

## **EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES**

**Committee:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee      **Date:** Tuesday, 10 July 2007

**Place:** Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping      **Time:** 7.30 - 8.41 pm

**Members Present:** Councillors R Morgan (Chairman) K Angold-Stephens (Vice-Chairman) D Bateman, R Church, M Colling, R D'Souza, J Hart, D Kelly, G Mohindra, Mrs P Richardson, J M Whitehouse and B Rolfe

**Other Councillors:** Councillors K Chana, M Cohen, Mrs D Collins, Mrs A Cooper, Mrs A Grigg, D Stallan, Ms S Stavrou and C Whitbread

**Apologies:** Councillors Mrs A Haigh and Mrs H Harding

**Officers Present:** J Scott (Joint Chief Executive), I Willett (Head of Research and Democratic Services), D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive), S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer), A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer), T Carne (Public Relations and Marketing Officer), Z Folley (Democratic Services Assistant) and M Jenkins (Democratic Services Assistant)

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### **11. 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.

### **12. MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the committee meeting held on 7 June 2007 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the third paragraph in minute number 5 being amended to read Zone 4 and not Zone 3.

### **13. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

It was reported that Councillor Jon Whitehouse was substituting for Councillor Mrs Haigh and that Councillor B Rolfe was substituting for Councillor Mrs Harding.

### **14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct no declarations of interest were made.

### **15. 2007/08 CABINET FORWARD PLAN.**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Mrs D Collins presented the Cabinet's plans for the year ahead. She drew the Committee's attention to the Cabinet's six priorities

which would be the main thread running through their whole work programme. These priorities are:

- a) Sound Finances;
- b) Youth – to carry forward dialogue with Epping Forest Youth Council on a regular basis;
- c) Housing – to investigate new proposals for affordable housing; and
- d) Green Belt/ East of England Plan – final version – work with other Local Authorities;
- e) Waste – monitoring of the new contract; and
- f) Safer Communities – liaise with local police and our community officers with regular progress reports on Anti-Social Behaviour and graffiti etc.

She welcomed views on the content, which was still a work in progress to be developed over the year.

Portfolio Holders in attendance were invited to present their Portfolio's work plan in turn.

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

**(i) Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services**

The Finance and Performance Management and Corporate Support Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor Whitbread introduced his Portfolio's forward plan. He emphasised that they were preparing for the next budget round and the upcoming audit.

**(ii) Community Wellbeing**

The Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder, Councillor Ms Stavrou commented that their current main priority was the Graffiti Draft Policy that was agreed by Cabinet. It gave her flexibility to accommodate any comments to be received from Town and Parish councils.

**(iii) Environmental Protection**

The Environmental Protection Portfolio Holder was not present so Councillor Mrs Collins introduced the work programme. The Committee noted that the approval for the appointment of a Waste Management Service Provider had moved to Cabinet for approval and from there would go to the next full Council.

**(iv) Leisure & Young People**

The Work Programme for this portfolio was introduced by the Head of Leisure Services who drew the Committee's attention to the Playing Pitch Strategy, the Play Strategy and the annual review of Leisure Fees and Charges. Councillor Collins added that their emphasis this year would be on the youth of the district and an item on the Youth Council would be added.

**(v) Civil Engineering and Maintenance**

In the absence of the Civil Engineering and Maintenance Portfolio Holder, Councillor Whitbread introduced the work Programme. He noted that the parking enforcement contract would be going to the next cabinet meeting, and that the Loughton Parking Review was to be considered in September.

Councillor Bateman asked if the number of residents parking areas could be increased, particularly near underground stations. Councillor D'Souza asked how the September review was to take place. Councillor Whitbread promised that they would be contacted separately to answer their queries. Councillor Angold-Stephens added that the Loughton review was being undertaken by County Highways and so was not a District review.

**(vi) Leader's Portfolio**

Councillor Mrs Collins reported that the sale of the T11 site was near completion and the Top Management Review was going to the July Cabinet meeting. The Forester Review was ongoing for end September, and the industrial development of Merlin Way was moving forward as planned.

Councillor Mrs Richardson asked if the Forester could include more detailed information on recycling. Councillor Mrs Collins replied that each time the Forester goes out the information is reviewed and updated.

**(vii) Housing**

The Housing Portfolio Holder, Councillor Stellan introduced work programmed for the Housing Portfolio. The Committee noted that the Springfields Tenders were going to the July Cabinet meeting.

**(viii) Planning and Economic Development**

The Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder, Councillor Mrs Grigg introduced the work programme. It was noted that a number of reports were going to the July Cabinet, including the Gypsy and Travellers report and the Contaminated Land report.

**16. TERMS OF REFERENCE - TASK AND FINISH PANELS**

The Committee considered the draft terms of reference for the Crime and Disorder Task and Finish Panel and the Leisure Task and Finish Panel. They noted that the Provision of Value for Money within Planning Services Task and Finish Panel and the Town Centre and Car Parks Task and Finish Panel had not met as yet to draw up their terms of reference.

**RESOLVED:**

That the terms of reference for the Crime and Disorder Task and Finish Panel and the Leisure Task and Finish Panel be endorsed by the Committee.

**17. ELECTIONS 2007 - REPORT OF CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERS SERVICES STANDING PANEL**

The Committee considered a report from the Returning Officer that came out from the Constitution and Member's Services Scrutiny Standing Panel review of the May 2007 elections. They had reviewed the organisation and running of the election procedures and made the following recommendations to the Returning Officer:

- (a) future use of Theydon Bois Village Hall as a Count Centre;

- (b) the possibility of future counts being split with some taking place at the close of poll and others the following day;
- (c) the count being available to a wider audience through webcasting;
- (d) a programme for the counting of wards;
- (e) laying out of bundles of counted votes to enable candidates, agents etc to witness the progress of a count.

The Returning Officer commented that:

- (a) he would look again at the use of Theydon Bois Village Hall;
- (b) opinions differed about when the counts should take place, there were some concerns about splitting the vote and about staffing the count for two days in a row, he was currently talking informally to polling staff so see what they thought;
- (c) webcasting is a very useful tool that should be made more use of, especially now that the Youth Council is on the horizon;
- (d) provisional counting to assist members to know when to be at the count for their results, a timetable was being looked at.
- (e) This will be considered.

Members commented that Theydon Bois was a better hall, provided that video screens and 'bus stop' signs could be put up. It has more room and is not so cramped.

There was an additional recommendation in the report that asked that nominations be published before the Easter Bank Holiday. It was noted that half of the Councils had managed to get them out on the Wednesday or Thursday, EFDC are behind the others authorities in letting members know who had been nominated. The Returning Officer promised to look into the publication date of nominations and said that the 'bus stop' signs had been ordered.

Councillor Mrs Richardson agreed that the more traditional time to issues results had been Thursday a night. The Returning Officer commented that polling is now two hours longer and this could take the count into the early hours of Friday morning. He was minded that for a close or a complicated count, tiredness could cause problems. Also they had to be sure in advance that they could staff the count.

Councillor Colling proposed that nominations should be published before the Easter Bank Holiday, this was seconded and carried by the committee.

**RESOLVED:**

That the meeting noted the recommendations of the Constitution and Member's Service Scrutiny Standing Panel and the agreed additional recommendation added by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the Returning Officer be asked to ensure that candidate lists be published as early as possible after the close of nominations.

**18. WORK PROGRAMME MONITORING**

The Committee reviewed the work programme.

**a) Overview and Scrutiny**

Noted that:

- a) item 4, under progress and comments that the word "college" be removed.

- b) Essex Police have been written to and will come back to this committee next July.
- c) That the six monthly review will be carried out at the October meeting.
- d) Item 8 was considered at the June meeting and not the July one.

**b) Housing Standing Panel**

Noted that the July meeting had been cancelled due to lack of business.

**c) Constitution and Members Services Standing Panel**

Noted that:

- a) They had reviewed the local government elections in May 2007.
- b) They are to arrange an extra three meetings to on the Local Government White Paper.

**d) Environmental and Planning Services Standing Panel**

Noted that a sub group had been set up to consider the re-use of buildings in the green belt.

**e) Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel**

Noted that they had considered the KPIs for the year at their last meeting.

**f) Leisure Task and Finish Panel**

Noted the terms of reference of the Panel. Also that the possibility of Youth Councils be considered in the future.

**g) Crime and Disorder Task and Finish Panel**

Noted the Panel's terms of reference.

**19. WEBCASTING EVALUATION**

Having discussed the matter the committee agreed that a special meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be convened on Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> August to consider the full webcasting report in depth.

**RESOLVED:**

That an extraordinary meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be convened on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> August at 7.30pm to consider the full webcasting report.

**20. WEST ESSEX PCT - PROPOSAL FOR JOINT SCRUTINY REVIEW**

The Committee debated the proposal to be included in the establishment of a Joint Scrutiny Panel comprising Members from Epping Forest, Harlow, Uttlesford and Essex County Councils and agreed that it would be more beneficial to be part of this review than not.

**RESOLVED:**

That the committee agreed to receive a further report in due course on the proposal for a joint scrutiny review between Epping Forest, Harlow, Uttlesford and Essex County Council.

**21. CABINET REVIEW**

The Chairman for the Constitution and Member Services Standing Panel, Councillor Church, noted that the Cabinet would be receiving a report at its next meeting on matters relating to the proposed Local Government Bill. The Constitution and Member Services Standing Panel has already taken on board a number of matters that the Council would need to consider once the Bill became law. His Panel would strongly support the option that they undertake any work that this would generate, and consider the issues that would affect the executive and the Council as a whole. He requested that the Cabinet be asked to agree this approach at their next meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee request the Cabinet to consider referring the executive governance aspects of the Bill to the Constitution and Member Service Standing Panel for consideration alongside other provisions in the Bill.

**22. JOHN SCOTT'S LAST MEETING**

The Committee noted that it was the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the Joint Chief Executive, John Scott, would be attending before his retirement. The Committee wished to convey their thanks and appreciation for the great support he had given over the years and wished him the very best for the future. They would miss him.

**CHAIRMAN**