

Report from the Essex Scrutiny Officer and Chairman Network meeting – 13th January 2012

A networking meeting for the Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny functions and their officers was held at Chelmsford. The purpose of these meetings is to share information and to create a network for the Scrutiny function and to share best practices or information on how the Scrutiny function can work across district boundaries.

The following points were raised and discussed:

- We all agreed we need to engage in a top down collaboration on scrutiny matters to prevent unnecessary work and to share scrutiny findings. There were a couple of districts that had not yet engaged and these would be encouraged to participate
- It was agreed that the Officer network would share items on Forward Plan and also some information on items where they have completed some investigations or scrutiny. Simon Hill agreed to be the focus to create this.
- It was also agreed that we would share our training for member and officers schedules and if spaces are available be willing to accept people from other districts. We were also reminded that from May we need to provide a return on what members have completed what training.
- We again discussed localism and a couple of districts had done some useful work in this area and they have agreed to share their reports. Thurrock has also had a task and finish panel on Localism and how to get engaged with residents. They will share this.
- We also discussed the new Community Budget and how it will work. It is early days and there are still issues on how this will be managed. Specifically if we work to share resources for example to reduce Anti Social Behaviour this will benefit the police, save hospital time but how will the costs be apportioned?
- We all seem to have issues on Highways and we were informed that work on the new Locality Boards is in progress and an update will be provided in due course.
- Finally there was a question on the new Parking Partnerships and how they would be scrutinised. The representative from Colchester stated they would be reviewed annually. The officer network was asked to look at how this will be done and report back to the group.

Cllr Richard Bassett
EFDC, Chairman Overview and Scrutiny