

Report to Council

Date of meeting: 24 April 2007

Subject: OS report to Council – April 2007

Officer contact for further information: Cllr R Morgan

Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry, ext.4246



Recommendation:

That the Overview and Scrutiny progress report from March 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 and 5 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 February 2007.

The Main Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Since my last report to Council the main Committee have received:

- A presentation from Ms Lonica Vanclay, the local Commissioner for Children's and Young People's Services, who gave another updating report on the development and commissioning of Children's and Young Person's services in the District.
- A report from the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee on Council Budgets for 2007/08 and forecasts.
- A review from the Constitutional and Members Services Standing Panel on Contract Standing Orders and Financial Delegation.
- A presentation from Davina Millership, the Area Highways Manager from the County's Highways Service who gave a presentation and conducted a question and answer session on local highways issues.
- They received a report from the Head of Environmental Services and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Civil Engineering and Maintenance on the provision of regular reviews on the free parking on Saturdays recently instituted.
- The Committee also considered and agreed their annual report, which appears elsewhere on this agenda for your consideration.

So far this year, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has met 8 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 are to report back to the main Panel with their findings.

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

Housing Standing Panel – last met on 30 January 2007, when it received a verbal update on Choice Based Lettings, considered the Housemark Benchmarking Report on EFDC Housing Service 2005/06, the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2006/07, a report on the Tri-annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2006, the recovery of arrears from Leaseholders report and the Private Sector Housing Strategy – Housing assistance Policy 2006. They are due to meet for one last time this year on 21 April 2007.

Constitutional and Members Service Standing Panel – met on 2 April 2007 when it considered the review of Financial regulations following detailed consideration by an officer working party, a new protocol for new questions time arrangements and for questions without notice at Council meetings.

Customer Services and ICT Standing Panel – met on 19 April 2007 when it considered the Corporate Contact Centre progress report. This Standing Panel will be wound up at the end of this municipal year due to lack of work, and its remaining work put to other Panels

Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel – met on 12 April 2007 when it considered the Quarter 3 KPIs monitoring statistics, the BVPP Summary for 2007/08, the Council Plan/ Local Area Agreement on performance monitoring arrangements, the draft internal Audit Plan for 2007/08 and a quarterly Financial Monitoring Report.

Environmental and Planning Standing Panel – met on 16 January 2007 when it considered the Draft East of England Plan – Government Proposals. It is not due to meet again until 26 April 2007.

Task and Finish Panels

(i) The Leisure Task and Finish Panel, chaired by Councillor Mrs Harding looked 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 the District Council's role and involvement in Outdoor and Community Events. The Panel presented a finished report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5 April 2007 and also to the Cabinet on 16 April 2007.

(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 and will be asking for an extension of their deadline into the new municipal year.

(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. The Panel received a presentation from the Youth Offending Team and the Probation Service on 15 March 2007. They are hoping to draw their panel to a close very shortly but might not meet the end of the year deadline.

(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. The Panel presented their final report to the Committee on 8 March and to Cabinet on 16 April 2007.

(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, the Panel presented its final report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5 April 2007.