

Supplementary Committee Agenda



Leisure Task and Finish Scrutiny Panel Tuesday, 25th March, 2008

Place: Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

Time: 7.30 pm

Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry, Tele 01992 56 4246
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6. DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT (Pages 3 - 24)

For the Panel to consider the draft annual report for this panel. The draft report attached.

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DRAFT



Epping Forest District Council



SCRUTINY

REPORT OF LEISURE TASK AND FINISH PANEL

March 2008

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1. Chairman's Foreword

Foreword by Councillor Mrs Heather Harding – Chairman of Panel

Councillor Mrs Harding to provide

**Councillor Mrs Heather Harding
March 2008**

2. Panel Composition:

The Leisure Task and Finish Panel 2007/08 comprised of the following Members:

Councillors Mrs H. Harding (Chairman), K. Chana (Vice Chairman), Mrs P. Brooks, S Murray, Mrs K. Rush, P. Turpin, Mrs R. Gadsby, Mrs A. Haigh, Ms J. Hedges, P. House, G. Pritchard and H. Ulkun.

The Panel met on five occasions throughout the Review Period and undertook a Site Visit to Waltham Abbey Sports Centre on the 18 September 2007.

3. Introduction and Overview

Summary of issues scrutinised

The Leisure Task and Finish Panel was established by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2007.

Our primary objective was to undertake a review of four topics which had been submitted to Overview and Scrutiny for consideration. These are summarised below:

- i) Future Management of Waltham Abbey Sports Centre;
- ii) Review of Arts Development in the District;
- iii) Monitoring of the Youth Initiatives Scheme;
- iv) Legacy from the Olympic/Paralympic Games.

The Public Interest Justification and Impact on Social, Economic and Environmental Well-Being considerations, presented as part of the original proposal forms, are attached at Appendix 1.

4. Terms of Reference

At our initial meeting, the Panel developed and agreed the following Terms of Reference and Aims and Objectives. These were kept under review throughout the period of our work, to ensure their continuing relevance.

1. To consider the four topics for Review as identified by Overview and Scrutiny Committee
 - i) Future management of Waltham Abbey Sports Centre;
 - ii) Review of the feasibility for alternative Arts Development in the District;
 - iii) The monitoring of Youth Initiatives Scheme; and
 - iv) Olympic Bid – to undertake a review of the opportunities presented by the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and bring forward proposals as to how the Council may wish to respond, including priorities for action and any resource implications.

2. To gather evidence and information in relation to the four topics through the receipt of data, presentations and by participation in fact finding visits.
3. To consult with Partners, Agencies, Stakeholders and Users of the services under review, to establish key issues and future need.
4. To evaluate all relevant facts in relation to the topics under review in an objective way and to produce recommendations for future action accordingly.
5. To establish whether there are any resource implications arising out of the topics under review and advise Cabinet as necessary, for inclusion in the Budget Process 2008/09
6. To report back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee at appropriate intervals and to submit any final reports, in the proposed Corporate Format, for consideration by O & S, the Cabinet and Council

5. Methodology – How we went about the Task

From the outset we accepted that as in previous years, the scope of the topics we were scrutinising was challenging and ambitious. However, there was recognition amongst the Panel, that the Topics were all of equal importance.

A site visit to Waltham Abbey Sports Centre was undertaken, supplemented by a number of formal presentations.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

TOPIC ONE

FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF THE WALTHAM ABBEY SPORTS CENTRE

The Panel recommends:

1. That the Council enter into a holding agreement with King Harold School on the existing terms of the current Agreement, up until the 31 March 2009.
2. That, dependent on the outcome of the feasibility of the provision of a new Sports Hall at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool, the Council should either
 - (a) Decline to enter into a new long term Dual Use Agreement for Waltham Abbey Sports Centre, and withdraw from the site at the time of any new Sports Hall at the Swimming Pool becoming available; or
 - (b) (i) That a new Dual Use Agreement is entered into with King Harold School for the future management of Waltham Abbey Sports Centre.
 - (b) (ii) That the Council seek an external management contractor to undertake their management responsibilities under the new Agreement.
 - (b) (iii) That the Contract period be in line with the existing contract for the Council's other four Centres.

TOPIC TWO

REVIEW OF ARTS DEVELOPMENT IN THE DISTRICT:

The Panel Recommends:

1. That in future the Key Objectives for the Council's Arts Services should be:-
 - (i) To ensure that the Arts Services make a contribution to wider social objectives, including crime and disorder and health improvement.
 - (ii) To continue to promote and deliver the Council's adopted Arts Policy.
 - (iii) To increase access to and participation in the Arts, for people of all ages and abilities;
 - (iv) To ensure that the current strong and effective network of partnership working is retained.
 - (v) To ensure that equality of access to the Arts is maintained and that targeted work is continued with groups at risk of social exclusion.

- (vi) To ensure that the Arts Service is delivered by the most cost effective means possible and that Value for Money is optimised whilst maintaining a creative and forward thinking arts programme.
 - (vii) To ensure that the District continues to benefit from investment in the Arts through the maximisation of External Funding opportunities.
2. That the transfer of Community and Cultural Services (including Arts) as a result of Senior Management Restructuring, to a more Corporate position under the Deputy Chief Executive, is the most efficient means of delivering the Key Objectives, outlined in Recommendation 1.
 3. That whilst a transfer of responsibility for Arts Development to a third party is not recommended, this should not preclude the pursuit of further opportunities for joint working and the sourcing of external funding.

TOPIC THREE

MONITORING OF THE YOUTH INITIATIVES SCHEME;

The Panel Recommends:

1. That the overall success of the Youth Initiatives Scheme be noted.
2. That the following specific areas for improvement be taken on board with respect to further phases of the scheme.

To follow on receipt and analysis of initial consultation questionnaires.

3. That the evaluation of the 2007/08 schemes be carried out in the autumn of 2008 and thereafter the outcome reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.
4. That the 10 Year Play Strategy produced to support the successful “Big Lottery Fund” funding application, be used to identify priority for future investment in outdoor facilities, over the period 2007-2017.
5. That the next two financial years 2008/09 and 2009/10, the Play Strategy external grant-aid of £244,000 be utilised to continue the programme of playground improvements.
6. That a future Capital Bid be made for 2010/11 to fund a further phase of the youth initiatives scheme, for the period 2010-2013, at a level to be determined by the circumstances prevailing at the time.

TOPIC FOUR

LEGACY FROM THE OLYMPIC PARALYMPIC GAMES

The Panel Recommends that:

1. The Council facilitates a District-wide “Cultural Olympiad” to run from 2008-2012.
2. That the “Cultural Olympiad” is a celebration of Life in Epping Forest, incorporating activities, and programmes of work with people of all ages and abilities, within local communities in the District, culminating in a “mini-Olympics” for young people in May 2012.
3. That a DDF Bid of £50,000 be made for 2012/13, to support the funding of the Epping Forest Cultural Olympiad.
4. That the Council welcomes the construction of the White Water Canoe Course in close proximity to Waltham Abbey, and seeks to maximise the economic legacy benefits to the locality, as well as the benefits for sports participation.
5. That a corporate Working Group be established, with participation by relevant external stakeholders, to keep abreast of opportunities to bring benefit to the District from the 2012 Games.
6. That the Council’s Economic Development Staff, in conjunction with Business Link East, continue to promote opportunities for local companies to bid for games related business/contracts.

REPORT ON TOPIC ONE

FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF WALTHAM ABBEY SPORTS CENTRE

Background

Waltham Abbey Sports Centre (WASC) is a Dual Use Sports Centre, located adjacent to King Harold Secondary School, in Broomstick Hall Road, Waltham Abbey. The Council enjoys the right to use the premises for the benefit of the wider community by virtue of a joint agreement entered into with the Education Authority, i.e. Essex County Council. This dual-use agreement came into effect on the 1st October 1977 for a period of 30 years and expired on the 30th September 2007, (although all parties are holding over on the current terms).

Over the years the District Council has provided additional facilities to the original sports hall and changing rooms, with the construction of two squash courts, a dance studio and bar area. With the exception of the dance studio and the bar (which is closed during the day) the school has exclusive use of the Centre during the day (8.30a.m. – 5.00p.m.) and priority use of the Centre, excluding the Squash Courts on Saturdays. This exclusive use arrangement covers the 40 weeks of the school term. The facilities are available to the District Council to organise holiday activities during the school holidays.

A critical appraisal of the operating costs of the Sports Centre was undertaken as part of the Best Value Service Review of Leisure Management. This highlighted that in comparison to the Council's other leisure facilities, in financial terms, the Centre was performing significantly poorer. Despite a number of cost reduction initiatives undertaken as part of the Budget Process 2003/04, this position, largely due to the constraints of the joint use agreement and age, design/quality of the facilities, still pertains.

The long-term management of the Sports Centre was considered by the Ad Hoc working Group in Leisure, as part of the Alternative Management Review. The Working Group concluded that based on the Centre's potential, and given that the Joint Use Agreement, at the time, had only two years left to run, that the Centre be excluded from the Tender process. The Centre therefore has continued to be managed In-House, until any new arrangements are put in place at the expiry of the current joint-use arrangements.

Historically it has been difficult to achieve high levels of use and participation by the local community. This can largely be attributed to the relatively utilitarian nature of the changing/toilet facilities etc., which have been designed with school use in mind (rather than the more discerning modern leisure customer), coupled with the irregular hours and the physical limitations of the facilities. In addition, there would appear to be a resistance from local young people to participate, who may have the impression that they are returning to school in their time off.

The programme delivered by the centre, whilst still offering some coaching courses, instructed sessions and holiday schemes, has tended, particularly since budget savings on staffing etc., in 2003/04, to be on a club hire or letting hall basis. The bar still meets the needs of sports users such as the 5 a side football and cricket leagues, as well as hosting functions such as birthday/anniversary parties.

Staffing levels are currently at the minimum level to cover the opening hours therefore, there is at risk of ad-hoc closure of the facility in the event of unanticipated staff absences. As part of the externalisation process of the Council's other four Leisure Centres, all the staff at WASC were offered the opportunity to transfer to the other centres, to be managed by SLM, the Council's Leisure Management Contractor. Despite the uncertainty of approaching the end of the current Dual Use Agreement, all the staff declined this offer.

Under the requirements of the Dual Use Agreement, in simple terms the District Council is responsible for meeting all expenses with the exception of 20% of the General Managers salary and, 50% of building maintenance costs. The Council meets 100% of the bar area and each respective party bears 100% of the costs of their own Public Liability Insurance. The Council retains all income from hire and use of the facilities and receives a contribution towards utility costs.

Matters the Panel Considered:

The 2006/07 Leisure Task and Finish Panel, who initiated the review of future management options for the Centre, established that both the Council and the School, shared a mutual desire for community use of the Centre to be maintained in future. The Panel also concluded that the most efficient way to advance this outcome was for the Council to engage the services of a third party contractor to operate the Sports Centre. When this had been originally suggested, the School expressed a reluctance to participate, although they were prepared to receive further information to explain how any third party involvement may work in practice and hear of the safeguards, which can be implemented through a contractual relationship. It was noted that any third party participation could only be achieved by open competition as the Council had excluded WASC, from the original Leisure Management Tender process.

The Review Process:

In order to allow the Panel to become more familiar with the Centre and the service it provides, we undertook a visit to Waltham Abbey Sports Centre in September 2007. We were given an informative Tour by the Centre Manager who explained the programme of activities offered, the current limitations of the facilities and the issues and challenges presented by the current Dual Use Arrangements.

The Panel were also advised that officers had been in communication with the Headteacher and Chairman of Governors of the School. As a result we learned that the School are now more fully aware of the implications of a third party contractor delivering the service. However, the School, whilst more willing to accept a contractor, this would only be on the basis that there was no direct interface with the operator, who in effect would be the Council's appointment management agent.

Our Panel therefore considered the terms of a draft new Dual Use Agreement with King Harold School, covering major issues such as staffing, opening hours, programmes of use and maintenance responsibilities. This was subsequently shared with the school who were in general agreement.

In January 2008, the Deputy Chief Executive and Assistant Head of Leisure Services, attended a meeting with the Headteacher and School Bursar, where it was confirmed that the Governing Body had now formally considered the matter and they would be prepared to go down the external contractor route. The School were also

keen to stress that no “education expenditure” could be used to subsidise community use.

We were also advised as a result of this meeting, how the School has aspirations to achieve a major refurbishment and redevelopment, which would see the demolition of the older parts of the building and replacement new build facilities. This is hopefully to be funded by the “Building Schools for the Future programme. A decision about whether Kind Harold’s application has been successful will be known, in late Spring 2008. Whilst the indicative plans would appear to leave the Sports Centre largely unaffected, the building programme may have some implications in terms of access and potential impact on parking. Another consideration highlighted to us was the potential need to have some extra gymnasium space provided within the Sports Centre, if funding could not be found to have it within the main rebuild.

Conclusions:

As a Panel, we have concluded that, whilst the School would be in agreement to an external contractor, as previously indicated, this would need to be by open competitive tender. This is based on legal advice, to the effect that the management of the site could not be a variation to the Council’s current Contractor’s contract, as it was not contained within the original offer tendered.

In addition, as it would take in the region of 6-8 months to undertake the tender process, once a decision had been taken to proceed, and bearing in mind that the current formal agreement between the Council and School expired in October 2007, we have taken the advice of the Council’s Legal and Insurance officers, that a holding agreement is entered into in the short term, until any new Dual Use Agreement/Contract is let. The School are willing to enter into this, but would like it to be for a minimum of 12 months to assist their forward planning.

The Council has built the costs of operating Waltham Abbey Sports Centre in the current way, into the 2008/09 budget. Therefore, resources have been allocated up until the 31 March 2009.

NB – Whilst this is what the 2007/08 Panel have concluded, members may wish to insert some further comment reference the Cabinet’s request to Overview & Scrutiny regarding a new sports hall at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool i.e. although the timescales for our Task and Finish Panel this year, did not allow for formal amendment to our terms of reference, we are aware from the leisure Portfolio Holder of Cabinet’s request to investigate the feasibility of providing a new sports hall at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool, as an alternative to a new Dual Use Agreement. We have therefore reflected this in our Recommendations.

REPORT ON TOPIC TWO

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARTS IN EPPING FOREST

Background:

Epping Forest Arts, the Council's Community Arts section was established in the late 1980's, in accordance with government recognition of the value of Arts provision within community settings. Since this time, the section has expanded and developed into one of the most well regarded and respected Arts delivery services throughout the region.

The service, which is unique in Essex, now includes an Arts Officer, Assistant Arts Officer, Arts Assistant, Dance Development Artist and a part time Admin. Officer. In addition, the team benefits from the services of 2 professional practicing artists.

The programme of work that the Arts Team undertakes covers a very wide cross section of arts disciplines that include; dance development, visual arts (photography, video and creative arts such as producing large community mosaics and sculptures) and performing arts (drama, movement & mime etc), as well as providing support and resources to the many voluntary arts groups in the area. People of all ages are accommodated through the Arts service and specific work is undertaken with the elderly and people with disabilities, as part of a comprehensive inclusion programme. The range of accessible opportunities available through the Arts, enable people in the district to take part in the arts as participants, spectators and as local artists.

The Arts section also provides the strategic lead and acts as the planning agency for arts provision in the district, offering a range of professional services in order to facilitate the development of the arts. This includes the direct provision of projects, performances, classes and workshops, run by professional artists, companies and the Council's own artists. Many of the Arts projects are delivered in conjunction with local partners and particularly local schools, colleges, sheltered housing and residential homes, community centres and groups. In addition, the Arts Team work with internal parties such as the Council's Museum, Community Development, Sports Development and Country Care services.

In recognition of the innovative and groundbreaking work that Epping Forest Arts has undertaken over the years, the Arts Council (England East) has acknowledged these achievements through providing significant funding for development of the Arts in the district on three occasions since 2001.

As the district does not have a purpose built public arts facility, gallery or theatre, all of the work that is undertaken by the Arts team is provided through community & village halls, libraries, local schools and through neighbouring facilities such as the Harlow Playhouse, where many performances are show cased.

The Council's currently Adopted Arts Policy is as follows:

"The Council supports the arts in recognition of the vital contribution that they make to the quality of life and to community identity; to the enhancement of the built and natural environment; to mental, physical and spiritual health and to the local economy". Through this, the Council's objective is: "to enable all sections of the community to have access to a wide range of arts provision of a high quality".

Matters the Panel Considered:

The Leisure Task and Finish Panel 2007/08, who undertook the initial review of the Council's Arts Service, in their report to Overview and Scrutiny, (subsequently endorsed by Cabinet), recommended that there was potential for some, or indeed all of the Council's directly managed arts development work, in future to be delivered by third parties. Our Panel was therefore charged with the task of reviewing the feasibility of this option.

The Review Process:

Whilst it had been suggested that it may be possible to increase the number of opportunities and participation in the arts by overcoming some of the current restrictions on funding and flexibility, our Panel started from a position that we would need to be absolutely clear as to what Objectives we were seeking and how quality standards could be retained.

In order to gain an insight into the current work of the Council's Arts Service, we received a presentation from the Council's Community and Culture Services Manager. From the presentation, the Panel noted that the work currently undertaken by Epping Forest Arts, not only celebrates and contributes to the "Special Character" of the District but also helps to improve the quality of life of a diverse cross section of our local community. We also saw how arts initiatives are being used successfully to target groups at risk of social exclusion as well as delivering Key Objectives within the Community, Council and Best Value Performance Plans.

The Panel could see that much of the work currently delivered by the Council's Arts Service is innovative and fairly unique, in local authority terms in the region, a fact that has been recognised by external funding support from the Arts Council East. It was identified that a key feature of the work of Epping Forest Arts is the strong and effective network of Partnership work that they have developed, to promote opportunities and participation in the Arts for all ages and abilities.

Interestingly, Epping Forest, unlike many other local authorities does not currently provide or manage any purpose-built arts facilities such as Theatres, Galleries or Studio/Workshop/Rehearsal space. Although some of these types of facilities do exist, on a more limited basis, in the voluntary and education sectors, local people generally have to travel outside of the District to attend performances or exhibitions. As a result of this, lack of Council owned arts facilities, the vast majority of Arts Development Work undertaken by Epping Forest Arts is on an outreach basis, using other local facilities and the wealth of outdoor spaces across the District.

We were advised that the wider development of Arts Activity in the District is limited to a larger extent by the current Human and Financial Resources available, in what is a Discretionary Service.

It was also pleasing to see that a significant amount of Added value has been brought to the Arts programme by the successful procurement of external funding through Grants etc. However, there is a question mark as to how sustainable this approach will be for the future, as there could well be a reluctance for Charitable Grant making bodies to continue to fund public organisations as we re-apply to existing funders, who may wish to distribute support to others in the Region. .

Based on this initial presentation we arrived at a number of Key Objectives to be retained irrespective of the means of delivery.

Key Objectives, arising from the review of Arts Development.

- (i) To continue to promote and deliver the Council's adopted Arts Policy.
- (ii) To increase access to and participation in the Arts, for people of all ages and abilities.
- (iii) To ensure that the current strong and effective network of partnership working is retained.
- (iv) To ensure that equality of access to the Arts is maintained and that targeted work is continued with groups at risk of social exclusion.
- (v) To ensure that the Arts Service is delivered by the most cost effective means possible and that Value for Money is optimised.
- (vi) To ensure that the District continues to benefit from investment in the Arts through the maximisation of External Funding opportunities.

Having established these core principles, the Panel received a further presentation, which explored the practical and service implications of the following alternative delivery options. The experience of other local authorities across the region was researched as part of this appraisal.

In summary, the options explored were to:

1. Outsource service to an external existing Arts organisation who may be either a Voluntary Sector or Commercial entity.
2. Transfer of Service to a new body specifically established to deliver arts development, which may take the form of a charitable entity, re Trust or Company Limited by Guarantee.
3. Explore the possibility of a "Shared Services" approach with another Neighbouring Authority or the County Council.
4. Reduce the level of direct delivery and enter into either a Service Level Agreement, or grant-assisting arrangement with another external Arts organisation, whilst retaining a Strategic/Co-coordinating role.
5. With the transfer of Community and Cultural Services (to include Arts) transferring under Top Management Review, to a more corporate position under the Deputy Chief Executive, investigate how the Arts Service could be re-focused across the wider work of the Authority in pursuit of Community/Council/BVPP Key Objectives.

Conclusions:

Having reviewed all the options available, the Panel concluded that there was insufficient added value to be achieved by external management of the Arts Service, against the risk to the current success of the in-house service. However, whilst the

Panel concluded that the Arts Service should be placed more corporately within the Deputy Chief Executive's area of responsibility, seeking to achieve corporate objectives more readily, it was stressed that this approach should not exclude opportunities for work on joint projects with external agencies and sourcing of external funding.

REPORT ON TOPIC THREE

EVALUATION OF YOUTH INITIATIVES SCHEME

Background:

In response to demand from Town and Parish Councils in 2005, the then Portfolio Holder for Finance and Performance Management, initiated a scheme, to support the provision of Outdoor Youth Facilities across the District.

In essence, £300,000 of District Development funding was allocated at a level of approximately £100,000 per annum for three years. 2005/06, 2006/07, 2007/08, to be determined by the Portfolio Holder and awarded to individual Town/Parish Council's against the following criteria.

- Provision of plans/drawings showing facilities to be provided.
- Planning and building regulation approval to be obtained where required.
- Ability to determine that the scheme will enhance activities for young people in the area.
- Financial details illustrating how the costs of the project are made up.
- Evidence of some measure of support for the scheme locally.
- Evidence of joint funding where appropriate and possible.
- Maximum grant of £50,000 per town/parish council per year.
- Scheme to have been discussed with District Council Officers and received their approval for implementation.

Matters the Panel Considered:

As the programme of improvements was reaching a conclusion, the Leisure Task and Finish Panel were asked to evaluate the success of the scheme in terms of the impact of reducing anti-social behaviour by providing diversionary activities. In addition, we sought to identify any areas for improvement, in the way the application process was managed and the grants administered.

The Review Process:

At our initial meeting the Panel discussed options as to how best to evaluate the success of the Council's investment, of some £100,000 in each year of the programme. It was felt important that Local Town and Parish Councils should be asked to comment; a view should be sought from local community police officers, and importantly young people themselves.

The initiative has been spread out in a three-year programme over the financial years 2005/06, 2006/07 and finally 2007/08. As such, some schemes in this current financial year have yet to be completed, or have only recently been implemented. While we felt that the earlier years' schemes have been in place sufficiently long to be able to gauge their impact, to avoid any delay in the review, it was agreed that the evaluation of the 2007/08 schemes be carried out in the Autumn of 2008.

However, in March 2008, an evaluation of the 2005/06 and 2006/07 projects was carried out. This was done through consultation with various stakeholders about the effect of the new youth facilities. It was our intention that this part of the evaluation

be completed by the end of the municipal year, to enable the results to be included in a report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April 2008.

The evaluation of the schemes took the form of a number of bespoke questionnaires seeking the views of Town and Parish Councils, the police and young people. It is our hope that Secondary Schools and the newly formed Epping Forest Youth Council will be involved in the further consultation.

The key learning points from the consultation are as follows:

“To be inserted”

Conclusion:

In addition to the improvements in the process and evaluation of success achieved through the initial questionnaires with Town and Parish Councils, the Panel were also made aware of the success of the “Big Lottery” Play Bid. This initiative saw an award of some £244,000 to improve play provision in Nazeing, Limes Farm and Lambourne.

We were advised that as part of this bid process, extensive audit and consultation work was undertaken to produce a 10-year Play Strategy, identifying need over the period 2007/2017. We concluded that whilst the next two years will see the investment of the additional £244,000, there are still schemes later in the Strategy Programme that will require funding.

Therefore, depending on the outcome of the evaluation of the directly funded projects, Members of the Task and Finish Panel are minded to recommend, that in future, further Capital Funding is bid for within the Council’s Capital Programme. This would be in order to continue the improvement of outdoor play and youth provision across the District.

REPORT ON TOPIC FOUR

LEGACY FROM THE 2012 OLYMPIC/PARALYMPIC GAMES

Background:

London's success in its bid to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, was announced by the International Olympic Committee on 6 July 2005.

The East of England was one of the foremost supporters of the London 2012 Olympic Bid with Essex being a strong contributor in helping the Region register the highest level of public support for the Games, across the whole of the United Kingdom. Epping Forest played a part in this initiative, hosting the 2012 Bid Roadshow and actively canvassing local support through schools etc.

It is generally recognised that Essex is uniquely positioned in many respects, to capitalise on the vast range of opportunities that the hosting of the largest multi-national event in the world will bring to London in 2012. The Economic Impact Study commissioned to support the Olympic Bid, projected that the benefit to the Eastern Region could be as high as £600 million and for Essex as much as £139 million.

In addition to the potential economic benefits of the Games, we identified that there were a number of Key Opportunities in other areas:

1. **Tourism**

Olympic related tourism has emerged as one of the key legacies for host cities and countries. With our proximity to the main Games site and special character with respect to environment and heritage, Epping Forest is well placed to capitalise on increased tourism. This will result in increased visits to local attractions and visitor spends, having a positive economic benefit.

2. **Getting our Communities Active, Healthier and Safer:**

The Olympics can be a powerful tool for promoting the positive benefits of adopting a healthy lifestyle and inspire people of all ages and abilities to get active.

3. **Community Cohesion by Developing a Feel Good Factor and Enhanced Pride:**

The ethos of Olympic movement can be maximised and used as a means of bringing people together from different communities to share positive experiences and gain greater understanding.

4. **Create a Significant Cultural and Sporting Legacy:**

A Cultural Olympiad is planned for 2008-2012 in support of the Games. To facilitate this, a Cultural Consortium named the "Legacy Trust UK" has been established. Currently they are working on criteria to distribute the £40M available to support the Cultural Olympiad. There is potential for the District to Bid for this external funding, to support Cultural celebratory events locally.

5. **Partnerships with local businesses to enhance investment and identify procurement and employment opportunities:**

The LOCOG will be responsible for procuring services to deliver and run the Games with the majority of their needs, (outside of the main construction contracts), focusing on the staging of the event itself. The procurement requirements are likely to cover goods and services such as sports equipment, venue temporary seating, security, venue dressing, hospitality and catering, staff and volunteer uniform, transport and official merchandising.

Matters the Panel Considered:

Whilst in general terms it was envisaged that there are potentially some exciting opportunities to be pursued with respect to the Olympics, our Task and Finish Panel were asked to explore the extent to which the Council may be involved, relative to the potential benefits.

The Review process:

At the start of our consideration the Panel considered a comprehensive report on the work that was being undertaken across Essex to maximise the benefits of the games. We were made aware of the Essex Legacy Plan and the approach to co-ordination of activity across the country. We were pleased to note that the Council were actively participating in this process by attendance at the relevant forums.

We then moved on to consider a presentation on how the Council may wish to be more locally involved with respect to delivering opportunities for young people, to be inspired by the Games and to learn from the Olympic ethos. It was recognised that the main Cultural Olympiad was due to start immediately after the Beijing Games in 2008 and we considered a proposal as to how we could facilitate our own District "Olympiad" to involve and inspire our community.

We were presented with a proposal for a co-ordinated 5-year programme of events and activities commencing August 2008. The Olympiad would be launched through an event at the Metropolitan Police Ground, Chigwell in September 2008 and culminate in our own "mini-Olympics" including all of our primary schools at Ongar Leisure Centre during May 2012, the year of the London Games.

In addition to the Cultural Olympiad Programme, we explored the economic possibilities of the Games and were very supportive of the "Business Breakfast" initiative being developed with Business Link East to promote procurement opportunities for our small/medium-sized businesses.

During the time of our review, we were kept advised of the developments in relation to the Mountain Biking Event at Brentwood, which was unfortunately deemed unsuitable due to lack of technical challenge and the potential relocation of the White Water Canoe Event to the Lee Valley Regional Park, in close proximity to Waltham Abbey. We considered that this had considerable legacy benefits.

Conclusion:

We concluded that there were considerable benefits in the District facilitating a Cultural Olympiad and that this should be supported in its final year through DDF Funding, the earlier years being funded within existing resources. In addition, we welcomed the White Water Canoe Venue, in principle, further to a full assessment of its impact. Finally we concluded that the next four years up to the Games will bring further opportunities and that Members should be kept involved, through the establishment of a corporate co-ordinating group.

Acknowledgements:

The Panel would like to thank the following Organisations for their assistance in the Review.

Topic One – Future Management of Waltham Abbey Sports Centre

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
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Topic Two – Review of Arts Development in the District:

6. |

Topic Three – Monitoring of the Youth Initiatives Scheme

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Topic Four – Legacy from Olympic/Paralympic Games:

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