Report to Council

Date of meeting: 18 December 2007

Subject: Overview and Scrutiny

Chairman: Cllr R Morgan

Item: 7(b)

Recommendation:

That the Overview and Scrutiny progress report from October 2007 to the present be noted.

Report

The main Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1.   At its meeting, held on 12 November 2007, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the recent call-in on the Cabinet's decision to release the restrictive covenant on Loughton Hall, Epping Forest College. After an exhaustive debate, the call-in was not supported by the committee.

2.   The meeting also considered a report to be submitted to this Council meeting on the review of the protocol on Outside Organisations. This came from the Constitution and Members Services Standing Panel, reviewing the current protocol on outside bodies. The protocol was introduced about two years ago to give guidance on a range of issues that can arise for members who serve as the Council's representative on outside bodies and partnerships. The Panel sought to bring this document up to date in relation to the new Code of Conduct, to tidy up the wording and to deal with representatives who are not Councillors.

3.   Another report considered and referred to Council was on Decision Making in Emergencies. Again this came from the Constitution and Members Services Standing Panel looking at the task of making provision in the Council's constitution for emergencies where there could be many members and officers unavailable through illness etc. This arose from an emergency planning seminar held earlier in the year on how the district would cope with Pandemic flu or a similar event.

4.   The Committee also agreed to accept a presentation from the Chairman of the Princess Alexandra Hospital on their bid for foundation status at their next meeting to be held 13th December 2007.

Standing Panels

5.   The 4 Standing Panels each have a rolling programme that consider ongoing cyclical issues and are comprised of the Housing Standing Panel under the Chairmanship of Councillor S Murray; the Constitution and Members Services Standing Panel chaired by Councillor R Church; the Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel chaired by Councillor Jon Whitehouse; and the Environment and Planning Standing Panel chaired by Councillor Mrs Smith.

6.   The Housing Standing Panel met on 25th October 2007. At this meeting they received a presentation on the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy and the Empty Property Strategy 2007-09 and reviewed the strategies on Rent Arrears, Anti-Social Behaviour, Energy Efficiency, Tenant Participation and Housing Information. They also reviewed the Housing Service Standards for 2007/08, the Allocations Scheme and the Choice Based Lettings scheme.

7.   The Constitution and Members Services Standing Panel met on 20 November 2007. They considered a review of the meeting cycle of the area plans sub-committee, a report of which is going to this Council meeting. They also considered reports on the Local Area Agreement and Communities Strategies and on the Executive Arrangements for England. They also considered communications and access to information arrangements within EFDC, and between the County, Essex County Council and its partners and residents.

8.   The Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel met on 13th November 2007 when they considered the quarterly financial monitoring report, the performance monitoring report on KPIs, the Fees and Charges report and a Land and Assets Review for the District Council.

9.   The Environment and Planning Standing Panel met on 29th October 2007, when they received a presentation on parking by the Highway Services Area Manager, Mr D Forkin and considered a progress report on the Nazeing Action Plan. They are due to meet again on 6 December 2007.

Task and Finish Panels

10.   The Provision of Value for Money within Planning Services Task and Finish Panel met for the first time on 23 October to agree their terms of reference, they have agreed to meet again on 3 December 2007.

11.   No other Task and Finish Panels have met in this period.