

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Thursday, 5th April, 2007

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

Time: 7.30 pm

Democratic Services Officer: Simon Hill, Senior Democratic Services Officer
email: shill@eppingforestdc.gov.uk Tel: 01992 564249

Members:

Councillors R Morgan (Chairman), Mrs J H Whitehouse (Vice-Chairman), D Bateman, M Cohen, M Colling, R D'Souza, Mrs H Harding, P House, G Mohindra and Mrs P Richardson

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS TO ATTEND

A PRE – MEETING FOR MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE WILL BE HELD AT 7.00PM

WEBCASTING NOTICE

Please note: this meeting may be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's internet site - at the start of the meeting the Chairman will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being filmed.

You should be aware that the Council is a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act. Data collected during this webcast will be retained in accordance with the Council's published policy and copies made available to those who request it..

Therefore by entering the Chamber and using the lower public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for web casting and/or training purposes. If members of the public do not wish to have their image captured they should sit in the upper council chamber public gallery area

If you have any queries regarding this, please contact the Senior Democratic Services Officer on 01992 564249.

1. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

1. This meeting is to be webcast. Members are reminded of the need to activate their microphones before speaking.

2. The Chairman will read the following announcement:

"I would like to remind everyone present that this meeting will be broadcast live to the Internet and will be capable of repeated viewing and copies of the recording could be made available for those that request it.

If you are seated in the lower public seating area it is likely that the recording cameras will capture your image and this will result in the possibility that your image will become part of the broadcast.

This may infringe your human and data protection rights and if you wish to avoid this you should move to the upper public gallery"

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

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

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

In considering whether to declare a personal or a prejudicial interest under the Code of Conduct, Overview & Scrutiny members are asked pay particular attention to paragraph 11 of the Code in addition to the more familiar requirements.

This requires the declaration of a personal and prejudicial interest in any matter before an OS Committee which relates to a decision of or action by another Committee or Sub Committee of the Council, a Joint Committee or Joint Sub Committee in which the Council is involved and of which the Councillor is also a member.

Paragraph 11 does not refer to Cabinet decisions or attendance at an OS meeting purely for the purpose of answering questions or providing information on such a matter.

5. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 22)

Decisions required:

To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8 March 2007.

6. PRESENTATION FROM AIDEN THOMAS - WEST ESSEX PRIMARY CARE TRUST

To be circulated separately.

7. 2006 - 07 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT (Pages 23 - 56)

To consider the attached report.

8. WORK PROGRAMME MONITORING (Pages 57 - 68)**Recommendation:**

To adopt the attached 2007 – 08 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme.

At its last meeting on 8 March 2007, the Committee requested that a meeting be arranged between the Chairman and the Vice – Chairman to formulate the 2007 – 08 OS work programme. The meeting was held on 22 March 2007.

The notes of the meeting and the programme they put together is attached for consideration. The Committee is asked to endorse the plan for implementation in the new Council year.

9. LEISURE TASK AND FINISH PANEL

(Chairman of Task and Finish Panel). To consider the report to follow.

10. OLDER AND DISABLED PERSONS TASK AND FINISH PANEL - FINAL REPORT

To consider the report to follow

11. CABINET REVIEW**Recommendation:**

To consider any items to be raised by the Chairman at the Cabinet meeting on 16 April 2007.

As the Cabinet agenda will not be available until after this meeting, the front sheet of the agenda will be circulated prior to this meeting to enable the consideration of the item.

12. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Exclusion: To consider whether, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press should be excluded from the meeting for the items of business set out below on grounds that they will involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the following paragraph(s) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) or are confidential under Section 100(A)(2):

Agenda Item No	Subject	Exempt Information Paragraph Number
Nil	Nil	Nil

The Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, which came into effect on 1 March 2006, requires the Council to consider whether maintaining the exemption listed above outweighs the potential public interest in disclosing the information. Any member who considers that this test should be applied to any currently exempted matter on this agenda should contact the proper officer at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.

Confidential Items Commencement: Paragraph 9 of the Council Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution require:

- (1) All business of the Council requiring to be transacted in the presence of the press and public to be completed by 10.00 p.m. at the latest.
- (2) At the time appointed under (1) above, the Chairman shall permit the completion of debate on any item still under consideration, and at his or her discretion, any other remaining business whereupon the Council shall proceed to exclude the public and press.
- (3) Any public business remaining to be dealt with shall be deferred until after the completion of the private part of the meeting, including items submitted for report rather than decision.

Background Papers: Paragraph 8 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules of the Constitution define background papers as being documents relating to the subject matter of the report which in the Proper Officer's opinion:

- (a) disclose any facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the report is based; and
- (b) have been relied on to a material extent in preparing the report and does not include published works or those which disclose exempt or confidential information (as defined in Rule 10) and in respect of executive reports, the advice of any political advisor.

Inspection of background papers may be arranged by contacting the officer responsible for the item.

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES

Committee:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date:	Thursday, 8 March 2007
Place:	Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping	Time:	7.30 - 9.45 pm
Members Present:	Councillors Mrs J H Whitehouse (Chairman) Mrs H Harding (Vice-Chairman) D Bateman, M Colling, R D'Souza, P House, Mrs P Richardson, K Chana and R Frankel		
Other Councillors:	Councillors K Angold-Stephens, Mrs D Borton, Mrs D Collins, Mrs A Cooper, A Green, Mrs A Grigg, A Lee, S Murray, B Sandler, Mrs M Sartin, D Stallan, Mrs L Wagland, C Whitbread, J M Whitehouse and K Wright		
Apologies:	Councillors R Morgan, M Cohen, G Mohindra and M Woollard		
Officers Present:	J Scott (Joint Chief Executive), J Gilbert (Head of Environmental Services), D Macnab (Head of Leisure Services), S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer), A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer), Z Folley (Democratic Services Assistant) and S Mitchell (PR & Internet Assistant)		
By Invitation:	D Millership (Essex CC), T Baker (Essex CC) and S Brooks (Essex CC)		

74. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman made a short address to remind all present that the meeting would be broadcast on the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings. The Committee noted the Council's Protocol for Webcasting of Council and Other Meetings.

75. CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

As the Chairman of the meeting Councillor Morgan was unavailable, the Vice Chairman, Councillor Mrs Whitehouse took the Chair for the meeting.

76. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Councillor Mrs H Harding was appointed Vice Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

77. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was reported that Councillor R Frankel was substituting for Councillor M Woollard and that Councillor K Chana was substituting for Councillor M Cohen.

78. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor Mrs M Sartin declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 (Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Task and Finish Panel – Final Report) by virtue of being a member of the LSP Board.

She declared that her interests were not prejudicial and indicated that she would remain in the meeting during the consideration of the item.

b) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor Mrs A Grigg declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 (Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Task and Finish Panel – Final Report) by virtue of being a member of the LSP Board. She declared that her interests were not prejudicial and indicated that she would remain in the meeting during the consideration of the item.

c) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor K Wright declared a personal interest in agenda item 9 (Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme) by virtue of being a member of Theatre Resources. He declared that his interests were not prejudicial and indicated that he would remain in the meeting during the consideration of the item.

d) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor Mrs J Whitehouse declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 (Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Task and Finish Panel – Final Report) by virtue of being a member of the learning partnership of the LSP. 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.

e) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor A Lee declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 (Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Task and Finish Panel – Final Report) by virtue of being a member of the LSP. He declared that his interests were not prejudicial and indicated that he would remain in the meeting during the consideration of the item.

79. MINUTES

That the minutes of the Committee held on 1 February 2006 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the correction of the spelling of Councillors Bateman name under minute number 69.

80. HIGHWAYS SERVICES - PRESENTATION

The Chairman welcomed Davina Millership, the Area Highways Manager for the District, Spencer Brooks, Senior Traffic Engineer and Trevor Baker the Assistant District Manager. They were attending the meeting to give a presentation and a question and answer session on local highways issues.

Ms Millership started by saying that an area office is the implementation arm of Highways and Transportation Section. They have strategic officers at County Hall that put together programmes and get funding from Central Government. This is then fed to the four area offices for practical implementation.

Generally the area offices carry out the day to day maintenance, e.g. resurfacing of footways and carriageways, potholes, gulley cleansing and traffic management schemes (including parking and general signage). They also implement road safety schemes and deal with Development Control, that is, schemes that have above five and up to fifty properties are dealt with by the area offices. They also deal with street lighting maintenance.

They have two main areas of funding for maintenance. One is a budget for basic maintenance, e.g. pothole patching and this is a reactive maintenance budget. The

other is capital funding for larger/major construction schemes and this is spread over a three year period. We are currently in the second year of the cycle. The first year concentrates on 'A' roads; the second year concentrates on 'A' and 'B' roads; and the third year on 'B' and unclassified roads.

The basic maintenance budget for 2005/06 was £2.5 million for the West Area Office – of that 31% went to Epping in 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08.

For Highways Maintenance, the West Area Office got 40% of the total amount for the County – of which 52% went to Epping in 2005/06, 33% in 2006/07 and 46 in 2007/08. This was from a £8m budget for the West Area.

Area Offices report to a Local Programme Manager, John Burr who in turn reports to Tony Ciaburro at County.

They run a Highways Panel twice a year that meets in the Harlow Offices and have a £200,000 Local Determination budget for use in consultation with Local Councils. They also use Section 106 money for specific projects and act as consultants to Local Councils.

Davina Millership then answered questions from members on highways that were sent to her prior to the meeting. The questions and answers are attached to these minutes as an appendix.

81. FREE SATURDAY CAR PARKING - MONITORING ARRANGMENTS

The Head of Environmental Services reported back to this meeting on the provision of regular operational reviews of the free car parking on Saturdays recently instituted. He reported that they were to use the existing parking attendants to monitor use of the car parks. They would be there at 10am and then again at mid afternoon to note the registration numbers of any long stay vehicles, this could be accomplished at no extra cost to the Council. A fuller feedback could be obtained from the Town Centre Partnerships, for a longer term survey.

The Portfolio Holder for Civil Engineering and Maintenance, Councillor Green added that initiative could be viewed in two ways, one, looking if the car parks were being used in a manner we did not want, and two, as a way to enhance town centres and assist traders, and this was where local ward members could provide feedback on how it's working.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse asked if it could also be noted how many cars use the parks and was assured that this would be done.

Councillor Frankel asked how long it would take to get meaningful feedback from this survey and was told that they would be collecting data every Saturday. A view would have to be taken on when the cut off point would be to get any meaningful data.

82. DRAFT 2006/07 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee noted that this was a first draft of the annual report for 2006/07. Comments were requested to be sent to Democratic Services by week ending 16 March 2007. It would then be amended and a final version put to the April meeting of the Committee.

83. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME REVIEW

The committee noted that a new work programme was to be presented to the next meeting. They were now asked to send in any new items for consideration by 19 March, when it would be considered under the PICK system. The Chairman and Vice Chairman will sift through the new requests to determine if any new topics are to be added to the work programme of the existing Standing Panels or to constitute new task and Finish Panels.

Standing Panels

Councillor Colling proposed that with the current large workload on officers, was the Customer Services and ICT Standing Panel still relevant as their workload had shrunk over the last few months. Councillor Collins agreed that a lot of their work was on hold at present, so it could be closed down and the remainder of their work could be transferred to the Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel, until their Customer Service work picks up again.

The Committee agreed that any outstanding work be re-evaluated and redistributed to other panels.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Customer Services and ICT Standing Panel be disbanded and its remaining workload be redistributed to other panels, principally to the Finance and Performance Management Panel.
2. The Committee considered the other Standing Panels and agreed that they should continue.

Task and Finish Panels

Leisure – the Chairman of the Panel Councillor Mrs Harding reported that the panel would have completed three of the four tasks set out in its terms of reference, that is the Review of the Future Management of the Roding Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve, the Review of Arts Development in the District and the District Council's role and involvement in Outdoor and Community Events. They would need more time to finish the Future Management of Waltham Abbey Sports Centre. A full report will go to the next meeting of this committee.

Town Centre and Car Parks – the antisocial elements of this Panel's terms of reference is still to be completed and probably continue into the new year.

Crime and Disorder – this Panel will be meeting again on 15 March and hopes to wind up its terms of reference by the end of this year.

Older Persons and Disabled Persons – this Panel is currently writing its final report, which will come to the next meeting of this committee.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The work programme for the committee and the need for the Chairman of the LSP to be invited to address the Committee on a yearly basis was noted.

Council Plan

Noted that a Value for Money Sub-group was currently meeting, and may call for an in-depth service review.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse commented that he had just come from that sub-group meeting and they had been looking at various areas of the Council but were constrained by the data in front of them.

Two areas that did occur to the sub-group for further investigation was:

- 1) the external management of leisure facilities by SLM, and they would like the Head of Leisure Services to bring a report to the Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel on this; and
- 2) planning applications - to ask a small sub-group or Task and Finish Panel to look at this under the Value for Money criteria.

The sub-group would recommend that a Task and Finish Panel could be set up in the new year to look at the above items.

84. LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP TASK AND FINISH PANEL - FINAL REPORT

The Committee received the final report of the Local Strategic Partnership Task and Finish Panel. Councillor Mary Sartin, the Chairman of the Panel, introduced the report and commended it to the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Local Strategic Partnership Task and Finish Panel Report be endorsed.

85. CABINET REVIEW

The committee looked at the cabinet agenda for the meeting to be held on 12 March 2007. The only item of business they had for it was, on the consideration of the Calendar of Meetings for 2007-08. At the recent Local Council's Liaison Committee meeting they had requested that provision be made by the District Council to leave one night a week free of meetings. This was so that they hold their own individual meetings to enable 'dual-hatted' Councillors to attend. The Local Councils thought that this might be feasible now that four Area Planning Sub-Committees had been reduced to three, thus freeing up some Wednesdays.

The Committee were sympathetic to Local Councils dilemma, but also acknowledged that the District Council's need for meetings should be paramount. They agreed that, as far as possible some spare days be kept free of meetings to help Local Councils, and this would be recommended to Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee put to the Cabinet three alternatives, that the principle not be agreed; or that where possible, the principle be agreed; or finally that the principle be accepted. The Committee would recommend the second option to the Cabinet.

OSC 8 March 2007 – List of Member Questions for Highways

(a) Highway Maintenance and Repair work

1. When are the pavements and roads in Chigwell going to be repaired/resurfaced? Many elderly residents living in Chigwell Row are finding it hard to cope with the poor conditions.

Councillor B Sandler Chigwell Row

Response:

We do not carry out repairs by area however as and when individual defects are reported they are dealt with. If these are localized then a large area of patching is identified.

If there are any specific areas that Cllr Sandler would like to be flagged for attention my Acting District Manager – Trevor Baker will attend a site meeting to discuss.

I understand that we have identified some works on the route through Chigwell Row – the details can be discussed with TB.

2. When will the road in School Green Lane, North Weald be repaired?

Councillor D Stallan – North Weald Bassett

Response:

TB is very busy and is currently covering for two posts. He is an outstanding officer who is often the last one in the office and first one in the mornings. Unfortunately working under pressure – things slip through which I can only offer my apologies.

School Green Lane was inspected and does not require any works. Beamish Close, works to the kerbs was carried out and some funding has been allocated for further kerb works although this can be made available for other repairs/works.

3. Why are the roads in the north of Essex so much better maintained than those in the south? Is it because no account has been taken of relative traffic volumes in each area? Are investment decisions based on road miles rather than traffic miles?

Councillor K Angold – Stephens – Loughton Roding

Response:

Basic maintenance funding is set aside for potholes and patching and allocations are based on a formula taking into account the length of county roads (roads of more than local significance) and local roads in each district. County roads receive a greater weighting in the formula.

The capital funding for carriageway and footway maintenance (larger schemes) is allocated taking into account the results of our latest condition survey but in recent years it has been apparent that a formulaic approach has

not always reflected the anecdotal view of the areas road condition. So the Portfolio Holder exercises his judgment.

4. Why hasn't the road repair work for Buckhurst Hill, to be implemented after the resurfacing works to the Loughton High Road, been carried out especially as the road surface is in a poor condition in places?

Councillor K Angold – Stephens – Loughton Roding

Response:

The Loughton High road works were carried out and funded by the District as part of the Town Centre scheme. Buckhurst Hill will be machine surfaced in the next few weeks.

5. How are you dealing with the unclassified but extremely busy roads (such as Oakwood Hill) to ensure they are not ignored.

Councillor K Angold – Stephens – Loughton Roding

Response:

We have received more funding for unclassified roads this financial year and we have identified work in our 07/08 programme. This programme is draft and yet to be approved by our Cabinet Member.

(b) On Street Parking – Crossovers

6. What is the "official" position about whether resident's cars be parked in the street or in driveways?

Councillor Roland Frankel - Theydon Bois

Response:

The only position the highway authority has on this is that residents have a responsibility to park their cars legally and not to cause an obstruction. It is their choice whether that is on a street or in driveways.

7. What strategies will be adopted to rectify sunken kerbs to stop cars parking on pavements causing pedestrians to be placed in hazardous situations?. This relates especially to Ongar High Street between the Post Office and Ongar Bridge

Councillor K Wright - Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash

Response:

This can occur historically for many reasons. Where there is a low kerb height which is deemed to be hazardous we are happy to look at assessing the location with a view to addressing the issue. This can be achieved a few ways depending upon the specific circumstances.

8. Has any strategy for addressing the problem of parking on pavements and across car entrances, which is endemic near schools, been considered? If not will one be? Chipping Ongar Primary School is a case in point. The use of bollards could provide a solution

Councillor Keith Wright - Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash

Response:

Parking on pavements where vehicles are causing an obstruction can be dealt with by the Police who have enforcement powers. This is the same with crossovers or car entrances. Where a waiting restriction exists this extends for the full extent of the highway and therefore parking enforcement officers can deal with cars parked on pavements.

The only other way of dealing with such a situation is to formalize parking in a parking zone.

Chipping Ongar Primary School, does this school have a school travel plan? – bollards and other measures can be introduced as part of such a plan. It is sensible that all school issues are raised and addressed as part of a formal plan rather than ad hoc measures.

9. What responsibilities do Essex Highways have for bollards and how is this provided? How many accidents have occurred within the vicinity of bollards in the past three years?

Councillor Mrs J H Whitehouse – Epping Hemnall

Response:

Ultimately street furniture such as bollards is the responsibility of the highway authority. This includes its location and maintenance. I cannot answer that as personal injury accidents statistics are recorded on the basis of contributory factors and you can search the database for specific factors. It is not usual to note the accident in terms of its location relative to bollards – it is more usual to note the vicinity of zebra crossings and whether it is dark/wet or road surface is slippery. In my experience the location of the bollards would only be listed as part of the description of the accident if it was relevant.

10. Why hasn't any emergency Traffic Regulation Orders been issued to deter all day commuter parking which has driven some traders out of business and is causing serious difficulties in Debden Broadway.

Councillor K Angold – Stephens – Loughton Roding

Response:

The Burton road car park is the subject of traffic orders which the District are preparing and as part of this the District is seeking consent from the County. The Cabinet member is being consulted along with County members on their views although the process of producing the orders by the District is ongoing. It has been raised that Commuters will be pushed into neighbouring roads once excluded from the car parks and the County working with the District have been carrying out parking surveys with a view to developing proposals to

address the possible problems. This will off course be the subject of discussion and consultation.

(c) Pot Holes

11. Why do some of our major roads such as Valley Hill and Oakwood Hill (with major traffic flows) continue to have dangerous pot holes ?

Councillor S Murray, Loughton Roding

Response;

We continue to inspect and repair them. The frequency of pot holes is related to the general structure of the road. It has been identified that Oakwood Hill be resurfaced and we are keeping an eye on Valley Hill. We consider it a priority and we will endeavour to identify funding as soon as we can.

(d) Footpaths

12. Why is a much used pedestrian footpath between Cheltanham Gardens and Highland Avenue in Loughton still unpassable after heavy rain. No indication has ever been given about when the work will be done even though both the ward members and residents have frequently reported the issue.

Councillor S Murray, Loughton Roding/ K Angold – Stephens – Loughton Roding

Response:

The unmade section has been identified for resurfacing and the made up section has been inspected and we are currently considering what measures need to be taken to address the problems.

(e) Street Lighting

13. Why is a lamp column on a busy junction (Oakwood Hill , Valley Hill and Roding Road) still not working?

Councillor S Murray, Loughton Roding

Response:

Lamp column 17 Roding Road lamp out was received on 15 Jan and completed 28 February 2007. The delay to repairing the outage was caused by the need to use traffic management due to the location near to a busy junction.

Lamp column 44 Oakwood Hill lamp out 1st received on 18 November 2006 and completed 23 January 2007. The second received 15 January and completed 28 February. Another call on 5 March from Cllr Murray on Monday 5 march to inform us that Lamp column 44 Oakwood Hill was still not working – contractors attended Monday night and Tuesday morning and have assured us that the job is complete.

Our Contractor should attend in 7 days initially however if there is further work needed. We have raised performance issues formally with our contractor who

has provided an undertaking to increase resources. I have recently recruited a new member of staff who will be able to assist in monitoring the contractors performance. We can report that already additional resources have been allocated and we are hopeful that our contractor will continue to improve their performance record.

14. What action will be taken to repair the two streetlight in North Weald (one in School Green Lane and one in Beamish Close)

Councillor D Stallan – North Weald Bassett

Response:

North Weald Parish Council owns the lighting in Beamish Close and School Green Lane. We have continued to manage the repair of the NWPC lighting as a good will gesture. Given my problems with staffing I would like to bring this relationship to an end.

Because of the arrangements these lights do not form part of the night time scouting of the County lighting stock and we rely on reports of outages from the Parish.

Beamish Close

We have not received a report of a day burner but we have received a number of reports of outages over the last year;

L/C 6032 Lamp out received date 05/06/06 completed date 09/06/06 = 35w SOX lamp

L/C 6033A Unit leaning received date 24/11/06 completed date 19/12/06 = Replump column

L/C 6028 Lamp out received date 24/11/06 completed date 15/12/06 = 35w SOX lamp & ignitor

L/C 6030 Lamp out received date 04/12/06 completed date 18/12/06 = 35w SOX lamp & ignitor

L/C 6026 Lamp out received date 18/12/06 completed date 15/01/06 = 35w SOX lamp and photocell.

School Green Lane

We have not received notification of any faults since 12/10/05 for this road.

(Since the meeting I have been informed that the Parish reported it to a consultant who attended a meeting on ECC's behalf – it appears that this was not reported to the office)

15. Will Highways reconsider the proposal to cut off street lighting across the District over the later part of each night? The matter is also ready causing concern to residents in the South of the District with the problems with antisocial behaviour and the later opening hours of public houses. Without adequate lighting CCTV will not be effective.

Councillor D Bateman Chigwell

Response:

You will be consultee on the part night switch off. It is currently only being piloted in Uttlesford in the West Area.

Areas with CCTV are exempt from the switch off for those reasons

(f) Rural roads

15. What action will Essex County Council take to eliminate/ reduce the damage caused to the County's roads by Heavy Goods Vehicle should the additional funding requested by the Portfolio for this work not be received?

Councillor Mrs A Cooper - Lower Nazeing

Response:

My district engineers do not perceive that this is a major issue in Epping however we will continue to repair defects.

(g) Local Liaison Arrangements

16. When will the step to establish local repair teams for minor work (as promised by the Portfolio Holder when he attended Loughton Town Council last year), be implemented? When will the liaison promised between the District and Local Councillors for addressing specific issues when re-surfacing takes place (e.g. damaged verges) be put into effect?

Councillor K Angold – Stephens – Loughton Roding

Response:

Local repair teams for minor works are being discussed at present and we are currently in discussions with our contractor on how they will resource this. We have Highways Panel meeting when District Officers, District members and local County members meet with me. I also meet your lead officer once a month to update on progress and issues. I am happy to meet

Councillor Bass has asked me to offer to facilitate a meeting with your representatives in County Hall or at the Area Highways Office with the Service Director for Highways, myself and with the Local County Members in attendance.

17. How would Highways respond to an EFDC forum on which they were represented, to list and prioritise approved schemes (such as lay – bys and parking improvements) which would be surveyed and costed by Highways in a similar way to which Housing have dealt with their land in the past?

Councillor K Angold – Stephens – Loughton Roding

Response:

Tony Ciaburro, our service Director, has recently offered to seek funding for improvements in the Epping area. We are discussing priorities with John

Gilbert and I know that he will be seeking your views. Once we have an indication of where or what you want you have identified then we will cost your the schemes and collate a bid.

(i) Telephone Enquiries

18. Why do some of your officers never reply to telephone messages?

Councillor S Murray, Loughton Roding

Response:

We have around 20 vacancies in an establishment of around 100. They are currently filled by agency staff. We appear to be suffering from a large turnover of certain staff mainly at inspector level and this puts additional workload pressures on our existing staff. Not responding to telephone messages is one of the issues – No-one does this deliberately and I know that I have gone for days sometimes not being able to respond to individuals. Sometimes we need a site visit before we can respond to another investigation into land ownership and this then means there is a delay and 20 other messages are left. So yes, I don't deny that this happens but I can assure you that it is not deliberate. We have given John Gilbert the direct lines for myself, Trevor Baker and Spencer Brookes. Please use them if someone has not responded and will endeavour to get a response.

19. Who should residents contact to report serious faults in pathways and roads?

Councillor K Wright - Chipping Ongar, Greensted & Marden Ash

Response:

We have a computerised system – so the office number will be manned and will be responded to. All information will go on there and be actioned. If you want to track progress then you can email Trevor Baker.

(i) Resources

20. Do you feel that this part of Essex with its dense population and hence heavy traffic flows is obtaining its fair share of resources from the central Essex pot ?

Councillor S Murray, Loughton Roding

Response:

Just looking at the capital for major projects – West Area received 40% of the total allocation for Essex and 33% of this was allocated to Epping and 46% of the total for the West Area will be allocated to Epping for next financial year.

Over the last three years Epping has received 31% of the total allocation for Basic Maintenance. It is worth noting that the West Area which comprises of 4 districts.

21. What is Highways doing about addressing the staff shortages in their West Area offices?

Councillor K Angold – Stephens – Loughton Roding

Response:

We are currently using agency staff. We only filled 12 positions in Oct 06 after a recruitment drive and still currently have 22 vacancies. Some of the positions were filled by internal promotion leaving gaps in the structure behind them. Also we have since have been given a further 4 members of staff in recognition of deficiencies in our structure. The County have accepted that there are significant issues with recruitment and are considering a recruitment and retention package for West Area staff.

22. What is the annual budget for the provision of traffic signs (eg crossroads)?

Councillor Mrs J H Whitehouse – Epping Hemnall

Response:

I have £147,000 for minor works for the Area. New signs comes out of this budget but maintenance and replacing stolen signs comes from basic maintenance. This money I add to the LDB budget to make up around £200,000 a year for Epping. Epping gets the lion's share of the LDB pot – roughly 33% of the total allocation.

23. To what extent has the amount spent on the replacement of signs, due to many being stolen, substantially affected the provision of new signs?

Councillor Mrs J H Whitehouse – Epping Hemnall

Response:

It doesn't – they come from different budgets. The replacement of stolen signs does eat into the basic maintenance of roads and that includes patching and potholes.

(h) Traffic/congestion

24. Does County Council feel that government policy to reduce car journeys is working in Essex? What studies have been made to determine at which point traffic density becomes unsafe?

Councillor R Frankel - Theydon Bois

Response:

Government transport policy in Essex is shaped by the influence of the East of England Plan and the County Council's own Local Transport Plan. Both plans include policies to manage a demand for travel and car travel in particular, and the LTP contains targets to reduce traffic volumes entering Colchester and Chelmsford, as well as the rate of growth in distance traveled across the County area. At the same time land use policies continue to put pressure on Essex to accommodate more housing and provide local employment

opportunities as well as national priorities such as expansion of ports and airports. So managing demand for car travel needs to consider both today's demands and those from future land use pressures, which are considerable.

Both sets of LTP targets are on track at present, with reductions observed during 2005 and 2006. There may be many factors behind this trend but there is no doubt that successful transport schemes such as park and ride, increased cycle facilities, reduced travel to school by car, travel plans and quality bus routes all contribute to reductions in car use.

IN conclusion policies do work at the local level but these local successes may be tempered by a general rise in traffic growth caused by background trends such as development pressures and the tendency for the average trip length to rise over time.

25. What causes more pollution: a) stopped cars, b) stop/start congested traffic, c) constantly moving cars?

Councillor R Frankel - Theydon Bois

Response:

According to the Highways Agency Design Manual for Roads and Bridges Vehicles operate most efficiently and produce least pollution when they are driven in freely flowing traffic at moderate speed (35-30mph fro NOz emissions)

Measurements have shown that the highest rates of emission occur in congested, slow moving traffic, and that there is also a tendency for emission rates to increase at high speeds, especially those of oxides of nitrogen. Emissions rates under stop-start driving conditions are much higher than those when vehicles are driven more slowly.

26. Since EFDC members permitted commercial development on Chigwell Lane, is there now any possibility of a full M11 junction 5?

Councillor R Frankel - Theydon Bois

Response:

I cannot answer this but will endeavour to obtain a response.

27. Baring in mind the work to be carried out on the A414 from 12 March 2007, why has there been no consideration of the fact the first bus leaves Ongar just after 6am and any delay will cause residents who use this first bus service to be delayed getting to work?

Councillor D Stallan – North Weald Bassett

Response:

When closures occur over night from 9pm to 6am – there will not be a problem as the first bus leave at 6.11am

28. Should the cost of traffic disruption (for the road users) be an issue for the time taken on repairs?

Councillor R Frankel - Theydon Bois

Response:

Yes, and we take this into account. Road works are programmed to avoid peak periods and we will try to do the most disruptive work at off peak periods. This is also taken into account when we allow utilities to work on the highway.

(j) Road Safety

29. At the end of 2006, the total number of road deaths in Essex County Council reached 101. Can Essex Transport confirm the total number of deaths in this District and provide a breakdown of how many occurred on:

- a) National Motorways and Primary Routes
- b) County Primary Routes 1 and 2
- c) Local Routes?

Councillor Mrs A Cooper - Lower Nazeing

Epping Fatalities – 17

M11 – double fatality

M11

M25

M25

A104 from Woodford Green

A113 London Road

A113 j/w High Road

A113 Double Fatality

A121 towards Honey Lane

A414 towards Harlow

B194

B194 crooked Mile

B181 High Road

B181

Unclassified Theydon Road

Trunk Road- 5

County Routes-10

Local Roads-1

(k) General

30. When will we be assured of a quicker response to local issues and a better service from highways?

Councillor K Angold – Stephens – Loughton Roding

32. Are you beginning to understand why local residents and some district councillors are very dissatisfied with the level of service provided by Essex Highways ?

Councillor S Murray, Loughton Roding

This page is intentionally left blank

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 5 April 2007

Subject: Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2006/07

**Officer contact for further information:
Adrian Hendry, Ext.4246**

Committee Secretary: Z Folley (ext 4532)



Recommendations/Decision Required:

That the attached Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report for 2006-07 reporting the work undertaken during the past municipal year be agreed and submitted to the Full Council at its meeting on 24 April 2007.

Introduction:

1. Further to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 8 March 2007, the attached annual report has been amended incorporating the comments made by the committee at that meeting. The document has also been type set into its final version. The meeting is now asked to agree the report so it can be referred to the full Council meeting on 24 April 2007.

2. This report is produced in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny procedure Rule 20 of the Constitution that requires an annual report to be submitted to the Council in April each year.

3. This is the sixth annual report to the Council, and the second under the new scrutiny regime instituted by the Council in April 2005, incorporating the Scrutiny Standing and the Task and Finish Panels.

This page is intentionally left blank

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2006-2007



Epping Forest District Council

Contents

Page

Introduction	3
- What is Scrutiny	3
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee	4
- Standing Scrutiny Panels	5
- Task and Finish Panels	5
The Overview and Scrutiny Committee	6
Standing Panels	
- The Housing Standing Panel	10
- Constitution and Member Services Standing Panel	12
- Customer Services and ICT Standing Panel	14
- Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel	16
- Environmental and Planning Services Standing Panel	18
Task and Finish Panels	
- Leisure Task and Finish Panel	22
- Crime and Disorder Task and Finish Panel	24
- Local Strategic Partnership Task and Finish Panel	25
- Services for Older People and Disabled People Task and Finish Panel	26
- Town Centre and Car Parks Task and Finish Panel	27
- Travellers Issues	29
Conclusion	31

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2006/2007

Introduction

This is the second report under the new Overview and Scrutiny Structure as instituted by the Full Council in April 2005.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to the setting up of five Standing Panels this year and five new Task and Finish Panels.

Overview and Scrutiny had implemented a training programme for councillors, delivered by a consultant who helped develop the councillor's skills on running scrutiny, asking relevant questions and probing deeper into issues that affect the Council and the wider community as a whole. This has led to a more professional and comprehensive examination of the areas they were asked to scrutinise.

What is Scrutiny?

Scrutiny in local government is the mechanism by which public accountability is exercised. The purpose of scrutiny in practice is to examine, question and evaluate in order to achieve improvement. The value of scrutiny is in the use of research and questioning techniques to make recommendations based on evidence. Scrutiny enables issues of public concern to be examined. At the heart of all the work is consideration of what impact the Cabinet's plans will have on the local community. However, the overview and scrutiny function is not meant to be confrontational or seen as deliberately set up to form an opposition to the Cabinet. Rather the two aspects should be regarded as 'different sides of the same coin'. The two should compliment each other and work in tandem to contribute to the development of the authority.

The 3 key principles of effective scrutiny in practice are:

- Scrutiny as "critical friendship" through constructive but robust internal challenge;
- Scrutiny as evidence based research and analysis using expert witnesses and public consultation;
- Scrutiny as a strategic programme investigating key council priorities and reflecting the concerns of the local community.

Scrutiny at Epping Forest utilises the 'PICK' system when setting its priorities. PICK stands for:

P = Public interest: the concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen;

I = Impact: issues that make the biggest difference to the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the district;

C = Council Performance: areas in which the Council and other agencies are not performing well;

K = Keep in Context: need to avoid duplication and wasted effort in identifying issues.

Alongside its challenge role, the scrutiny function has also continued to engage positively with the Cabinet and there continues to be strong cross party political co-operation between members on all panels.

Scrutiny has continued to provide valuable contributions to the Council following a change to the administration to a two party administration in 2006. The Cabinet remained receptive to ideas put forward by Scrutiny throughout the year.

At the first meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in May 2006 the committee reviewed their procedures following the training received. The meeting decided to continue the new arrangements and agreed the membership of panels.

Members were reminded that under the arrangements Scrutiny Standing and Task and Finish Panels had been established to undertake scrutiny reviews. The Committee had been tasked with agreeing the Membership of these panels, their terms of reference, work plans and reporting deadlines. Although the panels have no powers to make decisions they can put forward recommendations for consideration, either by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Cabinet or Council.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews the need for the continuation of Standing Panels prior to the end of the Council Year.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee coordinated with the Cabinet about their work plans for the year and pre-scrutinised their reports at its meetings during the week before Cabinet met. Liaisons with the Cabinet would take place to discuss the wider work programme that would be approved and reviewed annually. This acted as a troubleshooting exercise, finding out problems before they arose.

The Committee also engaged with external bodies in order to scrutinise parts of their work that encroached on the District and its people.

The Committee considered two call-ins this year (for details see Scrutinising and Monitoring Cabinet work on page 7), the first was on the Cabinet decision on the maximum length of cross-overs in May 2006 and secondly on the Cabinets decision on Free Saturday Parking in January 2007.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee membership consists of 11 Councillors who were appointed at the Annual Council meeting.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Panels

Standing Scrutiny Panels

Members agree terms of reference of panels and priorities of reviews and their work plans. A Lead Officer was appointed to oversee each panel to facilitate its process.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the work programme and terms of reference for each of the Panels on the basis of a rolling programme. The Standing Panels have a 'rolling programme' and would consider ongoing and cyclical issues. Five standing Scrutiny Panels were established, dealing with:

- i. Housing
- ii. Constitution and Member Services
- iii. Customer Services and ICT
- iv. Finance and Performance Management
- v. Environmental and Planning Services

Standing Panels reported regularly to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress with the work they were carrying out.

Task and Finish Panels

The Task and Finish reviews are restricted to dealing with activities which are issue based, time limited, non-cyclical with clearly defined objectives and are set a deadline to report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Panel reports on its progress as necessary. Five Task and Finish Panels were established during the year, they were:

- i. Leisure Task and Finish Panel;
- ii. Crime and Disorder Task and Finish Panel;
- iii. Local Strategic Partnership Task and Finish Panel;
- iv. Services for Older Persons and Disabled Persons Task and Finish Panel;
- v. Town Centre and Car Parks Task and Finish Panel.

The Task and Finish Panel on Travellers Issues that had begun during the municipal year 2005/06 carried on in this year, finishing in July 2006.

Task and Finish Panels are required to regularly report to the Committee on progress with the work they are carrying out.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Introduction by the Chairman:



“This is the second year of the Council’s new scrutiny system breaking down the topics being scrutinised into Standing and Task and Finish Panels and the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee, enabling a larger workload to be tackled and scrutinised. This has proved to be a very successful way of working through the large amount of topics that a Council’s Scrutiny structure is asked to consider over an average year.

As the Overview and Scrutiny Committee we have taken on numerous topics, including looking at the Epping Forest College, the Draft Council Plan for 2006-10, the proposed service levels at Whipps Cross University Hospital and the Police merger proposals. Also, a few days before each Cabinet meeting we meet to pre-scrutinise their agenda, enabling us to pre-empt any decisions and if need be, invite that member of the Cabinet to attend our meeting to answer any questions or concerns that we have about a particular report. The committee also has responsibility for determining

the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Work Programme and receiving regular reports from the Standing and Task and Finish Scrutiny Panel Chairmen. This is my first year as Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and as luck would have it, the Council began web-casting some of its meetings from the summer of 2006. This meant that our Committee was available to watch live on the web or at a later date, thus opening up the meeting to a much wider public than would be normally be the case. This, I understand, is proving to be a much appreciated resource, well used by the public.

I would like to take this opportunity to give my personal thanks to all the people from outside organisations who visited our Committee and Panels during the last year and gave us the benefit of their expertise and answered our (hopefully) pertinent and probing questions. We were very grateful that they took the time to help us out.

I would also like to express my thanks to my Vice-Chairman, Councillor Mrs Janet Whitehouse, the members of the O&S Committee, all the Chairmen of the Standing and Task and Finish Panels, the members of those panels and of course all the officers who support the Panels and my Committee and make our jobs that much more manageable.

I would like to take this opportunity to play particular tribute to the work of John Scott in developing Overview and Scrutiny at Epping Forest District Council over the last few years. Without his outstanding contribution we would not be in the position we enjoy today with Overview and Scrutiny Committee providing such effective monitoring of Cabinet decisions, constructive detailed policy development on behalf of the whole Council and strong relationships with our Community Partner Organisations”

Councillor Richard Morgan
April 2007

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee consisted of the following members:

Councillor R Morgan (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs J Whitehouse (Vice Chairman)
Councillors D Bateman, M Cohen, M Colling, R D'Souza, Mrs H Harding, P House,
G Mohindra, Mrs P Richardson and M Woollard.

The Lead Officer was John Scott, Joint Chief Executive (Community Services).

Terms of Reference

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's main functions are to monitor and scrutinise the work of the executive and its forward plan, external bodies linked to the District Council and the Council's financial performance. It is tasked with the consideration of call-ins, policy development, performance monitoring and reviewing corporate strategies.

The Committee's workload over the past year can be broken down as follows:

(a) Scrutinising and monitoring Cabinet work

The Committee reviewed and commented on the Cabinet's Forward Plan and identified areas for further consideration. The Committee has a proactive role in this area through carrying out pre-scrutiny work. This involved receiving and considering the Cabinet agenda prior to the Cabinet itself.

The Committee considered two call-ins this year, the first was on the Cabinet decision on the maximum length of cross-overs in May 2006 and secondly on the issue of the Cabinet's decision on Free Saturday Parking in January 2007, neither of the call-ins were supported and the original decisions stood.

The first call-in was originally considered by the Task and Finish Panel on residential parking. Part of their recommendations being that the maximum length of a crossover remains at 6 metres. The Cabinet endorsed this, acknowledging that the Task and Finish Panel had considered all aspects of this topic. However this part of the report was called-in by some members who thought it to be inflexible in the face of parking hardships of the residents and the public concern this generated. On balance the Committee supported the views of the Task and Finish Panel and the Portfolio Holder.

The second call-in on the provision of free Saturday parking was not at issue with the decision but that the Cabinet failed to properly consider and justify the decision, in particular the financial aspects of the decision. Also, the criteria for the review had not been established so that the success of the scheme could not be properly measured and there had been insufficient consultation with Town and Parish Councils and local ward members. After debating the decision taken and the call-in arguments the Committee agreed with the Cabinet's decision to provide free Saturday parking. However, the Committee did ask that the Portfolio Holder report back to them on the review procedures that were put in place.

(b) Standing Panels work programme monitoring

The Committee received regular updates from the Chairmen of the various Scrutiny Panels to report on the progress made with their current work. This has allowed the Committee to monitor performance, prioritise

work and when necessary adjust their work plans to take into account new proposals and urgent items.

(c) Items considered by the committee this year

This year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received presentations on and considered such topics as:

(i) A presentation by the Principal of Epping Forest College, David Butler and Roger Neville, the Chairman of the College Board, on its future plans and development. The college is seeking to develop part of its site to facilitate redevelopment of the college campus. The Committee, as well as commenting on these plans, also scrutinised the alleged problems posed by the students to the surrounding area. The Committee talked through these issues with the college and got a better understanding of the college's problems.

(ii) The Committee also received a presentation by Councillor R Chambers, Chairman of the Essex Police Authority and Mr R Paddock the Deputy Chief Executive and Treasurer, on the proposed merger of Bedford, Essex and Hertfordshire Police areas. The Committee scrutinised the proposal and submitted a response to the consultation exercise being carried out by the Government, stating in the strongest terms, their opposition to the proposed merger. In the end it was hoped that the Committee's recommendations were taken into consideration by the government and helped in their decision not to go ahead with the proposed merger.

(iii) The Committee considered recommendations of the Constitution and Member Services Panel on their review of the structure and membership of the Area Plans Sub-committees. The Committee rejected their proposal that no change be made to the structure of the Sub-committees and proposed that the present Area Sub-committees 'B' and 'C' be combined. The Committee considered that such a reconfiguration was required to balance out the workload of the Sub-committees and shorten the timescale for dealing with the cases, which the study revealed as issues of concern. The Committee supported the recommendation that all members of the Council should be members of their local Sub-committee. Their recommendations have since been endorsed by the Council for implementation from the start of the new Council year.

i(v) The Committee considered and commented on the draft Council Plan for 2006-10. They endorsed the key measures contained within the plan and made comments on several sections of the plan to be passed on to the Cabinet for their consideration.

(v) The Committee met the Local Commissioner for Children and Young People (CYPSP) Ms Lonica VanClay twice during the year, the second time she was accompanied by Ms G Mann (the Children's Commissioning Manager for the West Essex Primary Care Trust). On her first visit she reported on her role in the identification and commissioning of services for the 0-19 age range. The second time she reported to the committee, updating the structure of the CYPSP and the developments on the developments of Children's Services within the District.

(vi) The Cabinet were invited to present their plans for the year ahead, the Committee considered the schedules with a view to selecting issues for pre-decision scrutiny. They hope to develop this role over the next year.

(vii) The Committee received a presentation from James Slater, the Deputy Chief Executive of Waltham

Forest Primary Care Trust, Mr Alan Clarke of the Barking and Dagenham PCT, Aidan Thomas, Chief Executive of the West Essex PCT and Mrs Catherine O'Connell, Locality Director, West Essex PCT, on the 'Fit for the Future' review of Northeast London Healthcare, currently being undertaken by the Northeast London Strategic Health Authority. Resulting from this the Council appointed a member representative to the proposed Joint Security Committee being set up by four London Boroughs, Havering, Redbridge, Barking and Dagenham and Waltham Forest. This is due to meet in April 2007 and the Committee awaits the results with interest. This will be a first for the Council, participating in a cross border scrutiny.

(viii) Chief Superintendent Andy Adams, the Divisional Commander for Essex Police gave a presentation on their Neighbourhood Policy Initiative and wider issues. He attended the Committee twice during the year coming back to report on progress with local initiatives and wider policing issues.

(ix) The Committee considered a report of the Task and Finish Panel on Town Centres and Car Parks, making early recommendations to the Cabinet concerning the development of the new parking enforcement contract.

(x) Committee invited Ms Davina Millership, the Area Highways Manager for the district, to the meeting to answer questions from committee members and non-committee members on the state of the roads in the district. This was one of the most well attended meetings of the year and provoked a large number of questions from members.



HOUSING STANDING PANEL

Introduction by the Chairman:

"This is my second year as Chairman of the Housing Standing Panel and again we have had a busy year looking at various Housing Strategies and schemes. In addition we also undertook ongoing monitoring of various housing activities.

As always I would like to thank the Councillors and officers who have put in such hard work to help make this Scrutiny Panel run smoothly in carrying out its important role in scrutinising the Housing Services of Epping Forest District. My special thanks to Mrs Molly Carter, the Chairman of the Tenants and Leaseholder Federation who also attends our meetings as a member of the Panel."

Councillor Stephen Murray
April 2007

The Housing Standing Panel consisted of the following members:

Councillor S Murray (Chairman)

Councillor Mrs R Gadsby (Vice Chairman)

Councillors K Angold-Stephens, D Bateman, Mrs P Brooks, Mrs D Borton, Mrs H Harding, Mrs J Lea, G Mohindra, Mrs P Richardson, Mrs J H Whitehouse and J Wyatt.

The Lead Officer was Alan Hall, Head of Housing Services. The Panel also appreciated the Housing Portfolio Holder, Councillor D Stallan, attending the meetings to help them with their deliberations.

Mrs Molly Carter, the Chairman of the Tenants and Leaseholder Federation, who attends the meetings as a non-voting co-opted member to provide the views of residents and stakeholders, assisted the Panel.

Terms of Reference

The Housing Standing Panel is tasked to undertake reviews of a number of the Council's public and private sector housing policies and to make recommendations arising from such reviews to the Housing Portfolio Holder or cabinet as appropriate. They also undertake specific projects related to public and private sector housing issues, as directed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Panel scrutinised a number of important issues over the last year, which included:

- (i) The Choice Based Letting Scheme – the Council had agreed to work in partnership with five other local authorities, creating a consortium of six authorities, Brentwood BC, Broxbourne DC, Chelmsford BC, East Herts DC, Epping Forest DC and Uttlesford DC. The scheme would advertise any vacancies in

the housing stock of the relevant authorities. The people on the housing register could then express their interest in any property advertised. The Panel considered the proposed scheme and were advised of its implementation and use throughout the year.

(ii) Housing Services Strategy on Empty Council Dwellings – the Panel considered the Council's strategy on the amount of time council dwellings are kept empty between tenancies, that these are kept to a minimum and to assist the Council in discharging its duty to people who are homeless or otherwise in housing needs. The Tenant and Leaseholders federation had already considered and had supported this strategy.

(iii) Empty Property Strategy – they considered and commented on the draft Empty Property Strategy, which set out the action the council intends to take to bring long-term empty homes back into use. The Panel asked that officers put in extra safeguards into the report that went to cabinet to stop landlords receiving more than one grant per property.

(iv) Private Sector Housing Strategy – the Panel looked at and commented on, the draft strategy that will lead to substantial changes in the enforcement of the Private Sector Housing Standards and the arrangements for giving financial assistance to promote the repair and improvement of sub-standard private sector housing.



(v) Housing Service Strategy on Harassment – the Panel considered the strategy on harassment relating to the Council's approach to dealing with acts or allegations of harassment involving members of the public who are recipients of housing services. Housing Services condemns all forms of harassment and bullying and recognises that harassment is defined by the impact on the victim of harassment, not by the intentions of the alleged perpetrator.

(vi) Housing Service Strategy on Equality and Diversity – the Panel reviewed the Council's strategy on how the Council proposed to promote equality and diversity in line with the Council's Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy.

(vii) Housing applicants Ethnic Monitoring – reviewing the ethnicity of applicants on the housing register compared with the ethnicity of those allocated accommodation.



CONSTITUTION AND MEMBER SERVICES STANDING PANEL

Introduction by the Chairman:

"This year we looked at a variety of topics including reviewing the future shape of our Council meetings, how we could improve our Civic Ceremonial functions and how to improve the structure of our Area Planning Sub-Committees, which proved to be a contentious issue, with every member holding their own strong views on their future.

I would like to express my thanks to my Vice Chairman, Councillor Mitch Cohen for his valuable support over the year and of course, to the members of the panel for their important contributions."

Councillor Richard Morgan
April 2007

The Constitution and Member Services Standing Panel consisted of the following members:

Councillor R Morgan (Chairman)

Councillor M Cohen (Vice Chairman)

Councillors Mrs P Brooks, R Church, R D'Souza, J Demetriou, Mrs A Haigh, J Markham, Mrs P Richardson, Mrs P Smith and Mrs L Wagland.

The Lead Officer was Ian Willett, Head of Research and Democratic Services.

Terms of Reference

To undertake reviews of constitutional, civic, electoral and governance matters and services for members on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Council and the Cabinet with recommendations on matters allocated to the Panel as appropriate.

The Panel scrutinised a number of important issues over the last year, which included:

(i) Area Planning Sub-committees, Review of Structure – the Panel considered the structure of the Area Planning Sub-committees. The review stemmed from the desire to give all Members a place on their local Sub-committee and the need to even out their workload. The Panel canvassed all Members and the Local Councils who expressed strong support for the retention of the area based structure. Some proposed that the rural wards should be dealt with by a Sub-committee specifically for such areas to facilitate their needs. The Panel heard from planning officers who clarified that any reduction in the number of Sub-committees might marginally quicken the process for determining applications and help us secure our Best Value targets. The Panel considered the merits of a number of alternative structures submitted by Members but felt that they would not solve the issues behind the review. Having rejected the alternatives they recommended that the present structure of the Sub-committee be retained. The Panel paid particular

attention to the proposal that all Members be members of their Sub-committee as requested by many Members. Given the support for the idea, they felt that the change was necessary but sought the views of the Sub-committee itself on how the expansion could work. Both the Sub-committee and the Council have approved the proposals to come into effect in May 2007.

(ii) Council Meetings, Review of Future Role – the Panel also changed the rule for debate at Council meetings to enable back-bench members to question their Cabinet colleagues without notice. This has enabled them to ask question on topical issues and hold the Portfolio Holders to account on any pressing issue. The Members have expressed support for this new opportunity, which has been in place for several months. The Panel also introduced State of the District and Single Issue debates. The first of which will be held on the new government white paper which seeks to make key changes to local government. The forum will provide an ideal opportunity for Members to learn more about the paper and consider how we should respond to the challenges.

(iii) May 2006 Elections – the Panel reviewed the May 2006 elections covering the electronic electoral pilot, turnout, polling stations, postal votes, spoilt ballot papers, police liaison, complaints, the count and budget issues.

(iv) Review of Civic Ceremonial – The Panel set up a subgroup to undertake an in-depth review of the Civic Ceremonial function. The review revealed that the Chairman's Office had, over a number of years been supported by additional working hours by the Chairman's Secretary, without which many of the Council's high quality events would not have been delivered. The Panel secured further support through the budget process to better reflect the staffing required for the events. The Panel have also reviewed the use of a civic car. Whilst many districts run a full time vehicle for the Chairman's use, we rely on a hire car when the function requires the use of a car. This budget had not kept pace with increasing costs and placed the Chairman at particular disadvantage and we have agreed with our Cabinet colleagues, a modest increase in this budget. The review also covered the safe custody of the Civic Regalia, Civic Hospitality and Retiring Gifts for long serving Councillors.



(v) Reuse of Public Sector Information Regulations - the Panel reviewed the draft policy for the reuse of public sector information held by the Council and how it would respond to any requests that would be difficult without a policy, which reflected the requirements of the regulations.

(vi) Audit and Governance Committee – the Panel reviewed the need for and agreed to, the setting up of an independent Audit and Governance Committee. This independent Member group is to provide an effective challenge to the executive, conduct independent scrutiny reviews of the Council's financial affairs and effective leadership on governance.



CUSTOMER SERVICES AND ICT STANDING PANEL

Introduction by Chairman:

"This is my first year as the Chairman of this Panel, which has proved to be an interesting and informative experience. One of the main tasks we undertook this year was to get the pilot for the Council to webcast some of its meetings, off the ground. This was started in the summer of 2006 and has proved to be a very successful in bringing our important meetings to a wider public audience.

I would like to thank my Vice Chairman (Councillor Mrs Kay Rush) for all her help during the year and of course the Lead Officer for this Panel, Adrian Scott."

Councillor Mrs Maggie McEwen
April 2007

The Customer Services and ICT Standing Panel consisted of the following members:

Councillor Mrs M McEwen (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs K Rush (Vice Chairman)
Councillors Mrs D Borton, R Church, M Cohen, R D'Souza, Mrs C Pond, Mrs P Richardson, Mrs P Smith, Mrs L Wagland and J M Whitehouse.

The Lead officer was Adrian Scott, Head of Information and Communication Technology.

Terms of Reference

- (1) To consider the introduction of a Customer Services Transformation Programme* (CSTP) on behalf of the Customer Services, Media, Communications and ICT Portfolio Holder and to make any resulting recommendations to the Portfolio Holder or Cabinet as appropriate.
- (2) To consider the specific ICT role within the CSTP and agree which elements of this project should be monitored and reviewed by other O&S panels/committee.
- (3) To consider the business case and technical proposals for all major ICT systems on behalf of the Customer Services, Media, Communications and ICT Portfolio Holder prior to consideration by Cabinet.
- (4) To monitor and review progress on the implementation of all major ICT systems.

(5) To report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Council and the Cabinet with recommendations on matters allocated to the Panel.

*The Portfolio Holder has agreed to temporarily suspend the CSTP in order for the Council to give resource priority to other projects in light of the Council's current financial position.

The Panel scrutinised a number of important issues over the last year, which included the following positive outcomes:

Customer Services Transformation Programme – the Panel received a report from an outside consulting firm on the proposed phased implementation of the Customer Contact Centre. They made some very important comments on the possible structure of the plans which were subsequently considered and agreed as appropriate concerns by the Cabinet. Should the CSTP subsequently be re-introduced by the Cabinet the Panel would continue their monitoring role again next year.

Webcasting Pilot – a webcasting pilot had been agreed as part of its 2005/06 e-government strategy. The Panel were consulted early in the year on the webcasting pilot and helped set down a protocol. Later in the year they received an interim report on the encouraging first few months of the pilot. They considered and agreed officer proposals for full evaluation in the summer of 2007 and proposals to extend the current contract until March 2008 using existing revenue funding.

Replacement of the Local Taxation and Benefits ICT System – The Panel considered a draft report to the Cabinet on the replacement of the Local Taxation and Benefits ICT System. Their monitoring role continues into the new year and they will report as necessary on this project and other major ICT systems into next year.



ICT Desktop Strategy 2007-2009 – At their February 2007 meeting the Panel received proposals for the three year desktop strategy. The desktop strategy brings a formal approach to the procurement of both the IT equipment and software. The Strategy will contribute to the Council's cross cutting efficiency agenda by driving down IT costs whilst ensuring that all staff have access to the appropriate and adequate level of IT to carry out their job function. The Panel positively endorsed this strategy.

Webcasting of Planning Subcommittee A from Roding Valley High School



FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT STANDING PANEL

Introduction by Chairman:

“This Panel’s task is to keep a watchful eye on the Council’s finances and its performance. We have also found our workload heavily influenced by the need to tick Audit Commission boxes. This has led to some heavy agendas and there is further work to be done in ensuring that members find meetings relevant and interesting whilst still covering the full range of the council’s activities.

I would like to thank my vice Chairman James Hart for the support he provided during the year and, of course, the lead officers for their invaluable help and advice.”

Councillor Jon Whitehouse
April 2007

The Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel consisted of the following Members:

Councillor J M Whitehouse (Chairman)

Councillor J Hart (Vice Chairman)

Councillors Mrs R Gadsby, R Church, M Colling, Mrs A Cooper, R D’Souza, P House, D Jacobs and R Morgan.

The Lead Officers were Tony Tidey, Head of Human Resources and Performance Management and Bob Palmer, Head of Finance.

Terms of Reference

- o To review Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) and Local Performance Indicator (LPI) and to make recommendations for corrective action in relation to poorly performing BVPIs and LPIs;
- o To consider and make recommendations as appropriate on the Council’s annual Best Value Performance Plan;
- o To undertake a full review of the existing Council Plan and to make recommendations to the Cabinet;
- o To develop arrangements to directly engage the community in commenting on and shaping the future direction of services to make them more responsive to local needs, including the development of proposals for effective consultation through an annual community conference and to annually review the consultation exercises undertaken by the council over the previous year;
- o To consider the draft budgets for each portfolio and to consider financial monitoring reports on key areas of income and expenditure for each portfolio.

The Panel scrutinised a number of important issues over the last year, which

included:

- (i) The Key Performance Indicators for 2005/06 and 2006/07. Of the 100 or so performance indicators, the Cabinet chose 40 of these as Key Performance indicators and aimed for at least 40% of these indicators to be in the top quartile (i.e. to match or exceed the performance of the best 25% of district councils for that indicator). The Panel noted that the indicators for 2005/06 were comfortably above their targets. The Panel's scrutiny has revealed problems with some indicators which we hoped will be resolved when the basket of indicators is next reviewed;
- (ii) Examining the Gershon Backward Looking Statement for 2004/05, which detailed efficiency savings made by the Council and was submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government;
- (iii) Reviewing the levels of income generated from Local Land Charges search fees, and how the section is dealing with the recent shortfall in income due to the number of personal searches now taking place. They welcomed the news that the turn around time for searches had dropped from fourteen working days to six and that following pressure, the County Council had also provided extra resources to help in the searches;
- (iv) Looking at the financial implications of the number of staff vacancies and also looking at an Evaluation of the council's Recruitment and Retention Strategy. The Panel welcomed progress in attracting trainees and having them continue in post once they have been trained and endorsed the Human Resources section's shift of focus to sickness management issues;
- (v) Examining the Data Quality Audit and the Value for Money Strategy. This assessment had provided an opportunity to set out an overall corporate approach to ensuring data quality, through the development of a Data Quality Strategy;
- (vi) Considering the Financial Monitoring schedules each quarter in order to monitor the budget and identify areas of over or under-spending;
- (vii) Scrutinising the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Improvement Plan, prior to Cabinet consideration;
- (viii) Consideration of the Essex Local Area Agreement and considered the proposed actions and targets within priority areas of the agreement to be adopted by the Council;
- (ix) Assisting the executive on the review of the Council's Consultation Plan for 2006/07 and expressing concern that the limited consultation proposed for the council's waste strategy did not meet the standards set out in the consultation strategy because of time and resource constraints;
- (x) Examining the Value for Money Analysis for 2005/06. In order that this massive piece of work be studied in detail the panel set up a sub-group, of three members, which is due to make recommendations to the next meeting of the Panel; and
- (xi) Considering the draft Portfolio Budgets for 2007/08 and the revised four year forecast including the proposed level of Council tax increase for 2007/08 and receiving the Fees and Charges proposed for the forthcoming financial year (2007/08). The Panel endorsed the recommended council tax increase of 3.5% but expressed concern about the rising cost of waste management and diminishing level of reserves predicted in the four year forecast. It has requested a report on the council's land and accommodation strategy.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND PLANNING SERVICES STANDING PANEL



Introduction by Chairman:

"We meet on six occasions throughout the year and shaped policy on some of the most significant issues facing the local community. We formulated comments on the Draft East of England Plan, waste management, traffic issues in rural areas, the use of Community Wardens and consulted with local councils, residents and experts from external agencies during the process.

I would like to thank my Vice Chairman (Councillor Doug Kelly) for all his help during the year and of course the Lead Officers for this Panel John Gilbert, Head of Environmental Services and John Preston, Head of Planning Services and Economic Development. I would also like to thank all the representatives from outside agencies, local interest groups, the Local Councils and members of the public who attended our meetings and contributed to the discussions "

Councillor Mrs Penny Smith
April 2007

The Environmental and Planning Services Panel consisted of the following members:

Councillor Mrs P Smith (Chairman)
Councillor D Kelly (Vice Chairman)
Councillors D Batemen, Mrs D Borton, Mrs A Cooper, D Jacobs, A Lee, G Mohindra, Mrs P Richardson, Mrs L Wagland and J Wyatt.

The Lead officers were John Gilbert, Head of Environmental Services and John Preston, Head of Planning Services and Economic Development

Terms of Reference

1. To keep under review the activity and decisions of the West Essex Joint Waste Committee.
2. To consider what changes are practical and desirable to Council policies concerning the reuse of redundant and other buildings in the Metropolitan Green Belt.
3. To consider the arrangements by which the new Local Development Scheme is being brought into operation.

4. To consider matters which arise through the process that the Government is driving to bring in an East Of England Plan.
5. In the context of the DERA 'Cleaner Neighbourhoods Consultation document' to consider the viability of employing uniformed wardens, the formulation of a response to the document and the financial consequences of these matters.
6. In relation to Traveller issues to consider and monitor:
 - (a) the measures previously agreed by the Council to secure the clearance of the top level of the sites at Paynes Lane and the actions agreed for Birchfield;
 - (b) the position regarding tolerated sites and;
 - (c) the management of travellers who enter onto land within the district with a view to unauthorised encampments;
 - (d) Government's guidance on the needs of travellers in the context of the Council's review of its District Local Plan and the Essex Housing Needs Assessment;
 - (e) the results of the Commission for Racial Equality's study on traveller issues once published;
 - (f) That the draft list of current and past sites within the District produced by Planning Services be completed and updated and made available to the Environmental and Panel Services Standing Panel.

The Panel scrutinised a number of important issues over the last year, which included:

- (i) Clean Neighbourhoods and Street Wardens - The Panel continued to consider the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 which enables Local Authorities to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to deal with litter, fly tipping graffiti and other types environmental crime. The Panel heard from Essex Police and the local Street Warden Resource Centre to examine the possibility of using Street Wardens, our own staff or Police Community Support Officers to implement the new powers.

Some of the Panel visited Colchester and Braintree to observe the work of their street wardens. They appreciated the role that they performed but felt that our own local



Some of the Councillor speaking to a Street Warden in a housing estate in Colchester

i s -

sues might require a different approach. They balanced this against the high costs of the posts and decided not to recommend their use in the District. They intend to identify more cost effective and practical measures to clean up our streets at their next meeting in April 2007 and report their recommendations in the new-year.

(ii) Traffic Issues in Rural Areas - The Panel received a presentation from Keith Lawson of the Essex County Council who helped scope its review of the various pressures on rural areas. They took on board local concerns about commercial vehicle activity in Roydon and Nazeing and organised a focus day for local Members to identify some simple, practical cost effective solutions to the concerns. They will make recommendations on this in the new year. The issues have been reported to the Area Highways Manager and the Area Highways Panel which has raised awareness of the review to secure support.

(iii) East of England Plan - The Panel helped shape the EFDC response to the Draft East of England Plan. They expressed concern about the location and number of new houses identified for our District and strengthened the case for development at alternative locations. This has since been incorporated into the latest draft of the plan.

The Panel also pressed for sufficient infrastructure and funding for the proposals and are waiting to see whether this case has also influenced government thinking.

(iv) West Essex Waste Contract - The Panel continued to monitor the procurement of the West Essex Waste contract. The Panel will work to ensure that the needs our new recycling service are taken on board by the process so that our recycling target is achieved.

(vi) Planning Enforcement - Monitoring of Activity- The Panel arranged for regular reports to be included in the Members Bulletin on current planning enforcement activity. As a result Members are now able to keep a watchful eye over such investigations and flag up any issues of concern for investigation and action.

The Work of the Task and Finish Panels 2006-2007

LEISURE TASK AND FINISH PANEL

This panel was set up to consider the four topics for Review as identified by Overview and Scrutiny Committee i.e.

- i) Future management of Waltham Abbey Sports Centre
- ii) Review of the future Management of the Roding Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve
- iii) Review of Arts Development in the District and
- iv) The District Council's role and involvement in Outdoor and Community Events.

Under the Chairmanship of Councillor Mrs Harding, they gathered evidence and information in relation to the four topics through the receipt of data, presentations and by participation in fact finding visits.

They consulted with Partners, Agencies, Stakeholders and Users of the services under review. They established key issues and future needs and evaluated all relevant facts in relation to the topics under review in an objective way and to produce recommendations for future action accordingly for two of the four topics this year. They sought to establish whether there are any resource implications arising out of the topics under review and advise Cabinet for inclusion in the Budget Process.

The Leisure Task & Finish Panel consisted of the following members:



Councillor Heather Harding

Councillor Mrs H Harding (Chairman)
 Councillor Mrs P Brooks (Vice Chairman)
 Councillors M Colling, Mrs A Grigg, Mrs J Lea, J Markham, S Murray, Mrs P K Rush, Mrs P Smith, P Turpin and J M Whitehouse.

The Lead Officer was Derek Macnab, Head of Leisure Services.

Site Visits Undertaken by the Panel

The Panel made various site visits during the year to gain first hand experience and a feel for the items they were scrutinising. The Panel visited the Waltham Abbey Sports Centre and Swimming Pool, the Roding Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve, the 'Donny South' Event at North Weald Airfield, the Copped Hall Charity Fun Run, and the Ongar Arts and Education Centre at Great Stoney.

Presentations Received/ Consultation undertaken

- (1) The Panel received a presentation on the current State of the Arts and Art Development in EFDC by the Arts Officer, the Dance Development Artist and two community artists who presented an informative and unusual audiovisual presentation.

(2) The Panel also questioned the Arts/Activities Co-ordinator at Sherrell House (a care home in Chigwell), the head of the Ongar Music School and the manager of the IC Youth Dance Group at Ivy Chimneys School;



(3) The panel received an informative presentation on his organisation at the Great Stoney Ongar Arts and Education Centre by the Director of Theatre Resources;

(4) They received a presentation on the Council's role and involvement in Outdoor and Community events from the Council's Marketing and Events Manager;

(5) The Head Teacher of King Harold School, the School Bursar and the Chairman of School Governors for the School were invited to discuss the future management options for the Waltham Abbey Sports Centre;

(6) The Panel also spoke to a local user of the Roding Valley Meadows Nature Reserve; representatives from the Roding Valley Liaison Group; the Chairman and some members of the Local Nature Reserve Management Committee; some representatives from the Essex Wildlife Trust; the Warden of the Roding Valley Nature Reserve and the Botanical Recorder for Essex. The Panel also talked to EFDC's Country-care Manager;

(7) The Lead Officer also met separately with the head of the Grange Farm Trust to discuss the future management of the Roding Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve. They currently part own and part finance the reserve; and

(8) The Panel also received a presentation from Gerry Kehoe, the Council's marketing and Events manager on the value, role and benefits of events to the district. Noting that outdoor events have long since been a feature of the special character of the Epping Forest District.

Outcome

The Panel has issued an report on the Management of the Roding Valley Nature Reserve where they recommended that the Essex Wildlife Trust continue to manage the reserve and they be given a contract for a twenty year period (in order to attract external funding). This would not entail any additional expenditure on the Council's side and would ensure the continuation of the reserve's management. They have also reported on the review of Arts Development in the District. This, however, had thrown up a new avenue to be explored, that of perhaps outsourcing some of the work currently undertaken by the Council's Arts Team. However, this would need a new Panel to be set up to look into the options open to the Council. Finally they looked at the District Council's role and involvement in Outdoor and Community Events, they realised

that the Council should review how it is represented corporately at Events generally, in order to raise its profile. They also felt that there was some appetite for the Council to produce more of its own events and that further thought should be given to the running of small community events and the help that the council could give.

For more information see the report produced by the Task and Finish Panel.

Because of the wide scope of the work this Panel, they have found it impossible to bring the last item on their remit, the future management of Waltham Abbey Sports Centre to a conclusion in the time scale allotted to them. As a result they have asked the parent Overview and Scrutiny Committee to extend their timeframe into the new municipal year.

CRIME AND DISORDER TASK AND FINISH PANEL

The Panel sought to consult the Police on pinpointing the areas causing concerns, the PCT to establish the link between mental health and crime, a fact finding meeting with the Probation Service, the Fire Brigade, Transport for London and the EFDC Anti Social Behaviour Officer



Councillor Mitchell Cohen

The Crime & Disorder T&F Panel consisted of the following members:

Councillor M Cohen (Chairman)
Councillor M Woollard (Vice Chairman)
Councillors D Bateman, P Gode, Mrs A Grigg, Mrs A Haigh, D Jacobs, R Law, R Morgan, Mrs C Pond, P Spencer, D Stallan and J Wyatt.

The Lead Officer was John Scott, Joint Chief Executive, Community Services.

Presentations Received/ Consultation undertaken:

The Panel received presentations from and consulted with:

(1) The Divisional Commander for the Police (Western Division) on EFDC's ability to scrutinise the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

(2) The Director of Public Health, the Lead Commissioner for Mental Health from the West Essex Primary Care Trust and the Associate Director from the North Essex Mental Health Partnership Trust to explore the help and provision given to mental health patients to prevent them engaging in criminal activity.

3) The Fire and Rescue Services who have a part in working with young people to turn them away from crime.

Outcome

The Panel on considering the evidence taken since last July, deliberated and issued a final report in April. For more information see the Final report produced by the Task and Finish Panel.

LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (LSP)

The Panel was set up to consider the following:

To consider the set up and operation of the Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership and formulate recommendations on its future in light of the government consultation paper 'Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their Future' and the Local Government White Paper expected in November 2006.

The Task and Finish Panel consisted of the following members:

Councillor Mrs M Sartin (Chairman)
 Councillor Mrs P Smith (Vice Chairman)
 Councillors Mrs S Clapp, Mrs A Cooper, J Demetriou, Mrs J Lea, A Lee, Mrs J H Whitehouse and J M Whitehouse.

The Lead Officer was John Scott, Joint Chief Executive, Community Services.

The Panel expressed a wish to explore the strengths and weaknesses of the District's LSP and measures to secure greater community involvement and publicity for its work.

The Government consultation paper sought to pass responsibility for the LSP to the Council's Cabinet and create a greater role for members and scrutiny in their work to increase democratic accountability.



Councillor Mary Sartin

Presentations Received/ Consultation undertaken

In investigating these issues, the Panel heard from the Principal of the Epping Forest College in his capacity as the Chairman of the local LSP and the Life Long Learning Action Group. They interviewed some of the Action Group chairs, and appreciated that their groups had added real value to important projects through partnership working.

They considered the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and received a presentation on the "six – monthly refresh" from the Head of Community Planning and Regeneration for Essex County Council. They considered the performance management framework funding, and Member involvement in the agreement. They reviewed the Councils achievements against the five local LAA priorities and fed back comments to secure them.

Outcome

In December 2006, a sub-group of the Panel met to draw some conclusions and formulate recommendations for their final report. They agreed proposals to encourage greater member involvement, a stronger role for scrutiny, and increased funding for the partnership. The report also proposed that the Chairman of the Partnership should continue to be appointed by the whole Partnership on personal merit. Their full report was endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2007 and will be considered by the Cabinet.

For more information see the Final report produced by the Task and Finish Panel.

SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE AND DISABLED PEOPLE

The Panel was set up to consider the following:

1. To consider the services offered by EFDC to older people and disabled people (of all ages).
2. To consider the services offered by the voluntary sector to older people and disabled people in the district.



Councillor Susan Perry

The Task and Finish Panel consisted of the following members:

Councillor Mrs S Perry (Chairman)
 Councillor Mrs J Whitehouse (Vice Chairman)
 Councillors D Bateman, Mrs A Cooper, Mrs A Grigg, P House, D Kelly P Turpin and K Wright.

The Panel co-opted Kay Ellis as a member. Kay is a member of the Joint Management Team for Older People.

The Lead Officer was John Scott, Joint Chief Executive, Community Services.

Presentations Received/ Consultation undertaken

The Panel received presentations from and consulted with:

- (1) Members of the Joint Management Team for Older People, this team consisted of members from different organisations such as Adult Social Care, the District Council (Housing), Voluntary Action Epping Forest, the then Epping Forest Primary Care Trust, a Champion/User Consultant Geriatrician

and the Mental Health Trust.

(2) The Panel also received reports on services provided by the District Council covering such diverse aspects as Social Clubs for Older People, reviewing the Council's Handy Person Scheme, the Council's progress towards responding to the Disability Equality Duty and Concessionary Travel.

The Panel also undertook some visits either on their own or in small groups:

- (i) some members a meeting of a Sheltered Housing Forum and took the opportunity to ask questions and discuss matters of concern.
- (ii) Some members attended the Parsonage Court Day Club to find out first hand their problems and the views of those who attended the club.
- (iii) They attended a meeting of the Older Peoples Advisory Group, which covered a wide range of topics affecting older people in the District.
- (iv) The Chairman of the Panel visited Robert Daniels Court to view their facilities and speak to the residents.
- (v) A number of sheltered Schemes were also visited and the residents concerns noted.
- (vi) Some members attended a meeting of the sheltered housing managers, and some went to luncheon and social clubs.

Outcome

The Panel made a final report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee summarising their findings, commenting on the provisions provided and making several recommendations to the Council on how they could assist the older people and disabled people in the district.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is awaiting with interest the Council's formal response to the Disability Equality Duty.

For more information see the Final report produced by the Task and Finish Panel.

TOWN CENTRE AND CAR PARKS TASK AND FINISH PANEL

The Panel was set up to consider the following:

Town Centres:

- (i) the type of town centres that should be encourage in Epping Forest
- (ii) the key factors affecting the vitality of each of our town centres
- (iii) the steps required to assist and encourage the economies and growth of our town centres

Car Parking:

- (iv) The development of the new car parking enforcement contract;
- (v) Free parking on Saturdays;
- (vi) The development and future use of car parks

Anti-social behaviour in car parks;

- (vii) the extent of anti-social behaviour in car parks and the action taken to date;
- (viii) the various technical solutions available should closure of car parks be a necessary solution.



Councillor Matt Colling

The Task and Finish Panel consisted of the following members:

Councillor M Colling (Chairman)
 Councillor Mrs R Gadsby (Vice Chairman)
 Councillors K Angold-Stephens, Mrs P Brooks, J Demetriou, P Gode, P Macmillan, Mrs P Richardson, D Stallan, M Woollard and K Wright

The Lead Officer was John Gilbert, Head of Environmental Services.

Presentations Received/ Consultation undertaken

(1) Free Saturday Car Parking

The Panel looked at proposals to provide Free Saturday Car Parking in the Council's long stay and combined car parks, which is a key commitment of the Cabinet. They supported the recommendations in principle but requested that the regime be subject to operational review. The Cabinet accepted this advice. Some members subsequently called in the decision to make sure the financial arrangements were sound (as highlighted in the call-in section on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee) and, as a result, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have asked the Portfolio Holder to formulate suitable monitoring arrangements for the Committee to pursue. He reported his proposals to the March Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

(2) EFDC Parking Contract

The Panel held two meetings to explore proposals for the renewal of the Council's car parking contract. They heard from consultants and considered a report of their findings based on their knowledge of best value and practice. The Panel formulated recommendations to balance the need for both a cost effective and high quality new service. Their proposals have since been endorsed by Cabinet.



(3) Development Potential of Council car parks

As requested by the Cabinet in April 2006, the Panel investigated the development potential of a number of Council owned car parks. They heard from the Councils consultants, 'Bidwells' and asked them to investigate further proposals for the development of two of the sites. They stressed the need for this to provide an element of public parking for local residents and customers to support the growth of our local economy.

The Panel spoke to officers from Parking Associates Ltd and also the EFDC Parking Manager who advised on the current state of the car parks and what options were open to them in the future.

The Panel still has to look at measures available and the latest guidance on dealing with the problem of anti-social behaviour in car parks. They will continue with this important piece of work in the new-year.

Outcome

The Panel endorsed the idea of free Saturday car parking for certain council run car parks in the district, and this has now been acted upon. They also got an assurance that this will be reviewed in twelve months time.

Having made the above recommendation to cabinet the Panel has asked the parent Overview and Scrutiny Committee to extend their timeframe into the new municipal year as they consider town centres and anti-social behaviour in car parks.

For more information see the report produced by the Task and Finish Panel.

TRAVELLER ISSUES

The Task and Finish Panel consisted of the following members:

Councillor P McMillan (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs D Borton (Vice Chairman)
Councillors Mrs P Brooks, Mrs D Collins, K Faulkner, Mrs P Smith, Mrs S Stavrou, T Richardson and J M Whitehouse.

The Lead Officers were John Gilbert, Head of Environmental Services and Mr John Preston, Head of Planning Services and Economic Development.

Summary

This Panel continued from last year into June of 2006. It was set up in May 2005 to look at arrangements for dealing with unauthorised development on traveller's sites in the District and arrangements for tolerated sites and policy issues.

The Panel undertook a tour of the District viewing existing and ex



Councillor Peter McMillan

traveller sites, tolerated sites and occasional stopping sites to gather first hand evidence. The Panel engaged in a discussion with residents to obtain their views and attended a seminar on Travellers to consider the latest guidance. The Panel had produced an initial report in September 2005 recommending steps to secure and clear the Paynes Lane site at Nazeing.

The Panel looked at three tolerated sites in the District and reviewed whether the approach for such sites should be changed and also wider policy issues regarding traveller needs.

Outcome

The Panel agreed that these issues required detailed consideration in the light of recent government guidance and a longer-term commitment by members to address this issue. As a result it had concluded that the matter be referred to the Environmental and Planning Services Standing Panel who were able to give the longer term issues their consideration.

CONCLUSION



This is the second year of the new scrutiny system at Epping Forest District Council, and a year when members have been asked to look at all sorts of various and diverse subjects, ranging from Housing to Car Parking; from Leisure and Nature Reserves to Finance and Budgets; taking in the Constitution and Environmental and Planning items, Crime and Disorder, Older Persons, Disable Persons, Town Centres and the Local Strategic Partnership, Epping Forest College, the Essex Police Merger with Bedford and Hertfordshire and the draft Council Plan for 2006-10, along the way. And of course, there was the important matter of scrutinising the Cabinet's work.

This not only kept our members very busy during the year but also gave them a deeper insight into the everyday workings of the council and a sense of ownership of the Council's decisions. The resource of Overview and Scrutiny for this council is proving itself to be very valuable in enabling decisions, strategies and policies to be examined in detail before they are implemented, helping to reduce the number of call-ins. This enables a more informal and I think a more effective form of scrutiny to take place prior to the decisions being taken.

There were two call-ins this year, neither was supported by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the original decisions stood. It was pleasing to see that these were made on points of principle rather than political point scoring. The Standing Panels have once again proved their worth by concentrating on one service or a particular aspect of the council in depth and keeping a continuing eye on cyclical and annual issues.

The Task and Finish Panels had a mixed success this year, two of the five panels could not complete their allotted tasks within the time frame set at the beginning of the year and may be re-established into the new year. However, that does mean that three Task and Finish Panels have successfully fulfilled their terms of reference and have submitted final reports to the parent Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Perhaps this shows the limits of the amount of work our O&S system can cope with and perhaps a more modest work programme should be sought in the New Year.

It was pleasing to note that the Overview and Scrutiny panels were not just contained within the Council Offices, they have been more community focused and have gone out to meet and talk to the public. There have been a good number of positive outcomes that are demonstrated in this report that prove the undeniable success of scrutiny for the Epping Forest District.

If you have any comments or feedback on the contents of this report (whether you are a member of the public, a councillor or an officer of the council) please let Adrian Hendry, in Research and Democratic Services know, by emailing him on: ahendry@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

John Scott
Joint Chief Executive (Community Services)



SCRUTINY



Epping Forest District Council

Report designed and Produced by the Overview and Scrutiny Team.
Thanks to all member contributors

Further copies of this report can be obtained from:

**Research and Democratic Services
Epping Forest District Council
Civic Offices
High Street
Epping
Essex CM16 4BZ**

If you are interested in scrutiny at the Council please log onto our webpages at:

www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local_democracy/Scrutiny_home.asp

Our meetings are webcast for more information see:

http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local_democracy/Webcasts.asp

As requested at the 8 March OSC, the Chairman and the Vice – Chairman of the Panel met on 22 March 2007 to formulate the 2007/08 OS Work Plan. The meeting considered a first draft of the plan containing outstanding items from the current year and bids submitted for the new plan.

New bids for 2007/08 Work Plan

(1) The Provision of Value for Money - S Tautz - Senior Performance Manager

The Group **agreed** that a Task and Finish Panel be established to deal with this review.

(2) Communication and Access to Information within this Council and between Essex County Council – Councillor Mrs A Cooper

The Group sought clarification of the issues raised in the request. On receipt of this consideration could be given to how it should be dealt with. **ACTION** Officer to contact Councillor Cooper , request to be including on pending requests list.

(3) Youth Initiatives Scheme - request made by Cabinet on 2 February 2007

The Group **agreed** that the bid should be submitted to the Task and Finish Panel on Leisure Services to be reconstituted for 2007/08.

(4) Role of Rural Transport in the District – Councillor H Harding

The Group felt that the bid should be referred to the County Council for perusal by their Scrutiny Committee for the service. It was felt that their Members would be more able to influence the matter and secure a positive outcome bearing in mind the service fell within the County's remit.

(5/6) Parking on Grass Verges/Residential areas - Councillors K Angold – Stephens, R Frankell

The Group felt that the requests should be allocated to the Environmental and Planning Standing Panel. The Group felt that the work should focus on pursuing the recommendations of the 2005/06 Task and Finish Panel on Residential Parking which explored the issues raised by the bids in-depth. This would avoid any duplication of work. The findings of the Panel could be submitted to the six monthly review of the plan suggested below in point 9.

(7) Collection of Green/Food Waste – Councillor R Frankell

It was questioned whether the Portfolio Advisory Group on Waste Management was currently looking at the issues raised by the bid. In view of this the group questioned the need to set up another review of the issues. It was agreed that clarification be sought of the remit of the PAG to identify whether its ambit covered the concerns and, if not, the feasibility of the group taking them on. Another option was to refer the bid to the Environmental and Planning Services Standing Review. **ACTION** Officers agreed to speak to the Head of Environmental Services.

**(8) Customer Care – Issues from disbanded ICT Standing Panel –
Councillor J Whitehouse**

It was noted that Councillor Whitehouse had raised the need for the customer services aspects of the disbanded ICT Standing Panel to be allocated to a suitable Panel for ongoing consideration. It was proposed that the issues be taken on by the Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel

(9) Six monthly review

The Group felt that OSC should review its recommendations on a six monthly basis to identify achievements and whether follow action was required to secure them . The Group also felt that the OSC should monitor the Free Saturday Car Parking regime on a half yearly basis and that this task should be carried out at the review meeting.

This meeting considered concerns and suggestions raised by Councillor Mrs J Whitehouse on how the operation of scrutiny could be improved. The Group agreed that the work be held in abeyance for the time being and picked up during the six – monthly review.

Outstanding 2006/07 Work Plan Items

(a) Standing Panels

The meeting requested that the Housing, Constitution and Members Services, Finance and Performance Management and Environmental and Planning Services Standing Panels be reconstituted for 2007/08. It was reiterated that the ICT and Customer Services Panel should be disbanded and the Customer Services related aspects of its work be added to the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel for ongoing consideration.

(b) Task and Finish Panels

Leisure

It was **agreed** that the Panel should be disbanded and reconstituted afresh for 2007/08 to complete their work.

(c) Car Parking

The Group noted that the Panel had completed all of its work save the item on anti social behaviour in car parks. The Group questioned whether the Panel should be reconstituted to deal with this item. It was agreed that the views of the Chairman of the Panel be sought on this question.

(b) Crime and Disorder/Older and Disabled People/LSP Panel

It was anticipated that these Panels would hold their final meeting to complete their work before the end of this year. In view of this it was noted that the Panel would be disbanded by the end of this year.

Draft Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme – 2007/08

Item	Report Deadline/Priority	Progress/Comments	Programme of Future Meetings
<i>Standing Panels</i>			
<i>Housing</i>			
(1) Implementation of Choice Based Lettings	High Ongoing in 2007/8		30 April 5 July, 25 October 2007, 22 January 21 April 2008
(2) Annual Ethnic Monitoring Review of Housing Applicants	Medium July 2007		
(3) Draft Housing Strategy Statement & Strategic Housing Action Plan	High October 2007		
(4) Annual Review of the Housing Allocations Scheme	High October 2007		
(5) Six-monthly Progress Report on Housing Business Plan Action Plan	Medium January 2008		
(6) Six-monthly Progress Report on Strategic Housing Action Plan	Medium April 2008		
(7) Updated draft HRA Business Plan	High April 2008		
(8) Implement Housing Assistance Policy 2007.	High August 2007		
(9) Private Sector Housing Strategy Action Plan.	High Ongoing during 2007/2008		
(10) Progress on meeting PSA7 target on Decent Homes.	High Ongoing during 2007/2008		

Item	Report Deadline/Priority	Progress/Comments	Programme of Future Meetings
<i>Constitution and Member Services Standing Panel</i>			
(1) Local Government White Paper: Changes to OS including Community Call for Action Electoral Cycle Local Strategic Partnerships			8 April, 5 June, 30 July, 11 October 2007, 12 February, 28 April 2008
(2) Annual Review of Contract Standing Orders		Financial Regulations to be considered on 8 April 2007	
(3) Review of Protocol on Outside Organisations			
(4) Member Training Review			
(4) Cabinet operations in Emergency Situations			
(5) Review of May 2007 Elections			
(6) New Question Time at Council Meetings – Formulation of Protocol	April 2007		

Item	Report Deadline/Priority	Progress/Comments	Programme of Future Meetings
<i>Environmental and Planning Services Standing Panel</i>			
(1) Essex County Joint Waste Procurement Process	Ongoing	Panel to consider decisions of the West Essex Waste Joint Management Committee as and when they become available	26 April, 26 June, 5 September, 29 October,
(2) New Local Development Scheme	Ongoing		20 December 2007,
(3) Re use of buildings in the Green Belt/Traffic Issues in the Roydon and Nazeing Areas.	Ongoing	Underway – Focus day agreed for 7 March 2007 to identify issues. Results to be considered by Panel.	28 February, 23 April 2008
(4) East of England Plan – EFDC Response to Examination in Public		Underway: meeting on 16 January 2007 commented on summary of proposals	
(5) Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 – Implementation of provisions	April 2007	Underway	
(6) Ongoing Traveller Issues	Ongoing	Report to be submitted to future meeting	
(7) Planning Performance – monitoring of enforcement figures/outcomes	Ongoing	Statistics and reporting arrangements considered by the Panel on 30 October 2006. To be reported on a regular basis in Members Bulletin and reviewed by the Panel following six month trial.	
(8) Parking on Grass Verges/ Parking in Residential Area	*NEW ITEM*	To monitor the recommendations of the 2005/06 Task and Finish Panel on Parking in Residential Areas and, if necessary, identify any follow action required.	

Item	Report Deadline/Priority	Progress/Comments	Programme of Future Meetings
<i>Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel</i>			
(1) Best Value Performance Plan 2007/08		Arrangements for consideration of Full BVPP agreed on 12 February 2007.	19 June, 14 August, 13 November 2007, 14 January, 11 February 2008
(2) Key Performance Monitoring Indicators – Quarterly	Ongoing		
(3) Quarterly Financial Monitoring	Ongoing		
(4) Performance (Services to be scrutinised in Rotation)	Ongoing		
(5) Review of Local Land Charges			
(6) Annual Audit Plan			
(7) Local Area Agreements – Performance Monitoring	Ongoing	Quarterly performance monitoring to commence from start of 2007/08 municipal year	
(8) Council Plan 2006-2010 Performance Monitoring		Annual performance monitoring to commence from start of 2007/08 municipal year	
(9) Budget 2008			
(10) CPA Improvement Plan – Performance Monitoring	Ongoing	Quarterly performance monitoring of outstanding actions to commence from start of 2007/08 municipal year	

Item	Report Deadline/Priority	Progress/Comments	Programme of Future Meetings
(11) Annual Consultation Plan	Ongoing – Annual Review to June 2007	Consultation Plan to be considered at first meeting of each year	
(12) Fees and Charges			
(13) Land Assets – Performance		Added to programme by OSC on 2 February 2007	
(14) *Customer Contact Centre	Ongoing see (16) below	Proposed Progress reports on Customer Services Transformation Programme to every meeting	
(15) *Webcasting Project	July 2007	Further evaluation to be presented at July 2007 mtg. Project agreed to continue pending evaluation	
(16) *Customer Services Working Group feedback	April 2007	New Item	
* = items previously under disbanded Customer and ICT Panel			

Item	Report Deadline/Priority	Progress/Comments	Programme of Future Meetings
<i>Task and Finish Panels</i>			
<i>Leisure Services – to be reinstated for completion of work</i>			
(1) Future Management of Waltham Abbey Sports Centre	May/June 2007	Underway: Consultation undertaken with King Harold High School. Awaiting Governing Bodies views	TBA
(2) Review of Future Management of the Roding Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve	May/June 2007	Underway: Largely complete. Final meeting with Grange Farm Trust and Corporation of London planned for February 2007.	
(3) Review of Arts Development in the District	May/June 2007	Underway: Final date for review to be arranged	
(4) District Council's Role and involvement in Outdoor and Community Events	May/June 2007	Underway: Presentation scheduled for January mtg.	
(5) Monitoring of Youth Initiatives Scheme	TBA	*New Item*	

Provision of Value for Money within Planning Services – New Task and Finish Panel			
Provision of Value for money within the Development Control (Planning Services function)		<p>New Panel set up to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success of action to reduce backlog of planning applications • Improvements in performance • Ways of increasing the effective of Value for Money Analysis for 2005/06 and future years • regular reports from the Monitoring Board for the External Leisure Services Contract. 	

<i>Town Centre and Car Parks Task and Finish Panel</i>			
Anti Social Behaviour in Car Parks	High	The OS planning meeting on 22 March requested that the views of the Chairman and Lead Officer of the Panel be sought on whether the Panel should be reconstituted to complete this item.	TBA

Item	Report Deadline/Priority	Progress/Comments	Programme of Future Meetings
Crime and Disorder Task and Finish Panel – <i>To be disbanded following completion of final report due in June 2007</i>			
Crime and Disorder Act 1998 – Government Review and Recommendations		Final report to be completed for 5 June 2007 OSC	April 2007
Older and Disabled Persons Task and Finish Panel – <i>To be disbanded following completion of final report due in June 2007</i>			
Review of Services provided by this Council and associated voluntary agencies to older persons and the disabled.		To be completed for 5 April 2007 OSC	TBA

<i>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</i>				
(1) Scrutiny of London Underground Ltd	June 2007			5 April, 7 June, 12 July, 30 August, 4 October 8 November 13 December 2007 31 January, 6 March, 10 April 2008
(2) Scrutiny of Highways Local Service Agreement				
(3) Scrutiny of organised bodies – PCT			Chairman of West Essex PCT Aiden Thomas to attend this 5 April 2007 OSC to discuss new Strategy Statement for organisation.	
(4) Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership – Scrutiny of Chairman and Member level EFDC representatives			Agreed that the representatives be invited to report to the Committee on an annual basis	
(5) Scrutiny of Essex Police – Neighbourhood Policing Initiative				
(6) Scrutiny of Cabinet Forward Plan	July 2007			
(7) Six monthly review - Monitoring of OS recommendations Free Saturday Car Parking – progress reports Review of work plan	October 2007			
(8) OS Annual Report	April 2007/08		To be considered at this OSC	
(9) Formulation of 2007/08 OS Work Plan	April 2007		To be considered at this OSC	