

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Committee **Date:** Thursday, 6 April 2006

Place: Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.30 - 8.55 pm

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

Other Councillors: Councillors Mrs H Harding, R Morgan and S Murray

Apologies: Councillors M Colling and Mrs M Sartin

Officers Present: J Scott (Joint Chief Executive), A Scott (Head of Information, Communications and Technology), R Barwell (Public Relations and Internet Officer), S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Z Folley (Democratic Services Assistant)

By Invitation: (none)

100. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2006 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

101. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute Members reported at the meeting.

102. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

With the permission of the Chairman, the Committee received a report of the Waste Management Cabinet Committee to be submitted as urgent business to the Cabinet on 10 April 2006. It was agreed that due to the nature of the issues involved, the item be considered in private session following the consideration of the main agenda.

103. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor D Stallan referred to the report submitted under the previous item on waste management issues. He declared a personal but non prejudicial interest in the report and indicated that he would remain in the meeting during the consideration and voting on the item.

104. COUNCIL PLAN 2006-2010

Members were reminded that the Committee had previously considered the proposed content and format of the Council Plan for 2006-10 and had agreed the draft document for consultation purposes. Their attention was drawn to a list of all

those formally consulted during the consultation period lasting one month which had been circulated for information.

Members noted that the level of responses to this exercise was presently very low. They also acknowledged that the consultation timescale initially agreed for the draft plan did not adhere to the provisions in the Epping Forest District Local Compact suggesting that wherever possible a twelve week period be allowed for consultation with the voluntary sector.

In view of the need to ensure that the consultation on the Council's future priorities was as inclusive and assessable as possible and complied with the Local Compact, the Committee were asked to extend the deadline for the consultation period on the draft plan by two months. It was noted that following this, the results of the exercise would be submitted to this Committee and then the Cabinet for adoption.

RESOLVED:

That the timescale for the consultation on the draft Council Plan for 2006 to 2010 be extended by a period of two months.

105. WORK PROGRAMME MONITORING

(a) Environmental and Planning Services Standing Panel

The Chairman of the Panel, Councillor D Stallan reported on matters considered at the last meeting of the Panel on 28 March 2006. The Panel had considered the government consultation document on the Review of England's Waste Strategy. Officers would be presenting the document to the next meeting on 13 April 2006 with responses for consideration. The response to be made would be published in the Members Bulletin. This next meeting would also receive a presentation from the Essex County Council on their review of the re use of farm buildings in the Green Belt and scope its review on the issue of Community/Neighbourhood Wardens. The Panel would be asked whether it wished to delegate the task of considering this latter review to a sub-group possible made up of the Panel's membership. The Chairman sought the views of this Committee on this suggestion. The Committee noted the benefits attached to setting up a small Task and Finish style Panel and were of the view that this would be an ideal topic for such an approach. They considered the merits of setting up a sub group before the next Panel meeting in June 2006 so that the review could commence at an early date to meet the identified deadline. A member suggested that the review should pursue discussions with Community Wardens at Authorities elsewhere.

(b) Constitutional Affairs Standing Panel

The Chairman of the Panel, Councillor R Morgan reported that at its last meeting on 27 March 2006, the Panel undertook further work on their review on the future role of the Council. They recommended that four of the five identified alternative models be pursued and agreed to send these out to Members for consultation purposes through a special Members Bulletin. The Panel continued to examine the structure of the four Area Planning Sub-Committees to see whether the arrangements should be revised to balance the workload and membership of the Sub-Committees. The Panel agreed that the review should address three principles and that all Members be given the opportunity to contribute to the review. They agreed an item explaining this review and a questionnaire seeking Members views be also included in the Panels special bulletin which was currently being prepared and would be sent out next week. The Panel had received a verbal report from the Head of Research and Democratic

Services on options for enhancing the support provided to Members who might be the subject of an investigation and noted that a full report would be submitted to their next meeting on 6 June 2006. The Panel also noted that following the decision to withdraw from the electronic aspects of the Electoral Pilot, a traditional election would instead be held for the May 2006 election. The Panel also noted proposals to relax the guidance for tellers and proposed that the Councils own guidance on this be recommended as best practice.

(c) Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2006/07.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer reported that since the discussions at the last meeting, officers had put together a draft programme for final approval. The Committee were asked to approve this programme.

The Committee had previously agreed that the Task and Finish Panel on Traveller Issues be continued to focus on specific issues. It was agreed that this be reflected in the plan. It was clarified that the next meeting of the Panel would be held on 20 April 2006. It was agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee plan include an item indicating that Essex Police would be asked back in July 2006 and after this on a six-monthly basis to discuss local issues. It was also agreed that the Principal of Epping Forest College be invited to the next meeting in May 2006 to discuss the recent proposals to expand the college and this be reflected in the document accordingly.

RESOLVED:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2006/07 be endorsed subject to the inclusion of:

- (a) the Task and Finish Panel on Traveller Issues;
- (b) In relation to the OSC work plan, two additional items detailing the proposal to invite Essex Police to the OSC in July 2006 (and on a six monthly basis thereafter) and the intention to invite the Principal of Epping Forest College to the May 2006 meeting of the Committee.

106. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2005-06

The Committee were asked to endorse and refer the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2005/06 to the Council for consideration at its next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2005/06 be endorsed and submitted to the Council for consideration at its next meeting in April 2006.

107. CABINET REVIEW

The Committee considered the agenda for the next Cabinet meeting on 10 April 2006. The Committee commented on the following items which the Chairman undertook to report to the meeting:

- (a) Possible Redevelopment of Council Owned Car Parks – Appointment of Planning and Development (Item 9)/Petition – Use of Market Square, Waltham Abbey For Parking (Item 21)

Reference was made to the Task and Finish Panel to be established on Town Centre and Car Parks. The Committee agreed that it be suggested to the Cabinet that the Panel look at these reports before the Cabinet itself should the timescale involved allowed this.

(b) Loughton Broadway Regeneration Scheme (Item 20)

A member expressed concern at the proposals regarding the appointment of a Project Manager for the Scheme.

(c) Increasing the Amount of Affordable Housing in the District – Report of Housing Scrutiny Panel (Item 12)

The Chairman of the Housing Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Murray referred to the report. He explained that having considered the issues, consensus was expressed by the Panel in favour of the proposals which he would present to the Cabinet meeting. It was questioned why this report had not been submitted to the OSC prior to its inclusion on the Cabinet agenda.

108. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the next item of business on the grounds that it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

109. WASTE MANAGEMENT CABINET COMMITTEE REPORT.

The Committee considered a report of the Waste Management Cabinet Committee and supported the recommendations contained within which was to be considered by the Cabinet on 10 April 2006.

The Committee thanked those officers involved in dealing with waste related complaints for all their hard work in this challenging area.

CHAIRMAN