

# **Report to Council**

**Date of meeting: 28 April 2009**

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

**Chairman of the Committee:** Councillor R Morgan

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

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## **Recommendation:**

**That the Overview and Scrutiny progress report from February 2009 to the present be noted.**

## **Report**

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

#### **March 2009 Meeting**

1. The meeting received a presentation from the Chairman of the Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), Councillor Mrs D Collins and the partnership manager John Houston. They outlined the origins of the Partnership and its recent history.

2. The Committee was told that the LSP had received £450,000 in grants last year. They had been re-structured recently and now had less committees; currently consisting of four standing and three task and finish panels. 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

3. The LSP brought together all key public agencies, voluntary and private sector. 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

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.

4. 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".

#### **April 2009 Meeting**

5. The Committee received a presentation from Essex Police who updated the meeting on the current state of the District. Attending the meeting was Superintendent Simon Williams and Inspector Craig Carrington. The Superintendent informed the Committee of the latest crime figures for the district saying that crime had been reduced in the District by 11% over the last year with detection of crime rising to 29.2%. The overall crime figures were down by over 700 from last year. After the presentation the two officers were closely questioned by the members of the Committee.

6. The Committee also scrutinised the Cabinet Forward Plan for the year ahead, when they received an update from the Leader and various cabinet members. They Considered and agreed the report on frequently asked questions arising from the Planning Services Standing Panel; they also reviewed and agreed the 2008-2009 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report; received an update on the Town Centre Partnerships from the Portfolio Holder, Mrs Grigg and were updated on the results of the Publicity Code Consultation. They also considered the scheme of officer delegation and the establishment of a Safer Communities Committee which was decided to be put into the existing Safer Cleaner Greener Scrutiny Standing Panel.

7. The Committee also considered the report on the Review of London Underground Passes, they agreed that as an aspiration this was desirable, but taking into account the large cost of the proposed passes, over seven million pounds, it was thought that in the current financial climate that this should no longer be pursued.

#### **Standing Panels**

8. 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.

9. The Housing Standing Panel had met in March 2009 when they considered and

agreed the Housing Revenue Business Plan (2008-09) progress report; the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan for 2009-10; Changes to the Revenue and Capital Rules for new Council Housing; the Housemark Benchmarking Report on EFDC Housing Services 2007-08; Housing Strategies on under-occupation, older peoples services and housing management; Parking Enforcement on Housing estates and the Tenants Participation Progress in 2008.

10. The Constitution and Members Services Standing Panel met on 23<sup>rd</sup> February and 6<sup>th</sup> April 2009. In February they reviewed the Consultation on Publicity Code. In April 2009 they carried out a review on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; Civic Events and Officer delegation.

11. The Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel met on 10<sup>th</sup> February and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009. In February they considered the Key Performance indicators for quarter 3; the quarterly financial monitoring report for the period ending 31 December 2008; the Value for Money Cost and Performance Analysis for 2008/08 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period ending 2012/13.

12. At their March 2009 meeting the Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel considered the Key Performance Indicators for 2009/10; a progress report on Equality and Diversity for 2008/09 and a review on the Value for Money Strategy.

13. The Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Panel met on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2009. The meeting considered the first draft of the Safer Cleaner Greener Strategy and the draft Climate Change Strategy.

14. The Planning Services Standing Panel met on 12 February and 12<sup>th</sup> March 2009. At their February meeting they received a presentation on the Planning Portal and an update on income and expenditure and the revised estimates for 2008/09 and estimates for 2009/10. They also considered a possible scrutiny request from Councillor Mrs Cooper, which they gave an answer to all the main points at this meeting. The outcome was to be reported to the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee in April 2009. They also received a report outlining the effects of the change from moving from a 4 week cycle to a 3 week cycle from the Planning Sub-Committees and reviewed the Council's Planning protocol.

15. At their March meeting the Planning Standing Panel considered a Planning Enforcement Scoping Report and a Gypsy and Travellers Development Plan Document update. They also considered a timeline for the Local Development Framework and a report on the Planning and Economic Development Directorates Improvement Plan. They also received feedback from a recent meeting of the District Development Control Chairmen and Vice Chairmen.

### **Task and Finish Panels**

16. 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. A follow up meeting is scheduled for 30<sup>th</sup> April 2009.

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