

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Committee **Date:** Thursday, 2 March 2006

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

Members Present: Councillors Mrs D Collins (Chairman) Mrs J H Whitehouse (Vice-Chairman) Mrs D Borton, M Colling, P Gode, Mrs A Grigg, F Maclaine, Mrs M Sartin and D Stallan

Other Councillors: Councillors R Morgan, A Lee, Mrs H Harding, Mrs C Pond and J M Whitehouse

Apologies: Councillors K Faulkner and M Woollard

Officers Present: J Scott (Joint Chief Executive), J Akerman (Chief Internal Auditor), D Macnab (Head of Leisure Services), R Barwell (Public Relations and Internet Officer), C Overend (Policy & Research Officer), S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Z Folley (Democratic Services Assistant)

By Invitation: A Adams, T Mitchell and D Morrissey

85. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2006 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the substitution of the word 'violence' by the words 'youth facilities' in the last sentence of minute 80(i) (Work Programme Monitoring – Task and Finish Panel on Externally Funded Leisure and Youth Provision).

86. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The meeting noted that Councillor A Lee was substituting for Councillor K Faulkner.

87. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

88. NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

The Chairman introduced and welcomed Chief Superintendent Adams of the Essex Police, who was in attendance to discuss 'Neighbourhood Policing'. Also present were inspector Denise Morrissey and Inspector Tom Mitchell of the Loughton Division.

Mr Adams stated that in summary Neighbourhood Policing was about identifying and meeting the needs of the local community, implementing a style of policing that was more accountable and visible, and would mean that the community was more of a focus for policing efforts.

He explained the structure of the Western Division of Essex Police covering Epping Forest and recent changes that should benefit the District. He explained that following the restructure the Epping Forest locality was now covered by a District Commander and three inspectors. The changes facilitated the aims of the project and would ensure better cover.

Mr Adams advised that neighbourhood policing comprised a number of key principles. These were either in place or aspirations. The initiative focused on the profile of each neighbourhood to ascertain its needs and had allocated each individual ward with a named support officer that was responsible for delivering the scheme. Mr Adams referred to the types of activities and information gathered through this new approach. He reported on two incidents in Loughton that were successfully identified through the approach and dealt with through the use of new technology including a new surveillance vehicle.

Mr Adams reported that actions were co-ordinated with other agencies including the Council and incorporated within the Local Community Strategy through the work of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. He advised that staff at the division were committed to this approach and keen to ensure it was delivered. There were however some logistical problems arising from the changes.

The initiative had been tested in Waltham Abbey with few problems and would be implemented incrementally across the District.

Reference was made to North Weald. The area had experienced problems with anti social behaviour and there was a desire to see an increased police presence during the evenings. It was reported that additional police transport would be made available in the District, which should increase cover at the area.

In relation to the Grange Hill ward, a member expressed concern about the displacement to the area caused by the Dispersal Orders operating in neighbouring ward. A Member reported that overall the measures were working well in this locality and was reassured about the practice undertaken by some residents of keeping an incident diary. Mr Adams addressed concerns about response times to telephone enquiries. Neighbourhood policing arrangements had dedicated a mobile phone number to particular teams. Proposals for a regional contact centre were being held in abeyance due to the uncertainty around the future structure of the force. A decision would be made once details about the amalgamation had been made available. Any reorganisation should not affect the Neighbourhood Policing Initiative as it was suitable for any structure and would continue in being under any changes.

In relation to Lower Sheering, a member reported that public meetings had been held to consider the crime and disorder issues. As with North Weald this was a rural area which presented communications difficulties and impacted on response times. Mr Adams reassured that the officers designated to this area would focus on dealing with the low level issues in this area and be able to 'elevate them up the chain.'

Mr Adams circulated to the Committee a leaflet publicising the initiative. It was agreed that this document, together with a copy of the presentation be sent to all Members and the clerks of the Parish Councils.

The Chairman thanked the representatives for attending the meeting and their informative presentation.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Mr Adams of Essex Police be thanked for his presentation on the Neighbourhood Policing Initiative;
- (2) That a copy of the distributed leaflet and presentation be circulated to all Members and the Town and Parish Clerks; and
- (3) That Mr Adams be invited back to a later meeting to report on progress with the initiative

89. WORK PROGRAMME MONITORING

The Committee received progress reports on the current work of the various Standing Panels.

(a) Constitutional Affairs

The Chairman of the Panel, Councillor R Morgan, reported that the Panel had last met on 20 February. The Panel had reviewed the current structure of the Area Plans Committees to see whether they should be restructured in any way to even out the membership and level of work. The Panel identified a number of options for further investigation at the next meeting. The Panel undertook further work on their review of Council meetings and received a progress report from the Head of Research and Democratic Services on the Electoral Pilot and Electoral Administration Bill. The Panel considered and endorsed a pack designed to give prospective councillors a greater knowledge on the role and had requested a full paper on the provision of support for Councillors who might be the subject of an investigation. They considered a request to revise the Civic Protocol and recommended no changes be made.

(b) Environmental and Planning Services

The Chairman of the Panel, Councillor D Stallan reported that the Panel had last met on 28 February 2006. The Panel considered further the Examination in Public for the East of England Plan. They received a debrief from the former Head of Planning Services, Ivan Le Gallais on the sessions held on 13 and 14 February 2006 on matters affecting the District.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that at its last meeting, the Committee added to the Panels work plan the task of responding to the government consultation document entitled 'England's Waste Strategy'. He drew attention to the timescale involved and stated that two meetings on the 28 March and 13 April 2006 had been arranged for this. The Chairman asked the Committee to allow the Panel to respond directly to the document. It was agreed that an item be placed in the Members Bulletin to invite Members to submit comments on the document which was placed in the Members Room and a general invitation to attend to the meetings to express their views.

(c) Finance and Performance Management

The Chairman of the Panel, Councillor J M Whitehouse reported on the current work of the Panel which had last met on the 7 February 2006. The Panel had considered quarterly monitoring data and paid particular attention to those areas that were uncertain to meet their targets. They recognised the good performance of the

licensing section given that it had managed to process all of the licensing applications received within the relevant statutory deadline. The next meeting would consider whether the current list of Key Performance Indicators should be altered. The Panel gave further consideration to the budget and made a number of conclusions on the impact of the under spend on the salaries budget, the shortfall of income from local land charges, the higher than budgeted income from North Weald Airfield and the overspends on concessionary fares and black refuse sacks.

(d) 2006/07 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

The Senior Democratic Services Officers reported that the next meeting on the 16 March 2006 would be asked to give preliminary consideration to next years work programme. To date three new requests had been submitted for inclusion. He referred to the emerging Council Plan and suggested that the Committee might wish to allocate time to reviewing some of the key aims in this. The meeting was also to receive a presentation from London Underground Ltd. Members were invited to bring forward questions in advance of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Environmental and Planning Services Standing Panel be authorised to make a direct response to the consultation document 'England's Waste Strategy'

90. REPORT OF THE TASK AND FINISH PANEL ON EXTERNALLY FUNDED LEISURE SERVICES AND YOUTH PROVISION

The Chairman of the Task and Finish Panel, Councillor Mrs A Grigg presented the recommendations of the Panel on its review of youth provision in the District and external funding for leisure and cultural projects. The Panel had set out to review current provision for young people to identify future needs and how these could be met by the various agencies involved in service delivery. She reported that during the course of the review the Panel had paid two visits to voluntary sector youth clubs in the District and considered the work being carried out by numerous voluntary organisations in the area. The Panel concluded that the Council should become an increasingly active partner in the provision of youth services and that further provision should be made in the grant aid budget to realise this.

The Panel also received a paper providing details on the sources of external income secured by Leisure over recent years and a proposal by the Leader of the Council to provide £50,000 of additional funding as part of the next years budget. The Panel thought it would be premature to submit this request for this years budget and asked for a further report to developed on the options for Cabinet. It was noted that the Committee had previously considered a similar although separate bid for grant aid funding for youth provision in the District.

The Head of Leisure Services referred to the work undertaken by the Panel on the monitoring arrangements for the alternative leisure management contract. The recommended monitoring arrangements were now in place. The first meeting of Contract Monitoring Board would meet in March 2006 to consider performance to date.

The Portfolio Holder explained the timescale for progressing the proposals. She reported that this was the last year of the present three year service level agreement for grant aid support. She also explained the process for submitting and considering

new bids and that the present set of agreements would be considered in due course and would take into account any new projects.

Attention was drawn to the format of the report. It was emphasised that final reports of Task and Finish Panels should set out at the beginning their terms of reference and state how these had been achieved.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the work undertaken by the Panel on youth provision in the District be noted;
- (2i) That whilst the Panel recognised the value of the current level of financial support, the Community Wellbeing Portfolio be asked to consider making further provision in the Grant Aid Budget, for the District Council to become an active partner in the provision of voluntary sector/joint funded youth initiatives;
- (2ii) That the Council continues to offer professional advice and support to youth organisations to assist in their development;
- (3) That the Head of Leisure Services be asked to submit a report to the Cabinet for the enhancement of youth provision during 2006/07 including a request for a supplementary estimate;
- (4) That the completion by the Panel of its terms of reference be noted;and
- (5) That the following topics identified for future scrutiny review be submitted for inclusion in the 2006/07 Overview and Scrutiny Work Plan:
 - (a) Review of Arts Development and Community/Major Events
 - (b) Future Management Arrangements at Waltham Abbey Sports Centre

91. AUDIT PLAN 2006-07

The Chief Internal Auditor presented the draft internal Audit Plan for 2006/07.

The plan had been submitted to all Members and would be considered by the Finance and Performance Management Committee and the Cabinet in April 2006.

The Chief Internal Auditor reported that following views expressed by the Members last year, attached to the plan was information providing comparative benchmarking information. The Committee considered each section covering information on the work of the Audit, the internal Audit at the Council, the planning process and the work planned.

The Chief Internal Auditor outlined the aims and provisions in the strategy. He drew attention to the audit planning process as detailed in section 3 of the report. He advised on the work undertaken to complete the plan and set the context. He reported the factors used in determining the planned days allocated, the work planned for 2006/07 and how the programme would be prioritised. He advised that there was provision for investigation work, advice/assistance on new initiatives and flexibility so that audits could be substituted to accommodate reviews that were of greater risk to the Council's objectives. The Business Plan included an explanation of

the role of the Internal Audit, the background to how audits were planned, resourced and carried out.

In relation to contract delivery it was reported that the plan incorporated reviews of the waste management contract and the new Leisure contract.

The Chairman also requested that the time spent on Finance Audits be kept under review, given that the Council spent more time on some of these audits than other Authorities.

The Committee were also asked whether they wished to continue to undertake the task of scrutinising the annual audit plan or whether the task should be delegated to the Finance and Performance Standing Panel for consideration.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Draft Internal Audit Plan for 2006/07 be noted and endorsed;
- (2) That the task of scrutinising the plan for future years be delegated to the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel.

92. CABINET REVIEW

The Committee considered the Cabinet agenda for the next meeting on 6 March 2006. The Chairman undertook to report on item (8) - Planning Enforcement - Birchfield, Epping Lane, Stapleford Tawney.

CHAIRMAN

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