

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES

Committee:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date:	Tuesday, 1 April 2014
Place:	Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping	Time:	7.30 - 9.41 pm
Members Present:	Councillors R Morgan (Chairman), K Angold-Stephens (Vice-Chairman), G Chambers, K Chana, T Church, L Girling, D Jacobs, Ms H Kane, P Keska, A Lion, A Mitchell MBE, S Murray, B Rolfe, A Watts and D Wixley		
Other Councillors:	Councillors R Bassett, Mrs A Grigg, Ms G Shiell, P Spencer, D Stallan, G Waller and J Wyatt		
Apologies:	Councillors J Philip		
Officers Present:	D Macnab (Director of Neighbourhoods), I Willett (Assistant to the Chief Executive), I White (Forward Planning Manager), S G Hill (Assistant Director (Governance & Performance Management)), T Carne (Public Relations and Marketing Officer), A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer) and M Jenkins (Democratic Services Assistant)		
By Invitation:	H Byrne (Barts Health (NHS Trust)) and Dr A Chesser (Barts Health (NHS Trust))		

77. 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.

78. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor A Watts was substituting for Councillor J Philip.

79. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2014 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

80. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(1) Councillor G Chambers declared a non pecuniary interest in the following item of the agenda, by virtue of being employed by Barts Health NHS Trust. He advised that he would remain in the meeting for the duration of the item:

- Item 6 – Presentation from Barts Health (NHS Trust)

(2) Councillors Murray and Angold-Stephens declared a non pecuniary interest in the following item of the agenda, by virtue of being members of Loughton Town Council. They advised that they would remain in the meeting for the duration of the item:

- Item 11 – Cabinet Forward Plan – item in the Environment Portfolio Holder section on the refurbishment of the Charlie Moules Footbridge

81. PRESENTATION FROM BARTS HEALTH (NHS TRUST)

The Committee welcomed Dr Alistair Chesser, the Group Director for Emergency Care and Acute Medicine and Helen Byrne, Hospital Director for Whipps Cross. They were there to present an update on Whipps Cross and on the wider issues of Barts Health (NHS Trust).

Barts Health was chosen by the CQC as one of the first hospital trust to be inspected under its new regime. A team of 90 CQC inspectors visited all Barts Health hospitals during the week commencing 4 November 2013. A report was published on 14 January and shared with local stakeholders and partners. We noted that the overall findings were tough but fair, with much to be proud of. Three warning notices for maternity and care of the elderly issued last year at Whipps Cross were lifted. That the staff provided safe, compassionate care in clean surroundings with excellent infection prevention and control.

Areas for improvement include appointment attendance rates, cancellations, complaints handling, leadership development and organisational culture. The trust was clear that bullying and harassment had no place in Barts Health.

As part of their response, the Trust had developed six action plans which detailed how they would address the issues raised. There was also a single high level plan covering Trust wide actions and five site-specific plans covering actions at five of the six individual hospitals (all except Mile End, where the CQC found no actions to be necessary). They were also commissioning an independent review on staffing levels and were working on improving staff morale to make staff feel as valued as possible; and would be providing 24/7 consultant cover.

As part of addressing issues raised at Whipps Cross, they would be addressing delays in discharging patients; improving the patient environment and would be addressing equipment shortages. Some of the positive comments made about the hospital were that the staff were considered to be compassionate, caring and committed. The hospital was clean and the staff adhered to good infection control practice. Improvements had been made in both accident and emergency and maternity services since the May 2013 inspection. The three warning notices were lifted. Palliative care was compassionate and held in high regard by staff, patients and their friends and family.

They were doing all they could to support their staff and were aiming to reach a 95% staffing establishment (by September 2014) in all areas. This would help them reduce their reliance on temporary staff and improve quality and safety. They were also aiming for a greater visibility of their Executive Team with a seven day a week presence and were also setting up a new system to provide anonymous online dialogue between staff and members of the Trust Board. They would also commission independent investigations into specific allegations of bullying.

They were also developing monthly reporting of actual staffing levels by shift and ward/department and were rolling out a leadership and skills programme. Stronger links were being developed between their risk register and capital programme to target equipment replacement more effectively. They are also working with Healthwatch, local patients and staff on a new Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALs) and Complaint model.

They have introduced a clinical standards committee to oversee learning from incidents and will have continued dialogue with local partners and stakeholders. They will, of course continue to attend Overview and Scrutiny Committees at local authorities to keep them informed and have committed to twice weekly conference calls to plan the discharges of patients.

On their commitment to Whipps Cross Hospital they are working with colleagues and partners across the North East London area to develop a clear strategy for the future of their services and their hospitals. This included a clear commitment to providing emergency and maternity care at Whipps Cross. They were also investing in key services, including emergency and maternity care and introducing a new patient administration system that would allow seamless management of patients across all Barts Health sites. They noted that the whole estate required significant investment and were working on plans to generate capital for reinvestment.

Recently they have opened a new Emergency and Urgent Care Centre, opened in May 2012 and a new acute admissions unit, opened in September 2013. Their investment in maternity care included new operating theatres and recovery rooms, a dedicated bereavement suit for women and their partners and new emergency gynaecology/early pregnancy unit. They were also making further improvements to cleaning standards and the patient environment, by providing £170,000 for environmental improvements in patient areas. They have also received a further £1million for refurbishments.

The meeting was then opened out to questions from the members present.

Councillor Murray wanted to focus on the recent CQC report on maternity and services for the elderly. Acknowledging the progress made so far, he wanted to know how could such a large hospital in a large trust like Barts, get themselves into such a position. Dr Chesser replied that he was not here to defend the staff and accepted what had happened had not been acceptable. But things have moved on and this was much less likely to happen now. Allegations made us realise we had major problems. We have now retained all the staff in the wards in question and the results have been very impressive; we have seen improvement in terms of ownership by the staff of their wards. He believed that they had turned a corner.

Councillor Wixley noted that he had cause to experience the service at Whipps Cross last year and it was not all bad news. He was surprised that they had got a bad report as he was impressed on an individual basis. Part of the previous issue was finance for the trust as a whole. Also it had been noted that if you went into hospital on a weekend you were less likely to survive; how were they tackling this. There were rumours that the accident and emergency department of King Georges hospital may be closing, what effect would that have on Whipps Cross. Dr Chesser said that on the question of finance, they had faced a significant challenge and that they had now put in a finance recovery team and they would be in a better position at years end. They also have a massive efficiency savings target for 2014/15. This would not be completed at the expense of the quality of care given to their patients. The position was difficult but improving. As for weekend working, this was a live issue at present. The hospitals needed to set themselves up to ensure they achieved a level quality of

care over the whole week. This was difficult as it was expensive to employ specialists over the weekends, but at Barts Health they were committed to get to this point over the next 2,3 or 4 years. As for the closure of the A&E department at King Georges Hospital, yes there were plans for it to close and there would be some overspill that would come to Whipps Cross. We have plans to make sure we have the capacity at Whipps Cross to deal with that.

Councillor Keska wanted to know if there was a boundary for sending people to Harlow or to Whipps Cross hospitals. Ms Byrne said it was one of the 'A' roads in the Loughton area which decided if they went North or South.

Councillor Girling wanted to know if the team building and the general staff morale building would be continued or be revisited in the future. Dr Chesser noted that there was a risk when you put in a programme like that. You get a short term gain and then it would revert back. We hope that the good staff morale carried on. They have nurse mentors, working with ward managers to keep the improvement momentum going. There was also the investment in the wards to help staff.

Councillor Jacobs noted that they have a finance recovery team in place, he wanted to know what would happen to the outstanding deficit, and would it be written off? Ms Byrne noted that they had received some money when they set up, but they were still looking at an end of year deficit of £98 million. They were looking to involve the staff more in saving money etc. they would manage this deficit by becoming more efficient. If they don't get the money right they end up not in a voluntary turnaround but in a compulsory turnaround.

Councillor Murray wanted to know what they were going to do to raise capital for any capital investment on the site. Ms Byrne said that Whipps Cross was a big site. It has a corner with a number of nurse's residents, which they were looking to sell to raise some capital to reinvest.

Councillor Murray went on to say that as a ward Councillor he got a lot of positive feedback on Whipps Cross; but he still received emails complaining about there being no doctors at weekends and unhygienic wards which had dirty floors and uncaring staff who did not meet the patients basic needs. Why was this still happening? Dr Chesser replied that it was disappointing and shocking to hear this. We know that that there was a long way to go, some patient's get a high quality of service but there were still some problem areas.

Councillor Mitchell asked about discharging patients living on their own. How did they ensure they were looked after especially over a weekend? Dr Chesser said that was a big question. It was important that patients could go home but also that they were looked after when at home. We make sure that they would have a discharge plan and would look at their home environment and do a risk assessment, but sometimes it goes wrong. However, we do try and get it right for our patients. Ms Byrne added that they had done a lot of work on this. They have procedures that they follow and a planned discharge generally happens on a Monday or a Friday.

Councillor Angold-Stephens noted that most people here had experienced problems on the discharge of patients. However, with borderline cases involving cross border liaison what do neighbouring trusts do about liaising on patients and their records etc? Dr Chesser noted that it could be better. They do not as yet have a joined up ICT system across the NHS, but this may be possible in the near future. In the meantime we generally just phone through, but this can be difficult. We do need an ICT solution.

Councillor Lion said he had experienced problems with their midwife service being on an answering system. Also what were the follow up services provided. Ms Byrne noted that his was not a good experience. As for following up, they did surveys and had a friends and family test. They were looking to increase the response rate and feedback.

Councillor Watts wanted to know when the CQC would come again. And when you spoke about discharging people, you ticked boxes and processes were gone through. This sounded like a 'tick box exercise' but I'm sure it was not what you meant. Does the hospital follow up with a phone call to see how the discharged patient was doing or does the patient get a number that they can call if they need help. Dr Chesser replied that the CQC could come at any time. We find it hard to generalise, but high risk patients have a care package and plan to cover them. We sometimes follow up by phone and sometimes we escort people home, it all depends on circumstances. But, as always, we can do better. Ms Byrne added that the paperwork had been put in place to formalise the relationship between the Health and Social Services, this was a statutory responsibility. They work hard to ensure that they discharge this responsibility as well as they can. We try to make it a positive experience and try to return people home when it was possible.

Councillor Watts added that he did not get any comfort or confidence that what you are saying means that people do not fall through the cracks. Dr Chesser replied that they do issue a contact number; they also talk to the Community team and have a plan for the return of the patient to their home although it does not always go as planned.

Councillor Lea wanted to say that someone of her acquaintance had not been told privately that her husband had cancer. She also understood that sometime elderly patients could be very difficult and so sympathised with the health staff.

Councillor Girling wanted to know if there was still a post code lottery happening in the NHS on the supply over drugs – was this still an issue. Dr Chesser replied that this was not an issue. Patients should get the same access to the same high quality care.

The Chairman brought this particular part of the meeting to a close, thanking the speakers for their excellent presentation and answering the questions put to them.

82. WORK PROGRAMME MONITORING

The Committee reviewed the Overview and Scrutiny work programme.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee considered their work programme noting that this was their last scheduled meeting for the year and that their work programme was now complete. Item 6 on the programme, to review the strategic direction of Epping Forest College, was now going to take place in July 2014.

Housing Scrutiny Panel

The chairman had nothing further to add.

Constitution and Member Services Scrutiny Panel

The Vice Chairman in the absence of the Chairman had nothing further to add.

Safer Cleaner Greener Scrutiny Panel

The Chairman had nothing to add on the work programme, noting that there was a further meeting scheduled for 15 April 2014.

Planning Services Scrutiny Panel

The Chairman noted that their last meeting had been cancelled due to having only one item of business which was on the agenda for the meeting tonight. Normally they would consider the Local Plan, but the Local Plan Cabinet Committee had not met recently.

Councillor Watts noted that this was the second time that the Panel had been cancelled. As the Local Plan was number one on our risk register, this should be scrutinised. Perhaps O&S should establish a Task and Finish Panel to review this. As chairman of the audit and Governance Committee he thought this appeared not to have been managed.

Councillor Wyatt noted that although two meetings had been cancelled they did have an extra meeting added into their schedule. So in effect only one meeting was not held.

Councillor Bassett, the Portfolio Holder for Planning Services, noted that it was important that the Local Plan had taken all issues raised into consideration and then to take them to a full Cabinet meeting to make decisions so that any decisions could be made at an open meeting that was webcast and was able to be called in. He was always available to answer any questions and noted that the "duty to co-operate" was very heavy on the council now.

Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel

The Chairman noted that they had held their last meeting and had introduced a red/amber/green system to identify performance and improve the way they handled scrutiny of performance management.

Reserve Programme

Mr Hill noted that two PICK forms had been sent out to members but neither had been returned as yet.

Between now and July we will let the public know how they can contact us with any suggestions.

Members should also let us know if they have any suggestions.

83. PETITIONS SCHEME - FURTHER REVIEW

In the absence of the Chairman of the Constitution and Member Services Scrutiny Panel, the vice chairman, Councillor Watts took the Panel through their report reviewing the Council's Petition Scheme. This was last considered in September 2012. Since then the Localism Act had repealed the previous provision to have a petition scheme.

In reviewing this document again it was noted that some sections of our scheme required some attention.

He noted that in section (7) of the re-drafted scheme officers had tried to provide clarity on how petitions were dealt with related to the amount of support they received. No petitions had ever met the threshold for debate at either Overview and Scrutiny or Full Council. Whilst the Panel believed that the threshold levels were appropriate, the original provisions that envisaged allowing petitioners to seek officers to report at an Overview and Scrutiny had never been requested. Experience has shown that petitioners were interested in issues, not their management and in any event, this threshold had never been reached.

The Panel were therefore of the view that dealing with petitions over 1200 should require a Portfolio Holder to prepare a report to the full Cabinet for a decision. Such decisions would be open to call-in should Overview and Scrutiny wish to give them consideration. They also suggested that it should be open to the Portfolio Holder to decide to treat a smaller petition in this way should he/she so choose.

They had also suggested that the receipt of petitions were notified to ward members to ensure that local councillors were aware of received petitions. They had also asked that officers ensure that all petitions were subject to commentary in portfolio holder reports to Council as envisaged by the recent Overview and Scrutiny Review. They had also made minor changes to clarify timescales for response to petitions.

On consideration, the Committee wanted petitioners who had garnered enough signatures (1200) to have it considered at a Cabinet meeting, to have the same right to address that Cabinet meeting as petitioners had to address a Council meeting and be given five minutes to present their petition before it was discussed by the Cabinet. This was agreed by the Committee and added to the recommendations.

It was noted that under section 7 of the Operating Standing Orders that it be noted that it should read that petitions between 20 but fewer than 1200 signature (and not 2400 as wrongly printed) be considered by the relevant Portfolio Holder.

RESOLVED:

- (1) To recommend to the Council to approve the redrafted Council petitions scheme;
- (2) That, the proposed revised website information on petitions be noted; and
- (3) That, petitioners who had garnered enough signatures (1200) to have it considered at a Cabinet meeting, have the same right to address that Cabinet meeting as petitioners had to address a Council meeting and be given five minutes to present their petition before it was discussed.

84. QUESTIONS AT COUNCIL - REVIEW

Councillor Watts introduced the report dealing with a review of the new procedures for dealing with members questions without notice at Council meetings. This stemmed from a PICK form from Councillor Philip.

The public interest justification on the Pick Form for this review was as follows:

“The current system of questions without notice at full Council leads to a sense of disorganisation. The juxtaposition of questions on reports and questions on other matters leads to many occurrences of questions being identified by the Chairman only to find that their questions are for the other Section. This gives a bad impression to members of the public, present and watching on webcasts.”

Officers reviewed other Essex authorities and what arrangements for member questioning they operated and reported back to the Panel.

The Panel took note of the concerns expressed on the “Pick” form regarding confusion which can arise between questions without notice on any subject and questions on the written reports which are submitted to each Council meeting by Cabinet members and the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The evidence given by the current Chairman was helpful and confirmed that this issue needed to be clarified.

Currently, 20 minutes are allocated at each Council meeting for questions without notice. The Constitution was silent as to how the 20 minutes were to be utilised. In practice, successive Chairmen of the Council have tended to divide the 20 minute session into two parts: the first part dealing with questions on written reports, and the second part with open questions on any subject. It was noted that confusion can arise between the two ten minute periods.

The Panel proposed that the time allocated should be used to take questions on reports or on other matters entirely in any order. They thought this would make the operation of this part of the meeting easier for Chairmen of the Council and clearer for other Councillors. They had also gone a stage further by proposing that the 20 minutes should be increased to 30 minutes.

The Panel had noted from the Constitution that there was nothing that either permits or disallows supplementary questions in respect of those asked without notice. The Panel thought there was a need for clarity on this point and proposed that supplementary questions should not be allowed. If supplementary questions were allowed, there was a risk of creating further time pressure with fewer Councillors being able to raise questions in the first place.

Finally, the Panel felt that the remaining provisions of the 2007 Protocol should be adopted in the Constitution. This covered matters such as the Chairman’s discretion to extend the 30 minute period by up to a further 10 minutes if needed and to ensure that questions from all political groups and independent members are dealt with in the order in which they were put and, so far as is possible, dealt with at the Council meeting.

Councillor Murray proposed that the 30 minutes should be divided equally between questions on Portfolio Holders reports and the rest on any other issues. Councillor Wixley agreed and seconded this proposal. This was agreed by the Committee to be added to the recommendations made to Council. The meeting briefly debated whether supplementary questions should be allowed but agreed this was a grey area and would be difficult to distinguish the differences between the questions asked.

RESOLVED:

(1) That the following changes be made to the procedure for dealing with questions without notice by members of the Council to the Leader of the Council, Cabinet members and the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

(a) that the existing time limit for such questions be increased from 20 to 30 minutes and that priority be given to written questions for the first 15 minutes;

(b) that questions to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be dealt with at Council meetings at the same time as other Overview and Scrutiny Business, separately from questions to the Leader of Council and Cabinet members;

(c) that a new provision be added to the Council Procedure Rules clarifying that no supplementary questions on questions without notice shall be permitted;

(d) that the remaining provisions of a Council Protocol approved in 2007 in respect of questions without notice being incorporated in the new revised Procedure Rules covering the following be recommended:

(i) Chairman's discretion to extend the period for questions without notice up to an additional ten minutes;

(ii) Questions on written reports by Cabinet members etc., and without notice on other subjects in the order in which they are put;

(iii) Chairman's discretion to extend the period by an additional ten minutes; and

(iv) Chairman to ensure that questions from all political groups and independent members are put.

(2) That the draft revisions to the Council Procedure Rules as set out be approved; and

(3) That a report be submitted to the Council recommending the adoption of the revised Council Procedure Rules and their publication as part of the Constitution.

85. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report. They noted that they could submit any comments to Democratic Services by the end of April 2014.

Councillor Murray said that it was a good report especially the pages covering Housing Scrutiny and was pleased with the case study chosen. He thanked the members of his Panel for their input during the year and also the members of Democratic Services for their help and support.

Councillor Angold-Stephens proposed a vote of thanks be given to Mr Hendry for writing the report and this was endorsed by the Committee.

RESOLVED:

(1) That the draft Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for 2013-14 was noted; and

- (2) That the final version of the report be given final approval at the July meeting.

86. CABINET FORWARD PLAN - MARCH 2014

The Committee reviewed the Cabinet's Forward Plan for March 2014. They were asked if they had any thing that they wished to raise and if they wished to have the Forward Plan on a meeting by meeting basis or on a quarterly basis.

The Committee noted that the Leisure Service Review needed to be added to the forward Plan as it was not listed at present and that for now the Forward Plan should go to each meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Leisure Service review be added to the Forward Plan; and
- (2) That the Forward Plan be brought to each meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

87. EAST HEARTS DRAFT DISTRICT PLAN - PREFERRED OPTIONS CONSULTATION

Ian White, the Forward Planning Manager introduced the report on the consultation of the Draft Plan from East Herts Council. The consultation would finish on 22nd May 2014. The Draft Plan was intended to be read as a whole and there were no set questions as part of the consultation – views were being sought on the whole document. The Plan, once adopted (assumed to be in 2016), would cover the period 2011 to 2031 and set out a framework for guiding sustainable development in the district. It was a high-level, strategic policy document and would be supplemented by more site specific and detailed publications, including Supplementary Planning Documents.

It was noted that East Herts had an area of 184 square miles and was predominantly rural with the five market towns of Bishop's Stortford, Buntingford, Hertford, Sawbridgeworth and Ware providing a range of services to the surrounding rural area. The southern third of the district was within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The towns of Harlow, Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City all abut the district boundary and there was pressure for expansion of all three into East Herts. There were also substantial cross-boundary influences from Cambridgeshire and Essex.

There was likely to be a need for at least 15,000 additional dwellings between 2011 and 2031 – i.e. about 750 new dwellings per year, which the Draft Plan acknowledged as being "very challenging". There will be a shortfall of about 1,100 houses in the period 2011 to 2016, which would be addressed over the remaining 15 years of the Plan. Para 47 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) required Local Plans to identify (and update annually) a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against the agreed needs with an additional buffer of 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land.

The Draft Plan therefore acknowledged a housing requirement of at least 4,321 dwellings in the first 5 years after adoption (i.e. 2016 to 2021) comprising (i) 3,750 based on projected needs for 5 years; (ii) 365 towards compensation for the anticipated shortfall in the period 2011 to 2016; and (iii) 206 to allow a 5% buffer.

In the remaining period of the adopted Plan (i.e. 2021 to 2031) housing needs would be met at three "Broad Locations for Development". These were (a) north and east of Ware; (b) east of Welwyn Garden City; and (c) the Gilston area (i.e. north of Harlow). These are strategic areas where East Herts Council accepted the principle of development but where further research and testing was needed.

A separate chapter in the Draft Plan on the Gilston area advised that it would continue to be physically separated from Harlow and that development in that area would contribute to the needs of East Herts from (i) unmet housing needs in Bishop's Stortford and villages in the centre and east of the district; (ii) under-delivery elsewhere in the district; and (iii) reducing pressure for incremental housing development in other settlements.

While the Draft Plan makes passing reference to some of the requirements of "Planning policy for traveller sites" (CLG 2012), there was no mention of collaborative working or the consideration of the production of joint development plans that set targets on a cross-authority basis. The Draft Plan indicated that the district currently has only three authorised private Gypsy and Traveller sites currently totalling 11 pitches (but with planning permission for an additional 11).

In view of the difficulties this Council was facing in making suitable future provision for travellers, officers felt that it was very disappointing that no attempt had been made at least at collaborative working, if not a joint development plan approach. It was recognised that this was a complex and controversial issue, but as this district is 92% Green Belt (where traveller pitch etc. provision is inappropriate) while East Herts was about 33% Green Belt, officers felt that there should at least have been more attempt at co-operation in addressing this cross-boundary and strategic issue.

Mr White noted that a suggestion had been made and he agreed with that the first sentence in paragraph 10 of his report be replaced with: 'There will be requests from Harlow for some of what that Council identifies as regeneration needs to be met within Epping Forest District.'

Councillor Rolfe wanted to clarify if EFDC was not careful would we get everybody in our area. Mr White said no, but there was a need to identify suitable sites in our Local Plan and this was very challenging.

Councillor Watts was confused as we worked on the premise that the green belt was unavailable, so that what we have left has already been built in. Mr White replied that historically, every traveller site has been on the Green Belt and recent appeal decisions had independently concluded that the Green Belt was the only realistic option for future provision.

Councillor Bassett noted that we had major issues and could cause problems for the local population. We need to look how to share things out and develop areas, we can only put them in suitable places. We have created about 45 new pitches in the last 5 years, but this can be an issue for the future. The duty to co-operate can cause problems for us.

RESOLVED:

The Committee agreed that the following comments were sent to East Herts Council as a response to the consultation:

- (1) To note the demanding overall housing requirements and to support East Herts Council in making full provision for its needs;

- (2) To note the longer-term proposals for the Gilston area, and to encourage continued Member and senior officer co-operation and joint working, also involving Harlow Council, to monitor development progress in relation to other strategic planning and infrastructure issues in that general area;
- (3) To express concern that (a) the consultation was proceeding before a traveller accommodation needs assessment has been commissioned and (b) a five-year deliverable supply of sites had therefore not been identified; and
- (4) To express disappointment that the options of collaborative working and joint development plan provision for the travelling community have apparently not been considered.

88. LAST MEETING OF THE YEAR

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank all the members of the Committee, the Panels and all the officers for all their hard work over the last year enabling the scrutiny element of the council to function smoothly and efficiently. He especially thanked Mr Willett for all his hard work and guidance over the years, noting that this would be his last meeting; this sentiment was heartily endorsed by the entire meeting.

Councillor Murray took the opportunity to thank the Chairman, Councillor Morgan, for his good work over the last year.

CHAIRMAN