

# **Report to Council**

**Date of meeting: 17 February 2009**

**Subject: OS report to Council – February 2009**

**Chairman: Councillor Richard Morgan**



---

## **Recommendation:**

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

## **Report**

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

#### **December 2008 Meeting:**

1. The meeting received a presentation from some of the Epping Forest Youth Councillors giving an overview of their first year as councillors. They reported on their recent activities and successes and on the external funding they had received in their first year. They outlined their need for a similar amount of funding for their next year now that their start-up funding had or was about to finish. This was to support their training, transport and general revenue needs for the coming year.
2. The meeting also welcomed Peter Sadler, the new Principal of Epping Forest College. He gave the Committee a presentation on the strategic direction of the college, its vision for the future and its relationship with the community. After giving his presentation, Mr Sadler then answered various questions from the committee and other members present.
3. The Committee received a report from the Constitution and Member Services Standing Panel on the use of consultants, which it endorsed and recommended to Council.
4. The Committee received the final report of the Customer Transformation Task and Finish Panel who looked at the Council's reception and other customer contact areas, the Council's internal communications and telephone operators, the Council's website and the Council's magazine 'The Forester'. The Committee endorsed the report's recommendations and recommended it to the Cabinet.
5. The Committee finally considered the proposed joint PCT scrutiny in West Essex, in which Harlow and Uttlesford Councils were interested in joining with Epping to carry out joint health scrutiny on certain selected areas. The Committee were agreeable, in principle, to consider a joint scrutiny with the other two authorities and put forward some subjects that could be reviewed.
6. The Committee agreed to amend the terms of reference for the Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Panel to include "Highway accidents within the District to include specifically, data on accidents resulting in death or serious injuries".

## **January 2009 meeting:**

7. The January meeting welcomed Councillor Norman Hume, the County Portfolio Holder on Transport and Highway issues; Nick Roberts, the County Passenger Transport Co-ordination Centre Manager, accompanied him. They answered pre submitted questions from councillors and from the Youth Council and then went on to undertake a question and answer session from the members attending the meeting.

8. It was reported that Iain Wright, MP was invited to address the Committee on the provision for Gypsies and Travellers in the Epping Forest District. He wrote back saying that it would be inappropriate for him to attend whilst the Secretary of State was considering the independent Panel's recommendations on the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) review of Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation in the East of England. The letter of the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State was referred to the Planning Services Portfolio Holders Advisory Group for any further appropriate action.

9. The Committee then considered the draft Portfolio Holders Budgets Report that had recently gone to the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Standing Panel. The Panel and the Committee agreed the budget as recommended.

10. The Committee went on to consider reports on Civic Ceremonial arrangements, the review of Contract Standing Orders and of Financial Regulations. They also considered a government consultation paper on Public Relations, which had to be submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government by 12 March 2009 and a report on changes to the Executive Constitution resulting from the Local Government Act 2007. They also considered the Essex County Council Forest Transport consultation document. This document was considered by the Safer Cleaner Greener Scrutiny Standing Panel who made their comments and recommendations to the O&S Committee who endorsed them.

11. The Committee were also asked by the Full Council on 16 December 2008 to look into how the Council could work with relevant local public and voluntary sector bodies to undertake a review of current debt and the money advice service provision. The Committee decided that the best way was to set up a sub-group of members to research the item and report back to the full committee with their recommendations.

## **Standing Panels**

12. Five Standing Panels have been constituted this year, each have a rolling programme that consider ongoing cyclical issues and are comprised of:

- i) The Housing Standing Panel under the Chairmanship of Councillor S Murray;
- ii) The Constitution and Members Services Standing Panel chaired by Councillor Mrs McEwen;
- iii) The Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel chaired by Councillor D Jacobs;
- iv) The Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Panel chaired by Councillor M Colling; and
- v) The Planning Services Standing Panel chaired by Councillor Mrs Wagland.

13. The Housing Standing Panel had met in January 2009 when they considered and agreed the Tenants Satisfaction survey, the Housing Service Strategy on Home ownership and Rent Collection and the Draft Housing Strategy for 2009/12 which set out the district's housing plan for the medium term.

14. The Constitution and Members Services Standing Panel met on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2008 and on 12 January 2009. In December they reviewed the Civil Ceremonial Arrangements for the Chairman of the District this report went on to the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee

in January 2009 for endorsement. They also reviewed a consultation report on Standing for Office: Time of Entitlements, the Government White Paper "Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power".

15. The January 09 meeting considered the Member Training Programme for 2009/10. They also considered the Annual Review of Contract Standing Orders, the Annual Review of Financial Regulations; these went to the January 09 Overview and Scrutiny Committee for comment and endorsement. They also carried out a review of Overview and Scrutiny (still ongoing) and considered a government consultation paper on lowering the voting age to 16.

16. The Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel met on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2009 when they considered the Data Quality Strategy Review. The rest of the meeting was taken up by the detailed draft budget report, which the Panel commented on and referred on to the main January Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their comments and endorsement.

17. The Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Panel met on 9 December 2008 and had a special meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2009. The December meeting considered the first draft of the Safer Cleaner Greener Strategy and decided to hold a special meeting to consider the "Essex County Council – Forest Transportation Consultation" document. They also received an update on the Dobbs Weir and Nazeing Traffic update from Councillor Mrs Smith and reviewed a Cabinet report on the Inter Authority Agreement on the Waste Service Development Plan. At their January '09 meeting they considered in detail the Essex County Council's – Forest Transport Consultation when they received a presentation from David Sprunt, the Principal Transportation Co-ordinator on the consultation about plans for a transport strategy for the Forest.

18. The Planning Services Standing Panel scheduled for 6<sup>th</sup> January 09 was cancelled.

#### **Task and Finish Panels**

19. The two new Task and Finish Panels (Customer Transformation and the Leisure Task and Finish Panels) also met to agree their terms of References and their draft work programme for the year ahead and are continuing to meet to further their work programme.

20. The Customer Transformation Task and Finish Panel submitted its final report to the December meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 08 where it was agreed. It then went to the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 09 Cabinet meeting.

21. The Leisure T&F Panel had not met in the period covered in this report.