

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Committee **Date:** Thursday, 2 March 2006

Place: Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.30 - 9.16 pm

Members Present: Councillors Mrs D Collins (Chairman) Mrs J H Whitehouse (Vice-Chairman) Mrs D Borton, M Colling, P Gode, Mrs A Grigg, F Maclaine, Mrs M Sartin and D Stallan

Other Councillors: Councillors R Morgan, A Lee, Mrs H Harding, Mrs C Pond and J M Whitehouse

Apologies: Councillors K Faulkner and M Woollard

Officers Present: J Scott (Joint Chief Executive), J Akerman (Chief Internal Auditor), D Macnab (Head of Leisure Services), R Barwell (Public Relations and Internet Officer), C Overend (Policy & Research Officer), S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Z Folley (Democratic Services Assistant)

By Invitation: A Adams, T Mitchell and D Morrissey (Essex Police)

85. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2006 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the substitution of the word 'violence' by the words 'youth facilities' in the last sentence of minute 80(i) (Work Programme Monitoring – Task and Finish Panel on Externally Funded Leisure and Youth Provision).

86. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The meeting noted that Councillor A Lee was substituting for Councillor K Faulkner.

87. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made pursuant to the Council's Code of Member conduct.

88. NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

The Chairman introduced and welcomed Chief Superintendent Adams of the Essex Police, who was in attendance to discuss 'Neighbourhood Policing'. Also present were inspector Denise Morrissey and Inspector Tom Mitchell of the Loughton Division.

Mr Adams stated that in summary Neighbourhood Policing was about identifying and meeting the needs of the local community, implementing a style of policing that was more accountable and visible, and would mean that the community was more of a focus for policing efforts.

He explained the structure of the Western Division of Essex Police covering Epping Forest and recent changes that should benefit the District. He explained that following the restructure the Epping Forest locality was now covered by a District Commander and three inspectors. The changes facilitated the aims of the project and would ensure better cover.

Mr Adams advised that neighbourhood policing comprised a number of key principles. These were either in place or aspirations. The initiative focused on the profile of each neighbourhood to ascertain its needs and had allocated each individual ward with a named support officer that was responsible for delivering the scheme. Mr Adams referred to the types of activities and information gathered through this new approach. He reported on two incidents in Loughton that were successfully identified through the approach and dealt with through the use of new technology including a new surveillance vehicle.

Mr Adams reported that actions were co-ordinated with other agencies including the Council and incorporated within the Local Community Strategy through the work of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. He advised that staff at the division were committed to this approach and keen to ensure it was delivered. There were however some logistical problems arising from the changes.

The initiative had been tested in Waltham Abbey with few problems and would be implemented incrementally across the District.

Reference was made to North Weald. The area had experienced problems with anti social behaviour and there was a desire to see an increased police presence during the evenings. It was reported that additional police transport would be made available in the District, which should increase cover at the area.

In relation to the Grange Hill ward, a member expressed concern about the displacement to the area caused by the Dispersal Orders operating in neighbouring ward. A Member reported that overall the measures were working well in this locality and was reassured about the practice undertaken by some residents of keeping an incident diary. Mr Adams addressed concerns about response times to telephone enquiries. Neighbourhood policing arrangements had dedicated a mobile phone number to particular teams. Proposals for a regional contact centre were being held in abeyance due to the uncertainty around the future structure of the force. A decision would be made once details about the amalgamation had been made available. Any reorganisation should not affect the Neighbourhood Policing Initiative as it was suitable for any structure and would continue in being under any changes.

In relation to Lower Sheering, a member reported that public meetings had been held to consider the crime and disorder issues. As with North Weald this was a rural area which presented communications difficulties and impacted on response times. Mr Adams reassured that the officers designated to this area would focus on dealing with the low level issues in this area and be able to 'elevate them up the chain.'

Mr Adams circulated to the Committee a leaflet publicising the initiative. It was agreed that this document, together with a copy of the presentation be sent to all Members and the clerks of the Parish Councils.

The Chairman thanked the representatives for attending the meeting and their informative presentation.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Mr Adams of Essex Police be thanked for his presentation on the Neighbourhood Policing Initiative;
- (2) That a copy of the distributed leaflet and presentation be circulated to all Members and the Town and Parish Clerks; and
- (3) That Mr Adams be invited back to a later meeting to report on progress with the initiative

89. WORK PROGRAMME MONITORING

The Committee received progress reports on the current work of the various Standing Panels.

(a) Constitutional Affairs

The Chairman of the Panel, Councillor R Morgan, reported that the Panel had last met on 20 February. The Panel had reviewed the current structure of the Area Plans Committees to see whether they should be restructured in any way to even out the membership and level of work. The Panel identified a number of options for further investigation at the next meeting. The Panel undertook further work on their review of Council meetings and received a progress report from the Head of Research and Democratic Services on the Electoral Pilot and Electoral Administration Bill. The Panel considered and endorsed a pack designed to give prospective councillors a greater knowledge on the role and had requested a full paper on the provision of support for Councillors who might be the subject of an investigation. They considered a request to revise the Civic Protocol and recommended no changes be made.

(b) Environmental and Planning Services

The Chairman of the Panel, Councillor D Stallan reported that the Panel had last met on 28 February 2006. The Panel considered further the Examination in Public for the East of England Plan. They received a debrief from the former Head of Planning Services, Ivan Le Gallais on the sessions held on 13 and 14 February 2006 on matters affecting the District.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that at its last meeting, the Committee added to the Panels work plan the task of responding to the government consultation document entitled 'England's Waste Strategy'. He drew attention to the timescale involved and stated that two meetings on the 28 March and 13 April 2006 had been arranged for this. The Chairman asked the Committee to allow the Panel to respond directly to the document. It was agreed that an item be placed in the Members Bulletin to invite Members to submit comments on the document which was placed in the Members Room and a general invitation to attend to the meetings to express their views.

(c) Finance and Performance Management

The Chairman of the Panel, Councillor J M Whitehouse reported on the current work of the Panel which had last met on the 7 February 2006. The Panel had considered quarterly monitoring data and paid particular attention to those areas that were uncertain to meet their targets. They recognised the good performance of the

licensing section given that it had managed to process all of the licensing applications received within the relevant statutory deadline. The next meeting would consider whether the current list of Key Performance Indicators should be altered. The Panel gave further consideration to the budget and made a number of conclusions on the impact of the under spend on the salaries budget, the shortfall of income from local land charges, the higher than budgeted income from North Weald Airfield and the overspends on concessionary fares and black refuse sacks.

(d) 2006/07 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

The Senior Democratic Services Officers reported that the next meeting on the 16 March 2006 would be asked to give preliminary consideration to next years work programme. To date three new requests had been submitted for inclusion. He referred to the emerging Council Plan and suggested that the Committee might wish to allocate time to reviewing some of the key aims in this. The meeting was also to receive a presentation from London Underground Ltd. Members were invited to bring forward questions in advance of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Environmental and Planning Services Standing Panel be authorised to make a direct response to the consultation document 'England's Waste Strategy'

90. REPORT OF THE TASK AND FINISH PANEL ON EXTERNALLY FUNDED LEISURE SERVICES AND YOUTH PROVISION

The Chairman of the Task and Finish Panel, Councillor Mrs A Grigg presented the recommendations of the Panel on its review of youth provision in the District and external funding for leisure and cultural projects. The Panel had set out to review current provision for young people to identify future needs and how these could be met by the various agencies involved in service delivery. She reported that during the course of the review the Panel had paid two visits to voluntary sector youth clubs in the District and considered the work being carried out by numerous voluntary organisations in the area. The Panel concluded that the Council should become an increasingly active partner in the provision of youth services and that further provision should be made in the grant aid budget to realise this.

The Panel also received a paper providing details on the sources of external income secured by Leisure over recent years and a proposal by the Leader of the Council to provide £50,000 of additional funding as part of the next years budget. The Panel thought it would be premature to submit this request for this years budget and asked for a further report to developed on the options for Cabinet. It was noted that the Committee had previously considered a similar although separate bid for grant aid funding for youth provision in the District.

The Head of Leisure Services referred to the work undertaken by the Panel on the monitoring arrangements for the alternative leisure management contract. The recommended monitoring arrangements were now in place. The first meeting of Contract Monitoring Board would meet in March 2006 to consider performance to date.

The Portfolio Holder explained the timescale for progressing the proposals. She reported that this was the last year of the present three year service level agreement for grant aid support. She also explained the process for submitting and considering

new bids and that the present set of agreements would be considered in due course and would take into account any new projects.

Attention was drawn to the format of the report. It was emphasised that final reports of Task and Finish Panels should set out at the beginning their terms of reference and state how these had been achieved.

RESOLVED:

(1) That the work undertaken by the Panel on youth provision in the District be noted;

(2i) That whilst the Panel recognised the value of the current level of financial support, the Community Wellbeing Portfolio be asked to consider making further provision in the Grant Aid Budget, for the District Council to become an active partner in the provision of voluntary sector/joint funded youth initiatives;

(2ii) That the Council continues to offer professional advice and support to youth organisations to assist in their development;

(3) That the Head of Leisure Services be asked to submit a report to the Cabinet for the enhancement of youth provision during 2006/07 including a request for a supplementary estimate;

(4) That the completion by the Panel of its terms of reference be noted;and

(5) That the following topics identified for future scrutiny review be submitted for inclusion in the 2006/07 Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan:

- (a) Review of Arts Development and Community/Major Events
- (b) Future Management Arrangements at Waltham Abbey Sports Centre

91. AUDIT PLAN 2006-07

The Chief Internal Auditor presented the draft internal Audit Plan for 2006/07.

The plan had been submitted to all Members and would be considered by the Finance and Performance Management Committee and the Cabinet in April 2006.

The Chief Internal Auditor outlined the aims and provisions in the strategy. He drew attention to the audit planning process as detailed in section 3 of the report. He advised on the work undertaken to complete the plan and set the context. He reported the factors used in determining the planned days allocated and the work planned for 2006/07 and how the programme would be prioritised. He advised that there was provision for investigation work, advice/assistance on a range of topics and new initiatives, and flexibility so that audits could be substituted to accommodate reviews that were of greater risk to the Council's objectives. The Business Plan included an explanation of the role of the Internal Audit, the background to how audits were planned, resourced and carried out.

The Chief Internal Auditor reported that following views expressed by the Members last year attached to the plan was information providing comparative benchmarking information. The Plan covered 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2007. The Committee

considered each section covering information on the work of the Audit, the internal Audit at the Council, the planning process and the work planned.

In relation to contract delivery it was reported that plan incorporated reviews of the waste management contract and the Leisure Marketing contract.

The Chairman also requested that the time spent on Finance Audits be kept under review, given that the Council spent more time on some of these audits than other Authorities.

The Committee were also asked whether they wished to continue to undertake the task of scrutinising the annual audit plan or whether the task should be delegated to the Finance and Performance Standing Panel for consideration.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Draft Internal Audit Plan for 2006/07 be noted and endorsed;
- (2) That the task of scrutinising the plan for future years be delegated to the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel.

92. CABINET REVIEW

The Committee considered the Cabinet agenda for the next meeting on 6 March 2006. The Chairman undertook to report on item (8) - Planning Enforcement - Birchfield, Epping Lane, Stapleford Tawney.

CHAIRMAN

This page is intentionally left blank

Report to Overview And Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 2 March 2006

Subject: Report of the Task and Finish Panel on Externally Funded Leisure Services and Youth Provision – Final Report



Officer contact for further information: Derek Macnab – Head of Leisure Services Ext: 4260

Committee Secretary: Z Folley (ext: 4532)

Recommendations/Decisions required:

- **Youth Provision in the District**
 - (1) **To note the work undertaken on youth provision in the District to ascertain future needs and to determine how these can be best met by the various agencies involved in service delivery and;**
 - (2) **That the Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder be asked to consider making provision in the Grant Aid Budget for the District Council to remain an active partner in the provision of voluntary sector/joint funded Youth initiatives through the offer of professional advise and;**
 - **External Funding for Leisure and Cultural Projects**
 - (3) **To note the request that the Head of Leisure Services submit a report to the Cabinet for the enhancement of youth provision during 2006/07 including a request for a supplementary estimate**
 - **Review Completion**
 - (4) **To note the completion of the Panel's terms of reference as set out in paragraph 1.2 of the report.**
 - **Requests for future Scrutiny Reviews**
 - (5) **To note the topics identified for future scrutiny review and need for them to be submitted for inclusion in the 2006/07 Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan.**

Background

- 1.1 At the May 2005 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a Task and Finish Panel was established chaired by Cllr Mrs A Grigg to consider Externally Funded Leisure Services and Youth Provision. The Panel adopted the following Terms of Reference:
- i) To review current provision for young people in the District, seeking to identify future needs and how these can best be met by the various Agencies involved in the delivery of Young People's Services.
 - ii) To recommend arrangements for the monitoring of the Performance of the Council's Leisure Management Contract, to ensure that the Council's Key Objectives are being met.

- iii) To review the District Council's success in accessing External Funding for the provision of Leisure and Cultural Opportunities, in order to maximise future benefit and highlight any good practice.

Youth Provision In The District

2. At the initial meeting of the Panel, Members were advised that work with Young People in the District is currently undertaken on a multi-agency basis, not only by the Statutory Providers, but also by Leisure Services, Town and Parish Council and numerous Voluntary Sector Agencies. This was in addition to the range of opportunities provided by the private and commercial sectors.
3. Members considered that a review of Youth Provision could lead to a better understanding of priorities, improved communication, avoidance of duplication and identification of gaps in provision. Critically, it would also assist the Council in determining what role, if any, it wishes to undertake with respect to Young People's issues in the future. It was felt that this could influence the work of the Council's Young Person's Officer Post, which the Panel were informed had been vacant at this time for several months.
4. A number of Members of the Panel were current or previous representatives on the main –co-ordinating forum for Young People's issues in the District i.e. the "Epping Forest Locality Youth Strategy Group". As such, they were aware of potential changes in focus being driven by Central Government, regarding youth work and in particular the Connexions Service. It was therefore felt that it would be premature to recommend any local actions in isolation.
5. In order to seek clarity on these issues, the Panel agreed that it would be useful to have an Elected Member, with responsibility for young people, from the County Council, along to a future Panel meeting to ascertain how the County intended to respond.
6. The Panel recalled how in the past, Youth Clubs had been run at the majority of Senior Schools, utilising the skills of community volunteers. This service had declined through lack of resources, the difficulties in recruiting and retaining volunteers and the Local Management of Schools. The Panel concluded that this was unlikely to be re-established.
7. Again, at our meeting the Head of Leisure Services gave a presentation on Youth issues in the District. This detailed the main issues of concern identified by young people locally i.e. Transportation, Employment, ASBO's and Dispersal Orders, Leisure and Entertainment and lack of Local Facilities. Concerns about Young People in relation to Under Achievement at Schools, Drug and Alcohol abuse, Anti-Social Behaviour and Teenage Pregnancy/Sexual Health were also covered. An overview of current statutory responsibilities as well as an insight into the voluntary sector was given. The work of NACRO was also explained.
8. In conclusion Members felt it was important, that not only did they have the opportunity to visit some of the youth projects in the District, but also to hear directly from Young People.

Visits to Voluntary Sector/Joint Funded Youth Provision.

9. In September 2005 the Panel visited the Waltham Abbey Young Persons Information Centre at 38 Sun Street, where an Open Evening was being held. This allowed a useful insight into the work of the project to be gained. Members were given a tour of the facilities, which are a conversion of a shop premises. It was explained how WAYPIC's aim according to their Mission Statement, was *"To provide a discrete service of advice, information, advocacy and counselling that supports and empowers*

the young people of Waltham Abbey and the surrounding areas to have the opportunity to take control of their lives and to recognise their responsibilities to themselves and to the community”

10. WAYPIC is a Charitable Company limited by Guarantee, which operates on a Multi-Agency Partnership basis. The Partners included but not exclusively, are Epping Forest District Council, Essex County Council Youth Services, Epping Forest Primary Care Trust, Epping Forest Voluntary Action, Essex Young People's Drug and Alcohol Awareness Services, Connexions Service, Citizens Advice, Young Concern Trust and local residents and businesses.
11. The Centre provides a safe and supportive environment staffed by trained specialists, who address young people's issues and co-ordinate service delivery. Many positive impacts are being made, with particular success in relation to teenage pregnancy and sexual health issues.
12. The Panel then transferred to Waltham Abbey Youth 2000, which is located in the Booker Road Industrial Estate, again in Waltham Abbey. The Panel were greeted by David Stone, Essex County Council Youth Services Locality Manager for the District who showed the Panel around. WAY2000 had acquired the freehold of the building with the assistance of a National Lottery Grant, but had subsequently disposed of the rear part of the premises, which was no longer required for the Motor Project.
13. The Panel were advised that the Project, which is again a Charity with a number of partner agencies, was open on three nights per week and attended regularly by a group of up to 30 young people. These young people tended to be towards the older age group, 15 – 18 years, largely because of the isolated position of the building. Facilities are provided for these young people on a drop-in basis to use computers, art and craft resources and a traditional pool table etc.
14. In addition to the Drop In Service, the building also provided accommodation for the Prince's Trust/learning Skills project. This scheme had relocated with the withdrawal of the Youth Services from the Roding Centre Buckhurst Hill. Whilst it had continued to be well attended, Members raised concerns about its accessibility, particularly by public transport.
15. The Locality Manager went on to highlight other Youth Work across the District and in particular progress on the new Youth Centre at Loughton. Members were concerned that whilst there may be some growth in the local youth service budget after 2 years of standstill, there was no direct new revenue allocation to meet the running costs of the new Loughton Youth Centre. This would inevitably impact on Youth Work elsewhere in the District.
16. In October, a number of Members of the Panel paid an informal visit to "The Box" a voluntary run and funded 'Drop In' facility located in Epping High Street. The young People in attendance enjoyed and appreciated the facilities, on offer but would have liked longer opening hours. Concerns were expressed by the organisation, that there was a likelihood of their Lease not being renewed and they may have to re-locate to other premises.
17. Before the Task and Finish Panel formally convened in November the Group visited the new Ongar Youth Centre. This was to enable Members to view the facilities and importantly to gain an insight into the work of Youth Plus. Youth Plus is a Voluntary Sector Youth Club which has an active membership of young people, many of whom have special needs. The Club is run on a fully integrated basis and is operated with support, largely by the young people themselves.
18. The Club offers a range of Arts and Craft Activities, Sports, Social Outings, Excursions and produces Small Performance Pieces. At the time of the visit,

preparations were being made and rehearsals held, for a Christmas Show. Staff from the Council's Partnership Project with NACRO, "The Epping Forest Community Sports Programme", were also in attendance organising sports activities on the outside areas. On the evening, Members had the opportunity to speak with a number of the young people attending, who obviously enjoyed the club and were proud to be associated with Youth Plus.

19. It was noted that despite some dialogue, the Club had not approach the District Council, unlike most of the other Voluntary Youth Clubs for financial support. This appeared to be either through a desire to remain independent and/or lack of time to complete the Grant Application Form.

Conclusion

20. Throughout their review period the Panel had visited a number of Voluntary Run Youth Clubs. The important role they play with respect not only in offering opportunities for young people in areas not generally served by the Youth Service, but also in terms of Voluntary Service of the Community helpers, was acknowledged.
21. The Panel felt that the District Council should be active partners in supporting such clubs through the offer of professional advice and through the Grant Aid process. It was felt that 3 year funding agreements were probably appropriate to provide stability and that funding could be linked to specific outcomes. It was agreed that the views of the panel should be reported through O & S to the Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder who is responsible for Grant Aid.

Government Green Paper – Youth Matters

22. At the Panel's September 2005 meeting, the potential changes to the nature of Youth Provision, being promoted by Central Government were highlighted. Nigel Varman, Divisional Youth Work Manager, West Essex attended the meeting to talk about the County Council's response to the Governments Green Paper "Youth Matters".
23. Nigel circulated a copy of a presentation, which was being used by Essex to inform Members, Officers and Volunteers about "Youth Matters". However, Nigel stressed that the release of the Green Paper had been considerably delayed and as the County Council had not received sight of the document until mid August, they had yet to formally consider and respond. However, the implementation Timetable is very tight, with most changes sought and funding available from April 2006.
24. Subsequently, the Panel were forwarded a copy of the County Council's response to Youth Matters. It was clear that the County Council shared the view of the Task and Finish Panel that the proposed "Opportunity Cards", which offer discounted access for entertainment and leisure facilities, would be impractical and expensive, and not be an effective deterrent with respect to anti-social behaviour. Some Members of the Panel still expressed disappointment that more could not be done by Youth Services and Education, to provide Youth Clubs in Secondary Schools. Whilst it was recognised that funding was an issue, some Members felt this traditional type of provision had as much merit as the modern trend for "Drop In" and Information based schemes.

Future of Young Persons Officer Post

25. The Panel has proposed a Draft Job Description including a request to develop an Audit of Youth Opportunities in the District. The appointment of a Young Persons Officer's Post was considered by the Cabinet on the 6th February, 2006 as part of the Leisure Services Interim Restructuring Report, post externalisation of the Management of the Leisure Centres. It is hoped to advertise the post at the start of the new financial year 2006/07.

Monitoring Arrangements For The Leisure Management Contract

26. The Task and Finish Panel recommended Contract Monitoring arrangements for the Leisure Management Contract at its meeting in October 2005. These were subsequently agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8 December 2005 and confirmed by Cabinet.

External Funding For Leisure And Cultural Projects

27. The Panel were aware that in recent years Leisure Services has enjoyed success in attracting external funding to support the delivery of Local Leisure and Cultural opportunities. Much of the funding being based on the establishment of effective working relationships and partnering projects with other Agencies.
28. At the January meeting of the Panel, the Head of Leisure Services presented a paper, which broke down the sources of the £2.8 million of external income secured by Leisure Services in the last 5 years. Detail was also provided about the type of projects it was used to deliver. An insight was given as to what the main features are of a successful application. An overview of the current resources of the Council to identify, develop and submit Funding Bids was also explained. The Panel considered future options such as the re-appointment of an External Funding Officer and how to share best practice to the wider community.
29. The Panel also considered a proposal by the Leader of Council to provide £50,000 of additional funding, as part of next year's Budget to enhance youth provision. It was felt that there was insufficient time to make a fully considered response, before the Budget was set. It was agreed that the Head of Leisure Services would develop some options for consideration as a supplementary estimate, in the new financial year.
30. The Panel were impressed by the level of external funding achieved by Leisure Services and whilst they did not consider it necessary to re-appoint an External Funding Officer, felt that an internal cross-service co-ordinating group may have merit. The Head of Leisure Services Paper to be included in the Members Bulletin and advice to be made available at any forthcoming Community Forums.

Completion of Terms of Reference and Work Programme.

31. The Panel concluded its terms of reference at their last meeting on the 25 January 2006 and as a result has been disbanded.
32. A number of potential topics for future reviews were highlighted by the Panel to include a review of Arts Development and Community/Major Events and possibly future Management Arrangements at Waltham Abbey Sports Centre. It is noted that these requests will need to be submitted for inclusion in next years OS work plan to determine how they should be dealt with.

This page is intentionally left blank