Overview and Scrutiny Service Plan 2006/07

Contents

INTRODUCTION		3
1	Purpose of the Plan	3
O&S RESOURCES		6
1	Committee Structure	6
2	Staffing	7
3	Scrutiny Office Structure Chart	7
4	Revenue Budget 2006/07	8
O&S PRODUCTS		9
1	Our Products	9
2	The Programme of Major Scrutiny Reviews	9
3	The Audit Committee	10
4	Local Government Ombudsman Liaison	10
OUR PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK		11
1	Our Customers	11
2	Our Service and Operations	12
3	Our People	13
4	Our Finances and Resources	13
OUR PERFORMANCE 2005/06		14
1	Our Customers' Feedback	14
	– Scrutiny Function	14
	– Local Government Ombudsman Liaison Function	15
2	Our Output	16
OUR PLAN FOR 2006/07		21
1	Our Corporate Targets	21
2	Our Work	21
3	Our Service Improvement Plan	26
4	Future Enhancements to the Scrutiny Function	28
Equalities Assessment – The Scrutiny Equality Action Plan		29
Risk Management		31

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This service plan can be downloaded from www.birmingham.gov.uk/scrutiny.

INTRODUCTION

Overview and Scrutiny is a Member-led function, supported by a dedicated Scrutiny Office. Its role stems from the Local Government Act 2000.

Government Guidance states that "Overview and Scrutiny Committees are the key element of Executive arrangements. These Committees are the main way by which the Executive is held to account in public for the discharge of the functions for which it is responsible." The arrangements therefore go to the heart of the concepts of accountability and transparency.

Its function is essentially to scrutinise the policies, procedures, practices and decisions being made, so as to bring about continuous service improvements. On the 1st January 2003 this legal responsibility was extended to include the health service.

The Scrutiny Office also provides:

- Liaison between the City Council and the Local Government Ombudsman
- Support to the new Audit Committee.

Through the focus on service improvement, our work contributes to all four of the City Council's *BEST* values. But because of its position as an accountability mechanism – whether to elected Members or to the Local Government Ombudsman – our scrutiny work is a key contribution in particular to developing trust between the City Council, its partners and Birmingham people, and also within our organisation.

1 Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this plan is to set out the objectives, priorities and performance targets for the Overview and Scrutiny function and highlight the clear links between the work that we do and the Council key priorities of –

- Investing in Improvement.
- Improving Services – aspiring for excellence in all our services.
- A City of Vibrant Urban Villages.

We support these priorities both through:

- The work we do (see Our Products) and
- The way we do it.

INVESTING IN IMPROVEMENT

The Council Plan says:

Our first priority is to improve the quality of life for people in Birmingham - we want to make Birmingham a Council that is recognised for its excellent services and efficient use of resources. Delivering better value for money through strong management, rigorous performance management and disciplined financial controls will unlock other improvements to our services.

Our workforce is essential to delivering these improvements. We are committed to developing our employees and managers and we will work with them to find ways of training and motivating staff to continue to improve our services.

We in Scrutiny aim to contribute to this by:-

- Managing people effectively by ensuring that staff understand their role clearly and how they contribute individually to the performance of Scrutiny.
- Managing attendance within prescribed levels and within the Council's policy.
- Equipping our people with the necessary skills and developing them in line with the current, emerging and future needs of Scrutiny including implementing Performance and Development Reviews and training managers to use them.
- Effectively utilising the resources available to the Scrutiny Office in order to achieve our service priorities.

IMPROVING SERVICES – ASPIRING FOR EXCELLENCE IN ALL OUR SERVICES

The Council Plan says:

By bringing information together about customers' needs and views, we will improve our services to meet individual needs. Our staff are vital to this and a diverse workforce helps us serve all of Birmingham's communities better. We will maintain our clear focus on the services that most need improvement. But we will also continue to seek excellence in all the services Birmingham people want.

We in Scrutiny aim to do this by:-

- Ensuring a balanced work programme including performance monitoring and following up on actions arising out of inspection reports.
- Conducting our work professionally and to set standards.
- Carrying out inquiries in a reasonable timescale.
- Facilitating cross-party involvement on all the work we do.
- Effective and consistent tracking of progress on recommendations.
- Helping Directorates deal with complaints effectively and improve services by learning from them.

A CITY OF VIBRANT URBAN VILLAGES

The Council Plan says:

Strong and vibrant communities that get on well together are central to the city's future success.

In our Local Area Agreement we have made a clear commitment to improving the quality of life for Birmingham people. By making the fastest improvements for those people and areas with the greatest needs we will close the gaps that exist between people and between areas.

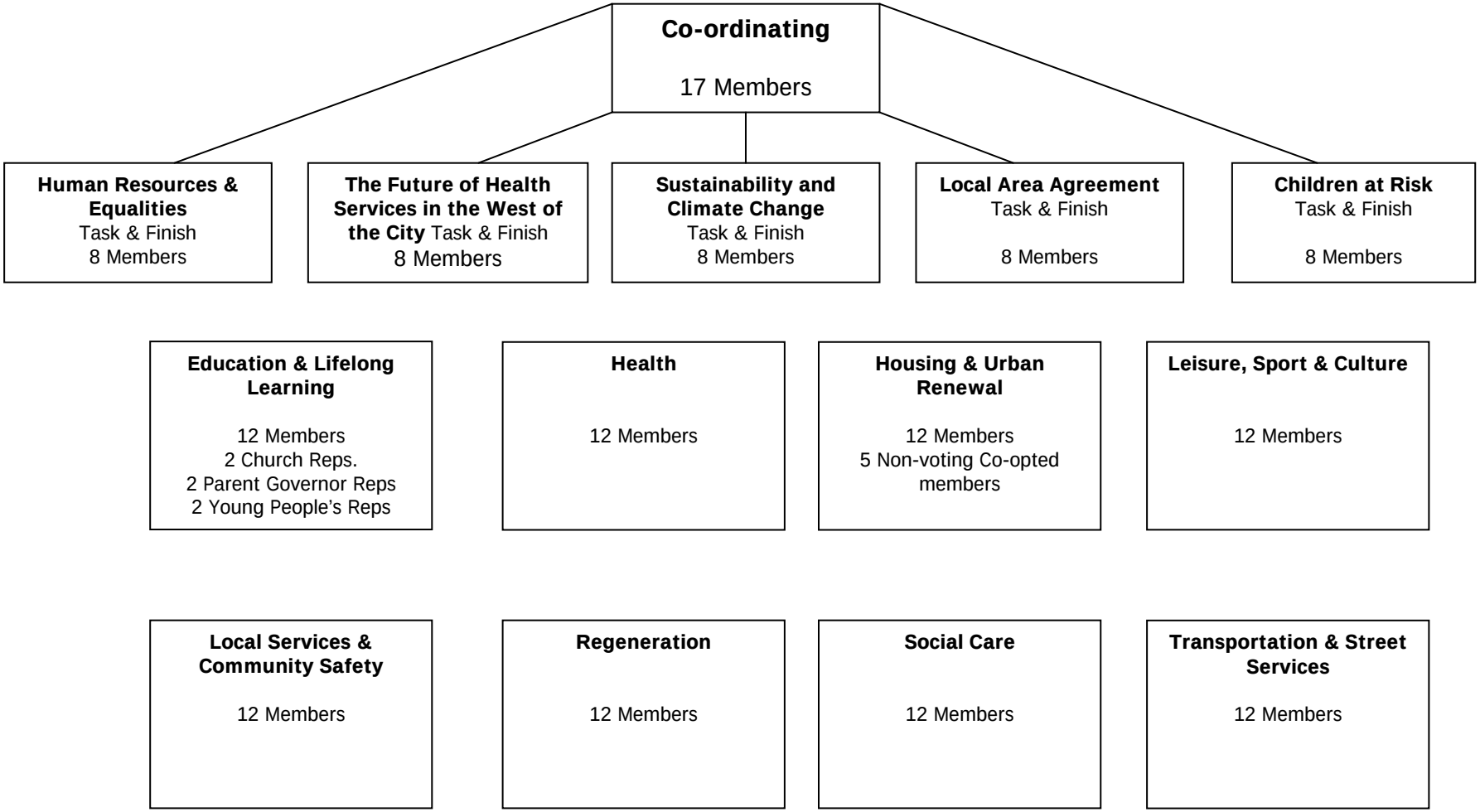
We in Scrutiny aim to do this by:-

- Encouraging public participation and engagement in Scrutiny work.
- Scrutinising and examining issues that are of concern to local people.
- Tackling issues that reduce health inequalities and improve health and well being.
- Supporting Scrutiny Members and Chairmen in their roles as community leaders.

O&S RESOURCES

Our key resource consists of the elected Members involved in the work and the supporting officers. In the current year, 85 Members sit on Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

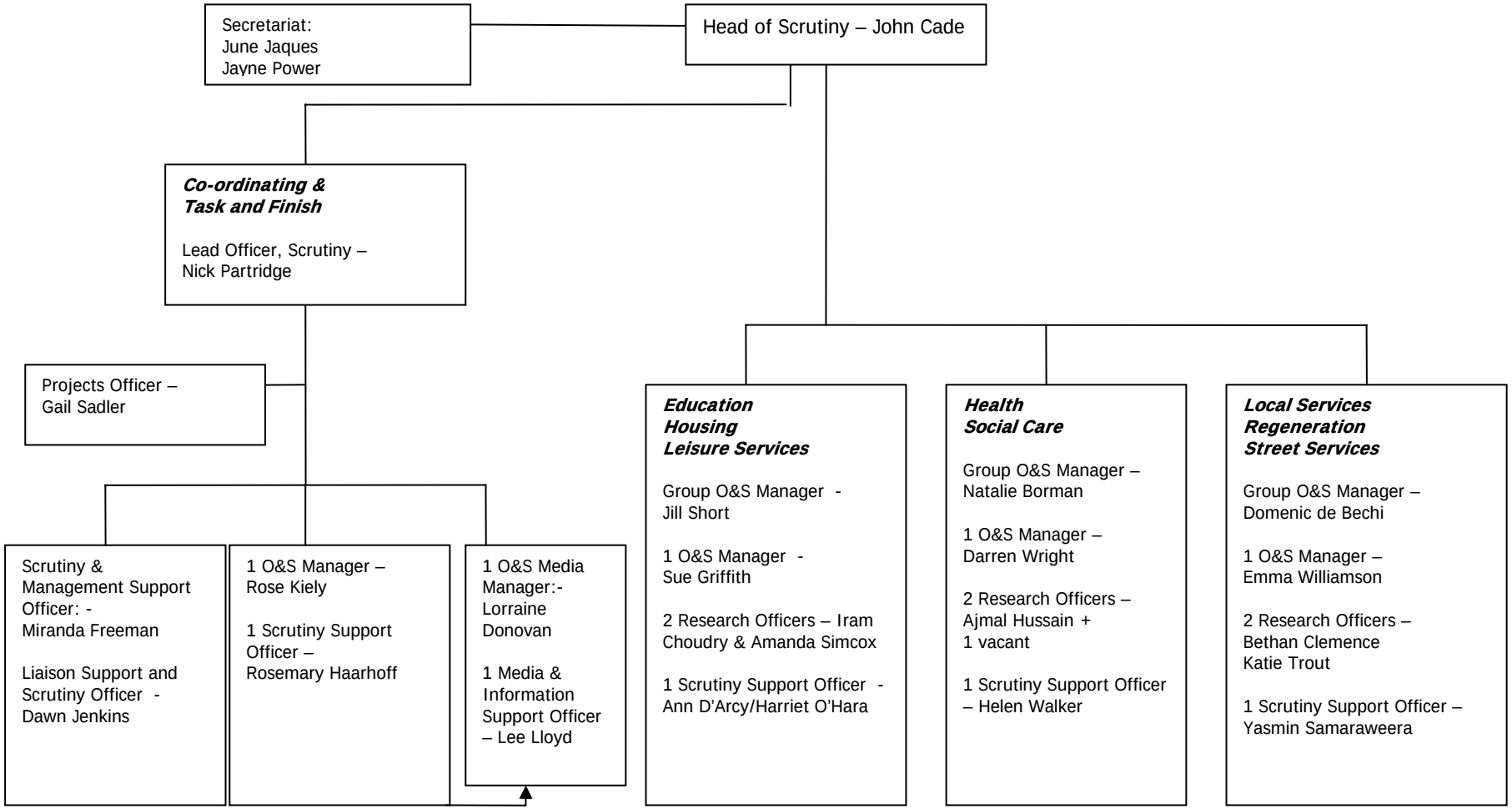
1 Committee Structure



2 Staffing

There are 25 fte posts in the Scrutiny Office, 76% being held by women and 24% by men. There was one vacant post at the end of July 2006. All staff are based in the Council House.

3 Scrutiny Office Structure Chart



4 Revenue Budget 2006/07

Employees	Premises	Transport	Supplies & Services	Support Services	GROSS EXPEN	Less: Rechargeable Expenditure	TOTAL AFTER RECHARGES
£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
942	40	1	180	127	1,290	0	1,290

Essentially, after taking out salary costs and the amount recharged to other City Council services, £143,000 is available this year to support the work of scrutiny and liaison with the Local Government Ombudsman.

O&S PRODUCTS

1 Our Products

O&S Committees have a variety of work through which they can both develop policy and hold the Executive to account. These include:

- major scrutiny reviews
- overview exercises
- scrutinising draft policy framework plans
- health consultations
- receiving financial and performance monitoring reports
- tracking the implementation of approved scrutiny recommendations
- call in of individual decisions
- the annual formal appearance of Cabinet Members at O&S Committees.

Liaison with the Local Government Ombudsman can lead to complaints against the City Council being settled in a number of ways, including being withdrawn, an amicable settlement, or in very few instances a formal report from the Ombudsman.

2 The Programme of Major Scrutiny Reviews

From an original position in the early days of scrutiny whereby Scrutiny Committees almost solely carried out lengthy reviews, we have deliberately diversified the work so as to become both more efficient and more effective. Nevertheless, major reviews continue to form some of the most significant work undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny, in terms of public interest and of impact on the City Council. They can be resource intensive, in terms of both Member and officer time. Therefore, issues are selected carefully, only proceeding with review topics which score highly on the established criteria:

- a high degree of public interest, political importance or sensitivity
- a significant contribution to the Council's wider governance role
- a high priority amongst City Council policy issues
- a significant improvement in service delivery and efficient management processes.

3 The Audit Committee

The purpose of the Audit Committee is to provide independent assurance to the Council on the following responsibilities:

i. the effectiveness of the risk management framework and the associated control environment;

ii. the effectiveness of the Council's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it might impact upon (i) above; and

iii. advising upon and/or reviewing the effectiveness of any other matters referred to the Audit Committee by the Executive, the Overview & Scrutiny and Regulatory Committees.

4 Local Government Ombudsman Liaison

To support excellence in our services by:-

i. managing the Council's relations with the Local Government Ombudsman

ii. advising Council Departments in relation to S.92 Local Government Act 2000 matters

iii. supporting the Scrutiny function.

OUR PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

We have designed and introduced our own performance framework. This allows us to assess our performance by measuring what we do through our performance indicators.

Overview & Scrutiny is the main contributor to Portfolio Priority 1.2 in the Council Plan which is to 'Create more opportunities for councillors to represent their constituents' views'. This is measured by the 'Percentage of members feeling satisfied that they can influence the policies and programmes of the City Council.'

That key performance measure is supplemented by our more detailed Performance Framework. There are five objectives across the components of the Performance Framework, as follows:

- **Our Customers**: There is professional guidance and support for the Scrutiny Activity and process and Committee members value the involvement of the Scrutiny Office;
- **Our Service and Operations**: Value is added to Executive processes, through Committees adopting a balanced work programme;
- **Our People**:
  - a) Sickness absence is within prescribed levels and is managed within the Council's policy;
  - b) Staff are developed in line with the current, emerging and future needs of Scrutiny;
- **Our Finances and Resources**: Scrutiny has sufficient financial resources and does not waste them.

1 Our Customers

No.	Indicator	Contents/Calculation
A1	Customer Satisfaction Survey of Scrutiny Members regarding the support service provided relating to their Scrutiny role and committee by Scrutiny Officers	This will be measured through the Scrutiny Satisfaction Survey, using the responses from the surveys of Elected Members – those who indicate that they are a member or Chair of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Q1). The measure will be of satisfaction indicated under "Q5: *How satisfied are you with the following aspects of the support that you receive?*", in relation to: • Support given by Scrutiny Office staff; • Support given by Link Officers, Support given by other officers; • Written reports from the Scrutiny Office, and Written reports from departments. **Calculated as:** % = (Very Satisfied + Fairly Satisfied for four categories) / (Total members of Overview and Scrutiny Committees responding *4)
A2	Customer Satisfaction Survey of Scrutiny Members regarding the support service provided relating to their Scrutiny role and committee by Link Officers and Departments	
A3	Customer Satisfaction Survey of Scrutiny Members regarding the support service provided relating to their Scrutiny role and committee by being kept informed about the portfolio of their committee	

No.	Indicator	Contents/Calculation
A4	Post-scrutiny opinion is 'positive'	This will be measured through the Scrutiny Satisfaction Survey, using the responses from the surveys of Officers. The measure will be of aggregate satisfaction indicated across all responses for *"(Information prior to the meeting) Q6: How satisfied were you with this information?"* *"Q9: How satisfied were you with the following? (Relevance of questions, Opportunity to put your point of view, Conduct of proceedings, Attention paid by members to the information provided, Feedback received after the meeting).*

2 Our Service and Operations

No.	Indicator	Contents/Calculation
B1	The proportion of items on Committee agendas in relation to Policy Framework Plans	3a: Items related to the 14 Policy Framework Plans laid down in the Constitution. 3b: Items related to (i) Financial monitoring reports, (ii) Performance Plan monitoring, (iii) Significant internal / external audits. 3d: Items related to (i) Policy development work (not already included in Policy Framework Plans), (iii) Specific items of overview work undertaken by Committees. **Calculated as**: % = (Total number of agenda items – including "other", i.e. those falling outside the above categories / number in each individual category) *100
B2	The proportion of items on Committee agendas in relation to Finance and Performance Monitoring	
B3	The proportion of items on Committee agendas in relation to Call In	
B4	The proportion of items on Committee agendas in relation to Overview	
B5	The proportion of items on Committee agendas in relation to Scrutiny Reviews	
B6	The proportion of items on Committee agendas in relation to Tracking of Scrutiny Recommendations	
B7	A current work programme is in place for all Overview and Scrutiny Committees	There is a work programme document available and up do date for each Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This should be the standard document, with limited variation according to specific Committee needs.

3 Our People

No.	Indicator	Contents/Calculation
C1	The average number of work days / shifts lost per employee	As defined within the corporate BV12 indicator.
C2	Return to Work Interviews are conducted within three working days of resuming work	The proportion of RTWIs that were conducted within three working days of the person resuming work. If the three working days cross the boundary of a monitoring period, this is included in the later period (for the purpose of this indicator only)
C3	% of Personal Development Reviews reviewed	Measured as the total number of staff that do not have a Personal Development Review outstanding beyond the timescales specified in the process.

4 Our Finances and Resources

No.	Indicator	Contents/Calculation
D1	Overall budget expenditure does not exceed budget, nor is there a shortfall of more than 5%	

OUR PERFORMANCE 2005/06

1 Our Customers' Feedback

Scrutiny Function

1.1 In Spring 2005/06 the Scrutiny Office undertook surveys to assess opinion of the Scrutiny process and Scrutiny's contribution to the Council's corporate priorities. Specifically, Elected Members, officers and external organisations who had been involved in Scrutiny and co-opted members were contacted.

1.2 The Member survey was conducted by MORI who conducted a telephone survey and gained a response rate of 83% (101 members). Three-quarters (77%) of Members were positive about their experience in Scrutiny with:

- 86% satisfied or very satisfied with support given by the Scrutiny Office staff;
- 82% satisfied or very satisfied with the *opportunity to suggest topics for review*;
- 78% satisfied or very satisfied with the *range of issues scrutinised*.

1.3 In addition 57% of Members said that they felt satisfied that they could *influence the policies and programmes of the City Council* – the key Scrutiny Performance Plan Indicator.

1.4 Officers and representatives of external organisations were asked to complete a paper questionnaire, and 29% and 40% respectively did so. Again, opinion of Scrutiny was positive:

- 80% of Officers were very or fairly positive about their experience at Scrutiny meetings, and in particular were satisfied with the *opportunity to put their point of view* and the *manner in which the proceedings were conducted*;
- 88% of external organisations representatives were very or fairly positive about their experience at Scrutiny meetings, with high satisfaction recorded with the *manner in which the proceedings were conducted* and that *the information provided received full and fair attention by Members of the Committee*.

1.5 Specific areas for improvement were raised. Member concerns focused on:

- The level of media coverage/interest in the work of Scrutiny;
- The level of public involvement.

1.6 Officers and external organisation representatives emphasised the need for better feedback after meetings, greater information about how Scrutiny fits in with decision-making and making it easier to identify Members and officers at meetings.

Local Government Ombudsman Liaison Function

The Local Government Ombudsman received 396 complaints against Birmingham City Council in 2005/06. This figure is marginally lower than the previous year. In the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Letter there is no criticism of the liaison function and, indeed, the Council was praised for the positive approach taken to resolving complaints via a local settlement when it was clear mistakes had been made. On the other hand, concerns were raised about the length of time taken to respond to enquiries and the completeness of those responses from Council Departments. Enquiries from the Ombudsman and responses from Council Departments are dealt with by the Scrutiny Office liaison function within 24 hours of receipt.

Last year, the Local Government Ombudsman determined 386 complaints against Birmingham City Council.

The LGO Annual Letter is available on www.lgo.org.uk/letters/pdfs/birmingham.pdf.

2 Our Output

This can be summarised as:

- eighteen major reports were presented to the full Council;
- Members requested the call in of 15 decisions made by the Executive; of these 4 decisions were actually called in, that is referred back to the Executive to think again;
- 9 statutory consultations were undertaken in response to proposals from various NHS bodies for major service variations;
- reports were received on 47 previous reviews, allowing Members to track the progress in implementing 359 recommendations agreed by the City Council;
- the Local Government Ombudsman determined 386 complaints against the Council.

More detail on each of these categories follows, but first we report our performance on achieving a balanced work programme. By this we mean using the full range of our products appropriately to add value to the work of the Executive.

Proportion of items on Committee agendas relating to:	%
Policy Framework Plans	2.1
Finance and Performance Monitoring	25.8
Call In of Executive Decisions	2.5
Overview	17.2
Scrutiny Reviews	23.2
Tracking Progress on Scrutiny Recommendations	11.2

By “balanced” we do not mean “equal proportions”. In fact this out-turn is closely in line with expectations at the beginning of the year, but with a higher proportion of items relating to finance and performance than were expected and fewer relating to overview exercises.

Major Reviews

Overview and Scrutiny presented 18 reviews to Council during 2005/06 as follows –

Report	Committee	Council Date
Involving Young People	Education and Lifelong Learning	7th June 2005
Learning in the 21st Century	Education and Lifelong Learning	7th June 2005
You are Your City	Local Services and Community Safety	7th June 2005
Operational Property Holdings	Regeneration	5th July 2005
Policy on the siting of telecommunication equipment on Council land and premises	Co-ordinating	5th July 2005
Birmingham Strategic Partnership	Co-ordinating	13th September 2005
Overview of the Management of Community Safety	Local Services and Community Safety	13th September 2005
Education and Training in Regeneration Programmes	Co-ordinating	11th October 2005
Second Inquiry into Electoral Matters	Electoral Matters Task & Finish	11th October 2005
Travelling to School	Transportation and Street Services	6th December 2005
Anti-Social Behaviour in Schools	Education and Lifelong Learning	10th January 2006
Recycling: Looking to the Future	Transportation and Street Services	10th January 2006
Mental Health Day Services	Social Care	7th February 2006
Section 31 Partnership Agreement between the City Council and Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Trust	Social Care	7th February 2006
Trees in the Public Highway	Leisure, Sport and Culture	7th February 2006
Problem Debt	Co-ordinating	4th April 2006

Traffic Management and Control	Transportation and Street Services	4th April 2006
Urban Design	Regeneration	4th April 2006

Call-Ins

There were 15 requests for call in, as follows:

Report Title	O&S Committee	Date	'Called in'
Fireworks Spectacular 2005	Leisure, Sport & Culture	8 June 2005	No*
Emergency Services Priority "Blue" Routes	Transportation & Street Services	11 July 2005	No
Voluntary Organisation Grants Allocation and Children's Play Schemes 2005/06	Leisure, Sport & Culture	20 July 2005	Yes
Our Homes Options Appraisal for Northfield, Selly Oak and Sutton Coldfield	Housing & Urban Renewal	3 August 2005	No
Winter Events Programme 2005	Leisure, Sport & Culture	17 August 2005	No
Operational Property Holdings – Creation of a Member led Property Board	Regeneration	19 August 2005	Yes
Business Transformation Strategic Partnership – Selection of Preferred Bidder	Co-ordinating	22 December 2005	No
Utilisation of Carry Forward Balances from 2004/5 (Perry Barr District Committee)	Co-ordinating	3 February 2006	No
Future of Tyburn Road Bus Lanes	Transportation & Street Services	14 February 2006	Yes
Tyburn Road Erdington (variation and revocation of bus lanes) Order 2006	Transportation & Street Services	15 March 2006	No

Report Title	O&S Committee	Date	'Called in'
Summer Events Programme 2006	Leisure, Sport & Culture	29 March 2006	No
Approval of the NRF Allocation 2006/7	Co-ordinating	31 March 2006	No
Grants to Arts Organisations	Co-ordinating	7 April 2006	Yes
Positioning of Boulton, Murdoch and Watt statue in Centenary Square	Leisure, Sport & Culture	26 April 2006	No*
Positioning of Boulton, Murdoch and Watt statue in Centenary Square	Leisure, Sport & Culture	23 May 2006	No

* decision withdrawn by Cabinet Member at meeting

Health Consultations

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a statutory responsibility to respond to consultations posed by the NHS but also to make a judgment as to whether the consultation has been carried out correctly. The standard timescale for a consultation is twelve weeks but the Committee can recommend that this should be longer if it feels that twelve weeks is insufficient to gauge views. During 2005/06 the Committee responded within the set timescales to all nine consultations:-

- Healthcare developments at Eastside
- The 3rd Forensic Medium Secure Unit in Yardley
- The reconfiguration of Primary Care Trusts
- The reconfiguration of West Midland-wide Strategic Health Authorities
- The reconfiguration of the West Midlands Ambulance Service
- The Child Development Centre at Allens Croft (recommended no statutory consultation required)
- Consultation on Smoke-free Elements of the Health Protection Bill
- Royal Orthopaedic Hospital Consultation on Foundation Trust Status
- Birmingham Children's Hospital Consultation on Foundation Trust Status.

Where the Committee concludes that the proposed service change will have an impact on the wider City Council we provide all directorates with an opportunity to comment on the drafted response. This serves to provide a one organisation response incorporating the views of both Scrutiny and the Executive. Examples of this approach can be seen in the consultations around the reconfiguration of the Primary Care Trusts and the creation of the regional Ambulance Service. Input was requested from the Executive to all but two of the consultations, those being the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital and Birmingham Children's Hospital Consultations on Foundation Trust Status.

Tracking Progress of Recommendations 2005/06

Our tracking process enables Members to assess regularly the progress made by the Executive in implementing Scrutiny's agreed recommendations. Last year, progress was assessed on 360 recommendations from 47 reviews. In nearly ninety per cent of cases, the recommendations were achieved or significant progress had been made. In only a very small number of cases did Members conclude that progress was too slow.

Progress Status	Number of Recommendations	% of Recommendations
Fully Achieved	170	47.2
Achieved Late	71	19.7
Not Achieved but Progress Made	72	20.0
Not Achieved – Obstacle	21	5.8
Not Achieved – Insufficient Progress	5	1.4
In Progress	21	5.8
TOTAL	360	100.0

OUR PLAN FOR 2006/07

1 Our Corporate Targets

The Council Plan 2006+ gives lead responsibility to the Chair of the Co-ordinating O&S Committee for achieving Priority 1.2:

"create more opportunities for councillors to represent their constituents' views"

Associated actions are to:

1. carry out scrutiny reviews related to the priorities in this plan and other matters of public interest; and
2. carry out work aimed at increasing value for money and efficiency.

At the end of the year we will assess the overall outcome again through the percentage of Members who are satisfied that they can *influence the policies and programmes of the City Council*. The City Council has set us the target of at least maintaining last year's level of 57%.

The two associated actions will be met through our work programme, not only by conducting major scrutiny reviews but also through our other activities such as performance and financial management. We will be particularly concerned to see that the City Council is obtaining sizeable and early returns on major investments it is making, as well as achieving the target efficiency savings.

In addition we will look again at our suite of products to make sure that every piece of Overview and Scrutiny work has as influential an outcome as possible.

In the following sections you can read about some of the key pieces of work we will be doing.

2 Our Work

The following reports will be presented to City Council in 2006/07:

Review Topic	O&S Committee	Expected Council Date
Environmental Wardens	Local Services and Community Safety	6th June 2006
Day Services for Adults	Social Care	11th July 2006
Devolution and Localisation	Co-ordinating	11th July 2006
Support to Small Businesses	Regeneration	12th September 2006
Overview of Community Engagement	Local Services and Community Safety	10th October 2006

Review Topic	O&S Committee	Expected Council Date
Recruitment and Retention of Teachers	Education and Lifelong Learning	10th October 2006
Anti-Social Behaviour	Local Services and Community Safety	7th November 2006
Youth Services	Education and Lifelong Learning	7th November 2006
Efficiency and Procurement	Co-ordinating	5th December 2006
Homelessness	Housing and Urban Renewal	5th December 2006
Building Bus Use	Transportation and Street Services	9th January 2007
School Admissions Procedures	Education and Lifelong Learning	6th February 2007
Well-Being Agenda	Social Care	13th March 2007
Home Care	Social Care	3rd April 2007

The conclusions of the Sustainability Task and Finish Committee, which is already underway, are not expected to be reported to the City Council until the 2007/8 municipal year, although an interim statement may be presented early in 2007. The scrutiny review of the Local Area Agreement is likely to be completed early in 2007/8.

Overview Exercises

A significant piece of overview work to be carried out by Overview and Scrutiny Committees this year is that of monitoring the progress of the Business Transformation programme. The programme itself is structured into 9 themes where significant changes in our business are proposed. Each theme will encompass a number of projects. Five of the themes are already in operation and four (marked * in the table below) are in the process of being set up. The following table shows which O&S Committee will take the oversight of different themes:

Committee	Business Transformation Theme
Co-ordinating	Customer Services* Property* Productivity* Information Management
Human Resources and Equalities Task and Finish	Excellence in People Management*
Social Care	Adult Services*
Local Services and Community Safety	Community and Environment
Education and Lifelong Learning	Children and Young People
Housing and Urban Renewal	Housing

Other significant pieces of overview work will be carried out by two of the Task and Finish Committees. The Human Resources and Equalities Committee will be looking at what the City Council is doing to achieve Excellence in People Management and other priorities in the Equalities and HR portfolio. The Children's Services Committee will maintain the necessary focus on improving services to vulnerable children whilst the new Children, Young People and Families Directorate beds down.

Scrutinising Draft Policy Framework Plans

Policy Framework Plans are a set of high-level policy statements which, by law, have to be approved by the full City Council before they can be implemented by the Executive. Overview and Scrutiny Committees help the Council by identifying weaknesses and controversial elements of draft Plans before they are submitted to the Council. In this way the majority of problems can be ironed out before the Council is asked to give its approval. In the coming year the following draft Plans and Strategies are to be considered by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee:-

Policy Framework Plans & Strategies	O&S Committee	Indicative Timetable for Reporting to City Council during 2006/07
Food Law Enforcement Plan (2006-07) (only variations to the plan now need to be reported to Council)	Local Services & Community Safety	September 2006
Adult Learning Plan	Social Care /Education & Lifelong Learning	October 2006
Taking Birmingham Forward 5 year plan (2005-10)	Co-ordinating	December 2006
Council Plan 2007+	Co-ordinating	February 2007
Birmingham Cultural Strategy	Leisure, Sport & Culture	March 2007

Health Consultations

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a statutory role in responding to NHS consultations where major service changes are proposed. During the year, we expect to be consulted on:

- Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospital NHS Trust – various changes including

  Towards 2010

  Women's Services

  Children's Services
- Merger of Good Hope Hospital and Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Tier 4 Restructuring
- Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Trust – Foundation Trust application

Local Government Ombudsman

The liaison work with the Local Government Ombudsman is demand led. We respond to the Ombudsman's requests for information and try to ensure that they receive a comprehensive response. Local Government Ombudsman requests for information and responses received from Council Departments are dealt with by the Scrutiny Office liaison function within 24 hours of receipt.

The Audit Committee

The Committee's work programme includes the Annual Audit Report, together with selected high risk reports produced by Birmingham Audit. This is in addition to the reports that the City Council is obliged to produce under statute. For example:-

- Annual Fraud Report
- Annual Fraud Report 2005/06
- Benefit Counter Fraud Team Annual Report 2006/05
- Statement of Internal Control
- Corporate Risk Register
- Audit Plan – Internal
- Audit Plan – External.

More details of each O&S Committee's Work Programme can be found at www.birmingham.gov.uk/scrutiny.bcc.

3 Our Service Improvement Plan

This section summarises our priority service improvements. These have been selected as a direct result of customer feedback through the MORI survey of Members, observations from officers and external organisations, and the Local Government Ombudsman's annual letter. Staff in the Office also regularly suggest ways of improving our work.

Performance Framework Element	Action	Date
Overall Performance Framework	• Complete revisions to targets and indicators	September 2006
Our Customers	**Communications**	
	• Clarify media service and service options • Establish system for updating web pages	September 2006
	• Revamp scrutiny web pages to make them more interactive • Clarify and set standards for media services • Check Members are receiving right information at the right time	December 2006
	Listening Strategy	
	• Develop public participation models/procedures note on public engagement	September 2006
	• Use these methods for engaging with public more often in specific reviews • Agree action plan for developing opinion survey of customers' perceptions	December 2006

Performance Framework Element	Action	Date
Our Service and Operations	• Identify comprehensive range of outcomes (the "Route Map") to ensure that every piece of Overview and Scrutiny work has as influential an outcome as possible. • Ensure procedure and guidance notes cover all areas of work and ways of working • Identify areas where we need standards and agree an example standard • Audit the tracking process with a view to including the impact of review recommendations	December 2006
Our People	• Develop staff management information database • Update and maintain the staff induction pack	September 2006
	• Work with HR colleagues to introduce systematic assessment of service quality • Implement staff management information database and systematic use of information	December 2006

Local Government Ombudsman	• Design and implement an IT-based system to support the work • Introduce system for more formal reporting of Local Government Ombudsman reports	December 2006

This programme is owned by the Head of Scrutiny and his management team, with named managers leading on each action.

4 Future Enhancements to the Scrutiny Function

At the moment Councillors are able to use their scrutiny powers to look at any activity undertaken by the City Council and the actions of the National Health Service in Birmingham. The Police and Justice Bill, currently before Parliament, proposes a further enhancement of scrutiny. If the Bill is approved, the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee will have the power to investigate how well the various local agencies, such as the Police, respond to residents' complaints about crime and disorder in their neighbourhoods.

This new power is not expected to come into force until spring 2007, but we will need to decide before then how exactly to operate it in Birmingham.

This particular enhancement is an example of what the Government terms "calls for action". The forthcoming local government white paper may contain proposals for more of these, extending the scrutiny role still further to cover other public service providers. We will need to make room in our 2006/7 work programme to consider these proposals, although they will not become legally binding for some time yet.

Equalities Assessment – The Scrutiny Equality Action Plan

The remit of each Overview and Scrutiny Committee explicitly contains the consideration of Equalities matters. In addition the Human Resources and Equalities Task and Finish Committee supports the work of the Cabinet Member in this area.

This is underpinned by the following actions within the Scrutiny Office:

Priority	Objectives	Date
Equality Impact and Needs Assessments (EINA) are completed and are current	Current EINA reviewed and reported to Equalities Will need to be reviewed again once the new EINA template has been finalised	April 2006 Once template finalised
Equality Action Plan is in place and current	No Equality Action Plan is planned for Chief Executive's Directorate - EAP for Scrutiny to be prepared to append to Service Plan	August 2006
The Equality Standard	Scrutiny is currently contributing to the ongoing work needed to take forward the Equality Standard over the next 6 months Representative from Equalities to be asked to attend team meeting to brief/raise awareness of the Racist Incident Monitoring Procedure and of the ongoing work being done around the Equalities Standard Equalities Evidence File to be updated with index to evidence held for the Equality Standard	 October 2006 July 2006
Racist Incident Monitoring Process is in place	Racist Incident Monitoring Procedure has been rolled out, signed forms are on evidence file, copies passed to Equalities, confirmation sent to Equalities on consolidation exercise looking back to April 2005 and monthly returns are being made in accordance with the corporate procedure.	Ongoing

Priority	Objectives	Date
Ensure that monitoring other Equalities areas is in place (gender, age etc.)	Disability, gender, faith and age were covered in initial screening. These will be reviewed when EINA is reviewed when the new EINA template has been finalised. Next revision of the Performance Framework must explicitly consider how best to integrate Equalities in terms of removing barriers.	September 2006
Induction	As part of general update/review of the Induction Manual, Equalities items need to be incorporated.	September 2006

Risk Management

Directorate/Division/Project: Scrutiny Office Date produced August 2006

Risk / opportunity information			Counter Measures		
No.	Description of Risk / Opportunity and Risk / Opportunity owner	Inherent Risk (Likelihood / Impact)	Description of current controls / mitigation in place and date when controls were last reviewed and reported upon	Residual Risk (Likelihood/ Impact)	Further controls proposed, and date for implementation
1	Risk that the function is not influential within the City Council Risk / Opportunity owner: Head of Scrutiny	Significant/ Significant	Carrying out a balanced programme of work to clear and set standards Last reviewed May 2006	Low/ Significant	• identify comprehensive range of outcomes (the "Route Map") to ensure that every piece of Overview and Scrutiny work has as influential an outcome as possible. • ensure procedure and guidance notes cover all areas of work and ways of working • ensure clear standards are in place wherever needed • audit the process for tracking the implementation of recommendations Date: December 2006

2	Risk that the reputation of Birmingham City Council is damaged by the work we do (both scrutiny and Ombudsman functions can lead to the publicising of cases of poor or bad practice) Risk / Opportunity owner: Head of Scrutiny	Significant/ Significant	Providing clear information to the public about the work we do, advice on how best to take forward their issues, and looking to include public and service users' views in our work Last reviewed May 2006	Medium/ Medium	• develop and use public engagement models • provide more, and more timely, publicity including through an attractive web-site • ensure Members are receiving the information they need at the right time for them Date: December 2006
3	Risk of failure to carry out statutory functions Risk / Opportunity owner: Head of Scrutiny	Significant/ High	Member and officer resources and skills in place. Positive response to Ombudsman's earlier request to strengthen the liaison function. The Police and Justice Bill proposes an enhancement of the scrutiny function. Further enhancements may be proposed in the forthcoming Local Government White Paper Last reviewed May 2006	Low/ Significant	• develop IT support to the Ombudsman liaison function • track and assess the impact of statutory changes as they become clear Date: May 2007
4	Risk that resources are not managed as efficiently and effectively as possible Risk / Opportunity owner: Head of Scrutiny	Significant/ Medium	Systems for finance and performance management in place.\managers trained in HR requirements and expectations, e.g. managing absence, performance and development reviews Last reviewed May 2006	Medium/ Low	• implement single staff information database • ensure we have capacity to comply with all corporate requirements Date: December 2006