

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**NOTES OF A MEETING OF SCRUTINY PANELS REVIEW TASK AND FINISH PANEL**  
**HELD ON THURSDAY, 15 JANUARY 2015**  
**IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING**  
**AT 7.00 - 8.05 PM**

**Members Present:** Councillors K Angold-Stephens (Chairman), Mrs R Gadsby, Mrs A Grigg, Mrs M Sartin, D Stallan

**Other members present:** Councillor G Waller

**Apologies for Absence:**

**Officers Present** S G Hill (Assistant Director (Governance & Performance Management)), S Tautz (Democratic Services Manager) and G. Nicholas (National Management Trainee)

**19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**20. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (25.11.14)**

The notes of the meeting of the Panel held on 25 November 2014 were agreed as a correct record.

**21. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL FRAMEWORK REVIEW - RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Task and Finish Panel considered a further report in connection with its review of the Council's current overview and scrutiny framework.

Members were reminded that, at the previous meeting, the Task and Finish Panel had agreed that a new framework comprising four 'select committees' be taken forward as its preferred option for consultation with Members and officers. At that time, it was also agreed that the proposed combination of the Audit and Governance Committee with the Standards Committee would not be considered for the proposed option, as a result of concerns expressed by the Audit and Governance Committee, but that this be included as an additional aspect for consultation to gather feedback for any potential review in the future.

The Panel was advised that items had been included in the Council Bulletin to consult with, and gain a perspective from, Members on the proposed select committee structure. The results of this exercise had demonstrated that members generally supported the proposed structure. Consultation had also been undertaken with the service directors and assistant directors which, whilst generally supporting the select committee framework, had given rise to some concern over the new committees not being strictly aligned to the Council's management structure and the workload implications of this approach.

The Panel noted that, although member feedback indicated that the combination of the Audit and Governance Committee and the Standards Committee was not

generally supported, it might be necessary to review the operation of the Audit and Governance Committee at some point in the future, to address the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. Members were advised that the elements of the review relating to the current responsibilities of the Audit and Governance Committee, were to be further considered by the Committee at its next meeting.

The Panel reviewed all of the work that it had undertaken in connection with its review of the current overview and scrutiny framework and considered the detail of its final framework recommendations to be made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its next meeting.

**Recommended:**

- (1) That a new overview and scrutiny framework, based on a structure of four 'select committees', be established with effect from the commencement of the 2015/16 municipal year;
- (2) That the titles and general responsibilities of each select committee be as set out in the report considered by the Task and Finish Panel, save that the Neighbourhoods Select Committee be instead referred to as the 'Neighbourhoods and Community Services Select Committee', to reflect the proposed separation of scrutiny activity relating to the functions of the Communities Directorate;
- (3) That, at the present time, no increase be made in the number of members appointed to each select committee, and that this remain at eleven councillors in accordance with pro-rata provisions;
- (4) That the Director of Governance report to the Council to seek the re-establishment of the existing Constitution and Member Services Scrutiny Panel as a new 'Constitution Working Group' from 2015/16, as a result of the implementation of the new select committee framework;
- (5) That, to ensure continuity during its on-going review of the Council's constitution, the Council be recommended to reappoint the existing members of the Constitution and Member Services Scrutiny Panel to the Constitution Working Group (wherever possible) and that no variation be made in the number of members appointed to the Working Group;
- (6) That the report of the Director of Governance recommend that the Constitution Working Group report directly to the Council in connection with its work programme, rather than the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- (7) That, subject to the concurrence of the Remuneration Panel, a Special Responsibility Allowance be awarded to the Chairman of the Constitution Working Group, as a result of the disbanding of the Constitution and Member Services Scrutiny Panel;
- (8) That no action be taken at the present time with regard to any possible combination of the Audit and Governance Committee and the Standards Committee but that, if necessary, a further Task and Finish Panel be established in future to consider such combination in light of new legislative audit requirements;

- (9) That focused and achievable work programmes be developed for each select committee each year, drawing on Portfolio Holder and service delivery aims and objectives, and relevant community priorities;
- (10) That the current induction and on-going training arrangements for members in respect of the Council's overview and scrutiny function, be reviewed and enhanced as appropriate;
- (11) That the select committees be encouraged to use a variety of appropriate techniques and methodologies as set out in this report, in the undertaking of future scrutiny and service review activity;
- (12) That, subject to the agreement of the above recommendations, the Council formally be advised of the proposals of the Task and Finish Panel, in view of the likely wider member interest in the establishment of a new overview and scrutiny framework; and
- (13) That the Committee consider the views of the Audit and Governance Committee in relation to the establishment of a new overview and scrutiny structure based on the four 'select committees'.

**22. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Panel was advised that, subject to the agreement of its recommendations by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, its work had now been concluded and that it did not therefore require re-appointment for 2015/16.

The Panel acknowledged the contribution of all those involved in its review of the overview and scrutiny framework. In particular, members thanked officers of Democratic Services for the support and assistance they had received in undertaking the review.