

# **Report to Council**

**Date of meeting: 22 April 2008**

**Subject: OS report to Council – April 2008**

**Officer contact for further information: Cllr R Morgan**

**Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry, ext.4246**



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## **Recommendation:**

**That the Overview and Scrutiny progress report from January 2008 to the present be noted.**

## **Report.**

### **The main Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

#### **March 2007 Meeting:**

1. At its meeting, held on 6 March 2008, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a presentation from Superintendent Stuart Ashton and Inspector Neil Fox on the Police's current work and issues in the District. Superintendent Ashton is based at Harlow Police Station and his responsibilities are for the neighborhood and partnership side of policing for Brentwood, Harlow and Epping districts. He is also responsible for all the uniformed Police Officers and PCSOs who deliver Neighborhood Policing across the division (excluding traffic officers) and is also the chair of the Epping Forest District CDRP. The meeting on hearing his presentation took the opportunity to question him on various matters that affect the District.
2. The meeting also considered the Constitution and Members Services Standing Scrutiny Panel report on Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 – Local Authority Executives. The Panel had considered the Act's requirement for Local Authority Executives. It provided for two types of Executive:
  - (a) an elected Mayor and Cabinet of two or more Councillors appointed by the Mayor; and
  - (b) a Councillor elected by the authority as Leader with two or more Councillors appointed to the Executive by the Leader.
3. The Committee agreed that this Council continue to operate a Leader and Cabinet Executive and rejects the option contained in the 2007 Act for an Elected Mayor and Cabinet Executive.
4. The meeting went on to endorse the Environment and Planning Standing Panel's conclusions and response to the Local Better Regulation Office consultation paper.
5. The Committee also got its first view of the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report to which it made some amendments and would confirm at its next meeting.

## **April 2008 Meeting:**

6. At their meeting on 10 April 2008 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received two presentations:
  - i. One from David Forkin, the West Area Highways Manager from County Highways Department who gave an overall assessment of the state of the highways in our area and answered questions from members on their various concerns.
  - ii. The other presentation was from Simon Williams, from London Underground Limited, who updated the Panel on their latest work plans for the District. He too answered various questions from members. Both presentations proved to be very successful and informative for the Committee.
7. The Committee finalised its annual report to be submitted to this Council meeting and agreed the final report of the Leisure Task and Finish Panel.
8. The Committee also agreed to look strategically at Epping Forest College, its vision for its future and its relationship with the community.
9. Finally, in a busy night, the Committee agreed to continue with the present Housing Standing Panel, the Constitution and Members Services Standing Panel and the Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel. However, they agreed to disband the Environment and Planning Services Standing Panel and establish two new Standing Panels. The Environment side of the Panel will be turned into a new Safer, Cleaner, Greener Stranding Panel, which will look at al the environmental aspects of the district and crime and disorder issues under its 'Safer' heading. It will also incorporate the terms of reference of what was the Crime and Disorder Task and Finish Panel. The other new Panel is to be a Planning Standing Panel, taking on the work of the Provision of Value for Money within Planning Services Task and Finish Panel.
10. Following on from this, the Crime and Disorder Task and Finish Panel and the Provision of Value for Money within Planning Services Task and Finish Panels will be disbanded and their workloads moved into the relevant Standing Panels.
11. The Leisure Task and Finish Panel will be reconstituted to continue its work and a new Task and Finish Panel will be will be established, tasked with looking at Customer Services issues.

## **Standing Panels**

12. 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.
13. The Housing Standing Panel met on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2008. At this meeting they considered unauthorised parking on Housing Estates, the HRA Business Plan and the Tenants Participation Progress Report 2007.
14. The Constitution and Members Services Standing Panel met on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2008 where they considered in depth, next years Members training programme.

15. The Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel met on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2008 when they considered the quarterly performance monitoring for Key Performance Indicators, the report on the 'Use of Resources Assessment – Auditors Judgements 2007' and noted the Council's results, the Best Value Performance Plan 2008/09, the Quarterly Financial Monitoring report for the third quarter of 2007/08, and the report on the new National Outcome and Indicator Set that is to be introduced from April 2008. The Panel also met on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2008 where they reviewed the Best Value and Local Performance Indicators, the Race Equality Scheme and Progress with Equalities work and the Gender Equality and Disability Equality Scheme.

16. The Environment and Planning Standing Panel met on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2008, when they received a presentation from Paul Hartley, the Senior Team Leader for the Environmental Team, from the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA). He took the Panel through an overview of what VOSA does and what powers they have, or lack. After his presentation he answered questions from members of the Panel and other members who attended the meeting. They also received a the report on Local Better Regulations Office – Draft Strategy 2008-11, to which they endorsed the Council's response to this strategy.

### **Task and Finish Panels**

17. The Provision of Value for Money within Planning Services Task and Finish Panel met on 21 January and again 8 April 2007 where they met with five planning agents to discuss the how they saw the Council's Planning services.

18. The Leisure Task and Finish Panel met on 25<sup>th</sup> February and the 25<sup>th</sup> of March where they finalised their end of year report and presented it to the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10 April 2008.

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