

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW TASK AND FINISH
PANEL
HELD ON MONDAY, 8 JULY 2013
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.00 - 8.40 PM

Members Present: K Angold-Stephens (Chairman), , Mrs J Lea, J Philip, Mrs M Sartin and Mrs J H Whitehouse

Other members present:

Apologies for Absence: Mrs A Grigg (Asset Management and Economic Development Portfolio Holder) and D Stallan (Housing Portfolio Holder)

Officers Present I Willett (Assistant to the Chief Executive), S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

1. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

It was noted that Councillor J Philip was substituting for Councillor A Grigg and Councillor J Lea was substituting for Councillor Stallan.

2. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The notes of the meeting held on 20 May 2013 were agreed subject to:

- Minute item 32, the first agreed point should read “that these steps to go to the Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel meetings...”.
And
- Minute item 34 under the first agreed point, third bullet point, to be clarified by saying that officers were to turn public suggestions into a PICK form so that they could be considered by the Committee. And the last bullet point on synchronising the Council’s rules about members of the public speaking at committee meetings - this should be referred to the Constitution and Member Services Standing Panel for their consideration.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest pursuant to the Council’s Code of Member Conduct.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Panel noted their Terms of Reference.

5. FEEDBACK FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON 20 MAY 2013

The Panel noted the comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20 May 2013 when they considered the latest interim recommendations of this Panel for any comments they would wish to make.

The Panel thought that under 3(c) an indicative timescale should be added. It should say a review to be held after 6 or 12 months.

The Committee considered the comments on the O&S work programme. Under Item 3(d) the Panel clarified that the proposed officer OSAPG steering group would initially consider any requests from the public and if appropriate would turn the request into a PICK document for consideration by the O&S Committee. They would also weed out topics that were inappropriate for consideration by the O&S.

A query was raised under 3(f), should the training on budget scrutiny be held before September as it appears the budget setting process started before then. It was agreed that the Director of Finance should be consulted on the most appropriate time to hold this type of training.

The Committee considered the proposals on call-ins (item 5(f) of the report) and asked if a call-in was withdrawn, would it still be reported to the O&S Committee? The Panel agreed that it would have to be reported back to the Committee saying why it had been withdrawn and what if any, changes had been made to the report in question.

They also asked if (under item 5(g)) this proposal meant that only the lead member of the call-in could speak to a call-in and would the other signatories be excluded? The Panel clarified by saying that the lead call-in member would speak first, followed by the Portfolio Holder. This would be followed by the other four signatories being given a chance to speak with the Portfolio Holder being given the chance to reply. It would then be opened up to a general discussion by the committee. If there were more than 5 signatories to a call-in then this initial chance to speak should be limited to the first five on the list. The other signatories would have a chance to join in during the general discussion.

The wording on 6(a) (Scrutiny of External Organisations) to be changed so that it read "...and when making presentations and responding to questions following a presentation."

The Committee queried the proposed new seating arrangements and if it was suitable for call-ins. They agreed that the Portfolio Holder and the appropriate Director should be sat together and this should be put into the recommendations. This should also be put into section 5 on call-ins.

Under 6(d) preparation for questioning the Panel noted that the committee needed to prepare their questions thoroughly. There needed to be the facility for a questioner to respond to any answers that they received by virtue of a supplementary question and to urge the Chairman to let questioners come back with a further supplementary question on any answers given.

The Panel also said that the O&S Committee needed to be more selective on who they saw and to be sure that they really wanted to see them. They noted that proper scrutiny needed more time to be carried out. It may be that members ask appropriate

officers what they would like to ask as they would have the most in depth knowledge and be able to steer members to cover appropriate topics.

Under 6(e) on follow up reporting by organisations, the committee should announce the next presentation at the previous meeting to enable the committee members to have a short discussion on the presentation, maybe prepare some questions in advance and also define what they specifically want the presentation to be about. The Panel agreed that where relevant the appropriate officers should be asked to attend the pre-meeting briefing to sharpen up members questions.

Under Finance/Budget Scrutiny heading under 7(e), the words "if relevant" should be added at the end of the sentence.

Under section 8(b) red and amber KPIs to be referred to an appropriate Standing Panel – it was noted that all the KPIs should go to the Finance and Performance Management SP as it was specifically concerned with looking at the Performance of the Council. However, there was no reason why the red and amber KPIs should not also be referred to the appropriate Standing Panel.

The Panel enlarged on 9(b) on allowing the public an opportunity to ask questions at the OSC. They agreed that if a member of the public raised a topic that was relevant for the Committee or one of the Standing Panels to consider then it should go the next meeting of the O&S Committee for them to consider it. Topics raised that were not relevant should be rejected. Officers should sift all requests received from the public as they came in and put any relevant public requests on to a PICK form before they went to an O&S Committee meeting for consideration.

6. CONSULTATION WITH THE AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Assistant to the Chief Executive, Ian Willett noted that the Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee had requested that his group be afforded the opportunity to review this Panel's proposals. They had received a copy of the draft recommendations on 27 June and had been satisfied that a robust review was in progress. They would also like to consider this Panel's final recommendations and to this end, the Audit and Governance Committee would be treated as consultee once a draft final report had been produced.

7. POLICE & CRIME SCRUTINY

The Panel noted that we already have a good link with the Community Safety Partnership on Crime and Disorder matters via the Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Panel. They noted that the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had attended a recent SCG Standing Panel meeting, in February this year, which was opened out to all members, Town and Parish Councillors and members of the public to attend and ask questions. This had proved very successful. They noted that the PCC also wanted to hold two public meetings a year in our district and we had facilitated his first one, held in May this year, by allowing him to hold it in our Council Chamber.

8. NHS SCRUTINY

The Panel noted that Health Scrutiny was a County function. However, they would not be adverse for us to undertake local health scrutiny on local matters. As a district we border the London Health District which our resident would probably use more

than our local services. If County gives us authority to carry out any particular health scrutiny then the most logical place this could go to would be to the Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Panel.

If members wanted to raise a specific health matter that they would like scrutinised then, as always, they could fill in a PICK form. Officers would have to ask county if as a District we could consider it. We should use a dual hatted District/County Councillor as our link to County on health scrutiny (e.g. Councillor Gadsby in 2013/14). Ideally the Councillor should be the District/County Councillor on the counties health scrutiny committee.

Members of the Panel asked if Officers could write to County to see if they were content with this proposed arrangement on possible future health scrutiny.

9. CONSULTATION

The Panel agreed that a draft final report should be written and the recommendations circulated for comment to all Councillors, Management Board and the Audit and Governance Committee.

10. DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee Secretary to consult with members on possible dates for their next meeting.