

## **EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES**

**Committee:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee      **Date:** Thursday, 7 July 2005

**Place:** Civic Offices, High Street, Epping      **Time:** 7.30 - 9.15 pm

**Members Present:** Councillors Mrs J H Whitehouse (Chairman) M Colling (Vice-Chairman) Mrs D Borton, K Faulkner, P Gode, Mrs A Grigg, Mrs P Richardson, Mrs M Sartin, M Woollard, L Martin and D Stallan

**Other Councillors:** Councillors A Lee, S Murray and J M Whitehouse

**Apologies:** Councillors Mrs D Collins and F Maclaine

**Officers Present:** I Willett (Head of Research and Democratic Services), R Palmer (Head of Finance), J Preston (Head of Planning and Economic Development), S Tautz (Senior Performance Management Officer), R Barwell (Public Relations and Internet Officer), S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Z Folley (Democratic Services Assistant)

**By Invitation:** Marina Sherriff, Aiden Thomas and Sally Yeoman

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### **20. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING**

Following the appointment of Councillor Mrs J H Whitehouse to the position of Chairman, the Committee were asked to appoint a Vice- Chairman for the meeting.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That Councillor M Colling be appointed Vice – Chairman for the meeting.

### **21. TERRORISTS ATTACKS**

The Chairman referred to the terrorist attacks in central London early in the day and on behalf of Members expressed sympathy for those affected. She asked the Committee to stand for a minutes silence.

### **22. MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 31 May and 9 June 2005 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

### **23. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

It was reported that Councillor L Martin had been appointed to attend the meeting in place of Councillor F Maclaine and Councillor D Stallan had been appointed to attend the meeting in place of Councillor Mrs D Collins.

**24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made pursuant to Part 2 of the Council's Code of Member Conduct.

**25. LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP - PRESENTATION**

The Chairman introduced Marina Sherriff, the Community Strategy and Partnership Manager of the Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership who was in attendance to give a presentation on the work of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

Ms Sherriff reported that the LSP had been established in response to the Local Government Act 2000 which placed a requirement on Councils to prepare comprehensive community strategies in partnership with local agencies and residents. She explained the background to the LSP and reported the progress made with the production and delivery of the Community Strategy for the Epping Forest District. This involved an explanation of the work of the Community Strategy and Partnership Manager, the completion and implementation of group action plans, reporting processes, review and monitoring arrangements.

Ms Sherriff reported that the Partnership covered a series of key themes and was connected to the Epping Forest Crime and Reduction Partnership. She drew attention to recent activities arranged to support the partnership including the Community Conference and an event organised to bring together local transport providers to share knowledge and resources. It was noted that this particular initiative resulted in actions to coordinate Essex County Council and Primary Care Trust transport services. She drew attention to the Youth Challenge Event held in March this year and reported subsequent work being carried out with a local school to implement a web based survey for young people's views. She explained performance monitoring arrangements and advised that a Partnership Improvement Plan had been devised and an annual away day organised to measure the performance of the partnership and identify aims for the future. Links within Essex including Go-East were also reported.

Following the presentation, Marina Sherriff introduced to the Committee Aiden Thomas, the Chief Executive for the Epping Forest Primary Care Trust and Chairman of the LSP. He outlined Ms Sherriff's role in more detail including the contribution she made to LSP activities. He further explained steps undertaken to monitor the implementation of the strategy and the progress made with key aims. A handout containing such information was circulated to Members.

In response to questions, Mr Thomas reported that the government had indicated a commitment to providing new funding to support partnership working. He stated that the LSP and local initiatives working to support joint projects should benefit from this approach. A member asked about the strategy's key aims and urgent issues. In response, Mr Thomas drew attention to the plan policies concerning the implications of housing proposals within regional planning guidance and transport infrastructure matters. He stated that transport issues were important because they affected everyone and was a service which the Partnership could take steps to improve. He advised that the implications of housing proposals ran through most parts of the strategy and thus was a significant area.

That Chairman thanked the representatives for their presentation and looked forward to their attendance at a future meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

That the presentation from Marina Sherriff and Aiden Thomas on the work of the Local Strategic Partnership be noted.

**26. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee were asked to consider terms of references for the Standing Panels on Finance and Performance Management, Environmental and Planning Services and the Task and Finish Panel on the register of Local Development Proposals.

(i) Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel

The Chairman of the panel Councillor J M Whitehouse outlined its work plan, and the different types of work to be considered and timescales.

(ii) Environmental and Planning Services Standing Panel

Councillor Stallan, Chairman of the Panel outlined its work plan. He stated that important items were the Council's waste management policies and the Local Plan. He advised that the programme also incorporated the Authority's response to the East of England Plan, which would be subject to public examination in September 2005 and required early consideration.

(iii) Register of Local Development Proposals.

As the Chairman of the Panel was not present the Senior Democratic Services Officer presented the proposals. He outlined the areas the review would address.

**RESOLVED.**

That the terms of reference for the Standing Panels for Finance and Performance Management, Environmental and Planning Services and the Task and Finish Review on the Register of Local Development be approved.

**27. WORK PROGRAMME MONITORING**

The Committee received reports on the progress made with the establishment of Panels. Several Chairman were in attendance to present the updates to Members.

**(a) Standing Panels.**

(i) Housing.

The Chairman of the Panel, Councillor Murray explained that the first meeting of the Panel had been timed to fit in with the existing housing timetable. He advised that the first meeting would determine a programme of future meetings.

(ii) Constitutional Affairs

In the absence of the Chairman of the Panel, Councillor R Morgan, the Head of Research and Democratic Services reported that the first meeting of the Panel would take place on 18 July 2005. He stated that the meeting would focus on reviewing the May 2005 Elections and would be presented with a list of other items to prioritise. He advised that this list would include a report of the Standards Board on regulations in relation to Member Services.

(iii) Environmental and Planning Services.

The Chairman of the Panel, Councillor Stallan, reported that he was seeking to ensure Panel members received the minutes of the monthly Joint Waste Management Panel. He stated that a first meeting would be arranged for early August 2005 to consider the Local Plan. He advised that a second was planned for September 2005 to deal with policies for redundant agricultural buildings. He reported that a meeting would be programmed for November 2005 to consider the Environmental Services Business Plan.

(iv) E-Government and ICT Standing Panel.

In the absence of the Chairman of the Panel, Councillor F Maclaine, the Head of Research and Democratic Services reported that he had met with the Head of ICT, the Chairman of the Panel Councillor Maclaine, and the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Support Services and ICT to discuss scrutiny's involvement in ICT issues. During discussions particular attention was paid to the Customer Contact Centre and Member Connectivity project. He stated that the timescale for both projects was challenging.

Members were advised that two meetings of the Panel had been arranged for 18 July 2005 and 8 August 2005.

**(a) Task and Finish Panels**

(v) Review of Externally Funded Leisure Services and Youth Provision.

The Chairman of the Panel, Councillor Mrs Grigg, reminded Members that the Cabinet would be considering a report on the Alternative Leisure Services Management Contract at its next meeting. The Panel would consider the results of the Cabinet discussions concerning the matter as well as its youth provision commitments.

(ii) Travellers Issues.

In the absence of the Chairman of the Panel, Councillor P Macmillan who sent his apologies, the Head of Planning and Economic Development reported that the first meeting of the panel would take place on 14 July 2005 and be a tour of traveller sites in the District. He advised that an agenda had been dispatched and outstanding reports would be circulated in due course.

Several Members expressed concern about the timing of the first meeting. It was suggested that steps should be taken to ensure that members were consulted about future dates to encourage maximum participation.

(iii) Member Services.

With the agreement of Councillor Mrs Sartin, the Head of Research and Democratic Services reminded Members that a pro - forma on Scrutiny Skills training had been sent to Members for comment. He stated that so far seventeen responses had been received and urged Members to return their forms as soon as possible. He advised that responses would be looked at the first meeting of the Panel.

(c) Reserve Programme.

The Head of Research and Democratic Services reported that the OSC work plan was due to be reviewed in six months time. He stated that as part of the review process new items would be needed for the programme to fill space left following the completion of existing reviews. Requests for the reserve list would need to be submitted via the standard scrutiny request pro forma to ensure they were given proper consideration at review stage. Members were encouraged to submit requests.

(d) Call in of Portfolio Decision regarding the purchase of recycling boxes.

The Head of Research and Democratic Services reported that the Portfolio Holder Decision regarding the purchase of recycling boxes for the Council's new recycling arrangements had been called – in. It was reported that the call- in comprised two elements. A review of the Portfolio Holder Decision and a request for a wider discussion about recycling arrangements. It was reported that the OCS Chairman, the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Protection and the Head of Environmental Services would be meeting to discuss how best to progress the request. Members noted that the Call-in would be fitted into the OSC work plan and considered at a future meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the progress reports by Panel Chairmen be noted; and.
- (2) That the Call-in regarding the Council's purchase of recycling boxes and proposed new recycling system be added to the OSC work programme.

**28. CABINET REVIEW**

The Chairman reported that under the Overview and Scrutiny rules the Committee were enabled to scrutinise proposed decisions of the Executive. She advised that the power should be used responsibly and with due care.

The Committee was asked to consider the 11 July 2005 Cabinet agenda to see whether there were any items, for pre scrutiny that they wished to be raised at the Cabinet meeting.

The Committee identified no matters to be raised at the Cabinet meeting.

**29. REVIEW ITEMS TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY THIS COMMITTEE**

The Committee were asked to consider the following items:

(a) Highways Local Service Agreement.

The Committee asked about the local level consultation arrangements for the Local Service Agreement (LSA). Members raised several highways related matters and asked how they would be dealt with under the new arrangements. Several Members sought clarity on new points of contact and described the responses that they had received regarding specific concerns. It was noted that such issues had been raised at the West Essex Area Forum. The Head of Research and Democratic Services stated that the Head of Environmental Services had been pursuing highways consultation issues with the County. He advised that proposals were due in September 2005. It was noted that they could include the introduction of new local forums, (outside existing Area Forums arrangements) consisting of District representatives.

Members underlined their wish to secure this Council's involvement in the new process. The Head of Research and Democratic Services agreed to liaise with the Head of Environmental Services to obtain further information on proposals and report back to the Committee. It was agreed that should this step not address the Committees views, a representative of the Essex County Council Highway's department be invited to the Committee. It was noted that a report on the matter would be considered in September 2005.

It was agreed that contact details for the LSA be included in the Members Bulletin.

(b) Future presentations

Members were asked to considered how they wish to deal with the presentations within the work programme allocated to the Committee. It was agreed that in view of the aim under the new arrangements to encourage Member led investigations, individual Members of the Committee be tasked with seeking questions for OSC presentations. Two Members were appointed – Councillors Mrs A Grigg and M Woollard. It was agreed that to facilitate the process an item be put in the Members bulletin to draw attention to the arrangements. It was also agreed that Members should hold pre - meeting briefings to co-ordinate their approach to external liaisons and that predetermined questions be collated and sent to the external organisations concerned.

(c) 'PICK' System – Review of operation.

In view of Councillor Maclaine's unavailability to discuss his request regarding the operation of the PICK system, the Committee agreed that the item be deferred.

(d) Forward Plan.

The Head of Research and Democratic Services reported that the Forward Plan was now available in the Members Room for perusal . He stated that senior management had undertaken work to improve the plans content and turn the four monthly document into a forward plan for the year. It was agreed that the plan should be a standing item on the Committee's agenda . This would enable the Committee to adjust its work plan to provide for such reviews.

(e) September meeting – business.

The Committee said that there were too many items of business planned for the September 2005 meeting. As a result it was agreed that the Liaison with London Underground be deferred to the October 2005 meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

• **Future presentations:**

- (1) That the work plan items allocated to this Committee be noted.
- (2) That the following Members seek questions for the forthcoming presentations to be dealt with by the Committee;

Highways Local Service Agreement – Councillor Mrs A Grigg  
London Underground Liaison - Councillor M Woollard;

(3). That an item reporting the arrangements contained within recommendation (2) above be placed in the Members Bulletin.

(4) That the identification of a Member to seek matters for the Primary Care Trust Presentation be deferred to a future meeting;

- **Highways Liaison.**

(5) That the Head of Research and Democratic Services liaise with the Head of Environmental Services to obtain information about the consultation arrangements regarding the Local Services Agreement and report back accordingly;.

- **Forward Plan.**

(6) That an item on the Forward Plan be included on the Committee's agenda at each meeting.

### **30. STANDING AND TASK AND FINISH PANELS - TIMETABLE FOR MEETINGS**

The Committee noted proposed dates for future Panel meetings.

### **31. PRESS AND PUBLIC - ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS**

The Head of Research and Democratic Services reported that the press had expressed an interest in attending meetings of Panels. He stated that relevant access to information did not suggest that Panel meetings must be open to the public. Thus it was up to Members to consider the issue. The view was expressed that open meetings would support the principles behind the new arrangements which were to encourage public participation in scrutiny. It was also stated that allowing such attendance could hinder debate. It was agreed that the Head of Research and Democratic Services make a report to the next meeting of the Committee.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the Head of Research and Democratic Services produce a report on the attendance of the press and public at Scrutiny Panel meetings for the next meeting of the Committee.

### **32. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AWARENESS SESSION**

The Committee noted that an awareness session on the new arrangements would be held on 19 July 2005 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Epping. Members were encouraged to attend.

**CHAIRMAN**