

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Committee **Date:** Thursday, 31 August 2006

Place: Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.30 - 9.30 pm

Members Present: Councillors R Morgan (Chairman) Mrs J H Whitehouse (Vice-Chairman) M Cohen, M Colling, Mrs A Cooper, P House, G Mohindra and Mrs P Smith

Other Councillors: Councillors Mrs D Collins, Mrs P Brooks, Mrs A Grigg, J Knapman, S Metcalfe, D Stallan, Ms S Stavrou and C Whitbread

Apologies: Councillors D Bateman, R D'Souza, Mrs H Harding, Mrs P Richardson and M Woollard

Officers Present: J Scott (Joint Chief Executive), D Macnab (Head of Leisure Services), J Boreham (Assistant Public Relations and Information Officer), S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Z Folley (Democratic Services Assistant)

By Invitation: Ms L VanClay

26. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2006 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

27. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was reported that Councillor Mrs A Cooper was substituting for Councillor Mrs H Harding and Councillor Mrs P Smith was substituting for Councillor D Bateman.

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor Mrs D Collins declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 (Development of Services for Children and Young People within the Epping Forest District – Presentation) by virtue of being the Chairman of the Epping Forest PCT. She declared that her interests were not prejudicial and indicated that she would remain in the meeting during the consideration and voting on the item.

29. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Committee were asked to change the order of business for the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the agenda item 6 (Development of Services for Children and Young People within the Epping Forest District – Presentation) be taken as the next item of business.

30. DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITHIN THE EPPING FOREST DISTRICT - PRESENTATION

The Chairman introduced and welcomed to the meeting Lonica VanClay, the Local Commissioner for Children and Young People (CYPSP) in the District, who was in attendance to report on her role in the identification and commissioning of services for the 0-19 age range.

The Government's vision for children's services was set out in the Government Green Paper 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) published in September 2003. Following this, the Department for Education and Skills produced non-statutory guidance on the role of District Councils in improving outcomes for children. A copy of this was attached to the agenda for the meeting.

A Local Commissioner for Children's and Young Peoples Services had been appointed in 6 districts (including Epping Forest) of greatest need. The role was to provide capacity to the local Children's and Young Peoples Partnership (CYPSP) and to facilitate and ensure partnership working was effective.

Ms VanClay referred to the Essex wide 'Change for Children' programme, which she worked to support, designed to attain the 5 outcomes of the ECM, reduce variation, meet local needs, coordinate services and partnership working. She referred to resource allocation advising that funding was provided for early prevention to prevent problems escalating and becoming more costly in the long term. She reported that in terms of priorities, funding was targeted at vulnerable children with complex problems. Reference was made to workstreams and the twelve priorities of the Children and Young People's Plan for improving the wellbeing of the age group.

She advised that CYPSP's role was to coordinate and encourage service delivery to achieve the twelve identified priority outcomes. The partnership would achieve this by undertaking a local needs and gaps analysis, coordinating provision, identifying priorities, commissioning, disseminating good practice, encouraging services to respond to the programme and challenging underperformance. The partnership was chaired by the Primary Care Trust.

Ms VanClay reported that CYPSP was responsible to the Local Strategic Partnership for the children's sub block of the Local Area Agreement. The partnership worked with local groupings of schools to provide a coherent seamless service for children and young people and families.

The CYPSP coordinator was based at the Voluntary Action Epping Forest office at the District Council in Epping. The Local Commissioner was located at the Waltham Abbey Health Centre in Waltham Abbey.

Ms VanClay advised that the structure of the partnership was likely to change. Consideration was being given to widening the membership of the organisation and more member involvement. Consultation on this would be held in October/November 2006 and following this invitations would be sent out to specific groupings including the Council. The partnership was looking to set up a series of new working groups to commence in the new year, update its terms of reference, structure and produce an action plan. These steps should come into effect from January 2007.

In response to questions, Members were reminded that central government had introduced a statutory obligation requesting Local Authorities bring together children's services. That approach was piloted in Braintree in 2005 and in Essex taken forward

by CYPSP. The partnerships membership comprised those agencies who were involved in children's services including Home Start, Essex County Council, the Police and the PCT. CYPSP now focused on information sharing and with the help of the County and the Children's Trust, strategic planning and commissioning services.

It was noted that two Members in attendance were also Members of the Epping Forest Youth Strategy Group. Ms VanClay emphasised the importance of youth services and explained that CYPSP supported the 'Youth Matters' Green Paper and was currently looking at the Youth Strategy. There was a desire to involve its members and develop its aims within the work of CYPSP aimed at providing a universal service for the age group.

Following the presentation, the Committee asked about the steps CYPSP intended to take to attract more funding for youth services. There was a lack of youth facilities in the District and the partnership needed to lead this cause. Ms VanClay advised that the partnership shared this aspiration. As resources were limited, part of its role was to make sure resources were spent more effectively as well as increasing availability.

It was reported that CYPSP was a partnership rather than a singular body. The constituent agencies took back issues identified to their own organisation thus there was no risk of services being diluted through the partnership approach. The Head of Leisure Services reported that the service and the District Youth Services Strategy Group undertook consultation with young people. The vacant Young Persons officer post would be appointed to in the near future and would also carry this out.

A member asked to receive clarification on the youth opportunity card envisaged in the 'Youth Matters' government consultation paper. Ms VanClay reported that the government had yet to clarify the way forward regarding this paper. Once such information had been received, the County Council and District Youth Services would liaise to look at the scheme to ensure that those in need of the support received it.

In terms of CYPSP powers, it was noted that there was no capacity to change how youth services were funding. As a result, emphasis was placed on influencing, persuading providers, getting funding into areas of need and information sharing. In relation to current work, she referred to action to coordinate parenting support. She reported that she had worked with the Children's Coordinator and various agencies including schools, Home Start the Children's Trust to coordinate funding and services. Support was available in schools for parents and from the early intervention programme. PCT and health staff had been trained up to help improve parenting. The mapping exercise to be undertaken by the partnership would also look to identify courses available in this area, who was involved and gaps in provision.

The Committee asked whether a mechanism could be established for reporting performance to the Committee. Ms VanClay agreed to this and envisaged that CYPSP could report back on outcomes to future meetings.

The Committee asked about the steps for identifying vulnerable children in the District and the likely timescale for this. It was stated that a list was needed in order that services could be planned effectively and identify gaps in services. It was reported that information was gathered from front line staff and agencies like the Childrens and Early Years Centres and multi agency meetings. Alongside this local network, the partnerships Common Assessment Framework would be the vehicle for establishing a register of vulnerable children. It was hoped that a mechanism would be established by 2008. The District Councils LSP Task and Finish Panel was looking at how the work of CYPSP could be coordinated within the LSP.

A member referred to recent changes to the funding arrangements for the Childrens Centre in Loughton. It was clarified that the County ran this facility and had decided to take it 'in house'. The Childrens Centres were a one stop shop for childrens services. Proposals for them in the District had not yet been finalised but there could be around 6-7 and be based in existing places or outreach services to ensure all area received support.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Lonica VanClay, the Local Commissioner for Children's and Young Peoples services in the District be thanked for her presentation and its availability on the Council's website be noted;
- (2) That the invitation envisaged in the presentation seeking council membership of the Epping Forest CYPSP's be noted and submitted to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration and;
- (3) That CYPSP be invited back to the Committee to present a progress report on outcomes.

31. LIAISON WITH CABINET

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Mrs D Collins presented the Cabinet's plans for this year. She welcomed views on the content which was still a work in progress to be developed over the year.

Portfolio Holders in attendance were invited to present their sections in turn.

The Committee considered the schedules with a view to selecting issues for pre-decision scrutiny.

(i) Finance and Performance Management

The Finance and Performance Management Portfolio Holder, Councillor J Knapman advised that additional meetings might be needed to formulate this years budget which he anticipated could be a difficult process. It was clarified that fees and charges were dealt with by the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel and agreed that this would be stated in the plan.

(ii) Community Wellbeing

The Portfolio Holder, Councillor Mrs S Stavrou, presented her work plan. She clarified that Licensing Act Policy was a responsibility of the Environmental Protection Portfolio and should be transferred accordingly in the programme. There was clearly a need to work with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) in the consideration of the Crime and Disorder issues. To improve performance against crime figures, for which there was a 2% shortfall, Inspector Andy Adams of Essex Police would be putting ideas to the next CDRP meeting. One proposal was to expand the automatic number plate recognition scheme. Home office funding would be sought.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the Grant Aid decision making process had been extended to involve agencies. She welcomed and undertook to give consideration to the suggestion that ward councillors who had local knowledge be able to input into decision making.

(iii) Environmental Protection

Works to Bobbingworth Tip were awaiting finalisation of section 278 agreement with the Council.

(iv) Planning and Economic Development

A member sought the current position on the funding arrangements for phase 3 and 4 of the Loughton Town Centre Enhancement Scheme. The Leader advised that no firm decisions could be made on this or the sums for any other schemes until the cost of the new waste management contract had been identified. The Portfolio Holder advised that difficulties with the utility services were interfering with surfacing works. It was still hoped that the first phase of the scheme would be finished in Oct 2006. She reported the estimated cost of the work and stated that an approach would be made to Cabinet seeking additional funding. A member referred to the removal of trees in Centric Parade for paving works for the scheme. The Portfolio Holder clarified that replacement trees would be sought however this would need County Council agreement. The Portfolio Holder had contacted each political group who had indicated Members were supportive of the progress being made with the scheme. It was reported that the Broadway Town Centre scheme was awaiting completion of section 278 agreement with County. It was anticipated that phase one of the works would be completed ahead of Christmas 2006 and estimated to cost £2.9 million.

It was reported that early in the week the Leader met Bill Rammell MP for Harlow to consider the Council's response to the Panel of Inspectors Report on the East of England Plan and the Environmental and Planning Services Scrutiny Panels proposal that the Council make a joint response with Harlow Council. It was noted that the Leader presented to the MP a copy of Council's proposed response to be sent to the Secretary of State and had agreed with its objections to development at North Harlow. As result of the meeting, the MP undertook to go back to Harlow Council to ask them to put their signature to the letter and to also ask Eleanor Laing, MP to sign the response to show the wider support for the document. It was anticipated that this would occur during the next two weeks.

(v) Housing

The Portfolio for Housing, Councillor Stallan presented the plan. He referred to the recent call-in on vehicle cross – overs in residential areas and reported the intention to consider and undertake consultation on the off - street parking scheme.

(vi) Leisure and Young People

The Portfolio for Leisure and Young People reported the steps intended in support of young people initiatives. He advised that consideration would be given to ensuring that there was sufficient funding for the initiatives considered by the last years Task and Finish Panel such as the Box in Epping to ensure that they could be continued. The current Task and Finish Panel on Leisure and Young People had brought forward their reviews on the future management of Roding Valley Nature Reserve and the Waltham Abbey Sports Centre so that bids could be submitted to this year's budget making process. Consultation with local schools had been carried out over the proposed redevelopment of Ongar Leisure Centre. Once Cabinet consent had been given to the project then consultation with the local community would be held.

(vii) Customer Services, Media Communication and ICT

The Portfolio Holder, Councillor Stephen Metcalfe reported on the five ICT areas under his Portfolio. The Customer Services Transformation Board was still meeting. The Cabinet had considered the issues and agreed that the Board be asked to consider the staff implications of the programme. Work was being undertaken with parties across Essex to see how the Single Non – Emergency could best be pursued and the role that the Council might take. The Portfolio Holder explained the purpose of the Corporate Procurement Strategy involving e-procurement for services. He reported a further item was the Corporate Information Strategy and that steps were being taken to update the Microsoft Software site agreement.

The Portfolio Holder was considering the tendering process for the waste management contract. There had been soft market testing and a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group had been set up. The group was to next meeting on 1 September 2006 when consideration would be given to whether consultants should be used for the tendering exercise. A Member presentation would be held on 7 September 2006. It was requested that the information to be presented be made available for comment prior to contract formulation in the Members Bulletin.

32. WORK PROGRAMME MONITORING

(a) Work Programme

The Committee considered their work programme. The following Panels had held meetings since the last meetings of the Committee and the relevant Panel Chairmen reported accordingly.

(i) Environmental and Planning Services Standing Panel

The Chairman of the Panel, Councillor Mrs P Smith, reported that at its last meeting on 29 August 2006 the Panel had commented on the proposed EFDC response to the Panel of Inspectors recommendations on the East of England Plan. The meeting was attended by local interest groups covering areas affected by the proposals. The Leader and the Cabinet had accepted the Panels revisions which would be made to the letter to the Secretary of State. The Panel had recommended that a joint approach be made with Harlow and expressed disappointment that the meeting arranged with the Authority for September 2006 to consider this matter was cancelled. The Panel was also to visit Colchester and Braintree on 5 October 2006 to see the role and work of Community Street Wardens in practice and agreed that a focus day be held with the assistance of Essex County Council for the purpose of identifying solutions for the traffic problems in rural areas.

(ii) Town Centre and Car Parking Task and Finish Panel

The Chairman Councillor M Colling reported that he and the Head of Environmental Services had met to consider the scope of the review. There was some urgent issues requiring consideration by the Panel including the consultants report on the possible development of Council owned car parks.

(iii) Crime and Disorder Task and Finish Panel.

The Panel had cancelled the meeting scheduled in August 2006 due the unavailability of the Police representative due to attend.

(iv) Local Strategic Partnership Task and Finish Panel.

In view of the unavailability of the Chairman, the Vice – Chairman of the Panel, Councillor Mrs P Smith, reported that at its last meeting on 30 August 2006 the Panel held a question and answer session with Mr David Butler the Chairman of the Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership. Some of the Chairmen of the various partnership actions groups would be attending the next meeting on 27 September 2006.

(v) Older Persons and Disabled Task and Finish Panel.

The Vice - Chairman of the Panel, Councillor Mrs J H Whitehouse reported that the Panel had visited Parsonage Court, an older persons facility in Loughton and had attended a meeting of sheltered forum representatives. The Panel had also been invited to attend a meeting for wardens for the sheltered housing scheme.

(vi) Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer reported that following consultation with London Underground Ltd and in view of the lack of responses to the item recently placed in the Members Bulletin seeking questions for the company, it had become clear that there was no real desire for a presentation from them to the October 2006 meeting. As a result it was agreed that the liaison be held back until the new year. Other outstanding external presentations were the scrutiny of the Highways Local Service Agreement. It was also anticipated that the Police would be asked back to the Committee to report outcomes for the Neighbourhood Policing Initiative.

(vii) Member Training Programme

The Senior Democratic Services Officer asked the Committee to determine a process for planning next years Member Training programme. The Committee were asked to determine whether Members should be involved and if agreed the forum for this. The Committee agreed that the task should be referred to the Constitutional and Member Services Standing Panel and an item be placed in the Members Bulletin seeking suggestions on the programme and future topics. A Member drew attention to the desirability of a course for Members on dealing with aggressive people. A member requested to receive a copy of the presentations given in the first two weeks of May this year. Officers undertook to give her this information.

RESOLVED:

That the task of reviewing the Member Training Programme and planning next years programme be referred to the Constitutional and Member Services Standing Panel

(b) Terms of References – Task and Finish Panel

The Panel considered Terms of References for the recently constituted Task and Finnish Panels.

RESOLVED:

That the terms of references for following the Task and Finish Panels be endorsed:

- (a) Crime and Disorder
- (b) Leisure
- (c) Older Persons and Disabled People

(d) Local Strategic Partnership

33. CABINET REVIEW

The Committee considered the Cabinet agenda for its next meeting on 4 September 2006. A main issue for consideration was agenda item 29 (Report of Panel of Inspectors East of England Plan) given scrutiny's in-depth consideration and response to the draft response.

CHAIRMAN