

# EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES

**Committee:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee      **Date:** Tuesday, 2 June 2009

**Place:** Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping      **Time:** 7.30 - 8.35 pm

**Members Present:** Councillors R Morgan (Chairman) K Angold-Stephens (Vice-Chairman) Mrs P Brooks, M Colling, Mrs A Grigg, D Jacobs, J Knapman, R Law, G Mohindra and B Rolfe

**Other Councillors:** Councillors Mrs D Collins, Mrs R Gadsby, Mrs H Harding, D Stallan and C Whitbread

**Apologies:** Councillors A Green, Mrs A Haigh and Mrs L Wagland

**Officers Present:** D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive), J Gilbert (Director of Environment and Street Scene), L MacNeill (Assistant Director of Environment & Street Scene), T Carne (Public Relations and Marketing Officer), S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer), A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer) and M Jenkins (Democratic Services Assistant)

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## 1. 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.

## 2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Mrs P Brooks had substituted for Councillor Mrs A Haigh and that Councillor B Rolfe had substituted for Councillor Mrs Wagland.

## 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Mrs A Grigg and Councillor Mrs D Collins declared a personal interest in item 6 of the agenda by virtue of being on the board of the LSP.

## 4. MINUTES

### RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2009 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

## 5. REPORT ON THE FORESTER CONSULTATION

The Committee received a report from the Public Relations and Marketing Officer, Mr T Carne on the recent Forester consultation. This report had originally gone to the Customer Transformation Task and Finish Panel for their comments and agreement. The full report and analysis had been put in the Members Room. Feedback

supported the current A4, colour format, the quarterly distribution and agreed that it was clear and easy to understand. It was noted that the magazine was predominantly read by the older residents of the district. Focus groups were also held and these elicited a great deal of feedback. They also provided an opportunity to reach groups that might not have responded directly to the survey questionnaire. The focus group held with the Youth Council was particularly important and surprisingly, even among the members of the Youth Focus Group, there was a great deal of positive feedback about the current Forester as well as many suggestions for ways to develop and enhance the magazine, such as more use of images, shorter more concise articles and a better front cover.

The Committee noted that since the conclusion of the formal consultation, officers had developed proposals to extend the content of the Forester to include the Epping Forest District Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), who were looking to raise their public profile, maybe through the Forester. By incorporating LSP contributions, the Forester would be expanding into areas such as health service provision, the volunteer sector and transport issues. The Forester could provide a platform not just for the District Council but also for the whole LSP. This could be achieved in various ways. Pages currently dedicated to Council news could be made available to other members of the LSP. If cutting the amount of Council information was not thought desirable then there was always eight pages of advertising that currently subsidise the cost of the Forester production. These pages either in block or an equivalent throughout the magazine could be offered to the LSP. In return they would be asked to fund the balance of lost advertising, creating a neutral impact on the Council's production budget.

Councillor Knapman commented that there was no problem with the LSP having a page saying what they were doing, but he did not want any longer articles, as it was an EFDC magazine and he would not want it to blur into a joint magazine.

Councillor Mrs Grigg said that good results had been achieved from the survey. It was important that the LSP raised its profile. The Forester was for the District Council but there was a place for the LSP and this should be explored.

Councillor Jacobs agreed and wanted to know about the funding from the LSP for the Forester. Mr Carne said that he was looking for member advice about financing the Forester. The suggestion was that the LSP finance some of it by taking over the space currently used by advertising, although residents did find the advertising useful.

Councillor Jacobs asked where the LSP money would come from. The Deputy Chief Executive said they were funded from various sources via the County and District councils, the police and businesses etc. A number of strategic partners were required to consult within the district and they could do this via the Forester.

Councillor Mrs Brooks said the front cover needed more variety, highlighting things that were happening in the District.

Councillor Mrs Harding asked if officers could go back to the current advertisers and increase the fees were being charged and make some profit for the Council. Mr Carne replied that they had no difficulty selling advertising space, so they had scope to look at this.

Councillor Angold-Stephens commented that we should be wary about increasing the size of the magazine and making it longer than it already was, it should also be broken up with more photographs.

Councillor Stallan was concerned about the delivery of the Forester; some parts of the District still did not receive it. Mr Carne replied that they had recently moved the distribution from the Post Office to a private distributor. The last edition was the first time they had used them and officers would need some time to see how good they were in comparison to the old contract.

Councillor Mrs Collins said there was an enthusiasm for the LSP to work with the Forester, but stressed it was not a take-over bid for the publication.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the outcome of the public consultation on the Forester be noted;
2. That the Committee recommend to the Cabinet that the proposals for the future of the Forester, as set out in the report, be endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and
3. That officers continue negotiations with the LSP with a view of having it provide a platform not just for the District Council but also for the LSP.

**6. LEISURE TASK AND FINISH PANEL - FEASIBILITY REPORT ON PROPOSED SPORTS HALL**

The Chairman of the Leisure Task and Finish Panel, Councillor Mrs Gadsby introduced the Panel's report on the provision of a Sports Hall at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool. The Committee noted that the joint use agreement had been agreed to be ended, whereby King Harold School would run the current sports facilities themselves. The Panel had agreed that the new project represented value for money but also recognised the current financial circumstances of the Council and Country as a whole. They also recognised that Waltham Abbey would welcome a new sports facility.

The Panel had recommended that a feasibility study be undertaken and that Cabinet be requested to make the necessary capital provision available.

Councillor Mrs Brooks commented that King Harold School was undergoing lots of changes; would the Council continue talking to the school about community use of the sports facilities. The Director for Environment and Street Scene, John Gilbert, said that they had tried to contact the school but had not succeeded in entering into a dialogue with them as yet.

Councillor Knapman pointed out that the table printed out on page 31 of the agenda should be read as 'total costs' and not as 'total additional revenue'. He also pointed out that the council needed to continue with this project as they could not now go back to the use of the school facilities. He also asked how comfortable the council was with the £1.7 million projected costs. Would it go up? Mr Gilbert said they had used 'Stace' to come up with this work so far. Eventually it would be up to the tenders received for the completion of the works.

Councillor Jacobs said that we needed to know once and for all what the intentions of the school were. The Deputy Chief Executive replied that the Council has made its intentions absolutely clear about the joint use. Officers may need to continue to help the school on the use/management of the sports hall, any actual decisions would not need to be made until the end of September 2009.

Councillor Whitbread said that the Council was now committed to withdraw from the joint use agreement, but he wondered why it would cost £41k to develop the new project. Councillor Mrs Harding said it was more than just a pre-planning study, they were also to carry out ground surveys etc. Mr Gilbert commented that this was about the right costs for the work to be undertaken. But, it had not gone through the Essex procurement hub, if it was to go forward it would then have to go through the 'hub'.

Councillor Knapman sounded a note of warning by saying that the estimated cost of £41k should be firmed up so that they could be sure it did not rise.

Councillor Mrs Brooks thought the 18 month time period was being optimistic.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the recommendations of the Leisure Task and Finish Panel be noted and endorsed; and
- (2) that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree to forward the recommendations to the Cabinet for their consideration at their next meeting.

**7. WORK PROGRAMME MONITORING**

**(a) Work Programmes**

The Senior Democratic Services officer, Simon Hill took the committee through their proposed work programme for the coming year.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

The meeting agreed that they should have the presentation on the provision of youth services within the district at their next meeting and also a presentation from the Fire and Rescue Services.

Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Panel:

Councillor Angold-Stephen noted that under item 6 on this Panel's work programme on residential parking the budget has been in place for over a year, have they started work as yet. He was promised a direct reply from the housing officer responsible for this work.

**(b) 2009/10 Proposed Work Programme**

The Committee noted the new proposal for a Task and Finish Panel for the coming year. They agreed that a Task and Finish Panel on the Pitt Review on Flood Defences should be established. Five members were nominated to sit on this Panel and it was requested that other members be asked to nominate themselves to this panel via a note in the Members Bulletin.

**(c) To consider the continuation of the current established Task and Finish Panels.**

The Committee considered the continuation of the existing Leisure Task and Finish and the Customer Transformation Task and Finish Panels. They agree that:

- (i) The current Customer Transformation Task and Finish Panel be disbanded and the remainder of their work load is put to the Finance and Performance Management Standing Scrutiny Panel.
- (ii) The current Leisure Task and Finish Panel be disbanded and the remainder of their workload is put to the Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Scrutiny Panel.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That a new Task and Finish Panel be set up to consider the Pitt review on flood defences.
2. That the Customer Transformation Task and Finish Panel be disbanded and the remainder of their work go to the Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel.
3. That the Leisure Task and Finish Panel be disbanded and the remainder of their work go to the Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Panel.

**8. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERSHIP TO STANDING PANELS**

The Committee were asked to make appointments to Standing Panels in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny rules. The Committee were reminded that the Council had agreed pro rata applied to Standing Panels and that membership should be kept to a minimum to allow each Group to have representation. It was noted that on this basis it had been calculated that Panels would consist of 11 Members, plus any independent member that wished to be a member of a Panel.

It was reported that nominations to Chairman and Vice Chairman to Standing Panels were excluded from the pro rata calculation rules required for such positions contained in the Council's constitution.

The Committee had before them a report detailing a list of nominations received and a tabled paper detailing late nominations and changes to the schedules.

**RESOLVED:**

That the appointments to Standing Panels annexed to these minutes be adopted.

**9. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERSHIP TO TASK AND FINISH PANELS**

The Committee were asked to consider appointments to the new Task and Finish Panel.

It was noted that any Member could be appointed to Task and Finish Panels. However Cabinet Members would not be able to serve on panels which bore directly on their Portfolio. In addition no panel could comprise of members of a single political group and restrictions on numbers did not apply.

Members were also asked to appoint a Chairman and Vice Chairman to each Panel.

The meeting had before them a tabled schedule detailing late nominations.

**RESOLVED:**

That the appointments to Task and Finish Panel annexed to these minutes be adopted.

**10. CABINET REVIEW**

It was noted that there was no business to report to the Cabinet.

**CHAIRMAN**

## Overview and Scrutiny Panels Membership for 2009/10

### Standing Panels

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#### Constitution and Member Services Panel

**Members –**

**Conservative Group (7):** Mrs M McEwen, Mrs J Hedges, J Knapman, G Mohindra, J Philip, D Stallan, Mrs M Sartin

**Liberal Democrats Group (2):** Mrs P Brooks, Mrs J H Whitehouse

**LRA Group (1):** J Markham

**BNP Group (1):**

**Independent (1):** R Morgan

**Chairman – Mrs M McEwen**

**Vice-Chairman – J Phillip**

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#### Finance and Performance Management

**Members –**

**Conservative Group (7):** J Collier, J Hart, G Mohindra, J Philip, B Pryor, A Watts, Mrs L Wagland

**Liberal Democrats Group (2):** D Jacobs, J M Whitehouse

**LRA Group (1):** K Angold-Stephens

**BNP Group (1):**

**Independent Group (1):**

**Chairman – D Jacobs**

**Vice-Chairman – G Mohindra**

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#### Housing

**Members**

**Conservative Group (7):** - K Chana, J Collier, Mrs R Gadsby, Mrs A Grigg, Mrs J Lea, J Wyatt, +1 Vacancy

**Liberal Democrats Group (2):** D Dodeja, Mrs J H Whitehouse

P.T.O

**LRA Group (1):** Mrs R Brookes

**BNP Group (1):** Mrs P Richardson

**Independent Member:** S Murray

**Chairman – S Murray**

**Vice-Chairman – Mrs R Gadsby**

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## **Safer, Cleaner, Greener**

**Members –**

**Conservative Group (7):** D Bateman, M Colling, Ms R Cohen, Mrs J Hedges, G Pritchard, B Rolfe, Mrs E Webster

**Liberal Democrats Group (2):** R Frankel, D Jacobs

**LRA Group (1):** R Barrett

**BNP Group (1):** R Law

**Independent Group (1):**

**Chairman - B Rolfe**

**Vice-Chairman – G Pritchard**

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## **Planning Services**

**Members –**

**Conservative Group (7):** T Boyce, K Chana, M Colling, J Hart, B Pryor, H Ulkun, Mrs L Wagland

**Liberal Democrats Group (2):** R Frankel, Mrs A Haigh

**LRA Group (1):** Mrs C Pond

**BNP Group (1):** Mrs P Richardson

**Independent (1):** Mrs A Cooper

**Chairman – Mrs L Wagland**

**Vice Chairman – K Chana**



**Task and Finish Panels  
Membership 2009/10**

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**Pitt Review on Flooding**

**Members –**

**Conservative Group:** Mrs A Grigg, Mrs E Webster, G Pritchard, B Rolfe

**Liberal Democrats Group:**

**LRA Group:** K Angold-Stephens

**BNP Group:**

**Independent Member:**

**Chairman:** Mrs A Grigg

**Vice Chairman:** K Angold-Stephens

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