

# **Report to Council**

**Date of meeting: 27 July 2010**

**Subject: Overview and Scrutiny report to Council – July 2010**

**Chairman: Councillor Richard Morgan**



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## **Recommendation:**

**That the Overview and Scrutiny progress report from June 2010 to the present be noted.**

## **Report.**

### **Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 12 July 2010.**

1. At the July meeting, the Committee considered a call-in of a Cabinet decision on the Housing Portfolio Holder Report on the 'Adoption of revised Standard Caravan Site Licence Conditions for Permanent Residential Sites in Epping Forest District'. The call-in cited that there had been no consultation with residents and insufficient contact with local ward members. It also indicated that there was insufficient consideration given to the impact on privacy of residents by lowering hedges and fences to 1 metre. Members requesting the call in would like the existing hedges and fences to remain at a maximum of 2 metres. In support of the call-in, six separate petitions were received from the various caravan and mobile home parks in the district. The meeting was well attended by both councillors and the public, with about 220 members of the public being accommodated in the public gallery and the atrium in the reception area, where they followed the meeting on the big television screens showing a live feed from the chamber.

2. Unusually for a meeting considering a call-in, the Chairman allowed all the lead petitioners to speak at the meeting, giving each one a three minute spot to put their case forward. It must be said that they all gave a good account of themselves, putting forward the case for their residents in a clear and persuasive manner.

3. After a long and involved debate the Committee agreed to refer the decision back to the Cabinet to re-consider their decision, taking into account the need for a more in depth consultation with residents and further consideration on the hedges and fences heights. They may like to consider applying this rule for new builds and/or redevelopments only. The Portfolio Holder for Housing suggested that the entire decision be given to the Housing Scrutiny Standing Panel to consider in depth at one of their meetings and to make detailed recommendations to a future Cabinet meeting. This was fully endorsed by the Committee.

4. The Committee then went on to receive a presentation from the manager of the Local Strategic Partnership, John Houston, who took the Committee through the partnership work done over the last year. Their role was to make a better quality of life for the district, to meet any challenges ahead and to act as ambassadors for the District. They set up Task and Finish Panels to look into various items, to quickly make changes and then step down. They identified grants for local causes and partnership funding from external bodies, organised a seminar on jobs and were in the process of producing a Local Community Strategy.

5. They then considered a report on 'Value for Money, Equality and Diversity' where the committee were asked if they wanted this work transferred to them from the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Standing Panel. On consideration they decided that it should stay where it was.

6. The Committee then received a report updating an earlier report that first went to the Committee in November 2009. This was on a review of debt and money advice undertaken by a sub-group of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, looking at, amongst other things, the operation and District Council support of the of the Citizens Advice Bureau. This report updated recommendations made last year and reported on any progress made.

7. The Constitution and Member Service Standing Panel Chairman, Councillor Mrs McEwen reported on the latest annual review undertaken on the elections held in May 2010. Their finding indicated that the elections were carried out without any major problems and were considered to be quite successful in organisation and execution.

8. Finally, the Committee endorsed the CCTV delivery plan that originally went to the Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Panel and will now go on to Cabinet in September for their final approval.