

4. NEIGHBOURHOODS SELECT COMMITTEE

The Neighbourhoods Select Committee consisted of the following members:

Councillor N Bedford (Chairman)
Councillor H Brady (Vice Chairman)
Councillors N Avey, R Baldwin, L Hughes, J Jennings, R Morgan, S Neville, A Patel,
C P Pond, B Rolfe, M Sartin, G Shiell, E Webster and J H Whitehouse

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

Terms of Reference

General

1. To undertake overview and scrutiny, utilising appropriate methods and techniques, of services and functions of the Neighbourhood Directorate;
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) *Waste management activities; and*
 - (iii) *Leisure Management*
 - (iv) *Local Plan Scrutiny*
4. To respond to applicable consultations as appropriate;
5. To establish working groups as necessary to undertake any activity within these terms of reference;
6. To identify any matters within the services and functions of the Neighbourhoods Directorate that require in-depth scrutiny and report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as necessary;

Performance Monitoring

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

Environment

8. 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.
9. To receive reports from the Waste Management Partnership Board in respect of the operation of and performance of the waste management contract;

Leisure

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

Transformation Project

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

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

(i) Neighbourhoods Directorate Business Plan for 2017/18 – At their first meeting of the year, the Select Committee received the Neighbourhoods Business Plan. The relevant Portfolio Holders attended the first meeting of each Select Committee to present their Business Plans, which were developed on a Directorate basis. This enabled each Select Committee to undertake a more in-depth scrutiny role regarding the numerous services which made up each Select Committee.

(ii) Regular Updates on the Local Plan – Throughout the year the Committee received regular updates on the development of the Council's Local Plan when they received reports from the officer in charge and had the chance to scrutinise the progress made and identify any obstacles that were encountered.

(iii) Key Performance Indicators 2016/17 – Outturn Review – The Committee reviewed the outturn position of the Corporate Plan Key Action Plan for 2016/17.

Thirteen of the KPIs fell within the Neighbourhoods SC's areas of responsibility. The overall position with regard to the achievement of target performance at the end of the year for these indicators, was as follows:

- (a) 9 (70%) indicators achieved target;
- (b) 2 (15% indicators did not achieve target; although
- (c) 2 (15%) indicator performed within its tolerated amber margin.

(iv) Corporate Plan Key Action Plan 2016/17 – Outturn Review - The Committee reviewed the outturn position of the Corporate Plan Key Action Plan for 2016/17 in relation to its areas of responsibility.

Fourteen actions fell within the areas of responsibility of the Neighbourhoods Select Committee. At the end of the year:

- 8 (57%) of these actions have been achieved at year end; and
- 1 (36%) of the deliverables or actions were not completed by year-end albeit significant progress has been made.
- 5 (7%) of these actions were expected to achieve target in the next 6 months

(v) Environmental Charter - The Corporate Green Working Party (CGWP) had been asked to develop an environmental charter and action plan to replace the Council's Climate Change Policy from 2009. The CGWP agreed that this should be modelled on the Climate Local methodology. This was a Local Government Association and Environment Agency initiative to support local authorities to look at climate change and take action.

The CGWP took the Climate Local Environmental Charter template and adapted it to EFDC's needs. The group also created a commitments and actions spreadsheet, modelled on the Climate Local system. The commitments and actions were broken down into three main areas (climate change, greenhouse gases and sustainability) with some overarching goals. This was to replace the group's Work Plan, which was very ad hoc.

(vi) Key Performance Indicators 2017/18 – Quarterly Performance – The Committee reviewed the Key Performance Indicators relevant to their Select Committee on a quarterly basis.

(vii) Corporate Plan Key Action Plan 2017/18 – Quarterly Position – The Select Committee received quarterly updates on the Council's corporate action plan pertaining to their area of responsibility.

(viii) Corporate Plan 2018-2023 – At their September 2017 meeting the Committee noted that the Corporate Plan, the Council's highest level strategic document, which would cover the period 2018 to 2023, was being reviewed and updated. The draft had been shaped from input from the Management Board, Leadership Team and Cabinet. The draft was an attempt this time to be illustrated in a diagrammatic fashion.

(ix) Leisure Management Contract – the Committee noted that a Partnership Board had been established between Places for People and EFDC, with the first meetings being chaired by the Leisure and Community Services Portfolio Holder. The purpose of this partnership board was to act as a liaison between the two organisations.

(x) Engineering, Drainage and Water Team – at their January 2018 meeting the Committee received a presentation from the Council's drainage team on land drainage, land and water quality and general drainage issues.

(See Case Study for details)

Case Study: Engineering, Drainage and Water Team

Land Drainage

The Land Drainage Engineer made a presentation on the work of the Engineering, Drainage and Water Team (EDWT). The EDWT was on call 365 days a year to provide a discretionary emergency flood response service to deal with flooding emergencies across the District, mainly arising from the flood risk assets that are the Council's responsibility.

Officers would monitor and respond to incidents and worked closely with the Environment Agency (EA), who has responsibility to manage Main River flooding,

Essex Fire and Rescue, Essex County Council (ECC) for highway assets and relevant water companies.

The team also monitored and maintained 50 storm grilles, which helped to protect key surface water pipes. The Council's contractor checks these on a regular basis. The Team also oversee 2,500 kilometres of ordinary watercourses.

Since 1983 the Council has had its own Land Drainage Byelaws to help control development along water courses, and is the only district within Essex to have such Byelaws. The Council also had enforcement powers under this Act, which were used when necessary.

The EDWT worked within the National Planning Policy Framework to reduce flood risk when new developments were proposed. It had assessed over 1,200 planning applications last year for flood risk and drainage concerns. It had also worked with the Planning Policy Team during the draft Local Plan process to ensure policies on the management of flood risk and drainage were robust and reflected both best practice and national Guidance.

Members were also apprised of different ways that the EDWT used to manage surface water flood risk as it was very proactive in the District. One way was through Surface Water Management Plans (SWMP). ECC had determined that Loughton was a 'Tier 1' location and in 2016 the Loughton, Buckhurst Hill and Theydon Bois SWMP was completed. This identified seven Critical Drainage Areas to help manage predicted flood risk. Waltham Abbey (Tier 2) would be the next area for a SWMP when funds were available from ECC. The Council uniquely had its own Flood Risk Assessment Zones (FRAZs) to help alleviate flood risk from incremental development. These were zones derived from the catchments of ordinary watercourses where there was a particular risk of flooding.

Land and Water Quality

The Land and Water Quality Officer reported that the Council had a duty to risk assess and sample water quality and had enforcement powers to ensure private water supplies were safe for human consumption and without risk to human health. This covered water extracted from boreholes, springs and wells. Of the 78 known private water suppliers, 38 had been inspected, and there are likely to be other unknown water supplies.

Problems could arise from contamination for instance where there are ineffective sewage systems or where systems were not properly maintained. There are many other factors that could impact on private water supplies. The Lee Valley sustained a large horticultural nursery industry so it was important that water used to irrigate crops and used for public consumption meet the required standards. Many nurseries did not have effective contamination reductions in place. Water towers also needed to be inspected. The Drinking Water Inspectorate considered that some of these sites were of the highest risk in the UK.

The Council was statutorily required to inspect and assess contaminated land under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. There were several thousand potentially contaminated land sites. These included former landfills, ex gas works, factories, brickworks and munitions stores. It also investigated the pollution of watercourses to maintain and improve water quality and deals with a range of pollution issues. .

General Drainage and other issues

The Engineering, Drainage and Water Team Manager spoke about general drainage issues and that her officers liaised with the water companies (Thames Water and Affinity Water), the EA and other organisations. The Council operated and maintained seventeen sewage treatment plants and pumping stations. The Council had a statutory requirement under the Building Act 1984 to ensure buildings had satisfactory drainage, duties under the Public Health Acts and various other statutory duties under a range of legislation.

In October 2011 most private sewers transferred to Thames Water. The Council was also responsible for all rural drainage systems, misconnections and other problems.

The Council had ongoing capital projects and managed its own assets. Bobbingworth Nature Reserve, a former landfill site, was one such successful project in operation.