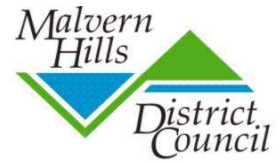


# Overview & Scrutiny

## Annual Report 2009 - 2010





## Foreword from the Chairman

I am delighted to present this report on behalf of Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2009 – 10. As you will see from the report this has been a year of significant development for this Committee.

We continue to provide the 'critical friend' challenge to the Council's own performance in delivering services but are also evolving to meet the challenges associated with the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Area Assessment, the new framework for the independent assessment of local public services and the outcomes they produce. This was evidenced in the district wide place survey, which captures local people's views, experiences and perceptions, about the local area, rather than the Council specifically. We scrutinised the results of the survey and acted to champion a number of local concerns highlighted by our residents.

The experience that members have gained over the past few years has stood the Committee in good stead for this important evolving Council function, providing reassurance that the Council is championing the interests of residents within the District.

In relation to acting as champion, it was gratifying that the Committee's work was evidenced in the Council's recent equalities self assessment, in which the Council was recognised by the I&DeA as reaching Achieving Status. Our approach has equalities at its heart and like the Council as a whole, we are keen to build on the good works already established.

This past year has also seen a number of opportunities for this Council to join with our neighbouring authorities to conduct joint scrutiny work. This is an area that I am sure will develop strongly in the future of Overview and Scrutiny, at both District and County level, while concurrently developing Overview and Scrutiny within MHDC.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Committee for their continued diligence, enthusiasm, professionalism and impartiality; all essential skills for confidently conducting robust scrutiny that demonstrates the Council's commitment to overseeing a better future for the residents of Malvern Hills District in 2010 and beyond.

I am also grateful to officers, Executive Portfolio Holders our Parish and Town Council representatives and other attendees who have contributed to our outputs this year.

Finally thanks are due to Nigel Snape, Head of Legal & Governance, for his valued advice and Karen Jarman, Democratic Services Officer, for her continuing support to the committee this year.



Cllr Tom Wells



# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>What is Overview and Scrutiny?</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Scrutiny Process and Organisation</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Overview and Scrutiny Reviews</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Pre-Executive Scrutiny</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Equalities and Diversity</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Task and Finish Reviews</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Future Reviews</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Developing Overview and Scrutiny</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Getting Involved</b>	<b>19</b>

## **Introduction and Overview**

The intention of this report is to provide an insight into the District Council's Overview and Scrutiny process and summarise the work that has been undertaken by the Committee and Task & Finish groups over the past year.

Our intervention in 2009/10 has made a key difference to the District in the following areas:

### **✓ Discretionary Rural Rate Relief**

We called representatives from the South Worcestershire Revenues and Benefits Shared Service to provide an explanation into delays reported by local businesses who had applied for discretionary rural rate relief within Malvern Hills' District.

Our intervention ensured delays in processing of applications were addressed and shaped a review into the procedures followed, which resulted in processes being put in place to deal with applications more expeditiously.

### **✓ Development Control Performance**

We called for an explanation into the dip in performance indicators for development control.

We were advised a new planning computer system was in the process of being installed but implementation had been more complicated and time consuming than anticipated.

We were reassured that delays in performance were temporary and expected to be resolved by the end of March 2010. We have asked for a report to come back to this Committee in June 2010 should the situation not improve as anticipated.

### **✓ Revenues & Benefits Shared Service**

Our informal fact finding session (March 2009) with South Worcestershire Revenues and Benefits Shared Service representatives to investigate a reduction in performance for Malvern Hills' District prompted a joint scrutiny review by the three authorities participating in this Shared Service – Wychavon District, Worcester City and Malvern Hills District Councils.

The joint scrutiny commenced in August 2009 and included within its terms of reference a review of:

1. The final business case for the Shared Service (as agreed by the three participating Councils) against current operation;
2. The performance of the service prior to and past the establishment of the shared service
3. The levels of customer satisfaction prior to and following establishment
4. To consider the governance arrangements between the shared service and the participating Councils to include how changes to the service requested by one or more Councils can be achieved and how equity of service between the authorities is maintained.

Each of the three authorities appointed a representative and substitute Member (ours being Cllr Paul Cumming with Cllr Roger Sutton as substitute)

Our Committee received and endorsed the [Joint Scrutiny Team's Final Report](#) at our meeting in March 2010.

*These demonstrate the Council's commitment to improve services for the community.*

### ✓ Budget Scrutiny 2010/11

The Committee's robust scrutiny of the draft capital and revenue budget 2010/11 aired several issues including:

- Gas Lamps
- We provided the opportunity for local concerns about the proposals to cease the Council's contribution of £18,000 for the maintenance of the District's gas lamps from 2011/12, to be taken into account as part of the Council's decision making process.
- Our intervention also ensured that the Parish and Town Councils concerned are consulted over these proposals.

*This demonstrates the Council's commitment to inclusive decision making.*

- Concessionary Swimming for the over 60s
- One of the Council's priorities for 2010 was improving the wellbeing of older people. With this in mind we were surprised at the proposal to remove the Council's contribution of £8,000 towards concessionary swimming for the over 60s (grant funding of £39,000) when the current government scheme ends in 2011/12.
- We were pleased that Executive Committee agreed that this would be reviewed as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan update for 2011/12 - 2013/14.

*This demonstrates the value that Overview and Scrutiny can bring to the Council's decision making process.*

### Local Democracy in Action

#### ✓ Arranging Assistance for Our Parish and Town Councils

- Litter Picking
- We assisted Parish and Town Councils who conduct litter picking by arranging for the District Council to either collect the bags of litter collected or to provide the Parish Council with a voucher, verifying they were not a business, to be presented at the landfill site at Hill & Moor to allow disposal.

*This demonstrates the Council's commitment to inclusive decision making and local democracy in action.*

## Scrutinising Public Services

The Committee's role of the community's watchdog on behalf of the Council also extends to scrutinising other partner public bodies. The focus of the Committee has turned more to meet this challenge in light of the way scrutiny is evolving to mirror the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Area Assessment, from focusing on council services to looking more broadly in terms of how the District Council performs in the context of the performance of the District as a whole.

### ✓ Championing Our Residents' Concerns

As such we examined the results of the district wide IPSOS MORI Place Survey conducted in 2008, and have called for evidence on three areas highlighted as matters of local concern throughout the district:

- Public Transport Provision
- Police Engagement with the Local Community
- Road & Footway Repairs (to Include Road Injury and Death)

### ✓ Identifying Obstacles to Delivering Rural Affordable Housing

The provision of rural affordable housing was also highlighted as a concern within the Place Survey. This had already been picked up for investigation by the Committee via the establishment of a Task & Finish Group to identify why rural affordable housing is not being delivered.

Part of the Task & Finish Group's work has involved consultation involving all our District, Parish and Town Councils, Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils, The Rural Housing Enabler for Worcestershire, all Registered Social Landlords who have been involved in delivering and letting rural affordable housing in the District.

The Group were due to meet with the Homes & Communities Agency, who provide funding for delivering rural affordable housing but this has been postponed due to the General Election purdah period. However the investigation is drawing to a conclusion and the Final Report is expected shortly

*These demonstrate the Council's commitment to, where possible, improve public services and quality of life for local residents.*

## What is Overview & Scrutiny?

Overview & Scrutiny aims to make the Council's decision-making process more accountable, transparent and inclusive and improve services to the community by:

- Holding the Council's Executive Committee and Planning Committee to account for the decisions they make;
- Reviewing and developing the Council's policies to ensure that they improve the well being of the community;
- Scrutinising the performance of outside organisations whose work affects the local community.
- Designated as the Council's Crime & Disorder Committee (September 2009) for the purposes of s.19 police and Justice Act 2006 as amended.

Once again this year, Overview and Scrutiny Committee is able to provide Malvern Hills District Council with the assurance that we have fulfilled our role to act as the Council's watchdog by reviewing Council service delivery, policies and processes to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

## Scrutiny Process and Organisation

Overview and Scrutiny is carried out by Councillors who do not sit on the Council's Executive Committee and can therefore approach issues with independence from the Council's key decision-making body.

The Committee's work programme is delivered in part through Task & Finish Groups, which are established as and when required to undertake detailed reviews. Both the Committee and Task and Finish Groups gather as much evidence as they can about an issue by undertaking research, for example, speaking with service users and community groups; questioning Portfolio Holders, Council officers or representatives from other public bodies; or undertaking fact finding visits. Overview and Scrutiny provides an excellent opportunity for the public to become involved in influencing services by providing evidence to the Groups and the Committee. There are also opportunities for the public to become directly involved in a review, including co-option onto the Committee or a Group.

Resulting Reports and recommendations for improvement when formulated are referred to Executive Committee, Planning Committee or Council for consideration.

The Committee usually meets 10 times per year. Task and Finish Groups meet as and when required, with only one operating at any one time due to resource constraints.

The membership of Task & Finish Groups may include any Member of the Council, except Executive Committee Members and, during investigations concerning planning policy will not include Planning Committee Members. This is a way for "back bench" Members to directly influence the Council's decision making.

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee currently comprises: Cllrs Tom Wells (Chairman); Mike Morgan (Vice-Chairman); Bronwen Behan; Serena Croad, Paul Cumming, Sue Gill and Roger Sutton.



Cllrs Serena Croad and Paul Cumming were appointed to the committee at Annual Council in June 2009 replacing Cllrs Jill Campbell and Marian Walters MBE.

We were most grateful to the dedication and contribution of Cllrs Walters and Campbell in the time served on the Committee and their sterling efforts that contributed to our making a difference.

The Committee welcomed our two new appointees who brought valuable attributes to the scrutiny table – Cllr Croad who served as Leader of this Council from May 2007 until April 2009; and Cllr Cumming with his extensive background in finance and previous Executive Portfolio experience.

We have continued with the allocation of an area of council responsibility for each member of the Committee, with the exception of the Chairman, in order for each member to have an insight and develop a specialism, the aim being for them to take the lead on scrutiny on matters within their respective Executive Portfolio areas.

This has worked well in most areas, with Committee member and their respective Head of Service developing a fruitful relationship. However, it was felt that it would be beneficial to review the frequency of meetings and to possibly rotate areas of responsibility, this is something we will discuss at a future meeting.

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Overview and Scrutiny Committee updates its work programme at each meeting. Managing the work programme with this flexibility enables the Committee to consider matters of local concern, not previously scheduled but which may merit inclusion.

Last year we asked our partners to submit items that they wished to be considered for inclusion, in advance of the Committee meeting in workshop mode, where the work programme for the year is reviewed.

This was considered a successful approach and one that has been replicated.

### Overview and Scrutiny Reviews

#### Discretionary Rural Rate Relief

This item was included in our work programme following reports of delays in processing applications that were causing hardship to the rural businesses concerned.

Rural businesses such as post offices, general stores, food stores, public houses and petrol stations who serve rural settlements with a population of less than 3000 automatically receive mandatory rural rate relief, which reduces their business rates by 50%. They can then apply for discretionary rural rate relief which reduces their

liability by a further 25% if the Parish Council support the application in principle or by 50% (i.e. 100% reduction) if the Parish Council also provide financial support.

We invited representatives from the South Worcestershire Revenues and Benefits Shared Service to our meeting in January 2010 to provide an explanation into the reported delays.

We discovered that there had been delays in the consultation with Parish Councils due to a number of factors, in particular resource and capacity issues resulting from the increased overall workload within revenues and benefits due to the general economic downturn. This had resulted in delays in the processing of discretionary rural rate relief applications.

We welcomed the commitment given by the Chairman of the South Worcestershire Shared Service Joint Committee to conduct a review of the discretionary rural rate relief applications process and were gratified that our recommendations were included as part of the review, which included, streamlining current processes, the date for applications being brought forward to before the start of the financial year to which they relate, earlier consultation with parish councils, a proper procedure to follow up on non-responsive parish councils, consideration of consulting local ward councillors in lieu of the Parish Council where no response has been received from the latter, consultation with councillors across the three participating South Worcestershire authorities on how they could become more involved in the process generally.

We are due to receive the draft outcomes of the review in the near future.

On a positive note, we were pleased to congratulate the Head of Service for South Worcestershire Revenues and Benefits Shared Service, when he updated the committee in March 2010 and advised that applications were now up to date.

## Flooding

The meeting in June 2009 scrutinised the Water Engineering Flood Study Stage 2 Report, produced by BWB Consultants and included the Council's proposals for implementing the recommendations in respect of the 19 priority sites that had been identified.

We were pleased to welcome a number of our Parish and Town Council representatives and local residents to participate in this meeting.

We identified that workshops were proposed as a means of progressing a solution in respect of each of the priority areas identified in the BWB report which we endorsed. We also stressed the importance of Parish Councils and Local District Ward Councillors being involved in that process.

We welcomed the assurance given by the Council's Environment Team Manager that the Council's momentum in responding to the problems of flooding in the District would not be lost and that arrangements for the proposed workshops could be progressed without awaiting the appointment of the new facilitator (now in post).

We were concerned at the extent of the gap between the estimated cost of implementing the recommendations in the BWB report and the level of funding currently available from the Council. Some doubt was expressed as to the likelihood

of solutions being implemented if these were reliant upon individual property owners to provide the funding.

There were many other properties in the District, outside of the priority areas identified in the report, that had suffered flooding and the Council's existing Land Drainage Officers would continue to focus on the Council's enforcement role in relation to land drainage generally.

At this meeting the Committee also noted the findings of an informal meeting that took place between this Council and Wychavon District Council (March 2009) in order to explore Wychavon's approach to flooding.

One of the findings was that Wychavon District Council operated a £5,000 grant scheme to support local flood alleviation projects where parish councils were encouraged to identify local schemes that could qualify for assistance under the scheme and be encouraged to match-fund using their precepting powers.

We considered this a positive initiative and asked that Executive Committee consider the possibility of this Council implementing a similar scheme, possibly involving match funding from parish councils or community groups.

The Committee also continues to monitor progress on recommendations arising from our Task and Finish investigation into the District Council's Response to the Summer Floods 2007. Our meeting in October 2009 found that:

- Residents of fifteen properties within the District continued to be displaced as a result of the summer floods 2007. We recommended that Executive Committee consider extending the period for Council Tax Relief afforded to those properties that remain uninhabited as a result of the floods.
- Some of our Parish Councils are not currently involved in preparing Community Emergency Support Plans. We asked that the Head of Performance and Policy encourage and support those Parish/Town Council's that are not already doing so to prepare Community Emergency Support Plans, using those that have already been completed as examples of best practice.

### Litter, Road and Footway Cleaning & Grass Verge Cutting

This item had been included in the work programme following submission by Hallow Parish Council who requested the Committee investigate the levels & adequacy of road cleaning (including footways) & litter removal within the District and the provision of support to communities which are prepared to assist with these functions.

We were pleased to welcome a number of our Parish and Town Council representatives who participated in this meeting.

We discovered that Parish Councils were keen for the development of the parish lengthsman scheme to take in such matters as litter picking, grass cutting, weed spraying etc and that the lengthsman scheme was taken up by 90% of Parish and Town Councils within the District.

It was interesting to note that Worcestershire County Council's budget for the Lengthsmen Scheme had increased from £161,000 in 2008/09 to £200,000 for 2009/10, and that funding could be made available to reimburse Parish/Town Clerks for their time taken up with the scheme.

We recognised the potential to further develop partnership working with County, District and Parish/Town Councils. Our resulting recommendations included that the District Council assist our Parish and Town Councils who conduct litter picking by arranging to either collect the bags of litter or to provide them with a voucher to arrange their own disposal at the landfill site at Hill & Moor. This was in recognition of the initiative demonstrated by our Parish and Town Councils.

### Local Area Agreement – Malvern Hills District Council's Approach to Environmental Efficiency

We conducted an overview of the District Council's progress towards achieving its Local Area Agreement Targets, the findings of which prompted us to request an update on how the District Council was addressing environmental efficiency, which we received at our December meeting.

We noted that whilst the Council had signed up to the Worcestershire Climate Change Pledge 2009, and had established a Project Board to identify a way forward in progressing Environmental Efficiency, corporate targets had not been established to reduce its carbon footprint. We recommended that Executive Committee establish corporate targets for reductions in stationery, vehicle and energy usage and that the Head of Performance and Policy consider the appropriateness of the Council subscribing to the 10:10 initiative.

### District Wide IPSOS MORI Place Survey

At our meeting in October, we received a presentation on the outcome of the District Wide IPSOS MORI Place Survey conducted in 2008. We scrutinised the findings and resolved to include in our work programme those issues highlighted most frequently as matters of local concern by our residents, which were:

- Public Transport Provision
- Police Engagement with the Local Community
- Road & Footway Repairs (to include Road Injury and Death)

We were already addressing rural affordable housing provision, also highlighted as a concern, via the ongoing Task & Finish Group looking into the obstacles to delivering rural affordable housing.

### Public Transport Provision

The Committee acted to champion this issue on behalf of residents. Representatives from Worcestershire County Council, who have responsibility for public transport provision were in attendance at our January 2010 meeting, as was Councillor Mike Biddle, Malvern Hills District Council representative to Malvern Hills Transport Partnership.

Comments concerning public transport provision within the District, identified by Ward, had been extracted from the Place Survey and shared with those in attendance.

The Committee explored a number of key lines of enquiry, including how Worcestershire County Council intended to address the issues raised by residents within the Place Survey.

As a result of our intervention, Worcestershire County Council agreed to provide a response to each of the issues concerning public transport provision extracted from the District-wide Place Survey. We expect to receive this shortly and depending on the outcome may require further scrutiny.

We also recognised that more effective use could be made of Malvern Hills Transport Partnership as a means to raise issues of concern by the District Council and its residents.

- **Police Engagement with the Local Community**
- We are due to meet with representatives from West Mercia Constabulary at our meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2010, to examine police engagement with the local community. May we take this opportunity to remind you that all are welcome to attend and participate in our meetings.
- **Road & Footway Repairs (to include Road Injuries and Death)**
- This issue, again identified as a local concern by our residents within the Place Survey results has subsequently also received national media interest following the adverse impact on the condition of roads following the extreme weather conditions and heavy snow falls experienced this winter. We have yet to confirm a date to discuss these issues, but updates can be found via the Work Programme, which is included as a standing agenda item.

### Pre-Executive Scrutiny

The Committee was pleased this year to have more opportunity to conduct pre-Executive scrutiny. The Council has developed a forward plan, which the Committee have requested be considered at meetings as a standing agenda item. This may provide the opportunity for more pre-decision scrutiny, adding value to the council's decision making process by demonstrating an accountable, transparent and inclusive way of conducting business.

Pre-Executive Scrutiny this year included:

#### ➤ Medium Term Financial Plan

Following scrutiny of the draft medium term financial plan 2010/11 to 2012/13 Overview and Scrutiny Committee were pleased to support the underlying principles and the approach being adopted in the proposed Medium Term Financial Plan.

## ➤ Budget Scrutiny

The Committee conducted a robust scrutiny of the draft capital and revenue budget 2010/11 <sup>1</sup> which highlighted several areas including:

- **Gas Lamps**
  - We provided the opportunity for local concerns about the proposal to cease the Council's contribution of £18,000 for the maintenance of the District's gas lamps from 2011/12, to be taken into account as part of the Council's decision making process.
  - Our intervention also ensured that relevant Parish and Town Councils are to be consulted over these proposals.
- **Concessionary Swimming for the over 60s**
  - One of the Council's priorities for 2010 is improving the wellbeing of older people. With this in mind we were surprised at the proposal to remove the Council's contribution of £8,000 towards concessionary swimming for the over 60s (grant funding of £39,000) when the current government scheme ends in 2011/12. We recommended that alternative funding sources should be sought in preparation for the cessation of grant funding.
  - We were pleased that Executive Committee agreed that this would be reviewed as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan update for 2011/12 - 2013/14.

## ➤ Worcestershire Enhanced Two Tier (WETT) Programme

Following consideration at our meeting in December 2009, we were pleased to support the recommendations of the Shared Services Reference Group in relation to the proposed shared services for Internal Audit, Regulatory Services and Property Services. In relation to Regulatory Services we recommended to Executive Committee that the subsequent detailed service specification to be drawn up should prioritise Customer Focus and ensure that future service levels for this Council are at least equivalent to those currently delivered.

## ➤ Single Equality Scheme 2010 – 2013

We were pleased to offer our endorsement to the Council's Single Equality Scheme, prior to Executive Committee decision.

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<sup>1</sup> full details can be found in the Overview and Scrutiny minutes from 9<sup>th</sup> February 2010

## The Committee's Contribution to I&DeA Peer Equalities Assessment of MHDC

We received regular updates on how the Council was progressing equalities and diversity initiatives within the framework for local government, in preparation for the Council's I&DeA Peer assessment.

Our meetings also encourage public engagement in the local decision making process, and reinforce the Council's commitment to an inclusive decision making process.

It was gratifying that our work was evidenced in the Council's recent equalities self assessment, considered as part of the peer assessment in which the Council was recognised as reaching achieving status. We are keen to build on good works already established.

### Task & Finish Reviews 2009/10

This year the task and finish area of work has been dominated by the investigation into obstacles to delivering rural affordable housing throughout the District. This is something that has been of concern to Members for a number of years and the District wide place survey claimed it was also a matter of concern to residents.

The Committee was most grateful to Cllr Bronwen Behan who agreed to chair this investigation. The report detailing the group's findings is expected shortly.

### Monitoring Malvern Hills District Council's Performance

Part of the Committee's remit is to hold Executive Committee and Senior Management to account, especially where performance is a cause for concern.

The Committee regularly scrutinises the Council's Performance Indicators. Our meeting in January 2010 highlighted a drop in performance statistics for Development Control, which was reportedly as a result of the implementation of a new computer system. The Committee called for an explanation into how this had impacted on development control performance.

At our March meeting, we identified that the business case for this project included a three month period for implementation. With hindsight this was considered insufficient in terms of both planning for and implementing such a complex system change. Other local authorities undertaking similar changes had not been so severely impacted due to allowing a longer timeframe for implementation, between twelve and eighteen months which was considered more realistic.

We were reassured that the drop in performance was considered temporary and aimed to be resolved by the end of March 2010. We have asked that a further report be provided to our June meeting should the situation not improve as anticipated.

## Monitoring Progress of Previous Task & Finish Reviews

In addition to the District Council's response to summer floods 2007, as mentioned earlier in this report, we also receive regular progress reports on other Task and Finish Reviews completed on behalf of this Committee, including:

- **Review of Positive Activities available to young persons aged 13 to 17 years throughout the district**

Teenagers are identified as one of the District's priorities for 2010. This Committee provides the Council a valuable monitoring role, ensuring that the recommendations benefiting the District's teenagers, as part of this Review agreed by Executive Committee in 2008, are returned to us to examine progress.

At our meeting in October 2009, we asked that the Head of Planning and Housing look into utilising s106 monies for the maintenance of playing fields.

- **Review of Disabled Facilities Grants Administered within Malvern Hills' District**

Provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) is a mandatory grant scheme that is provided to fund adaptations to properties to enable persons affected by disability to live or continue to live independently and safely in their homes.

At our meeting in February 2010 we found that the Council had maintained its level of funding (£300,000) for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) for 2010/11 and the same was also projected for 2011/12 and 2012/13. However the demand for DFGs was still overcommitted.

We were pleased that arrangements were progressing for Malvern Hills to join the South Worcestershire Home Improvement Agency (HIA). This offered a range of solutions, not just limited to DFGs, with a more holistic and sustainable approach.

We were advised that a comprehensive report on how the Council is looking to improve the support to people to live independent lives in their own homes was due to be submitted to Executive Committee.

## Future Planned Reviews

### **Police Consultation with the Local Community**

We are due to meet with representatives from West Mercia Constabulary at our meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2010, to examine police engagement with the local community. Please feel free to come along if you want to find out more or represent the views of your community.

### **Road & Footway Repairs (to include Road Injuries and Death)**

This issue was identified locally within the Place Survey as a cause for concern to our residents. These issues also received national media interest following the adverse impact on the condition of roads following the extreme weather conditions and heavy snow falls experienced during the winter. We have yet to confirm a date to

discuss these issues, but you can find updates within our Work Programme, which is included as a standing Agenda Item.

### Possible Future Task and Finish Reviews include:

- Litter, Road & Footway Cleaning & Grass Verge Cutting To investigate possible ways to support the development of partnership working between Worcestershire County Council, the District Council and Parish/Town Councils
- Review of District Council Enforcement Workload and Procedures.
- Review of Residents' 2 Hour Parking Permits and/or Car Parking generally

### Have Your Say....

Our Work Programme is formulated with the aim of improving public services and quality of life for our residents. A proforma is attached should you wish to submit an item you would like us to investigate.

### Joint Scrutiny with Neighbouring Authorities

In terms of joint scrutiny, there have been two areas where we have joined together with our neighbouring authorities over the last 12 months:

#### 1. South Worcestershire Revenues and Benefits Shared Service

South Worcestershire Revenues and Benefits Joint Scrutiny undertaken by a team comprising Malvern Hills, Worcester City and Wychavon District Councils, presented their [final report](#) to this Committee in March 2010.

#### 2. Worcestershire Hub

Scrutiny of the Worcestershire Hub which is ongoing involving all Districts within Worcestershire and hosted by Worcestershire County Council.

### Worcestershire Wide Joint Scrutiny Strategy Meetings

Worcestershire County Council held its inaugural meeting for County and District Council Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen and scrutiny officers on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2010, the purpose of which was to consider how to develop opportunities for joint scrutiny work. This will not detract from the continuing development of MHDC's Overview and Scrutiny function, which is coveted by other authorities.

### Developing Overview and Scrutiny

The Centre for Public Scrutiny provided guidance for Overview and Scrutiny Committees ('Take your Partners') on how to engage with the Comprehensive Area Assessment. The guidance highlighted the way that scrutiny was evolving from focusing on council services to looking more broadly at services provided by other

partners and partnerships, which also raised the possibilities for joint scrutiny working. We deliberated this at our meeting in October 2009.

It is expected that Overview and Scrutiny's involvement in the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) will be greater than its involvement in the previous regime Comprehensive Performance Assessment. This is recognised by the Audit Commission which sees

"...a two-way relationship between scrutiny and CAA. Scrutiny reviews carried out locally will provide valuable evidence that can feed into CAA and may help inspectorates understand issues without having to carry out additional work. The findings from CAA will also be helpful to Overview and Scrutiny Committees in identifying where they may wish to focus their attention and in providing them with helpful insights when conducting reviews."<sup>2</sup>

"This is an exciting and challenging time for Overview and Scrutiny. On behalf of the Committee I extend an invitation for you to come to one of our meetings and experience first hand the 'engine house' of the Council in action".

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<sup>2</sup> Audit Commission, Comprehensive Area Assessment: Framework document (February 2009)

## Your Suggestions Count...Make A Difference...

I think the following should be investigated:

(please refer to criteria overleaf)

Please say why:

Name/Organisation	
Address	
Telephone	
Email	

Please Return to:

Karen Jarman, Democratic Services Officer, Malvern Hills District Council, The Council House, Avenue Road, Malvern WR14 3AF email:

[Karen.jarman@malvern hills.gov.uk](mailto:Karen.jarman@malvern hills.gov.uk) Tel: 01684 862273 [www.malvern hills.gov.uk](http://www.malvern hills.gov.uk)

Suggestions for Overview and Scrutiny Reviews should:

- Affect a group of people living within the District
- Relate to a service, event or issue in which the Council has a significant stake or over which the Council has an influence or interest
- Not be an issue which overview and scrutiny has considered during the last 12 months
- Not relate to an individual service complaint
- Not relate to matters dealt with by another Council committee, unless the issue deals with procedure