



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Annual Report 2010/11

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Welcome to Rossendale Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2010/11

This is my last year as Chair of Overview and Scrutiny, having spent the last 6 years working hard to ensure that the Overview and Scrutiny function at Rossendale has been successful and this couldn't have happened without the support of all Scrutiny Members.

Local Government is currently going through a number of important changes as it takes on new powers and responsibilities. The role of Scrutiny will be key in ensuring successful transition and implementation of some of these changes, including the Localism Bill and Public Health reforms.

This Annual Report outlines how the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function continues to develop and highlights the key areas of work undertaken over the last 12 months.

In June 2009, you told us you had concerns about the lack of dentists within the Borough. We now have an additional dental practice in Haslingden and are due to have another service up and running soon in Bacup.

Scrutiny members have been working hard to ensure that Rossendale people will see all the health services originally within Rossendale Hospital, transferred into the new Primary Health Care Centre (further information within the report).

As always I would like to thank all Members and co-opted Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for the contributions they have made throughout the year.

I would like to thank Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer and all other Members of the Committee and Member Services Team who have helped support the Scrutiny Officer during the year.

My thanks are also extended to Portfolio Holders and the 'critical friend' relationship that has developed and I hope this will continue over the next year.

I hope that you enjoy reading about our key achievements during the last 12 months and that you will continue to support us in our continual efforts to improve public services in Rossendale during 2011/12.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Sandiford'.

**Councillor Gladys Sandiford
(Chair of Overview and Scrutiny)**

Comments from the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resource, Councillor Brian Essex



Rossendale Borough Council wants to provide the best possible services for its residents. Overview and Scrutiny is a process to check that this happens. Scrutiny Councillors take an overview of all the activities that the Council is involved in and can decide to scrutinise in-depth issues.

This year there has been extensive scrutiny of the Leisure Trust, CLAW, Rossendale Transport and health provision.

Reviewing Council policies, making suggestions for change and improvement and examining decisions made, have been key aspects of Overview and Scrutiny.

Councillors involved in scrutiny choose topics which are important to Rossendale residents. Members of the public can suggest topics if they want an issue raising, which Scrutiny can undertake on their behalf.

Overview and Scrutiny can question Cabinet about its decisions and hold them to account. They also invite outside bodies to their meetings to hear about their organisation (Health, Fire Service, Police).

Task and Finish Groups undertake valuable pieces of work on behalf of Overview and Scrutiny. These groups conduct their work on an informal basis, and whilst they have no decision making powers, they help the Council to improve the way it works by making recommendations to Cabinet.

I would like to thank all the Councillors involved in Overview and Scrutiny for their hard work, their time and professionalism and above all their challenge – we lead the rest of Lancashire and make Rossendale a better place to live in.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN ROSSENDALE

The Overview and Scrutiny function was introduced by the Local Government Act 2000, which outlined new political management arrangements for all Local Authorities.

Developing this function has been a challenging task facing all Local Authorities however, Overview and Scrutiny has continued to evolve and significantly added value to the work of Local Authorities.

Overview and Scrutiny seeks to reflect the voice and concerns of the public and its communities and to make an impact on the delivery of public services. The Overview and Scrutiny function at Rossendale undertakes the following work, which is explained in more detail throughout the report.

- Policy Scrutiny Committee
- Performance Scrutiny Committee
- Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
- Task and Finish Groups
- Response Groups
- Health Scrutiny

Overview and Scrutiny is objective and constructive, aiming to add value to any area it considers, based on an evidence process of exploring and deliberating, which then produces constructive reports and puts forward recommendations to the Authority's Cabinet.

Overview and Scrutiny in Rossendale operates in a non party political way and our Scrutiny investigations cover a wide range of topics and complex issues, ranging from specific local problems to broader issues of public concern which link to the strategic priorities of the Council and local partners.

Each Task and Finish Group collates evidence to help them make recommendations to the Cabinet or partner organisations. The length of a scrutiny investigation will differ depending upon the issues being scrutinised.

Overview and Scrutiny here in Rossendale also engages with external partners and other organisations to obtain evidence in relation to Scrutiny investigations and to develop working arrangements of benefit to the Council and its partners as a whole.

Overview and Scrutiny has also been involved in discussions on the proposed changes to hospital services in Rochdale and as a result of this there is now a Whitworth Town Councillor on Rochdale's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a voice for the people of Rossendale.

Response groups are set up as and when required to respond to consultations. These are usually made up of between 3 and 5 members, depending on the topic (more details further in the report).

Below is an overview of our work during the year.

Key Facts	
• Performance Overview and Scrutiny Meetings	8
• Policy Overview and Scrutiny Meetings	6
• Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Meetings inc 3 special meetings (2 budget scrutiny, 1 health)	7
• Task and Finish Groups	2
• Response to Consultations	13
• Site Visits	6

The COMMITTEES

PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

As always this Committee has been busy scrutinising not only the Council Performance Indicators, but also the performance of some of its partners.

Whenever a service is under achieving its targets they are asked to come along to our next meeting to explain the reason for underachievement and at the same time explain what they plan to do to ensure targets improve by the next quarter.

A main piece of work for the Committee was to oversee the transition of the Leisure Review. At a Council meeting in March 2009, it was agreed that this would be undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny and reports were presented to four of our eight Performance Scrutiny Committees.

Leisure Developments

Bacup Leisure Hall

Since early 2009, the Committee has received updates on the key tasks of the leisure review and to establish strategic priorities for leisure and culture. During this time we have overseen the take-over of Bacup Leisure Hall, which has now transferred to a private owner.

Haslingden Sports Centre and Marl Pits



At our meeting on 21st September 2010 the Committee was informed that the project team commenced the procurement process for the two improved facilities.

Plans have been submitted for the new pool at Haslingden Sports Centre and the development of fitness suite, five-a-side pitch and

improvement at Marl Pits

Overview and Scrutiny would continue to see these developments through and presentations would continue to be delivered to the Committee during 2011/12.

Ski Rossendale

In June 2009, it was reported that Ski Rossendale was in need of refurbishing the existing facilities to allow them to retain and attract customers. It was agreed that an exercise should be undertaken to assess whether there was any potential interest within the private sector to invest and improve the facilities at Ski Rossendale. In January 2011 Cabinet agreed that the Ski Slopes would close in March 2011, whilst a further option review was undertaken. The Committee has been kept up to date on the progress and this will continue during 2011/12.

Community Leisure Association of Whitworth (CLAW)

The Committee also monitored the work of CLAW, who had received external support to look at opportunities to increase income at The Riverside and to look at business planning for the venue. A report was produced and the Committee will look at this during 2011/12 and monitor future progress of the recommendations within the report.

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ROSSENDALE TRANSPORT LIMITED

Another area of work that the Committee looked at was Rossendale Transport Limited. The Chief Executive asked the Committee to monitor Rossendale Transport's Business Plan for 2011/13. Directors from the transport company were very open and informed the Committee of how they see the company developing during these difficult times. During 2011/12, we will continue to monitor performance through their 3 year Business Plan.

POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Policy Scrutiny Committee has given its views on 26 policies/strategies over the last 12 months, some of which are highlighted below:-

- Petitions
- Vacant Property Strategy
- Memorials on a Grave
- Communications Strategy
- Private Sector Housing Strategy
- Update on Core Strategy

Having had sight of these documents, Members put forward a number of additional recommendations and amendments, which were agreed and included in the final versions before they were presented to Cabinet.

The Committee has received a number of updates on the Core Strategy over the last 18 months. This has now been submitted to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination, which will be conducted by the Planning Inspectorate.

The Committee has this year had very busy agendas at each of the meetings and therefore, whilst it was the intention this year to ask to receive updates on existing policies/strategies so we can measure outcomes, this has not been possible. Therefore, we hope to receive existing policies this year to enable us to challenge Officers with the 'so what' factor, to ensure that decisions taken have been, or are to be implemented.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

This Committee met four times during the year and received presentations from its partners as detailed below:

June 2010 – REAL (Rossendale Enterprise Anchor Ltd) - The Senior Manager of REAL gave a presentation on the work of the organisation, which is a community organisation doing things with and for people to make Rossendale a better place to live and work and provided information on the types of services available.

September 2010 – Alder Grange Community and Technology School – A representative from the school provided an update on the new 6th Form Centre project and new education provision for 16-18 year olds. Councillor Sandiford and Councillor Cheetham attended the opening of the new 6th Form Centre and were very impressed.

December 2010 – Police and Community Safety Partnership/Domestic Violence - Under Government legislation implemented last year, Councils were given new powers to scrutinise the work of crime and disorder reduction partnerships to ensure they are effectively tackling local problems. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee had been designated as the Council's crime and disorder overview and scrutiny committee to carry out this function.

The Committee received a presentation from Chief Inspector Sewart and Trish Ellins, Community Safety Manager within the Council. The Committee were informed of the financial problems within the Domestic Violence Service (STAR).

Members were made aware that in August the Home Office approved a County-wide bid to increase the level of Independent Domestic Violence Advisor Service, to ensure that each district received a minimum of £20,000 toward the IDVA Service. This money should be paid 6 monthly in arrears to Lancashire County Council (as the accountable body of this grant funding). LCC would directly pay this to the IDVA service provider (STAR Centre Rossendale), the amount being £13,340. However, there had been a delay in receiving the funding from the Home Office.

Due to the current funding issues, salaries to staff at the STAR Centre have been delayed twice in the last three months. Along with this, the delay in funding from the Home Office and the fact that it is paid in arrears was also causing cash-flow problems which could again lead to a delay in salary payments in the future. Therefore the Committee suggested that the Borough Council 'loan' the STAR Centre the money to enable staff to be paid. This was agreed.

The Committee also wrote to local MPs asking them to take up the issue with the Home Office. A reply was received indicating that if requested by the accountable body of grant funding in their initial application that they would like the money paid 'up front', then this was given. It is now with STAR to write to Lancashire County Council asking them to include this request in future grant funding applications.

Back in July and August 2010, the Chief Executive called on this Committee to look at the Council's Corporate Priorities and investigate and discuss where and how savings could be made across the five areas. The Committee's findings were included in the full consultation process prior to being presented to Cabinet in September.

February 2011 – The Committee looked at the Council's budget and subjected each area to in-depth scrutiny. The recommendations from the Committee were included in the report to Cabinet.

This Committee had previously had a presentation from Accrington and Rossendale College and this year it was agreed that the Committee would undertake a visit to the College to talk to students from the Valley to seek their views on such things as transport. As a result of this partnership working, the

Council and the College are working together to establish a Campus within the Borough.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee also approved the final report of the Task and Finish Groups and considered the recommendations within the reports prior to sending to Cabinet or a partner organisation for approval.

Attendance at Overview and Scrutiny over the last 12 months has been tremendous as the table below shows.

Meeting	Number of Meetings	%
Performance Scrutiny	7	98%
Policy Scrutiny	6	93%
Management	7(inc 3 special)	82%

HEALTH SCRUTINY

The Health Overview and Scrutiny function is the remit of Lancashire County Council. Local health providers must consult with LCC's Health Scrutiny Committee when they make proposals that represent significant changes or 'substantial variations' to health services.

Rossendale Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been looking at local health issues which affect Rossendale.

Some years ago prior to the closure of Rossendale Hospital, the Council were assured that all services provided within the hospital would be transferred to new facilities within Rossendale. We now have a new Primary Health Care Centre (PHCC) located on Bacup Road in Rawtenstall (see picture below which is copyright of Eric Wright Group)



The Primary Health Care Centre opened in August 2010. The Council had been reassured that ALL services were to be transferred into the new 'health hub'. Since its opening the Council had tirelessly been working to ensure that services were transferred, although discussion is still ongoing about some of these services (urgent care centre being the main).

Initially in September 2009, a presentation to Overview and Scrutiny by the Chief Executive and LIFT and Commissioning Manager from the Primary Care Trust (PCT) informed us of the services which would be transferred into the new health hub. Then, in November 2009 we were informed at another presentation from the Business Manager, Rehabilitation, Stroke and Older People at East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust of a new proposed model of

care for rehabilitation patients and that rehabilitation would be centralised at Pendle Community Hospital, with an outreach service for Rossendale patients.

Following numerous letters and discussions, the service was transferred into the new health centre and Overview and Scrutiny Members visited the facilities prior to patients being moved in. There was initial concern that rehabilitation patients would not receive a hot meal and again this issue was raised with the Health Trust and eventually patients were offered hot soup and a sandwich. We visited the rehab unit to talk to the patients and found that they were happy with their meals.

There are still issues about some of the clinics which had been transferred including the glaucoma clinic, and there was ongoing discussions about these clinics, which we hope to have sorted soon.

We held a special Health Overview and Scrutiny Meeting on 7th March when representatives from the PCT came along to give presentations on developments within Rossendale and new NHS structures being developed nationally.

The Management Committee first heard a presentation from Sue Harvey, Consultant in Public Health on the new structures within the health service, explaining some of the wider determinants of health and the new structures.

Sue Warburton, whose role was to support GPs to establish a GP Consortium in Rossendale, in addition to her post as Head of Community Services, presented information on 'Shaping the Future', GP Commissioning Consortia. Also in attendance was Dr Williams, a Rossendale GP, who was Leading on the new GP Consortia.

Members raised a number of questions in relation to the 'the hub', as concerns were expressed by both Members of the Committee and the public who attended the meeting that promises were not being fulfilled by the PCT on the future of health provision in Rossendale.

The main discussion was around the future provision of health services in the hub, but Members were shocked to be told by Dr Williams that "we shouldn't hold out much hope of an urgent care centre." Everyone was shocked to hear this statement and since then there has been a great deal of media attention. We will fight on to ensure that we do all we can to make sure that the people of Rossendale receive an urgent care centre in the Valley.

In the last Annual Report we reported on the recommendations of the Dental Health Task and Finish Group and indicated that there was due to be a new dental surgery practice in Haslingden. This has now opened with capacity for 10,000 patients. There were 1,147 people from Rossendale on the dental access allocation database with BB4, OL12 and OL13 postcodes who were invited to join the Haslingden practice and already 975 new patients have been allocated to the practice.

THIS YEAR'S TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

Task and Finish Groups are groups that undertake a specific piece of work for a short period of time, produce a report and then finish.

All Members have been very busy taking part in Task and Finish Groups over the last twelve month with, we hope, some very positive outcomes.

Disabled Facilities Grants Task and Finish Group



A response group was established to look at the Disabled Facilities Grants process and invited a representative from Burnley Borough Council, Lancashire County Council and Occupational Therapy. There was also a site visit to St Vincent's Homecare and Repair Service.

A Disabled Facilities Grant is for someone who is living in a property and is disabled. The Grant would help towards the cost of adapting their home or providing facilities to help a disabled person to live more independently within the home. The maximum grant available is £30,000.

Who is eligible for a DFG?

- Someone who is disabled and lives in their own home or are a tenant, including a Housing Association tenant, can apply for a grant.
- Someone who is a parent or guardian of a disabled child (under 19) then they can apply for a grant.
- Someone who has a disabled person living with them and they are an owner-occupier or a tenant can apply for a grant on behalf of the disabled person.
- If a landlord has a disabled tenant, then he/she may apply for a grant on behalf of that tenant.

St Vincent's Homecare and Repair Service

The service is a locally based not-for-profit organisation which helps homeowners and private sector tenants who are older, disabled or on low income.

Budget Information

The Annual budget for Disabled Facilities Grants is £353,000 from the Housing Department making an overall budget of £500,000. This can vary from year to year based on reported spend and available budget.

The maximum available grant per application has recently been increased from £25,000 to £30,000. Any grant payable over this amount is at the discretion of the individual Council.

Rossendale received £353,000 and money from the Housing Department budget is added into this for an overall budget of £½ million. This means that the Council is constantly dealing with urgent cases and only touching non-urgent if there is money available in the budget at the end of the year.

On average the Council gets 12-14 referrals a month which can be for large or small grants. At present work waiting to be done is estimated at £1.3 million.

With regard to Lancashire County Council's small equipment prescriptions, (walking frames etc). People with this type of prescription had to go to Burnley or Millercare at Oswaldtwistle to have them dispensed. Recently, it had been agreed that St Vincent's Homecare and Repair Service can now accept these prescriptions. This is a positive for St Vincent's as well as for the people of Rossendale.

The Task and Finish Group prepared a report which included seven recommendations. These were presented to Cabinet in February for approval. The report is available on the Council's website.

At the time of writing the report we are still waiting for their response.

Enforcement Task and Finish Group

A Task and Finish Group was set up following concerns raised through various Overview and Scrutiny reports and queries from Members. Following discussion with the Overview and Scrutiny Management Sub Committee it was agreed that this was a potential topic for a light-touch scrutiny review.

During the review members expanded the scope to include all regulatory enforcement services.

The Group received updates from the Health and Housing Manager, an Area Officer, the Public Protection Manager and Officers from the Planning Team.

Planning Enforcement: The Council has a statutory duty to enforce planning contraventions. The Enforcement Team receive around 150-180 planning enforcement complaints per year. There were a number of open investigations from previous months and years relating to contravention of planning control.

Roller Shutters: Roller shutters appear to be a problem mainly to the Haslingden area. These kind of shutters can spoil the appearance of an area and encourage anti-social behaviour. It was suggested that businesses should be provided with specifications on what type of roller shutters can or cannot be used and relay this information to the manufacturer. It was recommended that a Shutter Policy be produced and presented to Policy Overview and Scrutiny for consideration before being presented to Cabinet.

Food Safety and Health Safety – Commercial: The Commercial Team of the Environmental Service also undertake Food Safety - anything to do with food in restaurants, takeaways, care homes, children's homes, childminders and anyone who handles food. This was through inspection, training sessions and the provision of advice.

Residential: The service covers housing standards, immigration checks, park homes, all aspects of pollution including smoke emissions, contamination land/water, air quality as well as nuisance, including noise.

The Council also investigates approximately 30-35 landlord complaints per month, mainly relating to the state of the property.

Communities: An Area Manager presented to the Group information on the different types of enforcement undertaken by the Communities Team and the minimum response times for the following:

Abandoned vehicles and racist/Offensive Graffiti – 24 hours (during a working week)

Flytipping and Statutory Nuisance - food waste/dog fouling accumulation – 3 working days

Accumulations of waste (non food), dog fouling and litter – 5 working days

Flyposting, bin issues, ASB and non racist/offensive graffiti – 10 working days

Service Requests – In 2010 the Communities Team received 1799 service requests.

Flytipping: Flytipping represents the biggest issues the team deal with. The cost of taking action could be £1,000 upwards.

Dog Fouling and Litter - Dog fouling is in the first instance dealt with by Animal Wardens, who are required to respond to complaints within 2 days. Hot spot areas are highlighted during regular meetings with Animal Wardens and through monitoring of their database of complaints. Officers then assist with signage, patrols, and letter drops.



Litter is dealt with reactively, and where a litter complaint is received, officers will visit the area to assess the cause of the problem and take action e.g. tackling fast food premises, bin provision, signage/posters. Officers also carry out patrols of littered areas with a view to issuing fixed penalty notices where appropriate.

The Group discussed ways they would like to see litter and dog fouling dealt with as part of a targeted programme of enforcement. Members would like to see proactive work in relation to takeaways, reminding them of their responsibilities re bins, sweeping, reducing packaging etc.

The Task and Finish Group made a number of recommendations which they feel could improve the enforcement service given by the Council and will endeavour to assist Officers to develop their Service Area. At the time of writing the report we are still waiting for their response.

RESPONSE GROUPS

At the request of the Chief Executive, Overview and Scrutiny responded to a number of consultations. A response group, made up of three to five members, met to discuss a particular consultation document and Officers from the Council with a specific interest in a topic would also attend to give their support to Members. Once a response letter had been produced it was sent to the Chief Executive for signing off. The following consultations were undertaken.

- Making Difficult Decisions about Funding Adult Social Care Services in Lancashire
- Climate Change and Natural Environment
- Court Closures
- DEFRA Natural Environment
- Fire Service (2)
- Infant Mortality
- Lancashire County Council Subsidised Bus Services – Consultation on Cost Saving Proposals
- NHS Consultation
- Pharmaceutical Services
- Public Health White Paper
- Young People’s Services – Reorganisation and Restructure Proposals
- Lancashire County Council’s Private Children Homes



A photograph of the response group which met to respond to the Consultation on Court Closures, (pictured are Councillor Cheetham, Councillor Sandiford, Irene Divine, Co-opted Member, whose expertise help the group form their views, Sian Roxborough, Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Pat Couch, Scrutiny Support Officer).

PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINY

Rossendale Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee work with its partners through undertaking different aspects of work – from responding to consultations (fire, health, LCC), to invitations to its Overview and Scrutiny Committee. As explained earlier in the report we have received presentations from the Police, Education and a Community Organisation.

Performance Scrutiny also received presentations on the performance of Green Vale Homes – Rossendale Borough Council transferred its housing stock in April 2006 and Scrutiny annually monitors the 12 promises made at the time of transfer.

CAPITA – who hold the contract to provide the council tax and housing benefit service. The Committee receives updates on their performance annually.

Throughout the next 12 months we will continue to meet with partner organisation.

SCRUTINY NETWORKS

The Lancashire Scrutiny Partnership Forum (LSPF) is open to officers and elected members from all 12 District Councils in Lancashire and the County Council. It aims to promote the development of the Overview and Scrutiny function in Lancashire.

The LSPF will:

- provide an opportunity for Lancashire's scrutiny officers and elected members to meet and discuss scrutiny matters of common concern and interest;
- disseminate information about scrutiny work plans adopted by Lancashire's District and County Councils;
- enable officers and elected members to participate in discussions about best practice in Overview and Scrutiny, and to learn from each other and from other authorities who have been successful in the scrutiny process;

In February 2011, Rossendale hosted the Lancashire Scrutiny Forum, attended by 20 Councillors and Officers from other Lancashire authorities and 9 Councillors and Officers from Rossendale.



The topic we picked for discussion was ‘partnership working’, which focussed mainly on working with our partners in the health services. Due to the number of questions we received, it appeared to be a worthwhile choice of topic.

Following the meeting we were approached by Councillors from other local authorities who asked to come along to one of our meetings to see our work.

North West Employers organise the North West Strategic Scrutiny Network, which is open to both Officers and Members. This provides an opportunity to share ideas and discuss developments in overview and scrutiny.

There is also the North West Scrutiny Support Officer Network, which meets three times per year, allowing officers supporting scrutiny to come together to discuss common issues and problems relating to scrutiny.

THE YEAR AHEAD – Next Year’s Work Programme

We are already planning our work for the next 12 months and asking people what they want us to review during the next 12 months. This we are doing via the media, at Neighbourhood Forums and the Council’s website, where we have a scrutiny form for people to complete and send back to us. These forms are also available at the One Stop Shop.

All the meetings detailed below are open to the public and start at 6.30pm in our new Council Chamber at Futures Park, Bacup.

Performance Scrutiny	Policy Scrutiny	Overview and Scrutiny Management
2011 20 June 25 July 26 September 24 October 28 November	2011 13 June 1 August 12 September 31 October	2011 6 June 5 September 5 December
2012 30 January 27 February 19 March	2012 16 January 20 February	2012 6 February

HAVE YOUR SAY!

At each meeting, there will be a public question time, where you are able to ask a question of the committee.

Scrutiny can't consider

- Individual complaints
- Individual issues about members of staff
- An individual's planning or licensing application

There is also a scrutiny form available on the Council's website to complete if you have an issue or concern that you would like scrutiny to investigate.

For further information or assistance, please email democracy@rossendalebc.gov.uk or complete the form below and return to the One Stop Shop in Rawtenstall or post to The Business Centre, Futures Park, Bacup, OL13 0BB.

I would like to suggest the following issue/service as part of the Work Programme for 2011/12.

.....
.....

Please state why you think we should look at this issue

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Name

Address

.....

Tel (optional)

Email