years since then, I've continued to serve as Vice Chair and later Chair of the Environment, Communities, and Partnerships Panel. While it has taken time, a huge amount of progress has been made in process changes to avoid a "conveyer belt" approach to the scrutiny work programme, a new process for member-led items for discussion, and more input into policies at a formative stage. These changes have made a genuine positive impact on policy outcomes, and Panel members should be proud of the role they have played in this. And I'm proud of helping steer and implement these changes.

I want to thank Councillor Julie Kerr as former chair of the O&S(EC&P) panel, and Councillor Ben Pitt who has served as Vice Chair since I stepped up into the Chair role. I also want to thank Councillor Cath Gleadow, Councillor Sally Howell, and Councillor Simone Taylor for the roles they played on the O&S(P&G) panel.

There is still work to be done. Effective scrutiny requires positive engagement with the process from executive councillors, active involvement from the committee chairs, a structured and effective work programme, and constructive input from all Panel members. Any Councillor continuing this work has my full support in doing so.

I hope that the new Panel members and chairs will continue this work to improve the scrutiny process, and that the new administration (from May 2026) engages actively and positively with the process. When the scrutiny process works effectively, outcomes for residents and Huntingdonshire as a whole get better - and that is what a council exists to do.

Topics Scrutinised during the municipal year 2025/26

The reports considered by the Panel included:

- Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee
- One Leisure Solar Installations 2025
- Climate Report Quarter 4
- Community Health and Wealth Building
- Annual Climate Report and Action Plan Update
- One Leisure Independent Review Update
- One Leisure Annual Performance Review
- Building Energy Strategy
- Paxton Pits Nature Reserve Extension of Leases
- Right to Grow Policy Review
- Huntingdon Sport and Health Hub – RIBA Stage 2
- Play Sufficiency
- Council Tax Support 2026/27
- Fleet Renewal and Infrastructure Improvement Strategy Report
- Update on the Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy and Associated Fund
- Lettings Policy Review
- Habitat Banking Programme
- One Leisure Independent Review Update
- Appointment Based Face to Face Services
- Parks and Open Space Commercial Sustainability Plan
- Signing of the Huntingdonshire District Council Armed Forces Covenant
- Local Area Energy Plan 2025/26
- Award of Contracts for the Public Advice and Information Service and Infrastructure and Support to the Voluntary and Community Sector

Additional Recommendations made to Cabinet during the municipal year

One additional recommendation was submitted to Cabinet for consideration during the municipal year.

Appointment to the Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee

The Panel did not appoint a Councillor as a non-voting co-opted Member to the Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee and or as substitute due to their being no volunteers, the appointment was referred to the Executive Leader, Councillor S Conboy, to make in the absence of a Panel nomination.

Call-ins considered during the municipal year 2025/26

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

Task and Finish and Working Groups during the municipal year 2025/26

One Working Group was established by the Panel during this municipal year, this working group looked at the formulation of the Council Tax Premiums Strategy. The work on the Disabled Facilities Grant group was completed and the Group will thereby be disbanded. The Climate Working Group met several times and discussed the Energy Strategy, the Fleet Decarbonisation Project and the Interim RECAP Partnership Waste Strategy.

Overview and Scrutiny Training and Development

Proposals for improved working methods

Following successful training sessions during the previous year, the Overview and Scrutiny Panels continued to take more ownership of their agendas and meetings were held to discuss both the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes and Agenda Planning. 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 8 recommendations were submitted to Cabinet for consideration during the municipal year.

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.

Bringing the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme to Life

Over the past four years, the Panels have sought to take more ownership of their agendas and topics discussed. As time has progressed, this new way of working has become more embedded in the way that Scrutiny operates and there are several successes to note from the past year.

The Panel had early sight and input on the Corporate Plan new performance indicator targets and tolerances and this scrutiny helped to shape the refresh of the Corporate Plan before it was brought through the democratic process for approval.

The Working Groups had early sight of several projects, including the Building Energy Strategy, the Fleet Decarbonisation project, the RECAP Partnership Waste Strategy and Council Tax Premiums. The input and scrutinization at an early stage helped Officers to shape and develop these projects before their implementation.

Following a Motion to Council, the Panel reviewed the Right to Grow Policy suggestion and through their scrutiny, Officers were able to navigate a way forward to the benefit of all. In addition, several topics, which had been presented to the Panels, were identified as requiring a further review in the future to scrutinise progress and success, these topics include the HDC Armed Forces Covenant, the One Leisure Solar Panels Installation, the implementation of usage for alternative fuels following a successful trial and the food waste collection service. The reviews of these topics have been included into the Panels forward agendas once a sufficient time period has passed to allow for meaningful scrutiny.

Finally, following the identification of Community Safety Partnerships as a topic of interest for scrutiny, work has been underway to progress the matter and it has been scheduled for review by the Panel in Autumn 2026.

Overview and Scrutiny in Huntingdonshire in 2026/27

Between them, the Panels have begun to develop a programme of work for 2026/27.

Topics already identified for possible inclusion are:

- Community Safety Partnerships
- One Leisure Solar Panel Installations – Review on progress
- Hydro-electric and small wind turbines
- Air quality and congestion
- Great Fen Project
- Immigration Reforms
- Food Waste Collection – Review on progress
- Electric vehicle charging infrastructure
- Alternative Fuels – Review on progress
- Places for People
- HDC Armed Forces Covenant – 12 month review

Studies will be completed on:

- Community Safety Partnerships
- KPIs

Looking ahead to 2026/27

A note from Councillor Tim Alban, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) Panel

To be a member of an Overview & Scrutiny Panel which covers some of the subject areas I care most about is really special and to chair it is a real privilege.

The Panel name and membership may have changed over the years, particularly in the six since I last chaired it but the willingness to work collaboratively across political groups remains.

During the 2026-27 Municipal Year the Environment Customers & Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Panel will have seven members who are serving their first term as district councillors and 5 who are existing councillors; our first meeting saw a high level of engagement, with plenty of suggestions of subjects and issues members want to consider alongside those which will come to the panel as part of the democratic process.

As 'back benchers' O&S gives us an opportunity to monitor performance, to scrutinise services and policies and to make recommendations or improvement and I am confident members of the panel will fulfil our obligations.

Looking ahead to 2026/27

A note from Councillor Andrew Wood, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny (Performance and Growth) Panel

Another year begins for Overview and Scrutiny (Performance and Growth) with much ahead of us, and I am pleased to continue the work of the previous administration who developed the scrutiny process to what it now is. This is in no small part due to the work of the previous Chair, Cllr Cath Gleadow and Vice Chairs, Cllr Sally Howell and Cllr Nic Wells, together with their supporting officers.

To be able to represent our residents on Huntingdonshire District Council is indeed an honour, and I am particularly honoured to Chair a Committee of such importance.

The work of the council supports many aspects of life in this District and it is essential that this is done effectively and efficiently. Our officers are all experts in their field and offer advice to councillors where necessary, enabling them to make decisions that reflect the desires and needs of residents.

Overview and Scrutiny is not there to micromanage all aspects of Council, and scrutinising all work that goes through Council is not an effective use of finite time and resources – doing this risks the O&S panels becoming a rubber stamp. However, areas of concern and particular importance should be seen by our committee and information is then presented to enable us to question aspects of that work. The introduction of member-led items through the topic suggestion process, which was introduced within the last administration, has increased the number of topics to be considered by the panel. This provides a real opportunity for backbench members of the Council to make a difference and influence the work of HDC.

One key function of this committee is to prioritise areas of interest and focus our attention where it can be of most value. The day-to-day work of council continues and we must strike a balance of ensuring that this progresses without distraction, whilst also reviewing information and procedures where positive outcomes can be achieved.

This is a particularly unusual year, in that The Council is aiming to publish a new Local Plan before the end of 2026 and we have the extraordinary task of preparing for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The deadline for the latter is set, and we must continue on the assumption that Vesting Day will happen on the 1st April 2027.

Work that is already within our Calendar, includes a regular review of our Corporate Performance Report for each quarter, The Local Plan, Strategic CIL Funding Allocation, Car Parking Strategy and, not least, the 2027/28 Revenue Budget & Medium-Term Financial Strategy. In addition to this we must select items from the Work Programme, which will be included within the calendar dependant upon urgency and value to be added.

It is an exciting time of change, and I look forward to working with all Members of the committee to achieve successful outcomes in all The Council's endeavours, always to the benefit of residents.