

Overview and Scrutiny

**Annual Report for
2018-2019**

INTRODUCTION

PAGE

Introduction and Welcome

What is Scrutiny

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Select Committees

Task and Finish Panels

COMMITTEES

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee

SELECT COMMITTEES

Communities Select Committee

Governance Select Committee

Resources Select Committee

Neighbourhoods Select Committee

TASK AND FINISH PANELS

Overview and Scrutiny Framework Task and Finish Panel

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT: MUNICIPAL YEAR 2018/2019

Introduction and Welcome from the Chairman

Welcome, this is the fourteenth annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Epping Forest District Council.

The report provides information on the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the four Select Committees and any time limited Task and Finish Panels that have occurred over the past municipal year.

This was the fourth year that the Select Committees had been broken down into directorates which consisted of Communities, Governance, Resources and Neighbourhoods. As always, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Select Committees were charged with reviewing Cabinet decisions, the Corporate Strategy and the Council's financial performance.

Following the progression of the People Strategy, the management structure and individual portfolio holder's responsibilities were reorganised. This also gave an opportunity for the overview and scrutiny framework to be reconsidered, to reflect this structure. With this in mind, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee set up a task and finish panel to consider the options available.

The task and finish panel considered proposals that would complement the new executive and a management structure and concluded that the select commitments could occur in line with the Council's adopted corporate aims; Stronger Council, Stronger Place and Stronger People for 2019/20 municipal year.

The Committee also scrutinised the performance of the public bodies that were active in the district, by inviting them to present to the committee. During the year we had received presentations from outside bodies including Citizen's Advice – Epping Forest District, Manchester Airport Group - Stansted Airport and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership.

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 Jennings for all his 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 achieve improvement through examining, questioning and evaluating.
- 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' and should complement each other, working 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 continues the 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 uses the Forward Plan of Key Decisions to consider the Cabinet's future decisions, to draw out any problems or concerns. 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 to scrutinise parts of their work that encroached on the District and its people. They also received stand-alone reports from officers and the Select Committees on the work they carried out during the year.

Select Committees

The terms of reference for each Select Committee were agreed each year by the O&S Committee, to establish a rolling programme of ongoing and cyclical issues. A Lead Officer was appointed to each Select Committee to help facilitate the process.

The four Select Committees were;

- (i) Communities;
- (ii) Governance;
- (iii) Neighbourhoods; and
- (iv) Resources.

The Select Committees reported regularly to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on their progress and work carried out.

Task and Finish Panels

The Task and Finish Panels 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 had been established in 2018/19, to review the Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee Framework, realigning the Select Committees to the Councils three corporate ambitions Stronger Communities, Stronger Place and Stronger Council.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee consisted of the following members:

Councillor M. Sartin (Chairman)

Councillor R. Jennings (Vice Chairman)

Councillors R. Baldwin, N. Bedford, P. Bolton, L. Burrows, D. Dorrell, S. Heather, J. Lea, A. Mitchell, S. Murray, S. Neville, A. Patel, P. Stalker, H Whitbread J.H. Whitehouse and D Wixley.

The lead officer was Derek Macnab, Acting Chief Executive.

Terms of Reference

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's main functions were to monitor and scrutinise;

- the work of the executive and its forward plan;
- external bodies linked to the District Council; and
- the Council's financial performance.

It also considered call-ins, policy development, performance monitoring and reviews the corporate strategies.

The Committee's workload over the past year can be broken down as follows:

(a) Scrutinising and monitoring cabinet work

The Committee can have a proactive role in this area through carrying out pre-scrutiny work on decisions set out in the Cabinet's forward plan of Key Decisions, which was considered at each meeting.

(b) Call-ins

The Committee had received one call-in this year, in reference to the Cabinet Decision C-024-2018/19, Accommodation Strategy which was determined on 10 December 2018.

The matter was considered at an informal meeting which was convened in accordance with the procedure for the 'withdrawal or modification of a call-in' contained in the Council's Constitution.

At this informal meeting, the lead signatory of the call-in was provided with the reassurances that the necessary due diligence would be undertaken at all stages in the process and that the decision would only enable the first stages of the Accommodation Strategy to progress. Officers would also keep members regularly updated on the various progress and outcomes of the strategy. Following the meeting the lead signatory of the call-in confirmed on behalf of the call-in signatories that the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could treat the call-in as withdrawn.

(c) *Select Committees work programme monitoring*

The Committee received regular updates from the Chairmen of the four Select Committees, who reported on the progress made on their current work programme. This enabled the Committee to monitor their performance and if necessary adjust their work plans to consider any new proposals and urgent items.

(d) *Items considered by the committee this year*

Over the year, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had received various presentations and considered a range of diverse topics.

Presentations included:

(i) The Essex County Council (Passenger Transport) – The Committee had wished to undertake external scrutiny of the support provided for local bus services operating across the Epping Forest District by Essex County Council. The County Council Portfolio Holder for Education, Skills and Passenger Transport was unable to attend the meeting but responded in writing to the relevant questions put by members.

(ii) West Essex and Eastern Hertfordshire Digital Innovation Zone – (now known as Herts and Essex DIZ) The Economic Development Officer, One Epping Forest Officer and the Technology and Support Services Portfolio Holder gave a presentation on the Digital Innovation Zone and investment in superfast broadband network across the District.

Following the Government's Industrial Strategy for Digital Innovation, funding had been obtained for superfast broadband connection to rural communities within the District. The Cabinet's aim had been, to be the best-connected authority in Essex with a total of 99.7% households achieved. The Council aimed to collaborate with other authorities and public-sector organisations involved in the Digital Innovation Zone, to benefit the Districts residents.

(iii) Citizens Advice (CA) (Epping Forest District) - The CA had been invited to discuss the service they provided throughout the District, in person or by telephone at their three offices based in Loughton Library, Waltham Abbey Town Hall and Hemnall Street, Epping and the two additional outreach services at Limes farm, Chigwell and Ongar Library.

The provision of free, confidential, independent and impartial advice, prevented residents suffering from a lack of knowledge of rights and responsibilities with issues such as benefits, debt management, housing, employment, relationships, legal matters and financial services. The CA advised that their objectives within Service Level Agreement with EFDC did not necessarily match the core work of the CA and that better collaboration could develop a quality service together.

(iv) Manchester Airport Group (MAG) Stansted Airport - The MAG were invited to discuss the local provision of services at Stansted Airport and specific issues raised by members.

These included the planned expansion and associated infrastructure requirements; future capacity and infrastructure which would arise from the significant planned housing developments across Essex; provision of employment opportunities for local residents; the handling of increased passenger numbers; opportunities for partnership working with further education facilities in the District; improvements to the existing railway infrastructure serving the airport; and associated high costs of taxi services at the airport.

(v) Council's People Strategy – The Strategic Director, G Blakemore updated members on the People Strategy. This consisted of five work streams which included Developing

Leadership, Developing the Organisation, Developing Skills & Capacity, Resourcing the Council and Pay, Grading & Benefits. The aim was to define clear accountability for decision making and responsibilities across the Council and to provide a common operating model between the customer, business and the specialist/technical.

(vi) Youth Council – The Youth Council presented their annual report which provided an overview of the events, activities, project work and achievements they have been involved since their election in 2018.

The Youth Councillors advised that to ensure they were considering relevant priorities, they consulted with their peers, which revealed that the five top issues of concern were; Skills for Work; Mental Health; Bullying; Drug Misuse; and Gangs. These issues were used as a starting point for their project work.

Furthermore, the Youth Council used social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and had been involved in many consultations with external organisations. They had received grants and awards of £4830 from external funding and had chosen to support Cardiac Risk in the Young (CRY) as their charity.

(vii) South East Local Enterprise Partnership

Other Topics Considered:

(i) ***Select Committees Terms of Reference and Work Programmes*** – Each year the terms of reference and work programmes were agreed for each of the Select Committees; Governance, Resources, Neighbourhoods and Communities.

(ii) ***Corporate Plan Key Action Plan Progress Reports 2018/19*** – These reports provided quarterly monitoring on the Council's key objectives, targets and delivery through 2018/19. The reports provided members with information on the performance indicators, in particular highlighting areas where targets had been missed and/or improvements had been made.

(iii) ***Forward Plan of Key Decisions*** – The plan was a work programme for the Cabinet which included details of decisions, Key Decisions and proposed private decisions. It provided an opportunity for the Committee to ask the individual Cabinet members about their future programme of work. The most current version of the Plan was included in the agenda for the Committee to be considered.

(iv) ***Transformation Programme – Project Dossiers/Project Closures*** – These reports demonstrated how the work of the Council and the corporate plan fitted together at a strategic level. It included the following work streams; the Customer Service Programme, the Customer Reception, Corporate Customer Team, Systems and Digital Development and Corporate and Business Planning.

Following further consideration, it was determined that these reports were not required and that the quarterly progress reports provided the required level of information for members.

(v) ***Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee Framework Review*** – Following the progress on the People Strategy, implementation of the new management structure and realignment of the portfolio holder responsibilities, it was considered an appropriate time to review the overview and scrutiny framework. A joint meeting was held with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee and suggestions were put forward to reduce the Select Committees to two, which would be supported by the two Strategic Directors. The

Committee felt that further consultation with members was required and that a task and finish panel should consider and determine a way forward. In January and February 2019, a task and finish panel met a number times and concluded that the Select Committees should be based around the Council's three Corporate Aims; Stronger Council, Stronger Place and Stronger Communities. **Further comments following the report to O&S on 16 April 2019.**

(vi) **Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations** – The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced changes to the timing of compulsory reviews of parliamentary polling districts and polling places.

The Returning Officer had advised that the next review would be required between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 and this would be beneficial to commence in January 2019, between the annual canvass for the register of electors for 2018 and the commencement of the canvass in 2019. The Governance Select Committee had requested that as the review was annually and no significant changes were expected, that due to time constraints the report would be submitted directly to Council, which was agreed.

SELECT COMMITTEES

1. COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE

The Communities Select Committee consisted of the following members:

Councillor H Whitbread (Chairman)

Councillor J Lea (Vice Chairman)

Councillors A Beales, K Chana, S Heap, S Heather, L Hughes, A Mitchell, A Patel, C Roberts, D Roberts, D Stocker, D Sunger and J H Whitehouse

The Lead Officer was Alan Hall, Director of Communities and P Pledger, Service Director Housing & Property Services. The Housing Portfolio Holder, Councillor S Stavrou, also attended the meetings, along with Wyn Marshall, from the Tenants and Leaseholder Federation and a nominated Youth Councillor. W Marshall attended the meetings as a non-voting co-opted member that provided the views of residents and stakeholders and a member of the Epping Forest Youth Council also attended as a co-opted member, where issues concerned young people.

It was noted that A Hall, Director of Communities retired from the Council in 2018 and the Committee wished to thank him for all his support.

Terms of Reference

The Communities Select Committee was tasked:

1. To undertake overview and scrutiny, utilising appropriate methods and techniques, of the services and functions of the Communities Directorate;
2. To develop a programme of work each year, informed by relevant service aims and member priorities, to ensure that the services and functions of the Communities Directorate are appropriate and responsive to the needs of residents, service users and others;
3. To consider any matter referred to the Select Committee by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Cabinet or a relevant Portfolio Holder, and to report and make recommendations directly to the Committee, the Cabinet or such Portfolio Holder as appropriate;
4. To consider the effect of Government actions or initiatives on the services and functions of the Communities Directorate and any implications for the Council's residents, service users and others, and to respond to consultation activities as appropriate;
5. To establish working groups as necessary to undertake any activity within these terms of reference;
6. To undertake pre-scrutiny through the review of specific proposals of the Council and its partner organisations or other local service providers, insofar as they relate to the services and functions of the Communities Directorate, to help develop appropriate policy;
7. To undertake performance monitoring in relation to the services and functions of the Communities Directorate, against adopted key performance indicators and identified areas of concern;

8. To identify any matters within the services and functions of the Communities Directorate that require in-depth scrutiny, for referral to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and
9. To recommend the establishment of task and finish panels to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as necessary, in order to undertake any activity within these terms of reference.
10. To review relevant projects and associated closure and benefits reports arising from initiatives undertaken as part of the Council's Transformation Programme.

The Panel scrutinised a number of important issues over the last year, which included:

(i) Review of Homelessness Strategy – The Committee reviewed the Council's Homeless Strategy which linked with the Council's Housing Strategy, Housing Allocations Scheme and Tenancy Policy. It incorporated the needs and demands on the service and actions that needed to be undertaken over the next three years, including the new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which came into force on 3 April 2018.

(ii) Housing Service Standards Performance Report 2017/18 and Review – The Standards and Housing Service's performance were considered each year by the Committee to determine if any changes to the Service Standards should be recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder, which had been minor.

(iii) Progress Report on the Implementation of the Ageing Population Study Action Plan – The Committee noted that in 2015/16 the Council had carried out a comprehensive study into the impact of an ageing population in the Epping Forest District. This had been generated into over 40 recommendations for the Council and a range of statutory and voluntary sector partners.

The study enabled the Council to increase its understanding of the future resident population and provided the opportunity to consult the existing older residents on their expectations and service needed as they aged, providing an insight into preferences and choices that they would ultimately make, in respect of their future lives in the Epping Forest District.

(iv) Housing Strategy Progress Report – This provided the Committee with a progress report on the Housing Strategy and the opportunity for the Key Action Plan to be reviewed.

(v) Corporate Plan Key Action Plan – This was the overarching document that set out the Council's priorities over the five-year period from 2015/16-2019/20. The Committee reviewed the outturn position of the Corporate Plan Key Action Plan in relation to Communities Directorate.

(vi) Key Performance Indicators Outturn Reports – This related to quarterly reports that monitored the performance of the Council's agreed Key Performance Indicators, to ensure improvement and where necessary corrective action be taken in relation to the Communities Directorate.

(vii) Transformation Programme Project Charters and Dossiers - This related to updates on projects from the transformation programme. It provided the basic definition of a project, its scope and identified a project manager and sponsor to complete the project.

(viii) Museum, Heritage & Culture LGA Peer Challenge (4.09.18) – The Council’s Museum, Heritage & Culture service took part in a fully funded competitive LGA Peer Challenge Review, which involved a small team of experienced professionals from the museum and cultural sector spending time at the Museum. The peer challenges were improvement focused and tailored to meet individual councils’ needs, complementing and adding value to the Council’s own performance and improvement. The Peer Review team reported that they saw evidence of an excellent service with demonstrable passion and commitment from councillors, staff and volunteers which was clearly demonstrated at all levels.

(ix) Social Housing Green Paper – The Committee was consulted and asked to provide responses to the green paper documents, which proposed a rebalance of the relationship between residents and landlords in a new deal for social housing.

(x) Use of Receipts from Right to Buy Sales – The Committee were consulted and asked to provide responses to the green paper documents which set out reforms to the arrangement for the use of receipts from Right to Buy Sales.

(xi) Essex Police District Commander – The Committee received a presentation on the current policing and crime issues in the District from Chief Inspector Lewis Basford, District Commander for Brentwood and Epping Forest Community Policing Team.

The Committee asked questions regarding mental health problems and the pathways used by the Police; the retention and recruitment of police officers; anti-social behaviour; the 101 and 999 response times; the current crime clear up statistics; and drugs operation.

(xii) Annual Report of Community Safety Partnership – This outlined the accomplishments of the Community Safety Team. In July 2018, the District Community Safety Hub opened and saw the Council’s Community Safety Team working alongside three Council funded Police officers. The Safety Hub was a first for Essex and was being watched closely by other local authorities across the UK. They had launched a Twitter account and a two-weekly newsletter, available to the public and advised more timely details of the work carried out by the Community Safety Team.

(xiii) Housing Revenue Account 30-year Plan – This report updated the Committee on the Housing Revenue Account 30-year Plan and that despite the Government’s policy to reduce all social rents by 1% per annum for four years, beginning in 2016/17, the HRA continued to be in a reasonably healthy state. All of the current and planned HRA loans were able to be repaid within 24 years (or 25 years from April 2018) and the minimum HRA balance of £2 million could be maintained throughout the plan period.

(xiv) Update of work of EFDC Funded Police Officers – The Committee was updated on the work of these Police officers. The work had been identified through the District Community Safety Partnership (CSP) priorities and Annual Strategic Assessment, which were aligned to the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner’s (PFCC) Policing Plan. The team were occasionally deployed to support EFDC Officers in their work, where formal task requests had identified a risk of threat or harm to staff in carrying out their lawful functions. Close management of the process had ensured that the Council’s police resources had been targeted most effectively and efficiently.

(xv) Fire Safety Policy – The Committee considered the Fire Safety Policy for Council-owned Accommodation, the benefits of installing sprinkler systems into “High-Risk” council accommodation and whether the Council should follow the “Stay Put” or “Stay Safe” policy

following the Hackitt review into the Grenfell Tower fire. The Committee were advised that based on the information contained on the Essex Fire and Rescue Service website, it would be recommended that the Council adopts the “Stay Put” policy in the event of a fire, but it would be up to the individual if they decided to stay or leave the premises.

2. GOVERNANCE SELECT COMMITTEE

The Governance Select Committee consisted of the following members:

Councillor G Chambers (Chairman)
Councillor D Dorrell (Vice Chairman)

Councillors R Brookes, L Burrows, R Gadsby, L Hughes, S Jones, H Kauffman, M McEwen, M Sartin, J Share-Bernia, H Whitbread, J M Whitehouse and D Wixley

The Lead Officer was Nigel Richardson, Service Director Planning Services

Terms of Reference

11. To undertake overview and scrutiny, utilising appropriate methods and techniques, of the services and functions of the Governance Directorate;
12. To develop a programme of work each year, informed by relevant service aims and member priorities, to ensure that the services and functions of the Governance Directorate are appropriate and responsive to the needs of residents, service users and others;
13. To consider any matter referred to the Select Committee by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Cabinet or a relevant Portfolio Holder, and to report and make recommendations directly to the Committee, the Cabinet or such Portfolio Holder as appropriate;
14. To consider the effect of Government actions or initiatives on the services and functions of the Governance Directorate and any implications for the Council's residents, service users and others, and to respond to consultation activities as appropriate;
15. To establish working groups as necessary to undertake any activity within these terms of reference;
16. To undertake pre-scrutiny through the review of specific proposals of the Council and its partner organisations or other local service providers, insofar as they relate to the services and functions of the Governance Directorate, to help develop appropriate policy;
17. To undertake performance monitoring in relation to the services and functions of the Governance Directorate, against adopted key performance indicators and identified areas of concern;
18. To identify any matters within the services and functions of the Governance Directorate that require in-depth scrutiny, for referral to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
19. To recommend the establishment of task and finish panels to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as necessary, in order to undertake any activity within these terms of reference; and

To review relevant projects and associated closure and benefits reports arising from initiatives undertaken as part of the Council's Transformation Programme.

The Panel scrutinised a number of issues over the last year, which included:

(xvi) Transformation Programme Project Charters and Dossiers - This related to updates on projects from the transformation programme. It provided the basic definition of a project, its scope and identified a project manager and sponsor to complete the project.

(xvii) Key Performance Indicators outturn reports – This related to quarterly reports that monitored the performance of the Council’s agreed Key Performance Indicators to ensure improvement and where necessary corrective action was taken.

(xviii) Corporate Plan Key Action Plan 2017/18 – This was the overarching document that set out the council’s priorities over the five-year period from 2015/16-2019/20. The select Committee review the outturn position of the Corporate Plan Key Action Plan in relation to Governance.

(xix) Review of Local Elections 2018 & Associated Matters – This provided information on the planning process and implementation of the elections held on 3 May 2018. The matter was required by law and the Approval of Areas and Polling Places was matter reserved by Council. The review highlighted the publicity, pre-election period, postal voting, staffing, polling stations, verification and count; and post-election consultation. A review of Polling Places and Stations during 2019 required a compulsory review which had occurred in January 2019.

The Boundary Commission for England – 2018 Review had revised proposals for the Eastern Region and had submitted the final recommendations on revised Parliamentary constituencies to the Government. There had been no changes recommended to the Epping Forest constituency boundaries but changes reflected in a second consultation to the Harlow and Brentwood and Ongar constituencies had been formally made.

(xx) Petition Scheme – The Committee considered the Council’s petition scheme with other local authority comparative data, in particular in relation to threshold requirements; clear and concise guidance; and the incorporation of e-petitions.

(xxi) Equality Objectives 2018-22 – The Committee reviewed the progress on the four equality objectives, in order for the Council to achieve the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty set out by the Equality Act 2010. Three of the four objectives had been completely met, although the status for ‘Produce and promote a process for accessing translation services’ and ‘Elected Members’ were ‘under control’ and would require further training for equality and diversity issues and further support for scrutinising equality impact assessments for major decisions.

(xxii) Equality Information Report 2018 – This report provided the Committee with the annual equality information that demonstrated compliance with the Equality Act 2010. It considered the progress made over the last year to improve the Council’s services and employment practices for people with protected characteristics, and its draft Equality Information Report for 2018.

(xxiii) Development Management - The Committee considered the notes of the meeting of the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Area Plans Sub-Committees and the District Development Management Committee. It highlighted members concerns for the consideration of planning applications by the Area Plans Sub-Committees, in circumstances where such applications were referred to a Sub-Committee for determination solely because of an objection to the development proposal by the relevant local council and their intention to speak at the Area Plans Sub-Committee meeting. The Committee considered whether this

was an appropriate use of members time at these meetings if the application could have been determined by the Service Director (Planning Services).

Review of the Local Enforcement Plan (LEP) – The Committee were advised that the LEP was scheduled for a review and the Town and Parish Councils had also been consulted. The report advised that there had been no significant change to planning legislation in respect of enforcement and that the LEP made clear what breaches were and how they were prioritised.

3. RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE

The Resources Select Committee consisted of the following Members:

Councillor A. Patel (Chairman)

Councillor P. Stalker (Vice Chairman)

Councillors N Bedford, L. Burrows, K Chana, D Dorrell, I. Hadley, J. Jennings, J. Lea, A. Mitchell, M. Owen, C. P. Pond, B Vaz and J.H. Whitehouse

The Lead Officer was Peter Maddock, Assistant Director Accountancy.

Terms of Reference

General

20. To undertake overview and scrutiny, utilising appropriate methods and techniques, of services and functions of the Resources Directorate;
21. To consider any matter referred to the Select Committee by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
22. To undertake quarterly performance monitoring in relation to the services and functions of the Resources Directorate, through review of progress against adopted key performance indicators and other appropriate measures;
23. To identify any matters within the services and functions of the Resources Directorate requiring in-depth scrutiny, for referral to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
24. To establish working groups as necessary to undertake any activity within these terms of reference;
25. To respond to applicable consultations as appropriate;

Finance

26. To consider the draft directorate budgets for each year, and to evaluate and rank proposals for enhancing or reducing services where necessary, whilst ensuring consistency between policy objectives and financial demands;
27. To review key areas of income and expenditure for each directorate on a quarterly basis throughout the year;

Information and Communications Technology

28. To monitor and review progress on the implementation of all major ICT systems;

Value for Money

29. To consider the Council's comparative value for money 'performance', and to recommend as required to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee, in respect of areas where further detailed investigation may be required;

Human Resources

30. To monitor and review areas of concern or significance that comes under Human Resources.

Transformation Programme

31. Transformation Projects relevant to this Committee:
Details of relevant new transformation projects to be submitted to the relevant SC for scrutiny.
32. Transformation Projects closure and benefits reports:
That any Directorate appropriate project closure and benefits realisation reports to be submitted to this SC for information.

The Panel considered and scrutinised a number of important issues over the last year, which included:

(i) ***Provisional Capital outturn 2017/18*** – The Committee considered the Council’s capital programme for 2017/18, in terms of expenditure and financing, and compared the provisional outturn figures with the revised estimates.

(ii) ***Provisional Revenue outturn 2017/18*** – The Committee considered the revenue outturn for the financial year 2017/18.

(i) ***Corporate Plan Key Action Plan 2017/18***– This was the overarching document that set out the Council’s priorities over the five-year period from 2015/16-2019/20. The select Committee reviewed the outturn position of the Corporate Plan Key Action Plan in relation to Resources.

(iii) ***Key Performance Indicators Outturn Reports*** – This related to quarterly reports that monitored the performance of the Council’s agreed Key Performance Indicators to ensure improvement and where necessary corrective action be taken by the Council.

(iv) ***Business Rates and Funding Services*** – The Committee received a report explaining the background to the Council’s business rates collections and how it translated into the funding of local services. The Council had a statutory duty to collect Business Rates although the final retained income for the Council was only around 10% of the collections. For 2017/18 the actual retained income had increased to £3.7m. It was reported that the Government was expected to issue a series of consultation papers in the coming months, ahead of local rates retention moving from 50% to 75%.

(v) ***Sickness absences monitoring*** - The report monitored the sickness absences quarterly and included absence figures by Directorate; the number of employees who had met the trigger level; those who had more than 4 weeks absence; and the reasons for absence. The Council was 0.72 days over its target of 7.25 during 2017/2018.

(xxiv) ***Transformation Programme Project Charters and Dossiers*** - This related to updates on projects from the transformation programme. It provided the basic definition of a project, its scope and identified a project manager and sponsor to complete the project.

(vi) ***Financial Issues Paper 2019/20*** - This report provided the Committee with the framework for the Budget 2019/20 and updated Members on a number of financial issues that would affect the authority in the short to medium term and also included the updated medium term financial strategy.

(vii) Technology Strategy Update – The Committee were advised that the new corporate project management system PENTANA had enabled the monitoring of the entire transformation process and created a central point of reference for the ICT work programme. The Committee were asked to comment and feedback on the format of the reports produced.

(viii) Fees and charges 2019/20 – The Committee considered the annual report on the fees and charges, which the Council levied and what scope there was, if any to increase particular charges, including their views of the suggested level of fees and charges for 2019/20.

(ix) Transformation Programme Project Charters and Dossiers – This related to updates on projects from the transformation programme. It provided the basic definition of a project and its scope with a project manager and sponsor to complete the project.

(x) Quarterly Financial Monitoring – These reports provided the Committee with a comparison between the original estimate for a three-month period and the actual expenditure or income. The reports covered the key areas of income and expenditure and had been aligned to the new service directorates responsible for delivering the services to which the budgets related and the budgets themselves were the original estimate.

(xi) Update General Fund Continuing Services Budget (CSB), District Development Fund (DDF) and Invest to Save (ITS) - The report updated the Committee on the draft Continuing Services Budget (CSB), District Development Fund (DDF) and Invest to Save (ITS) Schedules for 2019/20.

(xii) Shared Service Working – The Committee were advised that the Council had shared services in HR with Braintree District and Colchester Borough councils and the joint purchase of the iTrent system would result in a shared payroll system, which was due to commence from 1 June 2019.

(xiii) Fair Funding Review/ Business Rate Retention Consultations – The Committee were taken through two consultations issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) regarding the Fair Funding Review and Business Rates Retention. The Fair Funding review advised what the Government thought the Council needed to spend and the Business Rates Retention related to how the Council could raise the money, and how these transitional arrangements for the new funding regime would work.

NEIGHBOURHOODS SELECT COMMITTEE

The Neighbourhoods Select Committee consisted of the following members:

Councillor N Bedford (Chairman)

Councillor H Brady (Vice Chairman)

Councillors A Beales, P Bolton, R Brookes, K Chana, I Hadley, S Heather, L Hughes, L Mead, S Neville, A Patel, M Sartin, D Stocker and J H Whitehouse.

The Lead Officer was Derek Macnab, Acting Chief Executive.

Terms of Reference

General

33. To undertake overview and scrutiny, utilising appropriate methods and techniques, of services and functions of the Neighbourhood Directorate;
34. To consider any matter referred to the Select Committee by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
35. To keep under review:
 - (a) environmental enforcement activities;
 - (b) waste management activities;
 - (c) leisure Management; and
 - (d) the development of the Local Plan;
36. To consider the effect of Government actions or initiatives on the services and functions of the Neighbourhoods Directorate and any implications for the Council's residents, service users and others, and to respond to consultation activities as appropriate;
37. To establish working groups as necessary to undertake any activity within these terms of reference;
38. To undertake pre-scrutiny through the review of specific proposals of the Council and its partner organisations or other local service providers, insofar as they relate to the services and functions of the Governance Directorate, to help develop appropriate policy;
39. To identify any matters within the services and functions of the Governance Directorate that require in-depth scrutiny, for referral to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
40. To recommend the establishment of task and finish panels to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as necessary, in order to undertake any activity within these terms of reference;

Performance Monitoring

41. To undertake performance monitoring in relation to the services and functions of the Neighbourhoods Directorate, against adopted Key Performance Indicators and identified areas of concern;

Environment

42. To monitor and keep under review the Council's progress towards the development and adoption of a corporate energy strategy/environmental policy and to receive progress reports from the Green Working Party;

To receive reports from the Waste Management Partnership Board in respect of the operation of and performance of the waste management contract;

Leisure

1. To monitor and keep under review leisure management matters and in particular the procurement of the Leisure Management Contract; and

Transformation Programme

To review relevant projects and associated closure and benefits reports arising from initiatives undertaken as part of the Council's Transformation Programme.

The Panel scrutinised a number of important issues over the last year, which included:

(i) Key Performance Indicators Outturn Reports – These related to quarterly reports which monitored the performance of the Council's agreed Key Performance Indicators. They ensured improvement and where necessary corrective action to be put into place within the Neighbourhoods Directorate.

(ii) The Corporate Plan, Key Action Plan for 2017/18 – This set out the Council's priorities for a five-year period from 2015/16-2019/20. The Select Committee received quarterly reports on the progress in relation to the individual actions and deliverables in neighbourhoods. There were 10 actions which fell within the areas of responsibility for the Neighbourhoods Select Committees. 6 had been 'achieved or on target'; 2 were 'under control' and 2 were 'behind schedule'.

(xxv) Transformation Programme Project Charters and Dossiers - This related to updates on projects from the transformation programme. It provided the basic definition of a project, its scope and identified a project manager and sponsor to complete the project.

(iii) Air Quality and Public Health – The Committee received a presentation regarding the Neighbourhoods Services that the Council provided. This incorporated Public Health, Licensing, Neighbourhoods, Leisure Management, North Weald Airfield, Emergency Planning, Corporate Health and Safety, Environmental Pollution and issues around air quality.

(iv) Local Plans Updates – The Committee received updates from the Planning Portfolio Holder on the progress of the Local Plan, regarding the work being undertaken to support the progression and implementation of the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Planning in the district.

(v) Harlow Council – Local Plan Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Publication – Harlow District Council had published the Harlow Local Development Plan on Thursday 24 May 2018. A six-week period for representations had been requested, prior to submission of the Plan for examination. The Committee were advised that matters on the Pre-Submission Local Development Plan based on key cross-boundary issues that had been identified. It was recommended that EFDC respond to the publication period welcoming the pre-

submission Plan, while providing comments and/or recommendations on key policies and reserving the Council's right to appear at Independent Examination.

(vi) Corporate Green Working Party (CGWP) and Environmental Charter – These reports focused on the Council's internal functions of environmental matters. The Committee were advised that the role of environmental co-ordinator would be embedded into the work of all directorates going forward, to provide a more holistic approach across the Council to address these important issues. The Environmental Charter action plan continued to be reviewed by the CGWP.

(vii) Annual Report for Off Street Parking 2017/18 – This report provided the Committee with the first annual update on the progress of NSL Ltd, for the enforcement of the eighteen off street car parks owned by the Council. There had been an increase in parking enforcement because of staff working a shift basis to facilitate seven-day coverage and create good enforcement across the District. Improvements to the car parks such as surfacing; increased cleanliness; and new ticketing machines enabling chip and pin payments, had been installed in the Council's car parks. This was to the benefit of shoppers and commuters using them.

(viii) Emergency Planning and Corporate Health and Safety Arrangements -The Committee were updated on the emergency planning and business continuity of the Council.

In addition, the corporate health and safety was also being reviewed. This included lone working, accident report forms, the introduction of expectant mothers/nursing mothers risk assessment and the creation of a staff health and wellbeing strategy.

(ix) Leisure Contract Update - The Committee was updated on the leisure contract with Places for People (Leisure) (PfP). This included the completion of the new Leisure Centre at Waltham Abbey, investments and improvements at Epping, Ongar and Loughton Leisure Centres and the increase in overall membership across the District. The Committee was also informed about the feasibility for a new leisure centre in Epping on the St John's Site.

(x) Bobbingworth Nature Reserve – The Committee received the notes from the Bobbingworth Nature Reserve (Former Landfill site) Local Liaison Group, updating the Committee on the operation and maintenance of the site.

(xi) Environment & Neighbourhoods Enforcement Activity 2018 - The Committee was updated on the enforcement activity carried out by the Council's Environment & Neighbourhoods team in 2018, which included fly-tipping issues, noise complaints, other neighbour issues, unauthorised encampments and Taxi/Licensing enforcement. The figures compared to 2017 were virtually the same with slight increases in fly-tipping and noise issues.

(xii) Resource and National Waste Strategy – Consultation

Meeting on 19 March 2019

TASK AND FINISH PANELS

Origin/background:

On the 29 October 2018, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a proposal for the establishment of a new overview and scrutiny framework that would complement the new executive and senior management structure.

It was proposed that the structure would be based on two cross-service select committees and would be supported by the Strategic Directors.

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee determined that all members should be consulted and that a Task and Finish Panel be set up to consider the options available for a suitable framework.

Aims and Objectives:

(a) To determine a select committee framework, having regard to the terms of reference for the review that had been agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2018.

(b) To submit recommendations the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 April 2019, in order for the select committees to commence in the 2019/20 municipal year.

Term of Reference:

(a) That the Panel consider the future structure of the select committee framework to ensure that it complements the new executive portfolio and management structure of the Council, taking into consideration the options presented to the Committee at its meeting held on 29 October 2018;

(b) That the Panel consider:

(i) the retention of the existing framework of four select committees;

(ii) the introduction of an alternative framework of four select committees aligned with the new portfolio and service structure and the responsibilities of each select committee, to present opportunities for increased efficiency and effectiveness in scrutiny activity;

(iii) the introduction of an alternative framework of two or three select committees aligned with the new portfolio and service structure. and the responsibilities of each select committee, to present opportunities for increased efficiency and effectiveness in scrutiny activity; and

(iv) any other structure arrangement considered appropriate.

(c) That the Panel consider arrangements to ensure that reports in respect of the Council's adopted key performance indicators are made to the select committees as soon after the end of the relevant quarter as possible, and how best such reports can be presented to assist members in scrutinising performance against appropriate targets and the financial and resource implications for the authority; and

(d) That the Panel review the terms of reference of the existing select committees in terms of relevance and consider whether these could be improved.

The Panel

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee appointed Councillor P Bolton as the Chairman and Councillor B Jennings as the Vice-Chairman and requested that a notice for other members be placed in the Council Bulletin.

The following members expressed an interest; Councillors N Bedford, H Brady, G Chambers, D Dorrell, A Patel, M Sartin, H Whitbread and J H Whitehouse

The Lead Officer was Georgina Blakemore, Strategic Director.

The Panel met three times in January and February 2019 before reporting to the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 April 2019.

At their first meeting on 21 January 2019, the Panel considered the report that set out scope and timescale for the review of the overview and scrutiny select committee framework.

It was suggested that the Council's new cross-working approach and project and programme management environment based on the three Corporate Plan themes of 'Stronger Council', 'Stronger Place' and 'Stronger Community' could be adapted to provide a new form of select committee framework focusing on the authority's key priorities and outcomes.

Other issues raised by members were the effectiveness of performance monitoring and the consideration for consolidate this to one select committee, to enable the scrutiny and relevance of information and performance to occur as soon as possible after the end of the relevant quarter.

On 31 January 2019, the Panel gave further consideration to the future structure of the select committee framework, associated programme and project environment driving the Council's aims for increased customer service, efficiency and effectiveness and how they fitted into the three corporate aims. There was also the opportunity to provide policy development capacity through enhanced pre-scrutiny role.

The final meeting on 27 February 2019, considered the work programme for each of the select committees and the format that the Key Performance Indicators would be presented to members.

Outcome

Finally, the Panel made the following recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 16 April 2019 meeting **which were agreed?**

- (1) That a new overview and scrutiny select committee framework, based on a structure of three select committees, be established with effect from the commencement of the 2019/20 municipal year;
- (2) That the titles and responsibilities of each select committee, based on the themes of the Corporate Plan for 2018-2023, be agreed as follows:
 - (a) Stronger Communities Select Committee
 - customer excellence;
 - partnership working;
 - behavioural insights;

(b) Stronger Council Select Committee

- accommodation;
- people;
- digital enablement;
- medium-term financial strategy;
- Corporate Plan and Key Performance Indicator monitoring;

(c) Stronger Place Select Committee

- St. John's Road redevelopment;
- North Weald (masterplanning and re-location of council services);
- local plan;
- growth, skills and employment; and
- Council housebuilding.

- (3) That the consideration of quarterly performance monitoring information in respect of the Corporate Plan and the Council's adopted suite of Key Performance Indicators be undertaken by the proposed Stronger Council Select Committee, subject to the implementation of the exception-based reporting arrangements set out in this report;
- (4) That the draft terms of reference for each of the new select committees for 2019/20 be agreed;
- (5) That the draft work programme for each of the new select committees for 2019/20 be agreed;
- (6) That focused and achievable work programmes be developed for each new select committee for each year, drawing on Portfolio Holder and service delivery aims and objectives, and relevant community priorities;
- (7) That the scrutiny of business as usual activities be allocated to the ongoing work programme of each new select committee on the basis of the respective programme and project environment within the Corporate Plan for 2018-2023;
- (8) That the Cabinet be requested to ensure that relevant pre-scrutiny activity is built in to the development of all key decisions to reduce the need for call-in, and to pro-actively utilise the overview and scrutiny framework for policy development activity wherever appropriate;
- (9) That arrangements for meetings of the new select committees to be held on a quarterly basis during 2019/20, be agreed as set out in this report;
- (10) That the Service Director (Customer Services) arrange for the routine webcasting of meetings of the new select committees;
- (11) That the Constitution Working Group be asked to review the current application of requirements for members to make reports to ordinary meetings of the Council with regard to the business of external organisations subject of member representation;
- (12) That the operation of the proposed new select committee framework be reviewed after twelve months operation; and
- (13) That, subject to the agreement of the above recommendations, the Chairman formally advise the Council of the arrangements for the new select committee framework at its

meeting on 25 April 2019, in view of the likely wider member interest in the establishment of the new framework.