

# ***Report to Council***

***Date of meeting: 31 July 2012***

**Subject: Overview and Scrutiny report to Council – July 2012**

**Contact for further information: Councillor Richard Morgan**



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## **Recommendation:**

**That the Overview and Scrutiny progress report from April 2012 to the present be noted.**

## **Report.**

### **Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 17 April 2012.**

1. At our meeting on Tuesday, 17 April 2012, we noted that the call-in on Fire Safety in Flat Blocks had been referred to the Housing Scrutiny Standing Panel as the Panel had previously discussed the matter in detail. This was considered at their meeting held on 31 May 2012, when they endorsed the Cabinet's original decision.
2. We next considered two reports from the Constitution and Member Services Standing Panel. The first was on the Executive and Regulatory Council Decision Making. This recommended various changes tidying up the Constitution on matters concerning the council's property interests and regulatory decisions.
3. The second report was on the circulation of agenda, recommending that non-members of any council body be invited to 'opt in' to receive paper agendas. This was so the amount of paper copies could be reduced; members could always access the relevant agenda from our website. The Committee also noted that there was the possibility to moving to an electronically based system, such as using i-pads, however, legal opinion was currently being sought on the legal validity on doing this.
4. We next reviewed our draft annual report and our work programme at the end of the year, noting that we had completed the majority of the work and that any items not completed would be carried over into next year's programme.
5. The Chairman of the Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Panel informed us that they had considered a report on the arrangements of the new Highways Panel at their last meeting. They recommended, and we agreed, that the Council opt-in to the arrangements of the County and participate in the Panel by having our Appointments Panel nominate seven District Council members to sit with the seven County Council members on the new Highways Panel and make joint decisions on highway matters affecting our district. We also agreed that the District should administer the Panel meetings giving us more control over the running of the Panel. We also agreed that these arrangements should be reviewed in a year's time.

6. We then reviewed the recent training that we undertook with Harlow members in the previous month. The two courses were considered successful and we hoped to arrange future events using the same trainer. We also were hopeful that more members would take up this opportunity.

7. We also considered that the current arrangements of Overview and Scrutiny should be reviewed again, as it had not been done for some 6 years. To this end we proposed that a Task and Finish Panel be set up in the new-year to carry out a full review of all the O&S systems.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 7 June 2012**

8. At their first meeting of the year with a new Chairman, the Committee received the Key Objectives Outturn report for 2011/12. The key objectives are adopted annually by the Cabinet are reviewed on a six monthly basis both by Overview and Scrutiny and the Cabinet. We reviewed the key objectives and commented on each one in turn. Our committee expressed concern over the continuing long term nature of some of the projects listed, such as the new depot at Oakwood Hill; the development at North Weald Airfield and the relocation of services from the Langston Road depot

9. We went on to endorse the Overview and Scrutiny Annual report for submission to the July Council meeting and noted the large amount of work that the scrutiny process got through last year. We also agreed the membership of the Standing Panels, the new Task and Finish Panel and agreed our upcoming work programme.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 17 July 2012**

10. At our meeting we heard two call-ins, one on the Pyrles Lane Nursery and one on the Local Plan Consultation.

11. The first call-in was on the outline planning application for the redevelopment of Pyrles Lane Nursery. This was concerned with the perceived lack of consultation with ward members, concern with road safety matters, the perceived pre-empting on the consultation on the new Local Plan and if there had been any cost benefit analysis done. The Committee gave this a through hearing and debate, but in the end did not support the call-in.

12. We next considered the second call-in on the consultation period for the Local Plan 'Statement of Community involvement - issues and options'. The members calling this in considered that the consultation period was not long enough, considering that it ran through the holiday month of August and that the timescale for road shows did not permit sufficient time for informed responses from residents. After a lengthy and detailed debate the Committee agreed to recommend to the Local Plan Cabinet Committee that the consultation period be extended to 12 October 2012, as we agreed that August was a holiday month, it would also allow more time for the road shows and to enable a more detailed debate to be had.

13. We then considered changes to the Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel's Terms of Reference, as they had updated them making them more relevant and ensured that they accurately reflected the activities of the Panel. This we agreed to. We also agreed to minor changes to the membership of the Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Panel.

14. We noted that at our next meeting, in September, we would have a presentation from the Corporation of London on the management of the forest.