

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES

Committee:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date:	Tuesday, 19 April 2016
Place:	Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping	Time:	7.30 - 9.50 pm
Members Present:	Councillors R Morgan (Chairman) T Church, D Dorrell, L Girling, S Kane, P Keska, A Mitchell, G Mohindra, S Murray, S Neville, M Sartin, G Shiell, J H Whitehouse and D Wixley		
Other Councillors:	Councillors K Chana, A Grigg, H Kane, A Lion, J Philip, C P Pond, D Stallan, G Waller and C Whitbread		
Apologies:	Councillors N Avey, B Rolfe and B Surtees		
Officers Present:	D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Neighbourhoods), J Chandler (Assistant Director (Community Services)), G Wallis (Community, Health & Wellbeing Manager), S Tautz (Democratic Services Manager), D Butler (Youth Engagement Officer), A Hendry (Senior Democratic Services Officer), S Kits (Social Media and Customer Services Officer) and M Jenkins (Democratic Services Officer)		
By Invitation:	C Martin (Essex County Council) and G Holland (Essex County Council)		

59. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman reminded everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

60. COUNCILLOR KEN ANGOLD-STEPHENS

The meeting stood for one minute in silence in memory Councillor Ken Angold-Stephens, who recently 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 for being a friend to all. Councillor Murray also paid tribute to him as his fellow ward councillor.

61. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was reported that Councillor J H Whitehouse was substituting for Councillor B Surtees.

62. APPOINTMENT OF A VICE- CHAIRMAN

Councillor M Sartin was appointed vice-chairman for the duration of the meeting.

63. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the last Committee meeting held on 23 February 2016 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

64. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(1) Councillor L Girling declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item of the agenda by virtue of being an end user of the services under scrutiny. He advised that his interest was not prejudicial and he would remain in the meeting for the duration of the item and consideration thereon:

- ECC Children Services Presentation.

(2) Councillor S Neville declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item of the agenda by virtue of being a voluntary advisor of the Buckhurst Hill Money Advice Service who benefitted from Grant Aid. He advised that his interest was not prejudicial and he would remain in the meeting for the duration of the item and consideration thereon:

- Final report of the Grant Aid Task and Finish Panel.

65. EPPING FOREST YOUTH COUNCIL PRESENTATION

The Committee received their annual presentation from Epping Forest Youth Council giving an update on the year past and their future programme.

Speaking on behalf of the youth councillors were Jaymey McIvor, Chloe McKendrick, Joseph Pascoe, Doncho Atanassov and Matthew Tinker. They were joined by other members of the Youth Council.

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.

The Youth Council was elected for a two year period and they were now coming to the end of their term of office. Due to the recent completion of the Youth Engagement Task and Finish Panel, a review into the Council's youth engagement function; the Youth Council elections were consequently rescheduled from March to November 2016 and the current youth councillors have been asked to extend their term until December.

Their highest profile event in their year 2 was the Youth Conference held on 9th 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.

Social media was an important part of their work as it not only promoted what they did but raised the positive profile of young people in the district. They now have 765 followers on 'Twitter' and 427 likes on 'Facebook'.

They have also contributed to 14 consultations during the year and had representation on the Epping Forest Youth Strategy Group, the Police and Crime Commissioners Youth Forum, the Young Essex Assembly, the Youth Parliament, the Jack Petchey Achievers Network and numerous school councils. They have also all completed a Dementia Friends Awareness Raising session and basic First Aid course.

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. In February they set up a youth volunteer day and were supported by staff from the City of London to help clear an area of woodland.

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.

During their term of office that have secured external funding of:

- £1000 from the High Sheriff;
- £1500 from the Jack Petchey Foundation;
- £1500 from the Jack Petchey Crystal Award;
- £600 from the Think Big O2 for project work;
- £600 from the Young Lions Ambassador Award;
- £300 from the Jack Petchey Education Grants Scheme; and
- £750 from the Jack Petchey Small Grants award.

They have also collected donations of £500 from local businesses to support two intergeneration events. Making a grand total of £6750 over the last 2 months enabling them to deliver high quality projects. The Council could not have secured this external funding if it did not have an active Youth Council.

Notable achievements:

- At the beginning of 2015 the Youth Council received the prestigious High Sheriff's Shield for their work on bullying awareness;
- Youth Councillors Matthew Tinker and George Miller were selected as "I will Ambassadors" for the Step up to serve campaign for their community and voluntary work;
- Evie Foster was awarded the regional Young Lions Ambassador Award for her work with the Loughton Youth Centre. She also received the EFDC Young Citizen of the Year Award 2015 for her charity work;

- Fatemeh Ekhteyary received the 'Investors in Young People's Individual of the Year Award and was also a finalist for the 'Who will care' Award during 2015;
- Jaymey Mclvor received the 'Youth on Board' Award; and
- Hazel Towns, Chloe McKendrick and Julie Turrell received the Jack Petchey Achievement Award for their Youth Council work.

Each and every award raised the profile of Epping Forest District Council and the way that it values its local young people.

Finally the Youth Councillors welcomed the opportunity to take part in the Youth Engagement Task and Finish Review and thanked the Panel for reaching such positive conclusions on the future of the Epping Forest Youth Council and the wider Youth Engagement Commitments. They also thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their continuing support and giving them a wider voice.

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

Councillor Murray said that he was very impressed with the quality of the presentation. He remarked that he was involved in the Youth Engagement Task and Finish Panel and would like to thank the youth councillors that took part for their input. He was also pleased to note that they were looking into the mental health issues that befell young people, and reminded them that they had a floating budget of £8,000 to call upon.

Councillor Sartin was astounded by the amount of work that they had fitted into their period of office and asked them if they had enjoyed themselves. She was told that that they had a good time during their tenure.

Councillor Girling noted their intergenerational project and wondered if they took any feedback to their schools to help counter the image of young people. He was told that if they got feedback that young people were anti-social then they needed to dispel that image and one way was to visit older peoples' homes. In doing so they hoped to inspire young people and would welcome any suggestions on how to improve on that.

Councillor Neville thanked them for their participation in the Task and Finish Panel and wondered that with their interaction with older people, how their perceptions had change over time. He was told that at the start of the intergenerational project the older people thought younger people did not care about them; so they knew they had to work on this, not ignore them but to learn from them and clear up a lot of their misconceptions.

Councillor Mohindra thanked the officers for looking after and facilitating the Youth Council behind the scenes. This was echoed by the youth councillors who added that they had enjoyed their experiences on the dementia and mental health projects.

Councillor Wixley voiced his concerns about the increase in mental health issues in young people and why this was. A youth councillor said as a personal observation, that there was a lack of organisations that could speak to young people and a lack of projects to help them. The Youth Council's project was very important and gave access to these services. Young people suffered from a lot of stress, there were a lot of exams that had to be taken nowadays which they had to fit into their personal lives.

Councillor Wixley asked what the youth wage rate was at present. He was told that it was £7.20 in the UK and £8.55 in London.

Councillor Murray said that it was refreshing to have people who answered the questions put to them and that the answer was unambiguous and understandable.

Councillor Girling applauded the maturity of the Youth Councillors and their raising of the £7000 in outside funding. He was told that it was only available to them because they were an active youth council.

The Chairman thanked the Youth Council for their excellent presentation, saying that they were a credit to the District Council and the officers, and wished them good luck in their future endeavours.

66. ECC CHILDREN SERVICES PRESENTATION

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomed Chris Martin, the Essex 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.

ECC was in the process of redesigning the current service offer for Children's Centres and the Healthy Child Programme (including Health Visiting, Family Nurse Partnership, School Nursing Services and Healthy Schools Programme). This would also place parents, children and families at the heart of the service redesign. They were focusing on designing systems to ensure that information, advice and support made a real difference to families, children and young people. They undertook various engagement activities and following on from the findings of the Ethnographic Research they undertook a series of activities including local focus groups and workshops.

It was noted that Children's Centres were used by many people, 144 out of 367 respondents have used the service (40%). This was valued work carried out by the centres. 90% of the parents said they were accessible, in good locations and felt they were listened to when using them. They helped reduce the isolation that some parents were feeling. Some people felt that services and activities had been reduced and many wanted more. Parents would like the centres open for longer periods and on different days. Some wanted to use them but they were closed when needed. And some families in greatest need were not accessing the services at all. There was an outreach service but about 30% of families were not being reached; there needed to be a different way to interact with them.

Many did not know what was available to them and half of the respondents said this when asked why they had not received formal advice, information or support. They did not know where to go to get help or who to contact and were not accessing services as a result.

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 (SEND)) and by bringing these five services together:

- 0-5 Healthy Child Programme;
- 5-19 Healthy Child Programme;
- Children's Centres;
- Healthy Schools;
- Family Nurse Partnership.

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. The Family Hub should be open for 50 hours per week and it would co-ordinate all the support and services for families with children. It would also act as a signpost to the other support services.

Along with the each central Family Hub there would also be local delivery sites using local buildings and offering services for 20 to 30 hours per week. These would also be places where different organisations who support children and families already work. 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. It should target services at those that most need support, providing "Service Without Walls" and increase the age range these services covered.

Throughout the consultation a series of events were run offering families and stakeholders the opportunity to talk openly about the proposals outlined in the on-line consultation. Nine Stakeholder events were held throughout Essex and sixteen family drop-in events were held across Essex. They would continue to engage with families and the stakeholders and were planning to hold parent reference groups, planned for mid-May; stakeholder specification workshops have been happening for several months and would continue to do so up to procurement.

The information collected from the consultation was currently being 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.

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

Councillor Mohindra thought that this all meant responsibility without any funding; what could we do to help? Mr Martin replied that they could help by inviting them to sessions such as these so they could share their work, share their consultation findings and seek your support.

Councillor Mohindra then asked what were the monthly saving figures they were looking for. Mr Martin said that they had not attached any figures, but were looking for about £1million a month. This was the most important piece of work they could

do. It was better to prepare pre-school children which would benefit them throughout their school lives.

Councillor Girling commented that the consultation did not give the feeling that it had any force to it. The consultation had gone out during school holidays, not great timing. The process seemed to be made up as it went along. There were two consultation events planned, one was by Stanstead and the other at Harlow. Other consultation dates were added but they were during school time. As for Library Service consultations, some officers did not know what was going on in Loughton. Also Essex libraries ran out of paper copies and customers were told that if they wanted one printed it would cost them £4.50. The consultation could have been done better. Mr Martin replied that people could access the consultation through Children Centres where paper copies were available. Here some of my officers also sat down with parents to help them fill it out. You appear to have a bad experience, but I don't think it reflected the County's experience as a whole.

Councillor Mohindra added that they should be applauded, as when we told you we could not take part in the consultation, you added more dates into the process.

Councillor Helen Kane asked where were these consultation dates advertised and what was the input from the Epping area. She was told that it had been advertised on line and in the free papers, all the usual channels were used and also the children centres as for consultation responses, overall 73% were from parents and 216 specific responses from Epping Forest.

Councillor Helen Kane then noted that two brand new Children Centres were purpose built in Epping Forest 7 years ago, Hazlewood on Ninefields Estate in Waltham Abbey and Sunrise in Loughton. Both of these Centres were now proposed for closure. I would like to know:

- a) What consideration was given to the fact that these centres were built in Key super output areas of the Epping Forest district when proposing them for closure?
- b) With no permanent staff team based there, how would the buildings be managed and programmes delivered? and
- c) Who would be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the buildings?

She was told that the Hazlewood centre was not closing and it was proposed to be a delivery site operating for 20-30 hours per week; families should not notice a great deal of difference. Many of the services would be delivered by third parties, often in the evenings and these would be in addition to the 20-30 hours on offer. They were proposing the closure of the Sunrise as a Children's Centre site to enable staff to undertake more outreach and provide opportunity for childcare delivery to address local sufficiency issues. This consultation had raised the opportunity to consider whether Sunrise could maintain a delivery room for appropriate services.

Essex County Council would remain responsible for the buildings. As for permanent staff they would be there while services were being delivered, at other times there would be a telephone answering system people could use to get support.

Councillor Girling said that he thought that there was an Essex stipulation that one member of staff had to remain at any Children's Centre during operational hours. Little Oaks was one that his children use a lot and was shared with an adult group that use one half of this site. So it had frequently got adults coming in for activities. His concern for the proposal for Little Oaks was that a breast feeding mother would not have a separate room for this. The Sunrise did have separate rooms and most

people would say that the Sunrise would need to stay open and Little Oaks should shut. There was petition to this affect doing the rounds at present. His question was, has anyone actually gone to Little Oaks as it seems that you have no idea to what happens at the centres. Gill Holland replied that she had regularly been to Little Oaks. As for the question on breast feeding that was up to users on how they use the building. At present a Children Centre has to be open during their contracted hours; we do not want to be too specific on the hours it would depend on what ever time people wanted to use it. Mr Martin added that this was still just a consultation, so what you saw in the document would be subject to change. As for keeping a worker on base, one problem was that they have to staff the building when there was no one using the building, having to keep centres open when there were no children there. Councillor Girling commented that he understood that this had caused problems for staff, such as doing home visits or having the opportunity to hold full staff meeting as there always had to be one member of staff at the centre. As for the Sunrise centre, has there been any consultation with the school on site about the proposals as a number of the stake holders on reading your document on line think that this was a done deal. Mr Martin replied that this was a consultation, and the end product would not reflect what was currently in the consultation document.

Councillor Shiell, asked why the Brambles Children Centre in Epping was proposed above all others, to be the one "Family Hub" in this District? Did this mean that every one in the district, from Loughton and Waltham Abbey had to come into Epping? Because you can't get from Loughton or Waltham Abbey to Epping easily. Gill Holland replied that the proposal was that the Brambles be the Family Hub. The main purpose was that the services would be co-located there and then go out to the delivery venues we had spoken about, such as the Hazelwood building and the Loughton libraries etc. The intention was not for all the families to come into Epping because we recognised that would make life more difficult; but to deliver services in community halls, schools and church halls, in venues where people were. Some of the services would be from the Brambles but not all of them. Councillor Shiell asked how they would let families know this was just a hub, there seemed to be a lot of information missing. Ms Holland said these were only proposals at present so were vague now. Families were to be involved in the design of the joined up services and there would be lots of publicity with this. Mr Martin added that information would be going out digitally, using social media; but they needed to have a conversation with parents for their ideas.

Councillor Sam Kane noted that the Hazelwood Centre would largely continue as it was, not closing down. He understood that this was a consultation period, but was this the thinking at present. Ms Holland said that it would be a delivery site operating at between 20-30 hours per week. Most families we found tended to use the centre from about 9.30 to 2.30. Also this centre delivers some services in the evening and we were not envisioning that this would change as long as it delivered what families needed.

Councillor Sam Kane then asked about the True Stars centre based in the centre of the Limes Farm Estate in Chigwell. On a daily basis, staff dealt with vulnerable families at this site. How will the needs of these families be met under the current proposals? He was told that True Stars would remain a delivery site with between 20-30 hours of service from there. Although this centre was located within the Limes Farm estate the reach area was wider than this and freeing staff from the building would enable flexibility of outreach and services to be delivered from different venues around the community.

Councillor Mohindra remarked that he was one of the ward councillors for Grange Hill and Limes farm was part of his patch. Some of the comments concerned him

regarding Chigwell. Limes farm specifically needed the attention and he would hope the focus would remain on Limes Farm. There was an element of deprivation on the estate so any resources taken away from this area would cause him concern.

Councillor Mitchell said she had the same concerns as Councillor Shiell. What actual monitoring procedures would be in place to make sure that the service delivery was actually working the way you wanted it to? Mr Martin replied that that was a really good question. One of the things they were told off for during the consultation period was that they asked for a lot of data and did not appear to do a great deal with it. Providers were frustrated about chasing up the numbers when what they wanted to tell us was about the difference they made and the impact they had with the families; some of the providers would also like to tell us about the things that did not go so well and what they had learnt from that. They would use data for performance indicators, some evidence for best practice and things that have not gone quite so well. The final element was about County and our officers; we should get out into the field and meet families and ask them about the services we have commissioned and their experience of it.

The Chairman thanked Mr Martin and Ms Holland for their presentation and for answering member's questions so well. He noted that officers would be responding to the consultation in due course.

67. 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.

Early in the review process the Panel came to the conclusion that it would be easier and more logical to break down the review into two parts, namely one focussing on the major grants and associated policy and procedure and the other relating to the Service Level Agreements with voluntary groups active in the District, including the CAB and Voluntary Action Epping Forest, which had been carried out in 2015/16. This report related to the second part of the review.

Within Part 1 of the Grant Aid Review, 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.

The Committee reviewed the recommendations made by the Panel. Councillor Mohindra noted that recommendation 5 said that a rigorous process of monitoring was adopted for the higher Grant Awards. What did this mean. Councillor Pond said that officers should look at the various grants every year. Councillor Waller noted that there was always room for improvement in monitoring and for the use of SMART objectives.

Councillor Keska asked if the performance management benchmarking for the VAEF and the Epping Forest CAB would be for the whole district and would that mean they would be returning to Ongar. Councillor Pond said that they would restore it to one day a week. Councillor Waller noted that services tended to be directed to the more populated parts of the district. The CAB should be involved in the more out reaching parts of the district as they also had needs.

RESOLVED:

- (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;
- (5) That a more rigorous process of monitoring be adopted for the higher Grant Awards currently in operation for Voluntary Action Epping Forest and Citizen's Advice Bureau.

68. EQUALITY OBJECTIVES 2016 - 2020

The Director of Neighbourhoods introduced the report on the Equality Objectives plan for 2016 to 2020. The Council was required to publish equality objectives every four years to take forward its public sector equality duty. This duty required that we proactively consider how discrimination could be addressed through the work that we did, and also whether we could advance equality of opportunity and encourage good relations between different protected groups. The setting of objectives provided a focus on the outcomes to be achieved during the next four years.

In 2012 the Council adopted equality objectives which reached the end of its lifespan in March 2016. New objectives had been developed to take the Council up to April 2020, and because the objectives must be specific and measureable, an action plan had also been developed to deliver them.

The setting of equality objectives every four years was required of public bodies under the Equality Act 2010. It was therefore, a key statutory duty that the objectives were set and published, together with the ongoing progress to achieve them.

Four objectives were proposed and are set out below together with a brief outline of the reasons for their proposal:

Objective 1: To integrate the Council's public sector equality duty into our partnership working

The public sector equality duty was relevant across the full range of its activity

including its work through partnerships. The duty also applied to its public sector partners and it may be the Council could access good practice or share work to comply with the duty.

Objective 2: To apply robust equality requirements in commissioning, procurement and contract management

Procurement by local authorities was identified by the government as a key area for the development of equality and where there was the potential to improve the lives of people. Whilst it was evident there was some consideration of equality in our procurement practices, procurement had not been a focus for equality work to date, and integration was required if the duty was to be fully met.

Objective 3: To develop our capacity so that our employees have the knowledge, skills and confidence to deliver our plans

Employee understanding of Council requirements remains important. Whilst some progress had been made in the course of the current set of objectives, the CEWG considered there was the potential to refine and refocus training for employees to reflect the Council's current position.

Objective 4: To improve and develop equality in our business activities

This included projects and reviews, and along with Objectives 1 and 2, sought to build on progress already made in integrating equality into service planning and delivery, and extend it into our wider activities, and at an earlier stage of our investigation and research.

It was noted that as part of the objectives action plan, under item 4, each Directorate of the Council would undertake organising the work experience for three young people, making a total of 12 persons for each year. This would be different from the council apprentices as it came under a different scheme. They were looking to ensure that over time all the schools in the district had an opportunity to take up this work experience and make a positive difference to young people.

Under item 5 the council would work with partners to help older people to reduce the impacts of isolation. Councillor Wixley noted this was targeted at rural locations but that isolation could occur anywhere.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the concurrence of the Cabinet, the Council's Equality Objectives and Action Plan for 2016-2020, be agreed.

69. SELECT COMMITTEE FRAMEWORK - REVIEW

The Democratic Services Manager introduced the report on the review of the Select Committee Framework. As the Committee was 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 views of the current chairmen and lead officers of the select committees had therefore been sought in connection with the operation and management of the select committees over the last year. An item was also included in the Council Bulletin during February 2016, inviting other members to contribute to the review, and a number of officers have also submitted observations on the current arrangements.

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 Communities Select Committee. They had a heavy workload last year leading to long meetings and overcrowded agenda.

The Technology and Support Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor Lion also submitted comments to the effect that he considered the scrutiny function was still not strong enough and needed to get behind the real issues to improve the functions of the Council. He believed that the work programmes for each select committee needed to be linked to the corporate objectives, business plans and to the business as opposed to the financial audit. He suggested that portfolio holders could be asked to present the business plan for their portfolio and what they were planning to achieve in the year ahead. He also suggested that meetings should be held between the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny and the Select Committees at the start of each year in order to plan the work programme for the year.

Councillor Sartin noted that she had made her comments in the report. Her Select Committee had covered a lot of areas while the Housing Select Committee has had to cancel one meeting. She proposed that the Select Committees be aligned to the directorates for the coming year, to be reviewed at the end of the year.

Councillor Stallan, the Housing Portfolio Holder, noted that there was not total support given by the Management Board, where the Director of Communities had said that the current system had not been detrimental and with the Housing Bill coming out they would have larger agendas in the coming year and asked that the system remained the same.

Councillor Sartin added that the Neighbourhood and Communities Select Committee has not had enough time to scrutinise everything they had to.

Councillor Whitbread said that the Neighbourhood and Communities Select Committee had the Local Plan to look at and should not be distracted from this. It was time to balance up the workloads of the Select Committees.

Councillor Waller said that it was a balanced argument but he sided with Councillor Stallan on this. He noted the comments of the Director of Communities and thought it was too soon to make an assessment and we needed another year to assess the workloads.

Councillor Mohindra commented that Neighbourhoods have had a very busy year and that he supported Councillor Lion's suggestion for a Chair/Vice-Chairman meeting.

Councillor Lion noted that in his experience there was a lot more information available to the Select Committees, which was why he referred to the business plans and the use of audit functions.

Councillor Philip said that we had a good record at examining what was going on and after a year and this was a good time to consider how we did things. It made a lot of sense to align the Select Committees to the Directorates. The Local Plan was important and he could see no reason why Communities should be different from the other directorates.

Councillor Sartin proposed that the Select Committees should be aligned with the directorates. This was seconded by Councillor Church and agreed by the meeting. The meeting also agreed that there should be a separate Chairman and Vice-chairmen meeting at the start of the year.

RESOLVED:

(1) That the Committee considered proposed changes to the responsibilities of the four Select Committees and agreed that:

- (a) The four Select Committees be directly aligned with the four directorates of the Council; and
- (b) That a separate meeting be held for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairman and the Select Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen at the start of each municipal year.

70. CHANGE OF CHAIRMAN

At this point in the proceedings the Chairman, Councillor Morgan had to leave to attend to a prior engagement. The Vice-Chairman, Councillor Sartin took over the Chairmanship of the meeting.

71. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the draft Overview and Scrutiny annual report. They noted that a copy of each Select Committee section of the report had been sent to the relevant Chairman and Lead Officer for comment. The draft was still incomplete as not all Committees had held their final meeting by the time the agenda went to print. If there were more any comments, they should be submitted to Democratic Services by Friday, 13 May 2016.

A final version of the report would be submitted to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 7 June 2016 for endorsement and then on to the nearest full Council meeting.

Councillor Neville queried a point under the Neighbourhood and Communities Select Committee section, item (xii) on the 20mph speed limit. He thought that bullet point 6 should say between 20 and 24mph and not 24 and 29mph. 24 to 29mph was for Urban Areas. Officers agreed to look into this and change as appropriate.

Councillor Janet Whitehouse said that there was an omission under the Governance Select Committee section, item (i) Review of Elections – May 2015 – Lessons Learnt. It should have had something about the mix up of ballot books and the lesson learnt from that issue. Councillor Church (Chairman of that Select Committee) agreed that this should be included. Officers said that they would alter the report to include this point.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the comments on the speed limits and the review of elections item, the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2015/16 be agreed.

72. WORK PROGRAMME MONITORING**(a) Work Programmes****Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The committee considered their work programme and noted the progress at this their final meeting of the year. They noted that the programme was now mostly complete except for two items. Item 12 the progress on the 6th form consortium and item 15, the management of Epping Forest; both of which were scheduled for the new municipal year.

Councillor Girling noted that we have had the Corporation of London here once before (September 2012) and asked that the notes from that last meeting be circulated to members for information.

Select Committees:**Housing Select Committee**

The Committee noted that there was nothing to report.

Governance Select Committee

The Chairman had nothing further to report but thanked the members of his Select Committee for their work during the past year.

Neighbourhood and Communities Select Committee

The Chairman noted that all their work had now been completed.

Resources Select Committee

The Chairman noted they had received a presentation from the Council's apprentices at their last meeting. The Committee thought that it would be informative to ask them to address either an O&S Committee or full Council meeting on their experiences at this Council.

Task and Finish Panel:**Grant Aid Task and Finish Panel**

The final report for this Panel was at this meeting for agreement.

(b) Reserve Programme

The Democratic Services Manager reminded the meeting that to put an item in the reserve programme members should complete a PICK Form.

73. KEY DECISION LIST - REVIEW

The Committee noted the Cabinet's Key Decision List for February 2016. They had no specific items that they wished to consider.

74. LAST MEETING OF THE YEAR

Councillor Sartin, on behalf of the Chairman, Councillor Morgan, thanked the Committee for the work done during the year. She also thanked the officers for their behind the scenes work and also the Cabinet members who regularly attended these meetings

CHAIRMAN