

# **Report to the Cabinet**

**Report reference: C/078/200-08.**

**Date of meeting: 12 November 2007.**



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Portfolio: Leader of the Council.**

**Subject: Corporate Initiative 2008-09 – “Safe, Clean and Green in Epping Forest”.**

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## **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**(1) That the principle of the provision of more integrated ‘street scene’ and related services through locality based service delivery be developed in order to address community concerns as reflected in the 2006 General User Satisfaction Survey; and**

**(2) That further reports be received at the December 2007 and February 2008 Cabinets as this model is developed through the new Directorate structure.**

## **Report:**

1. A number of reports and research exercises have raised issues and concerns about the way some frontline services are delivered to the community and indeed how those who rely upon them perceive those services. Those reports and research exercises include:

- (a) the 2006 Epping Forest District Council General User Satisfaction Survey;
- (b) the Defra / Encams Local Environmental Quality Report; and
- (c) The Rogers Review on enforcement priorities.

2. Some background detail from these reports is attached at Appendix 1, but the ‘headlines’ can be detailed as follows:

- (a) overall satisfaction with the way the Council operates is down from 2003 and is below both the Essex and national mean;
- (b) satisfaction with street cleansing is slightly better than in 2003 but is significantly lower than the Essex and national means;
- (c) perception that the local environmental quality is poor in some areas;
- (d) councils must prioritise their enforcement activities concentrating on national and locally set priorities; and
- (e) local concerns regarding levels of environmental and other crime.

3. The Council has a commitment to listening and responding to community concerns and as such should review the way it delivers its key local services.

## **The Top Management Restructure:**

4. The recently completed review of the top management structure and the creation of the new Directorates presents opportunities to reconsider how some key local services are delivered to our communities. The groupings of the services within the Directorates will enable some of them to be provided on a more localised basis and also to facilitate a more 'joined up' approach to matters such as, for example, street scene and crime & disorder.

5. The newly appointed Service Directors have been requested to identify, as part of structuring their new Directorates, services which could be delivered in a different way, thereby providing more flexibility, local accountability and transparency, as well as engaging more directly with the local communities who receive those services. Whilst the majority of potential services falling into this category reside with the Environment & Street Scene Directorate, there are others which are located in other Directorates and it will be important in taking any initiatives forward to ensure inter Directorate co-operation.

6. The outcome of this process should be to:

(a) better link issues such as crime & disorder, policing, enforcement and licensing with the concerns of the public, with higher levels of visibility and pro-activity on the ground; and

(b) respond more positively to community concerns.

7. To achieve this consideration will need to be given to matters such as:

(i) improving existing linkages with Police Community Support Officers and the Police;

(ii) providing a means whereby members (District, Town & Parish), officers and the public can report to the council on problems in their communities;

(iii) linking officers to 'neighbourhoods' with responsibility for ensuring the speedy resolution of problems, and re-evaluating the role of Town Centre Managers;

(iv) empowering town and parish councils to undertake or support district council roles where it will clearly provide a better level of local service; and

(v) more use of the 'man-in-a-van' service to provide some of that response.

8. However, an initiative of this nature will almost certainly require additional resources to be applied, alongside the more effective use of existing resources. The rationale behind the top management restructure was to assist the Council in meeting its four-year financial forecast through reduced management costs and operational savings where possible. As this process develops there may be opportunities to reinvest some of these savings to provide the type of service delivery outlined above. Furthermore, consideration could be given to entering into joint funding arrangements with towns and parishes, particularly those with 'Quality Council' status, in order to be able to resource additional town centre (or locality) based managers and the provision of the 'man-in-a-van' type of services.

## **Statement in Support of Recommended Action:**

9. The principles outlined in this report are intended to enable the Council to manage the criticisms made of the way it delivers local services and its engagement with the community in so doing. Going forward in this way, subject to further reports on process and costs, would send a powerful message to the community that the Council has listened and intends to respond positively to those concerns.

10. In view of the fundamental impact this initiative will have on the current restructuring

process, it is important that, if the Council wishes to proceed in this way, the Council takes early decisions on the extent to which the initiative should be developed.

**Other Options for Action:**

11. Given that this is a report 'in principle' no other options are put forward at this stage.

**Consultation Undertaken:**

12. None at this stage

**Resource Implications:**

**Budget Provision:** Not known at this time, but dependant upon the final scale of the initiative there will be a need for additional, alongside the more effective use of existing, resources.

**Personnel:** Additional posts may be required as the training of existing officers to undertake their roles in a different and more locally based way.

**Land:** Nil.

**Council Plan 2006-10/BVPP Reference:** N/A.

**Relevant Statutory Powers:** Local Government Act 2000 – Community Wellbeing powers.

**Background Papers:** None.

**Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications:** The intention to take forward the "Safer, cleaner and greener" initiative for 2008-09 onwards.

**Key Decision Reference (if required):** Not a key decision.

### BMG 3 yearly review

(1) The Council is under a duty, as part of the Best value Indicator regime to seek the views of its community on a number of service delivery issues. The survey for 2006 has recently been compiled and was reported to members at a presentation on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October.

(2) Some key findings are as follows:

- (i) overall satisfaction with the way the Council operates is down from 2003 and is below both the Essex and national mean;
- (ii) satisfaction with street cleansing is slightly better than in 2003 but is significantly lower than the Essex and national means;
- (iii) satisfaction with household waste collection has fallen significantly, to well below Essex and national means;
- (iv) only around half those surveyed felt that the Council was working to make the area safer, acted upon local concerns or provided value for money;
- (v) just under a half felt that the Council was remote and impersonal; and
- (vi) there remain strong concerns regarding levels of crime

### Defra/Encams Local Environmental Quality report

(3) 'Encams' is the former "Keep Britain Tidy" organisation. It undertakes a lot of environmental campaign work and also national research for Defra and DCLG. Encams produces an annual national environmental quality report (LEQ) but Defra also commissioned it to provide local LEQ reports for each local authority. The report for Epping Forest DC was published in May this year.

(4) The LEQ report presents its information from the standpoint of an average person visiting the district. The Encams inspectors looked at issues such as:

- litter and detritus
- highway infrastructure
- street furniture
- signing & lining

and measured their condition against national benchmarks established from the national reporting system. Where relevant the standard used was a best value indicator, such as BV199 (litter, detritus, fly tipping and fly-posting)

(5) As might have been expected the picture reported was a mixed one, but there were clear concerns about the quality of street cleansing, the condition of the highway infrastructure and the poor state of street furniture, signs etc. They also commented that poor environmental conditions also added to peoples perception of crime levels in the area.

### The Rogers Review

(6) Peter Rogers is the Chief Executive of the London Borough of Westminster and was commissioned by the government to investigate local authorities' enforcement roles and how they established priorities. The commissioning of this report was welcomed by councils who were becoming increasingly concerned about additional regulatory burdens being placed upon them at a time of increasing downward pressure on resources.

8. Whilst it is not proposed to provide detail of the outcomes in this report, since this is a matter currently being considered by the Environment & Planning Scrutiny Panel, it is worthy of note that the following are identified amongst key national and local enforcement areas:

- alcohol licensing (including links to crime & disorder)
- air quality
- local environmental quality
- noise

all of which are matters of concern to our local communities.