

4. SAFER CLEANER GREENER STANDING PANEL

The Safer, Cleaner Greener Standing Panel consisted of the following members:

Councillor Miss C Edwards (Chairman)
Councillor Ms J Hedges (Vice Chairman)
Councillors W Breare-Hall, A Boyce, Mrs T Cochrane, D Jacobs, Mrs S Jones, B Judd, G Mohindra, Mrs C Pond and P Spencer

The Lead officer was John Gilbert, Director of Environment and Street Scene.

Terms of Reference

1. To approve and keep under review the “Safer, Cleaner, Greener” initiative development programme.

(Note: this development programme will encompass the three main issues and will therefore include matters such as:

- (i) environmental enforcement activity*
 - (ii) safer communities’ activities*
 - (iii) waste management activities (in addition to WMPB information))*
2. To keep under review the activity and decisions of the Waste Partnership Member Board and the Inter Authority Member Working Group.
 3. To receive reports from the Waste Management Partnership Board in respect of the operation of and performance of the waste management contract
 4. To monitor and keep under review the Nottingham Declaration “action plan” and the Council’s progress towards the preparation and adoption of a sustainability policy and to receive progress reports on the Council’s Climate Change Strategy from the Green Working Group
 5. (Subject to Cabinet approval of the Group) to receive and review the reports of the Bobbingworth Tip Management Group.
 6. To act as the Council’s Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee and to keep under review the activities of the Epping Forest Safer Communities Partnership as a whole or any of the individual partners which make up the partnership.
 - (a) That at least two meetings a year be dedicated as Community Safety Committee meetings.

Work from the Leisure Task and Finish Panel

7. Waltham Abbey Sports Centre / Swimming Pool:
 - To assess the feasibility of providing a new sports hall at the Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool;
 - To conclude the assessment commenced in 2007/08 of evaluating the current and potential future management arrangements at Waltham Abbey Sports Centre.

8. The on-going monitoring of the Youth Initiatives Scheme and Play strategy.

The Panel scrutinised a number of important issues over the last year, which included:

(i) Enforcement Activities – The Panel were updated on the various enforcement activities of the Council. The Council undertook 303 investigations in the first six months of 2010, of which only 3 resulted in prosecutions, demonstrating how difficult it was to gather sufficient evidence to mount an enforcement action. However, EFDC were in the process of embarking on a joint venture with Essex County Council which would enable Epping to access a regional database and enable officers to identify vehicle registrations numbers and get background information on the vehicle.

(ii) Safer Cleaner Greener Action Plan – The Panel scrutinised the SCG Action Plan for the year, noting the work of the Neighbourhood Team, the 'Crucial Crew' and the 'Reality Road Shows' (for the education on personal safety for school aged children), the CCTV policy and that the Council was currently achieving 100% of its target for removing offensive and racist graffiti within 48 hours of notification.

The Council was working with various partners to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. Officers had been given approval to introduce fixed penalty notices as an enforcement tool. Also officers would implement and monitor the action of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

(iii) Action Plans and Strategies - The Panel reviewed and agreed the following action plans: CCTV, the new Tree Strategy and the Safer Cleaner Greener Strategic Action Plan.

(iv) Sports Hall Provision at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool – This was an item left over from the Leisure Task and Finish Panel who looked at the feasibility for providing a new sports hall at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool. It was noted that the Cabinet, in 2009, agreed to the proposal to build a sports hall at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool and recommended that Sports and Leisure Management (SLM) undertake the work to the planning stage. The Panel noted that therefore the project was reliant on the planning permission, the agreement by the Cabinet on the future SLM contract and the allocation of the Capital Funding.



(v) Review of Waste and Recycling Collection Services during Christmas and New Year 2009/10 – The Panel reviewed the waste and recycling collections services during Christmas and New Year 2009/10, covering the period of bad weather conditions (heavy snow, ice) coupled with the bank holiday closure. It turned out that the district had done very well when compared with other authorities, only suspending services for just one day. They noted the action taken to get collection services back to normal, including suspended street cleaning services to divert some crews to grit high streets, main roads and pavements, suspending the normal 'side waste' policy and collect any waste placed next to normal collection containers and hire additional refuse freighters and crews in January 2010 to help clear the backlog. Although the primary responsibility rested with SITA, the company responsible for waste collection, Council Officers also went out to check up on them.



During this time there were also problems with landfill sites and recycling processors which were either closed or inaccessible at various times. This meant that the refuse trucks could not drop off their loads.

The Civic Offices were also closed over Christmas which caused a lot of customer frustration over the period. The case for closing the offices over the Christmas period would be looked at by a separate working group.

(vi) Consultation on Future of Policing - The Panel were asked to comment on a Home Office consultation document on the future of Policing (Policing in the 21 Century: Reconnecting the Police and the People). The consultation document suggested that democratic accountability would be increased by directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners, the abolition of Police Authorities, the creation of Police and Crime Panels and a more independent 'Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary'. The Panel though broadly content commented specifically that they were concerned by the role of a Police and Crime Commissioner and the type of candidate that may put themselves up for election and were ambivalent about the benefits of the actual post. Any candidate would need significant support from a backup office, which carried the risk of simply replacing one bureaucracy (i.e. Police Authority) with another.



(vii) Consultation on the Future of Licensing – The Panel were also asked to comment on a consultation document on licensing “Rebalancing the Licensing Act 2010”, which was looking to give local licensing authorities additional powers to regulate licensing in their area and allow them to respond more effectively to local concerns. They thought that the area of consultation be widened; there should be other means other than boundary notices and advertisements in the local press to communicate with the local residents, perhaps via Town and Parish Councils; Town and Parish Councils should be made interested parties and authorities should not have to pay compensation if a decision was overturned on appeal.



(viii) Police and Crime Commissioners – The Panel considered a report on the proposed Police and Crime Commissioners. From 2012 regional Police and Crime Commissioners are to be elected in all areas other than the Metropolitan and the City of London Police. The Panel wanted to be kept updated on the progress on the work for the new Police and Crime Commissioner and to monitor the use of police resources during the Olympic period.

(ix) Consultation on 'more effective response to anti-social behaviour' – The Home Office were consulting on more effective responses to anti-social behaviour and were looking to open up current legislation and bring it all under one umbrella act.



The Panel considered the document and provided suitable responses to the consultation.

(x) Crime and Disorder Meetings – At their October meeting the Panel reviewed crime and disorder issues. They considered the Community Safety Partnership and cross border work when members of the Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership (CSP) attended the meeting. The Panel were introduced to the cross border officer who was financed by Essex County Council after our Safer Communities Team approached them to appoint a West Essex Cross Border Officer, working on behalf of Epping Forest, Harlow and Brentwood CSPs. A temporary post was agreed.

The Cross Border Officer noted it was difficult to target individuals who 'commuted' into the district because of the easy transport links. However, there was now a London wide database in operation, which we had signed up to. This showed up interesting facts such as 'hot-spots' of criminality activity and that a small number of individuals were responsible for the majority of crime. Targeted cross border squads could now be put together to target cross border offending.

At the second Crime and Disorder Meeting – the Panel went out to St Mary's Church Hall in Loughton to hold their meeting. This time the topic of discussion was "Licensing and the Night Time Economy – Managing Expectations". At this meeting were the Council's Licensing Officer, Essex Police and members of the Safer Communities Partnership. They were there to discuss the processes of monitoring and the enforcement of the licensing conditions at various premises throughout the district and to answer any questions that arose.



Both the Police and the Licensing officer gave a short presentation on their various roles and duties towards licensed premises and the public. The Safer Communities Partnership had partly funded some police operations into policing licensed premises in Loughton. It allowed proactive measures to be deployed such as knife arches, drug dogs and PCSOs, when needed. They have also linked the pubs and clubs in Loughton High Road by two way radios so that they could share information.

Case Study: Review of Waste and Recycling Collection Services during Christmas and New Year 2009/10

The Panel received a report on waste and recycling collection services during Christmas and New Year 2009/10. This report covered the period of disruption during the period of bad weather (snow fall and icy conditions), coupled with the bank



holidays closures. Because of the severe weather in January our contractor could not catch up with the delayed Christmas collections. As it turned out, as a district we did very well compared with other authorities, only suspending services for just one day. The report highlighted the steps taken to bring services back to normal.

The main actions undertaken to get collection services back to normal were:

- a) Suspend Special Collections (bulky waste item collection) to divert resources to help catch up refuse and recycling collections.
- b) Suspend street cleansing services, divert some crews to grit high streets/main roads and pavements to assist residents.
- c) Divert remaining street cleansing crews to work alongside refuse and recycling crews.
- d) Suspend normal 'side waste' policy and collect any waste placed next to normal collection container until service back to normal.
- e) Street cleansing crews to pile up recycling and residual sacks at easy to access road junctions or the nearest point that a freighter could safely access.
- f) Hire additional refuse freighters and crews in January 2010 to help clear the backlog.

During this time updating information was put on the Council's website to keep the public informed. Although the primary responsibility rested with SITA, Council officers also went out to check up on them. During this time there were also problems with the landfill sites which were either closed or inaccessible at various times. This meant that the refuse trucks could not drop off their loads. The Civic Offices were also closed over the Christmas period which caused a lot of customer frustration over this time. This also meant that no staff were able to update the pre-recorded telephone message that the Council used and members were asked to provide some guidance on staffing over the Christmas period.

Some Councillors noted that neither officers or SITA could be criticised for the bad weather, the entire country had come to a halt during this period. People would understand about the delays if only they were informed what these problems were. There was now a case for looking into not closing the offices down completely over the Christmas period. It may be that a skeletal staff was kept on from all major services, which would solve the updating problem.

Other Councillors thought that this was the wrong time to open the offices at Christmas due to budgetary cuts. Only one member of staff would be needed to update telephone messages.

If the Council was to seriously consider opening over the Christmas period then Councillors would need to know the costs involved and how it would operate. They

needed to explore if the website could be updated remotely. Feedback was also needed from other Councils as to what they were doing. These were all good ideas but it all came down to costs. The Panel needed to consider costs before they made any recommendations.