

Overview & Scrutiny Panel for Development & Environment



Town Centre Strategy

A report focussing on the town centre strategies for both Dewsbury and Huddersfield.

Content

Page 4	Introduction/ Background
Page 5	Setting the Scene
Page 6	Difficulties Faced by Town Centres
Page 7	How Do We Move On?
Page 8	Feedback
Page 10	Feedback – Young People’s Views
Page 11	Value of Local Authority Assets
Page 12	On reflection
Page 13	Town Centres of the Future
Page 14	Current position and considerations
Page 15	Recommendations / Next Steps

Key **Orange text** = key messages



Introduction / Background

In March 2012, The Development and Environment Scrutiny Panel identified that they wanted to look at the regeneration of Huddersfield and Dewsbury town centres, including a **holistic look at the needs of the town, footfall, public transport, car parking** etc. This was considered quite a big area and would warrant a more focussed approach.

In June 2012, Jacqui Gedman, Director of Place and Peter McBride, Cabinet Member for investment and Regeneration suggested Scrutiny could focus on the town centre strategies across both Dewsbury and Huddersfield, identifying that the main area where Scrutiny could make a difference would be specifically focusing on the 'short term growth plans' that were being developed.

At a Panel meeting in July 2012, the Panel identified that they also wanted to look at the 'implementation plans' and 'background to developing strategies' and the current work that was being carried out. The Panel wanted to understand how the Council could **retain and increase regeneration within the Town Centres whilst managing the pressures and difficulties faced in the current economic climate.**

Subsequently, the below Terms of Reference were identified for the project:

- To review the implementation plans and the background to the developing Town Centre strategies in Kirklees.
- To gather good practice and evidence from other successful town centres.
- To make recommendations, as appropriate.

Task Group membership



Councillor
Ken Sims
(Lead
Member)



Councillor
Andrew
Marchington



Councillor
Karen
Rowling

Three voluntary co-optees: Ian Brierley, Ray Firth & Tim Duke

Setting the Scene

Up until 2008, Town centres were viewed as the source of retail across most of the district. The economic slump and changing consumer demands saw an increase in retail vacancy rates and a change in footfall patterns. With the rise of the internet and mobile technology it has been suggested this could result in further gaps on the high street, with retailers demanding less bricks and mortar up to 35% less retail space being required, a possible impact on vacancies in Dewsbury and Huddersfield. It has been identified that people no longer visit town centres purely for retail purposes alone and statistics suggest that by 2020, 50% of all meals will be taken outside of the home. Town centres, the form and function is evolving, how can the Council and partners shape this for a sustainable future.

Members of the Development and Environment Scrutiny Panel initiated an assigned task to review Town Centres in Kirklees. Assigned Tasks are specific tasks allocated to individuals or small groups of Panel Members by the Full Panel. This may include undertaking research, or going on site visits, and then feeding back to the Full Panel on findings. Assigned Tasks are often used to complement the full work of the Panel and the emphasis is on ensuring that scrutiny is a Member-led process with Members taking responsibility for key pieces of work.

The Panel undertook to gather evidence from town centres including; Stockport, Bury and Nottingham. The evidence gathered has been included within this report and influenced the comments and recommendations at the end of this report.

WHY STOCKPORT – Was a **PORTAS** pilot town and has a major city next door so in a similar position to Kirklees.

WHY BURY – Comparable in size to Dewsbury and has a hugely successful market.

WHY NOTTINGHAM – The level of **business engagement and involvement** is the level that Kirklees would aspire to achieve.

It was acknowledged by all that the role of the Town Centres remained important and so, the study trips were undertaken to assist in identifying good working

practices in relation to the development and regeneration of Huddersfield and Dewsbury, specifically;

- To benchmark Huddersfield and Dewsbury against other areas
- To understand the town centre **Governance arrangements** within other areas
 - To understand how partnership working played a part of these governance arrangements
- To identify if **“Visions”** played a part in the successful development of other areas
 - If so, to identify how were they implemented and monitored
- To identify any good practice to be learned from the areas visited and to share good practices developed in Kirklees with other areas

The Panel immediately identified that they needed to investigate what the two Town Centre’s main function would be and how these functions could be accommodated within the settings that already existed. The Panel also considered that both Huddersfield and Dewsbury had major cities nearby and that direct competition against these areas would be unsuccessful. Therefore the Panel felt that “something different” and **unique** needs to be offered within Kirklees.

Difficulties Faced by Town Centres

The town centre has become a major talking point with a number of high profile reports exploring the situation and endeavouring to provide solutions. The recession resulted in an increase in the level of vacant retail units, which provided a visible indicator of the economic downturn. The Coalition appointed a figurehead to review the high street and make some deliverable recommendations. The Portas Review highlighted the problem of empty shops and made a number of recommendations including supporting new forms of retail through pop-up shops, offering business rate breaks for new enterprises, reducing bureaucracy in planning, the supporting of mixed developments in town centres. The most significant recommendation was the formation of town teams, with 27 being designated and 100 others receiving financial support.

Bill Grimsey, attacked the Portas Review suggesting that the recommendation was an attempt “to try to keep a failed model on a life support machine.” Grimsey published his own solution that did not have retail as the main driver. The three conclusions to Grimsey Review were that town centre / high street plans must encompass community hub solution; a number of radical actions are required by government to stimulate local investment and local authorities should be encouraged to produce town plans.

The role and significance of town centres continues with the recently release assessment of on the role and value of local authority assets in town centres being published by APSE / CLES. This highlighted the economic, social and environmental role that publically owned stock in town centres could have. The report recommended that public assets should be recognised as being a major contributor in town centres and by using a designed tool kit the impact could be even more significant.

Two further research reports are being undertaken one by Manchester Metropolitan University “2020 High Street” and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills undertaking a national analysis. Both have selected towns in Kirklees with Holmfirth and Dewsbury being part of the studies.

There are a number of common issues that have been identified as impacting upon the vitality of our Town Centres including:

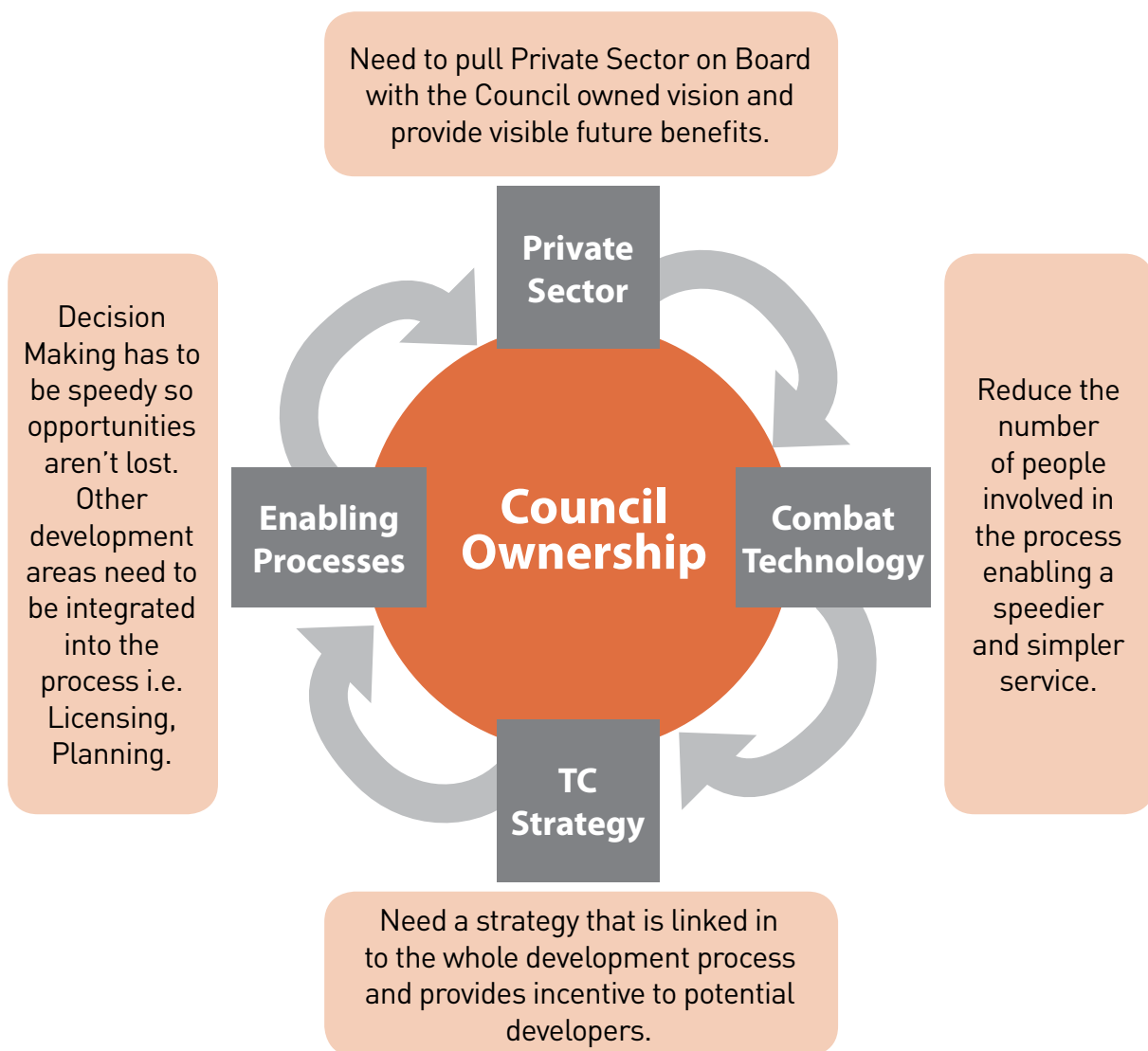
- Parking charges
- Business Rates
- Accessibility and Connectivity
- Appearance and perceptions
- Internet usage
- Governance

A report, entitled “Understanding High Street Performance”, suggests that a third of High Streets are “degenerating or failing”. It says retail spending in town centres has fallen to 42% from 49% in 2000 and is projected to fall further to 40% by 2014.

Previous practices within our town centres have created an apathy that we need to emerge from.

How do we move on from this?

The delivery of the town centre for the future is not an individual responsibility. Through collective activity and collaboration the town centres can have a renewed purpose and focus for the community. To inform the centre of the future we need all parties to own a shared vision, recognising each other's strengths and allowing, against the vision, barriers to be removed enabling quick decision and beneficial implementation.



Feedback

The three centres provided a different perspective of place development, how they are managed, how they develop and are shaping to a new operating environment. Scrutiny visited the three centres and drew the following conclusions:

Bury

APPROACH

Masterplan → Long Term Aims → Review

- Long term masterplan, renewed on a regular basis – flexible to adapt to changing needs.

PANEL'S VIEWS

- Concentrated on Market and was a significant success
- Strong leisure offer providing diversification to the centre
 - Key Drivers were: presentation, location and parking offer
- Actively sought requirements for the master plan – Premier Inn
- 2 strong areas of development also
 - Missed other opportunities.
 - The area in between the two main retail developments is now in need of regeneration and reconnection, as the two centres have pulled footfall away from the market anchor.

Stockport

APPROACH

Asset Managed → Interventionist → Local Authority

- Used Covenants, Leases, Funding and Local Authority Powers to facilitate development
- Confident in their strengths – pro-active in gaining development

PANEL'S VIEWS

- Council is proactive in its regeneration projects
- Previously developed over the river running through the district as didn't consider it an asset – now considered an asset.
- "Old town" at a higher level than "New town" – need to reconnect the two areas of the centre and overcome the topography
 - But struggle to get proactive approach from private sector – possibility of future conflict.
 - Not sure how sustainable the interventionist model is likely to be in the current economic climate. Considered short term in nature - providing platform for future private sector investment.

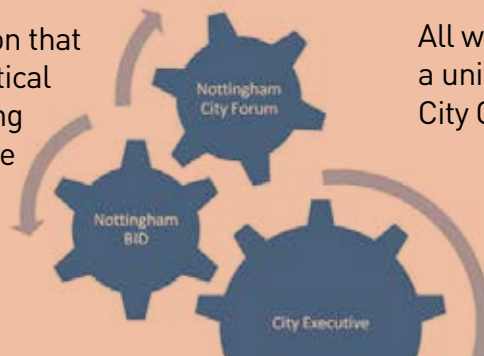
Feedback continued...

Nottingham

APPROACH

Business Orientated → Business Lead → Partnership

- Key driver is the One Vision that is signed up to by the political leads in the Authority along with the Public and Private partnerships.



All work together to give a unified approach for City Centre

Business Improvement District (BID) Levy

Income from	2013	2014	2015
BID Levy	780,500	803,900	828,000
Other	61,170	25,000	25,000
Total Income	841,670	828,900	853,000
Programme expenditure			
Place marketing	351,136	354,762	364,906
Place management	288,706	266,006	273,612
Licensing	16,500	16,500	16,500
Contingency	10,000	10,000	10,000
Total Activity costs	666,342	647,267	665,018
Management costs			
Management costs	136,232	136,232	136,232
Levy collection costs	31,750	31,750	31,750
Total management costs	167,982	167,982	167,982
Total expenditure	834,324	815,250	833,000

PANEL'S VIEWS

- Strong business community with BID delivery services and events
- City centre forum – public : private partnership delivering a joint vision
- Clear strategy that outlines what development is required – private sector sign up to
- Good marketing secures good “BID” – is Business lead, not Authority lead

APPROACH WOULD ASSIST KIRKLEES MOVE FROM A DEPENDANT ATTITUDE TO AN INDEPENDENT ATTITUDE

Feedback continued....

Young People's Views

To compliment the work of Scrutiny the IYCE (Involving Young Citizens Equally) provided a young person's perspective of how our town centres function and what "in their eyes" could be undertaken to enhance the offer for young people.

We know young people are big spenders! Every young person who participated in a town centre visit (as part of the project) spent an average of £3. Therefore, if the 43,515 young people aged between 12 -19, that reside in Kirklees spent £3 each in town, every month, there'd be £130,545 dropping in to the high street economy. That's a staggering £1,566, 540 a year of potential income.

Visiting Bury & Visiting Camden Market

The Young people visited Bury, exploring the Rock complex which was considered to be an addition to the town centre offering bowling, arcades and cinema. They also visited Camden in London. They visited market and town centre with the largest appeal being the variety of affordable fashion and accessories, colourful and vibrant atmosphere and abundance of street food.

High Street Innovation Fund: Young Peoples Information

Our Voice Programme has supported Young People to be involved in a variety of projects, which request their suggestions to increase the number of young visitors to Kirklees Town Centres.

To gather young people's views, the Our Voice Programme completed Town Centre Appraisals with young people in Huddersfield and Dewsbury, and also met with various groups across Kirklees. Here is the key information gathered from the Young People involved:

- Targeted communication – using creative signage, projections on buildings and what's on
- Promote loyalty schemes, young people's discounts and special offers
- Use piggy-back marketing and linked vouchers between stores
- Consider 'late night opening' in the summer months. Transport is too expensive for us to travel into town after school or outlying colleges, to only have 45 minutes to shop.
- Think about covering some of the open spaces to create spaces to eat and linger.
- Think about late afternoon and early evening entertainment like Cinemas and Arcades. At the moment we travel out of area to access these.

For more details, check out 'Our Voice our Town' at:

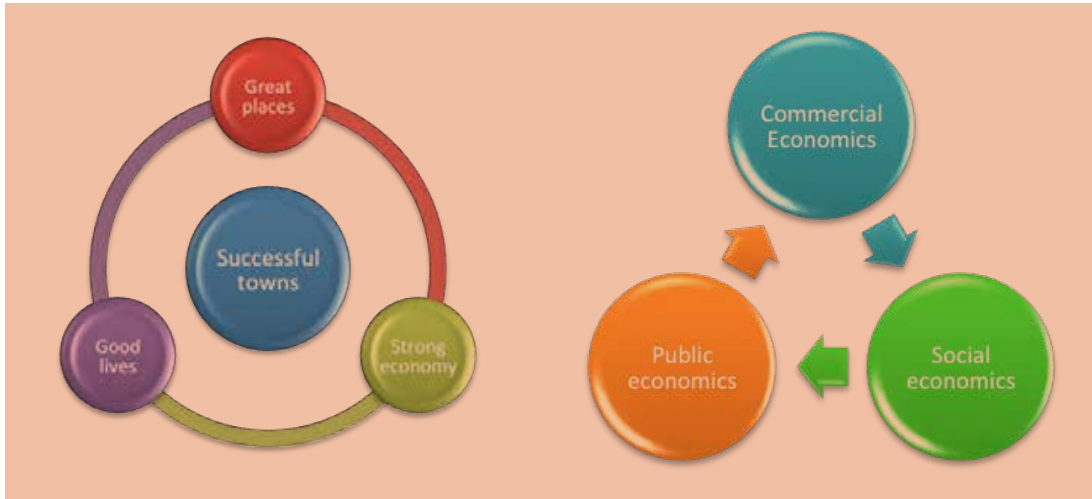
www.kirkleesyc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Our-Voice_HSIF_Report.pdf

Value of Local Authority Assets

The main towns in the Kirklees area all have Council buildings contained within them. To help engineer changes within the towns, the use of Council assets cannot be underestimated especially as part of a combined vision.

Successful Towns

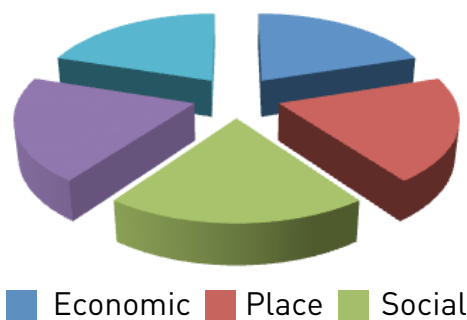
Economics of Town Centres



Categorising Assets

- Direct delivery assets includes schools, parks and care homes
- Administrative assets include town halls, operational headquarters, depots
- Saleable assets – non-operational assets
- Transport assets includes highways, ports, municipal airports, bus stations and car parks

Values and roles - Town centre Assets



The role of assets a council own can have a significant influence and impact on a town centre. A number of reports all referred to the use of Assets playing a central role in the development and regeneration of successful town centres i.e. Portas, Grimsey, Beyond Retail. All exploring our town centres, all advocating role of LA (assets) in TC's

Kirklees Assets

- 350 Buildings (incl schools, libraries, museums etc)
- 23,900 Council Houses
- 3,670 Individual garages(on rental)
- 3,900 Hectares of land (9637 acres)
- 10,970 Deeds held in secure storage
- 4,220 Property lettings (incl way leaves, leases, garden rentals etc)
- 350 Shops, Offices, Industrial Units and Commercial Lettings
- 12 Farms
- 100 Agricultural and grazing tenancies

Do we maximise our assets to deliver services?

Do we share our facilities to enable other agencies or partnerships to deliver services?

Do we use our assets base to stimulate or implement entrepreneurship such as easy access offices / retail / leisure?

Do we use our occupational covenant to stimulate the redevelopment of assets?

Can we encourage use of the public spaces for creative activity?

Could the portfolio be included in an asset backed vehicle such as Joint Venture (spreading value from one asset to support the development of another – rather than isolated selling)?

On Reflection

Scrutiny recommend a number of priorities to be considered

DEWSBURY		HUDDERSFIELD
Reviewing Strategy Development Document	Strategic Development Framework – specific TC strategies based on strengths	Re-affirming vision for the Town
Create a business partnership (NOTTINGHAM)	Long term masterplanning (NOTTINGHAM & BURY)	Build on existing partnerships
Strengthening the role of the markets (BURY)	USE ASSETS IN APPROPRIATE WAY (STOCKPORT)	Strengthen Hudds TC partnership as a delivery agency (NOTTINGHAM)
Promote a diversification of place – cultural diversity	Enhancement of independent retailing	Stimulation of agglomeration of activities (NOTTINGHAM)
	Creation of incubator retailing space (STOCKPORT)	
	Promotion of business led events / activities (NOTTINGHAM)	

The use of Assets should play a major part in the regeneration of Huddersfield and Dewsbury but also different ways of working need to be a consideration i.e.

Use of Authority powers Covenants Use of facilities

Priorities to consider:

- Accessibility & Connectivity
 - Huddersfield – Use of Ring Road
 - Dewsbury – M1 & M62 access
 - Rail
- Major competitors in 10 mile radius
 - Need to provide a different offer, utilising the individual strengths of Dewsbury and Huddersfield”
- Current perceptions
 - Need a strong marketing campaign to emphasise plans and places
- Parking
 - Free parking initiative (maybe Market day)

Town Centres of the Future

Scrutiny Panel suggestions

Short term fixes

- Identifying what already works in the town and expand on this
- Hold regular events in the Town Centres to showcase the towns
- Create and enhance the Town Centre partnerships
- Undertake a 6 month marketing campaign which identifies the key requirements for place (bespoke actions for Dewsbury and Huddersfield)
- Implement a programme of customer service sessions for front facing staff
- Target marketing of investment and development opportunities in the town centres
- Creation and promotion of bespoke town centre brands especially for Dewsbury

Medium term fixes

- Re-affirming a shared vision for Huddersfield Town Centre
- Reviewing and updating the strategy development document for Dewsbury Town Centre
- Ease of contact (Kirklees Direct) – understand need to save money but staff have to have technical understanding of certain areas to avoid customer frustrations at numerous contacts (medium term fix)
- **Creation and enhancement of Business partnerships to generate a unified vision and strategy for Dewsbury and Huddersfield**
- Development of Kirklees business hub as a gateway for investors, entrepreneurs and visitors to Kirklees

Long term fixes

- **Encourage private businesses to work in partnership with the Authority to deliver a shared vision**
- Move away from dependant and interventionist ways of working towards more independent practices, with the Authority acting as a facilitator in a partnership working model
- Increase footfall in Town Centre's with a diversification of the offer and an increase in urban living
- Business partnerships owning development and implementation of events and activities
- Development of bespoke business led town centre governance for example Business Improvement District model

Current Position & Considerations

Economic impact – We are in a time where Local Government funding is unavailable and time is money for the Private Sector.

- Key consideration should be how we can make development processes more enabling for potential developers and investors.

Dewsbury –

- “Co-create” – in essence, have a conversation regarding Dewsbury leading to the development of outcomes based on product offered
- Establish a new brand to assist in emotionally repositioning the town
- Create a business partnership to develop activities within the Town Centre
- Fully review the existing Strategy Development document

Huddersfield –

- Strengthen relationships with the Town Centre Partnership
 - Current conversations that are taking place have enabled this to restructure itself
- Create an interim strategy for the Town Centre
 - Work has already started on a vision that outlines how the Town Centre will look and feel in 10 years’ time

Summary and Conclusion

Economic impact – In a time where Local Government funding is unavailable and time is money for the Private Sector.

Key consideration should be how we can make development processes more enabling for potential developers and investors. To develop this requires:

A Consistent Approach

- So that potential projects/ developments do not have to start from the beginning each time
- So that they complement each other within the overall strategy

Gateway approach (single point of contact) with Simplified Processes

- Develop a working group across services involved in development to identify streamlined processes across the regulatory services i.e. Planning, Licensing
- Enabling, time sensitive procedures to avoid losing developments
- TC Officers available, visible and accessible

Understand competitor’s offers

- Work within the Leeds City Region to complement offers from neighbouring authorities in specific areas as identified in a Town Centre Action Plan
- Value our strengths and push different offers to create an attraction in specific areas as identified in a Town Centre Action Plan

Recommendations

1. Establish a co-ordinated vision for the Town Centres of Huddersfield and Dewsbury
 - Understand what our Unique Selling Points are and market these approaches
2. Re-affirm the Governance structures of the Towns
 - Interventionist approach through helpful approach to partnerships
3. Work towards building capacity within business partnerships
4. Encourage development by simplifying and unifying the processes involved, thus moving towards an “Enabling Approach”
5. Develop a Working Group across the Regulatory Services, meeting as and when required, to develop streamlined processes for the benefit of future developers
6. Develop an Action Plan that identifies the Visions for the Town Centres and share this with potential partners

Next Steps

- Review the strategy for Town Centres on a regular basis, adapting as necessary and involving partnerships as appropriate
 - Develop an Action Plan for the Town Centres and communicate the aims to develop a unified approach
 - Develop a vision for the Town Centres that compliments the aims of the Action Plan
- Report back to the Overview & Scrutiny Panel for Development & Environment on a six monthly basis
 - Share targets and results as part of these updates

Overview & Scrutiny Panel for Development & Environment

