

# **Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee**



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Date of meeting: 6 October 2005**

**Subject: Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme – Six monthly review**

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**Committee Secretary: Z Folley (ext 4532)**

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## **Recommendations:**

**(1) That the current (May – September 2005) Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be reviewed;**

**(2) That in conducting the above consideration be given to:**

**(a) the resourcing and scope of the programme; and**

**(b) the reserve programme and new proposals from members.**

1. (Head of Research and Democratic Services). The Overview and Scrutiny Procedural rules state that 'The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme shall be of six – months duration and be reviewed at or before the expiration of that six month period'.

2. The current six monthly programme (attached) runs from May to October 2005. A review of this plan is therefore now due.

## **Issues for consideration**

3. The procedures indicate that the Committee in determining the work programme shall:

(a) Review all proposals submitted to ensure that they relate to the Council's Policy Framework;

(b) Ensure the agreed work programme has sufficient member and officer resources to support it;

(c) Ensure that the work programme is properly prioritised;

(d) Allocate time limits for each project;

4. In conducting this first review, the Committee is asked to bear these considerations in mind together with the matters set out below.

## **Resourcing of Programme**

5. Earlier in the year, the Committee decided to pursue the entire list of projects put forward for consideration. This had three main impacts:

(a) Democratic Services staff have only been able to cover this Committee and the Standing Panels.

(b) Administrative support for the Task and Finish Panels has fallen to the Lead officers

concerned.

(c) With Overview and Scrutiny becoming a more active arm of the Council (in comparison with the old arrangements) there are worries about the ability of some services to keep up with the work currently being commissioned by Panels – quite apart from secretarial support.

6. Staffing support for the process is mainly delivered through Research and Democratic Services. There is currently still a vacancy for the post of Scrutiny Officer, a post that was added to the establishment following the review. Adverts for this post are currently out and the closing date for applications is 7 October 2005. Realistically no appointment will now be made until Christmas 2005. Members may also be aware that a post of Democratic Services Officer is being held vacant pending a review of Central Support costs following the removal of the Highways Agency. It is a matter for the authority to determine the level at which services are provided, indeed it was envisaged that members would take a lead in reviews in a greater self-supporting manner.

7. It is the responsibility of this Committee to manage the OS process and in particularly the work plan so that the work plan matches the resources available to support it. The enthusiasm being shown by members for the new programme is apparent but this needs to be tempered with caution about allowing unrestricted growth of the work plan. If this were to continue some established projects will slip back or never be completed.

#### **Reserve List.**

8. New projects which cannot be undertaken now can be placed in the reserve list (attached) or, if they are more urgent, replace any which are in the current programme but which are less pressing. Members need to bear in mind that new projects can be added but only if there is capacity among Panels and officers to undertake them.

9. A new request has been received from Councillor Mrs Whitehouse. This is attached for consideration.