

# **Report to Council**

**Date of meeting: 19 December 2006**

**Subject: OS report to Council – December 2006**

**Officer contact for further information: Cllr R Morgan**

**Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry, ext.4246**

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## **Recommendation:**

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

## **Report.**

At the start of the year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to the setting up of 5 Standing Panels this year and 5 new Task and Finish Panels. 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.

An Overview and Scrutiny progress report was submitted to Council in September 2006 and this is the second report.

## **Task and Finish Panels:**

(i) The Leisure Task and Finish Panel, chaired by Councillor Mrs Harding is 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, the Panel hopes to get a finished report out for these two topics by the end of January 2007.

A review of Arts Development in the District; and a review of The District Council's Role and involvement in Outdoor and Community Events, for which the Panel hopes to have a final report by February-March 2007.

Recently the Leisure Task and Finish panel has visited Theatre Resources, Ongar Arts and Education Centre in Chipping Ongar where they given a presentation on Theatre Resources various operations in the District and County.

(ii) The Town Centre and Car Parks Task and Finish Panel chaired by Councillor M Colling is 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.

The panel recently considered a report from Bidwells (Planning and Economic Development Consultants) who were appointed to investigate the development potential of the following five sites: Bakers Lane, Church Hill, Loughton Cornmill, Waltham Abbey, Burton Road, Loughton, Queens Road, Buckhurst Hill. The Panel will be making their recommendations

arising from this to the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the near future.

(iii) The Crime and Disorder Task and Finish Panel, chaired by Councillor M Cohen is 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 EFDC's Crime Reduction Team and the resources available to it.

The Panel has recently consulted with the Police, the Director of Public Health, the Lead Commissioner for Mental Health from the West Essex Primary Care Trust and an Associate Director from the North Essex Mental Health Partnership Trust who specialises in the criminal aspects of mental health.

(iv) The Local Strategic Partnership Task and Finish Panel, is 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.

The Panel recently received a presentation from the Community Planning and Regeneration, Essex CC and has sent one of its members to an LSP training session run by the East of England Assembly.

(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.

After reviewing the current situation in the district and carrying out various visits to gather information, this Panel is currently writing its final report, which should be completed in January.

All these Task and Finish Panels hope to have finished reports by January or February next year.

### **The Main Overview and Scrutiny Committee:**

The main Committee have recently received:

- a presentation from the Waltham Forest Primary Care Trust and the West Essex PCT on the "Fit for the Future" review of the Health Services. Following this, the Council has been approached by Havering Borough Council seeking our involvement in a joint Scrutiny Committee that the four North East London Authorities are establishing in the New Year to review proposals for future options. A report on this issue appears elsewhere on this agenda; and
- a progress report and presentation from Harlow Police on the Neighbourhood Policing Initiative.

The committee has also considered a report on the Cabinet Quorum rules and on Civic Ceremonials procedures.

So far this year, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has met 6 times.

### **Five Standing Panels**

The five Standing Panel are busily ploughing through their crowded rolling programme of work and are meeting on a bi monthly rota. Some Panels such as the Constitutional and Member Services Panel and the Finance and Performance Management have had to convene sub-committees of members to consider some of the more involved aspects of their work programme separately, and to report back to the main Panel with their findings.

At their recent meeting the standing Panels considered the following topics.

Housing Standing Panel – met on 31 October 2006, when it considered the Housing Service Strategy on Empty Council Dwellings; the Epping Forest Local Supporting People Strategy 2006-2010 (progress report); the Housing allocation Scheme; the Housing Service Strategy on Equality and Diversity and an update on Choice Based Lettings.

Constitutional and Members Service Standing Panel – met on 6 November 2006 when it considered the review of the Structure of the Area Plans Sub-Committees and the proposed formation of the Audit and Governance Committee. This Panel has also been reviewing the Area Planning Subcommittees and has concluded recently that no change should be made to the current structure of four Subcommittees.

Customer Services and ICT Standing Panel – met on 27 November 2006 when it considered the Corporate Contact Centre and the Webcasting Pilot.

Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel – met on 14 November 2006 when it considered the quarterly KPI monitoring reports; the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Improvement Plan; the Essex Local Area Agreement; the Quarterly Financial Monitoring figures; Fees and Charges for 2007/08; the consultation Plan for 2006/07; the Value for Money Analysis; the Evaluation of Recruitment and Retention Strategy; and a report on Local Land Charges.

Environmental and Planning Standing Panel – met on 30 October 2006 when it considered Community Street Wardens; the minutes of the Essex County Joint Waste Procurement Process; and Planning and Economic Development Enforcement Statistics.