

Report to Council

Date of meeting: 22 February 2011

Subject: Overview and Scrutiny Report to Council – February 2011

Contact for further information: Councillor Richard Morgan



Recommendation:

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

Report.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 24 January 2011.

1. At the January meeting the Committee received a call-in of a decision by the Cabinet of a Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder report (C-044-2010/11) regarding the decision for a £35,000 reduction in the Community Arts project budget including deletion of a part time Arts Administration Post. The call-in was concerned that this decision was inconsistent with the Council's stated intention to protect front-line services. After due consideration the Committee confirmed the original decision of the Cabinet.

2. They next considered a report from the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Standing Panel on the refurbishment of the Finance Reception area. The Panel had considered three options prepared by Norfolk Property Services for the development and improvement of the Finance Reception area after the critical comments made by the Audit Commission Inspectors. They proposed the following three separate costed options:

- Option 1 - to open things up and put in semi transparent low level barriers, take away the glass screens, put in new furniture and move the public area back. The total cost would be £200,600.
- Option 2 – as option 1 but with the addition of the extension to provide a group interview room. Total costs would be £267,266.84.
- Option 3 – as options 1& 2 but with new external glazing and sliding doors (two sets of automated doors), external roller shutters and new information screens. Total cost would be £302,255.86.

3. Off the three options, the Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel had chosen to endorse the third option, at a cost of £302,255.86. After due consideration and debate the Committee also decided to support option 3 and would recommend this to the Cabinet.

4. The Committee also received the draft Budget report, which was considered in detail the week before by the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee along with members of the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel. They noted and agreed their conclusions.

5. The Committee next considered a response to a consultation document on core strategies and options for the Harlow area. This originally went to the Planning Services Standing Panel and came to us with their draft responses. They agreed with their responses but also added that they would like to see a new junction built north of Harlow onto the M11. The Committee also gave the Planning Standing Panel the discretion to reply directly to any consultations, if the timing proved impractical to bring it to the main O&S Committee for agreement.

6. Finally the Committee received two reports from the Constitution and Member Services Standing Panel, one was for the introduction of e-invoicing and the other was for amending the Constitution to remove the guillotine on Cabinet meetings and the requirement to hold a minimum of 12 Cabinet meetings a year. Both reports were agreed and they will go onto the Council for their agreement.