

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COUNCIL MINUTES

Committee: Council **Date:** 13 December 2011

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.30 - 8.55 pm

Members Present: Councillors K Angold-Stephens (Chairman), B Rolfe (Vice-Chairman), K Avey, R Barrett, R Bassett, A Boyce, W Breare-Hall, Ms R Brookes, K Chana, Mrs T Cochrane, R Cohen, Mrs D Collins, Mrs R Gadsby, P Gode, Mrs A Grigg, J Hart, Ms J Hart, D Jacobs, D C Johnson, Mrs S Jones, P Keska, J Knapman, Ms Y Knight, Mrs J Lea, L Leonard, A Lion, Mrs M McEwen, J Markham, A Mitchell MBE, G Mohindra, R Morgan, S Murray, J Philip, Mrs C Pond, Mrs P Richardson, B Sandler, Mrs M Sartin, Mrs P Smith, P Spencer, D Stallan, Mrs J Sutcliffe, Mrs L Wagland, G Waller, Ms S Watson, A Watts, Mrs E Webster, C Whitbread, Mrs J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse, D Wixley and J Wyatt

Apologies: Councillors D Dodeja, C Finn, S Packford, W Pryor and Ms S Stavrou

Officers Present: D Macnab (Acting Chief Executive), C O'Boyle (Director of Corporate Support Services), R Palmer (Director of Finance and ICT), I Willett (Assistant to the Chief Executive), G Lunnun (Assistant Director (Democratic Services)), S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer), P Seager (Chairman's Secretary) and S Mitchell (PR Website Editor)

91. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Assistant to the Chief Executive 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.

92. DAVE SMITH

It was with much sadness that the Chairman informed the Council of the death of Dave Smith, one of the Council's carpenters.

Members noted that Dave had given over 15 years loyal service to the Council, and had been a dedicated and conscientious carpenter who had earned the respect of his managers, his colleagues and the tenants with whom he had come into contact.

The Council stood for a minute's silence in tribute to the memory of Dave Smith.

93. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 1 November 2011 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

94. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(a) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor Gadsby declared a personal interest in agenda item 14 (Joint Arrangements and External Organisations – Grange Farm Managing Trustees). The Councillor advised that she had determined that her interest was prejudicial and that she would leave the meeting for the consideration of the matter.

(b) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor Watson declared a personal interest in agenda item 12 (Report of Overview and Scrutiny – Audit and Governance Committee – Appointment of Portfolio Holder Assistant). The Councillor advised that she had determined that her interest was prejudicial and that she would leave the meeting for the consideration and voting on the matter.

95. ANNOUNCEMENTS**(a) Announcements by the Chairman of the Council****(i) Attendance at Events**

The Chairman reported on his attendance at the Annual General meeting of Crossroads Care which had also been a celebration of the silver anniversary of the Crossroads Scheme in the Epping Forest District. The Chairman drew attention to the work undertaken by carers for those with a wide range of physical and mental conditions.

The Chairman drew attention to the Remembrance Services which he had attended and thanked past Chairmen and other members for their attendance at services.

The Chairman announced that together with staff from the Animal Welfare and Emergency Planning Teams he had attended an event to celebrate a special award from the RSPCA in recognition of the Council's Emergency Animal Welfare Plans. He advised that this had given him an insight into one of the lesser known parts of the Environment and Street Scene Directorate although the star of the event had been a Bull Mastiff Cross dog.

The Chairman thanked Christine Eyles, Volunteer Centre Co-ordinator for the work she had undertaken in organising a donation station where members and staff could donate clothing for sale in St Clare Hospice Shops, one of the Chairman's Charities. He advised that 50 bags of clothing had been collected, the sale of which would provide a welcome boost to the Charity.

The Chairman referred to his attendance at the official opening of Zinc Arts Centre and Tolpuddle House, Ongar and the new Pavilion at the Grange Farm Trust, Chigwell. He advised that the Earl of Wessex had been present at both openings.

The Council noted that on 2 December 2011, the Chairman had attended the Debden Christmas celebrations. He thanked the Epping Forest College and schools for the entertainment they had provided at that event.

The Chairman reported that he had attended the Children's Sports Awards lunch organised by the President's Sporting Club/Essex Disabled Sports Foundation. Over 600 disabled children and their helpers from special schools from the region had attended the event which had been held at North Weald Airfield.

The Chairman advised that on 7 December 2011 he had attended a VIP performance by the East 15 Acting School.

The Council noted that the Chairman had attended the RAD Carol Service for deaf and deafblind held at Chelmsford Cathedral on 9 December 2011.

The Chairman reported that together with the Vice-Chairman of the Council and the Leader of the Council he had attended the Chigwell Riding Trust for Special Needs Carol Service which he had very much enjoyed.

The Chairman reminded members that the Council's Civic Carol Service was taking place on 16 December 2011 and that a quiz night in aid of its charity would be held at Theydon Bois Village Hall on 3 February 2012.

(ii) Chairman's Charity

The Chairman announced that £1,118 had been raised for his charity from the White Water Rafting Event held at the Lee Valley Water Centre. The Chairman thanked those who had taken part and especially those who had waived the refund of their entry fee.

The Chairman advised that tickets for a Christmas raffle in aid of his charity would be available in the Members' Room after this meeting.

(iii) The Floral Display

The Chairman announced that he intended to send the flowers from tonight's meeting to the family of Dave Smith.

(b) Announcements by the Leader of Council

The Leader advised that she had no announcements to make under this heading.

(c) Announcements by Portfolio Holders

The Portfolio Holders advised that they had no announcements to make under this heading.

96. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

The Council noted that there were no public questions for this meeting.

97. REPORTS FROM THE LEADER, CHAIRMAN OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

The Council received written reports from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Environment Portfolio Holder, the Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder, the Housing Portfolio Holder, the Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder, the Planning and Technology Portfolio Holder, and the Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder. The Council also received a supplementary written report from the Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder. The Council noted that the Support Services Portfolio Holder did not have any matters to report to the Council under this item.

The Chairman invited the Leader and Legal Portfolio Holder to provide an oral report, and the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other members of the Cabinet to give an oral update of their written reports.

(a) Leader and Legal Portfolio Holder

Councillor Wagland reported on her attendance at a meeting of the full board and formal re-launch of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership at which the Chairman, John Spence, had emphasised its mission statement to become the most enterprising economy in England. The Leader advised that the Partnership which covered Essex, Kent and East Sussex contributed £55bn to the National Economy (17%). Members noted that John Spence had again stated the need for the Partnership to add value, and only to undertake matters which could be achieved more effectively and efficiency than at the local level. The Leader advised that she would place documents reflecting the vision of the Partnership in the Council Bulletin. Councillor Wagland reported on progress being made by the Partnership in relation to two enterprise zones, one at Sandwich and one at Harlow. Members noted that the Partnership had received the largest allocation of Growing Places funding outside London amounting to £32m as well as £27m funding for Broadband development. A scheme in Essex would receive £6.2m regional growth fund for research and development within the medical and science, aerospace, defence and industrial markets.

The Leader reported that together with John Houston, LSP Manager, she had recently met Doctor Kamal Bishai, Head of the Local GP Commissioning Body who would be Chairing the Health Group LSP and would join the Board. Members noted that at a Board meeting earlier in the day, Doctor Bishai had reported on the role of the GP Consortia.

The Leader reported that together with J Chandler, Assistant Director, she had met Essex County Council officers in relation to the Essex Health and Wellbeing Board. She advised that Essex County Council was responsible for setting up a shadow board and District Council interests on that board would be represented by Tendring District Council representative. In due course the full board would have four District Council representatives from Tendring, Rochford, Harlow and Braintree. A stakeholder forum was to take place at which the views of the Epping Forest District would be put forward. A contribution would also be made to a Strategic Needs Assessment. The Leader advised that it appeared the GP Consortium would present plans to the Board in accordance with the Strategic Needs Assessment and that funds were likely to stay with the Consortium. Councillor Wagland advised that she would report further to the Council when she had more information.

Councillor Wagland advised that there had been an incursion by gypsies and travellers onto a District Council owned site opposite the Marriott Hotel in Waltham Abbey. She advised that contrary to rumour the Council's Legal Officers had issued proceedings as soon as they became aware of the situation and had secured the first available Court date of 8 December at which a Possession Order had been granted. An approach had been made to the Police requesting them to use Section 61 powers but they had not been prepared to do so. Accordingly it had been necessary to proceed with the trespass proceedings and following advice that Court bailiffs would not be available until the New Year, steps had been taken to engage a private bailiff service at a cost of £2,500. Those bailiffs had been successful in moving the gypsies and travellers from the land but they had now moved onto the Cornmill Car Park in Waltham Abbey and it would be necessary to take similar steps in order to seek their removal from that site although it appeared that the Police would be more inclined to use their Section 61 powers.

The Leader advised that the Council had joined the Public Law Partnership as a way of contributing and sharing expertise and costs. She advised that through this Partnership, District Council Officers had undertaken investigations about member complaints for Harlow and Basildon Councils and as a result this Council had received approximately £4,000 income. The Leader advised that the Partnership had been shortlisted for the Local Government Chronicle Legal Team Award in recognition of its approach to shared services.

Councillor Wagland advised that the Localism Bill had now been enacted and that a training session was planned for members in the New Year. She advised that this training session would be webcast and available for those members unable to attend the event.

(b) Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder

Councillor Gadsby, Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder, reported that the internal and external decorations, fixtures and fittings for the new Limes Centre at Limes Farm would be completed during the current week and that the statutory undertakers were due to complete their work before Christmas. She advised that although the Centre would not be open for Christmas, the project would be completed within budget and would be handed over to the Council during January 2012. She drew attention to the attractive facilities which would be available including a large hall with an integral kitchen suitable for functions such as wedding receptions, a medium size hall, a 12 seat meeting room, and a health clinic facility. Councillor Gadsby reported that a resident Community Development Worker would be on site two days a week and that all of the services would be provided within existing staffing resources.

Councillor Gadsby referred to the break-in at the Epping Forest Museum. She advised that two items had still not been recovered but the case was still under investigation. As a result of the break-in some improved security measures had been introduced.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the concerns of the Environment Agency regarding the integrity of the Town Mead site had now been overcome and work was expected to commence on the All Weather Pitch in the New Year.

(c) Planning and Technology Portfolio Holder

Councillor Philip, Planning and Technology Portfolio Holder, reported that WiFi was now available in the Council Chamber. He advised that access would be controlled through Democratic Services who would provide members with a password when requested.

(d) Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder

Councillor Mohindra, Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder, referred to his written report regarding changes to Housing Benefit for single people under 35 and stated that a copy of the letter to be sent to relevant claimants would be published in the Council Bulletin and details would also appear in the latest edition of The Forester.

Councillor Mohindra drew attention to the success of the Estates and Valuation Section in securing new tenants for shops in The Broadway, Loughton.

In relation to the redevelopment of the St John's Road area in Epping, the Portfolio Holder advised that a meeting was to be held on 12 January 2012 with Epping Town Council to discuss progress with the preparation of a development brief. He confirmed that an invitation to that meeting would be extended to Epping members. The Portfolio Holder advised that officers had been working with County Council officers and as a result a road safety audit had been undertaken. At a meeting of the Project Team terms of reference had been agreed and a timescale had been discussed. A further meeting of the Project Team was due to take place on 15 December 2011 at which it was hoped a realistic timescale would be agreed. Councillor Mohindra advised that he had emphasised to officers the need for a meaningful consultation exercise with adequate time for responses.

98. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS WITHOUT NOTICE

(a) Buckhurst Hill Parking Review

Councillor Spencer asked the Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder if a team of officers was in place to undertake the Buckhurst Hill Parking Review next year.

Councillor Smith, Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder stated that a team of officers had not yet been established but that she was fully aware of the need for a team to be developed.

(b) Revenue Income Optimisation – Parking Charges

Councillor J M Whitehouse drew attention to the written report of the Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder regarding the revenue income optimisation exercise recently undertaken by Price Waterhouse Coopers. He asked the Portfolio Holder to acknowledge the direct relationship between off and on-street parking and sought confirmation that any proposals would take account of the impact on on-street parking and ensure that the car parks in town centres would be available for local shoppers.

Councillor Mohindra, Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder advised that the main purpose of the proposals was to secure better utilisation of the car parks. Councillor Mohindra advised that the view of the Finance and Performance Management Committee had been to retain current off-street car parking charges to support the local economy of the District and further work would be carried out on how car parking charges could be structured to benefit local businesses by increasing turnover within the car parks. Councillor Mohindra invited Councillor Smith, Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder, to respond to that part of the question regarding on-street parking.

Councillor Smith, Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder advised that the correlation between off and on-street parking was recognised and would be taken into account.

(c) Epping New Road

Councillor Watts suggested that the Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder had omitted from her report reference to the filling of a pothole in the Epping New Road.

Councillor Smith, Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder thanked Councillor Watts for drawing this to the attention of the Council.

(d) Changes to Housing Benefit

Councillor Murray drew attention to the written report of the Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder regarding changes to Housing Benefit for single people under 35. He asked the Portfolio Holder if he agreed that a small section of the society was being unduly affected.

Councillor Mohindra, Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder advised that the decision of Central Government was a matter of concern to him. He acknowledged that a small minority would be affected and advised that the Government was trying to ensure that people lived in suitable sized accommodation. Councillor Mohindra said that the Council help those affected as best as it could.

(e) Council House Building Programme

Councillor Murray drew attention to the written report of the Housing Portfolio Holder regarding the decision of the Cabinet to commence a new Council House Building Programme. He pointed out that the District Council had not built a Council house since 1985 and that the current proposals would not secure a property until 2015. He asked the Portfolio Holder if she agreed that this was both a local and national disgrace.

Councillor McEwen, Housing Portfolio Holder pointed out that whilst the District Council had not built any houses during the last 30 years, a number had been built by Housing Associations. She emphasised that the District Council had been prevented from building houses as a result of Government regulations.

(f) Community Safety

Councillor Wixley drew attention to the written report of the Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder regarding operations undertaken in the Loughton Way area. He advised that the report referred to the Loughton Way area in Loughton whereas it should have referred to the Loughton Way in Buckhurst Hill.

Councillor Smith, Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder asked Councillor Wixley to accept that Buckhurst Hill was a safe place in which to reside as was Loughton. She pointed out that the reference to Loughton Way had been intended as a reference to the general area in which the Council had invested as had the local Town Council.

(g) Community Safety – The Broadway, Loughton

Councillor Markham referred to the domestic violence one stop shop in The Broadway, Loughton and to the proposed CCTV regeneration project in that area. He said that he was alarmed that it was felt necessary to give this much attention to The Broadway and he sought an assurance from the Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder that The Broadway was no different from any other part of the District.

Councillor Smith, Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder stated that earlier this month four doves had been released at a small service on the green adjoining the Civic Offices to symbolise the four deaths which had occurred in Essex in the last year as a result of domestic violence. She urged anyone experiencing home concerns to contact the Centre. The Portfolio Holder advised that domestic violence was a real problem and suggested that the provision of a on stop shop was a very

worthwhile facility. She said that the Broadway had been chosen due its accessibility and the availability of premises.

(h) Revenue of Income Optimisation – Advertising

Councillor Sutcliffe drew attention to the written report of the Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder regarding the opportunities for the introduction of advertising on the Council's website and vehicle fleet. Whilst acknowledging the need to increase income she sought an assurance that any such advertising would be limited and carefully controlled.

Councillor Mohindra, Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder, advised that this suggestion would be subject to a detailed report and the concerns of the Councillor would be taken into account.

(i) Olympic Games

Councillor J H Whitehouse referred to local events being organised to celebrate the Olympic Games in 2012 and asked the Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder if a comprehensive list was available showing all the events.

Councillor Gadsby, Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder stated that such a list was not available at present but that she considered this to be a good idea which she would pursue with officers.

(j) Relocation of Refuse Freighters to North Weald Airfield

Councillor Stallan asked the Environment Portfolio Holder about the current position regarding the possible relocation of refuse freighters to North Weald Airfield.

Councillor Knapman, Environment Portfolio Holder stated that matters were moving slowly and that at present no plans had been submitted. He continued that he was awaiting a report regarding contaminated land and on receipt of that report it might be possible to progress matters. However, there were other options and it was his preference not to relocate the refuse freighters to North Weald Airfield.

(k) Anti-Social Behaviour in North Weald

Councillor Grigg referred to the reduction in the number of reported incidences of anti-social behaviour and asked the Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder if she agreed that the figures distorted the extent of the problem due to residents being reluctant to report situations. Councillor Grigg stated that a resident in North Weald had suffered repeated attacks by graffiti artists outside of her property, most of which had taken place whilst the resident had been at work or asleep. Councillor Grigg reported that the resident had been advised that unless she witnessed the attacks and could provide evidence there was little action that could be taken. Councillor Grigg invited the Portfolio Holder to meet her outside of this meeting in order to consider this matter with a view to taking some remedial action.

Councillor Smith, Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder said that she remembered Councillor Grigg had raised this matter with her previously and that officers from the Safer Communities Team had spoken to the resident. Councillor Smith agreed to meet Councillor Grigg outside of the meeting in order to discuss possible further remedial action.

(l) Recycling – Blocks of Flats

Councillor Jenny Hart congratulated the Environment Portfolio Holder, officers and residents for the Epping Forest District Council being one of the top twenty District Councils for recycling rates. She stated that she understood communal bins were to be provided for a number of blocks of flats to enable the collection recycling of dry waste and she questioned when it would be possible for food waste to be collected from blocks of flats. She also asked if blocks of flats not within the communal scheme would still have clear sacks and blue boxes collected.

Councillor Knapman, Environment Portfolio Holder, thanked Councillor Hart for her compliments but stated that despite this Council's good performance he wanted to achieve a higher rate of re-cycling. He advised that a meeting was to be held in early January at which Councillor Hart will be welcome to attend when he would be discussing with officers the need for bespoke systems for individual blocks of flats so that all residents of flats were given the same opportunities to re-cycle as other residents.

(m) Reduction in Non-Recyclables to Landfill

Councillor Jenny Hart advised that members had been informed via the Council Bulletin in May 2011 of a proposal for a strategic waste management site at Courtauld Road in Basildon. She stated that she understood the aim was to provide a facility which would extract recyclable materials and process the remainder to produce a dried output material that could potentially be used or landfilled without the problems associated with the disposal of untreated household waste to landfill sites. She asked the Environment Portfolio Holder if he was aware what progress was being made in relation to the provision of this facility.

Councillor Knapman, Environment Portfolio Holder stated that the Courtauld Road site was going ahead. Officers were currently investigating a PFI arrangement and ultimately waste from this District would go to a transfer station at Harlow and then onto the Courtauld Road site.

99. MOTIONS

The Chairman reported that there were no motions to be considered at this meeting.

100. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER NOTICE

The Chairman reported that there were no questions by members under notice to be considered at this meeting.

101. REPORT OF THE CABINET - CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2012/13

Mover: Councillor Wyatt, Support Services Portfolio Holder

Councillor Wyatt submitted a report recommending the adoption of a calendar of meetings for 2012/13. He drew attention to changes which had been made to the draft calendar which had been considered by the Cabinet in order to avoid a clash of meetings.

Report as first moved ADOPTED

RESOLVED:

That the calendar of Council meetings for 2012/13 attached as an Appendix to these minutes be adopted.

102. REPORT OF THE CABINET - TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY/COUNCIL'S BANK

Mover: Councillor Mohindra, Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder

Councillor Mohindra submitted a report on the Council's overall treasury position and advised that the Council's bank no longer met the Council's minimum rating criteria.

Report as first moved ADOPTED

RESOLVED:

That the change in the Treasury Management Strategy to reduce the minimum long-term rating from a plus (or equivalent) down to a minus (or equivalent) specifically only for the use of the Council's bank, Nat West, and only while it remains in the ownership of the UK Government, be approved.

103. REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - APPOINTMENT OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER ASSISTANTS

Mover: Councillor Bassett, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Bassett submitted a report following consideration by the Constitution and Member Services Panel on a review of the Constitution of the Audit and Governance Committee to clarify whether a Portfolio Holder Assistant could be a member of that body.

By leave of the Council, Councillor Bassett sought approval to the insertion of the word "primarily" after the word "dealing" in recommendation 1 of the report in order to accord with the views which had been agreed by the Committee.

Report as amended ADOPTED

RESOLVED:

(1) That Portfolio Holder Assistants, except those involved with the Portfolio dealing primarily with the Council's finances, be eligible for appointment to the Audit and Governance Committee, subject to careful consideration by the Councillor concerned of the need to declare a prejudicial interest in any matter relating to the relevant Portfolio which comes before that Committee;

(2) That the decision set out in (1) above be reviewed after one year or if there is a change either in the roles of Portfolio Holder Assistants or the Audit and Governance Committee;

(3) That the designation "Deputy Portfolio Holder" be changed to "Portfolio Holder Assistant";

(4) That paragraph 1.6(a) (Councillor Members) of Article 11 of the Constitution (Audit and Governance Committee) be amended to read as follows:

"11.6(a) (Councillor Members)

Councillors appointed to the Audit and Governance Committee may not also be members of the Cabinet, any Cabinet Committee or any Panel appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with responsibility for reviewing the Council's finances or financial procedures.

A Portfolio Holder Assistant (other than any Assistant involved in any Portfolio dealing primarily with the Council's finances) appointed by the Leader of the Council shall be eligible for appointment to the Committee";

(5) That the Standards Committee be asked to issue advice to Portfolio Holder Assistants on how such conflicts of interest should be dealt with and to consult with the Audit and Governance Committee before it is issued;

(6) That the proposed review by the Audit and Governance Committee of its own constitution including the following specific matters be noted:

(a) terms of appointment for independent members;

(b) method of appointing Councillor members of the Committee (including pro rata rules and appointment by Council rather than political groups);

(c) whether the Committee should be increased in size;

(d) whether there should be a majority of independent members; and

(e) whether there should be separate Audit and Governance Committees;

(7) That any review of the Constitution which results from (6) above be added to the Work Programme of the Constitution and Member Services Scrutiny Panel;

(8) That the Audit and Governance Committee be advised of the view of the Constitution and Member Services Panel that the number of its members should be increased.

104. REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - REPORTING BY SCRUTINY PANEL CHAIRMAN AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

Mover: Councillor Bassett, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Bassett submitted a report following consideration by the Constitution and Members Services Panel on a review of the reporting arrangements at Council meetings in relation to matters considered by Overview and Scrutiny Panels

Report as first moved ADOPTED

RESOLVED:

(1) That the principle of Scrutiny Panel Chairmen presenting reports at Council and other Council bodies be approved;

(2) That Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules 12(3)(h) (Standing Scrutiny Panels) and 13(3)(h) (Task and Finish Scrutiny Panels) be amended to read as follows:

“be able, after consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to report to the Council, the Cabinet, a Cabinet Committee, a Portfolio Holder or any other Council body”;

(3) That Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules 12(4) and 13(3) be further amended by the addition of the following sub paragraphs:

“(i) in the circumstances set out in (h), the report shall be submitted in the name of the Panel and presented by its Chairman, unless the work of more than one Scrutiny Panel is involved, in which case any report to another Council body will be in the name of the Overview & Scrutiny and presented by its Chairman;

(j) in the event that the submission of a Panel report to another Council body is required such that it cannot be considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in accordance with paragraph (h) above, the Panel report may proceed for consideration subject to prior consultation with the Chairman of that Committee as to the reasons for urgency”;

(4) That, at Council meetings, the written report of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be dealt with prior to the reports by the Committee or any of its Panels and grouped under a single item relating to Overview and Scrutiny business; and

(5) That the Assistant to the Chief Executive be authorised to make any other consequential amendments to the Constitution arising from the above changes.

105. JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

The Council received a written report from Councillors Smith and Johnson in relation to their roles as Grange Farm Managing Trustees.

Councillor Murray suggested that the facilities currently provided at Grange Farm in no way replaced what had been available to the public some 30 years ago. He suggested that this Council had been responsible for the loss of public facilities.

Councillor Murray drew attention to the difficulty in accessing the Chigwell Nature Reserve from the west due to the gate on the pedestrian motorway bridge being locked. He suggested that there was a need to regularise the arrangements for the opening of the gate and suggested that during the summer months it should be open from dawn to dusk.

Councillor Smith apologised about the restricted access and stated that she would pursue this matter although she understood that the opening of the gates was controlled by another party.

Councillor Wixley stated that he had visited the pavilion on 1 October 2011 and had not seen any evidence of an Interpretation Centre for Essex Wildlife Trust. He asked if a lack of funds had prevented this from being pursued.

Councillor Smith advised that the Essex Wildlife Trust had moved into the pavilion and a wealth of information was now available. The Trust were also engaging with local schools. She suggested that on 1 October 2011 the project had been in its infancy and that matters had progressed considerably since that time.

Councillor Knapman referred to the grants awarded by the Grange Farm Trust amounting annually to approximately £120,000. He questioned how many projects had received grants and what proportion of the Trust's investment income was being devoted to grants each year.

Councillor Smith advised that grants were paid on the receipt of invoices for approved schemes. She stated that there were a number of outstanding applications which had been approved but in respect of which invoices had not yet been received. Accordingly, the grants in respect of those schemes had not yet been paid. Councillor Smith also referred to money which had been spent by the Trust in recent years on the pavilion and on the provision of football pitches.

Councillor Wagland referred to the comments made by Councillor Murray about the facilities on the site and pointed out that there had been doubts about ownership of the land which had been resolved through the establishment of a Trust. This had also ensured that any future development of the land could be controlled.

Councillor Knapman repeated his request for a report on the Trust's investments income and the amounts given in grant.

Councillor Smith confirmed that she would submit a report to a future Council meeting.

Councillor Webster advised that she was also a Managing Trustee nominated by Essex County Council. She advised that the Clerk to the Trustees could provide the information requested by Councillor Knapman and there was no reason why such information could not be provided on an annual basis.

Councillor Smith agreed with the comments made by Councillor Webster and again confirmed that she would report to a future meeting.

106. SEASON'S GREETINGS

The Chairman extended season's greetings to members and officers.

CHAIRMAN