

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL  
NOTES OF A MEETING OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE  
FRAMEWORK TASK & FINISH PANEL  
HELD ON THURSDAY, 31 JANUARY 2019  
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING  
AT 7.00 - 8.55 PM**

**Members Present:** Councillors P Bolton (Chairman), R Jennings (Vice-Chairman), G Chambers, M Sartin, H Whitbread, J H Whitehouse

**Other members present:** Councillor A Lion

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillors H Brady, D Dorrell

**Officers Present** G Blakemore (Strategic Director), G. Nicholas (Interim Transformation Manager), R Pavey (Service Director (Customer Services)), S Tautz (Democratic Services Manager)

## **6. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes of the meeting of the Task and Finish Panel held on 21 January 2019 were agreed as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of reference to views expressed by Councillor N. Bedford supporting the development of a select committee framework based on the three cross-cutting themes of the Corporate Plan and the associated cessation of framework arrangements that relied solely on service functions.

## **7. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Panel noted its terms of reference, which had been agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 18 December 2018.

## **8. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEE FRAMEWORK - REVIEW**

The Panel gave further consideration to proposals for the future structure of the select committee framework, based on the following themes of the Corporate Plan and the associated programme and project environment driving the Council's aims for increased customer service, efficiency and effectiveness:

### **'Communities' Select Committee**

- customer excellence;
- partnership working;
- behavioural insights;

### **'Council' Select Committee**

- accommodation;
- people;
- digital enablement;
- medium-term financial strategy;
- KPI and Corporate Plan performance monitoring;

### **'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.

G. Blakemore and R. Pavey illustrated the scope of the various programmes within each theme of the Corporate Plan and the potential opportunities for scrutiny activity in respect of specific projects and business as usual activities, alongside the development of the 'overview' aspect of the role of each of the select committees, to provide policy development capacity through an enhanced pre-scrutiny ('Overview') role.

R. Pavey outlined some of the projects that would be undertaken through the auspices of the proposed Communities Select Committee to secure customer excellence, but emphasised the importance of defining relevant key performance targets and measures to drive effective scrutiny as part of the ongoing development of a Customer Service Strategy, which might include the analysis of telephone calls to the authority, the review of themes arising from complaint activity and consultation through methods such as the establishment of focus groups. R. Pavey indicated that the review of performance against 'key' customer satisfaction measure would be an important function of the proposed Communities Select Committee going forward and that this should also include member satisfaction with services provided by the Council. Members suggested that it would also be important to consider service performance in situations where no complaints or other feedback was received.

R. Pavey also advised the Panel of work to be undertaken around the behavioural insights theme of the Corporate Plan, to future-proof the services of the Council through the analysis of social demographics and behaviours and the mapping of digital capability, in order to ensure the appropriate design of service provision in the future. Members were advised that a number of the programmes within each theme of the Corporate Plan were cross-cutting and that specific scrutiny activity would be allocated to the most appropriate select committee. The Panel was reminded that, as agreed at the previous meeting, the consideration of performance monitoring information on the basis of 'key' performance indicators would generally be undertaken by the Council Select Committee, subject to the completion of the review of current performance reporting arrangements and a move to exception-based reporting. G. Blakemore confirmed that key services would be subject to appropriate scrutiny through the adoption of exception-based performance reporting arrangements and that the identification of 'hot' topics requiring scrutiny activity would be likely to be revealed through the review of the customer satisfaction measures to be detailed in the Customer Service Strategy.

The Panel was advised that it was important to ensure that Overview and Scrutiny retained a role in the scrutiny of business as usual activities, particularly where performance measures or other intelligence indicated reduced levels of customer satisfaction. R. Pavey indicated that a role would therefore exist for the select committees to develop appropriate actions for improvement, as required in such areas. Members also considered that the development of work programmes for the new select committees should remain flexible and that the committees should be operated, where appropriate' on the lines of the working groups previously established by the Council and should utilise existing opportunities to establish task

and finish panels wherever necessary, to facilitate the delivery of work programme activity.

It was also suggested that the appointed chairmen and vice-chairmen of the new select committees should be actively involved in agenda planning processes for the committees. The Panel also stressed that it was important for the select committees to be able to develop recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet and/or the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and for the committees to be able to undertake meaningful monitoring of the implementation and outcome of such recommendations.

The Panel considered that there was a greater need for active engagement between the Cabinet and overview and scrutiny on identified matters of concern and that it might be appropriate for core service reports to be made to each of the new select committees on a regular basis. Members were of the view that it was important to continue the 'early warning' of key Cabinet decisions through the regular review of the forward plan of decisions by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that relevant pre-scrutiny work should be built in to the development of decisions contained within the forward plan, to reduce the need for call-in. The Panel also considered that the Cabinet should be encouraged to pro-actively utilise the overview and scrutiny framework for policy development and pre-decision scrutiny activity wherever appropriate.

The Panel suggested that the work of the Overview and Scrutiny should in future, be focussed on issues where scrutiny activity could make a positive difference to residents of the district, particularly with regard to the ongoing scrutiny of the activities of external organisations. Members also suggested that the intention of the Council to undertake detailed scrutiny activity should also be communicated to key stakeholders within the district.

It was suggested that the Council housebuilding programme might sit most appropriately within the responsibilities of the proposed Communities Select Committee and the Panel agreed that this issue be considered further at the next meeting. Members also agreed that it would be important going forward, to be able to fully distinguish the role and responsibilities of the proposed new Communities Select Committee from the service-based role of the existing select committee.

The Panel was reminded that changes to the role and responsibilities of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were not within its remit or terms of reference and that any recommendations relating to the Committee arising from the review of the select committee framework would need to be considered by the Council, on the recommendation of the Constitution Working Group. Members noted that there remained a statutory requirement for the Council to establish at least one Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members noted that the draft calendar of meetings for 2019/20 was to be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 7 February 2019 and currently provided for a number of cycles of meetings of the existing select committees throughout the next municipal year. The Panel was advised that the calendar would need to be revised subsequent to its agreement by the Cabinet to reflect the new framework, although members considered that no reduction should be made in the number of meetings of the select committees each year. Members were reminded that membership requirements for the select committees, particularly in terms of pro-rata requirements and the inclusion of members that were not affiliated to a political group were specified in the Constitution and that such matters were also not part of the terms of reference of the Panel.

**AGREED:**

- (1) That the future structure of the select committee framework, based on the Corporate Plan themes of 'Council', 'Place' and 'Community' and the related programmes within each theme of the Plan, be agreed;
- (2) That an illustration of the proposed new select committee framework be circulated to the Panel in advance of its next meeting;
- (3) That the scrutiny of business as usual activities be allocated to each new select committee on the basis of the respective programme and project environment within each theme of the Corporate Plan;
- (4) That the most appropriate select committee environment for the Council housebuilding programme be considered as part of the recommendations of the Panel with regard to the proposed select committee framework;
- (5) That the proposed terms of reference for the new the select committees be developed for consideration at the next meeting of the Panel;
- (6) That arrangements for the development of work programmes for the new select committees be considered at the next meeting of the Panel; and
- (7) That the recommendations of the Panel with regard to the proposed select committee framework, to be made to the Overview and scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 16 April 2019, be finalised at the next meeting of the Panel.

**9. WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19**

The Panel was reminded that the Chairman would be required to report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 26 February 2019, on the progress of its review of the current select committee framework and the achievement of its work programme.

**10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Panel was advised that there was no additional business for consideration at the meeting.

**11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that a further meeting of the Task and Finish Panel be held at 7.00pm on 27 February 2019 and that, if necessary, a final meeting be held on 14 March 2019 in order that the Panel can finalise its recommendations to be made to the Overview and scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 16 April 2019.