

## **Report to Council**

**Date of meeting: 26 July 2016**

**Subject: Overview and Scrutiny Report to Council**

**Contact for further information: Councillor M Sartin  
(Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee)**

**Committee Secretary:** Adrian Hendry, ext.4246

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### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**That the Overview and Scrutiny progress report from April 2016 to the present be noted.**

### **Report:**

#### **Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 19 April 2016**

1. At our last meeting for 2015/16, held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2016, we received a presentation from The Epping Forest Youth Council who gave us an update on their past year's work and their future programme. We noted that they had contributed to 14 consultations during the year and that Volunteering remained a big theme for them; they were passionate about encouraging other young people to volunteer, were working closely with 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.
2. We also noted that the Youth Council had secured outside funding of £6,750 in the last 12 month period to help them in their project work.
3. Also at this meeting we received a presentation from the Essex County Children Services. We welcomed Chris Martin, the Integrated Commissioning Director (West) 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 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.
4. Essex County Council was in the process of redesigning the current service offer for Children's Centres and the Healthy Child Programme. This would place parents, children and families at the heart of the service redesign.
5. The information collected from the consultation would be analysed and once completed would be added into their planning before making their recommendations to the ECC Cabinet. They would publicise the link for the recommendations once it was ready and they expected that to be late this summer and the new service to go live in April 2017.
6. We then received the final report of the Grant Aid Task and Finish Panel. 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. They concluded that the current level of Grant Aid be maintained and made four other recommendations to help expedite the council's funding procedures.

7. The Committee then considered the Equality Objectives for 2016 to 2020 which were agreed and then considered the Select Committee framework, which we slightly altered so that in the new municipal year, the four Select Committees would be lined up directly to the four directorates.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 7 June 2016**

8. At our first meeting for this year, held on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016 we received a presentation from the Superintendent of Epping Forest, Paul Thompson and Judy Adams the Chairman of the Friends of Epping Forest speaking to the recent public consultation on the Forest Management Plan. We noted that a new management plan was needed to guide the future management of Epping Forest.

9. The top two topics that the public expressed most concern over were public recreation and enjoyment and the preservation of the natural aspects of the forest.

10. A clear message from the consultation was that unstructured play involving natural features such as puddles, streams, sticks and logs was preferred to the provision of traditional formal play equipment. Also many respondents wanted to strike a balance between wild forest, waymarked trails and easy access trails.

11. We noted that the management plan would prompt further research to better understand the impact of visitor activities and would consider whether the current licensing scheme should be modified or extended. The presentation produced a considerable number of questions from members which were fully answered.

12. We then also reviewed and noted the outturn report on the Key Objectives for last year, agreed the final draft of the O&S Annual Report for 2015/16 and agreed the membership of the Select Committees for the coming year. It was agreed to hold a special meeting of the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Select Committees to discuss their upcoming work programmes and this was scheduled for 30 June.

### **O&S Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen meeting – 30 June 2016**

13. The Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Select Committees were invited to attend a new meeting to co-ordinate their work programmes for the coming year.

14. The following areas were covered and possible solutions were discussed:

- a) Presentations at Overview and Scrutiny Committee – members could meet agencies beforehand to discuss exactly the queries they intended to make at the presentation meeting. Scoping reports could be used.
- b) Presentations could be connected to an actual event or to a particular report being published.

- c) A good source for scrutiny was social media; trends in complaints could bring out particular problems.
- d) The topics around Freedom of Information Requests could also be identified as scrutiny projects.
- e) Directorate Business Plans could be scrutinised.
- f) Focus could be put on Key Performance Indicators that were shown as being in the red, where targets had not been achieved.
- g) There was a need to focus on issues rather than bodies.
- h) Trends could also be identified from Compliments/Complaints.

15. It was suggested that in future, perhaps around February or March, the work programmes for next year could be started rather than, as this year, the early summer period.

16. A full report on the outcome of this meeting went to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 19 July. The group will meet again in 6 months time.