

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Committee **Date:** Thursday, 5 March 2009

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.30 - 9.10 pm

Members Present: Councillors R Morgan (Chairman) K Angold-Stephens (Vice-Chairman) K Chana, M Colling, A Green, D Jacobs, Mrs P Richardson, B Rolfe, Mrs L Wagland and Mrs J H Whitehouse

Other Councillors: Councillors Mrs D Collins, Ms J Hedges, Mrs M McEwen, D Stallan, C Whitbread and J M Whitehouse

Apologies: Councillors J Hart

Officers Present: D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive), J Houston (Local Strategic Partnership Manager), A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer), M Jenkins (Democratic Services Assistant), P Tredgett (Information Assistant) and D Clifton (Principal Housing Officer [IT])

77. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman made a short address to remind all present that the meeting would be broadcast on the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

78. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor K Chana had substituted for Councillor J Hart.

79. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee, held on 29 January 2009, be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

80. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs J Whitehouse declared a personal interest in item 6 of the agenda by virtue of being a member of the LSP Learning Partnership.

81. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The Chairman welcomed to the Committee the Leader of Council and Chairman of the Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), Councillor Mrs D Collins and Mr J Houston, Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership Manager.

Councillor Mrs D Collins outlined the Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership's origins, she explained how she had taken over the Chairmanship of the LSP in September 2008 and thanked Councillor Mrs A Grigg for having taken over the

Chairmanship of the Partnership last summer. Councillor Mrs D Collins also thanked Councillor Mrs A Haigh, Chair of the SIPSIC Committee, for her work.

The Committee was told that the LSP had received £450,000, which would help a great deal in the district. The LSP had been re-structured recently, it now had less committees; currently consisting of four standing and two task and finish panels. Councillor Mrs D Collins was pleased to have J Houston as the new manager of the LSP. She thought that currently, despite successes, the LSP was not geared to outcomes, there had also been little support for the partnership over the last year. She particularly thanked D Macnab and C Overend, for their continued assistance.

Mr J Houston's Presentation to the Committee.

The LSP brought together all key public agencies, voluntary and private sector. It was the top table of the district representing expenditure, it found new ways of working, piloted new approaches and saved the tax payer money. It identified common problems and developed joined up solutions, pooled expertise, and added value to current developments but without replicating the work of others. The LSP delivered Local Area Agreement targets and acted as an ambassador for the area helping secure additional funding. It researched, consulted and agreed a sustainable community strategy whilst also setting out the milestones it needed to reach. The LSP established local priorities and could "bend" spending by other organisations which would assist in meeting local targets. The LSP enhanced accountability, all its meetings were open to the public.

The LSP was made up of senior members from statutory, voluntary and Business Communities. It included the following:

- Epping Forest District Council
- Essex County Council Education and Social Services
- Primary Care Trust
- Police, Fire and Rescue
- Parish and Town Council Representatives
- Faith Groups

Mr J Houston talked about the LSP's previous 12 months of work. It had been through various problems, in particular the previous manager leaving. It had secured £455,000 funding to support local schemes and had used its time constructively to review effectiveness. The Partnership had helped put £35,000 into CCTV provision, the Crime and Disorder Partnerships had driven crime down with Offender Panels reducing crime on the Limes Farm Estate by 31%. The LSP had also assisted in reducing the number of jobless people, within the district, from 478 to 303.

The outcomes from the LSP's activities had shown lots of commitment from partners, £70,000 funding and an enthusiasm to engage. However a sharper focus was needed with more openness and better communication. Emphasis was needed more on outcomes and delivery and not just attendance at meetings. Care had to be taken that the Partnership was not undertaking work that would have been completed without its input. The right people, with relevant experience, were needed on the LSP Board. A new Sustainable Community Strategy was needed, and to move projects onto newer levels.

There were now four fixed theme groups having been established:

- Healthier Communities
- Sustainable Communities

- Safer Communities
- Children and Young People

There were five Task and Finish Teams agreed, three had been set up immediately:

- Dealing with the Credit Crunch
- Reviewing the Sustainable Community Strategy
- Improving Communications

Two other teams were to follow:

- “Joining up” Service Delivery
- Enhancing Educational Attainment

In conclusion, despite difficulties, the LSP had secured £455,000 for local schemes, completed a major review of role and function, and established a new team to lead work.

The future work programme challenges were to create a new sustainable community strategy, make better communications, raising the LSP’s profile through action, more action and delivery through the Theme Groups and Task and Finish Teams. Engage more effectively at County and regional level with better “joining up of services.”

The Chairman of the LSP and the LSP Manager took questions from the Committee members and the other members present.

Councillor Mrs L Wagland asked about the Credit Crunch Task and Finish Panel. It had proved difficult to find out about the number of jobs created locally in Epping Forest. Good evidence was needed to underpin any documentation. Could the LSP locate this information? Councillor Mrs D Collins advised that she had recently attended a meeting of the Federation of Small Businesses in Brentwood where access to contracts had been discussed. Information from the meeting can be circulated to members. J Houston added that only a partial picture of the district’s economic situation currently existed. Any conclusions reached needed to be evidence based. The members were advised that the Credit Crunch Task and Finish Panel’s agenda and minutes were now on the Modern.Government system, briefing notes were also available. Councillor Mrs D Collins said that information about the meetings was also put in the Council Bulletin. Anybody could attend the Board meetings.

There was feeling that work was still needed on joined up thinking and service delivery. J Houston agreed that this was important, however it was important not to duplicate other agencies’ work. Common websites were also needed.

There was concern about the levels of experience needed by Panel members on the LSP. Councillor Mrs D Collins acknowledged the difficulties there were because members on various boards changed frequently, some members had poor attendance and there had been a continuous change of faces and responsibilities.

Councillor Mrs P Richardson spoke about the difficulties involved with forms when applying for Grant Aid. Councillor Mrs D Collins said that the officer contact for the LSP, Mr C Overend, was very helpful in completing forms accurately. Mr D Macnab, Deputy Chief Executive, advised that at the recent meeting of the Local Council’s Liaison Committee, the members had received a presentation on external funding, the FAIR Project (Voluntary Action Epping Forest at Homefield, Epping and Rainbow Services, Harlow). The project had run five years supported by lottery funding, and

aimed to improve application submission and success at obtaining external funding. The project was an invaluable resource.

Councillor K Angold-Stephens commented that the presentation had provided a good overview. However he felt that there was particular concern regarding 16-19 year olds, for example A-Level courses were being restricted at colleges and the local sports hall was facing closure, this was contrary to District Council, County Council and Government health strategies, which advised that provision be made for a minimum of three hours high quality sport per week. Councillor Mrs D Collins shared this concern she confirmed that County Council was aware of this problem and the local M.P., Eleanor Laing would be speaking to the relevant Government minister.

Members wondered if a representative of the LSP should be co-opted onto the recently set up Overview and Scrutiny sub-committee. D Macnab advised this was not necessary as there was currently an officer link through C Overend.

Councillor D Jacobs asked J Houston if there was a definition of sustainable communities. J Houston replied that it was about subsidiarity and maximising achievement for the community, this included care of resources for better investment.

Councillor C Whitbread warned the Committee that the current national economic problems were likely to effect the public sector as well. Public funding needed support through external funding, efficiency savings would need to be made. J Houston said that the LSP needed to identify pots of money, they needed to be vigilant about additional resources. Councillor J Whitehouse appreciated that there were priorities and it was right that the District Council was not driven by just what was available. However, he asked about renewal grants and project funding on limited terms, what happened when the grants ran out? To what extent had priorities been identified that needed funding in future years?

Councillor Mrs D Collins advised that the funding came from the Local Area Agreements which bid for funds on an annual basis, a programme was put forward, which was costed, with an explanation as to what it was for. The County Council then decided which projects should receive the money. D Macnab added that the District Council was allocated £45,000 per annum from the County Council for capacity building within the local LSPs, some of which had been sourced from the obsolete public service agreements which were the precursor to Local Area Agreements which made a reward grant covering a five year period. The bids were always made retrospectively. Councillor J Whitehouse was concerned that the very nature of the issues that the LSP was attempting to deal with such as health inequalities, deprivation and crime needed long term intervention to get to the causes rather than one-off impacts. If continually reliant on bid funding, not being sure one year to the next where the funding was coming from, how possible was it to do the long term strategy planning that was necessary. J Houston appreciated that it would be overly optimistic to deal with poverty in a two year programme. It was important to mainstream schemes with different options. It was important to have a longer term understanding of what the trends were. Schemes needed to be mainstreamed with different options. By re-evaluating, a discipline was imposed.

J Houston informed the Committee that anybody could contact or visit him regarding LSP matters.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Mrs D Collins and J Houston for attending the meeting and for giving their presentation.

82. DRAFT 2008/09 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Draft 2008/09 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report was presented to the Committee.

The following points were made:

- The text of the draft reports may benefit from being shortened and written in a less formal style.
- Members felt that portrait photographs of the Chairmen, from the Task and Finish Panels, should have been added to the Panel's draft annual reports.
- Extra text was needed in the Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel's annual report concerning Item 9 Capital Programme 2008/09 to 2012/13, a fuller description of the process for the revenue budget.

Comments were required to be sent to Democratic Services by 20 March 2009. Following amendments being made, a final version was going before the April 2009 meeting of the Committee.

83. WORK PROGRAMME MONITORING

(a) Updated Schedule

The following changes were noted:

(i) Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Item 13 Scrutiny of Essex Police – Community Policing Initiative. Should be widened to Safer Communities Partnership.
- Item 18 Debt Management Review. The Committee was advised that the constituted sub-committee had not met yet.

(ii) Safer, Cleaner, Greener Standing Panel

The Chairman of the Panel, Councillor M Colling, advised the Committee that they had looked at the strategy guide which included a climate change strategy and the Nottingham Declaration.

(iii) Leisure Services Task and Finish Panel

The Committee were advised that the feasibility study for Waltham Abbey Sports Centre was commissioned. When the study was completed a date for the Panel would be arranged.

(b) Reserve Programme

Mr D Macnab advised that the closing date for the review was 20 March 2009.

Councillor Mrs J Whitehouse requested that the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder, Councillor Mrs A Grigg, be invited to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny meeting to answer questions about the Town Centre Partnership.

AGREED:

That the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder be invited to a future meeting of the Committee to discuss the Town Centre Partnerships.

(c) Item from the 17 February 2009 meeting of Full Council

At their last meeting, the Council asked that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider a motion moved by Councillor D Bateman to establish a Task and Finish Panel to ensure that a review be carried out examining the introduction of free London Underground passes for residents in the District, aged 65 years and above, to include the Central Line to Epping.

Members asked for a report to be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee looking at the feasibility of free London Underground passes for district residents aged 65 and over.

AGREED:

That, a report be submitted to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee, looking at the feasibility of free London Underground passes for district residents aged 65 and over; and

84. CABINET REVIEW

The Committee noted that Item 17 Inter Authority Agreement with Essex County Council, would include a discussion on the ramifications of the agreement. The Committee was advised that the Portfolio Holder was aware of this.

85. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

CHAIRMAN

Annual Review Epping Forest LSP

Presentation to
Overview and Scrutiny Committee
5th March 2009

Cllr Di Collins Chairman Epping Forest LSP
John Houston Epping Forest LSP Manager

What will the presentation cover?

- Role of LSP - who is it, what is it for?
- Looking back - the last year
- Looking ahead – Key work underway
- Overview & Scrutiny – areas for inquiry

LSP – Who is it, What is it for?

Important role

- Bring together all key public agencies, voluntary and private sectors
- Identify common problems and develop joint-up solutions
- Pool expertise and enthusiasm and 'Add Value'
- Commission research, identify gaps in provision and opportunities for new ways of working

LSP – Who is it, What is it for?

continued

- Deliver LAA targets
- Act as ambassadors for the area and help secure additional funding
- Research, consult and agree a Sustainable Community Strategy, support the LDF
- Establish local priorities, ‘bend’ spending by large organisations to meet local targets
- Enhance Accountability

LSP – Who is it, What is it for?

- Made up of senior members from Statutory, Voluntary and Business Community
- Including:
 - EFDC
 - Essex County Council Education & Social Services
 - PCT
 - Police, Fire and Rescue
 - Parish and Town Council Representatives
 - Faith Groups

Looking Back – the LSP last year

- Previous manager left
- New manager appointed Dec, in place Jan
- £455k funding secured to support local schemes
- Time used constructively to review effectiveness – ensure fit for purpose

Looking Back - outcomes

Lots of commitment from partners, £70k funding and enthusiasm to engage

- Needed sharper focus
- More openness and better communication
- Emphasis on outcomes and delivery – and not attending meetings
- Do things that add value and not things that would get done anyway
- Ensure the LSP Board has the right people from right organisations
- Need new Sustainable Community Strategy
- Need to move things to ‘next level’

Looking Ahead – Key work underway

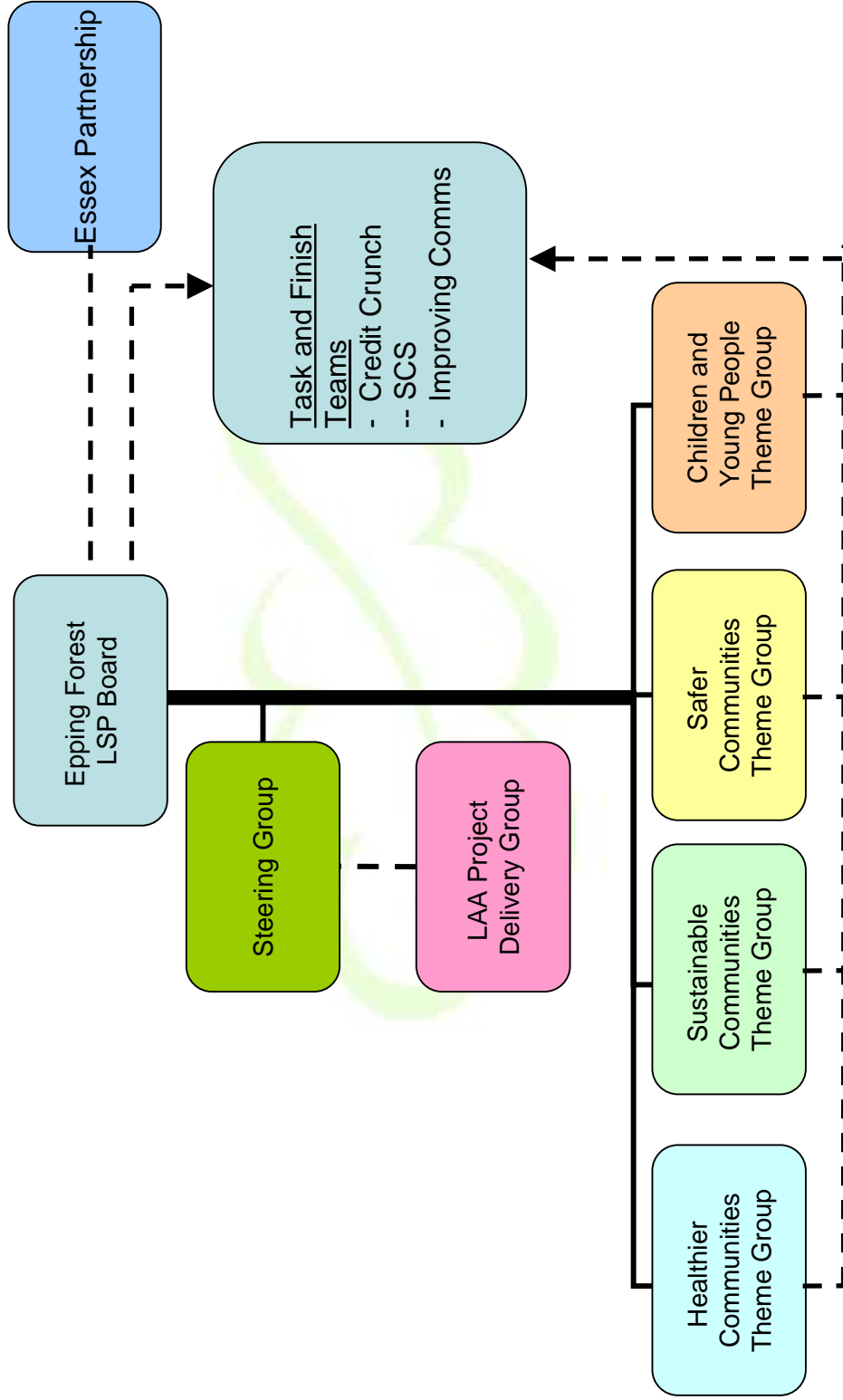
- New Senior Officer and Team in post
- Review of structures complete
- 4 fixed Theme Groups established
 - Healthier Communities
 - Sustainable Communities
 - Safer Communities
 - Children and Young People
- New executive Steering Group established

Looking Ahead – Key work underway

continued

- 5 Task and Finish Teams agreed
 - 3 set up immediately
 - Dealing with the Credit Crunch
 - Reviewing the Sustainable Community Strategy
 - Improving Communications
 - 2 others to follow
 - ‘Joining up’ Service Delivery
 - Enhancing Educational Attainment

LSP Structure



Overview & Scrutiny – areas highlighted for inquiry

- Action groups
- Health inequalities
- How the LSP works
- Future Plans
- Things we do well and not so well
- Education

Conclusion

- Last year difficult for LSP but...
 - Still secured £455k for local schemes
 - Completed a major review of role and function
 - Established new LSP team to lead work
- Future work programme challenging
 - New Sustainable Community Strategy
 - Better communications, raising profile through action
 - Action and delivery through the Theme Groups and Task and Finish teams
 - Engaging more effectively at County and Regional Level
 - Better ‘joining up’ of services

Any Questions?



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