

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Tuesday, 31st May, 2005

Place: Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

Room: Council Chamber

Time: 7.30 pm

Democratic Services Officer: Simon Hill, Senior Democratic Services Officer
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Members:

Councillors Mrs D Collins (Chairman), Mrs J H Whitehouse (Vice-Chairman), Mrs D Borton, M Colling, K Faulkner, P Gode, Mrs A Grigg, F Maclaine, Mrs P Richardson, Mrs M Sartin and M Woollard

<p>PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS TO ATTEND</p>
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1. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

To welcome Members to the first meeting of the new Committee.

2. NEW OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES (Pages 7 - 26)

(Head of Research and Democratic Services). To note the new procedural rules for Overview and Scrutiny.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

4. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

(Head of Research and Democratic Services). To report the appointment of any substitute members for the meeting.

5. MINUTES (Pages 27 - 50)

- (1) To confirm the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group held on 11 May 2005;and
- (2) To confirm the minutes of the meetings of:
- (a) Overview and Scrutiny Committee 1 held on 29 March 2005;
 - (b) Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 held on 5 April 2005; and
 - (c) Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 held on 7 April 2005

as a correct record.

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Head of Research and Democratic Services). To declare interests in any items on the agenda.

7. APPOINTMENT OF STANDING PANELS - 2005/06

Decisions required:

- (1) To appoint members to the following Standing Panels in accordance with pro rata in the proportions shown below:

Standing Panels	Appointments to places required:
Housing	Lab: 1 Cons: 4 Lib Dem: 2 LRA: 1 Ind: 1 BNP: 1
Constitutional Affairs	Lab: 1 Cons: 4 Lib Dem: 2 LRA: 1 Ind: 1 BNP: 1
ICT and E-Government	Lab: 1 Cons: 4 Lib Dem: 2 LRA: 1 Ind: 1 BNP: 1
Finance and Performance Management	Lab: 1 Cons: 4 Lib Dem: 2 LRA: 1 Ind: 1 BNP: 1
Environment and Planning	Lab: 1 Cons: 4

	Lib Dem: 2 LRA: 1 Ind: 1 BNP: 1
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(2) To consider requests for appointments to Standing Panels by non affiliated members; and

(3) To appoint a Chairman and Vice Chairman to the following Standing Panels:

Housing	Chairman: Vice Chairman:
Constitutional Affairs	Chairman: Vice Chairman:
ICT and E-Government	Chairman: Vic Chairman:
Finance and Performance Management	Chairman: Vic Chairman:
Environment and Planning	Chairman: Vic Chairman:

The Council has agreed that pro rata apply to Standing Panels only. The Overview and Scrutiny rules provide that membership should be kept to the minimum required to allow each Group to have representation. Additionally individual members, not affiliated to a group, have the right to apply for membership.

The Committee are asked to make appointments to Standing Panels in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure rules.

Nominations to Chairman and Vice Chairman of these Panels are excluded from the calculation required under the Council's protocol regarding allocation of Chairman and Vice-Chairman positions between the political groups.

8. APPOINTMENT OF TASKS AND FINISH PANELS - 2005/06**Decisions Required:**

(1) To appoint members to the following Task and Finish Panels in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny procedure rules:

Panel	Requests to be considered
Review of externally funded Leisure Services and Youth Provisions	Leisure Services – Review of Externally funded services, Youth Provision in the District
Traveller issues	Former Traveller Site at Paynes Lane, Traveller Incursions
Register of local interests	Establishments of Register of significant concerns for Development Proposals, Road and Pavements in District and Parking Policy in residential areas.
Members Training	Members Training - General and scrutiny skills

(2) To appoint a Chairman and Vice Chairman to the Task and Finish Panels

The Committee is asked to consider appointments to Task and Finish Panels. The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee has reviewed the requests for reviews and has determined that four Task and Finish Panel Reviews should be undertaken. These are outlined above.

The Overview and Scrutiny Rules state that 'Task and Finish' Scrutiny Panels shall be flexible as to the number of Councillors appointed to membership. There is no restriction on the numbers appointed.

Any Councillor may be a member of a 'Task and Finish' Scrutiny Panel, save that a member of the Cabinet may not be a member of any Panel which bears directly on his or her portfolio. Additionally no 'Task and Finish' Scrutiny Panel can be comprised of members of a single political group only.

It is a requirement of the procedure rules that a Chairman and Vice Chairman should be appointed to each Panel.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES

1. ARRANGEMENTS FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

- (a) The Council will, at the Annual Council meeting, appoint an Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in Article 6.
- (b) Each Overview and Co-ordinating Committee shall comprise 11 members, including a Chairman and Vice-Chairman appointed by the Council.

2. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - FUNCTIONS

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will discharge the Overview and Scrutiny functions conferred by Section 20 of the Local Government Act 2000 plus those responsibilities allocated by the Council.

3. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. The functions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall be as follows:
 - (a) review of corporate strategies;
 - (b) ensuring that the decisions/actions of the Cabinet accord with the Council's policies and budget;
 - (c) monitoring and scrutinising the financial performance of the Council and making recommendations to the Cabinet in relation to annual revenue and capital guidelines, bids and submissions;
 - (d) when required, questioning members of the Cabinet or other Committees and officers about their decisions and performance whether generally in comparison with service plans and targets over a period of time, or in relation to particular decisions, initiatives or projects;
 - (e) making recommendations to Cabinet and appropriate Committees and the Council arising from the outcome of the overview and scrutiny process;
 - (f) review and scrutiny of the performance of other public bodies active in the District, inviting reports from them by requesting them to address the Committee and local people about their activities and performance;
 - (g) questioning and gathering evidence from any person (including Councillors, members of Council staff and others) on issues falling within the functions of the Committee;

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- (h) determining terms of reference, memberships (including the appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman) and reporting for all Standing and 'Task and Finish' Scrutiny Panels;
- (i) scrutinising executive decisions;
- (j) considering and making responses to executive decisions which are called in either as a Committee or through referral to a Standing or 'Task and Finish' Panel;
- (k) monitoring the effectiveness of the call-in procedure, reviewing the number and reasons for call-in and making recommendations to the Council on any changes required to improve operation of the process;
- (l) monitoring and scrutiny of the Forward Plan;
- (m) review of implications of Government Consultation documents where requested by members;
- (n) reports on key performance Indicators referred to the Committee;
- (o) reports on Service Business Plans as requested by members;
- (p) receiving presentations from the Leader of the Council and other Portfolio Holders early in the Council year outlining their plans for the year ahead and reporting performance in the previous Council year;
- (q) consideration of requests from Cabinet for scrutiny involvement in policy development and determining appropriate action;
- (r) determining work programmes in accordance with items falling within Committee's ambit in accordance with (a)-(q) above.

4. WHO MAY SIT ON THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE?

1. All councillors except members of the Executive may be members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. However, no member may be involved in scrutinising a decision which he/she has been directly involved.

5. CO-OPTEEES

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall be entitled to recommend to Council the appointment of appropriate persons as non-voting co-optees.

6. MEETINGS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held in accordance with the Council's calendar of meetings in each year. In addition, extraordinary meetings may be called from time to time as and when appropriate. An Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting may be called by the Chairman, or by the Proper Officer if he/she considers it necessary or appropriate.

7. QUORUM

1. The quorum for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall be as set out for committees in the Council Procedure Rules in Part 4 of this Constitution.

8. WHO CHAIRS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETINGS?

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be chaired by the Councillor appointed as Chairman of the Committee at the Annual Council meeting.

2. A Vice-Chairman will also be appointed by the Council at its Annual Meeting. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee will be appointed from those Councillors serving on the Committee. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman will be appointed for a term of one year and will be eligible for re-appointment.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

Responsibilities

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall approve an Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme.

Compiling the Work Programme

2. In determining the contents of the work programme, the Committee will:

- (a) seek proposals for inclusion from all Members of the Council through the Members' Bulletin;
- (b) invite the Leader of the Council and other Portfolio Holders to submit proposals in respect of the Council's executive functions;
- (c) arrange meetings with the Leader and other Portfolio Holders to discuss their plans for the year in question;
- (d) agree with the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holders on any items for inclusion in the work programme which may be undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny on the Cabinet's behalf;
- (e) seek proposals from any partnership organisations on any projects which Overview and Scrutiny could undertake on behalf of those partnerships;
- (f) review the work programme for Overview and Scrutiny in respect of the current year.

Approving the Work Programme

3. The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme shall be approved prior to the Annual Council meeting each year and shall be of six months' duration. The programme shall be reviewed at or before the expiration of that six-month period.

4. The Committee will, in determining the work programme for Overview and Scrutiny:

- (a) review all proposals submitted to ensure that they relate to the Council's Policy Framework including the Community Strategy, the Improvement Plan, the Council Plan, and the Best Value Performance Plan;
- (b) ensure the agreed work programme has sufficient member and officer resources to support it;
- (c) identify in advance any budgetary provision required for specific projects;
- (d) ensure that the work programme is properly prioritised.
- (e) allocate time limits for each project;
- (f) ensure that any projects which do not find a place in the work programme are placed in a reserve programme for further review;
- (g) ensure that all Members of the Council are informed about the work programme as part of the annual report to the Council in April each year;
- (h) review the work programme on a regular basis during the year.

Urgent Items and New Proposals

5. Where new proposals or matters of urgency arise during the currency of an annual work programme, the Committee may:

- (a) determine that any new project should be added to the programme and adjust the remainder of the programme accordingly;
- (b) determine that a new project should be deferred for review when the next work programme is considered;
- (c) decline to accept an additional project and give grounds for so doing.

6. All proposals for additional or urgent projects shall be submitted in writing and presented at a convenient meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee by the member or officer so proposing.

Motions at Council Meetings

7. Any motion adopted by the Council following due notice from a Member of the Council and which relates to the responsibilities of Overview and Scrutiny shall, on adoption, stand referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration. In determining how to respond to the motion, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall consider whether the proposal should be incorporated in the work programme or held for future consideration in accordance with the procedures outlined in Paragraph 4 and 5 above. The Committee shall also advise the Council, via the Members' Information Bulletin, of the action taken on such motions.

10. AGENDA ITEMS

1. Any member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall be entitled to give notice to the Proper Officer that he/she wishes an item relevant to the functions of the Committee to be included on the agenda for the next available meeting of the Committee. On receipt of such a request the Proper Officer will ensure that it is included on the next available agenda.
2. Any members of the Council who are not members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may give written notice to the Proper Officer that they wish an item to be included on the agenda of that Committee. If the Proper Officer receives such a notification, then he/she will include the item on the first available agenda of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.
3. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall also respond, as soon as their work programme permits, to requests from the Council or the Executive to review particular areas of Council activity. Where they do so, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall report their findings and any recommendations back to the Executive and/or the Council. The Executive shall consider the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee within one month of receiving it and the Council within two months of receiving it, or, in either case, as soon as is reasonably possible.

11. POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT

1. The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to the development of the Council's budget and policy framework is set out in detail in the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules.
2. In relation to the development of the Council's approach to other matters not forming part of its policy and budget framework, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may make proposals to the Executive in so far as they relate to matters within their terms of reference.
3. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may hold enquiries and investigate the available options for future direction in policy development and may appoint advisers and assessors to assist them in this process. They may go on site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission research and do all other things that they reasonably consider necessary to inform their deliberations. They may ask witnesses to attend to address them on any matter under consideration and may pay to any advisers, assessors and witnesses a reasonable fee and expenses for doing so.
4. In carrying out any policy review or policy development work within their terms of reference, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may refer all or part of such matters to a Standing Scrutiny Panel or a 'Task and Finish' Scrutiny Panel for consideration in accordance with the programme approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

12. STANDING SCRUTINY PANELS - PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS

1. Standing Scrutiny Panels may be established on an annual basis by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
2. Standing Scrutiny Panel status will be restricted to those activities of a recurring or cyclical character which require a longer term involvement by members.
3. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall determine the number and terms of reference of Standing Scrutiny Panels and shall review whether they should continue in being before the end of each Council year.
4. Standing Scrutiny Panels will:
 - (a) adhere to a work programme agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
 - (b) have a chairman and vice-chairman appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
 - (c) have memberships which reflect pro rata requirements and the lowest number of members required to achieve cross-party representation whilst allowing the inclusion of members who are not members of a political group or are not members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
 - (d) have memberships which represent the minimum number necessary to adhere to their work programmes;
 - (e) be able to make proposals to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the variation of their terms of reference or work programme;
 - (f) be able to seek delegated authority from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to vary their terms of reference and work programme according to circumstances;
 - (g) report on a regular basis to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress with their work programme and on any recommendations for consideration;
 - (h) be able, with the prior approval of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to report direct to the Cabinet, a Cabinet Committee or a Portfolio Holder, to another Committee or to the Council with recommendations.
5. Any member of the Council may be a member of a Standing Scrutiny Panel, provided that any Cabinet member may not be a member of a Panel which directly deals with matters within his or her portfolio.
6. Any member of the Council shall be able to attend any meeting of a Standing Scrutiny Panel and be notified of the publication of the agenda.

13. 'TASK AND FINISH' SCRUTINY PANELS

1. 'Task and Finish' Scrutiny Panels may be established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in order to deal with ad hoc projects or reviews included in the annual work programme for Overview and Scrutiny.
2. 'Task and Finish' Scrutiny Panel status will be restricted to those activities which are issue-based, time limited and non-cyclical in character and have clearly defined objectives.
3. 'Task and Finish' Scrutiny Panels will:
 - (a) have terms of reference, membership and a work programme approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
 - (b) have a Chairman and Vice-Chairman appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
 - (c) have memberships which need not be based on pro rata rules;
 - (d) have memberships which represent the minimum number necessary to adhere to their work programmes;
 - (e) be able to make proposals to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the variation of their terms of reference or work programme;
 - (f) be able to seek delegated authority from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the variation of their terms of reference and work programmes according to circumstances;
 - (g) report on a regular basis to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress with their work programme and on any recommendations for consideration;
 - (h) report, with the prior approval of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, direct to the Cabinet, a Cabinet Committee or a Portfolio Holder, to another Committee or to the Council.
4. 'Task and Finish' Scrutiny Panels shall be flexible as to the number of Councillors appointed to membership. There will be no restriction on the numbers appointed.
5. Any Councillor may be a member of a 'Task and Finish' Scrutiny Panel, save that a member of the Cabinet may not be a member of any Panel which bears directly on his or her portfolio.
6. No 'Task and Finish' Scrutiny Panel shall be comprised of members of a single group only.
7. Any member of the Council shall be able to attend any meeting of a 'Task and Finish' Scrutiny Panel and to receive copies of agenda.

14. NOMINATIONS TO STANDING SCRUTINY AND 'TASK AND FINISH' PANELS

1. The Leader of each political group (and any Councillor who is not a member of a political group) shall be notified before the commencement of each Council year of the number of Standing Scrutiny and 'Task and Finish' Panels to be appointed and the number of members to serve on each Panel, indicating pro rata requirements where applicable. Similar notice will be given through the Members' Bulletin to other members of the Council.

2. The Leader of each political group will also be notified of the number of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen positions to be filled before the commencement of each Council year.

3. Group Leaders shall ensure that members of all political groups have an opportunity to nominate to any positions referred to under 1 and 2 above. Any nominations may be made up to the day before the meeting in question. Such nominations shall include a case for the position sought.

4. Nominations to these Panels shall be excluded from the calculation required under the Council's protocol regarding allocation of Chairman and Vice-Chairman positions between the political groups.

15. REPORTS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Once recommendations on proposals for policy review or development, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will prepare a formal report and submit it for consideration by the Executive if the proposals are consistent with the existing budgetary and policy framework, or to the Council if the recommendation would require a departure from, or a change to, the agreed budget and policy framework.

2. If the Overview and Scrutiny Committee cannot agree on a single final report to the Council or Executive as appropriate, then up to one minority report may be prepared and submitted for consideration by the Council or Executive with the majority report.

3. Reports by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall normally be presented by the Chairman of that Committee, unless he or she determines that it would be beneficial for a Panel Chairman to undertake this role instead or that a joint presentation is appropriate.

16. ENSURING THAT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORTS ARE CONSIDERED BY EXECUTIVE

(a) Executive matters not delegated to the Cabinet, a Cabinet Committee or a Portfolio Holder

1. Once the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has completed its deliberations on any matter it will forward a copy of its final report to the Proper Officer who will allocate it to either or both the Executive and the Council for consideration, according to whether the contents of the report would have implications for the Council's budget and policy framework. If the Proper Officer refers the matter to Council, he/she will

also serve a copy on the Leader with notice that the matter is to be referred to Council. The Executive will have 6 weeks or as soon as reasonably practical thereafter in which to respond to the overview and scrutiny report, and the Council shall not consider it within that period. When the Council does meet to consider any referral from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a matter which would impact on the budget and policy framework, it shall also consider the response of the Executive to the overview and scrutiny proposals.

(b) Executive Matters Delegated to an Executive Committee or Executive Member

2. Where the Overview and Scrutiny Committee prepares a report for consideration by the Executive in relation to a matter where the Executive has delegated decision making powers to another individual member of the executive or to an Executive Committee, then the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will submit a copy of their report to that individual or committee for consideration. At the time of doing so, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall serve a copy on the Proper Officer and the Leader. If the member or Executive Committee with delegated decision making powers does not accept the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee then the matter will then be referred to the next available meeting of the Executive for debate before exercising his/her decision making power and responding to the report in writing to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Executive member or Committee to whom the decision making power has been delegated will respond to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee within 6 weeks of receiving it. A copy of his/her written response to it shall be sent to the Proper Officer and the Executive Member or Committee Chairmen will attend a future meeting to respond.

(c) Cabinet Business - Work Plan

3. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will have access to the Executive's forward plan and timetable for decisions and intentions for consultation. Even where an item is not the subject of detailed proposals from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee following a consideration of possible policy/service developments, the committee will at least be able to respond in the course of the executive's consultation process in relation to any key decision.

17. RIGHTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEMBERS TO DOCUMENTS

1. In addition to their rights as councillors, members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have the additional right to documents, and to notice of meetings as set out in the Access to Information Procedure Rules in Part 4 of this Constitution.

2. Nothing in this paragraph prevents more detailed liaison between the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or any Scrutiny Panel) as appropriate depending on the particular matter under consideration.

18. MEMBERS AND OFFICERS GIVING ACCOUNT

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee or a Standing Scrutiny Panel or 'Task and Finish' Scrutiny Panel may scrutinise and review decisions made or actions

taken in connection with the discharge of any Council functions. As well as reviewing documentation, in fulfilling the scrutiny role, it may require any member of the Cabinet, the Head of Paid Service, or Joint Chief Executive, the Head of Service, or Assistant Head of Service to attend before it to explain in relation to matters within their remit:

- (a) any particular decision or series of decisions;
- (b) the extent to which the actions taken implement Council policy; and/or
- (c) their performance;

and it is the duty of those persons to attend if so required.

2. Where any member or officer is required to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Panel under this provision, the Chairman will inform the Proper Officer. The Proper Officer shall inform the member or officer in writing giving at least 14 working days notice of the meeting at which he/she is required to attend. The notice will state the nature of the item on which he/she is required to attend to give account and whether any papers are required to be produced for the Committee. Where the account to be given to the Committee will require the production of a report, then the member or officer concerned will be given sufficient notice to allow for preparation of that documentation.

3. Where, in exceptional circumstances, the member or officer is unable to attend on the required date, then the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Panel concerned shall in consultation with the member or officer arrange an alternative date for attendance not less than 14 days from the date of the original attendance.

19. ATTENDANCE BY OTHERS

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Panel may invite people other than those referred to in paragraph 17 above to address it, discuss issues of local concern and/or answer questions. It may for example wish to hear from residents, stakeholders and members and officers in other parts of the public sector and shall invite such people to attend. Such attendance is optional for those invited.

20. CALL-IN

1. When a decision is made by the Executive, an individual member of the executive or a committee of the Executive, or a key decision is made by an officer with delegated authority from the Executive, or an area committee or under joint arrangements, the decision shall be published, including where possible by electronic means, and shall be available at the main offices of the Council normally within 5 working days of being made. All members of the Council will be sent copies of the written records of all such decisions within the same timescale, by the person responsible for publishing the decision.

2. That notice will bear the date on which it is published and will specify that the decision will come into force, and may then be implemented, on the expiry of 5 working days after the publication of the decision, unless the required number of members objects to it and calls it in.

3. During that period, the Proper Officer shall call in a decision for scrutiny if so requested in accordance with paragraph (h) below and shall then notify the decision-taker of the call-in. He/she shall consult with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee who will determine that consideration of the call in will be referred to:

- (i) the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee; or
- (ii) an appropriate Standing Panel; or
- (iii) a Task and Finish Panel.

If consideration of any executive decision is likely, under these rules, to be delayed for more than two weeks the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may require an extraordinary meeting to be convened at an earlier date if the circumstances appear to warrant this.

4. If, having considered the decision, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel is still concerned about it, then it may, subject to the procedures outlined in Rule 16(a) or (b) above, refer it back to the decision making person or body for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of its concerns or refer the matter to full Council. If referred to the decision maker they shall then reconsider within a further 5 working days, or in the case of a Cabinet decision, as soon as practically possible amending the decision or not, before adopting a final decision.

5. If the matter was referred to full Council and the Council does not object to a decision which has been made, then no further action is necessary and the decision will be effective in accordance with the provision below. However, if the Council does object, it has no power to make decisions in respect of an executive decision unless it is contrary to the policy framework, or contrary to or not wholly consistent with the budget. Unless that is the case, the Council will refer any decision to which it objects back to the decision-making person or body, together with the Council's views on the decision. That decision-making body or person shall choose whether to amend the decision or not before reaching a final decision and implementing it. Where the decision was taken by the Executive as a whole or a committee of it, a meeting will be convened to reconsider within 14 working days of the Council request. Where the decision was made by an individual, the individual will reconsider within 14 working days of the Council request.

6. If the Council does not meet, or if it does but does not refer the decision back to the decision-making body or person, the decision will become effective on the date of the Council meeting or expiry of the period in which the Council meeting should have been held, whichever is the earlier.

7. Where an Executive decision has been taken by an area committee, then the right of call-in shall extend to any 3 members of another area committee if they are of the opinion that the decision made but not implemented will have an adverse effect on the area to which their committee relates. In such cases, those 3 members may request the Proper Officer to call-in the decision. He/she shall call a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on such a date as he/she may determine, where possible after consultation with the chairman of the committee, and in any case within

five days of the decision to call-in. All other provisions relating to call in shall apply as if the call in had been exercised by members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

8. Three members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or any five members of the Council have the right to call in an Executive decision. Such a request shall be in writing in the prescribed format and referred in Person to the Proper Officer.

9. Call in arrangements shall not apply to decisions on non-executive functions by Committees, Sub-Committees, Panels or Boards of the Council.

10. In the operation of "call in" arrangements, members of the Council shall also adhere to the terms of the Protocol approved by the Council and set out in Appendix 1 to these rules.

21. CALL-IN AND URGENCY

1. The call-in procedure set out above shall not apply where the decision being taken by the Executive is urgent. A decision will be urgent if any delay is likely to be caused by the call in process would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public interest. The record of the decision, and notice by which it is made public shall state whether in the opinion of the decision making person or body, the decision is an urgent one, and therefore not subject to call in. The Chairman of the Council must agree both that the decision proposed is reasonable in all the circumstances and to it being treated as a matter of urgency. In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman's consent shall be required. In the absence of both, a Joint Chief Executive or his/her nominee's consent shall be required. Decisions taken as a matter of urgency must be reported to the next available meeting of the Council, together with the reasons for urgency.

2. The operation of the provisions relating to call-in and urgency shall be monitored annually, and a report submitted to Council with proposals for review if necessary.

22. PROCEDURE AT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall consider the following business:
 - (a) minutes of the last meeting;
 - (b) declarations of interest;
 - (c) consideration of any matter referred to the committee for a decision in relation to a call in;
 - (d) responses of the executive to reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and
 - (e) the business otherwise set out on the agenda for the meeting.

23. CONDUCT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY FUNCTIONS

1. Where the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or a Panel conducts investigations (e.g. with a view to policy development), they may also ask people to attend to give evidence at committee meetings which are to be conducted in accordance with the following principles:

- (a) that the investigation be conducted fairly and all members of the committee be given the opportunity to ask questions of attendees, and to contribute and speak;
- (b) that those assisting the committee by giving evidence be treated with respect and courtesy; and
- (c) that the investigation be conducted so as to maximise the efficiency of the investigation or analysis.

2. Following any investigation or review, the Committee/or Panel concerned shall prepare a report, for submission to the Cabinet and/or Council as appropriate and shall make its report and findings public.

24. ANNUAL REPORT

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall submit an annual report to the Council in April each year on work undertaken during the preceding 12 months.

25. PARTY WHIPS

1. To facilitate cross party working, party whips will not be applied to the overview and scrutiny process.

PROTOCOL ON CONSIDERATION AND REPORTING ON EXECUTIVE DECISIONS CALLED IN BY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

1. Purpose of Protocol

- (a) To codify how the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel should deal with "call in" items.
- (b) To codify how the Executive should respond to reports by Overview and Scrutiny on decisions which have been called in.

2. Validation of "Call In"

- 2.1 All "call in" requests shall be made in writing in accordance with the Council's constitution. "Call in" requests shall only be made by members of the Council who are not members of the Executive. The "call in" shall be validated by the Chief Executive and referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration in accordance with the provisions of the constitution.

3. Consideration of "Call In" Items by Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 3.1 Consideration of Call-ins shall be the responsibility of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which will decide whether to consider the issue itself or direct a Panel to undertake it and report back to the decision maker. "Call in" items shall be referred to the next available date for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel. The provisions of the Overview and Scrutiny Rules in the Council's constitution will apply to "call in" requests which need to be dealt with more quickly.
- 3.2 At its meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel will receive:
 - (a) copies of all documentation submitted to the Executive on which the decision was based;
 - (b) a copy of the written notification of the "call in" including the names of the relevant Councillors who requested the "call in" and their grounds for so doing; and
 - (c) any other relevant documentation.
- 3.3 The relevant Executive Portfolio Holder and at least one of the members who activated the "call in" and who shall act as spokesperson for those members, shall attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel meeting.
- 3.4 The "call in" decision shall be considered in the following manner:
 - (a) the representative of the Councillors calling in the decision shall describe their concerns;
 - (b) the Portfolio Holder shall then respond

(c) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel will then debate the issues involved. The Chairman of the meeting shall have the discretion to vary the way in which evidence is gathered including speakers and public participation if appropriate but shall seek a response from the initiating Councillor(s) and the Portfolio Holder before formulating its recommendations;

(d) The Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel has the following options:

- (i) confirm the decision, which may then be implemented immediately, or
- (ii) refer the decision back to the decision taker for further consideration setting out in writing the nature of its concerns, or
- (iii) refer the matter to full Council in the event that the Committee or Panel considers the decision to be contrary to the policy framework of the Council or contrary to, or not wholly in accordance with, the budget.

(e) If it appears that the review of a decision of the Executive cannot be completed at one meeting, the Executive or decision taker will be informed, indicating any preliminary views the Committee or Panel may have and a proposed timescale for the completion of the review. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee/Panel shall, if necessary, consult with the Leader of the Council regarding the urgency of the proposed decision or any other related matter;

(f) The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel shall sum up the recommendations to be submitted to the Executive and these shall be incorporated in full in the Minutes or report of the meeting;

(g) In cases where the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel determines that a review of the decision is not justified or that, having reviewed the decision of the Executive, it has no adverse comment to make, the Committee or Panel shall ensure that its decision is published in the Members' Bulletin;

(h) In the circumstances outlined in (g) above, the decision of the Executive or Decision Taker may be implemented with effect from the date of that meeting;

(i) A report detailing any appropriate recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel shall be reported to the Decision Taker

(j) In presenting the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel, the Chairman may make general comments on the Committee's/Panel's recommendations, answer questions and respond to comments or new proposals made by the Executive at that meeting; and

(k) The report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel shall be sent in draft to all its Members for approval prior to their submission to the Decision Taker.

(l) Minority reports may be made by members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel in accordance with the Protocol for that purpose.

4. Consideration of Reports on "Call In" Items by the Executive

- 4.1 The report of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel will be referred in the first instance to the relevant Portfolio Holder(s) for the executive function concerned.
- 4.2 If the Executive decision is one which the Portfolio Holder(s) has delegated powers to make, he or she shall consider the written proposals of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel, must consult the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and delegated Panel Chairmen if he or she is minded to accept or reject them. In doing so the Portfolio Holder will ensure that, in recording that decision, the reasons for accepting, rejecting or amending those views are set out in the decision notice.
- 4.3 If the Executive decision is one which the Executive itself or a Committee of the Executive (acting under delegated powers) is competent to take, the relevant Portfolio Holder will consider the proposals of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel and refer them, with his or her written response, to the decision making body concerned.
- 4.4 At a meeting of the Executive or of any Committee of the Executive, the following documentation shall be submitted:
 - (a) the agreed report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel and any other supporting documents considered by it;
 - (b) a report of the Portfolio Holder indicating the response to the proposals of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel, indicating the options available and recommendation for acceptance, rejection or alteration of those proposals with reasons; and
 - (c) any other information.
- 4.5 The Executive or Committee of the Executive shall consider the matter as follows:
 - (a) the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel shall present the views and recommendations of the Committee/Panel based on the report of the relevant OSC meeting and respond to questions, make general comments and respond to new proposals as appropriate;
 - (b) the relevant Portfolio Holder shall then respond by presenting his report and recommendations on the proposals of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel;
 - (c) the Executive (or Committee thereof) shall then consider the original decision, the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel and any proposals by the Portfolio Holder; and
 - (d) the Executive (or Executive Committee) will then make a final decision on whether to re-affirm the original decision, amend the original decision or substitute a new decision. This decision shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting together with supporting reasons.

4.6 Where a Committee of the Executive is required to report to the full Executive on any matter, it shall submit a recommendation on action proposed to the Executive as part of the minutes of the meeting.

5. Implementation of Decisions When Cabinet Control or Membership Changes

5.1 Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraphs 3.4(g) and (h) above, where political control of the Cabinet or Cabinet membership changes following the Annual Council meeting each year, any decision made by the Executive and supported by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel following a "call-in" but not implemented before the changes occur, shall stand referred to the Cabinet for further review before action is taken.

6. Consideration of "Call In" Reports of Overview and Scrutiny Committees made to the Full Council

6.1 In some circumstances, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel may choose to refer the results of their consideration of "call in" items to the full Council, rather than the Executive in those instances set out in paragraph 3.4 (d) (iii) above and 6.2 below. With any necessary modification the "call in" shall be dealt with at the Council meeting in accordance with paragraphs 4.1 - 4.5 above.

6.2 In considering whether to report to the full Council, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or delegated Panel shall take account of the advice of the proper officer on:

(a) whether the Council may properly determine the matter if the function is delegated to the Executive;

(b) whether the Executive decision affects the policy or budget framework of the Authority and should properly be determined by the Council;

(c) whether the Executive decision relates to a matter which either reserved to the full Council by the constitution or by resolution; and

(d) any other advice which indicates that, for whatever reason, a report to the Executive is more appropriate to the proper despatch of Council business.

7. Restriction on "Call In"

7.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall at all times be aware that the decisions of the regulatory or non-executive bodies of the Council are not subject to "call in".

7.2 The "call in" procedure shall also not apply to any recommendation by the Cabinet to the full Council.

8. Definitions

8.1 For the purpose of this Protocol, the following definitions shall apply:

(a) "Executive"

This term should be interpreted as referring to the Cabinet, a Cabinet Committee or an individual Portfolio Holder acting under delegated powers.

(b) "Decision"

Denotes a decision on an Executive function by the Cabinet, a Committee of the Cabinet or of an individual Portfolio Holder.

(c) "Decision Taker"

This means the Cabinet, a Cabinet Committee or an individual Portfolio Holder who made the original decision.

9. Review of Protocol

9.1 This Protocol will be reviewed by the Council as part of its constitution as and when appropriate.

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EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group **Date:** Wednesday, 11 May 2005

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

Members Present: Councillors Mrs D Collins (Chairman) M Colling, F Maclaine, D Stallan, Mrs J H Whitehouse and M Woollard

Other Councillors: Councillors Mrs D Borton and K Wright

Apologies: (none)

Officers Present: John Scott (Joint Chief Executive), John Preston (Head of Planning and Economic Development), Adrian Scott (Head of Information, Communications and Technology), Ian Willett (Head of Research and Democratic Services), Simon Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Zoe Folley (Democratic Services Assistant)

43. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the minutes of the 5 April 2005 meeting of the Co-ordinating Group be confirmed; and
- (2) That the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee be asked to confirm the minutes of this meeting

44. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

45. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No further items of business were brought forward for consideration at the meeting.

46. PICK SCORING - METHODOLOGY

The Group were reminded that the Council had adopted the PICK scoring system for establishing priorities for the forthcoming OS programme. It was noted that recent scrutiny seminars on the arrangements applied at other authorities had contributed to the formulation of the criteria. It was noted that the assessment was the Council's own system and not a standard model used by other authorities. The Senior Democratic Services Officer outlined the background to the methodology and explained that it used a four point ranking system derived from the comments made by Members during training sessions.

Members were asked to consider the system of scoring. A Member suggested that it should cover the financial implications of proposals. In response the Senior

Democratic Services Officer reported that the PICK criteria was only the first stage of the assessment for suggested topics and that further on in the process detailed scoping exercises would be undertaken to identify the full implications including the costs of requests. A Member stated that the process was important as it would demonstrate how and why the Group reached its decisions on the plan and ensure that process was open and transparent.

RESOLVED:

That the PICK scoring system be noted

47. WORK PROGRAMME 2005-06

The Group considered the proposed work plan to date and information sheets containing details of the proposals in the plan. The Group were asked to consider how they wished to consider the requests and what scrutiny panels might be required to deal with the issues. It was suggested that members should ensure that the workload of any proposals was practical. Bearing this in mind the Group considered the schedule and grouped particular items together which they considered ongoing and agreed that to deal with them five standing panels be established on Housing, Constitutional Affairs, ICT and e-government, Environmental and Planning and Finance and Best Value Performance Management. It was noted that the panel on Environmental and Planning services could establish liaison arrangements with external interests to facilitate the consideration of issues.

Members considered the size of membership of the standing panels. The Senior Democratic Services Officer reported that the lowest membership number which could be used to achieve pro rata cross party representation on each panel was 10. This could increase to eleven to include an extra place for the Member not affiliated to a group. The Group agreed that this minimum membership option should be pursued. The Head of Research and Democratic Services undertook to work out in detail the pro-rata memberships arrangements for the standing panels and report his conclusions back to the next meeting.

Members considered how the residual topics in the plan should be dealt with. The Head of Research and Democratic Services reported that it had been suggested that some of these issues should not be included in the programme. He advised that the review of appointments to outside bodies had already been completed and therefore this needed to be deleted. He also stated that Group Leaders had suggested that the top management structure should not be considered by a scrutiny panel and that the Management Board had concluded that the Financial regulations review only required a review of virement policy and that this could be undertaken by the Cabinet. As a result the Group agreed that these items should also be deleted. It was reported that Cllr McMillan had withdrawn his proposed review of the Council's use of external consultants. The Councillor said that he would put his questions directly to Heads of Service and had been advised that he could submit his review again when the plan was reviewed.

Members considered the draft plan to ascertain which items were suitable for task and finish review. The Group agreed that four such panels needed to be appointed to deal with requests on the establishment of a register of development proposals (incorporating roads and pavements and parking policy in residential areas); Members Training; externally funded Leisure Services and Youth Provision and Traveller issues. It was noted that witnesses had expressed an interest in advising on aspects of the traveller review and that they could be invited to relevant meetings.

Members also looked at which topics should be considered directly by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Group considered whether the Liaison on the Highways Local Service Agreement should be undertaken by the Group or a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group. Members concluded that the issue should be considered within a public forum and therefore should initially be dealt with by the OSC until further details on the new liaison arrangements had been identified. It was agreed that consideration could then be given to allocating it to a separate panel. It was also agreed that the Liaison with London Underground Ltd, the scrutiny of outside bodies and the review of PICK should also be considered by the parent committee. It was noted that the proposed programme and the process for appointments to panels would be placed in the Members Bulletin. It was also noted that although the PICK process had not been used at the meeting to prioritise topics it could be used at a later stage when the programme was reviewed.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the proposed work programme for May – October 2005 attached as an appendix be noted;
- (2) That the Head of Research and Democratic Services advise on the pro rata arrangements for standing panels and report to the next meeting;
- (3) That an article which sets out the proposed work plan and explains the appointment process for the new panels be placed in the Members Bulletin

48. LIAISON WITH CABINET

The Head of Research and Democratic Services reported that a meeting needed to be arranged with the Cabinet members to discuss the emerging scrutiny work plan. He advised that the Cabinet was in the process of putting together its own work plan which would be agreed by the Council at the same time as the OSC plan. He stated that it was important to ensure that that Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny did not duplicate each others work and that they exchanged views about the plans. It was agreed that Cabinet members should attend the Committee meeting on 9 June 2005 to discuss the future work programmes.

RESOLVED:

That Portfolio Holders be invited to the OS Co-ordinating Committee's meeting on 9 June 2005 to discuss the Cabinet and Overview Scrutiny work plans for 2005/06.

49. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Group agreed that decisions needed to be made as soon as possible on the membership of panels to ensure that their work was not delayed. In particular it was noted that the issue of traveller incursions was becoming pressing. In view of these considerations it was agreed that a special meeting of the new Co-ordinating Committee would be arranged soon after annual council to determine appointments and the decisions required to set up panels. The Head of Research and Democratic Services agreed to ascertain a date.

CHAIRMAN

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Work Plan 2005/06 - Proposed Standing and Task and Finish Panels

(May – October 2005)

- **Standing Panels.**

The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group have suggested that the following five panels be established to consider the issues listed against each panel.

Panel	Requests to be considered
Housing	Housing Allocation Scheme, Annual Ethnic Monitoring Review of Housing Applicants and Housing Applications, Housing Services Development Plan – Progress Report, Policy on private sector Housing, Review of policies for empty homes in District, Implementation of Choice Based Letting Scheme, Review of Housing – Fees and Charges, Housing Strategy Action Plan (6 Monthly Progress Report) Local Supporting People Strategy – Adoption, Local Supporting People – (6 Monthly Progress Report)
Constitutional Affairs	Council Meetings – Review of Questions and Motions, Future Role of Council, Contract Standing Orders Review, Review of Policy and Procedures on External Links, Constitutional Issues/Corporate Governance, Community Involvements in new Scrutiny Arrangements, Services for Members, Electoral Review.
ICT and E -Government	Current Investment in Information Communications Technology
Environmental and Planning Services	Essex County Joint Waste Procurement Process, Planning policy for redundant buildings in the green belt, Local Plan, RSS14
Finance and Performance Management	Budget Consultation, Development of new Council Plan, Community Conference 2005/06, Best Value Performance Data

- **Task and Finish Panels**

The Group have suggested that the following four Panels be set up.

Panel	Requests to be considered
Review of externally funded Leisure Services and Youth Provisions	Leisure Services – Review of Externally funded services, Youth Provision in the District

Panel	Requests to be considered
Traveller issues	Former Traveller Site at Paynes Lane, Traveller Incursions
Register of local interests	Establishments of Register of significant concerns for Development Proposals, Road and Pavements in District and Parking Policy in residential areas.
Members Training	Members Training - General and scrutiny skills

- **Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group**

The Group have suggested that the following issues be dealt with by the new Co -ordinating Group.

Panel	Requests to be considered
Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group	London Underground Liaison, Scrutiny of outside bodies (Primary Care Trust/Local Strategic Partnership), Liaison on Highways Local Services Agreement, Administration of PICK system.

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny 1 **Date:** 29 March 2005

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices,
High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.30 - 8.27 p.m.

Members Present: Councillors Mrs J H Whitehouse (Chairman), M Colling (Vice-Chairman), K Angold-Stevens, Mrs P Brooks, Mrs A Grigg, Mrs A Haigh, A Lee, Mrs S Perry, Mrs P Richardson, Mrs M Sartin, D Stallan, K Wright

Other Councillors: M Heavens, C Whitbread

Apologies: Councillors Mrs R Gadsby, Mrs M McEwen, Mrs C Pond

Officers Present: J Scott (Deputy Chief Executive (Community Services)), L MacNeill, A Clear (Leisure Services), A Hall (Head of Housing Services), C Overend, S Hill, Z Folley (Research and Democratic Services)

38. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2005 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

39. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that there had been no substitute members appointed to attend the meeting.

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor K Wright declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 (Epping Forest District Council Voluntary Transport and Community Transport Schemes) by virtue of being an Ongar Parish Councillor and a Council representative on the Community Transport Scheme. He had determined that his interest was not prejudicial and advised that he would remain in the meeting for the duration of any discussion and voting on that item.

41. MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman informed the Committee that there were no matters arising for consideration.

42. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was reported that there was no urgent business for consideration at the meeting.

43. EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL VOLUNTARY TRANSPORT AND COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SCHEMES

Members were reminded that, at its meeting on 12 February 2004, the Committee had reaffirmed its in principle support for a merger between the Epping Forest District Council Voluntary Transport and the Community Transport Schemes. The Committee noted that, since that decision, ongoing discussions had taken place between the Chairman of the Committee, Voluntary Action Epping Forest, Ongar Parish Council, Waltham Abbey Rotary Club and officers of the District Council to consider the proposed scheme. The consultation exercise had identified support for the concept of the voluntary transport minibuses being retained locally for use by local groups with preference given wherever possible to community groups from the areas in which the buses were based. The Committee agreed that, in view of these responses, the transfer of the voluntary transport minibuses to the Community Transport Scheme should not go ahead, but that in accordance with the views expressed, the Ongar based and Waltham Abbey based vehicles be retained by their owners, with the revised procedures required to come into effect from 23 June 2005.

It was noted that the bookings for the Waltham Abbey based buses were currently undertaken through the District Council Information Offices. This arrangement would cease but only after a suitable alternative was found. Members also noted that Ongar Parish Council and Waltham Abbey Rotary would be taking on overall responsibility for all arrangements (servicing, maintenance, repairs etc) of the vehicles. They could also participate in the Community Transport Brokerage Scheme through which they would have the potential to benefit from income arising.

The Committee also proposed that the Loughton based vehicle, in view of its age, should be sold, with the proceeds of the sale being added to the Welfare Transport Budget. It was agreed that the sale should take place as soon as possible once alternative arrangements had been made in respect of committed bookings. It was noted that this could be provided through the Community Transport Scheme and that current user groups of the Loughton based bus would be offered the use of this facility.

The Joint Chief Executive (Community) reported that the Council had contributed significantly to the Voluntary and Community Transport Schemes over the years. He drew attention to the Council's 2005/6 Welfare Transport Budget and the amount set aside for the provision of community transport itself. Members considered this and proposed that the amount left over within the budget, following changes being put into place, should be used to meet the annual costs of funding a Community Transport driver, estimated at £15,000, with the residue to go towards the operational costs of the scheme. Members also recommended that, from 2006/07 onwards, the Council's contribution to the budget should be limited to meeting the annual costs of a driver for the scheme.

RECOMMENDED TO THE CABINET

- (1) That the proposed retention of the Ongar-based and Waltham Abbey-based Voluntary Transport vehicles by the respective owners and the sale of the Loughton based bus be approved;
- (2) That the proposal not to proceed with the transfer of the Voluntary Transport minibuses to the Community Transport Scheme also be approved;
- (3) That the balance of funds within the Welfare Transport Budget for 2004/5 be used to meet the annual cost of funding a Community Transport driver, estimated at £15,000, with any residual amount to be used as a contribution towards the operational costs of the Community Transport Scheme;
- (4) That in future years the Council's contribution be limited to meeting the annual costs of one Community Transport driver.

44. SIX MONTH PROGRESS REPORT ON KEY ACTION PLANS - HOUSING STRATEGY 2004 - 2007

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented a report, which detailed the progress made with the key action plans contained within the Housing Strategy 2004 - 2007. He reminded members that the Council's Housing Strategy had previously been approved by the Council and assessed as fit for purpose by the Government. He advised that important sections of the Strategy were the key action plans which set out the proposed action that the Council would take to address housing needs within the District over the next one to three years. The Committee were asked to consider the progress made with these stated actions.

Members were reminded that the six-monthly action plan included details of the Council's services in relation to homelessness provision, supported housing and special needs groups, public sector housing and energy efficiency initiatives. The report also monitored the Private Sector Housing Strategy and Tenant and Leaseholder Participation arrangements. The Committee focused on several parts of the progress report. In relation to its commitment to undertake a survey of caravan sites within the District, a Member asked whether this action referred to Mobile Home sites and suggested that this needed to be clarified. The Portfolio Holder for Housing Services stated that he would ask the Head of Environmental Services to circulate figures on the number of empty homes within the District. He stated that this information would be placed within the Members' Bulletin. A member asked about the housing provisions available for large families. The Head of Housing Services stated that a housing association scheme was currently being planned that would provide some four bedroom properties. Another involves the provision of three bedroom houses on the proposed development of small garage sites in the District. A report on this particular scheme would be submitted to the next Cabinet meeting. It was also noted that the post of Environmental Co-ordinator had not yet been filled.

RESOLVED:

That the Six-monthly Progress Report for the Key Action Plans contained within the Housing Strategy 2004 - 2007 be noted.

45. BEST VALUE SERVICE REVIEW HOUSING SERVICES SIX MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT ON SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor D Stallan declared a personal interest in this item by virtue of a family relative being an occupant of the Council sheltered accommodation. He had determined that his interests were not prejudicial and would advised that he would remain in the meeting for the duration of any discussion and voting for that item.

The Committee considered the second six-monthly progress report on the Housing Service Development Plan. In response to particular actions in the plan the Portfolio Holder stated that he would be considering a report from the Head of Housing Services on the delivery of the housing management service at the Waltham Abbey Housing "Surgery" in the near future. He drew attention to the national definition of a Key Worker and stated that the definition had been considered by the Local Strategic Partnership who had determined a separate, local definition. Members were reminded that a leaflet offering advice on anti-social behaviour was currently being produced and would be circulated to members. A member asked about the decision not to incorporate the Building Maintenance Section into Housing Services. The Head of Housing Services stated that Management Board had resolved that in view of the introduction of a Corporate Contact Centre these two services should be kept separate.

RESOLVED

That the second six-monthly progress report on the Housing Services Development Plan be noted.

46. EPPING FOREST LOCAL SUPPORTING PEOPLE'S STRATEGY 2005 - 2009

The Housing Portfolio Holder asked the Committee to consider the draft Local Supporting People's Strategy 2005 - 2009 and recommend its adoption to the Cabinet. He stated that the document set out for the future the means of planning and delivering local high quality housing-related support services to vulnerable people. The Council produced its first Local Strategy in 2002 which had been reviewed by this Committee and adopted by the Cabinet annually. Local providers and user representatives involved in supporting housing had been consulted on the draft of the latest four-year strategy. Comments from the consultations had been incorporated within the final version before members.

The Committee noted the existing provisions and new proposals for young parents within the Strategy. The Head of Housing Services stated that officers from this Council, Brentwood Borough Council and Uttlesford District Council were in the early stages of investigating the possibility of the introduction of a cross boundary young parent scheme to provide accommodation and support for young parents in all three districts. No decision had yet been made regarding where the accommodation would be located, although it was likely to be in Epping Forest since, geographically, this was preferable. Funding for the provision would be sought through Supporting People, the Housing Corporation and possibly Essex Social Services. The Committee noted that research has been undertaken into the need for the establishment of a Foyer Scheme in the District to help provide accommodation for young people. The Committee noted the scale of the proposed provision and that it

would be run by the YMCA with close links with the SAFE Project. A member asked if more detailed information on the number of young people leaving care for the District could be provided, instead of for the whole of West Essex. The Head of Housing Services stated he would take up this matter with Essex County Council Social Services to try to ascertain the information.

RECOMMENDED TO THE CABINET

That the Epping Forest Local Supporting People Strategy 2005-2009, circulated separately to Cabinet members, be adopted.

47. BEST VALUE AND LOCAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2004/05

The Committee considered the Council's Best Value and Local Performance Indicators for the third quarter of 2004/05 in relation to the Community Wellbeing Housing and Leisure Portfolios.

- **Housing Services**

The percentage change in the average number of families, which include dependant children or pregnant women placed in temporary accommodation under the Homelessness legislation compared with the average from the previous year (BV203).

It was noted that this was a new indicator for 2004/05. Next year the indicator would be reviewed and a new target set in light of this year's performance.

- **Leisure Services**

The number of visits/usages of museums per thousand population (BV170A).

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure Services reported that usages included website visits. He stated that for this quarter there have been fewer visits to the museum than anticipated, however the Outreach Programme, which included Internet visits, external school usage and museum presence at events had increased overall service usage. These activities had not been included within the figures. He stated that the figures for the number of visitors to the museum could be provided.

Number of individuals on low income who benefit from special concessionary prices (LPI5).

For this quarter this indicator had not achieved the targets set for the indicator. This was partly because Community Leisure after school clubs had been cancelled due to a shortage of suitably qualified staff and the cost of hiring schools, which had proved prohibitive.

Number of events staged at airfield (LPI15).

The Portfolio Holder advised that the indicator for the third quarter 2004/05 should read 99 not 33 as stated within the schedule. The new figure included boot sales and meant that the cumulative total for the year so far was now 130.

48. LAST MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

The Chairman reported that this was the last ever meeting of the Committee. She thanked members and officers for their participation and attendance at meetings and asked the Committee to forward topics for next year's Overview and Scrutiny programme.

CHAIRMAN

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee:	Overview and Scrutiny 2	Date:	5 April 2005
Place:	Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping	Time:	7.30 – 10.15 pm
Members Present:	Councillors D Stallan (Chairman), M Woollard (Vice-Chairman), D Bateman, Mrs D Borton, Mrs J Davis, K Faulkner, Mrs R Gadsby, L Martin, P McMillan, T Richardson, Ms K Rush, Mrs P Smith, Ms S-A Stavrou		
Other Councillors:	R Glozier, D Jacobs, J Knapman, S Murray, Mrs M Sartin		
Apologies:	Councillors K Angold-Stephens, D Kelly		
Officers Present:	J Scott (Deputy Chief Executive – Community Services), J Gilbert (Head of Environmental Services), S G Hill, Z Folley (Research and Democratic Services)		
Also in attendance:	S Williams (London Underground Limited), T Williams (Essex County Council)		

42. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2005 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

43. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

No substitute members were reported for the meeting.

44. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest announced in accordance with Part 2 of the Council's Code of Conduct.

45. MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman informed the Committee that there were no matters arising for consideration.

46. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was noted that there was no urgent business for consideration at the meeting.

47. LIAISON WITH LONDON UNDERGROUND LIMITED

The Chairman welcomed Mr Simon Williams of LUL to the meeting. He reminded Members that Mr Williams last attended the Committee on 23 November 2004. He reported that at that time discussions focused on several aspects of the service including station enhancements schemes, implications for transport links of regional planning guidance, hours of service and parking facilities at stations. He advised that Members asked the representative to come back to this meeting to give an update on matters raised and to answer new questions.

Mr Williams focused on several issues in relation to services in the District. He reported the research undertaken to identify the merits of extending the hours of operation of the Hainault - Woodford loop. He stated that in view of the low demand for the service and the costs associated with the change compared to the estimated social benefits, LUL had no immediate plans to expand this service. The proposal however would be further investigated and reviewed during 2006-07. He also explained future infrastructure development proposals and in view of regional development plans the possibility of linking Epping Station with Harlow. He stated that a detailed response to the Head of Planning and Economic Development letter on this issue was being prepared and asked Members to consider the Council's approach to the reinstatement and extension of services in the District.

The Committee received a progress report on LUL's station modernisation and refurbishment programme. It was reported that the final design for the Buckhurst Hill scheme would be completed by June 2005. It was anticipated that it would include plans to provide CCTV and strengthen and modernize the existing infrastructure at the station. Members were advised that all stations in the area would be refurbished in the next 4-5 years. A handout on LUL's major projects for the Central Line was circulated.

Attention was drawn to the proposed expansion of Epping Car Park. It was reported that LUL had set aside capital funding for the expansion. Members were also asked to submit their views on the proposals to run services an hour later on Fridays and Saturdays. Mr Williams advised that comments on the exercise could be submitted by completing the form circulated or via the website.

Mr Williams commented specifically on the decision to disable the facility which enabled passengers to open and close doors on trains. He advised that the provision had been taken away due to "dwell time" benefits at stations. He reported that due to the cost of implementing the technology required to reinstate the provision and the problems that the service could present in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour at stations, the decision would probably not be reviewed.

In response to the presentation a Member suggested that the Buckhurst Hill enhancement scheme should include work to improve the safety of the bridge and the condition of platforms. It was stated that further consideration should be given to re-opening the Queens Road Entrance to the station. The Head of Environmental Services stated that he would speak to the Head of Legal, Administration and Estates to consider the lease arrangements for the stations car park. It was noted LUL had set aside expenditure to improve the facility.

A member also suggested that the accessibility of Loughton and Debden Station needed to be reviewed. Mr Williams undertook to investigate this concern as well as the CCTV in parts of Loughton Station, issues surrounding the LUL footpaths around the area and the areas covered by the concessionary fares schemes for pensioners. The Committee explored the case for re-opening the Epping–Ongar Line. It was noted that the recent letter of the Head of Planning and Economic Development to the company about development issues affecting North Weald and Harlow, had not considered this line but an alternative route to service the areas concerned. Options to improve the feasibility of extending the hours of service of Chigwell station was considered and also the efficiency of the services implemented between London and Epping to cover delays.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Chairman thanked Mr Williams for his presentation. It was suggested that LUL should come back at an early opportunity to a future overview and scrutiny meeting to make a further presentation.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Mr Simon Williams of LUL be thanked for his presentation on services in the District; and
- (2) That LUL be invited to a future scrutiny meeting.

48. HIGHWAYS LOCAL SERVICE AGREEMENT – PRESENTATION

The Chairman welcomed Mr Trevor Williams, the Local Programme Manager for Essex County Council's Highways and Transportation Department who gave a presentation on the Highways' Local Service Agreement (LSA). He reminded Members that the Council had signed up to the agreement in principle earlier this year and as a result from 1 April 2005 existing agency arrangements had finished and the functions that the Council undertook on behalf of Essex County Council had been transferred back to the County.

Mr Williams reported that under the agreement responsibilities for the road network in the District was split into two distinct groups. The County managed the strategic routes in the District in consultation with the Council and other services including traffic calming. The Council and a new West Essex Area Highways office would exercise control over the local road network. To support this service, the Council's former agency staff would transfer to the regional office located in Harlow. Mr Williams advised that the change should improve the service, ensure that resources were more effectively managed and facilitate service delivery. It should also give the District Council more control over local roads.

He reported that protocols had been formulated to facilitate the reporting/monitoring and liaison arrangements for the LSA. He advised that the Manager for the Area Highways office, the County and the Council would liaise on a regular basis to monitor the service. It was noted that a Joint Members' Highways Panel, which would be drawn from the Members of the Councils concerned, would also monitor the new structure. The Head of Research and Democratic Services reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group were considering setting up a Scrutiny Committee to exercise the Council's role regarding the arrangements. It was noted that the District Council and the County would also have the opportunity to review the LSA on an annual basis.

Mr Williams reported that the County's Locally Determined Budget would be increased from 2005/06 onwards to support the changes and that the Council would have more control over how the expenditure within the budget was allocated in the area. He stated that the County Council Portfolio Holder for Highways Service had announced that additional expenditure would be made available over the next three years for improvements to the County's carriageways. It was noted that the Council had been asked to submit a list of local priorities to be funded by the expenditure. The view was expressed that the timescale that the County had given the Council for this exercise was too short.

Members were advised that a help line had been established to offer residents advice on highways related services. Several Members stated that the line should be charged at a cheaper rate than the present service charge. The Head of Environmental Services also stated that following the changes, residents would be expected to contact the County to enquire about highways matters. However, in the short-term they could still call the Council to address issues. He advised that resources had been provided by the County to cover the costs that this interim arrangement would require.

The Committee questioned whether residents were aware of the changes and where responsibilities for each Highway services now lay. Concern was also expressed about whether the West Essex Area office would respond effectively to local concerns. Mr Williams reported that the emerging contracts for the LSA would dedicate to each authority a team which would deal with local needs. He outlined the draft contracts and said that additional inspectors would be appointed to monitor their progress.

The Committee asked whether town centre enhancements schemes would be affected by the new agreement. The Head of Environmental Services reported that under the future structure there would be various options available to the Council regarding this matter. The Council could submit proposals to the County and based on the availability of resources, County could deliver the scheme itself. Alternately County could provide the scheme through a third party or ask the Council to provide the scheme directly.

Members also asked about the steps that would be taken to ensure that utility companies carried out reinstatement work. It was noted that future contracts could contain provisions to enable more action to be taken in this area. The Traffic Management Act would also facilitate such action.

In conclusion the Chairman thanked Mr Williams for his informative presentation. It was noted that a copy of his presentation would be circulated to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That Mr Trevor Williams of Essex County Council be thanked for his presentation on the Local Service Agreement.

49. BEST VALUE AND LOCAL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2004/05

The Committee considered the Best Value and Local Performance Indicators for 2004/5 in relation to the Civil Engineering and Maintenance, Environmental Protection and Planning and Economic Development Portfolios.

Members' attention was drawn to the following indicators.

- **Planning and Economic Development**

- (i) The percentage of standard searches carried out in 10 working days (BV179)

The Portfolio Holder stated that the service was a member of staff short and as a result performance against the target had decreased. He stated the appointment of an additional full-time member of staff was expected within the next few weeks.

- (ii) Percentage of planning applications determined in line with the Government's new development control targets to determine 60% of major applications in 13 weeks. (BV109a).

The Portfolio Holder reported that the ODPM was placing more emphasis on this Indicator and that performance against this target could help determine future Planning Delivery Grants. Therefore, there was a need to identify where any improvements could be made. A member stated that the percentage figure for this indicator was not very informative and asked to receive actual figures instead. It was noted that the Head of Planning and Economic Development and relevant officers would be undertaking a review of the process regarding the determination of major applications.

- (iii) Quality of Service Checklist (BV205a)

The Portfolio Holder said that the new integrated Planning/Building Control computer data base should improve performance against this indicator.

RESOLVED

That the Council's performance for the third quarter of 2004/05, in relation to Best Value and Local Performance Indicators for the Civil Engineering and Maintenance, Environmental Protection, and Planning and Economic Development Portfolios, be noted.

50. LAST MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

The Chairman reported that this was the last ever meeting of the Committee. He thanked the Committee, Portfolio Holders and officers for their support and attendance at meetings. He thanked the previous Chairman of the Committee and looked forward to next year's new scrutiny arrangements

CHAIRMAN

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EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny 3 **Date:** 7 April 2005

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices,
High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.30 – 9.00 p.m.

Members Present: Councillors Mrs D Collins (Chairman), F Maclaine (Vice-Chairman), M Cohen, M Colling, J Demetriou, T Farr, A Green, J Hart, J Markham, R Morgan, D Stallan

Other Councillors: J Knapman, C Whitbread

Apologies: Mrs M Boatman, R Goold, J M Whitehouse

Officers Present: P Haywood (Joint Chief Executive – Resources), R Palmer (Head of Finance), T Tidey (Head of Human Resources and Performance Management), C O'Boyle (Head of Legal, Administration and Estates), A Scott (Head of ICT Services), R Barwell, G Lunnun, Z Folley (Research and Democratic Services)

48. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2005 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

49. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that there had been no substitute members appointed to attend the meeting.

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made pursuant to the Council's Code of Members Conduct.

51. MATTERS ARISING

It was noted that there were no matters arising from the previous meeting.

52. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was noted that there was no urgent business for consideration at the meeting.

53. ORDER OF BUSINESS

RESOLVED:

That Agenda item 7 (Best Value Performance Indicators 2004/05) be taken as the next item of business.

54. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2004/05

The Committee considered details of the Council's performance for the third quarter of 2004/05 for the Finance and Performance Management, Corporate Support Services and ICT and People First Portfolios.

The Finance and Performance Management Portfolio Holder reported that overall the relevant services were short staffed and that this had affected performance in some areas. He questioned whether resources should be allocated towards addressing this shortfall.

- **Finance and Performance Management**

(i) The Percentages of Invoices for Commercial Goods and Services that were paid by the Authority within 30 days of such invoices being received by the Authority (BV8)

The Portfolio Holder advised that the target for this indicator had not been met. He advised that progress was being made in this area and that he was hopeful that performance would be in the top quartile next year.

(ii) Percentage of Council Tax Collected (BV9)

It was noted that compared to last year, performance against this target had decreased. The Portfolio Holder reported that this was partly due to the consequences of the changes to IT system which had now been completed.

(iii) Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. The number of investigations employed per 1000 caseload (BV76B)

The Head of Finance reported that the target would not be met as there was currently an Investigation Officer vacancy. He stated that the post had recently been advertised and as a result an experienced officer had been appointed. He advised that the successful applicant was serving out their notice with their current employers and would be joining the section shortly.

(iv) Speed of processing average time for processing new claims in days (BV7 8A)

The Portfolio Holder suggested that further improvements against this target needed to be made to ensure that the needs of claimants were met.

- (v) Percentage of Projects in approved Audit Plan completed (SS4A)

The Joint Chief Executive (Resources) reported that 86% of approved audit had been completed during the third quarter. He advised that a significant amount of planned audits had been completed during the latter part of the year and that this factor accounted for the improvements. It was noted that productive time measured the time spent on audit work.

- (vi) Percentage of telephone calls answered within 10 seconds ()

It was reported that this indicator measured direct calls to the services. The Finance and Performance Management Portfolio Holder stated that performance for this service needed to be improved. The Joint Chief Executive (Resources) reported that performance against the indicator reflected the need for officers to be away from their desks in order to deal with the backlog in work caused by the effect of the IT implementation. It was suggested that it would be more useful if actual numbers rather than percentage figures were shown for this indicator.

- **ICT and Corporate Support Services**

- (i) The number of working days lost due to sickness absence (BV12)

The Head of Human Resources and Performance Management reported that the target for this indicator for the third quarter had not quite been achieved. He advised that the information, however, was given based upon an estimate of performance using data available from the HR payroll system. It was noted that from 1 April 2005 the data would be up-to-date and a full picture could then be given. It was also noted that new procedures for absence recording would be put into place with effect from 1 April 2005. New initiatives would also be implemented from that date to deal with sickness absence to ensure performance against this indicator was improved.

- (ii) The Percentage of Local Authority employees declaring that they met the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 disability definition compared with the percentage of economically active disabled people in their local authority area (BV16AB)

It was reported that consideration was being given to initiatives aimed at raising performance against this indicator. It was noted that this could involve the implementation of different types of job advertising techniques. It was also noted that a survey which asked employees to declare whether they considered themselves to have any disabilities would be undertaken over the forthcoming year.

- (iii) The number of types of interaction that are enabled for electronic delivery as a percentage of types of interactions that are legally permissible for electronic delivery (BV157)

The Head of Research and Democratic Services reported that the content of the website had increased and nearly met the target defined by the ODPM for this target. He advised that new software would be implemented to improve the search facility on the website and that interactions had significantly increased over the last year and now averaged 120 a day. It was suggested that information on job vacancies at the Authority should be made more accessible especially for non-Council employees.

- **Democratic Services**

- (i) Percentage compliance with statutory requirements for registration of interests within one month and percentages of executive decisions made by Cabinet members under delegated powers (DS4)

The Head of Research and Democratic Services reported that the above indicators would be deleted from 2005/06. He advised that consideration was being given to whether more executive decisions could be made under delegated powers to speed up the decision making process. It was noted that this could include changing the definition of a key decision to enable Portfolio Holders to take more decisions which at present had to be referred to the Cabinet.

- (ii) Percentage of electoral registration annual canvassers forms returned (DS1)

It is reported that the current indicator was still based on the register only being updated once a year at the annual audit. It was noted that with the introduction nationally of the register whereby changes can be made on a monthly basis there was no longer such an incentive for electors to complete and return a form at the annual audit. The Head of Research and Democratic Services reported that in recognition of this change a more realistic target was being proposed for 2005/06.

- (iii) Percentage compliance with statutory requirement for declarations of acceptance of office within two months (DS2)

It was reported that all Town and Parish declarations had actually been completed within the required timescale. The figures however implied that the timescale had been exceeded as they took into account the period between declarations being submitted and sent on to the District Council.

RESOLVED:

That the Council's performance for the third quarter of 2004/05 in relation to Best Value and Local Performance Indicators for the Corporate Support Services and ICT, Finance and Performance Management and the People First Portfolios be noted.

55. E-GOVERNMENT

The Committee received a report on the Council's e-government initiatives. The Head of ICT presented the report as the Portfolio Holder for ICT was not in attendance. He advised that the main focus for the plan was to use modern information and technology to improve the quality of public services and the way that local government delivered and managed its services. He drew attention to the projects undertaken by the Council which had benefited from the Government Implementing E-government Grants (IEG) together with the proposed IEG capital grant allocation for 2005/06 and the ongoing corporate ICT maintenance costs of these projects.

The Committee were advised that to monitor progress with the initiative and the required level of future capital grants, the Government had placed a duty on all local authorities to produce an IEG Government return which sets out the Council's current

status for electronically enabling all interactions by January 2005. The Head of ICT reported that the IEG return was the mechanism which allowed local authorities access to central Government grant and that as part of this year's return the Government had introduced two new elements to the monitoring of E-government targets. These centred around the current Best Value Performance Indicator on the percentage of enabled interactions and the ODPM introduction of priority outcomes for E-Government. The Committee noted the current IEG return which included the Council's progress with the priority outcome exercise. The Head of ICT reported that a response to the return had not yet been received.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the progress made with the implementation of the Council's current E-government strategy. Members were reminded of the strategy main themes which focused on the use of e-government's initiatives to improve customer services and corporate ICT systems. It was reported that the Council had moved forward several specific e-government projects focused on the Council's e-government strategy. It was noted that a specific officer group had been set up to monitor progress on these projects.

The Committee were also advised that the Council was being assisted in delivering its e-government objectives by the Essex On-line Partnership. The Head of ICT reported that the partnership had provided capacity to undertake specialist e-government research and assist with the implementation of Essex wide ICT infrastructure projects. It was noted that the Council had a formal commitment to the on-line partnership for a further two years and that based on its current performance would greatly assist the Council with its outstanding ICT objectives.

The Committee noted that the report before Members would be considered in detail by a standing panel in the New Year. It was suggested that Members of the new panel should ideally have some knowledge of ICT issues to facilitate the consideration of the issue.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the IEG capital grant allocation for 2005/06 be noted;
- (2) That the IEG Government return that was submitted to the ODPM in December 2004 be noted; and
- (3) That the consideration of the implementation of IEG priority outcomes and the local Government strategy be considered by a new standing panel in the 2005/06.

CHAIRMAN

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