

Report to Council

Date of meeting: 26 September 2006

Subject: OS report to Council – September 2006

Officer contact for further information: Cllr R Morgan

Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry, ext.4246



Recommendation:

That the Overview and Scrutiny progress report be noted.

Report.

This is the first report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to Council for the year 2006/07 under the new arrangements as recommended by the O&S review committee at the end of the last municipal year.

The O&S Committee agreed to the setting up of 5 Standing Panels this year and 5 new Task and Finish Panels. The Travellers Task and Finish Panel convened last year carried on into this municipal year and concluded in July 2006. The Standing Panels each have a rolling programme that consider ongoing cyclical issues and are comprised of the Housing Standing Panel under the Chairmanship of Councillor S Murray; the Constitutional and Members Services Standing Panel chaired by Councillor R Morgan; the Customer Services and ICT panel chaired by Councillor Mrs McEwen; the Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel chaired by Councillor Jon Whitehouse; and the Environment and Planning Standing Panel chaired by Councillor Mrs Smith.

The five newly formed Task and Finish Panels are:

(i) The Leisure Task and Finish Panel, chaired by Councillor Mrs Harding, looking at the Future Management of the Waltham Abbey Sports Centre; a review of the future Management of the Roding Valley Meadows local Nature Reserve; a review of Arts Development in the District; and a review of The District Council's Role and involvement in Outdoor and Community Events.

(ii) The Town Centre and Car Parks Task and Finish Panel chaired by Councillor M Colling, looking at what type of Town Centre we would like to encourage within the district and we could assist and encourage the economies and growth of our town centres and development of the new car parking enforcement contract and the development and future use of car parks.

(iii) The Crime and Disorder Task and Finish Panel, chaired by Councillor M Cohen, considering:

- the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) and its effect on Scrutiny in EFDC and how it could be improved;
- the involvement of Overview and Scrutiny in the new 'Scrutiny Plus' arrangements to be conducted with other partner agencies;
- the proposal for a 'Community Call for Action' and its implications for EFDC Scrutiny; and

- the role of EFDCs Crime Reduction Team and the resources available to it.

(iv) The Local Strategic Partnership Task and Finish Panel, chaired by Councillor Mrs Sartin. Their remit is to consider the set up and operation of the Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership and formulate recommendations on its future in light of the government consultation paper 'Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their Future' and the Local Government White Paper expected in November 2006.

(v) Services for Older People and Disabled Task and Finish Panel, chaired by Councillor Mrs Perry considering the services offered by EFDC to older people and disabled people (of all ages); and to consider the services offered by the voluntary sector to older people and disabled people in the district.

All these Task and Finish Panels hope to report by January or February next year.

The main Committee have so far received presentations from the Principal of Epping Forest College, have scrutinised the merger proposals with Essex police, have considered the draft Council Plan 2006-2010, have received a presentation from the local commissioner for Children and Young Peoples Services for the District and also scrutinised the Cabinet Forward Plan for the next year in August 2006.

So far this year, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has met 3 times, the Standing Panels have met 11 times and the Task and Finish Panels have met 9 times.

This year we have implemented a training regime for councillors by an outside consultant who primed the councillors on how to run scrutiny, ask relevant questions and probe deeper into issues that affect the Council and the wider community as a whole. This will, we are confident, lead to a more professional and comprehensive examination of the areas we are asked to scrutinise.