



**Overview and Scrutiny**  
**Annual Report for**  
**2015-2016**



**Epping Forest  
District Council**  
[www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk)



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# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT: MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015/2016

## *Introduction and Welcome from the Chairman*

Welcome to the eleventh report of the Overview and Scrutiny Structure of Epping Forest District Council. After an 11 month long review into the Overview and Scrutiny functions we have established a new way to conduct our business. This year we have established four Select Committees in place of the old Scrutiny Panels structure we have had in previous years. These Select Committees were roughly aligned with the new Directorate structure the Council had put in place.

As always, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the new 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. The bare bones of scrutiny had not changed, only the way we carried it out.

At the beginning of the 2015/16 municipal year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to the setting up of four Select Committees for the year; no Task and Finish Panels were commissioned, but the already established Grant Aid Task and Finish Panel and the Youth Engagement Task and Finish Panel continued their work from the previous year.

During the year we received numerous presentations from outside bodies including the Epping Forest College, Barts Health NHS Trust, and the Epping Forest Youth Council.

My thanks go to the Chairmen and members of the four new Select Committees and the members and officers of the Task and Finish Panel, and my very special thanks go to my much missed Vice-Chairman, Councillor Angold-Stephens 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 Richard Morgan*

Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee



## ***What is Scrutiny?***

- Ø Scrutiny in local government is the mechanism by which public accountability is exercised.
- Ø The purpose of scrutiny in practice is to examine, question and evaluate in order to achieve improvement.
- Ø The value of scrutiny is in the use of research and questioning techniques to make recommendations based on evidence.
- Ø Scrutiny enables issues of public concerns to be examined.
- Ø At the heart of all the work is consideration of what impact the Cabinet's plans will have on the local community.
- Ø 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 Key Decision list (their forward plan) on a meeting by meeting basis. This acted as a troubleshooting exercise, unearthing problems before they arose.

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. Housing
- ii. Governance
- iii. Neighbourhoods and Community Services
- 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. Two Task and Finish Panels were established last year, both finishing this year. They were the Youth Engagement Task and Finish Panel, and the Grant Aid Review Task and Finish Panel.

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

## *The Overview and Scrutiny Committee consisted of the following members:*

Councillor R Morgan (Chairman)  
Councillor K Angold-Stephens (Vice Chairman)  
Councillors N Avey, T Church, D Dorrell, L Girling, S Kane, P Keska, A Mitchell, G Mohindra, S Murray, S Neville, B Rolfe M Sartin, G Shiell, B Surtees and D Wixley

The Lead Officer was Derek Macnab, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Neighbourhoods.

## *Terms of Reference*

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's main functions are 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 is tasked with the consideration of call-ins, policy development, performance monitoring and reviewing corporate strategies.

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

### *(a) Scrutinising and monitoring Cabinet work*

The Committee has a proactive role in this area through carrying out pre-scrutiny work. This involved considering the Cabinet's Key Decision List (Forward Plan) for the coming months on a meeting by meeting basis.

### *(b) Call-ins*

The Committee received one call-in this year.

The call-in received was on the Cabinet Decision ((C-018-2015/16) on the release of restructure covenants on land at Epping Forest College, Loughton.

The Call-in was based on the following premises, that:

- 1) *The covenants were imposed by the London County Council to protect an adequate supply of land for educational and NHS use in the vicinity of the residential development they had undertaken.*
- 2) *That need remains valid today.*
- 3) *ECC projections of rising 5s, plus the factors of extensive EFDC council house building and of continuing in-migration, imply a new school will be needed in 7-10 years.*
- 4) *There is no suitable spare land in Loughton on which a new school could be built.*
- 5) *Therefore this land, use of which was restricted for the needs of the then LEA (and NHS), should continue to be protected by covenant, for its original purpose.*

In attendance for the consideration of the call-in was Brian Page, the interim Principal of Epping Forest College; County Councillor Ray Gooding, the ECC Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning and Mark Pincombe the ECC School Organisation Officer.



The responsible Portfolio Holder noted that it was not his job to address the provision of primary educational needs for the area. Officers had asked Essex County Council's Education department and they said that they did not want the land; and the education projection of the population by the ONS suggested that no new places were to be needed in the next 10 years. He had received a request from Epping Forest College to release the Covenant and had to process that request in a reasonable timescale. It was a decision that was looked at in great depth, and in which officers had asked the Education Authority whether they wanted the land and they did not. Given that, the Cabinet had no option but to say that it made sense to release the covenants.

In the end and after reviewing the arguments both for and against, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee confirmed the original decision of the Cabinet (C-018-2015/16) regarding the release of restrictive covenants on land at Epping Forest College.

### ***(c) Select Committees work programme monitoring***

The Committee received regular updates from the Chairmen of the four Select Committees reporting on the progress made on their current work programme. This allowed the Committee to monitor their performance and if necessary adjust their work plans to take into account new proposals and urgent items.

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

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

### ***(e) Councillor Ken Angold-Stephens***

In April 2016 the Committee lost its respected Vice Chairman, Councillor Ken Angold-Stephens, who passed away after a long illness. Councillor Angold-Stephens was the Vice-Chairman of this Committee and chaired various other committees. He would be remembered for his great wealth of knowledge and experience and especially for being impartial and a friend to all.

### ***Presentations:***

**(i) Barts Health NHS Trust – Whipps Cross University Hospital** - The Committee at their first meeting of the year in June 2015 received a presentation from Lyn Hill-Tout, the interim Managing Director of Whipps Cross University Hospital. She was there to report to members on Barts Health NHS Trust's detailed plans for improvement in the areas of concern identified by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).



The Committee noted that Ms Hill-Tout had only been in post for 8 weeks, although she has had 42 years experience in the NHS and was last at the Mid-Staffordshire NHS Trust.

The Committee noted that 4 warning notices had been issued by the CQC plus specific compliance actions. The key concerns arising from the inspections were: insufficient staff levels; a persisting culture of bullying and harassment; bed occupancy that was too high; and a failure to meet national waiting times targets. Part of these concerns related to the high levels of agency staff and low staff moral.

The four warning notices related to the following regulations: staffing; incidents and learning (staff did not feel that anything was being done); flow, escalation, end of life care; and complaints and PALS.

There were however areas of outstanding practice, one was the effective management of pain relief for children and adults and their 'Great Expectations' maternity programme.

Four major hospital services at Whipps Cross (surgery, critical care, maternity and gynaecology, and services for children and young people) were rated as good for delivering caring treatment.

Ms Hill-Tout noted that Whipps Cross was still needed and had a future in providing acute healthcare to its local population, but has to change and develop a strategy for the future. They were committed to transparency with their stakeholders, staff and patients about their progress. A lot of people looked upon Whipps Cross as their local hospital and there was a lot of positive feedback from the local population.

The meeting was then opened out to questions from the members of the committee.

*(See Case Study for full details)*

**(ii) Volunteering through Time Banking** - At their meeting in July 2015 the Committee welcomed Marc Balkham the Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF) time-bank co-ordinator; with him was Chris Overend the EFDC policy officer.



Mr Balkham noted that this scheme covered the Epping Forest District as well as Harlow. This was about an exchange of time and skills between time bank members. They need only do what they wanted, when they wanted to. As they volunteered they built up time credits and were able to claim it back. Some examples of things that could be done were gardening, DIY, help with IT, languages, music or dance tuition. The scheme was free to join, with any exchanges covered by insurance. There was a simple online registration process that also required two referees. This was a requirement for joining, and both referees would be contacted and asked to provide a reference.

Some activities were best avoided such as providing direct care; anything carrying a financial risk; or repairs to cars and motorcycles for critical mechanical works such as breaks, steering or suspension; and childcare and anything connected with children. Groups of members could become mini time banks, if they had a shared location or shared aims.

The meeting was then opened to questions from the members present.

**(iii) Presentation from the Epping Forest College** - At their meeting in October 2015, the Committee received a presentation from Mr B Page, Deputy Principal of Epping Forest College and Mr S Markham, Director of Fusion Project Management Limited regarding the work of Epping Forest College.

Mr B Page advised that the college had expanded its courses recently and were working in close partnership with external organisations to widen the educational experiences of its students.

Mr S Markham advised of future plans in regard to the college site. A proposal was being made for the creation of a Sports and Health and Well Being facility, which would be built through a self funded scheme. The college required release of surplus assets to invest. The facility would have full community access.



Later in the year this would be a subject of a call-in.

The meeting was then opened to questions from the members present.

**(iv) Barts Health NHS Trust** - At their February 2016 meeting the Committee received a return visit from Barts Health NHS Trust there to update the Committee on their improvement plan from their last visit to this meeting in June 2015. In attendance was Fiona Smith, the Managing Director for Whipps Cross Hospital, with Dr Heather Noble, the Medical Director and Felicia Kwaku, the interim Director of Nursing.

They had now finalised their improvement plan called 'Safe and Compassionate', with each site having the same headings for their improvement plans. The improvement was being delivered through seven key work streams with both a corporate and site based focus and key government structures.



They had made progress in freeing up ward managers to manage ward fundamentals; nursing documentation had been streamlined; had started a 'smile and care' campaign and patient engagement workshops; put in a revised complaints process with a requirement to be much more responsive; and visitors and patients were able to identify the nurse in charge via a badge.

They had also ensured that there were appropriate care plans for those patients nearing the end of their life. Also the Margaret Centre had been refurbished, making it a more safe and comfortable environment for patients and families.

The Trust now had a new Chairman and a new Chief Medical Officer and a new Deputy Chief Executive. The Trust Board also had two new Non-Executive Directors to strengthen the Board. They also had new site teams in place accountable for operational delivery. They had a new programme called 'listening into action' to engage staff and also hold "Big Conversations" with staff (so far with over 1000 staff). This had resulted in lots of little improvements being made following suggestions from members of staff.

*(See Case Study for full details)*

**(v) Epping Forest Youth Council** – In April 2016 the Committee received their annual presentation from Epping Forest Youth Council giving an update on the year past and their future programme.

They thanked the members for their involvement and loyalty to the Youth Council over the past eight years. Noting that without member support they would not be in such a strong position to represent young people's views on issues that they cared about.

Their highest profile event in their second year was the Youth Conference held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2015. Their aim was to promote Local Democracy Week and they invited the local MP, Eleanor Laing to talk about her work in the House of Commons. About 90 young people attended, representing nine secondary schools in and around the Epping Forest District. Among other things they had a 'Make your Mark' ballot where they voted on which campaign they would like to pursue in the coming months. The top item they decided would be the living wage for young people, secondly tackling racism and religious discrimination and thirdly emotional wellbeing and mental health.



It was recognised that emotional wellbeing and mental health were major issues in the district and was not always addressed by schools. The Youth Council was working with North East London NHS Foundation Trust looking at ways they could design a project to support young people in the Epping Forest area. They were currently designing an 'Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Workshop' to deliver to secondary schools.

Volunteering remained a big theme for the youth councillors; they were passionate about encouraging other young people to volunteer and were working closely with their individual schools and had set up Youth Volunteer Days.

They were also looking at ways to break down barriers between older residents and young people. Over the years there were numerous intergenerational projects delivered by the Youth Council. Afternoon teas provided them with an opportunity to break down barriers and chat to the older residents about their perceptions of the younger generation and visa versa.

**(vi) Essex County Council Children Services** - The Committee welcomed Chris Martin, the Commissioning Director (Children) and Gill Holland the lead on Children Centre Performance in the west of the County. They were there to talk about Children Services in our area of the County and the 'Children's Centres in Essex' Consultation taking place.



Mr Martin noted that the Children's consultation was to consult on the Children's and young persons plan. This plan was to run from 2016 to 2019 and would set the direction of children services across Essex. This would affect children and young people from pre-birth to 19 and would improve joint accountability and decision making and move on to family centred plans.

As part of the consultation they had proposed to extend the current children's centre service by increasing the age range to support families with children from pregnancy to age 19 (up to 25 with Special Educational Needs) and by bringing these services together.

They were also proposing to stop calling them Children's Centres and call them Family Hubs. This was because they will be important places for young people and families as well as children and the name reflected the wider range of services that would be on offer. It was proposed that one existing Children's Centre in every district would become a Family Hub and the focal point for co-ordinating services and support families in that area. As well as these delivery sites there would be various 'outreach' sites variously situated in libraries and community centres; these would offer the opportunity for face to face advice, information and guidance.



Hopefully this would all help in the delivery of more flexible services, tailored to meet individual needs and would lead to improved opportunities to improve outcomes for families.

The meeting was then opened out to questions from the members present.

### **Other Topics Considered:**

**(i)** Over the course of the year the Committee considered the Cabinet's Forward Plan and Key Objectives for the coming year on a regular meeting by meeting basis. At each meeting the Committee looked at the updated list of the coming year's work programmed in for the Cabinet.

**(ii)** In June 2015 the Committee received a report setting out the year end outturn of the Corporate Plan Key Objectives. The Committee reviewed the report setting out the final outturn and progress made of the Council's Key Objectives for 2014/15.

They noted that:

- (a) 65% of the individual deliverables or actions supporting the key objectives had been achieved; and
- (b) 35% of the deliverables or actions were not completed by year-end.

**(iii)** The Leader of the Council, Councillor C Whitbread, introduced the Corporate Plan, Key Action Plan 2016/17 report. The Corporate Plan included the aims and objectives which are the Council's highest level strategic intentions. He noted that this was coming out earlier this year so as to get as much input as possible. This was an early opportunity for members to have some input into the Corporate Plan for 2016/17.

**(iv)** In July 2015 the Committee considered a consultation document on the replacement Waste Local Plan, revised preferred approach. They noted that Essex County Council (ECC) and Southend Borough Council were Waste Planning Authorities (WPAs) and were required to prepare a Replacement Waste Local Plan (RWLP) under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) and the revised EU Waste Framework Directive (2010).



The consultation ran from 18 June to 30 July 2015 – a period of six weeks, but the lead-in time for this Committee has meant that officers have had only one week to familiarise themselves with lengthy and quite difficult documentation to prepare this report. Officers believed that this was a wholly unreasonable approach by the WPAs, unfair to all consultees because of completely inadequate time to get to grips with a very important, but very complex, issue.

The formal response by this Council to the consultation emphasised the dissatisfaction that was shared by officers and Members. With future consultations, and with issues of this complexity, the Waste Planning Authorities must make full allowance for the lead-in period required by local authorities to prepare and publicise Committee reports.

**(v)** Also in July, the Committee considered the newly established Select Committee's Terms of Reference following the Council's revised procedure rules for the operation of the Overview and Scrutiny Function. The terms of reference were developed between the lead officers and the Chairmen of each committee before they went to the first meeting of that

select committee for consideration and agreement. The terms of reference were intended to reflect the scope of each committee who were to provide regular progress reporting on relevant matters to be made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**(vi)** In October 2015, the Committee received a report from the Democratic Services Manager regarding the Overview and Scrutiny Article and related rules from the Constitution which were being reviewed by the Constitution Working Group.

The approach of the review were for rules which applied generally to be moved into the main rules section and Article 6 (Overview and Scrutiny) would be re-drafted to address instances of relevant procedures being spread across the Constitution.

**(vii)** The Committee also received the final report from the Youth Engagement Review Task and Finish Panel presented by Councillor A Patel, a member of the Panel in the absence of the Chairman, with Councillor S Murray, and Youth Councillor J McIvor.

The Youth Engagement Review was undertaken between April and September 2015 during which they received evidence from Council officers, Youth Council Members and Essex County Council. Although the panel had been particularly interested in the targeted work undertaken with young people, they were disappointed that the County Council did not deliver any youth work within Epping Forest district because of budget cuts.



The Panel had recommended that the current operational budget for the Youth Council should be maintained at £12,000 per annum and that the Cabinet be asked for a CSB Growth Bid of £8,000 per annum for an enabling fund to support the Youth Council's access to projects. In addition, the Panel had requested that the District Council pursue devolvement of the budget and responsibilities for Youth Provision from the County Council to the District Council. A further bid would be made to the Cabinet for another CSB Growth of £25,000 per annum for targeted work by Community Services and Safety of the County Council.

The Committee agreed the recommendations made by the Task and Finish Panel and recommended them to the Cabinet.

Through the year the Committee was kept apprised of what was happening to the Task and Finish Panel's recommendations as they went through Cabinet and the budget setting round.

**(viii)** At the end of each quarter, the Committee received a report regarding the Quarterly Performance of the Key Objectives Key Action Plan 2015/16.



The Corporate Plan was the Council's key strategic planning document, setting out its priorities over the five year period from 2015/16 to 2019/20. The priorities, or Corporate Aims, were supported by Key Objectives which provided a clear statement of the Council's overall intentions for these five years.

**(ix)** In January 2016 the Committee received a report on Chelmsford City Local Plan consultation issues. Chelmsford's current local plan would run until 2021 and the next local plan was intended to roll forward to 2036. This consultation on the issues and options was the first of three such public consultation exercises.





Chelmsford shares boundaries with seven other Essex local authorities including Epping Forest District. It has an area of about 34,000 ha, 34% of which is in the Green Belt – this covering the south-west of the City Council area, including the boundary with this Council. It has a current population of 168,300 (with approximately 110,000 in Chelmsford Urban Area) and this is expected to increase to 192,000 by 2022.

Members noted that provision for traveller sites and pitches was a particularly difficult issue for this authority because of the 92% Green Belt coverage and the fact that permanent and temporary pitches were inappropriate development in the Green Belt. As this authority has a target of 112 extra pitches from the Essex GTAA 2014, one of the options for meeting this will be to discuss with neighbouring authorities the possibility of meeting some of this need through joint or shared provision. Chelmsford's consultation document did not mention this as a potential option.

**(x)** Also in January the Committee received another consultation document on the consultation relating to Crossrail 2.

Following an earlier consultation in 2013, the route for Crossrail 2 was decided upon with the Regional option favoured over the Metro option. This decision accorded with the route preference expressed by this Council at that time. Subject to funding and Government approval, it was anticipated that an application for powers could be made in 2017, with construction beginning in 2020 and completion in 2030.



The route of the Regional Option Crossrail 2 Line would run north-east to south-west in tunnels through central London linking up Wimbledon with Tottenham Hale. At the north-east end of the line a branch was proposed from Dalston heading to New Southgate in Enfield via Seven Sisters. However, the main line would run through Tottenham Hale following the WAML route up to Broxbourne.

The Committee noted that it was important to understand what the overall benefits and impacts of Crossrail 2 were likely to be for the District. In reiterating EFDC's continued broad support for Crossrail 2, there were invariably a number of issues and uncertainties at this stage regarding the likely impacts that implementation of the scheme may have. And, given that 2030 was the very earliest date that the line could become operational, assessment of likely impacts on Epping Forest District were very difficult to gauge at this stage.

In expressing a preference for the regional option this Council highlighted its concern about the need for guaranteed future investment in, and improvements to, the Central Line – both the Epping branch and the Hainault loop. The route, speed and relative ticket pricing for Crossrail 2 when it becomes operational are all variables that are likely to influence

passenger behaviour between using Crossrail 2 or the Central Line to access central London.



**(xi)** At their February 2016 meeting the Committee responded to the Basildon Borough Council local plan consultation and a consultation from the Essex Fire Authority. This consultation document proposed three options for organisational changes to the Essex County Fire and Rescue Services against a background of changing risk, reduced funding and a greater emphasis on partnership working.

**(xii)** Also in February the Committee considered and agreed the report on the recent review of the Waste and Recycling Collection arrangements and their initial service failures.

It concluded that a number of the problems encountered by Biffa when introducing the revised 4-day collection arrangements, could have been avoided with additional time, e.g. to improve staff training and familiarisation with new vehicles and IT, to test drive new routes more thoroughly, to retain and utilise local knowledge of existing staff, to fully run in new fleet and to have operated longer from new depot locations, before the service change.

This report then went up to cabinet to present its findings.

**(xiii)** In April 2016 the Committee received the final report of the Grant Aid Task and Finish Panel. The Chairman of the Grant Aid Review Task and Finish Panel, Councillor Caroline Pond introduced their final report. The Panel acknowledged the £11,500 saving made from the Grant Aid Budget for 2015/16 in respect of the one-off major grants and considered whether any further reductions could be made to the overall Grant Aid funding programme. It also looked at the various criteria for the distribution of funding; the monitoring and evaluation for each grant awarded and the Service Level Agreements applied.



More detailed consideration was given to the higher level funding agreements, in respect of Voluntary Action Epping Forest and the Citizen's Advice Bureau, who provided presentations to the Panel on their work. In addition, visits were made by the Panel members, to various organisations in receipt of grant funding.

The Task and Finish Panel recognised the vital role that the voluntary and community sector brought to local community well-being in the Epping Forest District. However, it also acknowledged the need for a more proactive approach to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of grants awarded, and particularly the higher level grants.

The Committee reviewed and agreed the recommendations made by the Panel.

**(xiv)** Also, in April the Committee considered a report on the review of the Select Committee Framework. As the Committee were aware, a new Overview and Scrutiny framework based on a structure of four 'select committees', was established with effect from

the commencement of the current municipal year, on a basis mirroring the new directorate structure.



As the first year of the select committee arrangements came to an end, it was considered that it would be useful for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the operation and management of the select committees, particularly in terms of the allocation of service responsibilities between individual committees and the achievability of their associated work programmes.

The comments and observations that have been submitted in relation to the operation of the select committee arrangements over the last year were largely focussed on the division of service responsibilities. The main issue raised was the imbalance of workload in the Neighbourhood and Community Services Select Committee. They had a heavy workload last year leading to long meetings and overcrowded agenda.

It was proposed that the Select Committees should be aligned with the directorates. This was seconded and agreed by the meeting. The committee also agreed that there should be a separate O&S and Select Committee Chairman and Vice-chairmen meeting at the start of the year.

#### **(f) Case Study: Barts Health NHS Trust – Whipps Cross University Hospital**

At their June 2015 and their February 2016 meetings the Committee received a presentation from officers from Barts Health NHS Trust.

They were there because a recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection of Whipps Cross had taken place in November 2014 by a team of about 20 inspectors with different expertise. Five domains were used to rate the quality of services: safe, effective, caring, responsive and well led.



The overall CQC rating of Whipps Cross was 'inadequate' and 4 warning notices were issued by the CQC plus specific compliance actions. The key concerns arising from the inspections were: *insufficient staff levels; a persisting culture of bullying and harassment; bed occupancy that was too high; and a failure to meet national waiting times targets*. Part of these concerns related to the high levels of agency staff and low staff moral.

The four warning notices related to the following regulations: *staffing; incidents and learning (staff did not feel that anything was being done); flow, escalation, end of life care; and complaints and PALS*; and the four compliance actions related to safeguarding; consent; records; and equipment.

There were however areas of outstanding practice, one was the effective management of pain relief for children and adults; and their 'Great Expectations' maternity programme. Also four major hospital services at Whipps Cross (surgery, critical care, maternity and gynaecology, and services for children and young people) were rated as good for delivering caring treatment.

The NHS Trust Development Authority (TDA) had placed Barts Health in special measures. These were designed to deliver service improvements at pace by providing support where it was most needed. Part of this support includes the appointment of an Improvement Director and the opportunity to partner with a high-performing trust. It was noted that staff were very relieved when that this report was produced as it had highlighted their concerns.

Improvement programmes would be developed in partnership with staff, staff representatives, patients and partner organisations.

It was noted that Whipps Cross was still needed and had a future in providing acute healthcare to its local population, but had to change and a future strategy had to be developed.



In February 2016 a different set of officers came to the Committee to update them on the progress made by Barts Health in the eight months between their first visit in June. They came to update the Committee on the measures undertaken since Barts NHS had been put into special measures and Whipps Cross Hospital had received four warning notices issued by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). They had now finalised their improvement plan called 'Safe and Compassionate', with each site having the same headings for their improvement plans. The improvement was being delivered through seven key work streams with both a corporate and site based focus and key government structures.

The trust had put in place "safety huddles" for each hospital every day, to discuss any safety or quality issues that would affect their patients. They also reviewed performance on a ward by ward basis against key quality and safety metrics that allowed them to track the measures in place. They also held monthly learning reviews looking at learning and sharing of improvement actions.

They had made progress in freeing up ward managers to manage ward fundamentals; nursing documentation had been streamlined; had started a 'smile and care' campaign and patient engagement workshops; put in a revised complaints process with a requirement to be much more responsive; and visitors and patients were able to identify the nurse in charge via a badge.



They had also ensured that there were appropriate care plans for those patients nearing the end of their life. Also the Margaret Centre had now been refurbished, making it a more safe and comfortable environment for patients and families.

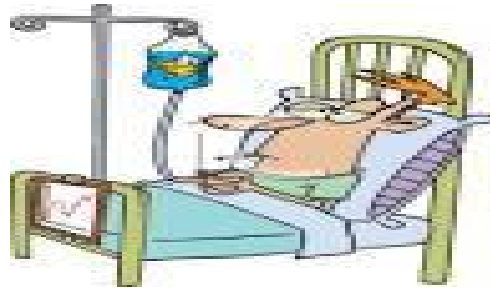
They were also tackling the number of vacancies and engaging more with staff. They had reviewed safe staffing levels and increased funded nursing establishment by 532 posts (150 posts being at Whipps Cross). Their current fill rate was up to 82% and they wished to take it up to at least 90%.

Whipps cross Hospital now had an integrated discharge team, working with CCGs, Council Social Care and Community Health Teams.

They were also investing £2million in IT, the first steps in a wider programme; £17.5million was planned in investment in Whipps Cross improvements; there was also a ward improvement programme and £15million set aside for medical equipment across the Trust. It

was noted that Whipps Cross was an old site, hard for staff to work in, but Barts Health was now investing in the site. A new High Dependency Unit was to be opened by July.

The Committee via the Chairman thanked the representatives from the Barts Health NHS Trust for their excellent presentation and their full and helpful answers and congratulated them on the work they had done so far.





# SELECT COMMITTEES

## 1. HOUSING SELECT COMMITTEE

*The Housing Select Committee consisted of the following members:*

Councillor S Murray (Chairman)  
Councillor A Mitchell (Vice Chairman)  
Councillors K Chana, R Gadsby, L Girling, S Kane, J Lea, C Roberts, B Rolfe, G Shiell and J H Whitehouse

The Lead Officer was Alan Hall, Director of Communities. The Committee also appreciated the Housing Portfolio Holder, Councillor D Stallan, attending the meetings to help them with their deliberations.

Wyn Marshall represented the Tenants and Leaseholder Federation, attending the meetings as a non-voting co-opted member to provide the views of residents and stakeholders.

### *Terms of Reference*

The Housing Select Committee was tasked to undertake reviews of housing related services and related functions of the Communities Directorate;

To ensure that they are appropriate and responsive to the needs of residents, service users and others;

To consider the effect of Government actions on housing related services and functions of the communities Directorate;

To undertake performance monitoring in relation to the housing services; and

They also undertake specific projects related to public and private sector housing issues, as directed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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

**(i) Communities Directorate's Housing Service Strategies** – At the beginning of the year (June 2015) the Committee received several reports on the various Strategies and Standards covering Housing and the Communities Directorate. These included the review of the Housing Strategy, Housing Service Standards Performance (2014-15) and review, the Communities Directorate's Housing Service Strategy on Energy Efficiency, the Housing Service Strategy on Housing and Neighbourhood Management, the Housing Service Strategy on Older People's Housing services and the Housing Strategy: 6 month progress report on the Key Action Plan 2015/16.

These were reviewed and agreed by the Committee and would continued to be kept under review throughout the year.

**(ii) Key Performance Indicators – Outturn (Q4) Performance** - From 2014/15 each former Scrutiny Panel became responsible for the review of quarterly performance against



KPIs falling within its area of responsibility. This report therefore included in detail only those indicators which fell within the areas of responsibility of the Housing Select Committee.

Ten of the Key Performance Indicators fell within the Housing Select Committee's areas of responsibility with the overall position in regard to the achievement of target performance at the end of the year, as follows:

- 10 (100%) indicators achieved the cumulative end of year target.

**(iii) Presentation on the current and future approach dealing with Private Empty Properties** – In November, the Select Committee received a presentation from the Private Housing Manager (Technical) regarding the Current and Future approach to dealing with Private Empty Properties.

The Select Committee were advised that nationally, there had been a reduction in the number of empty homes:

(a) From 783,119 in 2008 to 610,123 in 2014;

(b) Within Epping Forest District the reduction had been from 1,837 in 2005 to 1,391 in 2014; and

(c) From the £548,829 received by the District Council through the New Homes Bonus, £57,946 was due to the reduction in empty homes.

*(See Case Study for full details)*

**(iv) Results of the STAR Triennial Tenant Satisfaction Survey** - The Council's Communities' Directorate had been a member of Housemark, a national housing benchmarking club, for many years. They had a standard Tenant Satisfaction Survey called STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents) for its members to use.

The Council had commissioned an independent research company to carry out the STAR survey which took place between July and August 2015. An anonymous postal self completion questionnaire was sent to a random sample of a third of the District Council's tenants. In total, 798 tenants took part in the survey, representing a 36% response rate. This was well in excess of the STAR target. There were 26 questions in total.

Overall the resident satisfaction survey results in 2015 were broadly similar in comparison to the last STAR survey with satisfaction scores varying by one or two percentage points, up or down, on the majority of core questions compared to 2012. Where benchmark information was available, the vast majority of results were generally at or above average when compared with other landlords. The most notable result from the survey concerned the quality of homes which showed an 84% satisfaction level.

**(v) Response to DCLG Consultation on mandatory 'Pay to Stay' Scheme** – The Select Committee received a report regarding the District Council's proposed response to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Consultation on Pay to Stay: Fairer Rents in Social Housing.



In June 2013, the DCLG issued a consultation paper entitled "High Income Social Tenants Pay to Stay." At that time, the Government set out its intention that local authorities should be given the flexibility to charge those with high income proposed at that time, as more than (£60,000 per year) a higher level of rent to stay in their own homes. The proposal at that time was based on the higher rent being set at 80% of market rents. The Housing Scrutiny Panel,

which preceded this Select Committee, supported the proposal at that time but had concerns particularly around administration costs, the creation of “ghettos” which would inhibit mixed communities and felt that different thresholds should be applied to different parts of the country.

In October 2015, the Government issued a further Consultation Paper – Pay to Stay: Fairer Rents in Social Housing. Particular attention was drawn to the two questions on which views were invited by the DCLG, these were:

**Question 1:** How income thresholds should operate beyond the minimum threshold set at budget, for example through the use of a simple taper/multiple thresholds that increases the amount of rent as income increases and whether the starting threshold should be set in relation to eligibility for Housing Benefit?

Members felt that the introduction of a simple taper could be a sensible approach on the basis that a tenant’s taxable income increased the level of rent increase. However, this change would make the administrative arrangements difficult.

**Question 2:** Based on the current system and powers that local authorities had, what was your estimate of the administrative costs and what were the factors that drive these costs?

Officers considered that to administer the scheme an additional 2 (FTE) members of staff would be required to deal with matters such as tenants changing incomes and rent levels, backdating increased payments and refunds, altering a tenant’s rent in accordance with their tenancy conditions and undertaking regular reviews.

The Committee was advised that due to changes in income and benefit, officers would need to review cases several times a year.

**(vi) Future Approach to Housing Service Strategies** – The Director of Communities explained that over many years, the Housing Service had formulated a suite of Housing Service Strategies that individually set out the detailed approach taken by the Council and its officers to various housing activities. All the service strategies were produced in a common format and were then reviewed and updated by officers every three years and reported to the Housing Select Committee for consideration. Around the same time, service strategies relating to landlord services were also reported to the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation for their views.

The Communities Management Team (CMT) had recently considered the cost-benefits of spending the significant amount of time to update these Housing Service Strategies. They identified that although the general principles set out in the Service Strategies were followed, the Service Strategies were hardly ever referred to by officers between the three yearly reviews. Moreover, most of the actions included within the Action Plans had usually already been identified and planned prior to the relevant Service Strategy being updated and were included and monitored through the Communities Directorate’s Continuous Improvement Regime in any event.

The CMT was also aware that this approach to strategic service planning was not adopted by any of the other Directorates, Select Committees or Portfolio Holders. There was therefore an inconsistent approach both across the Council and the Communities Directorate. However, the CMT was also aware that the Select Committee appeared to find it useful to understand and review the Council’s approach to the various housing functions.

The CMT did believe that there would be real benefit in continuing to review, update and maintain some of the service strategies in some form, due to their particular strategic importance or a legal requirement.

Officers suggested that a further report be submitted to the Select Committee recommending that the number of strategies should be reduced, with some of them being combined, significantly reduced in content and reviewed every 5 years, instead of every 3 years.

In January 2016 officers came back with a new approach to covering the strategies most needed by the Council, including a reduction the number of strategies from 16 to 7, which the Select Committee supported.

**(vii) Six Month Review of the HRA Financial Plan** - As part of the Chancellor's Summer Budget in July 2015, it was announced that all social landlords must reduce their rents by 1% per annum for four years. The District Council's consultants had assessed that the estimated loss in rental income to the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) would be around £14 million over the next four years and around £228 million over the next 30 years. In view of this significant reduction in rental income, the consultants were commissioned to provide a report on the options available to the Council to ensure that its HRA did not fall into deficit.



The Select Committee were advised that the consultant's report identified a number of options available to the Council to re-cost its HRA Financial Plan for the future, including:

- a) Ceasing all or some of the funding currently available within the Financial Plan for future housing improvements and service enhancements for HRA services;
- b) Reducing investment in improvements to the Council's housing stock;
- c) Reducing/ceasing the Council's own Housebuilding Programme;
- d) Further borrowing for the HRA, repaid by the end of the Financial Plan; or
- e) Combinations of the above.

It was advised that the Housing Portfolio Holder had recommended to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee in September 2015 that most of the £702,000 uncommitted funding within the HRA's Housing Improvements and Service Enhancements Fund for 2016/17 should not be allocated or spent at present.

**(viii) Key Performance Indicators - Quarterly Progress** – the Committee reviewed the Key Performance Indicators relevant to their Select Committee on a quarterly basis.

**(ix) Data Quality Strategy 2016/17 – 2018/19** – At their March 2016 meeting the Select Committee noted that good quality data was essential in supporting the Council's decision making especially where these involved finance and performance. Additionally the Council's customers, partners and others interested in the Council's performance, needed to rely on the data the Council produced for evaluation purposes. The Council was also accountable for the money it spent and how it managed competing claims on their accuracy, reliability and timeliness in order to plan for the future and met customer needs.

The authority had identified principles and arrangements for ensuring high standards of data quality and had for a number of years formalised them within a strategy to support

consistency and encourage high standards of practice of data quality management. Data quality arrangements included ownership of data, systems and ensuring staff had the skills and knowledge needed to deliver high standards of data and data management.

**(ix) Housing Service Strategy on Empty Properties (3 Year Review)** - There would always be empty homes and properties empty awaiting sale, re-letting or renovation as these were a normal part of a healthy housing market. However properties that were left empty for long periods of time could cause significant problems in the local and national context. They were a wasted resource in terms of housing provision, particularly in areas of high demand like the Epping Forest district where 92% of land was green belt.



The previous and current government had recognised the value of reducing the number of empty properties as part of its overall ambition to provide an additional million homes nationally by 2020. Various incentives and options for local authorities had been introduced which included the New Homes Bonus (which rewarded councils for additional homes provided) and allowing councils the flexibility to charge up to 50% extra Council Tax on property that had been unoccupied and unfinished for 2 years or more. These initiatives had contributed to marked reduction in empty properties nationally.

Within the district the number of empty homes had fallen from 1,837 in 2005 to 607 in 2015. It was the Council's intention to bring 30 empty properties into use per annum.

### ***Case Study: Current and Future Approach Dealing with Private Empty Properties***

The Select Committee received a presentation on the current and future approach to dealing with private empty properties.

On a national level there had been a reduction in the number of empty homes:

- (a) From 783,119 in 2008 to 610,123 in 2014;
- (b) Within Epping Forest District, the reduction had been from 1,837 in 2005 to 1,391 in 2014; and
- (c) From the £548,829 received by the District Council through the New Homes Bonus, £57,946 was due to the reduction in empty homes.

The Select Committee noted that despite these figures, it was likely that there was an under reporting of empties to the Council because there had been a removal of incentives for people to inform their local authority that they had a home which was empty. Whilst the numbers for long term empties was steadily decreasing in the district (by 57 in the last year), the number of properties that had been empty more than 2 years had hardly changed (124 down to 122). The main reasons that these properties were empty was because they were being left for investment purposes, the owner had run out of money, properties were under major renovation or they were being marketed for sale possibly at an inflated price.

It was proposed that in the future officers would:

- (i) Continue to offer advice, information and financial incentives to owners of properties which have been at least 6 month's empty;

- (ii) Consider recommending a reduction in the time limit for eligibility for the Empty Homes Repayable Assistant to 6 months (from 1 year);
- (iii) Risk assess all properties that have been empty for at least 2 years against criteria based on length of time empty;
- (iv) Risk assess probate properties that have been empty for more than 2 years;
- (v) Actively pursue those properties with the highest risk score using enforcement if appropriate;
- (vi) Pursue all empties causing issues to local residents or the environment;
- (vii) Seek member approval for Compulsory Purchase or Empty Dwelling Management Orders; and
- (viii) Consider the possibility of the Council purchasing empty properties to replace homes sold under Right to Buy.



## 2. GOVERNANCE SELECT COMMITTEE

### *The Governance Select Committee consisted of the following members:*

Councillor T Church (Chairman)  
Councillor Y Knight (Vice Chairman)  
Councillors D Dorrell, L Hughes, S Jones, H Kaufman, M McEwen, B Sandler, S Watson,  
Jon Whitehouse and D Wixley

The Lead Officer was Nigel Richardson, Assistant Director for Development Management.

### *Terms of Reference*

To undertake reviews of the services and functions of the Governance Directorate and to consider the effect Government actions or initiatives on the services and functions of the Governance Directorate and to review the six monthly progress towards the achievement of the Council's equality objectives and review public consultation and engagement. To report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Council or the Cabinet with recommendations on matters allocated to the Committee as appropriate.

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.

To review six monthly progress towards the achievement of the Council's equality objectives for 2012/13 to 2015/16 and progress in relation to other equality issues and initiatives.

To develop arrangements as required, for the Council to directly engage local communities in shaping the future direction of its services, to ensure that they are responsive to local need.

To annually review details of the consultation and engagement exercises undertaken by the Council over the previous year.

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

(i) **Review of Elections – May 2015 - Lessons Learnt** – At their July 2015 meeting, the Panel received a report from the Returning Officer regarding the lessons learnt at the recent elections.



The report discussed planning processes and implementation for the elections held on 7 May 2015, the results of which were the election of a Member of Parliament for the Epping Forest Constituency, one Councillor was returned for each of eighteen District Council wards and ten Parish Council elections took place with six contested wards.



This election followed the first year when the Council was required to implement Individual Electoral Registration (IER). Work undertaken to encourage further registration had prompted some 5,000 changes to the IER register, published in 2014.

All of the election papers were printed by the Council's Reprographics Section, which, as before, provided an excellent service. The proofs of all District Council and Parish Council ballot papers were scrutinised carefully and all ballot papers were printed correctly.

It was advised that nationally, there was an issue regarding a late change made to the logo of the Green Party. The Electoral Commission had agreed the change but had not transmitted this information effectively to Returning Officers.

Due to the number of ballot papers required for the Parliamentary election it was necessary to engage an external printer for the 75,000 ballot papers. The split between internal printing for local elections and external for national ones worked well, it was recommended to continue with this for the 2016 Police and Crime Commissioner election where 100,000 ballots would be required.

The issue of postal votes for Epping Forest went smoothly. Nearly 10,000 postal voting packs were sent out, the most ever. Although there was no evidence of any postal vote fraud, 150 postal votes were rejected for various reasons.

All polling stations opened on time with no access issues. This year, four polling stations were changed due to unavailability of previous locations, no issues were raised in connection with these stations.

The Select Committee reviewed the circumstances of an issue that occurred in the town council elections in Epping, where ballot papers had been issued to transposed stations in the Hemnall and St. John's wards. Although this situation had arisen as a result of human error, members noted that appropriate lessons had been learnt from the incident and that revised processes had been immediately implemented by the Returning Officer to prevent any recurrence. In future, all ballot paper books were to be clearly marked with details of the relevant ward and date of election, all ballot papers would be thoroughly compared against issue lists before being issued to Presiding Officers, and that Presiding Officers would finally double check the allocation of ballot papers against expected totals before the commencement of a poll'.

Verification and counting of parliamentary ballot papers took place at Debden Park High School enabling a larger number of count staff to be employed. Counting started as soon as the polling finished, the process going smoothly. The final declaration of the Parliamentary seat was made at around 3.45p.m.



Discussions were held with Essex Police prior to the election. Polling stations received visits during the day and there were no instances requiring immediate police presence outside of the regular visits. Police support was also provided at the Count Centres on both Thursday evening and on Friday at Theydon Bois.

**(ii) Consultation Register 2014/15 and 2015/16** - The Committee noted that the District Council carried out a wide variety of consultations, both externally for public participation and internally for staff opinions. A list of these were compiled and published as a register on the Council's website, they set out the issues on which individual services would be consulting on or engaging with residents and customers during the year. They summarised the purpose, start and completion dates, service area administering the surveys, location of results and key findings. The register also set out the overall objective for consultation exercises yet to be undertaken.



Amongst the larger surveys carried out by the Council in the last 12 months were the Car Parking Review and the Tenant Participation Survey.

Human Resources would be carrying out further employee "Pulse" consultation to compare and measure staff attitudes against previous survey results.

**(iii) Key performance Indicators 2014/15 – Quarter 4 (Outturn) Performance** - Six of the KPIs for 2014/15 fell within the Governance Select Committee's area of responsibility. The overall position with regard to the achievement of target performance at the end of the year for these six indicators was as follows:

- (i) Three (50%) indicators achieved the cumulative end of year target;
- (ii) Three (50%) indicators did not achieve the cumulative end of year target; and
- (iii) One (17%) of these KPIs performed within the agreed tolerance for the indicator.

**(iv) Equality Objectives 2012-2016 – Quarter 4 progress for 2014/15** - The Equality Act 2010 placed a number of responsibilities on the Council in having regard to equality in the exercise of its functions, this included a Public Sector Equality Day (PSED). It aimed to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons sharing relevant characteristics and those who did not. Further specific responsibilities required the adoption of objectives for improving equality for service users and employees.

In March 2012, the Cabinet agreed four equality objectives for the four years from 2012-16, designed to assist the Council meeting the needs of the PSED. The objectives supported by an Action Plan, focused on key areas where improvement in relation to equality had been identified.



Members received a schedule detailing progress against individual actions, the reporting progress followed status indicators applied to individual actions.

**(v) Section 106 agreements – monitoring report 2014/15** – In October 2015 the Committee received a report setting out all Section 106 Agreements entered into during 2014/15, and details of the benefits realised throughout the year from previous agreements, including monies received where development had commenced.

Members noted that Section 106 Agreements acted as the main instrument for placing restrictions on development, often requiring the mitigation of site specific impacts. Agreements could be sought in situations where planning conditions were inappropriate to ensure or enhance the quality of development and to enable proposals that might otherwise have been refused planning permission to proceed in a sustainable manner. The Committee were reminded that Section 106 Agreements must always be relevant to and proportionate

to the scale and kind of related development and could be used to deliver: a) affordable housing; (b) necessary highway works; (c) public open space; (d) the restoration of listed buildings; and (e) off-site infrastructure.

Several members expressed the view that effective scrutiny of Section 106 arrangements required an overview and understanding of how and where monies arising from agreements were intended to be spent and appropriate timescales for the collection of relevant monies and the realisation of the associated benefits.

**(vi) Key Performance Indicators 2015/16 - Quarterly Progress** – the Committee reviewed the Key Performance Indicators relevant to their Select Committee on a quarterly basis.

**(vii) Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) – Equality Information Report 2015/16** - The broad purpose of the PSED required the Council to integrate the consideration of equality and good relations into its day-to-day business, positively contribute to the advancement of equality and fairness, and to reflect equality considerations into the design of policies and the delivery of services. The Senior Performance Improvement Officer reported that the review and monitoring of performance against the equality duty helped the authority to comply with its legal requirement; and to provide inclusive services.

The Select Committee congratulated the Senior Performance Improvement Officer on the development of the equality information report for 2015/16, which set out the Council's many initiatives and achievements in a clear and extremely effective way. Members identified a number of areas for possible inclusion in the report going forward, including the provision of services for young people and individuals leaving local authority care. Several members also expressed support and encouragement for participation in the equality-related programmes offered to councillors as part of the annual member training and development programme.

**(viii) Chairman's Expenditure and Allowances** – At their December 2015 meeting, the



Committee noted that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Council received special responsibility allowances in recognition of the particular expenses incurred by the Civic and Ceremonial role. It was advised that an anomaly in recompense for transport costs was addressed by the adoption of a motion at Full Council on 28 July 2015 that a review should be conducted into the current levels for the civic ceremonial budget by this select committee.

In addition to the Chairman's and Vice Chairman's individual allowances, "spending" budgets directly supported the work of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman amounted in total to £22,530. Officers conducted a survey of civic ceremonial expenditure by other Essex and neighbouring councils although differing budget structures made direct comparisons with the District Council difficult, there was a range of costs applied by different authorities, for example Chelmsford City spent £71,000 in total and Braintree District Council spent £17,340.

Officers informed members that the Chairman's spending never went over budget, in addition the Chairman's Secretary made strenuous efforts to reduce expenditure on events by obtaining a fairer bargain for the authority. It was also stated that there had been no inflationary increase in budget for the Chairman of Council in 10 years.

The Select Committee supported referring the Chairman's and Vice-Chairman's Allowances to the Member Remuneration Panel for more direct scrutiny.

**(ix) Planning Appeals Performance** – Appeal performance was reported every 6 months to the area planning committees using two Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), GOV007 which measured the percentage of planning applications recommended by planning officers for refusal, overturned and granted planning permission by appeal and GOV008 which measured the percentage of planning applications refused by Councillors against the recommendation of the planning officers and subsequently granted planning permission on appeal. Members sought clarity and understanding on why some appeals were dismissed and others were allowed, which in turn would help towards improving performance of these two KPIs as identified in their individual improvement plans.



Members were advised on the problems of attempting to successfully defend a decision to refuse at an appeal if there were no objections from the local Highways Authority. However, they felt that the staff at Essex County Council Highways were not particularly pro-active in checking planning applications at the consultation stage for neighbour objections on highway grounds whereas Councillors felt, if they did, then they could raise objections which would support their own views at the committee meeting.

*(See Case Study for full details)*

**(x) Development Management Pre-Application Advice** – The Committee noted that the Local Government Act 2003 allowed local authorities to charge customers for holding discussions prior to the submission of planning applications. This Council had been charging on major category applications since 2007 and had expanded this across other developments including householder extensions. Unlike planning application fees, pre-application advice was set locally, with discussions having always been encouraged as a charging scheme had the benefit of dissuading some ill conceived proposals and highlighted the cost of officer time in the process and recouping some of this cost.



It was advised that the number of pre-applications received and dealt with by officers had markedly increased and although this brought in a larger income to the authority, it had also added significantly to officer workload. In addition the time frame for response, set for up to 21 working days from a meeting, was rarely achieved because of the pressure for turning around planning applications in a timely manner.

**(xi) Development Management Chair And Vice-Chair's Meeting** - Member's attention focussed on the Review of Current and Future Training Needs. Members supported using training, particularly for Parish and Town Councils, to reduce the number of call-ins of planning applications to the Area Planning Sub-committees, better knowledge and understanding of planning considerations would make for better recommendations. It was also felt that regular and smaller "bitesize" training sessions for members would be beneficial as the details were easier to digest.

Members expressed concern with the consultation comments that were received from Essex County Council Highways on planning applications submitted to committees. They requested that Essex Highways' officers should be invited to this select committee to discuss these issues and it was agreed that this should be added to next year's select committee draft work programme.

There was a strong feeling that the District Council was stranded in a situation whereby the county council did not object or make adequate representations on planning applications and thus weakened planning committees' decisions, particularly when appeals took place.

**(xi) Technical Consultation On Implementation Of Planning Changes** – at their April 2016 meeting the Select Committee received a report from the Assistant Director Development Management regarding response to “Technical Consultation on Implementation of Planning Changes” Consultation. The Government was setting out proposals in the following areas:

- (a) Changes to Planning Application Fees;
- (b) Permission in principle;
- (c) Brownfield Register;
- (d) Small Sites Register;
- (e) Neighbourhood Planning;
- (f) Local Plans;
- (g) Expanding the approach to planning performance;
- (h) Testing competition in the processing of planning applications;
- (i) Information about financial benefits;
- (j) Section 106 dispute resolution;
- (k) Permitted Development Rights for state funded schools; and
- (l) Changes to statutory consultation on planning applications.

The consultation period commenced on 18 February 2016 and concluded on 15 April 2016, it ran to 12 chapters containing 77 questions in all. However, only those questions relevant to the select committee's terms of reference were submitted to the meeting.

The Committee gave their opinions to the answers that were pertinent to their terms of reference. The Assistant Director of Development Management said that he would take the Member's comments and submit them to the Government before the deadline.

### ***Case Study: Planning Appeals Performance***

The Select Committee reviewed planning appeals performance at its meeting held in December 2015.

Applicants applying for planning permission through a planning authority could appeal to the Secretary of State any decision made whether it be refused, or granting with conditions. In these instances, all parties provided the evidence required and were normally determined by exchange of written statements or appearance at a hearing or inquiry. Appeal performance was reported every 6 months to the area planning committees using two Key Performance



Indicators. The members of the select committee discussed six recent cases across the district which the Assistant Director (Development Management) had selected.

Members were advised on the problems of attempting to successfully defend a decision to refuse at an appeal if there were no objections from the local Highways authority. However members felt that the staff at Essex County Council Highways were not particularly proactive in checking planning applications at the consultation stage for neighbour objections on highway grounds, they could raise objections which would support their own views at the committee meeting.

An option for area planning sub-committees was to defer items for a fuller Highways assessment of the application in question. The Governance and Development Management Portfolio Holder advised caution when objecting to planning applications against officer recommendation as good evidence was needed to justify a refusal in all reasons put forward.

Members noted that an officer from the Highways authority did visit the District Council and read current planning applications and also visited relevant sites.

However, there had only been one successful appeal this year where costs had been awarded against the authority.

The current method of analysing the appeals record from the area planning sub-committees was through the 'Probity in Planning' reports submitted to the committees every six months at the end of the meeting which tended to happen after a long agenda. Members supported putting a summary of appeal decisions regularly in the Bulletin and that further training on this topic was also needed.



### 3. RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE

#### *The Resources Select Committee consisted of the following Members:*

Councillor G Mohindra (Chairman)  
Councillor P Keska (Vice Chairman)  
Councillors K Angold-Stephens, N Bedford, S Kane, H Mann, A Mitchell, A Patel, S Watson and Jon Whitehouse

The Lead Officer was Peter Maddock, Assistant Director (Accountancy).

#### *Terms of Reference*

- To undertake overview and scrutiny, utilising appropriate methods and techniques, of services and functions of the Resources Directorate, excluding those matters within remit of the Audit and Governance Committee, the Standards Committee or the Constitution Working Group;
- To undertake quarterly performance monitoring in relation to the services and functions of the Resources Directorate, though review of progress against adopted key performance indicators and other appropriate measures;
- 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;
- To review key areas of income and expenditure for each directorate on a quarterly basis throughout the year;
- To monitor and review progress on the implementation of all major ICT systems;
- 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;
- To monitor and review areas of concern or significance that comes under Human Resources.

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

**(i) Key Performance Indicators 2014/15 Outturn Performance** – At their meeting in July 2015 the Committee received the outturn report for the Quarter 4 results for the Key Performance Indicators for 2014/15. The Committee noted that the overall position for all the KPIs at the end of year (31 March 2015) was:

- 26 or 72% - indicators achieved the cumulative end of year target;
- 10 or 28% - indicators did not achieve the target; and
- 1 or 3% - performed within the agreed tolerance for the indicator.

Eleven of these indicators fell within the Resources Select Committee area of responsibility. The overall position at the end of the year for these eleven indicators was as follows:

- 7 or 64% - achieved the cumulative fourth quarter target; and
- 4 or 36% - did not achieve the cumulative fourth quarter target.

**(ii) Sickness Absence Outturn Report 2014/15** - Also at their July meeting the Committee received the outturn report for the sickness absence levels for 2014/15.

The Committee considered the sickness absence for quarters 3 and 4, 2014/15. It was noted that the target for sickness absence, under KPI10 for 2014/15 was an average of 7 days per employee; the outturn figure for that year was 9.2 days, making the Council above target for the first time in 4 years.

**(iii) Provisional Capital Outturn 2014/15** - The Committee then received a report on the Council's capital programme for 2014/15 in terms of expenditure and financing and compared the provisional outturn figures with the revised estimates. The revised estimates, which were based on the Capital Programme, represent those adopted by the Council in February 2015.



It was noted that the Council's total investment on capital schemes in 2014/15 was £20,114,000, compared to a revised estimate of £24,092,000. The largest underspends were experienced on General Fund projects. In particular, there was an underspend of £1,000,000 on the St John's Road Development scheme as the land purchase and asset negotiations planned to enable the proposed development of this site, had not taken place yet. As a consequence the full £1,000,000 set aside for this scheme was requested for carry forward to 2015/16. In addition, there was another large underspend of £448,000 on the Museum redevelopment scheme, for which Heritage Lottery funding has been secured. A carry forward of £448,000 to 2015/16 was requested.

**(iv) Provisional Revenue Outturn 2014/15** – Also in July 2015 the Committee received a report on the Council's revenue outturn for the Continuing Services Budget (CSB) of the general fund and the consequential movement in balances for 2014/15.



Net expenditure (CSB) for 2014/15 totalled £14.547 million, which was £763,000 (5%) above the original estimate and £223,000 (1.5%) above the revised. When compared to a gross expenditure budget of approximately £74 million, the variances can be restated as 1% and 0.3% respectively.

The main movement between the original estimate and the Revised and Actual position was the creation of the spend and save reserve which had moved £500,000 from the General Fund Balance into an earmarked reserve set up to fund any initial costs required to achieve on-going CSB savings. The fund would operate in a similar way to the District Development Fund (DDF) in that there would be the ability to move budgetary provision money between years as necessary. 2015/16 would be the first year of operation for this Fund.

**(v) Planning Enforcement Matters** – At their October 2015 meeting the Committee had a report on the work of the Planning Enforcement Section.

They noted that:

- The Planning Enforcement section was a non-statutory discretionary function of the Council, which had historically been actively supported by Councillors;
- Complaints were received from the public, Town and Parish Councils, Councillors and other departments which were responded to within 24 hours of the complaints, if they involved



Listed Buildings, Preserved Trees and new Gypsy & Traveller Sites or within 14 days for all other complaints;

- Officers spent a considerable amount of time on and off site investigating, evidence gathering, negotiating and advising with both complainants and complainers' whilst complying with the law and regulations;
- The complaints ranged from the serious and complex, to trivial and non-planning related with enforcement investigations being completed after a first visit or in more complex cases taking several years;
- All prosecutions and actions had to be legal, proportionate and expedient. The system allowed appeals on planning and enforcement decisions to go as high as the Supreme Court which took time and often appeared to the public and Members that no action was being taken;
- There was encouragement for complaints to keep in touch for regular updates and progress on the cases;
- The section was adequately resourced and had an active relationship with other Councils sections and the Essex Police;
- Income was generated by the receipt of retrospective planning applications and the pursuit of S106 Planning obligation monies;
- The Council had spent £424,000 in 2014/15, which compared to other Essex authorities was greater, although the District had the largest amount of Green Belt in Essex;
- The additional resources invested in planning enforcement reflected the seriousness of the planning enforcement function and would be detrimental to the authority and its residents if it was not maintained.

**(vi) Financial Issues Papers** – The Committee noted the Financial Issues Paper. This provided the initial framework for starting the 2016/17 budget and updated Members on a number of financial issues that would affect the Authority in the short to medium term. The following issues represented the greatest areas of current financial uncertainty and risk to the Authority, which included Central Government Funding, Business Rates Retention, Welfare Reform, New Homes Bonus, Development Opportunities, Income Streams, the Waste and Leisure Contracts and Transformation.

The Council remained in strong financial position as the overspend in 2014/15 had not been significant and the Council had substantial reserves. Following the General Election a greater political certainty had been created although there were a lot of funding and financial uncertainties for the Council.

**(vii) Energy Savings and Improved Management Process** – The Committee received a progress update report on energy savings and improved management processing. They were advised that the management and payment of energy supplies had historically been spread across numerous Directorates and the information had become fragmented therefore an energy consultant, Smith Bellerby (SB) had been approached to produce an accurate consolidated database, identify potential savings and streamline working practices.



The Select Committee noted that:

- SB were energy cost reduction specialists;
- The invoice processing element alone utilised at least 2 weeks of a full time post each month which now took 3 hours to process;
- SB dealt directly with the energy companies on behalf of the Council;

- The largest savings were from gas and electric supplies changing to cheaper tariffs which resulted in anticipated saving of £13,000, a scope to reduce available capacity charges yielding £3,300 per year and two additional savings of £500 per year for meter operator and data collector contracts; and
- The majority of savings had been identified during the first year, however the use of SB for a further year would provide time savings and a conclusion to the numerous ongoing disputes.

The Select Committee were in agreement with the use of SB, although concerns were raised about whether the consultants would need to be used continuously.

**(viii) Call Handling** – The Committee received a report on the first quarter for telephone monitoring statistics 2015/16, which included the percentage of abandoned calls and the number of calls sent directly to the voicemail system.

The Committee were advised that the figures for quarter 1 had been skewed because of problems with the new waste contract, which had now settled down and certain figures needed to be removed as they were related to answer phone services.

**(ix) Careline and Housing Related Charges** – Also at their October 2015 meeting, the Director of Communities, introduced a report on the charging plan for Housing Related Support (HRS) services.

The Committee noted that:

- The HRS covered the Careline Service, Scheme Management Service and the Intensive Housing Management;
- The Council had increased the HRS charges by 50% for 2015/16, in order to recover expected reductions in funding from Essex County Council (ECC) and for the service to become self funding;
- ECC had decided very late not to proceed with the planned reductions in funding in 2015/16, but because the charges had been increased and the tenants affected had been advised, they remained;
- The Housing Portfolio Holder had presented the Cabinet with 5 options on what action to be taken with the increased income, although after reviewing the services it had been noted that providing the Scheme Management Service there had been a £50,250 deficit;
- The Council also relied on the HRS funding from ECC, which had been expected to reduce in 2016/17 and was likely to continue to reduce in further years;
- Therefore the Cabinet decided that the Housing Portfolio Holder should produce a charging plan on how the HRS charges would be increased each year from April 2016 until the cost of the Scheme Management Service became self-funded and included the annual reductions in funding from ECC;
- The Epping Forest Tenants and Leaseholders Federation supported the charging plan and associated methodology.

The committee were advised that HRS services had been supported by the HRA for over 10 years and that there were other financial pressures on the HRA, therefore it was fairer for all, that the costs were spread over the users of the service.



**(x) Fees and Charges 2016/17** - This report which provided details on the fees and charges that the Council levies and what scope, if any, there was to increase any particular charges. This was an annual report produced as part of the annual budget process.



It was noted that:

- The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) had identified the need for savings, around £1m over the four year period with £150,000 falling in 2016/17, which was based on an assumed reductions in Government funding of 10% per annum;
- Increasing existing fees and charges was fairly limited and introducing charges where they were not levied was also limited;
- The traditional use of the September Retail Index (RPI) and Consumer Prices Index (CPI) had been widely used as a guide to inflation but it was thought that the Labour inflation rate was now more relevant as employee costs represented the largest element of the expenses, which was currently 2.8%.

The Director of Communities advised that the Tenants and Leaseholder Federation supported the proposed housing-related fees and charges for 2016/17, which were increased by the labour Inflation rates, which were currently 2.8%.

**(xi) Quarterly Financial Monitoring** – The Committee received Quarterly Financial Monitoring reports on key areas of income and expenditure, proving a comparison between the original estimates for the period 1 April 2015 to 30 June 2015 and the actual expenditure or income applicable.

**(xii) Key Performance Indicators 2015/16 Quarterly Updates** - The Committee reviewed the Key Performance Indicators relevant to their Select Committee on a quarterly basis.

**(xiii) Draft General Fund CSB and DDF Lists and Savings Update** – In December 2015 the Select Committee considered the first draft of the Continuing Services Budget (CSB) and the District Development Fund (DDF) schedule for 2016/17.

They noted that the Financial Issues Paper went to the October 2015 meeting of this committee, highlighting a number of financial uncertainties and risks facing the authority, including the reduction in Central Government funding, retention of Business Rates, Welfare reform and the Leisure Management Contract renewal. Since then there had been a number of other items identified such as the increase in the employers national insurance contributions, relating to the employees in the Local Government Pensions Scheme.

The Governments Spending Review was due shortly; speculation was that District Councils would be hit the hardest, although this Council was well placed to meet that challenge

**(xiv) Sickness Absences 2015/16** - It was noted that the Council's target for sickness absence for 2015/16 was an average of 7 days per employee. The outturn figure for 2014/15 was an average of 9.2 days per employee. This put the council above its target for the first time in 4 years. This year, although still running above target the figures were slightly better than this time last year. It was also noted that the 2015 Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) report stated that a number of organisations (not just in the public sector) reported that



they had seen an increase in stress related absence and mental health problems. Although minor illness accounts for most short term absence whereas acute conditions such as stress, musculoskeletal, mental health and back pain are the most common reasons for long term absences. The council reflected these findings.

As part of the improvement plan HR will arrange workshops for managers on mental health issues. The first four of a number of workshops had been arranged for December 2015 and it would be mandatory for all managers to attend. The Council was also working with 'Rethink', a mental health charity and Vine HR to arrange these sessions.

#### **(xv) Update of Work Carried Out by the HR Team –**

**Apprentices** - The Committee noted that the first cohort of apprentices (2013-15) had now successfully finished their apprenticeships. The council appointed 7 business administration apprentices and 2 multi trade apprentices. The business administration roles would provide a range of transferable skills and thus offer more opportunities for employment.

A second cohort had now been appointed and it had been decided that it would be just for local young people who would do appropriate NVQs at the local college. There was not as much money around to fund as many places as last time but they received some help from the Communities Directorate in conjunction with a Housing Association and were able to fund two more places, but these places were reserved for the children of their tenants. This time around, the apprentices' progress would be monitored more closely.

**Shared Services – HR** – The HR team participated in the Essex network of the heads of HR the Essex Strategic Partnership for a number of years. In 2010 the partnership reviewed its governance arrangements and agreed to develop it into a not for profit company.

The aim of setting up a not for profit organisation was so that;

- it could generate its own income so it becomes self-sufficient;
- it could provide value for money for the member authorities in any contractual arrangements;
- Heads of HR could work more collaboratively and achieve greater savings for their authorities; and
- It provides a formal framework for the Heads of HR, limiting the risks and liabilities for individual authorities.

**Procurement of a HR/Payroll IT System** – The current payroll IT system was not fit for purpose and that officers were presently in discussions with Colchester and Braintree Council's with the aim of jointly procuring a system. The evaluation process was due to be finalised before Christmas 2015 with an implementation/start date early in the new financial year.

**Broxbourne** – Officers were having initial discussions with Broxbourne Council to identify potential areas where we could work together and find efficiencies. They currently provide museum services for us and it may be we could work closer with them.

**Mast Money Budget** – It was noted that the Council receives rent from communications companies for the lease of space on the Civic Offices roof for a communications mast. Members have agreed that any money from this lease would be allocated to projects that would benefit the staff.

**Employee Engagement** – The Graduate Trainee organised Employee Engagement Workshops to involve staff and were run from April to June 2015 to gain feedback from

employees on a range of engagement centred topics. There were 62 employees who attended the workshops across five different sessions.

**Employee Survey** – As part of the work on the Engagement Strategy the Graduate Trainee was tasked with carrying out an Employee Survey. During the workshops referred to previously employees were asked their views

**(xvi) Review of Private Funding** – Also at their December 2015 meeting the Select Committee noted that Grants and Contributions make up a fairly modest proportion of capital funding, this includes section 106 and similar income which the Council receives as part of agreements made when planning permission was granted for development schemes. These monies could be provided for a variety of different purposes and would be based upon requirements identified as part of the planning process. The types of project could range from education, highways, leisure, health and affordable housing provision. In some cases the money was provided to the County Council or the National Health Service and in other cases to this Council.

**(xvii) Housing Benefit Fraud and Compliance** – This went to the February 2016 meeting of the Select Committee. They noted that from 1 October 2015, the responsibility for the investigation of Housing Benefit fraud was transferred from the Authority to the Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS) which was part of the Fraud and Error Service within the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Responsibility for Local Council Tax Support fraud remained within the Authority and was investigated by the Corporate Fraud Team.

*(See Case Study for full details)*

**(xviii) Data Quality Strategy 2016/17 to 2018/19** – The meeting noted that the Council needed timely, accurate and reliable data in order to manage activities and meet internal and external requirements to demonstrate accountability through accurate reporting. Data was used for the assessment of the Council's performance, including the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The Data Quality Strategy set out the arrangements for the next 3 years to ensure key data met the highest standards and was 'right first time'.



Good quality data was essential to support the Council's decision making especially decisions involving finance and performance. Additionally the Council's customers, partners and others interested in the Council's performance, needed to be able to rely on the data produced for evaluation purposes. The Council was also accountable for the money it spent and must manage competing claims on its resources. It therefore required data which was accurate, reliable and timely in order to plan for the future and meet customer needs.

**(xix) Government Consultation on New Homes Bonus** – The Committee received a report on the government consultation on New Homes Bonus, part of the draft financial settlement for local authorities.



The meeting noted that:

- The consultation sought views on a number of significant changes to the New Homes Bonus.
- The stated intention of the proposed changes to the scheme was to save £800 million which can then be used to fund adult social care.

- The removal of £800 million and the re-allocation of this amount has the overall effect of changing the distribution so two thirds will now go to counties and only a third to districts.

**(xx) Presentation from the Council Apprentices and National Graduate**– at their April 2016 meeting the Select Committee received a short presentation from 8 of the Council apprentices about their work and experiences at the council. They each gave a brief outline of the work that they were doing and how it helped them develop. They were then questioned by the Committee on their time with, and how they felt working for, the Council.

At the same meeting the committee also received a short presentation from the Council's National Graduate Development Programme appointee, who gave a short presentation to the meeting about his appointment and subsequent work at the Council. This was a national scheme for trainee management development he had applied for and had subsequently to go through various tests and interviews to get this placement. Since he had started with the Council he had been given a different placement every six months to get a broad experience of the work of a local authority.

Council's National Graduate Development Programme appointee, Mr G Nicholas gave a short presentation to the meeting about his appointment and subsequent work at the Council. This was a national scheme for trainee management development he had applied for and had subsequently to go through various tests and interviews to get this placement. Since he had started with the Council he had been given a different placement every six months to get a broad experience of the work of a local authority.

### ***Case Study – Housing Benefit Fraud and Compliance***

The meeting noted that from 1 October 2015, the responsibility for the investigation of Housing Benefit fraud was transferred from the Authority to the Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS) which was part of the Fraud and Error Service within the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Responsibility for Local Council Tax Support fraud remained within the Authority and was investigated by the Corporate Fraud Team.



Four of the Council's existing Benefit Investigators were transferred to the DWP under TUPE like legislation. Three of these were transferred to the Harlow DWP office and the other was transferred to the Basildon DWP office. The former Benefit Investigation Manager was now the Manager of the Council's Corporate Fraud Team and was the only member of the former Benefit Investigation team who remained with the Authority. The transfer went smoothly.

If a referral was passed to SFIS for investigation, it could be allocated to any SFIS team and would not necessarily be investigated by the SFIS team in Harlow. As they had no documents relating to Housing Benefit, the Council were requested to provide all the documentation that it had. However, this had proved problematic as the Council needs to send the documents electronically but the DWP's IT system could not accept the file size that the Council needed to send. This had emerged as a problem for all Authorities which the DWP had not yet resolved. The Council either has to split it up into a lot of smaller emails or hand over the paperwork physically, but the amount of work this was causing was becoming a problem.

Following the transfer to the DWP, the Council set up a Compliance team to carry out initial enquiries and clarify/obtain information relating to applications for Housing Benefit/Local Council Tax Support, and Liaison Officer posts were created with part of their duties being the liaison point between the Authority and SFIS.



Traditionally communication with the DWP was difficult because their staff were frequently moved to different roles and/or offices. It was therefore not possible to build any relationship with regard to any particular project or work stream. Communication with the SFIS team in Harlow had been good with regard to the cases that were transferred, but only because three members of the former Benefit Investigation team were currently based there. However, two of those are now transferring out of the Harlow office which means that future communication may not be so effective.

In conclusion it was noted that the Council's working practices have been changed to adapt to the lack of control over Housing Benefit fraud investigation and officers would continue to monitor the situation and make further changes if necessary. However, it was too early to determine exactly how effective the transfer to a single fraud investigation service would be in reducing fraud in the Housing Benefit system in the future.



## 4. NEIGHBOURHOODS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

*The Neighbourhoods and Community Services Select Committee consisted of the following members:*

Councillor M Sartin (Chairman)

Councillor H Brady (Vice Chairman)

Councillors N Avey, R Gadsby, L Hughes, B Jennings, L Mead, A Mitchell, S Neville, A Patel and B Surtees

The Lead officer was Derek Macnab, Director of Neighbourhoods and Deputy Chief Executive.

### *Terms of Reference*

1. To undertake overview and scrutiny, utilising appropriate methods and techniques, of services and functions of the Neighbourhood and Communities Directorates (not including Housing matters).
2. To consider any matter referred to the Select Committee by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
3. To keep under review:
  - (i) *Environmental enforcement activities;*
  - (ii) *Safer communities activities;*
  - (iii) *Waste management activities; and*
  - (iv) *Leisure Management*
  - (v) *Local Plan Scrutiny*
4. To identify any matters within the services and functions of the Neighbourhoods Directorate and the community services and community safety activities of the Communities Directorate that require in-depth scrutiny and report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as necessary.
5. To act as the Council's Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committee and to keep under review the activities of the Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership as a whole or any of the individual partners which make up the Partnership.
6. To undertake performance monitoring in relation to the services and functions of the Neighbourhoods Directorate and the community services and community safety activities of the Communities Directorate, against adopted Key Performance Indicators and identified areas of concern.
7. 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.
8. To receive reports from the Waste Management Partnership Board in respect of the operation of and performance of the waste management contract.
9. To monitor and keep under review leisure management matters and in particular the procurement of the Leisure Management Contract.

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

**(i) Key Performance Indicators 2014/15 Quarter 4 (Outturn)** – At their first meeting of the year in July 2015 The Committee considered the outturn (Q4) report for the Key Performance Indicators for 2014/15 specific to this Select Committee area of responsibility.



**(ii) Update on the adoption of the River Roding Flood Risk Management Strategy** - The Committee considered the letter from the Environment Agency updating the council on the River Roding Flood Risk Management Strategy. It was noted that the Environment Agency (EA) had attended the Safer Cleaner Greener Scrutiny Panel sometime ago to brief them on this management strategy. This letter was sent to every property next to the river and to this Council as it had land by the river. It was noted that members were very unhappy about this strategy.



The EA was responsible for the overview of flood risk management in England and had identified the best way to manage flood risk in the Roding catchment over the next 100 years, with the aim of protecting as many properties as possible while carefully balancing the amount of public money they spent.

**(iii) Crucial Crew Initiative** – In September 2015 the Committee received a report on 'Crucial Crew'. This was an annual event which was facilitated and delivered by the Council's Community Service and Safety teams. It was specifically designed to educate primary school pupils aged 10 (year 6) in a range of personal safety, health and wellbeing topics.

Crucial Crew has been provided for over 10 years and was historically delivered over the same two week period in June, in line with agreed primary school timetables. This year every Year 6 primary school pupil in the Epping Forest District attended the half day events; in all 1351 Epping Forest pupils participated. In addition 13 schools from the Brentwood area paid to attend, bringing a further 408 children into the project, making a total of 1759 attendees.



The event has traditionally been held at Gilwell Park Scouting Headquarters; however, following recent notification of a planned increase in hire costs by approximately £2000 in 2016 it was decided that an alternative venue of Debden House would be piloted in 2016 for the same venue costs as 2015.

**(iv) Draft Community Safety Partnership Annual Report for 2014-15** - The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) was made up of representatives from Essex Police, Essex Fire and Rescue Service, Community Rehabilitation Service, Epping Forest District Council, Voluntary Action Epping Forest and the Magistracy. They meet on a quarterly basis to oversee the range of work undertaken and were responsible for undertaking an annual review of current crime and disorder issues.



Their main source of funding was from the Essex Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and although this has reduced, they have still managed to function efficiently and effectively.

Over the year they had assessed the following issues as local priorities:

- Domestic Abuse;
- Assault/violent crime;
- Anti-social behaviour; and
- Burglary in a dwelling.

They did some of the best work in Essex on domestic abuse by care and support of victims. They ran a sanctuary scheme with Community Safety, Essex Police and Essex County Fire & Rescue Service to provide enhanced security to very high risk victims that do not wish to move, making them feel safer at home. They also run 'J9' training courses across West Essex to deal with the preventative side of domestic abuse. Their work on Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) continues to be a priority area. They have an ASB investigator who is trained in mediation and is also the EFDC Restorative Justice Ambassador to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. This was a new initiative to identify emerging problem families and provide support and mediation before problems escalate.



In 2013 with funding from the PCC, EFDC's community safety team purchased 5 cameras allowing the installation of a self contained CCTV system (camera, monitor and recorder). These were offered to local residents on a loan basis with an option to purchase at cost price. They would be used to assist across a broad range of matters including gathering evidence in support of allegations of Anti-social Behaviour or deterring bogus callers.

Burglary from dwellings continued to be a priority crime due to the close proximity to the London Metropolitan area and the excellent transport links through the district. This allows travelling criminals to enter and leave by a number of different means.

**(v) Key Performance Indicators 2015/16 Quarterly Updates** - the Committee reviewed the Key Performance Indicators relevant to their Select Committee on a quarterly basis.

**(vi) Review of the Local Plan** – at each meeting the Committee received regular updates on the current state of the Council's Local Plan.

**(vii) Uttlesford Local Plan – Issues and Options Consultation** – In November 2015 the meeting noted that Uttlesford District Council's previous Local Plan ran into difficulties at Examination in Public late in 2014. The main concerns related to the Objectively Assessed Housing Needs (OAHN) figure relying on out of date evidence and the capacity of the village of Elsenham to take the amount of new development being proposed. The examination was not completed and as a consequence Uttlesford subsequently withdrew the Plan in February 2015.



Their current Issues and Options consultation on a new local plan was intended to be the first of three stages of formal consultation and engagement. They hoped to have a final draft plan by next year and a submission version by 2017.

Uttlesford along with Harlow & East Hertfordshire is one of the

Strategic Housing Market Area (SHMA) partners with this Council. Officers were concerned that the SHMA was not mentioned in the consultation document as this was a key piece of joint evidence prepared for the four authorities in the Housing Market Area. Officers were also surprised that there was no mention in the document about the boundary issues and that more was not said about the potential impact of Stanstead Airport.

**(viii) Community Services Summer Activities 2015** - The 2015 summer activities were organised and delivered by the Community Services section. They consisted of a wide range of activities to engage children, young people and their families. It was noted that almost 2000 people had participated in the extensive range of activities on offer which included physical activities such as Soccer Tots, mountain biking, Play in the Park and Play in the Forest sessions and dance programmes as well as other creative activities.

These activities were detailed in a brochure that was delivered to all schools in the district. This was supplemented by fliers, posters, school visits, social media, a website, radio interviews and attendance at community events and Town Shows.



There was also an 'Inclusion Programme' which was funded through Essex County Council, designed for children and young people with additional needs. Although parents and carers frequently elect to attend sessions with their children, a special fully supervised camping break was organised this year to give parents respite and enable the children to stay without their families if they wanted to. This proved hugely successful and received excellent feedback.

**(ix) Fly Tipping Clearance and Enforcement** – In November the Committee also received a report on fly-tipping clearance and enforcement. It was noted that this was a problem that was growing. The Environment & Neighbourhoods (EN) Team were responsible for enforcing waste law in the district. They log all incidents of fly-tipping and prioritise investigations to try and trace the source of the waste and fly-tipper. They took as an example Laundry Lane that was constantly being fly-tipped and constantly being cleared by the district or the County Council. Waste has



also been dumped on private land and although the Council has the powers to force the land owner to clear the tip they did have some sympathy with them on this. They were also getting pressure from the private land owners to help them clear up the tipped areas.

**(x) Update from the Green Corporate Working Party** - The Committee noted that they were working towards a new environmental policy to tie in with the Council's Corporate Objectives.

A presentation was given to the Leadership Team on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2015 which Directors and Assistant Directors were asked to consider the options for the development of a corporate energy strategy/environmental policy. They came up with a number of suggestions including:

- Electric vehicle charge points in the district;
- The council to have their own electric vehicles;
- E-billing, e-notification, more on-line forms;
- Have targets for energy efficiency as part of the local plan;



- Making communities resistant to the impact of climate changes;
- Making meetings paperless.

These, and the other suggestions made would be taken to the next Green Working Party meeting to be discussed. They would then look to create an 'environmental charter' with an action plan which would then be brought back to this Select Committee for comments and agreement. This would replace the Council's existing Climate Change Policy 2009.

**(xi) Review of Waste and Recycling Collection Arrangements** – On 17 December 2015 a special meeting was arranged for this Select Committee with a one item agenda, specifically to review the new domestic waste and recycling contract and following the switch to the four day collection schedule and the introduction of new vehicles and technology. This resulted in an unacceptably high level of missed collections. The Council's Environment Portfolio Holder noting that this was an important service, formally requested that the Overview and Scrutiny undertake a review on his behalf and that the outcome be formally reported back to the Cabinet. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that this request should be determined by the Neighbourhoods and Communities Select Committee. Given this, a single, one off meeting of the Select Committee be dedicated to this single subject.



*(See Case Study for full details)*

**(xii) PICK Form on 20mph Speed Limit** – In January 2016 The Committee welcomed David Sprunt, from the Essex Transportation Strategy and Engagement, Economic Growth; and Vicky Duff, the Essex Network Management Group Manager. They were there to enlighten the committee on those facts and policies used by Essex County Council and the guidance issued by the Department of Transport on road speeds, especially relating to the implementation of 20mph limits.



The Committee noted that:

- That Essex CC had a Speed Management Strategy advised by the Department of Transport circular 01/2013;
- It had been established by research that 20mph speed limits generally only led to small reductions in traffic speeds;
- The latest advice was that a mix of 20mph limits and 20mph zones would be better, providing that the signing was correct;
- The objective would be that 'any 20mph restrictions should be self-enforcing';
- Any 20mph limit of zone would require a Speed Limit Order, which had to be consulted on;
- The current policy allowed for the consideration of 20mph limits on local roads if the mean speeds were less than 24mph;
- At the beginning of the limits there would have to be clear signage and also at the end of the restrictions. There would also have to be repeater signs along the route;
- 20mph zones had traffic calming measures e.g. speed humps, chicanes etc. these zones applied not just to one road but to whole areas, such as estates;
- It was noted that generally people did not like them and the low speeds over traffic calming measures also produced more noise for residents;
- The most effective method for reducing speed was the use of chicanes, but it needed some major engineering work to put them in;



- 20mph signs could be used as a calming feature but they would not physically reduce the speeds;
- The county also has a “20’s plenty” scheme used mainly outside schools, but very little reductions in speeds were achieved;
- Advisory speed limit signs could be also be used outside schools, they were not mandatory and thus no speed limit order was required;
- Before a scheme was put into place, information was required in the form of speed surveys, traffic surveys and collision data;
- It was noted that a lot of areas in Essex did not have high collision rates for Children and pedestrians;
- Repeat signage in an area tended to create clutter on those roads;
- Essex Police did not have the resources to enforce these areas.

**(xiii) Area Crime Analyst** – Also in January 2016 the Chairman welcomed the Safer Communities Manager and West Local Policing Area Partnership Analyst, who gave a short presentation on the local crime and disorder figures up to and including November 2015, via the Home Office system, ‘iQuanta’. This system provided data for a 3 year span.



The Committee noted that:

- All Crime was up by 14% (630 cases) in comparison to previous years figures to date;
- On a month by month total – in December 2012 there were 591 cases compared to November 2015 with 642 cases, an increase of 7.9% (51 cases) over 3 years;
- Against other similar authorities we had similar figures to Maidstone, who the ONS identified as a match to Epping. Our figures were 56.835 crimes to Maidstone’s 56.588 crimes;
- Broxbourne was a border council similar to us with similar proximity to London and transport links and had 62.278 crimes and Watford (with 72.614 crimes) had similar tube and Motorway links;
- The figures for violence against the person showed a 27% (246) increase in Epping Forest in comparison to the previous year;
- Epping was 17% below the Essex average;
- In comparison with other similar authorities, the figures for the year ending November 2015, Epping had 1690, Maidstone 2690, Watford 1704 and Broxbourne;
- Following a peak in October ASB incidents had fallen by a third in December; and
- By locality, Loughton remained the highest, with 263 ASB incidents, followed by Waltham Abbey (176) and Epping (139).

**(xiv) CCTV Action Plan** – The Committee reviewed the EFDC CCTV strategy for 2016-2022, noting that this report had recently gone to the Cabinet for their information and agreement.



The Committee noted that the strategy covered the period from 2015 to 2022, following on from the previous strategy that was produced in 2008, when the Community Safety Team took over the responsibility for the Council’s CCTV provision as part of the Safer, Cleaner Greener Review.

The Strategy set out the Council’s current CCTV provision, detailing respective locations, numbers of cameras, condition and costs for maintenance, and repair and replacements over the next seven years,

along with recommendations for de-commissioning of equipment. It also provided an overview of the benefits that were realised for the local communities in which it was installed and the various use made of CCTV footage by the Police and insurance companies.

The Council's success in the use of CCTV had generated ongoing demands from Directorates to install new CCTV equipment within key areas of the district and the point had now been reached where an increased budget was required, to meet the costs of replacing old equipment and the increased servicing and maintenance costs, which was also covered by the Strategy.

**(xv) Local Policing Proposals** – The Committee received a report on the recently proposed Policing cuts and their implications on the Council's Community Safety Service.

This originated from November 2015, when the PCC, Nick Alston and the Chief Constable of Essex Police announced proposals to make significant changes to local Policing across Essex, in a move to ensure that Essex Police was fit for purpose, in the future.

This report was aimed at starting a discussion with members on the implications of the reduction in police resources and the impact it would have on the Council's Community Safety Service.

The problem council officers faced were that they were best guessing what was going to happen in the district. They were looking at potential reductions in policing, such as triaging calls into High, Medium or Low risks and then only reacting to high risk cases and fielding the other calls to other relevant authorities. They were mindful that the Council would pick up more work and there would be more disgruntled members of the public not having the Police act on their problems.



Anti-social Behaviour powers given to us by the Government would raise the officer's workload, especially as the Police would not act. This may also result in more problems at the reception desks from disgruntled members of the public.

The Council only had two ASB officers to deal with the Epping Forest District. They were seeing a rise in cases from 192 to 331 cases. The public would make their feelings known to Members who will then let the officers know, increasing their caseload as they try and resolve complaints on behalf of Members and this would be very time consuming.

**(xvi) Reality Roadshow 2015** - Building on the long-standing success of Crucial Crew, the Reality Roadshow initiative was a personal safety, health & well-being event that brought together a host of statutory and voluntary agencies, to deliver a day of educational workshops to Year 9 (14 year old) pupils at schools in the district. It was specifically tailored to address young people's issues that have been identified as a priority concern locally. It provides over 1100 pupils in the district with expert advice and guidance on making the right choices in life for good health and well being.

Pupils participated in either 5 or 6 workshops depending on individual school timetables and each session was specifically designed to address current issues facing local young people. The workshops delivered in 2015/16 were:

- The Consequences of Crime – delivered by Essex Magistrates
- Online Internet Safety – EFDC's Community Health and Well-being Team
- Sexual Health - NHS Sexual Health Services

- Legal Highs and Substance Misuse - Alcohol & Drugs Advisory Service (ADAS)
- Alcohol Awareness - AlcoHELP
- Healthy Relationships and Domestic Abuse - Safer Places

The impact of the Reality Roadshow programme on participants was generally very significant, as the messages given are very clear and designed to show the worse case scenarios of being involved in negative behaviours. The programme also promoted the opportunity for young people to make changes in their lives and to receive support and advice from the various agencies available locally.

**(xvii) Response to DCLG technical Consultation on the NPPF** – Also in January 2016



the Committee received a report on the response to the proposed changes to the national planning policy consultation. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in 2012 and was supported by

the online Planning Practice Guidance. Amendments are now proposed to the NPPF which encompassed the following:

- Broadening the definition of affordable housing, to expand the range of low cost housing opportunities for those aspiring to own their new home (this includes the Government's intention to introduce Starter Homes as a type of low cost home ownership);
- Increasing the density of development around commuter hubs, to make more efficient use of land in suitable locations;
- Supporting sustainable new settlements, development on brownfield land and small sites (up to 10 units), and delivery of housing allocated in plans; and
- Supporting delivery of starter homes.

There were nine sections contained with the consultation paper and 23 questions on which answers were sought.

**(xviii) Museum Development Trust** – At their March 2016 meeting the Committee received a report on the proposal to establish a Museum Development Trust for Epping Forest and Lowewood Museums.

The meeting noted that In April 2015, officers were successful in securing £55,000 funding from Arts Council England (ACE) as part of its Resilience Programme, to undertake two feasibility studies. The aim of the studies was to investigate opportunities for supporting resilience of the Museum, Heritage and Culture (MHC) service over the long-term and during economic austerity.



The key recommendation to come out of the study was to establish a Development Trust to operate in parallel to the general management of Epping Forest and Lowewood Museum services based on the model of a company limited by guarantee and registered charity.

They noted the positive benefits of setting up a separate charitable entity, which included the ability to access a range of funding possibilities that were not previously available, opportunity to secure additional grants and donations and the ability to claim Gift Aid on qualifying ticket sales.

A tripartite arrangement came into being in early February, following an approach by Chelmsford City Council for support and advice in relation to operation of their Museum Service, which had just received funding for a major Heritage Lottery Fund project.

Two senior officers from Chelmsford came to look at our museum and talk to senior officers here. They had discussions about the Trust and how to set it up. They were very impressed with our work and were keen to act as a partner agency for us and set themselves up as a separate Foundation Trust. We shall establish a close relationship with them as well as Broxbourne.

**(xix) Prevent Initiative and Radicalisation Issues** – Also at their March meeting the committee received a report on the Home Office funding for the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism – the ‘Prevent Duty’ that came into force for local authorities on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015.



In October 2015, the Council received notification from the Home Office, that it would be allocating £10,000 to all local authorities (excluding priority areas) as a one off payment in this financial year, for the delivery of specific work to support the implementation of the Prevent Duty.

All Councils were required to apply for the funding and needed to present a plan on how the money would be spent. The application on behalf of EFDC focussed on two distinct areas of work; the upgrading of the Council's IT systems to prevent misuse of IT for extremist material, and, the provision of a Prevent Education Programme within the district's local secondary schools, for both pupils and teachers.

Following the receipt of the grant a nationally recognised Training Programme '*Me and You Education*' was therefore commissioned to undertake the delivery of in-schools Prevent work and this has been delivered to pupils in years 7 – 13.

**(xx) Brentwood Draft Local plan: Public Consultation** - The Committee noted that the Brentwood Draft Local Plan includes the strategy, planning policies and proposed land allocations intended to cover the period 2013 to 2033.

Epping Forest District and Brentwood Borough are in a very similar situation – i.e. with challenging pitch provision targets from the GTAA (112 and 84 respectively) and with very comprehensive Green Belt coverage (92% and 89% respectively), so there could be some advantage in considering joint provision in the general area of the common boundary.

**(xxi) Response to Lower Thames Crossing Consultation** - Highways England was consulting on proposals for a new road crossing of the River Thames connecting Kent and Essex. It was considered that a new crossing was needed to reduce congestion at the existing Dartford Crossing and unlock economic growth, supporting the development of new homes and jobs in the region.



The proposal was the culmination of lengthy investigations into options for a new Lower Thames Crossing which has been lobbied for by Kent and Essex County Councils and business leaders.

**(xxii) Replacement Essex Waste Local Plan – Consultation** - The Replacement Waste Local Plan: Pre Submission Draft was the version of the Plan proposed to be submitted to the Secretary of State, leading up to independent examination by a Planning Inspector later in 2016. It included a vision statement, objectives and a spatial strategy to enable the delivery of sustainable waste development, site allocations and policies to manage waste



development. The Plan covers the administrative areas of Essex County Council and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council.

The focus of this consultation, which was being carried out under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 was on soundness and legal compliance. The Planning Inspector could only address these issues in his consideration of the Waste Plan.

**(xxiii) Data Quality Strategy 2016/17 – 2018/19** – The Committee noted that the Council needed timely, accurate and reliable data in order to manage activities and meet internal and external requirements to demonstrate accountability through accurate reporting. Data was used for the assessment of the Council's performance, including the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The Data Quality Strategy set out the arrangements for the next 3 years to ensure key data meets the highest standards and was 'right first time'.



The Council had identified principles and arrangements to ensure high standards of data quality and had for a number of years, formalized them within a strategy, to support consistency and encourage high standards of practice of data quality management. This revised strategy continued to reflect the principles for data quality originally identified by the former Audit Commission.

**(xxiv) Enforcement Activity** – The Committee received a report on the enforcement actions taken in 2015. They noted that in line with previous reports on enforcement activities of the Environment & Neighbourhoods team, the data has been broken down into 6 month periods covering the summer and winter months. In general summer months were busier, particularly for noise complaints. This pattern has been repeated in 2015.



Noise and waste/fly-tipping issues make up a large percentage of the teams enforcement work, it was estimated that the Environment and Neighbourhood Officers (ENO) spend 80% of their time on these two issues across the district.

In some cases officers are clearly working towards establishing non-compliance with the law, with the aim of instigating prosecution proceedings e.g. fly-tipping incidents. However, officers also spend a great deal of time trying to educate, deter and resolve issues informally. That was particularly the case with noise issues and other neighbour nuisance complaints. Although prosecutions draw attention, enforcement officers investigate and resolve many more cases informally.

Officers have started to use new powers to issue formal Community Protection Warnings (CPW) and Community Protection Notices (CPN). This new power provided officers with more scope to deal with some issues that previously did not fall under specific statutory nuisance powers.

Although the new power was welcome, the Committee noted that it came at a time when other enforcement agencies, that share similar enforcement responsibilities, such as the Police, Environment Agency and Essex County Council were increasingly under pressure, leading to more enforcement work being directed to the ENO team.



## **Case Study: Review of Waste and Recycling Collection Arrangements**

On 17 December 2015, the Chairman of the Committee welcomed the members of the public, officers, councillors and invited guests to a special meeting of the Neighbourhoods and Communities Select Committee. The meeting was to review the new domestic waste and recycling contract and following the switch to the four day collection schedule and the introduction of new vehicles and technology. This had resulted in an unacceptably high level of missed collections. The Council's Environment Portfolio Holder noting that this was an important service, formally requested that the Overview and Scrutiny undertake a review on his behalf and that the outcome to be reported back to the Cabinet. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed that this request should be determined by the Neighbourhoods and Communities Select Committee. Given this, a single, one off meeting of the Select Committee be dedicated to this single subject.

In addition to the Environment Portfolio Holder and the Council's lead officers on Waste and Recycling, senior representatives from Biffa municipal were present. They were invited to give evidence and answer questions.

### **Part one – the Procurement Process**

The Committee went on to review the procurement process. The consultant from White Young and Green, who supported the council through the procurement process gave a brief description of why the council chose to go for Competitive Dialogue, the procurement process, any key considerations and service improvements identified. He noted that this process enabled the bidders to take into consideration:

- the grounds maintenance service;
- establish synergies between grounds maintenance and street cleansing services;
- to market test the in-house service for fleet management and maintenance;
- to seek a solution in relation to depot provision;
- an innovative approach to the provision of trade waste collection and recycling;
- achieve a minimum average recycling rate in excess of 60%;
- the provision of up to date ICT; and
- where affordable to endeavour to go for innovation and added value.

The Council had expressed a wish to move from their current depot and explore alternative type of fleet contract and would also examine the contract term, which should be longer than the former 7 years.

They were also looking at how recycling, composting etc. could be improved; the procurement process was wholly designed to see how contractors would tackle this.

### **Part two – Mobilisation and the first 6 months of Contract**



The meeting went on to consider the second part of the review, the mobilisation and the first 6 months of the contract.

Officers advised the meeting that the decision to award the contract was made by the Cabinet in May 2014. After that there was a handover period from Sita to Biffa. The first thing was to get Biffa set up at the Langston Road depot; TUPE staff transfer over to Biffa; transfer assets like vehicles and the stock of wheelie bins and other

containers etc. This was carried out successfully and Biffa operated the 5 day collection service from 4 November 2014. The Waste and Recycling Manager added that the council acted as a buffer between the outgoing and incoming contractors.

Officers noted that every household received a letter about the change over, with a calendar showing the collection dates, information was also put on our website with a search tool to enable householders to check the date and type of waste and recycling collection, and this proved very successful. The Council had received criticism for not having enough publicity, but the problem was not that, but that collections were missed.

The Portfolio Holder added that with hindsight the letters were not as clear as they could have been. But more broadly, we had done a good job communicating by using the website and other means.

### **Part three – Revised Arrangements, Problems, Operational Issues & Remedial Actions**

Officers noted that the 4 day collection consisted of Tuesday to Friday collections, a one pass collection for dry recycling and glass and new ICT and Customer relationship Management systems for the management of customer contact and also the new collections for small electrical equipment, textiles and batteries.

At the start the Council had received feedback that the collections were not happening as effectively as they should have been. Some houses were missed and this was coupled with a lack of knowledge of some of the areas being covered. Staff did not necessarily know the location of some of the bins as there were some unusual places they were being kept. This ended in missed collections and staff had to do some relearning of the 'ins' and 'outs' of an area. Some rural areas had consistent problems at this time.

At its peak the contact centre was getting about 750 calls a day and they handled this by drafting in staff from other areas to answer calls and emails. An additional problem was that officers had to learn new ways of processing the new systems; at the start the lines of communication were not that clear, but this had changed now.

A member of the public said that she had received her recycling calendar for May to October for which she thanked the officers. But, right from the beginning her general waste was collected but her recycling waste wasn't. On numerous occasions during May and July when she reported it she was told that Biffa would be informed of this.



Officers from Biffa noted that that the new ways of working required change. They should have been using local crews; and once they started operating they were not achieving what they should. They then had to run three 'mop-up' crews to deal with the problems that arose. A combination of various issues caused a perfect storm. They also lost some employees and with them local knowledge. The new vehicles were different and needed some time for familiarisation; they were also slower which impacted on the length of the rounds. They were also relying on a new IT system which had

teething problems and the longer working days meant that they got caught up in traffic as

well. They noted that they did not have enough resources and introduced four new rounds and also had to bring in new people.

A full report went to the February Overview and Scrutiny Committee and onward to the April 2015 Cabinet meeting.



# TASK AND FINISH PANELS

## 1. *YOUTH ENGAGEMENT REVIEW TASK AND FINISH PANEL*

### **Origin**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 10 February 2015 set up a Task and Finish Panel to review potential options for the best use of the existing budgets for youth engagement for the future. Also, they agreed that it would be helpful to co-opt two youth councillors to sit on this panel and give their input. This Panel stemmed from a PICK form submitted by Councillor Kane the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Community Services.

### **Aims and Objectives**

- (a) To report findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and submit a final report for consideration by the Committee and the Council by November 2015;
- (b) To include two representatives from the District Youth Council on the Task and Finish Panel;
- (c) To determine the impact of the Council's current engagement with young people, through consultation with local statutory and voluntary sector partners, and,
- (d) To determine the best use of the allocated funding for the future.

### **Draft Terms of Reference**

- 1. To review the operation of the Youth Council and identify specific areas of work undertaken and the success and impact of these;
- 2. To review the level of engagement with peers in local schools and 'other young people' of all ages across the district, through the range of work undertaken by the Youth Council and the importance of this engagement for local community groups;
- 3. To consider feedback from local schools and other partners in respect of the work of the Youth Council;
- 4. To identify the expenditure related to various elements of the Youth Council work programme and analyse the cost/benefit of this;
- 5. To consider other work undertaken by Community Services and Safety to engage with young people and identify the costs associated with this;
- 6. To consider the status of Essex Youth Services following recent service transformation and resulting implications for the district; and,
- 7. To prepare a set of recommendations for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in November 2015.

## **The Panel**

The Committee appointed the following members to serve on the Panel:

**Members** (up to May '15): S. Murray, G. Mohindra, C. Roberts, B. Surtees, K. Adams, R. Butler

**Members** (after May '15): S. Murray, G. Mohindra, C. Roberts, S. Neville, B. Surtees A. Patel

**Other Members who attended:** Mrs H Kane, J McIvor (Youth Councillor), M Tinker (Youth Councillor)

**Officers:** J Chandler (Assistant Director Community Services and Safety), G Wallis (Community, Health & Wellbeing Manager and R Perrin (Democratic Services Officer).

The Panel had its first meeting in April 2015 and their last meeting on 14 September 2015.

## **Outcome**

Recommendations of the Panel in relation to the Epping Forest Youth Council was:

- i) That the Council retains and continues to support and develop the Youth Council in terms of wider youth engagement;
- ii) That the Youth Council be afforded the opportunity to present a report/update twice a year to all Members of Council through a suitable meeting;
- iii) That the Youth Council acts as a consultee for stakeholder presentations at Overview and Scrutiny Committees;
- iv) That the current operational budget for the Youth Council be maintained at £12,000 per annum; and,
- v) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee makes a bid to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee for Continuing Services Budget (CSB) Growth of £8,000 per annum for an enabling fund, that the Youth Council can access for projects, to be agreed by the Neighbourhoods & Communities Select Committee.

Recommendations of the Panel in regard to future delivery of youth provision by Community Services and Safety:

- i) That the Council pursues the devolvement of the budget and responsibilities for Youth Provision from Essex County Council to the District Council; and,
- ii) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee makes a bid to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee for Continuing Services Budget (CSB) Growth of £25,000 per annum, for targeted work by Community Services and Safety and not at the detriment of the current service.



## 2. GRANT AID REVIEW TASK AND FINISH PANEL

### Origin:

At its meeting on 16 September 2014, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the establishment of a new Task and Finish Panel to review the Council's Grant Aid Scheme for Sports, Arts, Leisure and Community Groups in terms of the overall policy/guidance and procedures for Major Grants and Service Level Agreements including those for the determination of applications, and those for the pre and post determination stages.



### Aims and Objectives:

- (a) To report findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to submit a final report for consideration by the Committee and the Council by April 2015;
- (b) To gather evidence and information in relation to the review through the receipt of appropriate data, presentations and by participation in fact-finding visits to other authorities if necessary;
- (c) To have due regard to relevant legislation and the Council's procedures;
- (d) To consult political groups and independent Councillors during the review process.

### Term of Reference:

To review the current structure of the Grant Aid Scheme, taking into consideration the terms of the overall policy/guidance and procedures those for the determination of applications, and those for the pre and post determination stages and how this framework would best fit the structure of the Council.

(1) To specifically consider:

- The eligibility criteria and assessment arrangements for funding taking into account the budget available and the thematic areas in the leisure and cultural strategy;
- The grant maxima;
- Appropriate arrangements for safeguarding;
- Review procedures.

(2) To consider any other matters that are deemed appropriate.

### The Panel

The Committee appointed the following members to serve on the Panel:

Councillors Caroline Pond (Chairman), J Knapman (Vice-Chairman), T Boyce, A Mitchell, S Murray, G Shiell and B Surtees

The Panel did not finish its work by the end of the 2014/15 municipal year and continued its work into the 2015/16 year, holding its final meeting on 14 March 2016.

The Panel recognised the vital role that the voluntary and community sector brought to local community well-being in the Epping Forest District. However, it also acknowledged the need for a more proactive approach to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of grants awarded, and particularly the higher level grants.

### **Outcome**

The Panel were satisfied that the agreed amendments to the Grant Aid Service Level Agreements and improved performance management would ensure that the Council was receiving best value from the grants awarded. They also felt that the level of remaining Grant Aid Funding should remain as it is, to ensure that the Council could continue to support the essential services provided through the voluntary sector.

The Panel made the following recommendations:

- (1) That the current level of Grant Aid funding be maintained;
- (2) That, from 1 April 2016, funding of less than £5,000 per annum for three years be provided for Voluntary Groups without the need for a formal Service Level Agreement, but, subject to the receipt of an Annual Report from each Group outlining the benefit to the District from the funding;
- (3) That the revised Service Level Agreement as agreed by the Panel, be adopted by the Council;
- (4) That the District Council maintain provision for longer term funding to Voluntary Action Epping Forest and Epping Forest Citizens Advice Bureau from 2016/17 onwards, based on performance management benchmarking closely monitored on an annual basis; and
- (5) That a more rigorous process of monitoring is adopted for the higher Grant Awards currently in operation for Voluntary Action Epping Forest and Citizen's Advice Bureau

