

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT: MUNICIPAL YEAR 2017/2018

Introduction and Welcome from the Chairman

Welcome to the thirteenth annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Structure of Epping Forest District Council and my second year as Chairman.

This was the third year of our new O&S set up using Select Committees to break down our work by Directorate. This year we re-established the four Select Committees aligned with the Directorate structure.

As always, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Select Committees were charged with reviewing Cabinet decisions, the Corporate Strategy, the Council's financial performance and also scrutinising the performance of the public bodies active in the District by inviting reports and presentations from them. Also, for the first time this year we started looking at the Council's Transformation Programme, designed to take the Council into future years

At the beginning of the 2017/18 municipal year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to the setting up of one Task and Finish Panel to review how we were to scrutinise the Transformation Programme.

During the year we received presentations from outside bodies including the Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust, Barts Health NHS Trust, Transport for London, Epping Forest College and the East of England Ambulance Service.

This past year we have looked at two of our neighbouring NHS hospitals quite closely even though strictly speaking the County Council has jurisdiction in the scrutinising of health services. This was because of the problems reported by the Care Quality Commission and the concerns raised by our residents. With the County's blessing we have had the two NHS Trusts in to update us on their problems and have found them to be working hard towards remedying their situations.

My thanks go to the Chairmen and members of the four Select Committees and the Task and Finish Panel; also, my special thanks go to my Vice-Chairman, Councillor R Brookes for all her help and support through the year.

And of course, I would like to thank all the officers that have worked so hard to keep the Committee members informed and supplied with the background information that they needed to carry out their investigations.

Cllr Mary Sartin

Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

What is Scrutiny?

- Scrutiny in local government is the mechanism by which public accountability is exercised.
- The purpose of scrutiny in practice is to examine, question and evaluate in order to achieve improvement.
- The value of scrutiny is in the use of research and questioning techniques to make recommendations based on evidence.
- Scrutiny enables issues of public concerns to be examined.
- At the heart of all the work is consideration of what impact the Cabinet's plans will have on the local community.
- However, the overview and scrutiny function is not meant to be confrontational or seen as deliberately set up to form an opposition to the Cabinet. Rather the two aspects should be regarded as 'different sides of the same coin'. The two should complement each other and work in tandem to contribute to the development of the authority.

Alongside its role to challenge, the scrutiny function has also continued to engage positively with the Cabinet and there continues to be cross party co-operation between members on all panels.

Scrutiny has continued to provide valuable contributions to the Council and the Cabinet remained receptive to ideas put forward by Scrutiny throughout the year.

The rules of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee also allow members of the public to have the opportunity to address the Committee on any agenda item.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee coordinated with the Cabinet and pre scrutinised their Forward Plan of Key Decision on a meeting by meeting basis. This acted as a troubleshooting exercise, unearthing problems before they arose. It also gave the Cabinet a chance to ask Overview and Scrutiny to look at any items of work that they thought needed either scrutiny or pre-scrutiny.

The Committee also engaged with external bodies in order to scrutinise parts of their work that encroached on the District and its people. They also received stand alone reports from officers and reports from the Select Committees on the work they carried out during the year.

Select Committees

A lead Officer was appointed to each Select Committee to facilitate its process. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the terms of reference for each of the Committees on the basis of a rolling programme to consider ongoing and cyclical issues. Four Select Committees were established, dealing with:

- i. Communities,
- ii. Governance,
- iii. Neighbourhoods, and
- iv. Resources.

The Select Committees reported regularly to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress with the work they were carrying out.

Task and Finish Panels

The Task and Finish reviews are restricted to dealing with activities which are issue based, time limited, non-cyclical and with clearly defined objectives on which they would report, once completed, to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

One Task and Finish Panel was established to review the Council's Transformation Programme and to establish what Scrutiny would need to keep an eye on in the next few years.