

Report to Council

Date of meeting: 30 July 2013

Subject: Overview and Scrutiny report to Council – July 2013

Chairman: Councillor Richard Morgan



Recommendation:

That the Overview and Scrutiny progress report from June 2013 to the present be noted.

Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 4 June 2013

1. At our first meeting of the year, we received a presentation from Jenny Boyd the Director of Local Delivery West, Children's Social Care at Essex County Council. She spoke mainly on Corporate Parenting and the role councillors could play in spotting problems and making decisions with the welfare of disadvantaged children always in mind. We spent some time questioning her on children's services in our area and published the informative slides that she used in her presentation in the Council Bulletin.
2. We then considered the final report of the Senior Recruitment Review Task and Finish Panel. The Panel undertook a review of the recruitment processes and recommended modifications to future processes. The recommendations were agreed by the committee and the report went to the May Council meeting.
3. Next we considered the final draft of our annual report, which is on the agenda for this meeting. We also agreed the membership and chairmanship of the various Standing Panels and the remaining Task and Finish Panel for the year and noted the update of Overview and Scrutiny Review Task and Finish Panel noting their draft recommendations made so far.
4. Finally at this meeting we agreed to receive a presentation from the Citizen Advice Bureau during this new municipal year. We asked the Housing Services Standing Panel to look at unauthorised parking on grass verges and to look at the difficulties our Council encountered when improving Communal areas of flat blocks. We also asked the Constitution and Member Services Standing Panel to undertake a review of the process for the nomination and appointment of the Vice Chairman of Council.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting - 16 July 2013

5. At the 16 July meeting, we received a presentation from John Houston, the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Manager. He took us through the LSP's work over the last year and some of the work they had lined up for the coming year. He tabled their draft annual report, noting that it would only be published via the internet on their website. They were currently concentrating on tourism in the district and had set up a tourism taskforce to look into the concerns and possible solutions for increasing the number of visitors to our district. As part of this they had set up the One Epping Forest Tourism website. They were also looking at local businesses and how they could be helped in these difficult times.

6. Other topics they were looking at were health and wellbeing and new partnership structures that could be established or strengthened to increase the efficiency of working in our area. They were also looking at the future role for glasshouses and green agriculture jointly with Enfield and Broxbourne councils.

7. We were then taken through the current Crossrail2 Consultation. The consultation had been considered by the Planning Scrutiny Standing Panel when they had proposed several responses that were detailed in the report. Our Committee agreed their comments and added that they supported the West Anglia route; they would also like some mention of improvements to car parking in our area if the rail services were to be improved and more commuters were to be attracted into our district. The Committee also noted the consultants report drawing attention to the current limits on the capacity of the Central Line and emphasised the need for continued investment in the Central Line coming into Epping and the need to get the Central Line attached to the Crossrail2 project to ensure continued investment.

8. We then considered and noted the Corporate Plan Key Objectives for 2012/13 and agreed an amendment to the Terms of Reference for the Housing Standing Panel.

9. We considered a report of the Constitution and Member Services Standing Panel on the employment procedure rules covering the recruitment and appointment of staff, redundancies, dismissals and disciplinary action. The committee agreed the recommendations proposed and this report is now on your agenda for final approval.

10. We agreed another report from the Constitution and Member Services Standing Panel on the convention on the working relationships between political groups and officers; this report is also on your agenda for approval. And finally we also noted the annual review of the elections that happened in May and any problems that had been reported during this period.