

Information on Huntingdonshire District Council's "Overview and Scrutiny" website:

### **Overview And Scrutiny**

Overview and Scrutiny Panels aim to improve the Council's performance by monitoring, questioning and making recommendations on the way that services are provided and decisions taken.

### **Purpose of Overview and Scrutiny**

In 2000, as part of the local government modernisation programme, the Council established a Cabinet system to manage its business and take decisions.

Overview and Scrutiny Panels were set up to question decisions made by the Cabinet and examine particular issues, policies or Council services.

The Panel's work falls into FOUR broad areas:

### **Holding the Cabinet to Account**

The Panels are charged with holding the Cabinet to account, a key role in the new executive style of decision making. This involves ensuring that decisions taken by the Council's Cabinet are appropriate and within the Council's policy and financial framework. If any three members of a Panel feel that a decision is inappropriate or contrary to policy or the budget they can "call the decision in" within 5 days of it being made to prevent it from being implemented. They can then summon the relevant Cabinet Member and Officer to be interviewed and make recommendations to the decision maker to reconsider or amend their decision.

### **Studies**

The Panels carry out detailed, evidence-based assessments of Council services or wider issues which affect the lives of local people. At the end of each study, a Panel will report with recommendations as to how things could be improved. During the course of reviews, Councillors will speak to Cabinet Members and to officers and also to external witnesses to assist them in their information gathering.

### **Scrutiny of Council Policies**

Much of the Scrutiny Panel's work involves the detailed examination of key Council plans and policies, both before and after they have been approved. The Budget, the Corporate Plan and the Best Value Performance Plan have all come under scrutiny in the last year.

### **Performance Monitoring**

The Panels review the performance of the Council and the achievement of performance indicators and targets. Panel Members also participate in the Council's Best Value Review process and in monitoring the outcome of individual Reviews.

A copy of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels' Annual Report for 2005/06 is available on the right hand side.

### **Links**

- Participating in the Overview and Scrutiny Process (includes a link to the Hunts DC modern.gov system and contact details for Democratic Services)
- The Panels (includes a link to the Hunts DC modern.gov system)
- Useful Links (e.g. Centre for Public Scrutiny, Improvement and Development Agency [IDeA], Institute of Local Government Studies, Direct.Gov, [www.info4local.gov.uk](http://www.info4local.gov.uk))