

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group **Date:** Wednesday, 11 May 2005

Place: Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.30 pm

Members Present: Councillors Mrs D Collins (Chairman) M Colling, F Maclaine, D Stallan, Mrs J H Whitehouse and M Woollard

Other Councillors: Councillors Mrs D Borton and K Wright

Apologies: (none)

Officers Present: John Scott (Joint Chief Executive), John Preston (Head of Planning and Economic Development), Adrian Scott (Head of Information, Communications and Technology), Ian Willett (Head of Research and Democratic Services), Simon Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Zoe Folley (Democratic Services Assistant)

43. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

(1) That the minutes of the 5 April 2005 meeting of the Co-ordinating Group be confirmed; and

(2) That the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee be asked to confirm the minutes of this meeting

44. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct.

45. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No further items of business were brought forward for consideration at the meeting.

46. PICK SCORING - METHODOLOGY

The Group were reminded that the Council had adopted the PICK scoring system for establishing priorities for the forthcoming OS programme. It was noted that recent scrutiny seminars on the arrangements applied at other authorities had contributed to the formulation of the criteria. It was noted that the assessment was the Council's own system and not a standard model used by other authorities. The Senior Democratic Services Officer outlined the background to the methodology and explained that it used a four point ranking system derived from the comments made by Members during training sessions.

Members were asked to consider the system of scoring. A Member suggested that it should cover the financial implications of proposals. In response the Senior

Democratic Services Officer reported that the PICK criteria was only the first stage of the assessment for suggested topics and that further on in the process detailed scoping exercises would be undertaken to identify the full implications including the costs of requests. A Member stated that the process was important as it would demonstrate how and why the Group reached its decisions on the plan and ensure that process was open and transparent.

RESOLVED:

That the PICK scoring system be noted

47. WORK PROGRAMME 2005-06

The Group considered the proposed work plan to date and information sheets containing details of the proposals in the plan. The Group were asked to consider how they wished to consider the requests and what scrutiny panels might be required to deal with the issues. It was suggested that members should ensure that the workload of any proposals was practical. Bearing this in mind the Group considered the schedule and grouped particular items together which they considered ongoing and agreed that to deal with them five standing panels be established on Housing, Constitutional Affairs, ICT and e-government, Environmental and Planning and Finance and Best Value Performance Management. It was noted that the panel on Environmental and Planning services could establish liaison arrangements with external interests to facilitate the consideration of issues.

Members considered the size of membership of the standing panels. The Senior Democratic Services Officer reported that the lowest membership number which could be used to achieve pro rata cross party representation on each panel was 10. This could increase to eleven to include an extra place for the Member not affiliated to a group. The Group agreed that this minimum membership option should be pursued. The Head of Research and Democratic Services undertook to work out in detail the pro-rata memberships arrangements for the standing panels and report his conclusions back to the next meeting.

Members considered how the residual topics in the plan should be dealt with. The Head of Research and Democratic Services reported that it had been suggested that some of these issues should not be included in the programme. He advised that the review of appointments to outside bodies had already been completed and therefore this needed to be deleted. He also stated that Group Leaders had suggested that the top management structure should not be considered by a scrutiny panel and that the Management Board had concluded that the Financial regulations review only required a review of virement policy and that this could be undertaken by the Cabinet. As a result the Group agreed that these items should also be deleted. It was reported that Cllr McMillan had withdrawn his proposed review of the Council's use of external consultants. The Councillor said that he would put his questions directly to Heads of Service and had been advised that he could submit his review again when the plan was reviewed.

Members considered the draft plan to ascertain which items were suitable for task and finish review. The Group agreed that four such panels needed to be appointed to deal with requests on the establishment of a register of development proposals (incorporating roads and pavements and parking policy in residential areas); Members Training; externally funded Leisure Services and Youth Provision and Traveller issues. It was noted that witnesses had expressed an interest in advising on aspects of the traveller review and that they could be invited to relevant meetings.

Members also looked at which topics should be considered directly by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Group considered whether the Liaison on the Highways Local Service Agreement should be undertaken by the Group or a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group. Members concluded that the issue should be considered within a public forum and therefore should initially be dealt with by the OSC until further details on the new liaison arrangements had been identified. It was agreed that consideration could then be given to allocating it to a separate panel. It was also agreed that the Liaison with London Underground Ltd, the scrutiny of outside bodies and the review of PICK should also be considered by the parent committee. It was noted that the proposed programme and the process for appointments to panels would be placed in the Members Bulletin. It was also noted that although the PICK process had not been used at the meeting to prioritise topics it could be used at a later stage when the programme was reviewed.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the proposed work programme for May – October 2005 attached as an appendix be noted;
- (2) That the Head of Research and Democratic Services advise on the pro rata arrangements for standing panels and report to the next meeting;
- (3) That an article which sets out the proposed work plan and explains the appointment process for the new panels be placed in the Members Bulletin

48. LIAISON WITH CABINET

The Head of Research and Democratic Services reported that a meeting needed to be arranged with the Cabinet members to discuss the emerging scrutiny work plan. He advised that the Cabinet was in the process of putting together its own work plan which would be agreed by the Council at the same time as the OSC plan. He stated that it was important to ensure that that Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny did not duplicate each others work and that they exchanged views about the plans. It was agreed that Cabinet members should attend the Committee meeting on 9 June 2005 to discuss the future work programmes.

RESOLVED:

That Portfolio Holders be invited to the OS Co-ordinating Committee's meeting on 9 June 2005 to discuss the Cabinet and Overview Scrutiny work plans for 2005/06.

49. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Group agreed that decisions needed to be made as soon as possible on the membership of panels to ensure that their work was not delayed. In particular it was noted that the issue of traveller incursions was becoming pressing. In view of these considerations it was agreed that a special meeting of the new Co-ordinating Committee would be arranged soon after annual council to determine appointments and the decisions required to set up panels. The Head of Research and Democratic Services agreed to ascertain a date.

CHAIRMAN

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Work Plan 2005/06 - Proposed Standing and Task and Finish Panels

(May – October 2005)

- **Standing Panels.**

The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group have suggested that the following five panels be established to consider the issues listed against each panel.

Panel	Requests to be considered
Housing	Housing Allocation Scheme, Annual Ethnic Monitoring Review of Housing Applicants and Housing Applications, Housing Services Development Plan – Progress Report, Policy on private sector Housing, Review of policies for empty homes in District, Implementation of Choice Based Letting Scheme, Review of Housing – Fees and Charges, Housing Strategy Action Plan (6 Monthly Progress Report) Local Supporting People Strategy – Adoption, Local Supporting People – (6 Monthly Progress Report)
Constitutional Affairs	Council Meetings – Review of Questions and Motions, Future Role of Council, Contract Standing Orders Review, Review of Policy and Procedures on External Links, Constitutional Issues/Corporate Governance, Community Involvements in new Scrutiny Arrangements, Services for Members, Electoral Review.
ICT and E -Government	Current Investment in Information Communications Technology
Environmental and Planning Services	Essex County Joint Waste Procurement Process, Planning policy for redundant buildings in the green belt, Local Plan, RSS14
Finance and Performance Management	Budget Consultation, Development of new Council Plan, Community Conference 2005/06, Best Value Performance Data

- **Task and Finish Panels**

The Group have suggested that the following four Panels be set up.

Panel	Requests to be considered
Review of externally funded Leisure Services and Youth Provisions	Leisure Services – Review of Externally funded services, Youth Provision in the District

Panel	Requests to be considered
Traveller issues	Former Traveller Site at Paynes Lane, Traveller Incursions
Register of local interests	Establishments of Register of significant concerns for Development Proposals, Road and Pavements in District and Parking Policy in residential areas.
Members Training	Members Training - General and scrutiny skills

- **Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group**

The Group have suggested that the following issues be dealt with by the new Co -ordinating Group.

Panel	Requests to be considered
Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group	London Underground Liaison, Scrutiny of outside bodies (Primary Care Trust/Local Strategic Partnership), Liaison on Highways Local Services Agreement, Administration of PICK system.