

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW TASK AND FINISH
PANEL
HELD ON THURSDAY, 6 DECEMBER 2012
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.00 - 8.40 PM**

Members Present: K Angold-Stephens (Chairman), Mrs R Gadsby (Vice-Chairman), Mrs A Grigg (Asset Management and Economic Development Portfolio Holder), D Stallan (Housing Portfolio Holder) and Mrs J H Whitehouse

Other members present:

Apologies for Absence: Mrs M Sartin (Vice Chairman of Council)

Officers Present I Willett (Assistant to the Chief Executive) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

1. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

The Panel noted there were no substitute members.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Panel noted the original terms of reference set by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY REVIEW -SCOPING REPORT

The Panel considered the scoping report for the Panel reviewing their terms of reference and the timescale for the completion of the review. The Panel noted that:

- a) The rules on 'Questions from the public' were being reviewed at present and may well be changed by Cabinet and Council by next February;
- b) The members of the Panel discussed the possibility of Chairmen being given the discretion to allow more than the stipulated number of public speakers at any meeting;
- c) The Panel agreed that they should also look at how the Council Chamber should be laid out, especially when the O&S has a presentation. Should they all be on the same level so that the Committee did not have to look up to them?

- d) Should the Committee be introduced to visitors so that they knew who they were talking to and what wards they represented, or was it that the Councillors were there to represent the district as a whole;
- e) Should topics at presentations be limited in number so that they could be considered in more detail;
- f) They noted the comments made in the recent interviews with members that O&S needed to be reviewed as it lacked bite; and
 - that there were concerns on the appointment of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the O&S Committee;
 - there were concerns over the whipping of members over O&S matters;
 - that the relationship between O&S and the Cabinet did not seem as good as it could be, they did not seem to be working well together.
- g) That the O&S Committee and the Cabinet meetings were too close together;
- h) Would it be better to use the forward plan to review the Cabinet's work over a three month period;
- i) Councillor Waller would like to address the Committee – this was agreed;
- j) For wider geographical topics such as public health, would joint scrutiny with an adjoining authority be more useful;
- k) There was a need to scrutinise how outside bodies were dealt with;
- l) How do you get members more involved in the process?
- m) The work of the Standing Panels be reviewed, are they in the right format?
- n) There were concerns raised over budget monitoring, with too much detailed figure work going to the scrutiny panel, that was really more for the Cabinet to deal with. It was thought that Scrutiny should look at the broader budget issues, and not the detailed figure work;
- o) The Panel would like a report on this from the Director of Finance brought to its next meeting, it would also be a good idea for the Chairman of the Finance Standing Panel to attend this meeting as well;
- p) Should the relevant KPIs go to the relevant Standing Panel to look at and not to the general Finance Panel;
- q) All Panel Chairmen should be consulted on what they think was right or wrong with the present system (Mr Willett to arrange);
- r) That the present Call-in system worked well, but was a five day deadline long enough?
- s) Was there a procedure for "calling back a call-in" – if the lead member of a call-in, having met with the relevant Portfolio Holder and having come to a mutually agreeable solution, could a call-in be withdrawn? And

- t) That there was some concern over the arrangements on how call-ins were heard. The Portfolio Holder had to wait for the lead member of the call-in to speak and then had to wait for any other member of the call-in to add their comments, which was potentially five other speakers, who could speak before the Portfolio Holder had a chance to put their view across.

The meeting on considering the number of topics that they had to take into account under this review, would like two (or maybe three topics) covered at each of their future meetings in order to get through their subject matter within their proposed timescale.

The Chairman agreed that he should report on a regular basis to the Full Council meeting to keep them up to date on this Panel's deliberations.

The Panel agreed that they should aim to finish this Panel's work by March or April of 2013. They reviewed and agreed their terms of reference, which is attached.

5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Various dates are to be circulated to members for their consideration.

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Origin:

At its meeting on 7 April 2012 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) decided to establish a new Task and Finish Scrutiny Panel to review Overview and Scrutiny operations generally within the Council with particular reference to relations between the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny. This decision was made following attendance by a number of members at a joint training session on Overview and Scrutiny convened jointly with Harlow Council.

Draft Terms of Reference:

1. To scrutinise the current processes of Overview and Scrutiny and to what extent the functions could be improved.
2. To examine and review operational aspects of Overview and Scrutiny, in consideration of:
 - a) Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
 - Developing the relationship with the Leader;
 - Policy on appointment and political allegiance;
 - Leader / OSC liaison.
 - b) Cabinet Liaison:
 - Arrangements for pre-scrutiny of Cabinet business;
 - Meeting arrangements;
 - Questioning Portfolio Holders;
 - Annual Cabinet priorities.
 - c) Scrutiny Panels:
 - Membership / role of Standing Panels;
 - Progress reporting and achieving outcomes from Panels;
 - Managing Scrutiny Panel business.
 - d) Call-in procedures:
 - Presentation of Call-ins;
 - Responses by Portfolio Holders;
 - Briefing by Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny.
 - e) Scrutiny of External Organisations:
 - Engagement with the public;
 - Layout of the Chamber;
 - Selecting the right forum for external scrutiny;
 - Following up on undertakings given;
 - Avoiding pre-prepared presentations;
 - Preparation: liaison with the public and other councillors;
 - Managing Questions / setting of objectives.

Meeting 1

Meeting 2

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY REVIEW TASK AND FINISH PANEL: TERMS OF REFERENCE

- f) Budget Scrutiny:
 - Assessing the effectiveness of the present Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel;
 - Determining the correct role of Overview and Scrutiny in budget preparation and monitoring;
 - Budget documentation for OSC;
 - Programming O&S involvement in budget making.

- g) Public Profile of OSC:
 - Public awareness;
 - Determining the work plan each year (including the PICK system);
 - Questions from the public for Portfolio Holders / OS Committee.

Meeting 3

3. To examine and review any other operational aspects of Overview and Scrutiny.

Aims and Objectives:

- (a) To report findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to submit any final reports in the proposed Corporate Format for consideration by O & S and Council by April 2013.
- (b) To gather evidence and information in relation to the topic through the receipt of data, presentations and by participation in fact finding visits if necessary;
- (c) To have due regard to the relevant legislation Council procedure rules.
- (d) To consult political groups and independent Councillors at the final stage of the review.

TIMESCALE	ESTIMATED	ACTUAL
Commencement: Dec 2012	April 2013	
<u>Finish</u> 1. As a time limited review - to end by April 2013.		First meeting held on 6 December 2012