

# EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES

**Committee:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee      **Date:** Tuesday, 31 May 2011

**Place:** Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping      **Time:** 7.30 - 9.16 pm

**Members Present:** Councillors R Bassett (Chairman) D Wixley (Vice-Chairman) Ms R Brookes, K Chana, D Jacobs, D C Johnson, Mrs S Jones, S Murray, Mrs M Sartin, D Stallan and G Waller

**Other Councillors:** Councillors R Barrett, A Boyce, Mrs M McEwen, G Mohindra, J Philip, Mrs P Smith, Mrs L Wagland and C Whitbread

**Apologies:**

**Officers Present:** D Macnab (Acting Chief Executive), J Gilbert (Director of Environment and Street Scene), J Chandler (Assistant Director (Community Services and Customer Relations)), S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer), A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer), S Mitchell (PR Website Editor) and M Jenkins (Democratic Services Assistant)

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## 1. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman reminded everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

## 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

## 3. MINUTES

### RESOLVED:

The minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 11 April 2011 be agreed subject to the inclusion of Councillor Jennie Hart and noting the misspelling of Councillor Philip's name under minute item 99 (b).

## 4. KEY OBJECTIVES 2010/11 - OUT TURN REPORT

The Committee considered the outturn report for the range of Key Objectives for 2010/11. Performance for the Key Objectives for the year is reviewed by the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee went through the objectives one at a time and made the following comments:

**Key Objective 1** – *To maintain the Council's sound financial position:* the Committee were pleased to see the latest figures and gave credit to the Finance Directorate for this.

**Key Objective 2** – *To seek Continuous performance improvement and the best use of resources:* it was noted that this was still important and was linked to achieving value for money. They also noted the big improvement in the Housing Repair Services.

**Key Objective 3** – *To work with the Epping Forest Safer Communities Partnership...:* the Committee noted that the crime figures had gone up slightly and that this would be something for the Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Panel to look at during the year. They noted that there was also financial pressures on the Police and it was important to find out if there was anything the Council could do to help.

**Key Objective 5** – *...help mitigate the impact of the current economic conditions...:* the Committee hoped that the car parking charges could be kept low again this year to help local businesses. There were also concerns raised that the free parking areas get filled very quickly and not necessarily by shoppers, nullifying the vale of the initiative.

**Key Objective 7** – *To improve the performance of the benefits Service:* the Committee complimented staff on their hard work in bringing down the average number of days for processing new claims to 22.96 days. They also noted that changes were being proposed to bring in a 'universal credit' and were unsure how this would ultimately affect the staff.

**Key Objective 9** – *To achieve the level of savings identified within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy:* Noted that the Council had done well in their saving strategy but there were still savings to be made in the coming year.

**Key Objective 11** – *To continue to increase the Council's recycling performance:* the Committee noted that the government were thinking about changing from the two weekly collections to a weekly one. The council would then have to consider what impact this would have on recycling. They also wanted to congratulate the officers on meeting their targets despite the exceptional bad weather experienced during the winter months.

**Key Objective 12** – *To review the Council's commercial Landholdings...:* they noted the Council's Commercial landholdings was something to be kept under scrutiny during the year.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee noted and commented on the Outturn Performance in relation to the Council's Key Objectives for 2010/11.

**5. CHILDREN SERVICES TASK AND FINISH PANEL - FINAL REPORT**

The Chairman of the Children's Services Task and Finish Panel, Councillor Mrs Wagland, introduced her Panel's report, giving a brief history of the Panel and the work carried out. She thanked the members and officers who had helped her carry out this investigation and asked the Committee to endorse the recommendations made and refer it up to the Cabinet.

Councillor Murray agreed with the Panel's recommendations, noting that the report was well worth reading as it was an important document and one of the best bits of scrutiny he had read.

Councillor Stellan agreed that it was an important document and would like the report to go on the Council's website and to all members.

Councillor Mrs Sartin thought it was an excellent report and wondered in relation to their recommendation 5, when Essex County Council would come to this Committee. Mrs Wagland suggested it should be the tail end of the year after their Scrutiny Panel had looked at this topic as well.

The Chairman noted that as there were little of costs and resources in the report and these would be useful to know as an indicator of what the Council needed to do. Councillor Mrs Wagland replied that the costs as was known, were in the report. Detailed figures would be needed to be worked out and it would be important to prioritise our actions. Julie Chandler, Assistant Director Community Services, added that the officers involved tended to deal with a whole range of different duties and so it was difficult to pinpoint officer input, time and costs.

In all, the Committee agreed that this was an excellent report.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the recommendations of the Children's Services Task and Finish Panel be endorsed and the report be referred on to Cabinet; and
- (2) That Essex County Council's Director of Children's commissioning, be requested to meet with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of Children's Services on an annual basis.

**6. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2010/11**

The Committee received the amended annual Overview and Scrutiny Report for 2010/11 incorporating comments made at their meeting of 11 April 2011.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report for 2010/11 reporting the work undertaken during the past municipal year be agreed and submitted to the Full Council at its meeting on 28 June 2011.

**7. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERSHIP TO STANDING PANELS**

The Committee were asked to make appointments to Standing Panels in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny rules. The Committee were reminded that the Council had agreed pro rata applied to Standing Panels and that membership should be kept to a minimum to allow each Group to have representation. It was noted that on this basis it had been agreed by group leaders that Panels would consist of 11 Members, including any independent member that wished to be a member of a Panel.

It was reported that nominations to Chairman and Vice Chairman to Standing Panels were excluded from the pro rata calculation rules required for such positions contained in the Council's constitution.

**RESOLVED:**

That the appointments to Standing Panels annexed to these minutes be adopted.

**8. WORK PROGRAMME MONITORING**

**(a) Work Programme**

The Committee considered their work programme for the coming year. They noted that the Standing Panels would be agreeing their work programmes at their first meetings.

**O&S Work Programme**

**Item 8** – *Review of Secondary and Primary education in the District...* - Councillor Murray was pleased to see it on the work programme and suggested that officers could contact the consortiums of Primary School Heads and Secondary School Heads and ask them to send a representative each to the appropriate O&S meeting.

**Item 11** – *Corporation of London* – noted that there were concerns raised about the forest and members were pleased to have it on the programme. It was suggested that a representative from 'Friends of Epping Forest' be invited to that meeting.

The Committee also wanted to consider the new organisational make up of the PCT/ West Essex Health Service and any progress made on the commissioning of local health services. It would be helpful if they could come at the end of the year to talk to the Committee. It was noted that the County were establishing a Panel to look at this. Also, that the Bill was presently on pause so it would be more appropriate to look at this in the autumn.

The Committee also wanted to look at what the state of play was on the Lea Valley Regional Park Authority and the Olympics. Officers said that a report could be brought to the next meeting on the progress so far.

The role of the Transport Police was brought up, what their jurisdiction was and any data on criminal activity over the last four years. Also, was their data compatible with the County Police's data handling systems and could they share data electronically. It was thought useful to have the Transport Police and the Essex Police there at the same meeting and this should be added to item 12 of the Work Programme.

**9. UPCOMING VISIT FROM LONDON UNDERGROUND**

The Committee considered the upcoming visit from London Underground at their next meeting. They wished to consider:

- Capacity on Trains;
- Train stock improvements;
- Engineering works, how much is refurbishment;

- Refurbishments at Mile End – can't see the destination boards, the ceiling height is too low and staffing levels at the station;
- Oyster Cards, will the scheme be extended; there have been reports in the press that they were not working as they should and people were being overcharged;
- Parking issues around the stations and the road outside Epping Station as the Council did not own or enforce parking on it;
- The disabled exit at Epping Station, could they advise people at Theydon Bois on what side of the station the train was to stop at so that people could decide what to do;
- Litter in the car parks;
- Impact of the Olympic games –
  - we are a commuter town what will happen to our commuters during the Olympic period and how would LUL manage this problem;
  - Also would there be an increased staff presence during the games or increased opening hours of the stations;
  - would there be a link from Loughton to Waltham Abbey to save people travelling into central London and then out again; had this been considered; and
- Security at unmanned stations.

## 10. CABINET REVIEW

The Committee were concerned about the amount of recovery time for agenda item 11, 'ICT disaster Recovery Policy'. It was thought that a 40 day recovery period was too long and substantial improvements was needed on this.

The Committee then went into privates session to discuss any concerns they had about cabinet agenda item 16, Review of Grounds Maintenance and Nursery Services, when they expressed concern about potential loss flexibility due to any outsourcing.

**CHAIRMAN**

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## Scrutiny Standing Panels Nominations for 2011/12

### Standing Panels

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#### Constitution and Member Services Panel

**Members –**

**Conservative Group (7):**

D Stallan; Mrs M Sartin; D Johnson; J Philip; Mrs S Watson; Mrs M McEwan; B Rolfe

**Liberal Democrats Group (1):**

Mrs J H Whitehouse

**LRA Group (2):**

R Cohen; J Markham

**Other Nominations (1):**

R Morgan

**Chairman – D Stallan**

**Vice-Chairman – D Johnson**

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#### Finance and Performance Management

**Members –**

**Conservative Group (7):**

P Keska; R Bassett; W Pryor; James Hart; G Waller; K Chana; Ms S Packford

**Liberal Democrats Group (1):**

D Jacobs

**LRA Group (2):**

K Angold-Stephens; R Cohen

**Other Nominations (1):**

S Murray

**Chairman – D Jacobs**

**Vice-Chairman – G Waller**

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## **Housing**

### **Members -**

#### **Conservative Group (7):**

Mrs A Mitchell; D Stallan; Mrs A Grigg; K Chana; Mrs S Jones; H Ulkan; W Pryor

#### **Liberal Democrats Group (1):**

Mrs J H Whitehouse

#### **LRA Group (2):**

Jennie Hart; Ms R Brookes

#### **Other Nominations (1):**

S Murray

**Chairman – S Murray**

**Vice-Chairman – Mrs A Mitchell**

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## **Safer, Cleaner, Greener**

### **Members**

#### **Conservative Group (7):**

Mrs M Sartin; G Mohindra; K Avey; Mrs L Webster; Mrs A Mitchell; W Breare-Hall;  
Ms Y Knight

#### **Liberal Democrats Group (1):**

P Spencer

#### **LRA Group (2):**

Ms T Cochrane; Mrs C Pond

#### **Other Nominations (1): Vacancy**

**Chairman - Mrs M Sartin**

**Vice-Chairman – Mrs C Pond**

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## **Planning Services**

### **Members –**

#### **Conservative Group (7):**

H Ulkan; A Watts; Ms Y Knight; A Boyce; P Keska; B Sandler; A Lion

#### **Liberal Democrats Group (1):**

Mrs J Sutcliffe

#### **LRA Group (2):**

C Finn; J Markham

#### **Other Nominations (1): Vacancy**

**Chairman – H Ulkan**

**Vice Chairman – A Watts**

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