

## Scrutiny Task and Finish Panel Agenda



### ***Leisure Task and Finish Scrutiny Panel Tuesday, 13th February, 2007***

**Place:** Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

**Time:** 7.00 pm

**Democratic Services Officer:** Adrian Hendry, Research and Democratic Services  
Tel. 01992 564246, email: ahendry@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

**Members:**

Councillors Mrs H Harding (Chairman), Mrs P Brooks (Vice-Chairman), 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

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**2. SUBSITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)**

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

**3. 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.

**4. MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING - 21 NOVEMBER 2006 (Pages 7 - 10)**

To consider and agree the notes of the meeting of the Panel held on 21 November 2006.

**5. TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 11 - 14)**

(Chairman/Lead Officer) To note the attached updated Terms of Reference and associated Work Programme. The Panel are asked at each meeting to review both documents.

**6. FUTURE MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT FOR THE RODING VALLEY MEADOWS LOCAL NATURE RESERVE**

As Members are aware, on the 12<sup>th</sup> September the Task and Finish Panel undertook a consultation meeting with respect to the Future Management of Roding Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve.

The consensus of the Panel was that the Preferred Option would be to recommend that the Essex Wildlife Trust be offered a new Management Agreement for a length of twenty years (in order to attract external funding) but that the new agreement should provide for greater monitoring and evaluation of management practices, with more frequent and direct reporting to the Council. In addition, the Panel also recommended that partnership working with Countrycare should be formalised to promote joint working, within any new arrangements.

The Panel recognised that the Grange Farm Trust have an interest as landowners on the Nature Reserve. Unfortunately, the Trust could not send a representative to the consultation meeting. As such, they would need to be consulted prior to any final decision.

The Head of Leisure Services met with the Grange Farm Trust for an initial discussion on the 16<sup>th</sup> November 2006 and reported orally on the outcome, at the Task and Finish Panel's last meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> November.

Subsequent to this meeting, the Head of Leisure Services attended another meeting with the Grange Farm Trust along with John Hall, Director of Essex Wildlife Trust. The meeting was generally positive with the Grange Farm Trust taking the opportunity to raise a number of concerns they have regarding the management of the site, in particular the perceived loss of flora and fauna.

As a follow-up from the meeting, the Grange Farm Trust have formally written to the Head of Leisure Services outlining their view as to how the process could proceed. Within the correspondence the Trust identify a number of key issues they would wish to see addressed in any future Management Agreement. The letter is attached for Members of the Panel's consideration.

It can be seen that whilst the Grange Farm Trust do not appear to have any fundamental objection to the re-appointment of Essex Wildlife Trust, they do express a view that other alternatives have not been adequately investigated. To this end they have proposed an exploratory meeting with the Epping Forest Conservators.

Members of the Panel are asked to consider the correspondence from the Grange

Farm Trust and in particular express a view on the Council becoming involved in talks regarding the management of Roding Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve with the Corporation of London, Epping Forest Conservators.

## **7. REVIEW OF ARTS DEVELOPMENT IN THE DISTRICT**

At their meeting in November 2006 Members of the Panel had the opportunity to visit Great Stony, Ongar Arts and Education Centre and hear of the work of Theatre Resource. The Director of Theatre Resource, Jeff Banks stressed the importance of the relationship with the District Council and touched on ways in which the Partnership could be strengthened to include Theatre Resource practically delivering some aspect or indeed all of the work currently undertaken by the Council's Arts Team. It is understood that this view was also expressed in a follow-up letter, sent by Theatre Resource, thanking Members of the Panel for their interest.

Panel Members had a thorough presentation on the work of Epping Forest Arts back in July 2006. Whilst Theatre Resource have some similarities in that they undertake a good deal of work with people with special needs and those at risk of social exclusion, the emphasis on Arts Education is clearly different.

Similarly, their current work is not confined to Epping Forest but undertaken on a Regional Basis, with the work they do undertake locally largely focused on the Ongar locality.

Notwithstanding, the role of Scrutiny Task and Finish Panels is to challenge and review the way that services are currently delivered. Therefore, Members views are sought on the desirability of undertaking further feasibility work on third party delivery of Arts Development work in the District. This would need to be undertaken on a wider basis than simply a dialogue with Theatre Resource to avoid acquisitions of anti-competitiveness and ensure that the Council achieved maximum value for money in whatever course of future action it may follow.

## **8. PRESENTATION ON THE COUNCIL'S ROLE AND INVOLVEMENT IN OUTDOOR AND COMMUNITY EVENTS**

Outdoor and Community Events have long been a feature and reflection of the "Special Character of the Epping Forest District. Participation in such Events, whether they be school fetes, village days, festivals or major outdoor shows, can foster a sense of community well-being and promote social inclusion, by bringing a wide range of people together to celebrate, commemorate, raise funds or simply to enjoy themselves.

Historically, Leisure Services has had an important role to play in the facilitation and Management of Events, such as the Epping Fireworks Carnival, Ongar Carnival, Waltham Abbey Festival Week and Carnival of Lights, the initial Debden Day and World Mental Health Day. This was in addition to special events in the Council's Leisure Centres and the Leisure promotional "Roadshow".

However, as far back as the Best Value Review of Leisure Management in 2001, it was noted that whilst there was a significant expressed demand for the council to assist in the Management of Events (and indeed also to participate in them), due to a

lack of dedicated resources, as the Council focused on other aspects of community development work, this was likely to be unsustainable in the longer term.

Therefore, whilst the Council has retained significant expertise in the form of Leisure Services Marketing and Events Manager, the level of practical involvement in Events Management has been severely curtailed over time, as other staff with the training and experience of the production of Events have not been replaced and the Council's own stock of specialist equipment has been depleted through time, because of reduction in expenditure for maintenance and replacement.

As such, more recently Leisure Services has only been able to practically assist in a much-reduced number of community events on a re-charge basis, such as the Epping Fireworks Carnival whilst also providing technical advice to other Event Organisers. This also includes the important on-going role at North Weald Airfield, ensuring that the Major Outdoor Events Programme at the site adheres to Event Health and Safety Standards and other legislation and Contractors are aware of such organisational requirements.

In recent years, Event Management has developed into a specialist area of work. This is due to an increasingly complex technical framework and a proliferation of Best Practice Guidelines and Recommendations. This is set against an increasingly litigious outlook and a risk aversion from Insurers in relation to Events.

Notwithstanding, as highlighted earlier there is an ongoing expressed demand from local people, Town and Parish Council, Voluntary Organisations and Charitable Groups who turn to the Council for operational and legislative assistance with Events. This demand currently cannot be met within existing resources. The Council itself does not have a Corporate Council wide approach to managing its own Events, nor indeed, a fully co-ordinated approach to participation at other Public Events, where the opportunity existing to showcase the quality of the Council Service and raise the profile of Key Community issues.

It was therefore proposed that the Council needs to address its future role in Event provision and look at the options. Whether this be the organisation of its own major Civic Event, as many other Local Authorities in the region undertake e.g. Chelmsford Spectacular, or indeed the hosting of major celebrator events such as the Harlow Town Show and fireworks Spectacular. Such Civic Events, particularly organised Firework Displays, have an important role to play in public safety.

Alternatively, the Council may prefer to support other organisers or promoters by means of technical advice or grant aid. All of these need to be approached from a resourcing stance. In addition, the Council's own Major Outdoor Events venue at North Weald Airfield already plays host to numerous Events. The site has the potential in the longer term to develop into a well-organised regional entertainment venue.

Members have had the opportunity in the Summer of 2006, to visit a major outdoor event "Donney South" at North Weald Airfield and also a smaller community event, "The Copped Hall Run" organised with the Council's assistance, by Epping Rotary Club.

Gerry Kehoe, the Council's Marketing and Events Manager will give a presentation and seek feedback from the Task and Finish Panel as to what level and role the

Council may aspire to in terms of the future involvement in Outdoor and Community Events.

**9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

To consider any other urgent business.

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To be agreed.

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**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL  
NOTES OF A MEETING OF LEISURE TASK AND FINISH SCRUTINY PANEL  
HELD ON TUESDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2006  
IN THEATRE RESOURCES, ONGAR ARTS AND EDUCATION CENTRE, GREAT  
STONEY, HIGH STREET, CHIPPING ONGAR  
AT 7.00 - 9.05 PM**

<b>Members Present:</b>	, , Mrs P Brooks (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair), M Colling, Mrs A Grigg (Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder), S Murray, Mrs P K Rush and Mrs P Smith
<b>Other members present:</b>	Mrs D Collins and C Whitbread
<b>Apologies for Absence:</b>	Mrs H Harding, Mrs J Lea, J Markham and J M Whitehouse
<b>Officers Present</b>	D Macnab (Head of Leisure Services), Mrs L MacNeill (Assistant Head of Leisure Services), J Chandler (Sports Development Officer) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

**Also in attendance:**

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**29. SUBSITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)**

Noted that there were no substitute members for this meeting.

**30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor S Murray declared a general personal but non-prejudicial interest by virtue of being the Council's representative on the Roding Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve Management Committee and the nature reserve having a partnership with Roding Valley High School.

Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor Mrs Grigg declared a general personal but non-prejudicial interest by virtue of being the Council's representative on the Roding Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve Management Committee.

**31. MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING - 28 SEPTEMBER 2006**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2006 was agreed as a correct record.

**32. TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel noted the Terms of Reference and Work Programme, which they considered still to be relevant and would not require any amendment.

**33. FEEDBACK FROM MEETING WITH GRANGE FARM TRUST**

The Head of Leisure Services reported on a meeting he had recently undertaken with the head of the Grange Farm Trust about the future management of the Roding Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve and the consensus reached by this Panel that the Essex Wildlife Trust should have their contract renewed for a period of twenty years. He noted that the Grange Farm Trust was shortly to sign up to a Section 106 agreement to increase the size of the site and to put in an 'Interpretation Centre'. They had held a dim view of the Essex Wildlife Trust in the past but not anymore. The Head of Leisure Services explained why Epping Forest DC could not take over the managing of the site and that the Corporation of London may not be legally able to do it. The Farm Trust indicated that they would like to provide some improvements to the site and would like a further meeting with EFDC to discuss it.

**34. WALTHAM ABBEY SPORTS CENTRE - FUTURE MANAGEMENT OPTIONS**

The Head of Leisure Services reported that he had another meeting with the Head of King Harold's School, the bursar and the head of the Board of Governors. The school showed some interest in what a third party arrangement would mean for the management of the sports centre. They were taken through the key issues on contract specifications and informed on how the contractor might generate profits by increasing usage of the centre. It could be that the Council would run the contractor and the school would not need to get involved. The contract would run up to 2013 and up from 2013 to 2016 the contract would run on a performance basis. EFDC have now sent the school our standard contract specifications for them to study. The Council would need to go through a competitive process for a new contract and would also need to vet any company that puts in a bid. As there was only 10 months left any moves towards competitive tendering would have to be done fairly swiftly.

There was distinct resistance to a direct management approach to the centre.

It was noted that it may be useful to arrange for King Harold School to meet other schools that have a similar partnership arrangement and talk to them.

**35. TOUR OF GREAT STONEY, ONGAR ARTS AND EDUCATION CENTRE AND INSIGHT INTO THE WORK OF THEATRE RESOURCE**

The Director of Theatre Resources, Jeff Banks welcomed the Panel to the Theatre Resources centre and gave a brief outline the history of the group. It is a registered Educational Charity and Arts organisation that was set up in 1990, and was originally based at Waltham Abbey. The objectives of the organisation is to provide Arts and Education for the community, covering all art forms and to provide a specialist organisation for developing arts and education for disabled and other socially excluded people and groups.

Currently they have 16 staff at the Theatre Resource group and offer about 70 contracts a year to outside/visiting tutors. Their turnover is about £600,000 per annum; mostly raised from commissioning projects, with about 16% coming from local authority grants (including EFDC). Last year they worked with about 60 partners and fundraisers.

The building currently occupied by the group in Chipping Ongar acts as a base for them to run their various projects. They currently have a long-term plan to develop



the centre and provide a studio theatre, and more and better teaching space. They would like to bring together disabled persons in residential courses who would need a high degree of physical accessibility. They currently use Wickens House, for the residential courses, but this facility may close soon.

The group also provides supportive employment opportunities for people with disabilities, a number of staff are disabled, and they would ideally like the building to be run and managed by people with disabilities.

Theatre Resources have a long relationship with EFDC, going back to 1990 and have worked closely with Epping Forest Arts. As there are two arts structures in the District they would like to propose that Theatre Resources support either all or part delivery of the Epping Forest Arts services. They would welcome the chance to talk to EFDC about making their partnership closer. They could provide a specialist service and a range of activities for local people and would welcome the chance to strengthen their ties with the District.

Mr Banks was asked if the group could raise extra money successfully, he replied that they are looking at some big fund-raisers, but firstly they will provide development funding to show what they can do. As for having a solid financial background, 'Future Builders for England' have been scrutinising them for the last two years and are looking to raise £900,000 for them.

When asked if they had worked with Mencap, Mr Banks replied that they work with a lot of local groups and have worked with Mencap, Essex, as they tend to work to a larger catchment area than just district level. They recently did a project with young people from across Essex and Hertfordshire, and tend to work regionally.

Asked if the group was disadvantaged because of the bad public transport routes in the district. Mr Banks agreed that public transport is appalling in the area, they had run courses where the taxi bill to transport the children to the venue equalled all the other costs of the course. This is one of the reasons why they would like to be able to deliver residential courses. They have two types of market for their courses; one for children through to adults and the other is for the people who work with those people. There are also a lot of outside organisations who want to hire their facilities.

Asked if they integrate able-bodied children with disabled children, Mr Banks replied that most groups like to work with people of their own level and ability. But they also run courses where they integrate the abilities of the participants.

At this point the group was taken on a tour of the rooms and facilities of the Theatre Resources building.

### **36. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was raised.

### **37. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

A suitable date for the next meeting is to be identified and agreed with the Chairman and lead officer of the Panel.

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### Term of Reference:

1. 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.
2. To gather evidence and information in relation to the four topics through the receipt of data, presentations and by participation in fact finding visits.
3. To consult with Partners, Agencies, Stakeholders and Users of the services under review, to establish key issues and future need.
4. To evaluate all relevant facts in relation to the topics under review in an objective way and to produce recommendations for future action accordingly.
5. To establish whether there are any resource implications arising out of the topics under review and advise Cabinet for inclusion in the Budget Process 2007/08
6. To report back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee at appropriate intervals and to submit any final reports in the proposed Corporate Format for consideration by O & S, the Cabinet and Council.

### Aims and Objectives of Review:

LEISURE TASK AND FINISH PANEL: TERMS OF REFERENCE

Key Issues:		
<b>TIMESCALE</b>	<b>ESTIMATED</b>	<b>ACTUAL</b>
Commencement		13 July 2006
<u>Finish</u> <b>1.</b> Interim report to include any budgetary items for the next budget round. <b>2.</b> Review of the Future management of the Roding Valley Meadows local Nature Reserve. <b>3.</b> Future Management of Waltham Abbey Sports Centre. <b>4.</b> Review of the Arts Development in the District. <b>5.</b> District Council's role and involvement in Outdoor and Community Events.	By 5 October 2006  January 2007  January 2007  Feb-March 2007  Feb-March 2007	
Reports.	As above	

LEISURE TASK AND FINISH PANEL: WORK PROGRAMME

Proposed Date	Item	Current Position
Thursday 13 July 2006	Initial Meeting of the Panel. Scope and Terms of Reference	Scope and Terms of Reference agreed. To be put up to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
Tuesday 18 July 2006	Visit to Waltham Abbey Sports Centre and Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool	Fact finding visit carried out by four members of the panel.
Monday 31 July 2006	Presentation on the Arts. Follow up discussion from visits to WASC & WASP	Presentation received by Panel and other councillors.
Tuesday 8 August 2006	Visit to Roding Valley Meadows LNR	Visit took place.
Sunday 13 August 2006	Visit to Donney South Event, North weald Airfield.	Visit took place.
Tuesday 12 September 2006	Meeting of the Panel and Essex Wildlife Trust, EFDC's Countryside Service, Management and Liaison Committee, the Grange Farm Trust and Local People	Presentations and consultation received by Panel.
Sunday 17 September 2006	Visit to Copped Hall Charity Fun Run	Visit took place.
Thursday 28 September 2006	Meeting of the Panel and the Headteacher of King Harold School and the school Bursar and Leisure Management Contractors SLM	Future Management Options considered. HOL to meet further with the school and discuss draft Heads of Future Agreement to protect Community use.
Tuesday 21 November 2007	Meeting of the Panel and the Director of Theatre Resources at the Theatre Resource Centre, Great Stoney, Chipping Ongar.	Panel noted the work undertaken by the Theatre Resources group in the Epping District.
Thursday 7 <sup>th</sup> December 2006 Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Interim Report to O & S on initial recommendations with respect to Management Options at Roding Valley LNR and WASC	To be drafted depending on outcome of negotiations with Grange Farm Trust and King Harold School, and T & F views on the 21 <sup>st</sup> November 2006.

LEISURE TASK AND FINISH PANEL: WORK PROGRAMME

Thursday 18 January 2007	Presentation on Community and Major Outdoor Events.	To identify Council's future role based on visits and options outlined in Presentation
Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup> February 2007 Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Final Report to O & S on WASC and RVLNR	To determine Preferred Management Options to be recommended to the Cabinet on the 12 <sup>th</sup> March 2007