

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee consisted of the following members:

Councillor M Sartin (Chairman)
Councillor L Girling (Vice Chairman)
Councillors N Avey, N Bedford, R Brookes, D Dorrell, S Kane, Y Knight, A Mitchell, S Murray, S Neville, A Patel, B Rolfe, G Shiell, D Stallan, 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-054-2016/17) on Waste management Policies.

The Call-in was for:

The Waste and Recycling Policy, specifically policy 10 on the supply of waste and recycling services to land registered on the Local Land Property Gazetteer. It did not concern any other Waste and Recycling Policy adopted by the Cabinet at its meeting on 2 February 2017.

A meeting was called prior to it being considered by the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee to discuss this call-in on the Cabinet decision on Waste Management Policies; specifically policy 10 on the supply of waste and recycling services to land registered on the Local Land Property Gazetteer.

Attending were the two signatories of the Call-in Councillors J Lea and S Kane; the relevant Cabinet member, Councillor W Breare-Hall; and the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor M Sartin.

Councillor Breare-Hall thanked Councillor Lea in bringing this discrepancy to his attention. She had raised potential flaws in the current policy which should be revised to take this into account once the relevant departments have been consulted, i.e. Council Tax, Planning and Waste Management. He was keen to avoid bad practice.

Councillor Breare-Hall was happy to take this away, review this specific aspect of the policy and report back. Councillor Lea agreed that this was the best way forward.

This Call-in would now be treated as being withdrawn; the Portfolio Holder would review this aspect of the policy (item 10) and to consult members of the Call-in on a revised report.

(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.

Presentations:

(i) Management of Epping Forest – In June 2016 the Committee received a presentation from Mr P Thomson, Superintendent of Epping Forest and Ms J Adams, Chairman of the Friends of Epping Forest on the Management Plan Consultation for Epping Forest.

The consultation Epping Forest – The Next 10 Years ran from June to October 2015 with 1,600 individuals being contacted and responses received from 432.

The consultation was broken down into 6 themes:

- (1) Public recreation and enjoyment.
- (2) Preservation of the natural aspect.
- (3) Protection of the unspoilt forest.
- (4) Regulation and management.
- (5) Heritage.
- (6) Deer management.

The Corporation intended to promote equality duties, public involvement and volunteering. The consultation document was to be published in June 2016 and the Public Consultation on 6 themes in the summer of 2017.

The Committee also heard from Ms J Adams regarding the Friends of Epping Forest.

The Friends had been in existence for 45 years and were the only group focused on the Forest as a whole and all its related interests. They were also the largest single voluntary membership organisation in the forest. The Friends participated in planning consultation, undertook guided walks, produced publications, operated a visitor centre and was involved in fundraising.

The Friends had concerns about the Forest's future, which were summarised as follows:

- (1) Wood pasture restoration.
- (2) Cycling.
- (3) Litter
- (4) Development threatening the Forest.
- (5) Risk of the Forest losing its naturalness.
- (6) Localism – a potential benefit but posed risks.

A particular concern was that the Forest could become a park in the future and lose its status as a natural forest/woodland.

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

(ii) Transport for London – Central Line Services and Infrastructure - The Committee welcomed two officers from Transport for London, Chris Taggart the General Manager (Central Line) and Mark Hart the Stakeholder Engagement Manager (Bakerloo, Central and Victoria Lines). Mr Taggart explained that he was the leader of the operational team that carried out the day to day management of the Central Line, including Station Staff and Drivers. Mr Hart explained that it was his job to notify any stakeholders of any activity on the rail lines, or noise or if he had information to impart on station closures etc. It was his job to notify people on upcoming works or problems.

The TfL officers had received advanced notice of the topics and any questions that the Committee wanted to cover at this meeting and answered them at the meeting.

The meeting noted that:

- Only about 3% of journeys started at the ticket office, most of them were undertaken by the use of oyster cards;
- There were currently no plans to extend the night time services to Epping. Night trains have now been running for several months and this service would be reviewed in the New Year. Stopping trains at Loughton allows them to turn around;

- They had introduced a new timetable on the Central Line in August trying to balance as best they could the service over the Central Line Services as a whole;
- They recognised concerns of customers from Roding Valley, Grange Hill and Chigwell and would be looking at the timetable to see if they could off-set any negative impact as a result of the last timetable;
- All stations had toilet facilities; open at different times of the day. They were sometime taken out of use for maintenance or through vandalism. There was a current map displaying toilet facilities, but that was out of date and was currently being reviewed;
- all their stations now have Wi-Fi but it could not be received in the tunnels and there were currently no plans to extend it; and
- There was a separate team in TfL that looks after the Car Park arrangements. In regards to Epping, they are looking at improving car parking provision there and were currently reviewing their options;
- TfL were planning to deliver 30 new step free stations over the next five years and are currently working through which stations these would be;

Asked what the term 'capacity' meant in terms of the Underground. The meeting was told that it could mean a number of things such as the number of carriages, or trains or passengers. It could also have something to do with the signalling systems. They could operate up to 33 trains per hour and were at their limit at present, even if they had more trains.

The Central Line had very reliable automated signalling systems; but when it goes wrong it can go badly wrong especially when you had such a tight timetable as they had. However the systems were generally very good and reliable on the Central Line.

The introduction of new and air-conditioned rolling stock – TfL were working on this at present, the following lines were currently being upgraded – Piccadilly Line, Bakerloo Line the Waterloo and City Line – are all part of this project.

The CCTV system installed between 2000 and 2010 will be replaced starting around 2018 as they have come to the end of their useful lives. The new system will be digital and will have better integration with the other CCTV systems.

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

(iii) Presentation from the Epping Forest College - At their meeting in February 2017, the Committee received a presentation from the recently appointed principal of Epping Forest College, who had been invited to address the committee on the recent Ofsted report on its 'inadequate' judgement of the quality of its local further education facilities and services.

The inspectors at their January visit indicated in their unofficial comments that they were very impressed at the speed and progress that had been made since their last visit and that the college was addressing the issues. Part of the improvements was down to change in management and governance.

The culture of the college had radically changed, it no longer has the mood of despair and disappointment; and with the help of her colleagues they were turning the college around.

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

(See Case Study for full details)

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 2015/16.

(iii) The Corporate Plan, Key Action Plan 2017/18 was reviewed in July 2016. The Corporate Plan included the aims and objectives which are the Council's highest level strategic intentions. It was that this was an early opportunity for members to have some input into the Corporate Plan for 2017/18.

2017/18 would be the third year in the lifetime of the aims and objectives and a draft key action plan for 2017/18 had been produced building on activities identified in the action plan for the current fiscal year.

Key Action Plans were monitored by the Select Committees, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet on a quarterly basis. As living documents they could be subject to change or development as appropriate to reflect emerging priorities or unforeseen circumstances.

(iv) During the year the Committee reviewed and commented on the quarterly progress of the Corporate Plan Key Action Plan 2016/17.

(v) The Committee noted that the Government's Communities and Local Government Committee had launched an inquiry into overview and scrutiny in local government. The aim was to consider whether overview and scrutiny arrangements were working effectively and whether local communities were able to contribute to and monitor the work of local authorities.

The Committee agreed that officers should respond to the inquiry and it was also agreed that the response should be agreed by the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

(e) Case Study: Epping Forest College

In February 2017, the Chairman introduced the recently appointed principal of Epping Forest College, Saboohi Famili, who had been invited to address the committee on the recent Ofsted report on its 'inadequate' judgement of the quality of its local further education facilities and services.

Ms Famili started by saying she was happy to be sharing the plans of the college to move forward from their current situation. She had been appointed to this post in

September 2016, and within five weeks they had an Ofsted visit, resulting in an 'inadequate' marking. The reasons for this were mainly because of lack of scrutiny of the situation and the lack of scrutiny from the governors to ensure that the problems were addressed. At this time they had also self assessed as inadequate and Ofsted had merely confirmed this assessment. She was pleased that one of the strengths identified by Ofsted was that the new leadership had accurately identified the problems that they faced.

As a result of this judgements they would now have more regular visits from Ofsted setting out the Ofsted support in the year to come and then will carry out another major inspection in 12 to 15 months; so they were looking to next April to have full inspection to prove that the college had moved away from being an inadequate organisation.

The inspectors came back on 26 January and their unofficial comments were that they were very impressed at the speed and progress that had been made and that the college was addressing the issues. Part of the improvements was down to change in management and governance.

Presently their actions plans, as noted by Ofsted, had clear milestones and achievement of impacts. They were living documents that were regularly updated. They also engaged with their learners and had monthly forums where they shared problems and tapped into the talents of the young people, because it was their college and they needed their help to take the college forward.

The culture of the college had radically changed, it no longer had the mood of despair and disappointment; and with the help of her colleagues they were turning the college around. There was still a long way to go as it could not be changed overnight but there was a confidence that they could turn it around and engage with staff and learners. They had a key project going on called 'Today, Tomorrow, Together' to engage with their stakeholders as we were aware that they had also let some of their key stakeholders down, including businesses, who had to look elsewhere for their training needs.

One of the key purposes of the college was to listen and strategically plan the future of the organisation. This 'hiccup' was something that they would be able to address within 12 months; there were already signs of improvement at the college which would get reported on by Ofsted on a regular basis. They have at least three more reports before they have a full Ofsted next year and one of the key things was that they looked forward to was the next 10 to 15 years instead of being completely inundated with the task in hand. They were looking to where they needed to be to support the local economic development of the area and the workforce of the future and also be a college where you would be proud to send your children to.

The overall leadership of the college had changed, they had only one member of staff from the previous leadership team; this was due to colleagues realising that the way forward was to be different to what they had done in the past and they also had retirements and other natural departures within their organisation.

After some close questioning from Members, Councillor Sartin thanked Ms Famili for her detailed and frank presentation and asked if she happy to attend a future meeting to update the Committee on progress made. Ms Famili said that she was happy to do so and that her invitation still stood for any Councillors to come and visit the college.