



# Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2014-2015

*Epping Forest District Council*  
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# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT: MUNICIPAL YEAR 2014/2015

## *Introduction and Welcome from the Chairman*

Welcome to the tenth report of the Overview and Scrutiny Structure of Epping Forest District Council. After an 11 month long review into the organisation, principles and structure of the Overview and Scrutiny functions we have altered the way we conduct our business. That, as well as the reorganisation of the directorate structure of the authority will mean that we will be looking at fundamental changes to the Scrutiny structure in the new municipal year.

At present, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Panels are charged with reviewing Cabinet decisions, the Corporate Strategy, the Council's financial performance and also scrutinising the performance of the public bodies active in the District by inviting reports and presentations from them. The bare bones of scrutiny will not change in the new year, only the way it will be carried out.

At the beginning of the 2014/15 municipal year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to the setting up of five Scrutiny Panels for the year and two Task and Finish Panels were commissioned.

During the year we received numerous presentations from outside bodies including the Epping Forest College, Essex Children Services, the EF Youth Council, the Counties Mental Health Services for young people and the North Essex Parking Partnership.

My special thanks go to the Chairmen and members of the various Scrutiny Panels and especially the members and officers of the Task and Finish Panel that reviewed our Scrutiny Panel arrangements.

And of course, I would like to thank all the officers that have worked so hard to keep the Panel members informed and supplied with the background information that they needed to carry out their investigations.

*Cllr Richard Morgan*

Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## ***What is Scrutiny?***

- Ø Scrutiny in local government is the mechanism by which public accountability is exercised.
- Ø The purpose of scrutiny in practice is to examine, question and evaluate in order to achieve improvement.
- Ø The value of scrutiny is in the use of research and questioning techniques to make recommendations based on evidence.
- Ø Scrutiny enables issues of public concerns to be examined.
- Ø At the heart of all the work is consideration of what impact the Cabinet's plans will have on the local community.
- Ø However, the overview and scrutiny function is not meant to be confrontational or seen as deliberately set up to form an opposition to the Cabinet. Rather the two aspects should be regarded as 'different sides of the same coin'. The two should complement each other and work in tandem to contribute to the development of the authority.

Alongside its role to challenge, the scrutiny function has also continued to engage positively with the Cabinet and there continues to be cross party co-operation between members on all panels.

Scrutiny has continued to provide valuable contributions to the Council and the Cabinet remained receptive to ideas put forward by Scrutiny throughout the year.

The rules of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee also allow members of the public to have the opportunity to address the Committee on any agenda item.

## ***The Overview and Scrutiny Committee***

The Committee coordinated with the Cabinet and pre scrutinised their forward plan on a meeting by meeting basis. This acted as a troubleshooting exercise, unearthing problems before they arose.

The Committee also engaged with external bodies in order to scrutinise parts of their work that encroached on the District and its people. They also received stand alone reports from officers and reports from the Scrutiny Panels on the work they carried out during the year.

## ***Scrutiny Panels***

A lead Officer was appointed to each Panel to facilitate its process. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the terms of reference for each of the Panels on the basis of a rolling programme. The Scrutiny Panels have a 'rolling programme' to consider ongoing and cyclical issues. Five Scrutiny Panels were established, dealing with:

- i. Housing
- ii. Constitution and Member Services
- iii. Finance and Performance Management
- iv. Safer Cleaner Greener
- v. Planning Services

Scrutiny Panels reported regularly to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress with the work they were carrying out.

### ***Task and Finish Panels***

The Task and Finish reviews are restricted to dealing with activities which are issue based, time limited, non-cyclical and with clearly defined objectives on which they would report, once completed, to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Three Task and Finish Panels were established during the year, they were the Scrutiny Panel Review Task and Finish Panel, the Grant Aid Review Task and Finish Panel and the Youth Engagement Review Task and Finish Panel.

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

***The Overview and Scrutiny Committee consisted of the following members:***

Councillor R Morgan (Chairman)  
Councillor K Angold-Stephens (Vice Chairman)  
Councillors G Chambers, K Chana, A Church, D Dorrell, L Girling, P Keska, J Lea, A Mitchell, S Murray, B Rolfe M Sartin, G Shiell, B Surtees A Watts and D Wixley

The Lead Officer was Derek Macnab, Deputy Chief Executive.

## ***Terms of Reference***

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's main functions are to monitor and scrutinise the work of the executive and its forward plan, external bodies linked to the District Council and the Council's financial performance. It is tasked with the consideration of call-ins, policy development, performance monitoring and reviewing corporate strategies.

***The Committee's workload over the past year can be broken down as follows:***

### ***(a) Scrutinising and monitoring Cabinet work***

The Committee has a proactive role in this area through carrying out pre-scrutiny work. This involved considering the Cabinet Forward Plan for the coming months on a meeting by meeting basis.

### ***(b) Call-ins***

The Committee received no call-ins this year.

### ***(c) Scrutiny Panels work programme monitoring***

The Committee received regular updates from the Chairmen of the various Scrutiny Panels reporting on the progress made on their current work programme. This allowed the Committee to monitor their performance and when necessary adjust their work plans to take into account new proposals and urgent items.

### ***(d) Items considered by the committee this year***

Over the year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received various presentations and considered a range of diverse topics.

## ***Presentations:***

**(i) Strategic Direction of Epping Forest College** - The Committee at their meeting in July 2014 received a presentation from Penny Morgan, the recently appointed Principal of Epping Forest College; she had been appointed in December



2013. She was there to speak on the strategic direction of the college, its vision for the future and its relationship with the Community.



The college had made great strides over the last five years, taking in over 3,500 students each year and had hundreds of visitors that came in to use the college for various events etc. Over 85% of the students live within 10 miles of the college. The college was also a major employer for local people, over 59% of staff live within 10 miles of the college, thus contributing to the local economy.

They provided a wide range of training, skills and educational provision, such as Business, Childcare, Construction, Media and Music, IT, Maths and English and Sport, ensuring that they were giving students the best opportunity to become work ready and gain employment. They also work with local employers and help to provide apprenticeships in local businesses, an achievement they were very proud of.

They were always striving to improve on the range of courses and opportunities offered to their clients whilst additional demands were placed on them by the government.



The meeting was then opened out to questions from the members of the committee.

**(ii) Presentation from Children Services** - At their meeting in November 2014 the Committee welcomed Chris Martin, the Integrated Commissioning Director (West) from Essex County Council. He was there as part of a follow up to last years successful presentation on Children Services, given by Jenny Boyd.

Mr Martin noted that it was important to support children and their families from birth right through to the early years of their life (2 to 5 years), to give them the best possible opportunity to succeed. They wanted to be challenging and have all the people working across the early years system to have a single vision of what needed to be changed, this would require big shifts in culture and practice.

They would be working towards building capacity and capability of parents to support themselves and to support one another; with professional workers starting from peoples strengths and finding ways to build on them to prevent problems occurring. This would involve thinking differently about the workforce, letting them do what needed to be done and to make use of their diverse experience. If they get this right they would achieve better outcomes for children while at the same time saving money.

It was noted that they had less money to spend than before and so would need to be more effective with what they did have. More needed to be done and improvement continued as resources diminished.



They were undertaking an ambitious, strategic, broad reaching review of early years in collaboration with Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to

identify innovation across the system, especially with families, removal of duplication of resources and roles, developing a common understanding and model of child development and skilling up the workforce to deliver new approaches.

They would also engage in ethnographic research with Essex parents and families, taking an in-depth look at the lives of eight families living across Essex combined with observational fieldwork at over 30 services. This type of research reveals behaviours and patterns that other methods would not pick up. Insights gained so far was that they needed to focus on building the resilience of families and reducing their isolation.

The meeting was then opened to questions from the members present.

**(iii) Presentation from the Epping Forest Youth Council** - At their meeting in January 2015, the Committee received a presentation from six members of the Youth Council; they were joined by thirteen other Youth Council members.



They were there to give an overview of what the Epping Forest Youth Council had been up to over the past year. This was their first year in office of the two they were elected for.

By far their highest profile event last year was the Youth Conference held in the Council offices on 14 October 2014. 90 pupils from years 7, 8, 9 and 10 representing ten secondary schools from the District attended. They were consulted about issues affecting the lives of local young people; gathering their views on possible solutions and gather ideas on how to improve the local community. They were also keen to promote local democracy.

Three main concerns were highlighted. They were alcohol misuse, bullying and stress. Other issues raised were around skills and jobs and the need for more volunteering opportunities, the misuse of drugs particularly 'legal highs'.



The Youth Council had launched a campaign called '#URNotAlone' during national Bullying Awareness week in November; highlighting services and support groups for victims of bullying and their parents and also gave presentations to all year 9 pupils in the district. The project was deemed a great success by pupils, parents and teaching staff and the Youth Council were really proud of this piece of work.

The Committee noted that:

- Social Media was also an important part of their job as it promoted their work and raised the profile of young people in the district.
- They had been asked to contribute to 10 consultations this year and were pleased to have representations on the Epping Forest Youth Strategy Group.
- The Council's Youth Volunteer Programme was now being taken up by all secondary schools in the district.
- They had secured external funding of £1200 from the Jack Petchey Foundation, £900 from 'Think Big O2' for their project work and a further £750 from the Jack Petchey Small Grants awards.

They had hoped that they had shown that the 21 Youth Councillors had developed strong links with schools and youth groups and had connected with many thousands of their peers on behalf of the council.

**(iv) Mental Health Services in the District** – In March 2015 the Committee welcomed Chris Martin (Integrated Commissioning Director (West)) and Christina Pace (Commissioning Lead, Essex County Council) to the meeting. They were representing the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and were there to give a presentation on the joint re-commissioning of emotional well being and mental health services for Children and Young People in Southend, Essex and Thurrock.

They noted that now with national government plans to put in more funding, their new service model would be based on needs assessment and feedback from consultation with service users and partners. This highlighted the need for more integration and clearer access routes to services, especially for vulnerable people and for the consistency of the quality of service.



They were jointly commissioning one integrated service for the whole county for targeted and specialist mental health services. There would be a single point of access for all referrals to the service, including self referrals. The services would be community based and available in each area. They would focus on identifying and treating young people who need CAMHS services as early and effectively as possible.

There would be 24/7 access to the crisis services and a community based intervention service. There would also be consistent advice and training for all their partners.

It was noted that a new national taskforce had recently made recommendations on improving mental health for children and families and nationally, an additional £1.25 billion investment over a five year period was set out in the budget. CAMHS were uncertain how any future government would respond, but this was an opportunity to build on their new service model.

The meeting was then opened out to questions from the Committee.

**(v) North Essex Parking Partnership** – members of NEPP came to the April 2015 meeting of the Committee. The NEPP officers gave a presentation outlining the background to their organisation, their functions, policies and processes. After an interesting presentation, members questioned the NEPP officers on various aspects of parking in the District.

*(See case study for full details)*

### **Other Topics Considered:**

**(i)** This year for the first time the Committee considered the Cabinet's Forward Plan and Key Objectives for the coming year on a regular meeting by meeting basis. At their first meeting of the year in July 2014 the Committee look at the coming year's work programmed in for the Cabinet.

It was noted that the Cabinet took an interest in the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and appreciated the important role scrutiny played in providing checks and balances to the Executive.

The Cabinet's Key Objectives for 2014/15 were presented under a number of broad themes and these constitute the priorities of the Cabinet over the next municipal year. It was noted that a number of items were an extension of last year's programme.

The Local Plan was probably the most significant document that the Council would produce for many years. It would determine the future character of the District and help deliver benefits to the residents in terms of homes and employment. All key decisions in relation to the Local Plan would be taken by the Cabinet, but they wished to be as consultative in their approach as possible. It was noted that the Scrutiny Panel on Planning was responsible for scrutinising the Local Plan and this was an area where it was hoped that the Cabinet and Scrutiny could work together.

It was highlighted that the Council was keen to embark on a Council House Building Programme and the Housing Portfolio Holder had established a Cabinet Committee to advise him. With tenders being received for the first phase this was an exciting initiative for the Council.

The Council had also embarked on the development of a new Leisure and Cultural Strategy, which would not only clarify the role that the Council would play in future provision, but also determine the best way to procure the new Leisure Management Contract.

**(ii)** In July 2014 the Committee received a report setting out the year end outturn of the Corporate Plan Key Objectives for 2013/14. A range of key objectives for 2013/14 was adopted by the Cabinet in March 2013; progress in relation to individual actions and deliverables are reviewed on a quarterly basis.

At the end of the year, 23 (42.6%) of the individual deliverables or actions supporting the key objectives had either been completed or achieved. Some 20 (37.0%) deliverables or actions were not completed by year-end. A further 11 (20.3%) deliverables or actions were on-hold at year end, as a result of external circumstances.



**(iii)** In September 2014 the Panel received a report from the Returning Officer regarding the Local Elections held on 22 May 2014.

The following elections were held in May 2014:

- (a) Election of 7 Members of the European Parliament for the Eastern Region of the UK;
- (b) 19 District Council Wards; and
- (c) 1 Parish Council by-election for Buckhurst Hill West.



Voter turnout at the various elections ranged between 44% in the Buckhurst Hill East Ward and 28% in Waltham Abbey Paternoster Ward. Turnout for the European Parliamentary Election, within the district, was 35.58% compared with a turnout of 35.90% across the region.

It was noted that there were few issues with the election, generally all practices were completed successfully.

**(iv)** Also in September the Panel received a report from the Returning Officer regarding the Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations.

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 made it compulsory for this authority to carry out a review of Parliamentary polling districts and polling places within 16 months, starting from 1 October 2013, with further reviews starting on 1 October of every fifth subsequent year.

A polling district was a geographical area created by the sub division of a UK Parliamentary Constituency for the purposes of an election. A polling place was the building or area in which polling stations would be selected by the Returning Officer. A polling station was the room or area within the polling place where voting took place.

**(iv)** The Committee received a report regarding the London Infrastructure Delivery Plan consultation from the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Neighbourhoods.

The London Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) had been published by the Mayor of London for consultation making the case for better infrastructure provision in London.



It was noted that the London Infrastructure Delivery Plan did not set out how policies would be delivered, implemented and monitored. Instead, it made a business case for London to control its own finances through fiscal devolution. The Committee supported the prioritization of transport schemes, such as four tracking the West Anglia Lines along the whole of the Upper Lee Valley and the Central Line because of:

- (a) Predicted job growth in Central London;
- (b) The Central Line's importance in delivering commuters to this area; and
- (c) Its particular importance to the lower end of the London-Standed-Cambridge corridor.

Members were particularly concerned about providing car parking facilities around train stations as there was currently a congestion problem there.

**(v)** In November 2014 the Committee received a report on the Communities and Local Government Consultation on 'Planning and Travellers', seeking views on proposed changes to planning policy and guidance for the travelling community. The stated intentions of the proposed changes were to (i) ensure that the planning system applies fairly and equally to both the settled and traveller communities; (ii) further strengthen protection of "sensitive areas" and Green Belt; and (iii) address the negative impact of unauthorised occupation. The consultation also stated that the Government remained committed to increasing the level of authorised traveller site provision in appropriate locations to address historic undersupply as well as to meet current and future needs.

The consultation contained 13 questions with draft answers contained in the appendix to the report.

It was also noted that all the pitches/caravans were in the Green Belt and that our District was 92% Green Belt.

The extent of Green Belt in different Council areas varies very widely – e.g. East Herts was about 33% Green Belt while Uttlesford was significantly less – i.e. both these neighbouring districts have potentially significantly greater options for identifying suitable locations. This proposal by the Government – a "one size fits all" approach seems too blunt and inflexible given the wide variation in Green Belt coverage of affected districts. It was particularly unfair to those districts which have a very high

percentage of Green Belt, and where there was already a long-established and sizeable traveller community.

Officers could think of no immediate and practical solutions to the problems, other than to suggest a re-think at national level. The planning system as it currently operates was not making adequate provision for the needs of the travelling community. The problem was particularly acute in Green Belt areas, where there does seem to be a perception of favourable treatment for travellers, but the proposals in the consultation would only exacerbate the overall problem of meeting total needs, and make it very much harder to identify suitable sites in the Green Belt.

The Committee noted and agreed the draft answers to the CLG Consultation on Planning and Travellers.

**(vi)** In February 2015 the Committee considered the draft Corporate Plan for 2015 to 2020. They noted that the current Corporate Plan would end on 31 March 2015 and this new Corporate Plan had been developed to take the authority forward over the next five years.

The Council's main areas of focus for the five year lifetime of the new Plan had been captured in a new set of corporate aims; in addition a new set of Key Objectives had been developed to support the aims. On consideration the Committee agreed the proposed new plan and recommended it to the Cabinet and Council.



**(vii)** Also in February 2015, the Committee considered the final report of the Task and Finish Panel looking at the current Scrutiny Panels of the Council (see a fuller report under the Task and Finish Chapter of this report).

With the revision of the Council management structure in December 2013, reducing the service directorates down to four, the Panel considered the creation of a four panel structure to align with the new directorates. This proposal arose in part, due to the existing arrangements, where not all service areas were subject to scrutiny by any particular Panel.

The Committee agreed with the Panel that a new Overview and Scrutiny framework, based on a structure of four 'select committees', be established with effect from the commencement of the 2015/16 municipal year.

**(viii)** The Committee also considered a consultation report from the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA) on its Park Development Framework. They noted that whilst it was not a planning authority, there was a duty to prepare plans for the management and development of the park.



The proposals in the consultation document were generally in line with the statutory duties of the Park Authority. Subject to the detail of individual projects, the Council were supportive of these proposals, as they were in line with the original purposes of the Park and relevant policies of the current Local Plan and Alterations and the National Planning Policy Framework.

However, there were two matters within the proposals which were of concern. Firstly, a significant number of new buildings were being suggested to support implementation of the proposals, and a lot of these were in the Green Belt. The consultation document



generally acknowledges the need to take account of Green Belt location for most of these suggestions, but the proposals could still amount to a significant amount of development with implications for the openness of the Green Belt.

Secondly, there was the casual reference to the use of Compulsory Purchase Powers for large areas of glasshouses etc. The document also indicated that it was likely that the Authority would resist major redevelopment or expansion of new large-scale glasshouse uses.

Members noted that recently the Council had formed the Lea Valley Food Task Force. The intention was to develop a standard policy approach in new Local Plans, supportive of the glasshouse industry, across local authority boundaries as an example of positive co-operation.

The Committee agreed that the overall approach of the proposals in the context of the statutory functions of the Park Authority, ie in relation to sport and recreation, leisure, education and landscape, heritage and nature conservation be supported.

But they expressed concerns about the possible extent of new building being proposed in the Green Belt and to object to proposals, as currently worded, concerning the use of compulsory purchase powers in relation to a number of glasshouse sites and other long-standing commercial uses within the Park.

**(ix)** In March 2015 the Committee considered the review of the operation of the Planning Committees and their Terms of Reference. This had originated from a PICK form that initially went to the Planning Services Scrutiny Panel and then on to the Constitution Scrutiny Panel, when they looked at the following matters:

- (a) The operation of the speaking arrangements and deadlines for submission of material to planning sub-committees; and
- (b) The terms of reference of the Planning Sub-committees and the District Development Control Committee.

The changes would also bring clarity to the role of the Chairman in controlling the business at the meeting, particularly for speakers. It was considered by the Panels that these rules should be implemented in advance of the completion of the Constitution Review to allow a period of operational experience to be undertaken with a check in 2016 to make sure that they were still appropriate.



On consideration the Committee endorsed the proposed changes and made this recommendation to the next full council meeting.

#### **(e) Case Study: North Essex Parking Partnership**

At their April meeting the Committee received a presentation from officers from the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP).

The NEPP officers outlined the background to their organisation and the Committee noted that:



- Essex County Council had decriminalised parking functions between 2002-2004, which led to them being policy makers for 12 agencies in districts and boroughs running parking enforcement;
- A growing deficit reaching £900,000 across the county led, in 2009, to the County Council ordering district and boroughs to cancel all agencies;
- The agencies were replaced by two organisations, the North and South Essex Parking Partnerships. The North was responsible for Epping Forest, Harlow, Uttlesford, Braintree, Colchester and Tending; and the South was responsible for Brentwood, Basildon, Chelmsford, Maldon, Rochford and Castle Point.

The strategic priorities for this new organisation (NEPP) was:

- Improving safety for drivers and pedestrians;
- Improving business opportunities through better parking policies;
- Discouraging commuters from parking in permit only areas;
- Increasing enforcement to improve availability for Blue Badge holders; and
- Greater environmental efficiency.

The NEPP Business Plan was to improve on efficiency and be financially sustainable. The NEPP had inherited a deficit of £574,301; currently they had a small surplus of £80,000.

Their business plan was to bring all parking matters into one place, improve on the backlog built up on signage and maintenance of signs and lines; maintain income from the PCNs as far as possible, within policy. They were a council shared service and did not act under a client / contractor service. They wanted to make efficiencies in whole operation to eliminate their deficit and make savings from reduced management, overheads and accommodation.

The meeting was then opened up to questions from the members present.

During this the Committee was advised of the Essex Act, peculiar to this county, which allowed for enforcement. In cases where land was owned by an authority, it was advised that legislation should be checked first. Highways owned land required an S50 application for entering the highway to carry out mowing. Each licence needed to be applied for separately, by the authority carrying out the mowing work, and each area needed proof that it was kept in the condition to which the law related. Enforcement could then be carried out by notice. A trial had been carried out in Braintree with successful results. It was felt that in the medium to longer term better enforcement could be achieved with this legal mechanism.

The NEPP officers confirmed that they did have a comprehensive database on road lining. They advised that there was limited funding to cover maintenance of all lines

across NEPP (£150,000 for the whole area) and so maintenance was done by priority. NEPP informed the Committee that lines were made of plastic which bonded with the road surface and as such it could only be laid during the summer months.

They noted that safety and congestion schemes would first fall to ECC as did new developments, the rest fell to NEPP with schemes being progressed by Essex County Council as Area Reviews. It was advised that there was no funding for NEPP, new schemes were scored and given a priority.

NEPP officers had brought with them copies of a "Who's Who" of their staff and contact details. Members asked for this staff guide to be circulated via the Bulletin.

They also advised that enforcement times varied. However, if there was an area which required more enforcement then Members could notify the Area Enforcement Manager. If there was a clear system of lines and signs in place then action could be taken, however if lines were very worn then enforcement action may not have a chance of success. The minimum standard for signage and lines was covered in the national rules. All enforcement had to be of a sufficient standard to withstand an appeal. The rules for signage were presently being reviewed for implementation this year, the intention being to reduce signage wherever possible. Councils were being encouraged to use "zone" systems to reduce the amount of signage in place.



# SCRUTINY PANELS

## 1. HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL

*The Housing Scrutiny Panel consisted of the following members:*

Councillor S Murray (Chairman)  
Councillor G Shiel (Vice Chairman)  
Councillors K Chana, R Gadsby, S Jones, J Lea, C Roberts, B Rolfe, T Thomas, H Ulkun and J H Whitehouse

The Lead Officer was Alan Hall, Director of Communities. The Panel also appreciated the Housing Portfolio Holder, Councillor D Stallan, attending the meetings to help them with their deliberations.

Wyn Marshall represented the Tenants and Leaseholder Federation, attending the meetings as a non-voting co-opted member to provide the views of residents and stakeholders.

### *Terms of Reference*

The Housing Scrutiny Panel was tasked to undertake reviews of a number of the Council's public and private sector housing policies and to make recommendations arising from such reviews to the Housing Portfolio Holder, Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Cabinet as appropriate. They also undertake specific projects related to public and private sector housing issues, as directed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

*The Panel scrutinised a number of important issues over the last year, which included:*

**(i) Communities Directorate's Housing Service Strategy on the Private Rented Sector** – In July 2014 the Panel received a report regarding the Communities Directorate's Housing Service Strategy on the Private Rented Sector. There were 17 Housing Service Strategies produced to date and they set out how individual housing services would be delivered. They had assisted in achieving the Customer Service Excellence Award and the ISO 9001:2008 Quality Accreditation.



**(ii) DCLG Guidance on Rents for Tenants on High Incomes** - The Panel received a report regarding the DCLG Guidance on rents for Social Tenants with High Incomes. In June 2013, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) issued a consultation paper entitled "High Income Social Tenants Pay to Stay."

Under "Pay to Stay," the Government set out their intention that local authorities should be permitted to charge high income tenants a higher level of rent to stay in their homes. The DCLG's proposal at that time was based on higher rents set at 80% of market rents.

In May 2014, the DCLG issued its Guidance on rents for Social Housing, which would come into effect from April 2015.

In regard to social tenants with high incomes, the Government did not expect local authorities to adhere to its Social Rent Policy for properties let to households with an income of £60,000 per year. Instead authorities could choose to charge them up to full market rent. It was noted that this proposal was at variance with the original proposal at 80% of market rents made under the “Pay to Stay” consultation in 2013.



However, difficulties were identified with administering any separate rent policy for the Council's high income social tenants.

Government estimates suggested that between 11,000 and 21,000 social tenants, representing around 1% of all social tenancy households in England met the threshold. When applied to the number of properties in the Council's housing stock, around 64 high earning Council tenants would be required to pay market rents. It was found that rents would increase on average by around £83.00 for each of the 64 tenants affected, bringing in total additional income of around £276,000 per annum.

The Panel concluded that the District Council be recommended to take no further action on this issue at present; and that a further report be submitted to the Panel setting out the options regarding a separate Rent Policy for high income tenants when legislative compulsion on tenants to declare incomes is established along with sanctions for tenants found to have failed to declare.

**(iii) Housing Under-Occupation Officer Post – 1 Year Review** – At the Cabinet meeting in April 2012, the recommendations from this Panel, to appoint some additional new posts, were agreed. One post was that of a new Housing Under-Occupation Officer. The Cabinet requested that the Panel review the effectiveness of any new posts agreed after a period of 1 year.

It was known that many Council properties were under-occupied, which did not make the best use of the Council's housing stock but often resulted in older and vulnerable tenants incurring greater household running costs.

The new Housing Under-Occupation Officer was appointed in May 2013. Prior to the review of the Housing Allocations Scheme, letters were sent to around 1,300 homeseekers on the Housing Register. As a result, there were around 40 enquiries, all of which were followed up. This led to 5 of the Council's existing tenants moving to smaller accommodation. During the year, a further 1,300 letters were sent to all existing tenants over 60 years of age who were under-occupying Council accommodation, promoting sheltered accommodation and offering other opportunities. This led to 30 enquiries, all followed up with 6 appointments.

The Panel recommended that the role of the Housing Under-Occupation Officer post be expanded and that the post be re-designated as Re-Housing Support Officer to reflect its future role

**(iv) Tenant Profile report 2014** - In August 2013, the District Council's Housing Information Team began a postal survey or “census” of Council tenants. At the time there were approximately 6,400 properties on the Housing Revenue Account. The two principal aims for conducting the survey were to:

- (a) Check that the data held on the Housing system was correct; and



- (b) Build a better profile of tenants for service planning purposes.

A total of 6,390 households received questionnaires and 3,649 were subsequently returned by the closing date in January 2014. The questionnaires then went onto ask:

- (a) Their preferred form of communication;
- (b) Their main language;
- (c) Whether they had internet access;
- (d) If they had any disabilities;
- (e) Whether they wanted assistance with communications;
- (f) Their contact details for next of kin and keyholders; and
- (g) If they had access to a current account with a bank or building society.

The data gathered through the survey gave Housing staff access to more accurate information of tenants. Special needs identified were being flagged on the computer system so officers were aware of them. In addition, the Council had appointed a firm of external consultants, ARP Research, to produce a tenant profile report. ARP was provided with data collected from the survey returns and from this they produced a written report, executive summary, district mapping and ward profiles.

**(v) Presentation by Essex County Council's Floating Support provider – Family Mosaic** – The Panel welcomed Karla McLeish, Acting Floating Support Manager and Angela Randle of Family Mosaic, who gave a presentation regarding their organisation's work.



Family Mosaic possessed around 24,000 good quality homes available for rent serving more than 45,000 people, providing care and support services. They were one of the largest housing providers in London, Essex and the South East. Karla McLeish managed a team in Waltham Abbey which covered Epping Forest and Uttlesford.

**(vi) Key performance Indicators 2014/15** - The Panel received quarterly reports for their Key Performance Indicators 2014/15 from the Director of Communities.

The Scrutiny Panels were now each responsible for the review of quarterly performance against specific KPIs within their areas of responsibility.

**(vii) Government Consultation Paper “Right to Move”** - The Panel received a report regarding a Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Consultation Paper entitled “Right to Move”.

The Consultation Paper explained that the Government expected local authorities to ensure that their Housing Allocations Schemes, residency requirements enabling social tenants to move across local authority boundaries for work related reasons so as not to impede labour mobility. The proposed regulations would remove the residency requirement for local authorities or housing association tenants who sought to transfer from another local authority district in England in order to be closer to their work or take up job offers, apprenticeships or work related training opportunities in order to avoid financial hardship.

The Government further proposed to ensure that authorities set aside a proportion of lets for tenants who needed to move for this purpose with a minimum expectation of 1% of lettings.

The Council responded to the consultation paper setting out the following:

- (i) The Council would welcome the Government's proposal to "spell out" in more detail the circumstances in which they would expect local authorities to apply the addition to the "hardship" reasonable preference category for those needing to move for work or work related training.
- (ii) The Council asked that it was clarified whether such preference would only apply to those in financial hardship and how such hardship were measured, particularly as there were no legal powers available to require applicants to declare their income.
- (iii) The Council had concerns about setting aside a proportion of lets for this purpose and the difficulties with publishing information on the demand and lettings on any right to move quota.
- (iv) There were a number of difficulties with giving priority to existing tenants for a "community contribution" in order to assist them to move within their own local authority area.

**(viii) Review of the Housing Allocations Scheme** - The Government required local authorities to have a Housing Allocations Scheme for determining priorities and the procedure for selecting a person for accommodation. Government guidance allowed for authorities to decide how accommodation should be allocated based upon local priorities, provided schemes were both legal and rational.

The Panel was advised that the amended Housing Allocations Scheme would be considered by an external legal advisor prior to statutory consultation being undertaken and final Cabinet approval

*(See Case Study for full details)*

**(ix) Review of the Tenancy Policy** - Under the Localism Act 2011 registered housing providers were granted additional powers allowing for local decisions on the management of social housing. This included enabling providers of social housing with the option to use flexible tenancies for a minimum period of 5 years. Flexible tenants generally enjoyed the same rights as secure tenants, including the Right to Buy, subject to the current qualifying criteria. On expiry of the fixed term, the tenant was assessed against an agreed Assessment Criteria to determine whether a further tenancy should be granted. If another tenancy was not offered, there was a requirement to provide the tenant with advice and assistance.

**(x) Home Option Choice Based Lettings Scheme – Progress Report** - The Choice Based Lettings Scheme introduced in November 2007 was administered externally by Locata Housing Services (LHS). Under the scheme, all vacant social rented properties were advertised to applicants on the website and a two weekly Property List giving details of location, type, rent, service charge, council tax band and landlord of the available accommodation. Applicants applying for a property by

expressing an interest in up to a maximum of three properties for which they had an assessed need.

Between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2014, 345 properties had been allocated to homeseekers on the Housing Register. A further 49 properties were allocated direct to homeless applicants and an additional 11 to applicants leaving supported housing.

Some of the 345 properties allocated from the Housing Register had been advertised on more than one occasion, as they were difficult to let, this had resulted in 427 advertisements being placed on the website and in the Property Lists. With 24,307 expressions of interest being made, this was an average of around 70 expressions of interest from homeseekers each time a property was advertised. Most properties attracted in excess of 200 expressions of interest. Almost 97% of homeseekers expressed an interest in properties over the Internet.

Around 71% of all applicants registered on the Housing Register had participated in the scheme during the last year.



As a result of the introduction of the Local Eligibility Criteria under the current Housing Allocations Scheme, the numbers of homeseekers on the Housing Register had substantially reduced. As at 31 August 2014 there were 1,563 homeseekers on the Housing Register compared to 6,219 in June 2011.

**(xi) Annual Review of Protected Characteristics – Housing Applicants and Lettings** - In previous years, the Panel had undertaken an annual review of the ethnicity of applicants on the Housing Register and compared this with the ethnicity of those allocated accommodation, considering any disparities and whether there should be any resultant changes to the Housing Allocations Scheme. No such disparities had yet been identified.

Following the introduction of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty in 2011, public bodies had to consider all individuals when carrying out their day to day work. There were nine “Protected Characteristics” which had considerations as follows:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion and Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

Generally, it was found that the statistics confirmed that the Protected Characteristics of homeseekers housed in Council accommodation were similar to those on the Housing Register. Therefore, it was recommended that no amendments be made to the Council’s Housing Allocations Scheme.

**(xii) Landlord Accreditation Scheme** – At their February 2015 meeting the Panel received a presentation regarding the Landlord Accreditation Scheme from the Private Housing Manager.

The Essex Landlord Accreditation Scheme (ELAS) was intended to raise standards in private sector rented accommodation. The scheme encouraged private landlords to come forward, make themselves known and enhance their professionalism.

ELAS was a consortium of 8 Essex District Councils, including Epping Forest District Council, administered through Blue Watch a wholly owned trading company of the Chief Fire Officer's Association (CFOA) Blue Watch Ltd for 5 years. Membership was £95.00 per annum and once a landlord was registered their properties could be advertised free on the ELAS website, they could receive discounted property insurance, they would have access to free impartial advice and information and for landlords that have licenceable houses in multiple occupation (HMO), some councils including Epping would reduce the HMO licence fee.

Despite the scheme being launched in September 2014 it had made slow progress with only two landlords having joined across Essex. It was hoped that with further publicity and exposure there would be an increase in membership.

**(xiii) Housing Improvements and Service Enhancements Fund 2015/16** - It was noted that for the past three years, the Cabinet had asked the Housing Scrutiny Panel to consider and recommend a proposed list of housing improvements and service enhancements to the Cabinet utilising the additional funding received by the HRA which the Panel had last examined in March 2014.



There were 7 new housing improvements and service enhancements being undertaken in 2014/15, in addition to the completion of a further 7 projects extending/carried forward into 2014/15. Generally good progress had been made with the delivery of most of the projects during the year to date.

**(xiv) Housing Services Strategy** - The Housing Service Strategies were produced in accordance with an agreed standard framework, regularly updated. In total, 14 Housing Service Strategies had been produced covering:

- (a) Equality and Diversity;
- (b) Housing and Neighbourhood Management;
- (c) Tenant Participation;
- (d) Private Rented Sector;
- (e) Empty Council Properties;
- (f) Anti-Social Behaviour;
- (g) House Sales and Leasehold Services;
- (h) Rent Arrears;
- (i) Rent Collection and Administration;
- (j) Under-Occupation;
- (k) Housing Information;
- (l) Older People's Housing Services;
- (m) Energy Efficiency; and
- (n) Harassment

The strategies were produced to a common format that set out how individual housing services would be delivered.

## ***Case Study: Housing Allocations Scheme***

At its meeting on 21 October 2014, the Housing Scrutiny Panel reviewed the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme.

It is a Government requirement that local authorities have a Housing Allocations Scheme for determining priorities and a procedure for selecting a person for accommodation. Their guidance allowed for authorities to decide how accommodation should be allocated based on local priorities, provided their schemes were legal and rational.

The Council's Cabinet had asked the Housing Scrutiny Panel to undertake a 12 month review of the Housing Allocations Scheme. The Panel received the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Guidance providing social housing for local people (October 2013) and allocation of accommodation (June 2012) which the Panel had regard in respect of its deliberations on the proposed changes to the scheme.

The Housing Portfolio Holder had initial views on the 12 month review following informal discussions with the Cabinet. These were as follows:

- (1) That the Residency Criteria should be increased with new applicants who had lived in the district for less than five continuous years immediately prior to their date of registration, not qualifying for inclusion on the Housing Register.
- (2) That all existing home seekers on the Housing Register who had lived within the district for less than 4 ½ continuous years immediately prior to the date the new Housing Allocations Scheme was introduced, should be removed from the Register.
- (3) That all existing home seekers who were removed from the Register because they did not meet the Local Eligibility Criteria, should be allowed to re-register if, or when, they did meet the criteria but that their registration date be their date of registration.

The Housing Portfolio Holder advised that despite the local housebuilding programme, there was still a shortage of social housing. He felt that local residents with the longest connection to the district ought to be prioritised.

It was felt that the wording within the Government's Code of Guidance was open to interpretation, particularly in regard to exceptions relating to applicants with a "strong association" to the area. However the Panel felt that an exception should be made for existing social housing tenants who were seeking to move from another local authority in order to access work. A paragraph should be added to include those who had secured either permanent employment comprising of a minimum of 24 hours each week, or an apprenticeship or full time work related training and currently lived either in excess of 50 miles from their current or intended place of work.

The Panel recommended that those who had moved out of the district into settled accommodation for less than 3 years but had lived in the district for at least 5 years immediately before moving out should be treated as home seekers who had lived in the district for more than 5 years. Members also recommended that a lesser residential requirement of 3 years should be applied to those leaving care.



It was recommended that where an applicant's gross annual household income including residential property equity, savings, shares or other assets exceeded £76,000, they should not qualify to join the Council's Housing Register.

The Chairman of the Panel was concerned that the long term effects of these proposals would change the social mix of the social housing sector, however the Panel supported the proposals.

Any tenant of the Council is offered an incentive payment to encourage downsizing their accommodation, where both properties were owned by the Council. The maximum payment is currently £2,000. During 2013/14, 41 tenants of the Council downsized to another property owned by the Council with less bedrooms. This resulted in 54 bedrooms being released; the total amount paid in downsizing payments was £47,500.

The Housing Portfolio Holder felt that the downsizing incentive payments should be increased. Accordingly, the Panel supported the incentive payments for each bedroom released being doubled to £1,000 with the amount paid for removal costs remaining the same and a standard decoration allowance payment of £500.00 being paid using "Homebase" vouchers subject to a maximum payment of £4,000.

The Panel was of the view that the increased incentive payments should only apply to tenants who were not subject to the removal of the spare room subsidy. It was noted that the increased incentives could result in an estimated increase in budget provision of around £68,000 making a required total annual budget of £115,500.

The Panel endorsed the view that the current policy on homeseekers refusing two offers of suitable accommodation within any three months period having their application being deferred for 6 months should be strengthened to two refusals within any period having their housing application deferred for 12 months. However, although those downsizing Council accommodation would be penalised in the same way, the penalty would apply following three refusals. The Panel supported a number of more minor changes suggested by officers

The Panel was advised that the amended Housing Allocations Scheme would be considered by an external legal advisor prior to a statutory consultation being undertaken and final Cabinet approval.



## 2. CONSTITUTION AND MEMBER SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

*The Constitution and Member Services Panel consisted of the following members:*

Councillor M Sartin (Chairman)  
Councillor A Watts (Vice Chairman)  
Councillors D Dorrell, J Lea, M McEwen, J Philip, Caroline Pond, D Stallan, G Waller, J H Whitehouse and S Weston

The Lead Officer was Simon Hill, Assistant Director, Governance and Performance Management.

### *Terms of Reference*

To undertake reviews of constitutional, civic, electoral and governance matters and services for members on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Council or the Cabinet with recommendations on matters allocated to the Panel as appropriate.

*The Panel scrutinised a number of issues over the last year, which included:*

**(i) Local Elections – 22 May 2014** – At their July 2014 meeting, the Panel received a report from the Returning Officer regarding the Elections held on 22 May 2014. They were:

- (d) Election of 7 Members of the European Parliament for the Eastern Region of the UK;
- (e) 19 District Council Wards; and
- (f) 1 Parish Council by-election for Buckhurst Hill West.



Voter turnout at the various elections ranged between 44% in the Buckhurst Hill East Ward and 28% in Waltham Abbey Paternoster Ward. Turnout for the European Parliamentary Election, within the district, was 35.58%, compared with a turnout of 35.90% across the region.

It was noted that there were few issues with the election, generally all practices were completed successfully.

The issue of postal votes went smoothly. Initially problems were experienced with software and scanners used for checking personal identifiers, but this was resolved remotely. 196 postal votes were rejected for various reasons, over 60 of which did not contain a ballot paper or postal voting statement. It was advised that new legislation

required the Electoral Registration Officer to inform electors, after a poll, that their postal vote identifiers had been rejected.

**(ii) Review of Polling District, Polling Places and Polling Stations** - The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 made it compulsory for this authority to carry out a review of Parliamentary polling districts and polling places within 16 months, starting from 1 October 2013, with further reviews starting on 1 October of every fifth subsequent year. It was necessary for the Council to consider polling districts and places in the Epping Forest Parliamentary constituency and those parts of the Brentwood and Ongar and Harlow situated within the district.

A polling district was a geographical area created by the sub division of a UK Parliamentary Constituency for the purposes of an election. A polling place was the building or area in which polling stations would be selected by the Returning Officer. A polling station was the room or area within the polling place where voting took place.



Notice of a review together with details of the existing polling districts, polling places and polling stations were given on 24 March 2014. The consultation period ran from 24 March to 30 May 2014.

Following the consultation, the Panel advocated that a report be submitted to the Council making several minor recommendations on the future of the district's polling places and stations.

**(iii) Constitution Review** - The Panel noted that the Council adopted a new constitution, based on a government model, in 2000. However in order to reflect changing circumstances, the constitution had grown to over 650 pages with no overriding review having been undertaken since its adoption.

The agreed Business Plan for the Governance Directorate included the aim of completing a review of the Constitution by March 2016. Although this Panel had undertaken a number of reviews of sections of the Constitution, the proposed review sought to ensure consistency of wording and rules across the piece and rationalise procedures to avoid duplication or repetition.

*(See Case Study for full details)*

**(iv) Joint Consultative Committee – Review of Terms of Reference** - Following a Management Board report in December 2012, it was acknowledged that the Terms of Reference for the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) had not been reviewed for a period of considerable time. Therefore Management Board agreed that a review of the JCC should take place.

The JCC was the Council's forum whereby discussions took place with the recognised trade unions in line with the representations at a regional level. However the Performance Improvement Unit (PIU) had identified that non-union members were not represented at the JCC. Whilst technically correct, as trade unions were not required to represent non-union staff, it was noted that:

- (a) The trade union representatives who attended the Committee had to be employees of the Council;
- (b) There were 9 trade union representatives from a range of service areas who between them were likely to hold a range of views similar to employees who were not trade union representatives; and
- (c) All representatives, whether staff or member, were permitted to share their views with the Committee and did so.

It was advised that work was progressing outside the review of the JCC Terms of Reference regarding internal staff communications and as part of the review they would draft and develop an Employee Engagement Strategy.

The Panel were happy to recommend the amended and updated terms of reference for the JCC.

**(v) Planning Committees and their Terms of Reference** - At their February 2015 meeting the Panel considered a review of the operation of Planning Committees and their Terms of Reference. This originated from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 16 September 2014, when it referred a PICK form request to the Planning Scrutiny Panel who then referred their deliberation on to this Panel.

The Panel supported the Planning Scrutiny Panel's recommendation on the criteria for referring applications to the DDCC subject to the inclusion of "large scale development schemes" to the items that would go directly to the DDCC.



The Panel supported changing the name of the District Development Control Committee to District Development Management Committee to reflect new directorate section titles and the adoption of the revised draft Article on the operation of and arrangements for Planning Committees.

**(vi) Amendments to the Council's Complaints Scheme** - The Council's complaints scheme had four stages, an investigation of a complaint at each stage was undertaken by the following:

- (a) Step 1 – Manager of the Service area concerned;
- (b) Step 2 – Director or Assistant Director;
- (c) Step 3 – Complaints Officer on behalf of Director of Governance; and
- (d) Step 4 – Member Complaints Panel

The Panel was informed that in 2006 the Local Government Ombudsman introduced the "12 week rule" which urged councils to complete every stage of a complaint within 12 weeks of their first receipt. Inability to do so meant the complainant had the right to bypass any remaining stages in the complaints procedure and instead take their complaint to the Ombudsman. However, the complaints procedure adopted by the District Council made it impossible to complete all four stages within 12 weeks. Investigations at Steps 1, 2 and 3 usually took around 3 – 4 weeks each to complete. A

complainant remaining dissatisfied could request a further review, although it could take 7 – 8 weeks to organise a meeting of the Step 4 Member Complaints Panel.

Therefore complainants were advised that it was not possible to offer a Step 4 review within the 12 week time limit, therefore they had the right to bypass this and take their complaint to the Ombudsman.

Members noted that discontinuing Steps 1 – 3 would not resolve the problem because whichever two of the three stages were retained, would still require a total of around 8 weeks to complete, which would not leave enough time to organise a Complaints Panel review within the 12 week time limit. It was advised that no other local authority in Essex, or indeed the rest of the country, had as many stages for complaints or offered a final review by Members.

Members supported the recommended changes.

### ***Case Study: Review of the Council's Constitution***

The most substantial task undertaken by the Constitution and Member Services Scrutiny Panel has been to start the process of reviewing the Council's Constitution.

The Council's Constitution dates back to the Local Government Act 2000 which required every council to have a Constitution containing the authority's standing orders, code of conduct and such other rules and information that were considered appropriate.

Over time the Constitution had grown to over 650 pages which whilst reflecting changing circumstances, had made easy access to the rules governing Council business at times difficult. No overriding review has been undertaken since its adoption.

The Business Plan for the new Governance Directorate included the ambitious task of completing a review of the Constitution by March 2016. It sought to ensure consistency of wording, rules and a rationalisation of procedures to avoid duplication and repetition.

The Constitution and Member Services Scrutiny Panel commenced work on the review with consideration of a scoping report at its September 2014 Panel meeting. The Panel was aiming to examine the following specific areas during this year:

- (a) Articles of the Constitution;
- (b) Delegations and contract standing orders;
- (c) Minority references;
- (d) Council Procedure Rules; and
- (e) Use of the Chairman's Casting Vote

Given this huge task the Members of the Panel have prioritised their working method as follows:

- (i) Reviewing sections from the Constitution at each meeting with short commentaries by officers with suggested changes;
- (ii) Undertaking consultation with other parties; and

(iii) Extending invitations to Committee/Panel Chairmen when a Constitutional review issue relevant to their area arose.

The Panel planned to complete the work by March 2016 with the aim of the Council agreeing the new Constitution document by the end of that municipal year. The review was currently making good progress.



### **3. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY PANEL**

*The Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel consisted of the following Members:*

Councillor A Church (Chairman)  
Councillor A Mitchell (Vice Chairman)  
Councillors K Angold-Stephens, D Dorrell, J Knapman, H Mann, G Mohindra; H Ulkun, Jon Whitehouse, S Watson and E Webster

The Lead Officer was Peter Maddock, Assistant Director (Accountancy).

#### ***Terms of Reference***

##### **Performance Management**

1. To review Key Performance Indicator (KPI) outturn results for the previous year, at the commencement of each municipal year;
2. To identify on an annual basis, subject to the concurrence of the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee:
  - (a) a basket of KPIs important to the improvement of the Council's services and the achievement of its key objectives; and
  - (b) the performance targets and monitoring frequency of the KPIs for each year.
3. To review performance against the adopted KPIs on a quarterly basis throughout each year, and to make recommendations for corrective action in relation to areas of slippage or under performance;

##### **Public Consultation and Engagement**

4. To develop arrangements as required, for the Council to directly engage local communities in shaping the future direction of its services, to ensure that they are responsive to local need;
5. To annually review details of the consultation and engagement exercises undertaken by the Council over the previous year;

##### **Finance**

6. To consider the draft portfolio budgets for each year, and to evaluate and rank proposals for enhancing or reducing services where necessary, whilst ensuring consistency between policy objectives and financial demands;
7. To review key areas of income and expenditure for each portfolio on a quarterly basis throughout the year;

## Information and Communications Technology

8. To monitor and review progress on the implementation of all major ICT systems;

## Value for Money

9. To consider a regular analysis of the Council's comparative value for money 'performance', and to recommend as required to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee, in respect of areas where further detailed investigation may be required; and

## Equality

10. To annually review the achievement of the Council's equality objectives for 2012/13 to 2015/16, and progress in relation to other equality issues and initiatives.

### *The Panel scrutinised a number of important issues over the last year, which included:*

(i) **Key Performance Indicators 2013/14** – The outturn report on the key performance indicators adopted by the Council for 2013/14 went to Panel's July's meeting. The meeting noted that a range of thirty five Key Performance Indicators had been adopted by the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee in March 2013.



The position in regard to the KPIs for the end of the year was as follows:

- a) 28 (80%) indicators achieved the cumulative target; and
- b) 7 (20%) indicators did not achieve the cumulative target, although 2 of these indicators performed within the agreed tolerance for that indicator.

Members were reminded that as part of the Overview and Scrutiny Review undertaken in 2013/14, changes had been made to the existing arrangements for the quarterly review of KPI performance.

From the first quarter of the year, four of the existing Scrutiny Panels (Finance and Performance Management, Housing, Planning, and Safer Cleaner and Greener) will each be responsible for the review of quarterly performance against relevant KPIs, rather than all indicators being considered by the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel.



(ii) **Sickness Absence 2013/14 (final figures)** – At their July, 2014 the Panel received a sickness absence report for quarters 3 and 4 for 2013/14. The Panel noted that the Council's target for sickness absence under KPI10 for 2013/14 was an average of 7.25 days per employee. The final overall outturn figure of 7.01 days was below the target of 7.25 days for the year.

(iii) **Consultation and Engagement** – The Panel received the annual report on the public consultations carried out during 2013/14.



Every year a list of consultation planned and carried out by the Council was published on the website and brought to the attention of this Panel.

The Consultation Register was a list of the most recent exercises, which have been carried out on behalf of the Council or by the Council in the last financial year.

It was noted that some new policies and initiatives had been consulted on such as the Introduction to Annual Site Licence Fees for Permanent Residential Park Homes; and the HealthWorks Survey (Healthworks was a health improvement and well-being project for young people aged 11 to 19, and encourages them to adopt healthier lifestyles, providing a range of activities, workshops and courses).

The Panel noted that the Council had undertaken 6 statutory surveys and had planned a further 2 so far this year. It had also carried out 4 discretionary surveys.

Costs were being kept low by using resources in-house and using online technology. Three statutory surveys made up the bulk of the costs involved in public engagement which totalled £111,000; the 'Local Plan Preferred Options' consultation planned for December, involved the highest costs mentioned in the report of £90k.

Judgement on whether or not to include a consultation on the register should be relative to the impact and local sensitivity of the subject. For example if the changes being proposed are likely to be either:

- contentious,
- an expensive project,
- a possible cause for complaint,
- effect a lot of people,
- controversial;

- or a possible nuisance to residents

then they would be included on the register, however small they were.

More emphasis had been given to data protection in consultation. Further monitoring would be carried out to ensure this happened.

Online consultation was steadily becoming more advanced and the Council was starting to use WebHost, which was Cloud technology and gave more control and faster recovery of data and analysis.

Further use of Social Media for consultation purposes was being researched to see if the feedback or publicity aspects were a useful source of public engagement and or feedback.

**(iv) Provisional Capital Outturn for 2013/14** – This report set out the Council's capital programme for 2013/14, in terms of expenditure and financing, and compared the provisional outturn figures with the revised estimates. The revised estimates, which were based on the Capital Programme, represented those adopted by the Council in February 2014.



The Council's total investment on capital schemes in 2013/14 was £13,006,000, compared to a revised estimate of £15,610,000. The largest underspends were experienced on General Fund projects, virtually all of which were underspent.

**(v) Provisional Revenue Outturn for 2013/14** - This provided an overall summary of the revenue outturn for the financial year. The Panel noted that the net expenditure of the Continuing Services Budget (CSB) for 2013/14 totalled £14.219 million, which was £149,000 (1.0%) below the original estimate and £265,000 (1.9%) below the revised. When compared to a gross expenditure budget of approximately £75 million, the variances can be restated as 0.2% and 0.35% respectively.

There were also improvements in the funding position as this showed an increase of £286,000, however this was not the full story as movements between the Collection Fund (where Council Tax and Business Rates are accounted for) and the General Fund are governed by specific regulations.

The Panel noted that when HRA Self Financing was introduced it became clear that more money would be available for service improvements and enhancements. Each year an amount was allocated for service enhancement based on the likely funding available. There was an underspend on the programme last year and therefore £112,000 was requested for carry forward into 2014/15.

**(vi) Key Performance Indicators – Performance by Quarters** – The Panel noted that from this year, each Scrutiny Panel would be receiving their own performance indicators to review on a quarterly basis. Through the year the Panel received a quarterly update on their own set of indicators.



Eleven of the Key Performance Indicators fell within the F&PM SP areas of responsibility.

By their last meeting the Panel had the third quarter results for the KPIs specific to their Panel for 2014/15 and noted that:

- (a) 6 (55%) indicators achieved the cumulative third quarter target, and
- (b) 5 (45%) indicators did not achieve the cumulative third quarter target.
- (c) 7 (64%) were currently anticipated to achieve the cumulative year-end target.

**(vii) Quarterly Financial Monitoring** – the Panel also received quarterly updates on the financial state of the council.

They noted that the new Business Rates Retention scheme was in its second year whereby a proportion of rates collected were retained by the Council. By the end of June 2014 the figures were looking good with the Council retaining funding of £40,680; but this might not continue depending on the number of claims from small businesses that were received.

**(viii) Performance Monitoring – Call Handling** – The report on call handling performance that was produced in response to a request made by this Panel at their March meeting. They had wanted to know how long a member of the public would have to wait before they were answered by the switchboard. They noted that our new telephone system was now live and capable of producing very detailed management information. However it was noted that although a report on switchboard times was possible the majority of calls now bypass the switchboard and go to direct dial extensions. It would be more beneficial to monitor what happens following the switchboard transferring a call.



ICT staff had only just been trained in the use of this new monitoring system and on the subsequent production of reports. They were now looking to members to give a steer as to what they would like to have monitored. Officers could then produce regular reports monitoring as appropriate.

By their March 2015 meeting the Council's new telephone system was live and could produce various monitoring information. Following the introduction of a number of auto attendants (menu assisted calls), a large number of calls now bypass the switchboard and go straight to directorate contact centres and workgroups.

They noted that other authorities that had telephone systems like us tended to favour reporting on:

- a. The percentage of abandoned calls (subject to a minimum of 4 rings); and
- b. The number of calls sent directly to the voicemail system.

ICT tended to favour these indicators that specifically relate to the service callers were receiving. During January, 35,388 calls were received – 9.8% of these were classified as abandoned with 4.22% of calls going directly to voicemail. This may be something that the Panel would want to monitor. The Panel agreed that these would be appropriate points to monitor in the coming year.

**(ix) Financial Issues Paper** - This provided the initial framework for starting the 2015/16 budget. It had been to the Cabinet Finance Committee in July and was here for the Panel comments on the initial budgetary structure for 2015/16.



The report took the members through the General Fund Outturn for 2013-14, the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Continuing Services Budget. It also went through central government funding, noting that significant changes had happened at the start of 2013/14 and we were only a year and a half into these changes. It was noted that as part of abolishing Council Tax Benefit and introducing Local Council Tax Support (LCTS), the DCLG had to determine whether parish Councils would be affected by the reduction in council tax base or left outside the calculations. However, despite the consultation response on the scheme being massively in favour of tax base adjustments only at district level, the DCLG decided that parish councils should also be affected. One of the problems with this decision was that DCLG did not have a legal power to make grant payments directly to parish councils. This meant the funding for these councils had to be included in the grants to districts and it was then for districts to determine how much of the grant was passed on. Members determined that parish councils should be fully protected from this change for 2013/14, a decision that was not shared by many authorities across the country.



It was noted that half of the Business rates retention was kept locally, 40% to EFDC, 9% to Essex County Council and 1% to the Essex Fire Authority; and 50% went to Central Government.

As the billing authority we were responsible for collecting the money and then paying it over. However, as our share (£12,755,334) exceeds the amount of our funding deemed to come from retained business rates (£2,909,311) the excess (£9,846,023) was also paid to Central Government as a "Tariff". The tariffs are used to provide "Top Ups" to those authorities whose non-domestic rate income was lower than their deemed funding from business rates. Overall this meant we were collecting nearly £32 million but retaining less than £3 million, or just over 9%.

**(x) Equality Objectives 2012-2016** – At their November 2014 meeting the Panel noted the quarter 2 progress on the Equality Objective. In 2012 the Cabinet had agreed a range of equality objectives for the four years from 2012 to 2016, designed to help the Council meet the aims of the general duties of the Equality Act (2010) and bring about positive improvements to service design and delivery. The report reflected progress against these objectives as at the end of the second quarter of 2014/15. The achievements of these objectives were supported by an action plan spread across the four year time frame.



**(xi) Sickness Absence for 2014/15** – The Panel noted the absence figures for quarters 1 and 2 for 2014/15. It included absence figures for each directorate and the number of employees who had met the trigger level. It was noted that the figures had taken a bit of a downturn this year; this seemed to be due to several long term absences.





**(xii) Equality Information – Workforce Data** - This report on Equality Information, generated under action E04.02 of the Council’s Equality Objectives 2012-16 to “carry out analysis of workforce data to identify trends and patterns in areas as identified by Corporate Equalities Working Group”.

The Panel noted that:

- Women were well represented in the Council’s workforce (56.02%) and there was evidence that they were accessing training opportunities and achieving promotion;
- Disabled people were well represented in the Council workforce. The figure was 11.14% for the Council and 10.17% for the district. There was evidence that this group were accessing training opportunities and achieving promotion;
- The Council workforce was older on average than the local population, with 34.06% being in the 45-59 age range;
- 52.97% of Council staff did not wish to disclose their religion or belief. Statistics for the staff that did provide this information show that non-Christian groups are under-represented with 3.05% for the Council and 8.1% for the district; and that
- 51.07% of Council staff did not wish to disclose their sexual orientation. There was no comparative information from the 2011 Census.

**(xiv) Fees and Charges 2015/16** - This report that went to the Panel’s November 2014 meeting, provided details on the fees and charges that the council levies and what scope, if any, there was to increase any particular charge. This was an annual report produced as part of the annual budget process.

It was noted that:

- The medium term financial strategy had identified the need for savings around £1.5m over the four year period, with £500,000 falling in 2015/16. This may well rise to near £1m;
- Increasing existing fees and charges would help reach the savings target set, however, there were issues to consider such as whether fee increases will drive customers away and have the opposite of the desired effect and actually reduce income;
- The September Retail Prices Index (RPI) has recently been published at 2.3%. Previously this has been used as a guide when setting the level of increase however other factors such as cost of provision also need to be considered;
- Generally, it was recommended that the majority of fees and charges be increased by the Retail Prices Index (RPI) for September 2014 (2.3%) - rounded up or down as appropriate.



The Panel broadly agreed with the proposed level of the fees and charges for 2015/16, but would like the increase charges to the ‘Careline’ services to be revisited.

**(xv) Commercial Property – Rent Paid** – The Panel at its meeting in September 2014 considered KPI GOV002 (Commercial Property – Rent Paid) and noted that the percentage of rent arrears over 90 days was 4.73% against a target of 3% and an explanation was required as to why this figure was below target.

Members were invited to look at how this indicator was presented, it had distorted figures as it included former tenants and historic debts and did not relate to current

expected income for the financial year. Targets would need to be adjusted to reflect this, perhaps by breaking it down into two sets of figures.

The Panel, on consideration thought that there was a need for early intervention, a way to see and identify the warning signals.

*(See Case Study for full details)*

**(xvi) ICT Updates** – The Panel received update on the Council’s Information and Computer Technology systems updating them on the ongoing works and projects of the ICT strategy. Overall the projects were on track and progressing well.

They noted that the Council now had:

- An Auto Attendant telephone system with menu assisted calls;
- There were now mobile applications to enable officers and members to work out of the office;
- The whole council was now covered by wireless connectivity;
- ICT now have out of hours call-out arrangements to enable them to resolve any problems before core working time begins; and
- The Council has now developed its own online booking system for leisure services and this will eventually link in with the Finance system.



**(xvii) Financial Monitoring** - The Panel undertook quarterly financial monitoring on income and expenditure for quarter three of the financial year. The last quarter would be reported in the new municipal year.

By the end of quarter three it was reported that it would be a surprise if the Council showed an underspend this year.

### ***Case Study – Commercial Property – Rent Paid***

At their meeting in September 2014 the Panel considered KPI GOV002 (Commercial Property – Rent Paid) and noted that the percentage of rent arrears over 90 days was 4.73% against a target of 3% and an explanation was required as to why this figure was below target.

The Chief Estates officer noted that:

- The Council had substantial property portfolios;
- This KPI excluded debts under 90 days to enable people to pay;
- There had been resources issues but it was hoped that two Asset Management & Economic Development Assistants, approved by Council in September 2014 would be able to help chase outstanding debts;
- Members were invited to look at how this indicator was presented as it had distorted figures as it included former tenants and historic debts and did not relate to current expected income for the financial year; and

- Targets would need to be adjusted to reflect this, perhaps by breaking it down into two sets of figures.

The Panel considered a list of arrears from current tenants and former tenants and lists of debts that the council's legal services were dealing with. Where it was felt that the situation would not improve, court orders had been obtained for possession of the properties so that the Council could re-let to new tenants. It was noted that some tenants were making regular payments to reduce their debt; or had been paying but had now stopped; there were a number of debts not worth pursuing as they may have gone into administration. If these were taken out, the arrears would go down to below 3%.

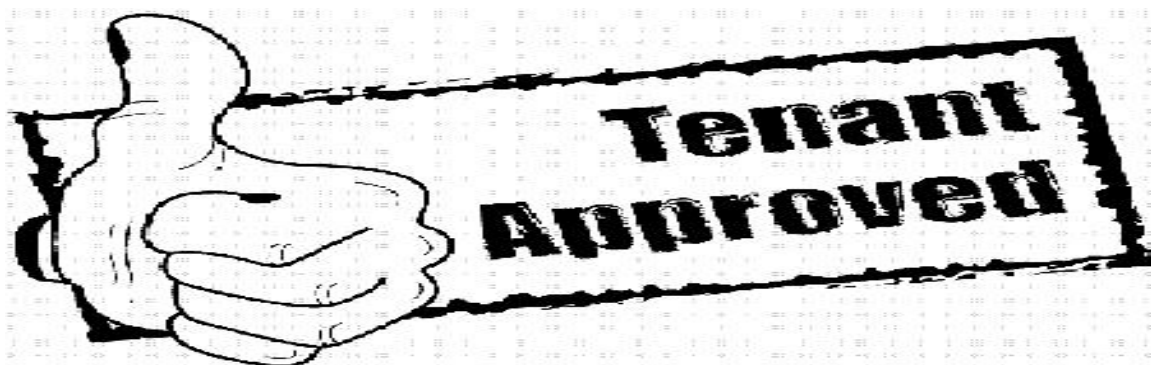
The Panel noted that these were only commercial property debts; and that although some went back to 2006, were still listed, but as they were still being paid of, if only a small amount on a regular basis, the Council was still collecting.

Asked if the Council asked for deposits and took due diligence in letting to new tenants, the Chief Estates Officer said that they did exert due diligence and also took a deposit and used it if they have to take re-possession.

The Panel went on to examine certain cases as detailed in the report in more depth to get a better knowledge of the cases outstanding.

The Panel concluded that there was a need for early intervention, a way to see the warning signals. Future problems were hard to identify as the signs were not always clear. Officers did not know the tenants business in detail and had to make judgement calls on this.

The Chairman summed up by saying that the general consensus was that prevention was better. Deposits could be use to pay arrears and if used they should be topped up by the tenants and if they could not, it would be a sign that they were in trouble. This could be used as an indicator. The Panel recommended that the risk management policy for this be reviewed. They would also like the KPI reviewed to consider if the figures should include historic debt which did not relate to the current expected income for the financial year. Targets would need to be adjusted to reflect this.



## 4. SAFER CLEANER GREENER SCRUTINY PANEL

***The Safer, Cleaner, Greener Scrutiny Panel consisted of the following members:***

Councillor J Lea (Chairman)  
Councillor H Brady (Vice Chairman)  
Councillors K Chana, R Gadsby, B Jennings, L Mead, A Mitchell, S Neville, M Sartin, B Surtees and E Webster

The Lead officer was Qasim Durrani, Assistant Director, Technical Services.

### ***Terms of Reference***

1. To approve and keep under review the “Safer, Cleaner, Greener” initiative development programme.

*(Note: this development programme will encompass the three main issues and will therefore include matters such as:*

- (i) environmental enforcement activity*
- (ii) safer communities activities*
- (iii) waste management activities (in addition to WMPB information))*

2. To keep under review the activity and decisions of the Waste Partnership Member Board and the Inter Authority Member Working Group.
3. To receive reports from the Waste Management Partnership Board in respect of the operation of and performance of the waste management contract
4. To monitor and keep under review the Council’s progress towards the preparation and adoption of a sustainability policy and to receive progress reports on the Council’s Climate Change Strategy from the Green Working Group.
5. To receive and review the reports of the Bobbingworth Nature Reserve (former Landfill site) Liaison Group.
6. To act as the Council’s Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee and to keep under review the activities of the Epping Forest Safer Communities Partnership as a whole or any of the individual partners which make up the partnership and:
  - That one meeting a year be dedicated as Community Safety Committee meetings.
7. To monitor and review the new Local Highways Panel.
8. To receive the minutes of the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) for the purposes of monitoring the work and progress of the partnership.
9. To monitor and review the minutes of the Police and Crime Panel.
10. To receive copies of the Leisure Board minutes.

***The Panel scrutinised a number of important issues over the last year, which included:***

**(i) Road Traffic Accidents** – At their first meeting of the year in July 2014 the Chairman welcomed Adam Pipe, the Casualty Reduction Manager from Essex Police and PS Simon Willshire. They were there to talk about the work Essex Police were doing with the road traffic collisions data for the Epping Forest area.



The Panel noted that the traffic sections were having a difficult time as they were not seen as a priority by central government and had to deal with cuts in their resource budgets. They were to get down to 80 from the current 160 officers for the County and to 10 motorcycle units, with only 2 officers responsible for commercial vehicles. They were also down to 9 special constables responsible for casualty reduction.

Mr Pipe's section was also responsible for the road side safety cameras and carried out camera offences investigations. The cameras were not just for fines and a lot of the people caught this way were told by the courts to take safety courses. They were creating all sorts of courses for low level offenders from cyclists, to motorcyclists and drivers, all based around educating them and modifying their behaviour.

Part of their job was to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured (KSI) on Essex roads through enforcement, education and engagement. Partly this would be down to the maximum use of re-education for the low end offenders and ensuring, where possible, that top end offenders were brought to justice.

The meeting noted that a disproportionate 26% of KSIs were motorcyclists who made up only a small percentage of motorised road traffic. They were also noticing an increase in drunk drivers at present.

In the Epping Forest area, in 2014 so far there had been 35 KSIs. There had been 40 for 2013. As for cyclists, so far this year there have been substantially less KSIs than last year, which was encouraging. There had been quite a few pedestrian accidents so far this year especially in the Loughton area, a densely populated urban area.

They also identified those persons who used the road network to commit crime.

**(ii) Anti Social Behaviour Case Review Model** – Also at their July meeting the Panel noted that new legislation on Anti-Social Behaviour, the Crime and Policing Act 2014 (formally known as 'Community Triggers') received royal assent on 13 March 2014. The Act was designed to introduce simpler, more effective powers to tackle anti-social behaviour and provide better protection for victims and communities.

Within the Act are new responsibilities for the relevant bodies including the District Council, the Police, clinical commissioning groups, health providers and registered social housing providers.

To ensure agencies took a more joined up, problem solving





approach, Safer Essex had agreed to develop a consistent County-wide approach across all agencies who are involved in the use of the new legislation; providing victims of anti-social behaviour with a coherent and effective response regardless of where they lived in Essex.

It was important to note that the District Council would play a key pivotal role in this process by taking the lead over the other agencies, including Essex Police, in recording, collating and responding to all Anti-social Behaviour Review requests from the public.

**(iii) Waste Contract Update** – The meeting received a rundown on the latest of the new waste management contract awarded to BIFFA. The Cabinet had agreed on 19 May to award the contract to Biffa Municipal Limited. Following the publication of the decision on 21 May there was the Alcatel mandatory standstill period. This was to allow any unsuccessful bidder to challenge the decision made by the Council. It was noted that no challenges were made to the awarding of the contract and the contract had now been formally awarded to them. The unsuccessful bidders had a debrief session on 3<sup>rd</sup> July. This was attended by SITA, SERCO and Ubaser.



**(iv) Recycling in Flats and Multiple Occupancy Dwellings** – The Panel received a verbal report on the current state of recycling in flat blocks in the District. There were a total of 7,400 flats in the District and some of these were not able to have suitable containers put in to collect the recycling. 80% of flats that were suitable for having recycling containers have now got them and officers were exploring ways to put some containers in the other 20% of flats. They were also looking at ways to put in food recycling but there had been problems with contamination. Recycling bins were being redesigned along with new literature and leaflets to educate the residents in the flat blocks.





**(v) Update on the Environment Agency River Roding Strategy** – In October the Panel received an update on the Environment Agency’s River Roding Strategy telling members that the Environment Agency (EA) would be adopting the recommendations of the River Roding Strategy. They would be writing to all properties and landowners within the boundary of the River Roding’s flood plain, advising them of the strategy recommendations and how the implementation would impact on their property. This



strategy would benefit 1000 properties in the catchment but unfortunately some properties would remain at high risk or in a few cases have an increased risk of flooding. They would be working with those property owners to offer advice and guidance to ensure they were aware of the risks and the steps they could take to minimise these.

Once the River Roding Strategy was fully implemented it was likely that there would be impacts on the district and resourcing implications for the Council.

**(vi) Key Performance Indicators 2014/15** - The specific Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for each quarter of the year that was appropriate to this Panel were noted. This was the first year that these specific indicators had gone to the Panel since being agreed by last year’s Overview and Scrutiny Review Task and Finish Panel.

Over the year the Panel considered the performance of the Key Performance Indicators for 2014/15 relevant to the council services that the panel monitors on a quarterly basis.

By the end of quarter three, the Panel noted that of the KPIs that fell within the Safer Cleaner Greener Scrutiny Panel area of responsibility their position was:

- i) 7 (78%) of indicators achieved the cumulative third quarter target;
- ii) 2 (22%) of indicators did not achieve the cumulative third quarter target;
- iii) 8 (89%) were currently anticipated to achieve the cumulative year-end target.

**(vii) CCTV – 3 Year Action Plan** – At their January 2015 meeting the Council’s CCTV Operations Officer updated the Panel on the CCTV three year action plans. The Panel noted that the use of CCTV had helped in the investigation of some unpleasant crimes, including a violent assault on a taxi driver in Epping. A lot of these investigations had led to arrests directly attributable to the use of CCTV.



Relevant CCTV footage was made available to the Police and other responsible authorities.

The Panel noted that:

- Loughton High Road now had high definition cameras installed along its length and this had proved useful so far;
- The museum in Waltham Abbey will have high definition cameras installed and the current system at North Weald Airfield would also be improved;
- Officers were looking to stream the live CCTV footage back to the Civic Offices so that they could be monitored in real time;
- There were now about 450 cameras across the district, with the police asking for about 253 downloads of incidents last year;

- The Council has recently completed a self assessment on its CCTV services and has found itself to be in good shape as an authority;
- The Council was now receiving more and more requests from insurance companies for CCTV footage and officers have now started charging for these images;
- For any operations using covert surveillance, magistrate's authorisation would have to be sought. The Council had also developed its own policy for this. A recent success for the use of covert surveillance was the catching of a long term fly tipper;
- Officers were updating the way people could request CCTV footage by using the council's website. This was now a clearer and quicker way to request footage by way of a web form and a generated unique reference number; and
- We would be helping Waltham Abbey Town Council with their CCTV systems during the coming year.

**(viii) Enforcement Activities Update** – The Panel received an update on the Council's enforcement activities. The figures remained fairly constant over the periods shown, fly tipping remained an ongoing problem and the council tended to publicise successful prosecutions to act as a deterrent. The report detailed some of the more successful prosecutions.

**(ix) Air pollution** – At their meeting in February 2015, the Panel received a report that was in reply to the querying of the amount of air pollution in our district and in particular the levels of particulate pollution in Epping Forest, attributable to 6% of all deaths.

They noted that officers carried out an assessment every 3 to 4 years based on PM<sub>10</sub> particulates.



Research showed that particulate pollution reduced life expectancy by two years and could also be the cause of serious illnesses. The current Mayor of London had an objective to achieve an ultra low emissions zone in London. However, it was noted that our power to influence this issue was very limited because of the motorways and commuters going in and out of London.

It was also noted that there was a need for a safer set up for cyclists in our area, the rural roads were just too dangerous. It was highlighted that 'Sustrans' the transport charity were looking into this at present in the Epping area.

**(x) Engineering and Drainage** – the Panel received a presentation by the Council's Drainage Manager on the Council's role in alleviating the risk of flooding in the district and what the Engineering, Drainage and Water Team (EDWT) did.

The Panel noted that EDWT provided a discretionary 24/7 – 365 emergency flood response standby service to deal with out of hours flooding incidents involving Council owned assets or to assist members of the public, where appropriate. They would respond to all types of flooding incidents, working closely with the Environment Agency where necessary.

*(See case study for full details)*

(xi) **Thames Water** – at their very last meeting the Panel received a presentation from four officers from Thames Water. They were there to tell the Panel about their work in this area, the problems they faced and to outline some solutions. They started by apologising for the time taken for some of the work they had undertaken and for their lack of communication in aspects for the cases provided.



Thames Water was increasing the number of customer representatives in both their clean and waste teams to improve contact. They were also continuously reviewing their communications branch improving how they target communication to areas that needed it most.

The Panel noted that they had a duty to provide public sewerage and to clean and maintain sewers. They also had a duty to provide and extend sewerage systems, but do not have the duty to provide capacity to deal with flood or ground water. They also do not deal with rivers or canals. There were three types of sewer: foul water sewers, surface water sewers and combined sewers (these were mainly in London).

The causes of flooding could be many and complex and it was difficult to identify where the water initially came from. In general, it was noted that the local council and land owners were responsible for surface and ground water flooding; highway flooding was the responsibility of the local council and/or the Highway Agency; river flooding was the responsibility of the riparian owners and the Environment Agency; Thames Water was responsible for surface water sewers and foul water sewers.

They prioritise their calls and have 2 hours for emergencies and 4 hours for operational blockages. If follow on works were needed, dependant on Highways Agency agreement and notice/permit had been granted it would be a 5 to 10 day notice.

### ***Case Study: Engineering and Drainage***

In February 2015 the Council's Drainage Manager, gave a presentation on the Council's role in alleviating the risk of flooding in the district and what the Engineering, Drainage and Water Team (EDWT) did.



A note from the planners outlined the role of planning in flood risk prevention. It was noted that Local Plans should be supported by a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and policies to manage flood risk from all sources. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) set strict tests to protect people and property from flooding, which all local planning authorities were expected to follow. Where these tests were not met, national policy was

clear that new development should not be allowed.

In terms of day-to-day development management, planners assessed applications using mapping data made available by the Environment Agency. In addition recent guidelines issued by government requires all local authorities to consult with their Lead Local Flooding Authority; in our case it was Essex County Council, on development of 10 dwellings or more, to assess flood risk from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses and to promote sustainable drainage proposals.

The EDWT provided a discretionary 24/7 – 365 emergency flood response standby service to deal with out of hours flooding incidents involving Council owned assets or to assist members of the public, where appropriate. They would respond to all types of flooding incidents, working closely with the Environment Agency where necessary.

It was noted that there were three Flood Alleviation Schemes (FAS) in the district that were the responsibility of the Council, and that:

- They were built in high risk areas, with properties at risk of flooding;
- The levels of water in the storage areas at two of the sites were monitored 24/7, 365 by telemetry and recently installed CCTV;
- In addition there was the Loughton Brook Scheme, which was statutorily classified as a Reservoir and was managed by the Environment Agency.

In addition to the FAS the EDWT monitor and maintain (with the Council's Term Contractor) the council's 50 storm grilles and approximately 2,500km of ordinary water courses.

It was also noted that:

- We were the only District in Essex with its own Byelaws on Land Drainage;
- As an authority we liaise with Thames Water, Essex County Council (Highways), Affinity Water, Environment Agency (& other organisations);
- Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Council was statutorily obliged to inspect and assess potentially contaminated land sites within its boundary;
- Local Authorities must set out its approach as a written strategy;
- There were thought to be several thousand potentially contaminated land sites, due to historic contamination, with 91 landfill sites;
- Local Authorities also had a statutory duty under the Building Act 1984 and the Public Health Acts to ensure buildings had adequate drainage and that blockages, defects and pollution from sewage were properly dealt with;
- In October 2011 most private sector sewers transferred to Thames Water; the Council was still responsible for all rural drainage systems and for many situations where there were drainage problems in urban areas;
- EDWT provided investigation and enforcement services on private sewers that fell outside the jurisdiction of Thames Water;
- The poor performance of Thames Water meant that officers often had to get involved with problems that should have been dealt with by Thames Water;
- EDWT maintain the Council's own drainage records and also have access to the Thames sewer maps;
- EDWT have recently purchased a vehicle and have replaced their old CCTV equipment to assist with flooding and drainage work;
- The Council's Local Plan should take into account climate change over the longer term which would include flood risks;
- EFDC have their own Flood Risk Assessment Zones (FRAZ) set out in its Local Plan;
- The FRAZ have been identified and mapped by officers;
- These FRAZ were not the same as the Environment Agency Flood Zones;
- EDWT officers assessed planning applications and if the development falls within a FRAZ a flood risk condition would be recommended;
- The Council encourages all developers to follow the principals of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in designing facilities for the handling of rainwater runoff;

- The Government had recently decided to remove the responsibility for delivering SuDS from the Local Lead Flood Authority (ECC) and strengthen the planning system – which has placed the responsibility back on us;
- The Flood and Water Management Act (April 2010) was intended to implement Sir Michael Pitt's recommendations following the widespread flooding of 2007. This flooding was largely caused by surface water runoff overloading drainage systems.

It was noted that there was disjointed help offered from the Highways Agency. Officers also noted that what problems they had encountered in carrying out their work had mainly been the inefficiency of the Highways Agency and Thames Water. There was only so much our officers could do without any co-operation.

In conclusion the Panel confirmed that they wanted Thames Water to come to a future meeting.



## 5. PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

*The Planning Services Scrutiny Panel consisted of the following members:*

Councillor G Chambers (Chairman)  
Councillor Y Knight (Vice Chairman)  
Councillors D Dorrell, H Kaufman, M McEwen, B Sandler, G Shiell, B Surtees, S Watson, A Watts and D Wixley.

The Lead officer was Nigel Richardson, Assistant Director (Development Management)

### **Terms of Reference**

1. To consider and review Measures taken to Improve Performance within the Directorate concerning:
  - a) Performance standards and monitoring; and
  - b) Other Reviews
2. To monitor and receive reports/updates on the delivery of the Local Plan;
3. To monitor and receive reports/updates on the Planning Electronic Information System. To provide information regarding the progress and availability of planning information held on i-Plan.
4. To establish whether there are any resource implications arising out of the topics under review and advise Cabinet for inclusion in the Budget Process each year;
5. To report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at appropriate intervals on the above. To report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Council and the Cabinet with recommendations on matters allocated to the Panel as appropriate;
6. Response to Planning Consultations;
7. Receiving feedback from Chair and Vice Chairmen of Development Control meetings; and
8. Business Plans Review Development Control – Governance and Forward Planning – Neighbourhoods.

*The Panel scrutinised a number of important issues over the last year, which included:*

- (i) **Update on Local Development Scheme** – At their first meeting of the year the Panel received a report regarding an update on the Local Development Scheme.

The Localism Act 2011 made a requirement that local authorities must prepare and maintain a Local Development Scheme specifying the local development documents. The last scheme, formerly adopted by the Council in July 2013, set out the proposed



programme for the preparation of the Epping Forest Local Plan. Members noted that the Council had made good progress in developing the evidence base.

**(ii) Section 106 Annual Report** - Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allowed a local planning authority to enter into a legally-binding agreement or planning obligation with a land owner/developer over a related issue.

Section 106 Agreements could act as a main instrument for placing restrictions on developers, requiring them to mitigate on-site and site specific impacts. Such agreements could be sought when planning conditions were inappropriate to ensure and enhance the quality of development and enable proposals that might otherwise have been refused to go ahead in a sustainable manner. Contributions may be secured by:

- (a) Work in-kind provided or constructed by the developer;
- (b) A financial payment (which may be decided using a formula); and
- (c) Transfer of land for a facility.

#### **Performance for the Year 2013/14**

Benefits negotiated through the year would provide a total of £729,218 received into the public purse. Benefits actually realised through the year had provided a total of £725,711 received into the public purse, Highway improvements at the developer's expense and funding of a fixed 1 year term Conservation Technical Officer post.

#### **The Future**

The use of S106 Agreements attached to planning permissions granted after April 2015 were to be restricted, as they were being replaced by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The adoption of the CIL required an up to date development plan and adoption after consultation and examination, before such a levy could be adopted and payment received. Monies raised under CIL could only be spent on infrastructure which included roads and other transport facilities, flood defences, schools and other education facilities, medical facilities and sporting and recreational facilities. From 6 April 2015, it would not be possible to use S106 Agreement delivery of such infrastructure items, unless it was site specific and no more than 5 S106 obligations could be pooled together for that one delivery requirement.

As part of the Local Plan the Council must consider the infrastructure necessary to accompany development. In the Local Plan this assessment of infrastructure would form the Information Delivery Plan (IDP). Once all infrastructure needed was identified, all of the existing revenue streams would then be reviewed.

**(iii) Local Plan Progress Reports** – At various time during the year, the Panel received a progress reports regarding the Local Plan.

They noted that:

- The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was being updated with a draft report. The report would help identify the District's Objectively Assessed Housing Need and constitute an approach to future housing provision.
- Progress had been made on the master planning work for North Weald Bassett in consideration of the way the airfield would relate to the wider village.
- Consultants had been engaged for further work on economic and employment evidence for supporting the Local Plan and the Economic Development Strategy.

- The joint Essex-wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment had been completed with briefings by the consultants held in July 2014. The Planning Policy Portfolio Holder advised that there was a requirement for the district to source 112 extra Gypsy and Traveller pitches, although they would be around existing settlements.
- The Cabinet approved a draft methodology for a comprehensive Green Belt Review which outlined further work being undertaken based on the experience of other recent examinations.
- Officers had been meeting regularly with the appropriate authorities to consider cross boundary issues.

*(See Case Study for full details)*

**(iv) The London Infrastructure Delivery Plan** - The London Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) had been published by the Mayor of London for consultation making the case for better infrastructure provision in London. The Mayor had published a number of key policy reports making the case as follows:



(a) The Independent London Finance Commission Report argued for the full devolution of property taxes to London government with an associated increase in borrowing levels enabling London government to increase investment in its own infrastructure;

(b) The Mayor's 2020 Vision document identified world class infrastructure provision which met the city's needs;

(c) The Further Alterations to the London Plan (FALP) document set out the scale of the housing challenge to 2036 with planning policies to address it, including identified housing capacity to 2025. There were a range of other proposals about infrastructure and the environment ensuring good quality sustainable development; and

(d) The London First Infrastructure Commission examined the challenges faced by the capital because of growing population, workforce, ageing infrastructure and demanding fiscal context. The commission looked at all solutions to planning, delivery and financing for the future, specifically calling for stronger city wide strategic infrastructure planning with greater coordination across sectors.

Members supported the Mayor's approach to London's growth by keeping it within current boundaries and not encroaching on the Green Belt, at least until the full London Plan Review undertaken in 2015.

**(v) Progress Report on Electronic Information Systems for Development Management** – In September the Panel received a progress report regarding Electronic Information Systems Development Management.

Development Management was dependent on the operation of its planning database for both Development and Building Control which was linked to Information@work, the software for all plans, maps, photographs and documents.



Significant benefits came from reducing the use of paper, therefore work continued on improving electronic access to planning information by Parish and Town Councils. It was advised that the District Council was no longer able to print plans and other documentation received electronically for circulation to Parish and Town Councils. Officers were aware that Internet and computer equipment were limited in some areas, therefore progress had been made on improving the situation with funding for electronic projectors to Parish Councils. Fourteen Parish and Town Councils had made applications for grant funding to support electronic equipment.

A project to convert microfiche records to electronic format was due to begin in November/December 2014. The aim was to convert 71,000 historic Development Control microfiche jackets (4 million images) to electronic format during the course of the next twelve months.

Significant progress had been made in the electronic conversion of historical microfiche planning records. It was estimated that by December 2015, 93,000 jackets comprising nearly 5 million historical planning images, would have been converted to an electronic format.

Members expressed frustration at the quality of the plans submitted to Development Control meetings. Officers advised that there was no legal requirement to control the types of plans displayed at meetings, adding that they were often hampered by the electronic technology available at meetings. In particular Area Plans South Sub-Committee had basic resources compared to the District Council's Chamber.

**(vi) Key Performance Indicators 2014/15** – The Panel received quarterly reports regarding Key Performance Indicators for 2014/15 specific to their Panel's responsibilities.

Six of the KPIs fell within the Planning Scrutiny Panel areas of responsibility. The overall position with regard to the achievement of target performance at the end of the third quarter of the year for these six indicators was as follows:

- (i) 3 (50%) indicators achieved the cumulative third quarter target;
- (ii) 3 (50%) indicators did not achieve the cumulative third quarter target, although 1 (17%) of these KPIs performed within the agreed tolerance for the indicators; and
- (iii) 5 (83%) were currently anticipated to achieve the cumulative year end target.

**(vii) Community Infrastructure Levy** – The Panel noted that planning obligations were legal contracts made under Section 106 of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act linked to a planning application decision made by the local planning authority. The obligation related to the land within the planning application only. Planning obligations were used to:

- (a) Prescribe the nature of development to comply with policy (for example, requiring a portion of housing to be affordable);
- (b) Compensate for loss or damage created by a development; and
- (c) Mitigating a development's impact.

A review in 2004 concluded that S106 could not deliver strategic infrastructure and in its place the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was conceived to capture an element of land value for funding strategic investment. The CIL was introduced in 2010 with new

regulations. Planning obligations entered into from 6 April 2010 needed to meet three new tests:

- Necessary for making the development acceptable in planning terms;
- Directly related to the development;
- Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

The District Council was yet to decide whether to adopt a CIL which could not be introduced without an up to date adopted Local Plan. It was advised that Council consultants would inform Members on the potential for introducing CIL in the district. As of November 2014 only 12% of councils (less than 50) had a CIL in place.

**(viii) Meeting of the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the Planning Sub Committee and the District Development Control Committee** - The Panel received a copy of the notes from the meeting of Development Control Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen held on 2 December 2014.

The Panel were informed that:

- (a) The District Development Control Committee (DDCC) would be re-titled District Development Management Committee;
- (b) The Council would use the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) definition advice in determining those planning applications applicable to be reported straight to DDCC;
- (c) The procedure for referring a planning application from an Area Planning Sub-Committee to DDCC was being amended so that a minority reference could only take place after a committee vote had been taken; and
- (d) A Portfolio Holder report was being prepared on the options for the possible relocation of the Area Plans South Sub-Committee from Loughton.

**(ix) Building more Homes on Brownfield Land, Consultation Proposals** - A Government consultation published on 28 January 2015 sought views on proposals for measures making it easier for building on brownfield land suitable for housing. They expected that permissions on brownfield land suitable for housing would in future be granted by Local Development Orders (LDO) and had set an objective that by 2020, LDOs should be in place in over 90% of brownfield land suitable for housing, with an intermediate target of 50% by 2017, and which did not already benefit from planning permission.



LDOs granted permission to specific types of development within a defined area and removed the need for developers to make a planning application. Members noted that a particularly controversial aspect of the consultation was the proposed sanction of placing councils under special measures for not making sufficient progress in setting LDOs in place. In these cases, applicants would have a choice of applying directly to the Secretary of State for planning permission. Whilst it was acknowledged that in a district such as Epping Forest, which was over 92% green belt, the Government's

proposals should not be a major issue, there were still a number of potentially harmful implications and an objection in principle to the proposals was recommended.

The Chairman requested that the full response submitted by the Panel be put before the next meeting, be placed in the Council Bulletin and also be copied to the local MPs.

### ***Case Study: Delivery of the Local Plan***

Contained within the Terms of Reference of the Planning Scrutiny Panel is a requirement for the Panel to monitor and receive reports on the delivery of the Local Plan.

At the July 2014 Panel meeting it was reported that under the Duty to Co-Operate, a Strategic Housing Market Area (SHMA) Group had been established with neighbouring authorities, widening its brief to include other cross boundary issues.

Members noted that Developer Briefings had been held in the Spring of 2014 allowing those who had put forward large sites on the edge of Harlow, to set out current thinking on their proposals.

The September 2014 Panel noted that progress had been made on the master planning work for North Weald Bassett in consideration of the way in which the airfield related to the wider village.

The Panel was advised that the Essex wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment had been completed with briefings by the consultants held in July 2014. The Planning Policy Portfolio Holder advised that a requirement had been made for the district to source 112 extra Gypsy and Traveller pitches.

The Council had been a signatory to a letter sent from local authorities in the South East to the Greater London Authority in response to the consultation on the draft Further Alterations to the London Plan, expressing concern that it potentially undershot the provision of future homes that London needed by a considerable margin. It had failed to adequately plan for the interim level of need identified of 49,000 dwellings per annum because only 42,000 were specifically allocated to London boroughs.

The December 2014 Panel was advised of the importance in ascertaining the relationship between the housing need evidence in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and employment forecasts. The District Council's Local Plan consultant advised the Panel that a neighbouring district council's Local Plan had been examined by the inspector who had found that their housing numbers were not sufficient to meet their objectively assessed need. The District Council's work with neighbouring authorities had led to inclusion of an additional population scenario using the intercensal change between the 2001 and 2011 census. This more accurately reflected the situation on the ground.

The Panel Chairman requested an extra-ordinary meeting scheduled for February 2015 for further discussions on the Local Plan and any consultations that might arrive. This meeting received confirmation that the Uttlesford Local Plan Examination had not been recommended for adoption by the inspector. There was concern that the housing numbers had derived from an outdated SHMA and Objectively Assessed Need for housing, plus the potential expansion of the village of Elsenham, particularly concerns about the capacity of the local road network in the absence of committed significant infrastructure improvements.

At the Panel's last meeting in April 2015, Members were advised that receipt of the final report from consultants on the updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was slightly delayed. This was because new household projections had been published by the Government requiring an updated SHMA.

The Phase 1 of the Green Belt Review was nearing completion and its findings would be shared with parish and Town Councils at the Local Council's Liaison Committee scheduled for 15 June 2015 which would be a single item agenda meeting.

It was noted that planning officers from the District Council would be attending an Inspection of the Northern Gateway Access Road scheme, submitted by Enfield Borough Council on 28 April 2015, along with representatives from Loughton and Waltham Abbey Town Councils. A District Council final statement objecting to the scheme had already been submitted.

The Planning Policy Portfolio Holder informed the Panel that he had attended a meeting at City Hall to develop better communication with local authority representatives in the south east. He was advised that there were plans to build 49,000 homes in London with no expectation that any of these would be exported beyond its boundaries.

This was the final Panel meeting and Members were informed that their Work Programme was completed.





# TASK AND FINISH PANELS

## 1. SCRUTINY PANEL REVIEW TASK AND FINISH PANEL

### Origin:

At its meeting on 25 February 2014, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the establishment of a new Task and Finish Scrutiny Panel to review the structure of the Council's existing framework of Scrutiny Panels, and to make recommendations for how any new structure could best complement the new management structure of the Council.

### Aims and Objectives:

- (a) To report findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to submit a final report for consideration by the Committee and the Council by the end of March 2015;
- (b) To gather evidence and information in relation to the review through the receipt of appropriate data, presentations and by participation in fact-finding visits to other authorities if necessary;
- (c) To have due regard to relevant legislation and the Council's procedures;
- (d) To consult political groups and independent Councillors during the review process.

### Term of Reference:

To review the current structure of the overview and scrutiny panel framework, taking into consideration the report of the recent overview and scrutiny review and how any future panel framework would best fit the management structure of the Council;

- (1) To specifically consider whether the Council should:
  - retain the current five-panel structure; or
  - move to a panel structure based around the new directorate responsibilities (i.e. have four panels instead of five); or
  - move towards a commissioning model based upon a work programme;
- (2) To consider options for any other panel structure deemed appropriate;
- (3) To review the workload and terms of reference of each of the existing scrutiny panels for relevance and consider how their processes could be improved;
- (4) To consider how any future scrutiny panel established to review relevant functions of the Governance Directorate would interrelate with the terms of reference of the Audit and Governance Committee and the Standards Committee; and
- (5) To report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on options for a new scrutiny panel framework to be implemented from the 2015/16 municipal year.

## The Panel

The Committee appointed the following members to serve on the Panel:

Councillors K Angold-Stephens (Chairman), M Sartin (Vice Chairman), R Gadsby, A Grigg, D Stallan and J H Whitehouse

The Lead officer was S Hill, Assistant Director Governance and Performance Management.

A review of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements was undertaken in 2013/14. The Council's service directorates had recently been restructured, resulting in a change from seven directorates to four. A proposal for a suggested new Overview and Scrutiny Panel structure aligned to the directorate framework was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 February 2014.

This review only concerned the future structure of the Scrutiny Panel arrangements. Wider constitutional aspects (unless the Panel identify issues that affect the Constitution) and a review of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee itself, were excluded from the scope of the work of the Task and Finish Panel.

As part of the investigation process a Saturday workshop was held to get the view of members. Fourteen Members attended the scrutiny workshop facilitated by an independent Scrutiny Advisor, on 22 November 2014 with a mixture of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Scrutiny Panels, members of the Task and Finish Panel, members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and members of Cabinet. The workshop focused on three main sections:

- Strengths, Weaknesses & Aspirations for the current provision of Scrutiny;
- Applying insights gained from section one to the different types of Scrutiny; and
- Weighing evidence, making choices.

Attendees also discussed the following different methods of scrutiny that could be utilised in individual circumstances:

- challenge session – single issue, one session;
- single day scrutiny – a snap shot review;
- focus group meeting – focus is on consultations with users/stakeholders as opposed to scrutinising officers/members/providers;
- short-term single issue panel – typically two or three meetings to review a single issue;
- longer-term panel work – typically over four to six months, with detailed scrutiny;
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting – an item with presentation and questions, discussion and with the option to make recommendations.

The utilisation of these approaches, as appropriate to individual scrutiny activities, was agreed by the Task and Finish Panel and formed part of its recommendations for a future panel framework.

The Panel recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee a four committee structure, replacing the Panel Structure with a new Directorate orientated Select Committee structure. The four Select Committees being:

- Environment Select Committee;
- Governance Select Committee;
- Housing Select Committee; and
- Resources Select Committee.

They also recommended that no action be taken at the present time with regard to any possible combination of the Audit and Governance Committee and the Standards Committee but that, if necessary, a further Task and Finish Panel be established in future to consider such combination in light of new legislative audit requirements.

These recommendations were accepted by the parent Overview and Scrutiny Committee and would be put into action when practicable.

## **2. GRANT AID REVIEW TASK AND FINISH PANEL**

### **Origin:**

At its meeting on 16 September 2014, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the establishment of a new Task and Finish Panel to review the Council's Grant Aid Scheme for Sports, Arts, Leisure and Community Groups in terms of the overall policy/guidance and procedures for Major Grants and Service Level Agreements including those for the determination of applications, and those for the pre and post determination stages.

### **Aims and Objectives:**

- To report findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to submit a final report for consideration by the Committee and the Council by April 2015;
- To gather evidence and information in relation to the review through the receipt of appropriate data, presentations and by participation in fact-finding visits to other authorities if necessary;
- To have due regard to relevant legislation and the Council's procedures;
- To consult political groups and independent Councillors during the review process.

### **Term of Reference:**

To review the current structure of the Grant Aid Scheme, taking into consideration the terms of the overall policy/guidance and procedures those for the determination of applications, and those for the pre and post determination stages and how this framework would best fit the structure of the Council.

#### **(1) To specifically consider:**

- The eligibility criteria and assessment arrangements for funding taking into account the budget available and the thematic areas in the leisure and cultural strategy;
- The grant maxima;

- Appropriate arrangements for safeguarding;
- Review procedures.

(2) To consider any other matters that are deemed appropriate.

### **The Panel**

The Committee appointed the following members to serve on the Panel:

Councillors Caroline Pond (Chairman), J Knapman (Vice Chairman), T Boyce, A Mitchell, S Murray, G Shiell and B Surtees.

The Panel did not finish its work by the end of the 2014/15 municipal year and would continue into the next year.

## **3. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT REVIEW TASK AND FINISH PANEL**

### **Origin**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 10 February 2015 set up a Task and Finish Panel to review potential options for the best use of the existing budgets for youth engagement for the future. Also, they agreed that it would be helpful to co-opt two youth councillors to sit on this panel and give their input. This Panel stemmed from a PICK form submitted by Councillor Kane the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Community Services.

### **Aims and Objectives**

- (a) To report findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and submit a final report for consideration by the Committee and the Council by November 2015;
- (b) To include two representatives from the District Youth Council on the Task and Finish Panel;
- (c) To determine the impact of the Council's current engagement with young people, through consultation with local statutory and voluntary sector partners, and,
- (d) To determine the best use of the allocated funding for the future.

### **Draft Terms of Reference**

1. To review the operation of the Youth Council and identify specific areas of work undertaken and the success and impact of these;
2. To review the level of engagement with peers in local schools and 'other young people' of all ages across the district, through the range of work undertaken by

the Youth Council and the importance of this engagement for local community groups;

3. To consider feedback from local schools and other partners in respect of the work of the Youth Council;
4. To identify the expenditure related to various elements of the Youth Council work programme and analyse the cost/benefit of this;
5. To consider other work undertaken by Community Services and Safety to engage with young people and identify the costs associated with this;
6. To consider the status of Essex Youth Services following recent service transformation and resulting implications for the district; and,
7. To prepare a set of recommendations for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in November 2015.

### **The Panel**

The Committee appointed the following members to serve on the Panel:

Councillors S Murray (Chairman), G Mohindra (Vice Chairman), K Adams, R Butler, C Roberts and B Surtees

Two non-voting youth Councillors were also co-opted to help the Panel with their work. They were Youth Councillors J McIvor and M Tinker.

The Panel had its first meeting in April 2015 and will continue on into the new municipal year, hopefully finishing in November 2015.

