

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES

Committee:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date:	Tuesday, 27 November 2012
Place:	Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping	Time:	7.30 - 9.05 pm
Members Present:	Councillors R Morgan (Chairman) K Chana, Ms J Hart, D Jacobs, Ms H Kane, P Keska, L Leonard, A Lion, Mrs M McEwen, S Murray, J Philip, Mrs M Sartin, Mrs P Smith and D Wixley		
Other Councillors:	Councillors R Bassett, Mrs A Grigg, Mrs J Lea, D Stallan, G Waller, Mrs E Webster, C Whitbread, J M Whitehouse and J Wyatt		
Apologies:	Councillors K Angold-Stephens, Mrs R Gadsby and L Girling		
Officers Present:	D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive), G Wallis (Community Development Officer), S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer), D Butler (Young Persons Officer), A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer), T Carne (Public Relations and Marketing Officer), L Doherty (Young Person's Assistant), M Jenkins (Democratic Services Assistant) and J Leither (Democratic Services Assistant)		
By Invitation:	S Cascarina (St Johns), J Collins (Davenant Foundation), E Foster (Independent), E Gokmen (Davenant Foundation), H Qadri (St Johns), C Sander (Roding Valley High), I Sheikh (Independent), O Tinker (Roding Valley High) and A Williams (Davenant Foundation)		

44. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman reminded everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

45. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Mrs J Hart was substituting for Councillor K Angold-Stephens and Councillor L Leonard was substituting for Councillor L Girling

46. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 16 October 2012 be agreed.

47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

48. PRESENTATION FROM YOUTH COUNCIL

The Chairman introduced five members of the Youth Council who were there to give a presentation on the work of the Youth Council over the last year and to give an indication of planned work for the coming year.

The Youth Councillors were Edward Gokmen, Olivia Tinker, Aaron Williams, Carina Sander and Ella Foster. They started off by saying that the Epping Forest Youth Council (EFYC) was first set up in 2007 with an associated annual running cost of £12k. Every year since, members of the EFYC have come to this meeting to update Committee members on their recent and future work load and to request that a £12,000 District Development Funding for the coming year be added to the Council's draft budget. The funding was to cover the running costs of the Youth Council, such as elections in schools, training, transport and equipment costs.

The Youth Councillors had been elected in March of this year and had undertaken various training courses in preparation for their new roles. They have actively encouraged, in conjunction with the Council's Community Development Team, approximately 150 teenagers across the district to take part in youth volunteer days this year. A big piece of work undertaken by the Youth Council this past year had been a review of all the Youth Clubs in the district in order to identify all the active youth projects in Epping Forest and to assess their quality by giving them a star rating. Youth Councillors visited each one 'under cover' as part of a mystery shopping exercise. Following this initial visit they then contacted club staff to arrange a meeting and discuss their findings. The overall winner of their Youth Project of the Year 2012 was 'Youth Plus' in Ongar. They have also produced publicity material to promote all Epping Forest youth projects and have updated their "tube map" style poster and using some of their Jack Petchey funding to produce extra flyers, mugs and mouse mats.

They have also formed relationships and have met with representatives from other neighbouring youth councils and have met with the local MPs.

They have recently received a presentation on the forthcoming local plan and had commented on the Dog Control Order proposals. They would like to have the opportunity to become more imbedded in the Council's decision making process. They also use the social network site to inform and update the local youths and can be followed on 'Twitter'.

In conclusion they formally requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend that a DDF of £12,000 be allocated to the Epping Forest Youth Council to enable them to continue to give local young people a voice at District Council level.

The meeting was then opened to questions from the members.

Q. There appears to be some problems with the Youth Club in Ongar, do you know anything about this?

A. The club has been closed down due to lack of funding and Essex County Council who was looking to use the building to house other youth services.

Q. How much interest was there in your electorate in what you do?

A. We have a lot of people come up to us and ask us questions about our work. We also have suggestion boxes in schools which provide topics for our discussions and possible projects.

Q. At the recent PCC elections only about 10% of electors voted; what was the percentage of votes for your elections?

A. Every pupil at the schools who were in on that day, voted.

Q. Were all students allowed to vote or was it restricted to certain year groups?

A. All students, irrespective of age were eligible to vote.

Q. What do you feel you have learnt as a Councillor and was it what you expected?

A. We were at first taken aback but then got to know each other. Ideas were brought forward and discussed and this taught us a lot. We have had a good reception from councillors and students. People are taking us seriously now and we are making a difference.

Q. How are you involved in the decision making process?

A. We had been involved in the Dog Control Order proposals as it was important to have our views taken into consideration. We also sit down with councillors in our partnership strategy scheme.

The Youth Councillors in turn asked the meeting how they envisaged adult councillors working with youth councillors. They were told that they needed to work more closely together. Councillors needed to listen to young people, recent major consultations produced some of the best ideas from young people. We need to listen to you and to engage with you.

Q. How often do get responses from your Tweets?

A. We get a good response, a lot of the youth in the district follow us; we also have a 'Facebook' page and know that it is well used.

Q. How much time does your council work take up?

A. It's difficult but it is worth it as we meet every two weeks. It also helps with our school work and makes us more confident in class.

Councillor Murray was impressed with their presentation, and thought it was well structured; he was even more impressed by their ability to answer our questions. He had no hesitation in recommending the £12k. Why was this not in the Continuing Services Budget (CSB) so that they do not have to apply for it every year, however he would still have them come to this meeting once a year and update us on their work.

Councillor Sartin agreed it was important that the Youth Council still came and gave a presentation. She would also like to congratulate them on the work done on Youth Clubs in the district. It was very impressive.

Councillor Whitbread said that the change in budgets could be assessed for next year to go on a CSB basis.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee agreed to recommend the £12,000 for inclusion in the new budget and formally recommend this bid be transferred to the Continuing Service Budget so that the Youth Council need not make an annual bid from the District Development Fund; and
- (2) The Committee would still like the Youth Council to attend a meeting on an annual basis to update them on their work and achievements.

49. KEY OBJECTIVES 2012/13

The Deputy Chief Executive, Derek Macnab, introduced the report on the Corporate Plan for 2011-15 and Key Objectives for 2012/13. The Panel noted the progress made on the Key Objectives for the first six months of this year. This report had already gone to the Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel and Cabinet Committee.

Councillor Whitbread commented that it was interesting to see how the achievement for the key objectives tended to repeat themselves year after year, such as the car parking objectives.

Councillor Smith commented that the report indicated that a formal decision had not yet been made on free car parking on Saturdays. Councillor Whitbread replied that there would be free parking on Saturdays in the run up to Christmas; we also have a lot of free parking throughout the year on Saturdays at various car parks.

Councillor McEwen asked when Leader Lodge would be opened. Councillor Stallan replied that they were waiting to assess the tenders; he would give an update at the next Cabinet meeting.

Councillor Murray asked what evidence that the free car parking provided in December boosted the revenue for the local shops and why were there no restrictions on the time they could park? These car parks could be full by 9 or 10am for the rest of the day. It may be that people would like to pay if they could get a space. Councillor Waller said this was an intense period for retailers and as shoppers could go else where we need to support local retailers. We are reviewing the car parking charges and as part of this, a survey has been carried out recently on the future of charges.

Councillor Philip queried why Key Objective C06.d (v), implementation of the new Tenancy policy, had been marked as 'on track' as it was under target. Councillor Stallan was not sure why, he would have it looked at. It should be moved to 'under control'. Mr Macnab added that the definitions should be clarified and perhaps reduced to two or three.

Councillor Jennie Hart asked what was the intention for car parking charges in the longer term; would there be any parity between long term and short term charges as it was confusing for residents and shoppers. Councillor Waller replied that they had considered some adjustments for this coming round but decided it was necessary to support our residents and would consider reducing some charges.

Councillor Jacobs remarked that they had no commuter rail link in Ongar and so had no commuters parking there. If you change the tariffs you would do it across the district, but it may not be appropriate in certain areas. Councillor Waller agreed to take Councillor Jacobs views into consideration.

RESOLVED:

That the progress in relation to the achievement of the Council's key objectives for 2012/13, for the first six months of the year, be noted.

50. SIX MONTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW

Mr Hill, the Senior Democratic Services Officer took the Committee through their current Work Programme reviewing the 6 month of work carried out so far.

(a) Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee noted the work covered so far, and that:

- Item 11 of the work programme, review of the Essex Police Service was also being considered the Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Panel, who have asked to look at the PCC. It may be useful to have the Panel take on this issue as well and combine it with their proposed review of the PCC. They would then be able to open this meeting to all members. Members thought that this should remain in the work programme of both committees to double the chances of getting the PCC to one of the meetings;
- Item 9, Broadband Access, should not be greyed out as members had asked to have either BT or Virgin to attend a meeting;
- Item 14 of the work programme was to review the PCT at their January meeting; and
- Item 17, Review of Highways, members wanted to know when it could go to a meeting. Officers said that they would try and arrange this for March 2013. The comments would have to be altered to reflect that the highways section had not settled down and did not look like they were about to. The County Portfolio Holder should be invited to enable us to quiz them on their Highways strategy. It was noted that the Highways Panel covered different work to the overall strategy that the Committee wanted to look at and should not be confused.

(b) Housing Standing Panel

The Chairman of the Housing Standing Panel, Councillor Murray took the meeting through their recent work programme. The Committee noted that:

- The Home Options based letting scheme was working successfully;
- They had received an update in July on the Homelessness Strategy;
- They were impressed by the Mears presentation on their repairs management services;
- They had noted very satisfactory results achieved by the Tenant Satisfaction Survey;
- They would be looking at the new Tenancy Policy at their meeting on 17 December 2012; and
- The Annual Review of the Housing Allocations Scheme would be reviewed at an extra-ordinary meeting in December 2012.

(c) Constitution and Member Services Standing Panel

The Chairman of the Panel, Councillor Sartin took the Committee through their work programme. The Committee noted that:

- At their meeting to be held on 4 December they would look at the access to information rules, the review of notices for questions and the review of Portfolio Assistants as members of the Audit and Governance Committee. They would also look at the terms of reference for the Housing and Appeals and Review Panel; and
- They would still have to table in the review of the PCC elections.

(d) Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Panel

The Chairman of the Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Panel, Councillor Lea took the Panel through their work programme. It was noted that at their last meeting they received a presentation from Acting Chief Superintendant Collison, Essex Police, who updated them on the latest performance of the police in our area.

(e) Planning Services Standing Panel

The Chairman of the Planning Services Standing Panel, Councillor Wyatt, updated the Committee on their work programme. The Committee noted that they had an extra-ordinary meeting on 7 November 2012, when they looked at the Enfield consultation on their Northern Gateway road plans. Following this we had sent in the comments, mainly objecting to the London Borough's plans, signed by the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Planning.

It was noted that EFDC had very little time to respond and we were very disappointed as to how this consultation was carried out, the paperwork was complicated and unclear and we had very little time to reply.

(f) Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel

The Chairman of the Panel, Councillor Lion, updated the Committee on their Work Programme. It was noted that:

- At their last meeting they reviewed their Council's KPIs and noted that two of these would not be met by the end of the year;
- They were wondering how the new Chief Executive would want to change the KPI for the Council;
- They would like to align some of the KPIs to Portfolio Holders responsibilities;
- They had also considered the new proposed Fees and Charges for the coming year;
- They also considered the sickness record for the last six months and with the good results reported they would be reviewing this to see if they still needed to have as much detail as was currently put in the report; and
- They have added a new item to look at the proposed new telephone system for the Civic Offices.

Task and Finish Panels

Noted that all the Task and Finish Panels were due to finish by the end of the year.

(i) Overview and Scrutiny Review Task and Finish Panel

Noted that they were due to hold their first meeting on 6 December.

(ii) Review of Chief Executive Appointment Panel Task and Finish Panel

A date for their first meeting has yet to be arranged as the preparation of the data needed had been delayed.

(iii) Review of Licensing Services Task and Finish Panel

Noted that their first meeting had been held on 23 October and that next meeting was to be held on 17 December 2012, to start at 7.30pm so as not to clash with the Housing Standing Panel.

51. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE REVIEW OF LICENSING SERVICES TASK AND FINISH PANEL

The Committee received the draft Terms of Reference for the recently established Task and Finish Panel looking into the Licensing Services for the Council.

The Committee noted and agreed that the following Councillors form the membership of the panel. They were: Councillors P Smith (Chairman), K Angold-Stephens, James Hart, R Morgan, J Philip, C Pond, D Stallan and S Watson.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted and agreed the terms of reference and membership for the Review of Licensing Services Task and Finish Panel.

52. CABINET REVIEW

The Committee wanted the following comments brought to the Cabinet's attention:

- The Chairman of the Housing Standing Panel wanted to give his full support to agenda item 9 on the Council Housebuilding Programme and that he would fully endorse the third recommendation that would be tabled at that meeting by the Portfolio Holder.
- Members wanted it to be noted that agenda item 19, 'Calendar of Council Meetings', the annual budget setting meeting was set to be right in the middle of the school's half term in February; and asked if this could be avoided.

CHAIRMAN