

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES

Committee:	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Date:	Thursday, 19 November 2020
Place:	Virtual Meeting on Zoom	Time:	7.00 - 10.25 pm
Members Present:	Councillors M Sartin (Chairman), R Jennings (Vice-Chairman) R Baldwin, P Bolton, L Burrows, D Dorrell, I Hadley, S Heather, J Lea, S Murray, D Plummer, P Stalker, D Sunger, J H Whitehouse and D Wixley		
Other Councillors:	Councillors N Avey, R Bassett, C McCredie, A Patel, J Philip, C C Pond, C Whitbread, H Whitbread and J M Whitehouse		
Apologies:	Councillors S Rackham, D Stocker, N Bedford and S Kane		
Officers Present:	G Blakemore (Chief Executive), N Boateng (Service Manager (Legal) & Monitoring Officer), N Dawe (Chief Operating Officer), C Hartgrove (Interim Chief Finance Officer), P Maginnis (Service Director (Corporate Services)), V Messenger (Democratic Services Officer), S Mitchell (PR Website Editor), K Pabani (Chief Estates Officer), A Small (Strategic Director Corporate and 151 Officer), L Wade (Service Director (Strategy, Delivery & Performance)) and G Woodhall (Team Manager - Democratic & Electoral Services)		

48. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

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

49. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee noted that no substitute Members had been appointed for this meeting.

50. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2020 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- (a) Pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor R Bassett declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Executive Decisions – Call-in agenda item by virtue of being Chairman of the Business Stakeholder Group at New City College.
- (b) Pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor R Jennings declared a non-pecuniary interest in the UK Innovation Corridor agenda item by virtue of being a longstanding close friend of the Director, Mr J McGill.

52. PUBLIC QUESTIONS & REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee noted that no public questions or requests to address the meeting had been received.

53. UK INNOVATION CORRIDOR - SCRUTINY OF EXTERNAL ORGANISATION

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to bring forward this item at the meeting.

The Chairman, Councillor M Sartin, introduced from the UK Innovation Corridor, Director Dr J McGill, and Independent Business Chairman, Dr A Limb, as the Committee had requested an opportunity to undertake external scrutiny of this organisation. The Innovation Corridor's geographical area extended from north east London to Cambridge and Peterborough, and from Stevenage eastwards to beyond Stansted Airport. The local authorities that formed the Innovation Core included Epping Forest (a founder member), Broxbourne, East Hertfordshire, Harlow and Uttlesford district councils.

The Innovation Corridor had become the UK's most productive region and was home to 2.1 million jobs. A fifth of those people were employed in the 'knowledge economy' – ICT, life sciences, advanced manufacturing and engineering, transport and logistics. The main sectors for Epping Forest were construction, business services, public admin and health, but lower employment in the information, financial services, communications and R&D sectors.

How did the Innovation Corridor support the Council? It was a voice to Advocate, Broker and Co-ordinate – an ABC. It was a non-statutory, like-minded group and coalition of the willing that gave it a bigger voice to lobby national and London government and private investors for districts' ambitions, such as Harlow and Gilston and the Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ). The Innovation Corridor was a leading sci-tech region and was a collective corridor to England as a whole. It lobbied for infrastructure, rail, road and digital, and promoted the local economy but there were areas of deprivation. It helped to promote investment opportunities, such as those for the North Weald Airfield Masterplan. The London Stansted Cambridge Corridor was also referenced in the Council's Local Plan Submission Version (December 2017) in respect of employment needs across the functional economic market and the needs of the Council.

Councillor M Sartin asked why it had changed its name? Dr A Limb replied that while its former name the London – Stansted – Cambridge Consortium had identified its geographical location, the UK Innovation Corridor evidenced the importance of 'innovation' to match the scale of its ambitions, and no one else had claimed the name.

Councillor R Jennings asked what work had been done to promote skills and what was its support in this area? Dr A Limb replied that colleges within the Innovation Corridor were now collaborating more effectively as they had signed the Regional Skills Concordat to get investments into colleges and therefore, would have the skills going forward to retrain older workforce and provide the younger workforce with the skills it needed. Dr J McGill added that it was a fragmented system, but the Innovation Corridor was bringing colleges together, and as a collective would get more attention from the business sector.

Councillor S Murray was glad to hear about the work they were doing with colleges and that there was more collaboration, However, he had not seen much on their website about economic growth that could widen social inequality. How did they mitigate this effect? Dr J McGill replied that they recognised economic growth could widen social inequality and were trying to address this sizeable issue. Just as the first Covid-19 lockdown was starting, the Innovation Corridor had established a commission with City of London, Cambridge academics, the Cambridge and Peterborough Mayors to address these points. He would email this suggested policy document, "Covid-19: A recovery where no-one gets left behind", to the Democratic Services Manager, G Woodhall, after the meeting to distribute to members.

Councillor J M Whitehouse asked what was Innovation Corridor's contribution specifically to North Weald, Harlow and Gilston? Dr J McGill replied that they had started working with the District councils on Harlow and Gilston about five years ago and there had been a willingness to collaborate. The Local Plan Submission Version was a part of this. They promoted the Harlow Gilston Garden Town. They were aware of North Weald Airfield's importance for aviation use and housing and were keen to be involved in the Council's own NWA masterplan. The collective opportunities were there as they could promote it further to their London partners and on their website. Councillor J M Whitehouse asked what potentially stopped people investing here? Dr J McGill replied, uncertainty. Every uncertainty was an investment risk. Was there a planning process in place and was a development an investor was proposing being addressed by planning officers? Investors tried to minimise risk. The Innovation Corridor was an important asset for the UK, and by raising its profile was a corridor to the world. If it got the attention of a major developer with a host of other people attracted to the corridor because it met their specific requirements, the proposal would then get down to local authority level.

Councillor D Wixley asked how the Innovation Corridor was funded and were its employees full or part time? Dr A Limb replied that it was essentially funded by annual contributions from local authorities. Although modest, they could contribute in kind with their time, expertise and engagement. Private investors, developers and businesses would also sponsor initiatives. The Innovation Corridor would match private sector funding with local authority funding but did not receive government funding. It had a good governance structure. Innovation Corridor had a range of different authorities and focused on infrastructure planning/development and employment skills. Dr J McGill added that business sponsorship enabled it to organise an annual conference and visit trade shows. It was in the business of collaboration and received £30,000 sponsorship from Manchester Airports Group and the Greater London Authority. Uttlesford District Council was also a partnership member. The Business Skills Concordat had helped broker an agreement with the Mayors of London and Peterborough.

Councillor D Plummer asked about the Innovation Corridor's approach to carbon neutrality and reducing road traffic, and for businesses to be environmentally sustainable, as well as investment from environmentally sensitive sources in reference to it receiving sponsorship from the Manchester Airports Group. J McGill replied that it was very active on promoting more journeys by rail particularly on the West Anglia mainline. Airports were big producers of carbon emissions as was Manchester Airports Group, but most of the passenger journeys to and from Stansted Airport were by public transport. How much impact Covid-19 would have on changing working practices and on homeworking, only time would tell. The Innovation Corridor was a member organisation and quite a few of the local authorities had declared climate emergencies, so its agenda was shaped by its members.

The Chairman thanked J McGill and Dr A Limb for taking this opportunity to address the Committee as it was important for members to have heard what the Innovation Corridor was doing and present an overview of its work.

Resolved:

- (1) That appropriate external scrutiny of the UK Innovation Corridor on the effect of its work across Epping Forest District be noted; and
- (2) That the Democratic Services Manager circulate to all councillors after the meeting, the UK Innovation Corridor's suggested policy document "Covid-19: A recovery where no-one gets left behind".

54. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS - CALL-IN

Following the report (C-017-2020/21) to Cabinet on 14 September 2020 that approved New City College (formerly Epping Forest College) be granted a "variation to the covenants further to previous removal of restrictive covenants, in order to facilitate the College's plans for the site", the decision was called-in by Councillors C C Pond, H Kauffman, S Murray, C Roberts and D Roberts. An informal meeting was held on 7 October 2020 between the lead call-in Councillor, C C Pond, Councillor A Patel (Commercial and Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder) and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman, Councillor M Sartin, and Vice-Chairman, Councillor R Jennings and relevant officers.

At the informal meeting it was noted that the covenants ran with the land and with the successors entitled to the land. Officers agreed that the point made on the use of the land for community purposes and a Wellness Centre was valid and they could ask that the contract include a community benefit such as a Wellness Centre. The Legal Services Manager, N Boateng, would seek to tie this in with the contract. She would draw up documents in liaison with Councillors C C Pond and A Patel. Councillor C C Pond agreed if this could be arranged then it should satisfy most of the points his members had raised. The call-in was put on hold but, as the College had not been willing to reciprocate, the call-in had come back to Overview and Scrutiny for a decision, in accordance with Article 6 (Overview and Scrutiny) of the Council's Constitution. As some members felt that the procedure had not been made clear in the agenda, a motion to defer this decision to another meeting was taken, but the motion was lost.

Councillor C C Pond explained that at the informal meeting on 7 October (as detailed above) they had been close to achieving an agreement. This had stemmed from ten years ago when the College had sold the land where a community sports centre had been located for an old people's home and benefitted financially. There had been negotiations between the College and Council officers to secure a replacement covenant for a sports centre and wellness centre, and grounds for the community. A 'side letter' between the Council and the College had allowed this to be carried out in perpetuity with the former owner of the College and the Council owed it to Loughton's citizens. Councillor C C Pond suggested this matter be referred to Cabinet to negotiate a new covenant to protect the land, as Essex County Council had stated that there was no requirement for the land to be used for education in which case the College could argue that the need for the covenant was redundant and apply to the Lands Tribunal to release the covenant. Councillor A Patel had consented to go along this route. However, there had been a delay after the informal meeting waiting for a response from the College. Councillor C C Pond hoped that with a little more time a suitable settlement could be achieved.

Councillor D Dorrell asked if the land was handed back to the College and it did something other than a wellness centre, could it do what it wanted with the land and would the Council have any recourse? The Legal Services Manager replied the 2019 Deed of Release with the College was for residential and a wellness centre.

Councillor D Wixley confirmed that he had a copy of the 'side letter' (proposed by former Councillor Wagland) that stated that both the public and College could use the land. It went back to 2009 in relation to another covenant over the demolition of Debden Sports Centre where a care home had since been built. He would like to see the College comply with this, as it was crucial that the public had access to this facility. The concern was with Luctons Field where half the land was earmarked for housing, could the remaining open space be protected and preserved, and confirmed legally? The Legal Services Manager replied that in the Deed of Release there was use for public and the definition of this was wider than a sports centre as it included other community activities. Councillor J Philip advised that as this was also one of the Local Plan sites, it was detailed in the Local Plan Submission Version (LPSV) how much land could be used and how much would be preserved to 2033. Councillor D Wixley commented that the land was reasonably well protected then. Councillor C C Pond replied that there was still one unresolved issue that the future of the remaining open space was protected in perpetuity and he did not believe the LPSV did specify this in detail. In so far as the release of covenants, this can be released but a new covenant was required to provide assurance for the community and was a matter for discussion between the respective lawyers to come to an agreement. A vote to refer the call-in matter to Cabinet for further discussion to protect the future of the land for the community was successful. Councillor J Philip asked for a follow-up report to be submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 3 December 2020. Councillors A Patel and C C Pond would have a further discussion and that Councillor A Patel would approach the College again.

Resolved:

- (1) That the recommendation be referred to Cabinet on 3 December 2020 over whether Epping Forest College be granted a variation to the covenants on the land further to previous removal of restrictive covenants, in order to facilitate the College's plans for the site.

55. CORPORATE PLAN KEY ACTION PLAN 2020/21 QUARTER 2 PROGRESS

This item, which had been deferred by Overview and Scrutiny on 15 October 2020, was current up until 30 September 2020. L Wade, Strategy, Delivery and Performance Director, summarised the key points in the report, which included an internal officer governance structure that had been established to focus on the delivery of the Corporate programmes aligned to the Stronger ambition objectives. This would strengthen governance and internal decision-making, as the programmes would be led by a director enabling corporate performance management to be aligned with individual performance management. All projects would be aligned under one of the three Stronger select agendas.

There were three exceptions under the Corporate plan programmes scope and performance measuring report. These were:

- Telecare offering project;
- ICT restructure delayed by Covid-19; and
- Local Plan due to Inspector's capacity to digest main modifications' (MMs) submissions.

Under Town Centre development, Councillor D Wixley queried what was meant by 'barriers' in the feasibility study that set out opportunities and remedies for barriers in relation to high streets in Waltham Abbey, Ongar, Loughton, Buckhurst Hill and Epping. N Dawe, Chief Operating Officer, replied that there were no specific barriers, but this was part of the high streets' reviews and making high streets safe. The draft paper for Waltham Abbey had identified 28 points to help raise the barriers, e.g. street furniture. Councillor D Wixley was specifically interested in Loughton but would like to know the barriers for each high street. The Chief Operating Officer agreed to apprise Councillor D Wixley of the barriers identified thus far for each town centre to help make them safe.

Councillor J H Whitehouse said that the report was interesting and informative but asked why under the select committees' corporate programmes of work, Stronger Place had more than either Stronger Communities or Stronger Council because it was unbalanced? G Blakemore, Chief Executive, replied that select committee scrutiny was driven by members, not officer driven, and suggested that this was followed up by the scrutiny chairmen and vice-chairmen at their next Joint Meeting in January 2021. Councillor J H Whitehouse reminded the Committee that it was agreed that any Housing policies would go to Overview and Scrutiny Committee before they went to Cabinet. Options would show the level of delay provided. There were summaries in each sector that highlighted any exceptions.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Committee noted the internal governance that has been established to manage and deliver the programmes of work aligned to the Stronger council ambitions in 2020/21;
- (2) That the Committee noted the programme of work aligned to the Stronger select ambitions;
- (3) That the Committee noted the scope of the corporate programme of work and associated benefits in 20/21 which will be used to baseline Corporate performance management;
- (4) That the Committee agreed on the scope of reporting for Overview and Scrutiny in 2020/21 such that:
 - (a) Detailed progress on programmes of work and project level would be scrutinised by Stronger Council; and
 - (b) Overview and Scrutiny Committee would receive summaries and scrutinise any exceptions.
- (5) That the committee reviewed the report in relation to the performance of the programme of work for 2020/21 and noted the following exceptions at red status:
 - (a) Telecare offering project: Due to delay in cessation of service following withdrawal of ECC tender. Milestones would be re-baselined in quarter 3.
 - (b) ICT Restructure – due to delay in completion of the restructure.
 - (c) Local Plan – due to delay in the review of main modifications document as a result of inspectors limited capacity to review.
- (6) That the committee reviewed the performance of quarters 1 and quarter of the KPIs that were previously used in 2019/20 and noted those KPIs that had not been reported; and

- (7) That the committee reviewed the recommended KPIs below and agreed these 16 KPIs for 2020/21:

Service	Recommended KPIs
1 Customer services	Overall Customer Satisfaction
2 Customer services	First point resolution
3 Customer services	Complaints resolved within SLA
4 Community Health and Wellbeing	Increased participation in community, physical or cultural activity
5 Community Health and Wellbeing	Major works voids
6 Community Health and Wellbeing	Total number of households in TA
7 Community Health and Wellbeing	No of homelessness approaches
8 Housing Management	Rent arrears
9 Planning and development	% applications determined within agreed timelines
10 Planning Policy	Housing Delivery Test progress
11 Leisure Management	Leisure facility usage
12 Waste Management	Household Recycling level
13 Waste Management	Reduction in household waste
14 People Team	(TBC) % of Employee Leavers
15 People Team	Diversity and Inclusion
16 Sustainability Travel/Climate Change	Currently reviewing appropriate KPI

56. ACCOMMODATION UPDATE

The Strategy, Delivery and Performance Director's report covered progress on the accommodation programme until 16 October 2020. Works had been progressing well and had reached a critical stage of the project, in confirming the design and the fixtures and fittings. The contract continued to be within budget, and a positive variance of £91,806 was being forecast. A Members briefing had been held on 16 November 2020 where plans, layouts and more information around the delivery of the programme had been shared.

Councillor S Murray had attended the informative briefing but was concerned the loop system would not be very extensive and restricted to part of the building. As the whole of the civic offices were being refurbished the loop system should be as extensive as possible. He had raised this at the briefing and was awaiting a response from officers on this.

Councillor J H Whitehouse asked for more information about the civic arrangements for the Chairman and where would functions be going to take place as the Leader and Chairman would share an office? The Strategy, Delivery and Performance Director replied that in addition to the collaboration area (previously the Members area) there would be an extensive space on the ground floor for larger events which could also be divided up into smaller areas. The decision had also been made for the Leader and the Chairman to share an office. Councillor M Sartin commented that the reality of the situation when the Leader and the Chairman had separate rooms was that they were not being used sufficiently.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Committee noted the summary of progress on the Accommodation Programme as at 16 October 2020.

57. PEOPLE STRATEGY

P Maginnis, Service Director (Corporate Services), provided a further update to the report made to Overview and Scrutiny Committee's October meeting in relation to the workstream – creating a culture of engagement and wellbeing. A new Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), known to employees as Perkbox had been launched on 1 September 2020. The platform enabled employees to access online counselling, financial and legal support and discounts from major retailers. As part of this platform there was also an integrated wellbeing platform that provided easy online access to mental and physical wellness programmes. As part of this platform employees also had access to Perkbox Medical, 24/7 access to online GPs. A free learning platform hosted by Magpie also offered employees further personal development opportunities. Officers had already used its functionality in a recent survey of employees.

Councillor S Murray was interested in the results of the survey and asked if the Service Director could provide a report on the survey's findings and the uptake of Perkbox by employees at the Committee's next meeting in February 2021, which was agreed.

Resolved:

- (1) That the report be noted; and
- (2) That a report on the uptake of Perkbox by employees and the survey's findings be reported to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 February 2021.

58. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT QUARTER 2

C Hartgrove, Finance Consultant, explained that the Budget Monitoring Report was usually reported to the Stronger Council Select Committee but as its next meeting was in January 2021, the Chairman had agreed it was more timely for the quarter 2 report to come before this Committee tonight.

This report dealt with the 2020/21 General Fund revenue and capital positions, as at 30 September 2020 (quarter 2) and provided an update on the quarter 2 capital position for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The revenue elements of the HRA were currently under review, with detailed projections being developed for the quarter 3 stage for consideration by members. This would include an update on progress against the Council's adopted 30-year HRA Business Plan. In terms of General Fund revenue expenditure at quarter 2, a budget over spend of £1.944 million was forecast, with projected net expenditure of £19.118 million against an overall budget provision of £17.174 million. The General Fund revenue position for 2020/21, at quarter 2 was summarised by service area in Appendix A of the agenda report.

Covid-19 had made a massive impact on the General Fund revenue position most notably on:

- Leisure facilities (c. £2.8 million)
- Qualis income (c. 2.1 million)
- Car parking (c. 1.01 million)
- Development Control (c. £0.67 million)

On a positive note the Government had been generally supportive of the financial challenge facing local authorities. £1.947 million in general un-ringfenced funding had already been provided, along with further support through an income loss

compensation scheme, which was forecast to rise to £1.875 million by the year end. This amounted to a combined funding of circa £3.8 million.

The General Fund Capital Programme for 2020/21 at service level as at 30 September 2020 was detailed in Appendix B of the agenda report. Spending in the first 6 months had been £1.4 million, with a forecast outturn of £17.34 million and, if this happened, would lead to a small net underspend of £0.094 million.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme for 2020/21 as at 30 September 2020 (detailed in Appendix C) showed the programme budget totalled £25.313 million. Spending in the first 6 months had been £6.369 million, with a forecast outturn of £18.427 million, and if this happened, would lead to an underspend of £6.886 million. The dominating factor on the HRA Capital Programme for 2020/21 had been Housing Development, with a net underspend of £6.742 million forecast for the year end at the quarter 2 stage.

Councillor S Murray said to the Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder, Councillor J Philip, that what happened this financial year had a potential impact on the next financial year, and would there be a Council Tax increase and were non-core services under threat? Councillor J Philip replied that a report (C-040-2020/21 – Medium Term-Financial Plan Development and Scene Setting) to Cabinet on 16 November 2020 allowed £4 million in next year's budget to minimise this. Council Tax could increase by £5 a year for a Band D property but the Council would keep any Council Tax increase as low as possible for its residents.

Resolved:

- (1) That the General Fund revenue position at the end of Quarter 2 (30th September 2020) for 2020/21, including actions being or proposed to improve the position, where significant variances have been identified, be noted (Appendix A);
- (2) That the General Fund capital position at the end of Quarter 2 (30 September 2020) for 2020/21 be noted (Appendix B); and
- (3) That the Housing Revenue Account capital position at the end of Quarter 2 (30 September 2020) for 2020/21 be noted (Appendix C).

59. CABINET BUSINESS

Cabinet's Key Decision List updated to the 17 November 2020 was scrutinised by the Committee and the following points were raised.

There were issues raised with the portfolios of the Leader, Finance and Economic Development, Commercial and Regulatory Services, Customer and Corporate Support Services, and Planning and Sustainability.

- (a) Environmental and Technical Services (Councillor N Avey)

Waste and recycling

Councillor S Murray remarked that the review of waste and recycling should involve the fullest of public consultations, as this was the most essential service and the Council did not want to get it wrong. On the transfer of services to Qualis, he would be looking at the business case very carefully as he felt there was a little bit of ideology on this from members. Councillor N Avey replied that the business case was

most important, absolutely not ideology, and he assured members he would have to be satisfied with the business case before considering the transfer of a service to Qualis. In respect of the waste contract, there would be lots of details in future on this as it was an exceptionally important contract.

Councillor M Sartin continued that Councillor Murray had asked if there would be consultations of this, would this be a public consultation, or would it also depend on the review? Councillor Avey replied that it would likely depend on the review and lots of waste guidance from the Government was changing how local authorities would have to deal with waste. If there was a chance for a public consultation with residents, the Council would obviously take this opportunity.

Councillor J H Whitehouse asked when would there be another meeting of the Waste Management Task and Finish Panel to review the third wheelie bin? Councillor N Avey replied that he would check with officers as a meeting had not been scheduled but he believed the Council was waiting for recommendations from the Government on the separation of food waste and would let the Councillor know after the meeting. Councillor M Sartin said it was her understanding that the Task and Finish Panel would be reconvened in the future when the Government had progressed/finished its consultations and further guidance was issued.

(Post meeting update: J Warwick (Contracts Service Manager) advised that the Council was waiting for the Government's waste proposals due sometime next year, so it would make sense to put this on hold. The report C-047-2020/21, Strategic Options for Waste Management Contract, was approved by Cabinet on 3 December 2020 to engage consultants regarding the waste contract review. When the review was completed, if it contained any significant service changes/options, or if the Government announced any changes, members might want to set up the Task and Finish Panel).

(b) Housing and Community (Councillor H Whitbread)

Review of service charges

Councillor J H Whitehouse remarked that the review of fees and charges used to come to scrutiny, would they do so in future? Councillor H Whitbread replied that she would confirm this with officers, but it was up to members to choose what to scrutinise. Any new policies should go through scrutiny.

Councillor S Murray emphasised that any significant charges should be phased in for tenants over a number of years and he would look forward to reading this report, and when would the report on the new policy that outlined how the Council should be disposing of RTB receipts go to Cabinet? Councillor H Whitbread replied that the Council would take the fairest approach on services charges and that a decision on the RTB receipts report would be made by Cabinet in the new year.

(Post meeting update: D Fenton (HRA Project Director) advised that the report on RTB Buying Street Properties would go to Cabinet on 21 January 2021.)

Resolved:

- (1) That the Committee reviewed the Executive's current programme of Key Decisions to enable the identification of appropriate matters for the overview and scrutiny work programme and the overview of specific decisions proposed to be taken over the period of the plan.

60. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME**(a) Current Work Programme**

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager introduced the work programme, but members did not raise any issues.

(b) Reserve Programme

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager introduced the items in the reserve programme, but members did not raise any issues.

Resolved:

- (1) That the current Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2020/21 be noted; and
- (2) That the current reserve programme be noted.

61. SELECT COMMITTEES - WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the current work programmes for the three select committees.

(a) Stronger Communities Select Committee

Councillor D Sunger reported that the select committee was looking forward to the District Police Commander coming in January 2021. In relation to monitoring homelessness in the District, a progress report on how the Council has been helping those individuals sleeping rough within the District was due in January. Officers were working to distribute Universal Credit and the furlough scheme had been extended. The community GROW project in Loughton was a good achievement.

Councillor J H Whitehouse requested that the Epping Forest District Museum be added to the work programme. There was some interesting work being done on the museum collections, as detailed in the report on Overview and Scrutiny – Corporate Programme Governance and Reporting by the Strategy, Delivery and Performance Director. Councillor D Sunger agreed for this to be added to the work programme.

(b) Stronger Council Select Committee

Councillor P Bolton reported that the combination strategy was going ahead. Also, the current financial situation was very unpredictable.

Councillor S Murray commented that as this select committee scrutinised the business case, could it scrutinise the transfer of business services to Qualis? The transfer of a service was very significant, and he could not see Qualis giving back a service once it had been transferred. How would scrutiny be undertaken and what would be the best way to scrutinise the transfer of a business service to Qualis, which he thought members should be doing? The Strategic Director, A Small, replied that it depended on which service was being transferred, as to which select committee scrutinised it.

(c) Stronger Place Select Committee

As Councillor R Bassett had left the meeting, Councillor M Sartin stated that the work programme was as detailed in the agenda.

Councillor S Murray complimented Cllr Bassett on being a good select committee Chairman for Stronger Place, which was noted.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Committee noted the work programmes of the three select committees;
- (2) That Epping Forest District Museum, with regards to the ongoing work on its collections, be added to the Communities Select Committee work programme;
- (3) That scrutiny be undertaken by the relevant select committee when a service transferred to Qualis; and
- (4) That it be noted that Councillor S Murray complimented Councillor R Bassett on being a good Chairman of Stronger Place Select Committee.

62. LOCAL HIGH STREETS TASK AND FINISH PANEL

The Chief Operating Officer, N Dawe, said that the Local High Streets Task and Finish Panel had been established a year ago but was suspended after the first meeting on 24 February 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown. Making high streets safer, in addition to the economic recovery and social wellbeing focus was being reported back to Cabinet and there would be other reports coming forward. The Policy Advisory Group under the Commercial and Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor A Patel, oversaw Covid-19 work on the high streets, the degree and nature of the economic recovery and some other items.

In view of the progress being made with the post Covid-19 town centre projects, the Committee was being asked if it should reconvene the Task and Finish Panel as per its existing terms of reference; or should it recommence its activities but alter its terms of reference and mode of operation; or should the Panel cease and members involvement and oversight of the High Street projects needed to be addressed differently.

Councillor D Wixley asked if the membership of the Panel could be clarified after the meeting.

(Post meeting update: The membership of the Local High Streets Task and Finish Panel comprised Councillors J Share-Bernia (Chairman), R Jennings, J Jennings, H Kane, H Kauffman, P Keska, D Plummer, S Rackham, C Roberts, D Stocker and J H Whitehouse).

The following councillors supported the recommending of the Panel:

Councillor J H Whitehouse said she was a Panel member and she agreed with N Dawe that things had changed since they last met. It was up to the Panel to see what had changed and the terms of reference could also be changed. As the Policy Advisory Group (PAG) did not publish any minutes, members were not always aware

of the work it was doing, and it had a wider remit than the Panel. The Councillor recommended that a further meeting should take place and could report back to Overview and Scrutiny on how the Panel thought it should move forward.

Councillors S Murray and D Plummer thought that the Panel should recommence and re-look at its terms of reference to see if any changes were necessary.

Councillor A Patel said that the PAG was looking at the revival of high streets and its work had superseded that of the Task and Finish Panel's. He was keen to avoid officers having to duplicate work and reporting, and that the PAG was better placed to take this work forward.

Councillor M Sartin disagreed as the PAG looked at broader issues and was not open to scrutiny and therefore, she could see the value of the Task and Finish Panel having one more meeting.

Councillor C Whitbread, the Leader, emphasised that officers were under pressure to write reports and he did not want duplication of officer time. He asked the scrutiny members to bear with the Executive and postpone the reconvening of the Task and Finish Panel at the moment. The Council needed to get through the Covid-19 recovery and then the Task and Finish Panel could come back and look at high street viability etc.

Councillors Sartin and Murray agreed with the Leader's comments and understood the situation and that officer time was under more pressure during this coronavirus crisis.

Councillor J H Whitehouse asked when would the Panel be reconvened? Councillor M Sartin agreed that this item would be revisited at the next meeting on 2 February 2021.

Resolved:

- (1) That the reconvening of the Local High Streets Task and Finish Panel would be revisited at the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 February 2021.

63. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Stronger Place Select Committee – Appointment of Chairman (and possibly Vice-Chairman)

G Woodhall, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager, reported that the current Chairman of the Stronger Place Select Committee, Councillor R Bassett, had resigned as Chairman of the Select Committee, but he intended to remain as a member of the Committee. Therefore, a new Chairman and possibly Vice-Chairman needed to be appointed for the remainder of the municipal year by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Conservative members proposed and seconded Councillor S Heather as the new Chairman while the Loughton Residents Association members proposed and seconded Councillor J Jennings for this position. The result of the vote was for the current Vice-Chairman Councillor S Heather to become Chairman.

A second vote for the Vice-Chairmanship saw the Conservative members propose and second Councillor R Morgan, while the Loughton Residents Association

members proposed and seconded Councillor J Jennings. The result of the vote was for Councillor R Morgan to become the new Vice-Chairman.

Resolved:

- (1) That the resignation of Councillor R Bassett as Chairman of the current Chairman of the Stronger Place Select Committee, be noted;
- (2) That the Committee appointed Councillor S Heather to the position of Chairman of the Stronger Place Select Committee for the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year; and
- (3) That the Committee appointed Councillor R Morgan to the position of Vice-Chairman of the Stronger Place Select Committee for the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year.

64. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Committee noted that there was no business which necessitated the exclusion of the public and press from the meeting.

CHAIRMAN