

# Putting the Community First

PAPER E

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2004/05



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# Introduction

*'The power to question is the basis of all human progress.'*

*- Indira Gandhi*



Overview and scrutiny in the Isle of Wight Council has achieved a great deal on behalf of the community over the past year. As the Island continually moves forward we are playing an important role safeguarding the interests of the community to ensure a more prosperous, healthier and safer Island for the future. The title of this year's report very much recognises the important role of overview and scrutiny in local government.

This year has seen substantial change in the way that scrutiny has been undertaken following extensive training, and an independent assessment of our work. Select committee councillors have engaged more meaningfully with the community they serve, by convening meetings outside of County Hall, to witness firsthand important issues facing Islanders and to review progress being made.

It is important to acknowledge the many constructive contributions of stakeholders, witnesses and members of the public who have, together with councillors from all political parties and officers, participated in the overview and scrutiny process and made it successful.

**Cllr Margaret Lloyd**  
*Overview and Scrutiny Chairman*

Spring 2005

# Overview and Scrutiny

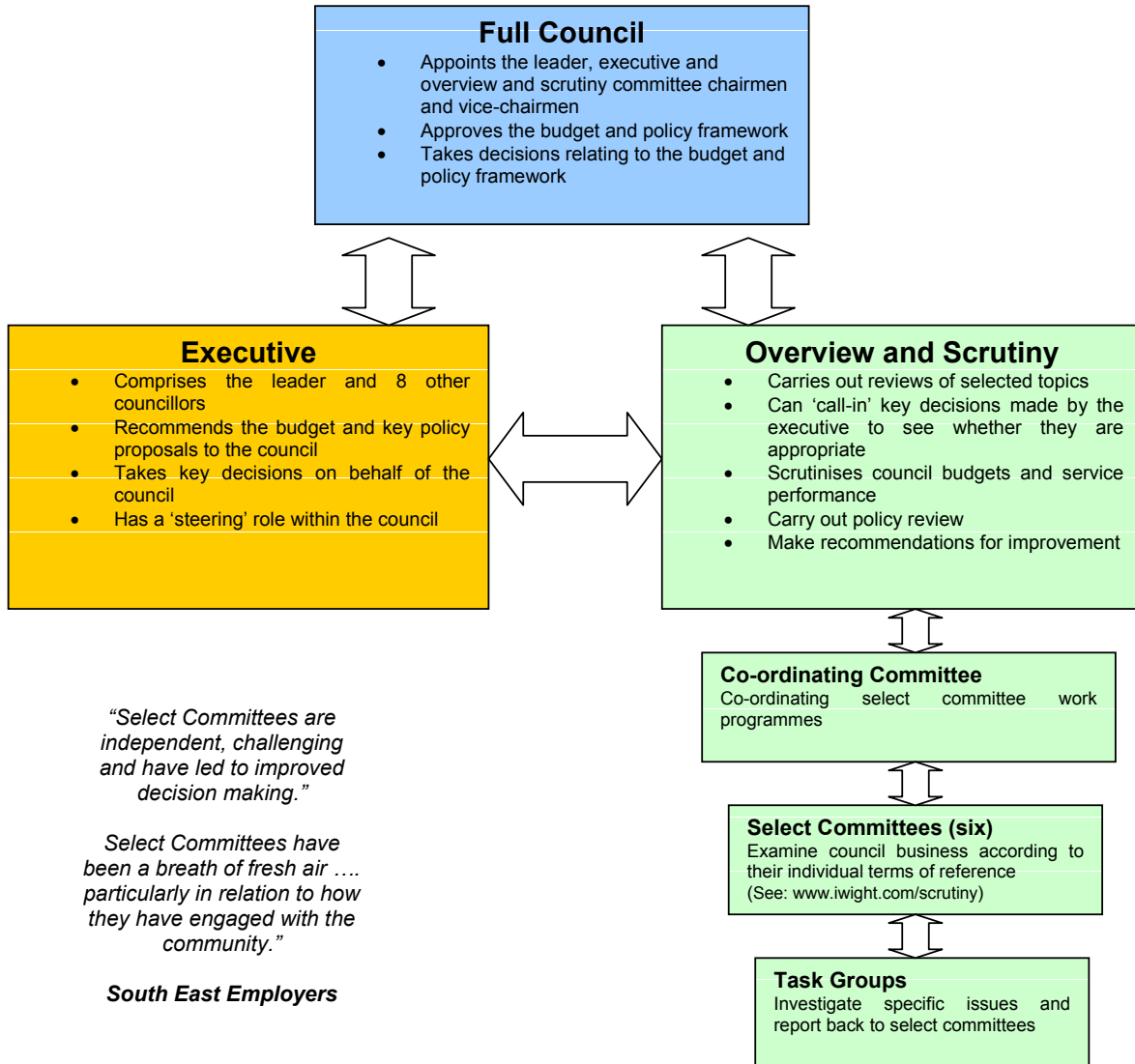
## What is it? How does it work?

Overview and scrutiny in the Isle of Wight Council is the process by which the executive are held to account for policy decisions and service provision. Each select committee is comprised of nine councillors and membership is divided up on political lines to reflect the overall political balance of the council. They determine their own topics to scrutinise and review. They collect and examine evidence and make recommendations to the council's executive. These are usually in respect of improvements required, performance standards and policy improvements.

Select committee functions:

- To examine decisions of the council executive to improve accountability to the community.
- To carry out reviews of services.
- To establish issue focused task groups to investigate and improve services.
- To gather and use evidence from the community, interest groups and service providers to reach their conclusions.
- To make recommendations to the council's executive to improve decisions and influence policies.

# How it all works



# A vision for the future

## Creating a service that works for everyone

Overview and scrutiny is not only restricted to Isle of Wight Council services. Recently, we have expanded our horizons to include the delivery of health services, Police services and external transport providers.

Our success this year has been in working with the community to look at important issues which affect local people. Good scrutiny depends on the input and participation of everyone concerned and we aim to improve this by widening participation. There are a number of ways that this can be achieved:

- Scheduling meetings at times and venues that suit participants better.
- Invite representatives from town and parish councils and other organisations onto select committees.
- Work more closely with local business and voluntary organisations.
- Work with members of the public who are interested in the issues addressed by select committees.
- By improving the *iwight.com* website, to make it easier for people to get involved
- Use the website to gather information, through surveys, opinion polls and scrutiny forums.
- Continual development of scrutiny best practice.

*Overview and scrutiny are key factors in good democracy - let's make our council work with everyone, for everyone.*

## What have we done?

Each select committee developed its own individual published work programme after consultation, advice and regard to the council's own key objectives. Many topics affect many areas within the council. In order to deal with such topics the Co-ordinating Committee determines which select committee is best placed to undertake the work. In some cases committees will combine expertise to produce the best recommendations.

The main themes from this years work programme are highlighted within this report.



Cllr Charles Hancock, Chairman  
Economic Development, Tourism, Planning and Leisure Services Select Committee

# Economic development

## Major regeneration projects

*'Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant'*

*- Robert Louis Stephenson*



Cllr John Adams, Vice Chairman

There are currently four major regeneration projects being co-ordinated by the Isle of Wight Council as part of the South East Development Plan:

- PAN Masterplan
- Sandown Bay Regeneration Strategy
- Cowes Waterfront Project
- Ryde Regeneration Project

While the regeneration strategy is evolving the select committee has made sure that interested parties are consulted and kept up to date with progress. For example, the Pan Materplan, a project aiming to provide affordable homes and social housing planned for the Pan area of Newport, has been scrutinised by the select committee. After looking at the masterplan and consulting interested parties the select committee made the following recommendations:

- An impact assessment on transport should be carried out
- Green areas should be designated
- Adequate parking should be included

The select committee arranged a public meeting in Sandown to enable the local community to comment and give their views on the priorities for stimulating economic activity in the area.

Members of the select committee saw for themselves the main features, scale and planned regeneration of the Cowes Waterfront Project by visiting sites along the River Medina with invited local town councillors. Getting close to the local community, listening to their concerns and constructively feeding into the planning process has helped make this regeneration project breath life into the whole waterfront area from Cowes to Newport.

The arrangements and logistics of the Isle of Wight Music Festival have been closely scrutinised by the select committee to ensure this event remains a viable and attractive feature on the Island's tourism calendar. The select committee have recommended that access for the disabled should be improved for future events.

## **Planning Services**

A review of the council's planning services was undertaken. The main points were that the service should:

- Have a customer focus
- Take into account what matters to local people
- Improve the development control process
- Improve quality control

The review and its findings were inspected by the Audit Commission and the result was that they judged the service to be: "A fair service with promising prospects for improvement". The improvement plan for planning services is being reviewed and updated as a result of the Audit Commission Report.

The Audit Commission Report can be read on the Planning Services web site:

[www.iwight.com/council/documents/performance/planningservices.pdf](http://www.iwight.com/council/documents/performance/planningservices.pdf)





Cllr Victor Morey, Chairman  
Fire and Public Safety Select Committee

# Public safety

## Fire, fireworks and more...

*'The primary object of all good Governments is to protect the citizen in the enjoyment of life, liberty and property'*

- Stephen F. Hale



Cllr Heather Humby, Vice Chairman

### Community Wardens

The select committee has reviewed the Ryde Community Wardens project and has recommended an Island-wide scheme. A plan is being drawn up to produce a pilot scheme for next year. Select committee members have actively pursued a change to existing working practices and recommended a more flexible approach between different services. The outcome shall be a new role that should have a wider responsibility to provide quick, effective and economic response to all council-wide inspection, vandalism and community service.

### Fire Modernisation

The select committee is scrutinising the fire modernisation initiative and performance targets to ensure the best possible service is developed. Initially, select committee members did not fully appreciate the extent and timetable of the government initiative. However, training for members and a better understanding of this change programme has resulted in challenging scrutiny of recent external reports on the Fire Service and is raising local performance before a further government review in the coming year. A review recommended that priority be given to a system to highlight areas of high risk and resource requirements and the deployment of staff and equipment. Overview and scrutiny has also contributed to the development of a training programme for all members of the fire and rescue service.

### CCTV

CCTV is a key component part of the anti-crime and drugs strategy. The select committee has already made recommendations on the shape, structure and makeup of the new service. Recently, they have also requested that challenging performance targets are developed and adopted to measure and monitor the overall effectiveness of CCTV compared to more traditional approaches to crime and disorder.

### Fireworks

In response to community concerns the select committee are investigating problems caused by the misuse and mis-selling of fireworks.

# Health and social care



Cllr Ian Stephens, Chairman  
Adult and Community Services Select Committee

*'Without a sense of caring there can be no sense of community.'*  
- Anthony J D'Angelo



Cllr Roger Mazillius, Vice Chairman

## Healthfit

Healthfit was an initiative to reorganise health services in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The main objective being to divert more resources to general practitioners and community services. The select committee consulted with users and others involved to establish whether this initiative met community needs. The committee identified over fifty separate recommendations ranging from the care of older people, patient travel and transport to dentistry and mental health. The committee continues to actively monitor progress and hold health partners to account for their performance in these vital areas of health provision. The select committee can take great pride in its contribution to many service improvements such as successful recruitment and retention of healthcare staff and a better resourced community service to facilitate the transfer of older people from hospital.

The select committee recognised that it must also address issues of lifestyles within its own workforce. To this end work has been done to promote healthy eating, raise staff fitness levels and highlight the dangers of not including physical activity in office life.

In the interests of the local community the select committee have established links across the region with Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton Councils to more effectively monitor health services.

## Patient travel

Patient travel has been highlighted as a major issue for many people on the Isle of Wight. As part of a transport review the council is looking at closer working between itself, the NHS and the voluntary sector. The select committee continues to work hard to reduce the cost of travel to the mainland for patients and create an improved system for getting people to hospital and GP appointments on the Island through better co-ordination of existing travel arrangements between the public, private and voluntary sectors.

## Health and social care integration

A task group is involved with scrutinising the setting up of a new organisation combining health and social care on the Island. The aim is to improve health and social care for Islanders as a number one priority, and for any new organisation to be accountable and financially viable. Presently, the task group is looking at how this new body should be governed and how the community will be directly involved. Details of this project can be found at <http://www.shapingthefutureiow.org.uk>.

## **Homecare**

A task group was set up aimed at establishing homecare provision. As a result a new tendering process has been produced aimed at improving staff terms and conditions (in order to improve recruitment and retention), training, consistency and reliability of service. The new arrangements have resulted in the improved staff stability, reduced turnover and better training.

On a very positive note, the select committee received thanks from Mrs Chris Partridge for the successful outcome of an issue brought to the committee's attention in 2003, leading to a recommendation which resulted in the appointment of a full time autism and Asperger's syndrome officer.

## **Housing and Council Tax Benefits**

Following a review recommendations were put forward to improve the benefits service in terms of accessibility, efficiency and response time, as well as to improve arrangements to counter fraud. The benefits service has now:

- halved the average time for processing new claims from 75 to 30 days
- increased the number of interim payments
- simplified application forms
- reduced staff sickness
- improved access to the service
- increased take-up of benefits

An external inspection rating of the service after the review showed it to be a top rank service.

## **Homelessness**

The select committee has regularly monitored homelessness statistics on the Island with a focus on cutting the number of people in temporary accommodation. The target for this has now been met and no one is living in temporary accommodation for more than six weeks.

## **Record Office**

A task group is looking at how best to replace the existing records office in line with national archive standards. The group will examine best practice in other councils including a combined records office and museum for viewing paper records and artefacts.



Cllr John Howe, Chairman  
Children's Services Select Committee

# Education

*'You carry the future of the country in your school bags.'*

- Williams



Cllr Barbara Clough, Vice Chairman

## **School organisation**

The select committee decided to undertake its own review based upon a thematic approach to school organisation. By listening to the views of a wide range of interested parties, including pupils, teachers and the community, it prepared its own report and key findings. These key outcomes were forwarded to the council's executive to be added to the discussions over the proposed move from a three tier to a two tier education system.

## **School performance**

As part of the need to raise pupil achievement the select committee has consulted with school representatives. The committee is also looking at the role of school governors and their relationship with the local education authority to improve school performance. A training event on roles and responsibility for governors will be piloted with councillors who are serving school governors.

## **Special Educational Needs**

The select committee has formed a task group to look at the statementing process for children with special educational needs (SEN). The task group has consulted widely with parents, legal advisors, health service professionals and other stakeholders in order to make recommendations to the executive.

## **Community play facilities**

As part of Local Democracy Week, The Oakfield Crew, made up of pupils from local middle and high schools made a presentation to the select committee on their project to provide community play facilities. Members are working to help successful delivery of this project.

## **Looked after children**

Select committee members identified that their 'corporate parenting role' needs to be enhanced and developed. The importance of this responsibility has led to new induction arrangements for all councillors following the May 2005 elections.

## **Every child matters**

The select committee has supported the establishment of the new Children's Services Directorate and continue to monitor and review the integration of services to ensure that every child on the Island has the opportunity to access the five outcomes contained within the every child matters framework (for further details see: <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/economic-well-being/>).



Cllr Garry Price, Chairman  
Environment and Transport Select Committee

# Environment and transport

*'You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.'*

*- Abraham Lincoln*



Cllr Mike Cunningham, Vice Chairman

## Public transport

There is a major review of transport being undertaken at the moment for a task group formed by the environment and transport select committee. The main parts of the review are:

- To form a future vision of transport, which is part of an overall vision for the Island called the 2020 Vision. Some of the major issues include the need to:
  - Provide a safe and well maintained road network.
  - Improve travel opportunities for everybody living on the Island, particularly those who do not own a car.
  - An improved public transport network, offering choice.
  - Accommodate economic growth and regeneration.
  - Protect the Island's environment.

Local public transport users, community organisations, town and parish councils, and environment groups have been consulted extensively to get ideas for improvements. These include issues around the quality and frequency of services, fares and tickets, public transport information and the supporting infrastructure. This project will continue into the coming year.

## Newport traffic management

The council has made a number of changes to improve traffic flows through Newport and the select committee will review the effectiveness of these. Key stakeholders will be consulted before recommendations are made to the executive.

## Parking

As a result of the implementation of parking charges the select committee have requested a review of the decision making process be undertaken.

## Road Maintenance

The select committee continues to monitor the councils bid for a private finance initiative (P.F.I.) to fund the way of providing much needed road maintenance, new capital programmes and improving its highway infrastructure in the future.

## **Road Safety Cameras**

The select committee with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Safety Camera Partnership have looked at the effect of safety cameras in reducing road traffic casualties. Following further investigations, the chairman prepared a report to go directly to the Department for Transport for future surplus funds from fixed penalty tickets, derived locally, to go towards new road safety initiatives on the Island.

## **Agenda 21**

The select committee reviewed progress on how the council was performing against its Agenda 21 strategy. The members enthusiastically supported the 'Energy Awareness Week' proposed for 2005 and visited the Island's main landfill site at Lyn Bottom and the Island Recycle Centre on Forest Road. Members are aware of the importance and significance of recycling waste to the local community.



Cllr Margaret Lloyd, Chairman  
Resources Select Committee

# Value for money

*'An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.'*

- Henry De Bracton



Cllr Barbara Lawson, Vice Chairman

## Procurement

A review of all of the council's buying and contracting processes for goods and services was completed in 2004/5. The review led to several initiatives supported and monitored by the committee:

- The "Selling to the IW Council" guide on the council's website (<http://www.iwight.com/council/procurement>).
- 'Meet the buyer' days with local suppliers.
- A partnering pilot for refurbishing school buildings.

Further progress is to be made in areas such as e-procurement systems and a commitment to the use of environmentally friendly products.

Overview and scrutiny will continue to ensure fair competition, transparency and probity throughout our procurement processes. It will continue to pursue quality services and good value for money for the benefit of the community.

## Use of Consultants

A task group is investigating the use of consultants by the council. It is looking at why they are used, how they are chosen and how their work is monitored.

## Property transactions

Throughout the year the select committee has held a number of call-ins relating to land and property transactions. This has been an area of work which requires a great deal of professional, specialist and technical expertise. Due to the complexity and sometimes controversy that these meetings have generated, in future all major property transactions will be considered by the committee prior to their disposal. The committee agreed a new 'property protocol' so that transparency and value for money can be achieved and evidenced by the wider community.

A comprehensive training session relating to this area was arranged and made available to all members of the council, to give a wider understanding of this complex area.

## **Great Access to Great Services (GAGS)**

Improving how the public can access services is a key objective for the council. The aim is to become a truly customer centred organisation. The committee has been involved in formulating policy to set down the performance standards it wishes the new front of house contact centre to operate within. These minimum standards include:

- 80% of enquiries should be dealt with at first point of contact
- all customer service points of contact with the public should be managed and act in a consistent way
- there should be a wide range of contact methods with all services available at all service points
- information should only be captured once and then used widely

Achieving this vision will require a cultural shift in working patterns for many members of staff and select committee members have worked hard to promote the benefits for service providers and users. The new Customer Services Charter and associated performance measurements can be viewed at <http://www.iwight.com/home/news/customer.asp>.



# We need you!

***‘Improvement and, where necessary, reform, should be guided by the requirements of citizens and communities, not the self-interest of professionals or politicians in national or local government.’***

- Sir Sandy Bruce-Lockhart, *Chairman of the Local Government Association*

The council's select committees have been working, individually and collectively, in their respective areas to assist the Island to move forward economically and socially. From major construction projects to refinements in the benefits system, provision of healthcare and schools. Overview and scrutiny is playing a vital role in the delivery of projects and services that are beneficial to the Island's community as a whole, and ensuring that the democratic process is clear and transparent.

Although this year has seen a number of successful outcomes as a result of overview and scrutiny work undertaken, there is always room for improvement. The main way in which the overview and scrutiny process can be improved is through the involvement of as many interested parties as possible. Select committees wish to ensure that the views of the local community are taken into account in the implementation and delivery of Isle of Wight Council policies and strategies. If you want to highlight any issues that you feel need to be addressed please do not hesitate to contact the Select Committee and Review Team.

## How to get involved

To find out more about the overview and scrutiny process and select committees and their work programmes visit: <http://www.iwight.com/scrutiny>

Alternatively, you can contact Alistair Drain, Head of the Select Committee and Review Team, for any information on 01983 823803 or you can write to:

### **Select Committee and Review Team**

Isle of Wight Council, County Hall, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 1UD

Or by email to [scrutiny@iow.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@iow.gov.uk)