

Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee

10:30	Thursday, 26 September 2013	Committee Room 1, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex
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Quorum: 5

Councillor S Walsh
Councillor M Buckley
Councillor A Erskine
Councillor I Grundy
Councillor T Hedley
Councillor I Henderson
Councillor R Hirst
Councillor J Huntman
Councillor D Kendall
Councillor M Maddocks
Councillor C Pond
Councillor S Robinson
Councillor J Spence
Councillor A Wood

Chairman

For information about the meeting please ask for:

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Essex County Council

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Part 1

(During consideration of these items the meeting is likely to be open to the press and public)

		Pages
1	Apologies and Substitution Notices The Committee Officer to report receipt (if any)	
2	Declarations of Interest To note any declarations of interest to be made by Members	
3	Minutes To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 20 June 2013.	5 - 6
4	Work Programme and Updates To consider report PSEG/03/13 on the preliminary Committee Work Programme.	7 - 18
5	Monitoring of Scrutiny Report on Off Site Emergency Planning Arrangements around COMAH Sites in Esse To consider report PSEG/04/13 on the Cabinet responses to the report recommendations.	19 - 30
6	Monitoring of Scrutiny Report on Financial Inclusion To consider report PSEG/05/13 on the Cabinet responses to the report recommendations.	31 - 48
7	Implementation of Part Night Street Lighting To receive report PSEG/06/13 and a briefing on the implementation of the Part Night Street Lighting.	49 - 54
8	Date of Next Meeting To note that the next Committee activity day is scheduled for Thursday 24 October 2013.	
9	Urgent Business To consider any matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.	

Exempt Items

(During consideration of these items the meeting is not likely to be open to the press and public)

To consider whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of an agenda item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 or it being confidential for the purposes of Section 100A(2) of that Act.

In each case, Members are asked to decide whether, in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption (and discussing the matter in private) outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

10

Urgent Exempt Business

To consider in private any other matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLACE SERVICES & ECONOMIC
GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL,
CHELMSFORD ON 20 JUNE 2013**

Present:

Councillor S Walsh (Chairman)	Councillor R Hirst
Councillor B Aspinell (substitute for Councillor S Robinson)	Councillor J Huntman
Councillor M Buckley	Councillor D Kendall
Councillor A Erskine	Councillor C Pond
Councillor I Grundy	Councillor A Wood
Councillor I Henderson	

Also in attendance was Councillor C Guglielmi.

1. Membership

Members noted the membership of the new Committee as set out below:

Councillor S Walsh (Chairman)	Councillor J Huntman
Councillor M Buckley	Councillor D Kendall
Councillor A Erskine	Councillor M Maddocks
Councillor I Grundy	Councillor C Pond
Councillor A Hedley	Councillor S Robinson
Councillor I Henderson	Councillor J Spence
Councillor R Hirst	Councillor A Wood

Councillor Simon Walsh was elected Chairman of the Committee at Full Council in May 2013.

2. Apologies and Substitution Notices

The Committee Officer reported apologies for absence from Councillors M Maddocks and J Spence. An apology was also received from Councillor S Robinson with the substitute being Councillor B Aspinell.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of personal interest.

4. Appointment of Vice-Chairmen

Councillor Ian Grundy was nominated as a Vice-Chairman and with agreement of the Committee was duly appointed.

Councillor Ivan Henderson was nominated as a Vice-Chairman and with the agreement of the Committee was duly appointed.

The Chairman explained that the role of Vice-Chairman would be to assist in formulating the future work programme of the Committee and to act as conduit for members of the Committee in bringing forward items for inclusion in the Forward Look.

5. Minutes

The Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 21 March 2013 were approved as a correct record by those Members who had been in attendance at the last meeting of the Economic Development, Environment and Highways Policy and Scrutiny Committee and signed by the Chairman, subject to an amendment on page 7 of the agenda pack (page 3 Minutes), 3rd bullet to remove the word 'outside'.

6. Committee Terms of Reference

The Committee noted report PSEG/01/13 on the Committee's Terms of Reference.

In response to a question the Chairman clarified that where there were cross-cutting issues across more than one Committee remit, the issue would be referred to the Scrutiny Board to take a pragmatic view on how the issue is taken forward.

7. Dates of Future Meetings and Work Programme

The Committee noted report PSEG/02/13 on the Dates of Future Meetings. It was acknowledged that the May 2014 date may need to change if the European Elections take place on the scheduled date.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 10.07am.

Chairman

		AGENDA ITEM 4
		PSEG/03/13
Committee:	Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	26 September 2013	
WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATES		
Enquiries to:	Christine Sharland, Scrutiny Officer 01245 430450 Christine.sharland@essex.gov.uk	

The purpose of this report is to set out what action has been taken so far to develop proposals for the Committee's work programme and to seek its endorsement for taking forward the planning of certain scrutiny reviews where it has been established that it may influence the Council's activities going forward.

Preliminary briefings to underpin Committee activity

Following the County Council elections in May Members have had various opportunities to find out more about those matters that fall within the Committee's remit. Aside from informative briefings organised as part of the Council's overall Member Induction Training, the Committee's own June and July activity days were aimed at providing an operational overview of relevant services.

In June, following a brief formal meeting to appoint Vice Chairmen, the Committee received an informal briefing from Robert Overall, Deputy Chief Executive, who provided an operational overview of issues in the Committee's remit. While in July three Cabinet Members (Councillors Bass, Jowers, and Walters) spoke about their portfolios, and some of the headline issues that they were addressing. In November the committee activity day will focus upon the Economic Growth and Infrastructure portfolio, which is held by Councillor Bentley.

Aside from briefings held at County Hall, it is important for the Committee to seek out first-hand knowledge about matters falling within its portfolio. Consequently as a part of the June activity day a site visit was also arranged to Hadleigh to learn how the London 2012 Games has been used as a catalyst to bring about positive change in the social and economic wellbeing of local communities in Essex. The visit was pertinent to the Committee's remit and provided an overview of how the Olympic Legacy is evolving in practice from people who have been directly engaged in various projects that are delivering positive results in terms of economic regeneration and partnership working. Although the visit had been organised as an opportunity for Members of the new Committee to find out more about each other as well as looking at issues pertinent to its remit, it was disappointing that only three Members out of fourteen took part.

Developing Overview and Scrutiny (OS) at Essex County Council

In the past year steps have been taken to review the County Council's OS arrangements, and to introduce a more consistent approach to its effective development. Indeed the former Economic Development, Environment and Highways Policy and Scrutiny Committee reviewed its own activities and highlighted some broader messages that its Members wished to be conveyed to its successor, namely this Committee. Those messages are set out in a report EDEH/10/13 submitted to the former Committee in March 2013 (Minute7), and a copy of that report was circulated electronically to this Committee's Members in June 2013 and is published on the Council's website.

The approach that has been adopted for developing this Committee's work programme takes into account not only the broader experience and lessons passed on by its predecessors, but also the framework for OS drawn from good practice that has been collated into the Council's OS own Handbook, which is being published on its website. Overall a more objective approach is being developed in the way that scrutiny committees select and conduct reviews, together with greater emphasis upon the role and responsibilities of Members in the successful outcomes or otherwise of OS activity.

Developing the Committee's Work Programme

Over the summer progress has been made in the identification of projects where the Committee could influence the Council's decision making processes and add value to the way that issues are addressed, and that work will continue to be ongoing.

Given the vast number of issues that Members may wish to find out more about across the Committee's remit, there is a temptation to choose to review popular or parochial topics that interest everyone rather than taking a more strategic approach and concentrating on those issues where the Committee through careful planning and delivery can produce positive and sometimes far reaching outcomes.

The Chairman and Scrutiny Officer, in discussion with Members and Officers, have collated information to assist the Committee to prioritise projects for inclusion in its work programme. The information has also made it possible to distinguish between issues where an in depth review may be necessary and those where a different approach may be more appropriate in terms of resource available and what may be achievable in practice.

Some of the factors that have been taken into account to balance the Committee's resources effectively and develop its work programme include:

- Accepting that in some cases the Executive is in fact best placed to review and address matters of concern, and where committee involvement would not add value to consideration of issues within existing resource and time constraints; and
- Recognising that there are in fact alternative channels for Members to influence the Council's activities for instance by responding individually to consultations that their attention is drawn to, and taking an objective view as to whether or not the Committee's involvement may or may not add value to outcomes and does not, in

fact, duplicate similar work already being undertaken.

- With specific reference to consultations, it would not be possible for scrutiny committees to consider all the numerous consultations that take place let alone other potential project streams. Therefore it is critical that any proposals to scrutinise consultations are carefully evaluated in terms of the framework for the particular topic, the timing of any Committee engagement as well as what its involvement may be able to achieve in practice.
- Cabinet Members and Council Services often organise seminars and workshops on specific topics to which Councillors are invited in order that they can input their views in the way that policies and services may be developed. Recent invitations that have been relevant to this Committee's remit include the Essex Partnership for Flood Management Engagement Day (23 September), Highways Winter Overview Briefing (22 October), and the surgeries being proposed by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation. It is important that Members take advantage of such invitations if they want to find out about the topics as it would not be an effective use of limited resources for the Committee to duplicate similar opportunities in order to consider the same topics.

Issues proposed for inclusion in the Work Programme

The projects identified for the Committee's attention have been carefully selected taking into account the topic selection criteria set out in the Overview and Scrutiny Handbook, and the real potential to influence the Council's activity going forward.

It is acknowledged that the Committee's work programme has to have some flexibility in its schedule as from time to time some unexpected issues may arise for its consideration. This situation has already occurred as a call in of a Cabinet Member decision on the implementation of part night street lighting has necessitated changes being made to arrangements that were being planned around the topics scheduled originally for this meeting.

Based upon investigation the following topics have been earmarked for inclusion in the work programme:

Monitoring Scrutiny Report Outcomes: The following items will be scheduled in the work programme for this Autumn as part of the monitoring of outcomes of past scrutiny reviews:

- Financial Inclusion – see separate report elsewhere on this agenda.
- Off Site Emergency Planning Arrangements around COMAH sites in Essex – see separate report elsewhere on this agenda.

Proposed New Reviews as agreed by former Economic Development, Environment and Highways Policy and Scrutiny Committee

- New review on the Future of the Recycling Centres for Household Waste. This review was recommended by the former Committee in January 2013 (Minute 5). It is proposed that initially a briefing be arranged for the full Committee on the background to the topic, prior to establishing a task and finish group to take forward the planning of the project with a view to the investigative stages commencing in the New Year. The original scrutiny report proposing the new review and setting out an outline for this new review may be accessed via the following [Link](#)
- New review around the topic of 'Integrated Passenger Transport'. This is a potentially broad and far reaching in depth review that was identified by the former Committee in January 2103 (Minute 7), and is cross cutting for the Council in terms of its political and organisational structures. The objective of a review could be along the lines of 'to consider the physical availability, accessibility and co-ordination of public transport across Essex, and how the network could be improved to encourage greater regular use of services'.

In terms of timing it is likely that a full Committee briefing will be organised for early 2014 (23 January provisional date) in order to assist it in the planning of the project by a Task and Finish Group. In the meantime Members' attention is drawn to recent correspondence that Cabinet Members have sent to Councillors drawing their attention to current consultations on the future provision of Home to School Transport (this particular issue falls within the remit of the People and Families Scrutiny Committee), and Local Bus Services. Members are encouraged to respond individually to these consultations if they so wish so that their views may be taken into account by the Cabinet Members.

New Proposals around current issues

- **Economic Growth Strategy**

It is proposed that the Committee's November meeting (rather than October as originally planned) will be focussed upon the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Infrastructure. The objective will be to familiarise the Committee with the content of the Economic Growth Strategy through an in depth briefing, and undertake action planning in the afternoon to consider in practice how the Strategy may be implemented. A draft scoping document for the project will be circulated to Committee Members in due course for comment.

Two further economic growth issues are being investigated for potential inclusion in the work programme in the longer term around exploring what more the Council could do in addressing youth unemployment across the 19-24 age group (This is different from what we all describe as "NEET" which is generally perceived as the 16-19 age group); and identifying the different forms of economic partnership that currently in Essex, and consider the most effective form of partnership working to support economic growth.

- **Government Consultation on Aviation Policy**

Given the significant implications that the Davies Airports Commission could have for Government's Aviation Policy in the future, it is proposed that the Committee will contribute to the County Council's formal response to consultation that is anticipated early next year.

It is anticipated that the Commission will publish its interim report in December 2013, which will contain within it an answer to the question of whether additional capacity is needed in the South East for aviation, and a series of options for how this might be delivered should it be required. The Commission has indicated that more detailed assessment of the various options will continue during the course of 2014 and the methodology for these assessments will be the subject of consultation. Consequently there would be a further round of views sought before submission of the final report to Government perhaps at the beginning of 2015.

While the timescale and format of the Commission's consultation are still unclear, it is necessary to do some pre planning of the Committee's own handling of the topic so that Members are assisted in a way that they can take forward a more effective investigation. Although final details on any consultation has not been published by the Commission, it is suggested that it would assist Members to undertake site visits to Southend and Stansted Airports to find out more about the strategic and local issues associated with those airports. This evidence could then be used by the Committee to cross examine any witnesses, inform any conclusions it might reach, and recommendations it might forward to the Cabinet for consideration as part of the Council's formal consultation response.

In terms of the Committee's work programme it proposes that the site visits be organised for early 2014, and possibly consideration of any consultation at its February / March meeting.

Although the topic is onerous in terms of its potential complexity and the lack of clarity around the consultation in terms of planning the Scrutiny Committee's own involvement, there are various examples of past scrutiny reviews of Government consultations that may prove to be helpful in planning this particular review once more information has been published by the Commission.

- ❖ Scrutiny Report on ECC Response to the Draft National Policy Statement for Nuclear Power Generation, including proposals for a new Nuclear Power Station at Bradwell (February 2010) [Link to Scrutiny Report](#)
- ❖ Scrutiny Report on the Government Consultation in Proposals for Revising the Charges at the Dartford-Thurrock River Crossing (September 2011) [Link to Scrutiny Report](#)

- **Parking Partnerships**

The Essex Parking Partnerships were established in 1 April 2011 and brought together all street-based parking services in Essex. The Partnerships form a new service that is council-run and is a partnership between Essex County Council and two lead councils. It is split into two areas: The North Partnership is led by

Colchester Borough Council and the South Partnership by Chelmsford City Council. The aim is to run parking enforcement to a fair and consistent standard in order to provide the same level of service but in a more efficient way.

The two Partnerships are responsible in each area for the on-street Civil Enforcement Officers; the parking enforcement process together with challenges to, and payments of, parking penalties plus administration of the parking restrictions and the management of the scheme.

The former Committee agreed when the Partnerships were established that it would be more appropriate to undertake a scrutiny review after sufficient time had elapsed for scrutineers to be able to investigate the effectiveness of their operation in practice. It is suggested that a suitable terms of reference for a review would be 'Are the original objectives of the Parking Partnerships being delivered, and what lessons have been learned to inform more effective partnership working in the future?'

Arrangements are being made for the full Committee to receive a briefing on the Parking Partnerships at its next scheduled activity day ie 24 October prior to establishing a task and finish group to take forward the review.

Other topics being investigated for inclusion in the Committee's future work programme include:

- Ringway Jacobs Contract (after April 2014). In the meantime attention is drawn to some work being undertaken by the Audit Committee on the Essex Highways Contract and Performance Management.
- Traveller Unit (after April 2014)
- Flood Management (later in 2014)
- Impact of weather on various council services (focus on ESH services within remit)
- Country Parks

NB This is not a finite list as other matters are also under investigation

Arrangements will also be made outside of more formal activity to raise the Committee's awareness of broader remit issues including a visit to the Trading Standards offices, and Members will also be given opportunity to shadow that Service's officers carrying out responsibilities

Updates on Past Activity

- **Park and Ride**

By way of illustrating how scrutiny projects may influence Council activity, in September 2011 the former EDEHPSC published its report on the Park and Ride (P&R) Scheme in Chelmsford, and forwarded three recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation. On the basis of the information considered by its Task and Finish Group one of the recommendations the Committee made was a proposal that consideration be given to levying a nominal charge of £1 on 5 to 16 year olds to use the P&R Services.

The Committee's attention is drawn to the recent Cabinet Member decision (dated 6 August) to consult upon changes to the scope and structure of the P&R Scheme that includes the introduction of child fares (5-16 year olds) of £1 per day, £5 per week and £20 per month.

- **Hadleigh Site Visit**

In June a visit was arranged for the Committee to Hadleigh and the site of the Olympic Mountain Bike course. The three Members who took part in the visit were pleased at how informative it proved to be in practice. When they arrived at the Former Hadleigh Fire Station prior to a presentation they were able to take in a local art exhibition and see how the flexible facilities are being used for various activities as the start of their visit co-incided with the closing of another local meeting.

Members found out more about how the County Council has engaged with other partners to optimise the 2012 London Games as a catalyst to bring about change in the social and economic wellbeing of local communities in Essex, and how the Olympic Legacy is evolving in fact. It was highlighted that the Games were proving to be much more than a sporting event as a large range of activities had been triggered eg economic, tourism, physical legacy, regeneration as well as encouraging increased sporting and physical activity. Aside from being able to seek information from County Council officers Members also received information from Councillor Anne Naylor, the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing, and Castle Point Borough Council representatives.

Next steps

Based upon the above information a preliminary draft Work Programme is attached at the Appendix. However, it should be noted that at this stage it does not incorporate the full complement of work that will need to be programmed in due course.

Action required by Committee

The Committee's agreement to the evolving work programme is now sought so that further action can be taken and Members engaged in the planning of individual reviews.

Appendix

Preliminary work programme of the Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee: Forward Look for 2013/ 2014 (as at 16 September 2013)

Meeting	Topic	Approach	Current status
2013 <i>TFG – Task and Finish Group</i>			
20 June Formal Meeting	Appointment of Vice Chairmen, and note remit		Formal business around administration of Committee
Informal Briefing	Robert Overall to provide operational overview of ESH (Environment, Sustainability and Highways services)		
Site Visit	Hadleigh, Olympic Legacy	View how project used as catalyst for regeneration in Hadleigh area, and partnership working	No further action at this time
25 July	Briefings: Councillor Jowers/ Libraries, Communities and Planning Cllr Walters/ Waste and Recycling Cllr Bass/ Highways and Transportation	Briefings to inform Committee about its remit	No further action at this time
<i>31 July, and 5 September</i>	<i>Corporate Member Development on Scrutiny</i>	<i>Generic training for all Scrutiny Committee Members</i>	
<i>23 September</i>	<i>Essex Partnership for Flood Management Engagement Day</i>	<i>Organised by Partnership and therefore not a Committee event. However, the event is relevant to Members as topic falls within remit of Committee and may be an issue to be included in work programme at a later date</i>	<i>Not part of Committee programme. However, the seminar is relevant to its remit.</i>

26 September	<i>Committee Pre Meeting prior to formal meeting</i>	<i>Forum for Members to actively take part in planning of committee activity</i>	
26 September Formal meeting	Work Programme	Progress report to consider proposed committee activity and reviews	Ongoing
	Review of Off Site Emergency Planning Requirements COMAH Sites	Scrutiny Report approved by Committee (Minute 4/ February 2013)	Part of monitoring outcomes of original review.
	Financial Inclusion	Scrutiny Report approved by Committee (Minute 4/ February 2013)	Part of monitoring of outcomes from original review
	Part Night Street Lighting	Arising from the call in of a Cabinet Member this topic, it was agreed that the Committee receive a detailed briefing on the project that is to be rolled out county wide over the coming months.	
<i>Afternoon</i>	<i>Visit to Emergency Planning Centre</i>	<i>Part of Member Induction programme, and pertinent to 'COMAH' review referred to above.</i>	
October TBC	Financial Inclusion: Task and Finish Group	Proposal to set up TFG to be considered by Committee on 26 September	To cross examine outcomes of Scrutiny Report, and then to report back to Committee
October TBC	COMAH Task and Finish Group	Proposal to set up TFG to be considered by Committee on 26 September	To cross examine monitor outstanding responses to Scrutiny Report, and then to report back to Committee
<i>22 October</i>	<i>Highway Winter Service Seminar</i>	<i>Promoted by Cabinet Member and therefore not a Committee event. However, it is relevant to</i>	<i>Not part of Committee programme. However, the</i>

		<i>Members as topic falls within remit of Committee and may be an issue to be included in work programme at a later date.</i>	<i>seminar is relevant to its remit.</i>
24 October	Work Programme		Update
	Financial Inclusion	Consider report of TFG on outcomes of approved Scrutiny Report	Aim to conclude monitoring of original scrutiny report
	Parking Partnerships	Introductory briefing on topic prior to establishing a Task and Finish Group to plan and undertake scrutiny review	New review
24 October	<i>Site visit Trading Standards Offices</i>	<i>Visit designed to inform Committee about activities that fall within its remit</i>	<i>Tentative proposal</i>
November TBC	<i>Parking Partnership Task and Finish Group</i>	<i>Initial meeting of TFG to plan review and draft scoping document for Committee's formal approval</i>	
28 November Informal full day meeting	Briefing Cllr Bentley/ Economic Growth and Infrastructure	Briefing on the Economic Growth Strategy and Scrutiny Action Learning on NEETS issue	
19 December	Waste disposal and Recycling Centres for Household Waste Service	Introductory briefing on topic prior to establishing a Task and Finish Group to plan and undertake scrutiny review	New review
Late 2013/ Early 2014 Two dates TBC	<i>Government Consultation on Aviation Policy</i>	<i>Separate site visits to Southend and Stansted Airports to gather evidence to inform consideration of Government Consultation</i>	<i>Evidence gathering</i>

January/ February	Parking Partnerships, and RCHW Service Task and Finish Group activity		Evidence gathering
23 January 2014	Integrated Passenger Transport	Introductory briefing on topic to be designed to assist the Committee to prior to establishing a Task and Finish Group to plan and undertake scrutiny review	Potential new review
	Task and Finish Group activity		
27 February	Government Consultation on Aviation Policy	Await Commission's formal consultation on interim report	Timing dependent on Government consultation timetable

ACTIVE TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

Task and Finish Groups			
	Membership	Status	Planned Activity
Financial Inclusion	Cllrs Grundy, Kendall, Walsh	Based upon former Group that undertook original review, proposal for it to reconvene to cross examine response to recommendations set out in Scrutiny Report	October
Off Site Emergency Planning Requirements around COMAH sites		Proposed to be set up to monitor outstanding responses to recommendations set out in Scrutiny Report	October
Parking Partnerships		To be set up in October 2013 to plan and undertake forward review	Autumn 2013/ Winter 2014

RCHW Service		To be set up to plan and take forward new review in the New Year	Winter/Summer 2014
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Please note that the TFGs will have to identify timetables for their activities that will have to be managed within overall resource available.

		AGENDA ITEM 5
		PSEG/04/13
Committee:	Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	26 September 2013	
MONITORING OF SCRUTINY REPORT ON OFF SITE EMERGENCY PLANNING ARRANGMENTS AROUND COMAH SITES IN ESSEX		
Enquiries to:	Christine Sharland, Scrutiny Officer 01245 430450 Christine.sharland@essex.gov.uk	

Background

An in depth investigation on the Off Site Emergency Planning Requirements around COMAH Sites in Essex was conducted over a two year period, and the scrutiny report was agreed by the former Economic Development, Environment and Highways Policy and Scrutiny Committee (EDEHPSC) in February 2013 (Minute 4).

While a copy of the Scrutiny Report's 'Conclusions and Recommendations' is reproduced at Appendix A to this report, the full Scrutiny Report is available via the following [Link](#). A copy has been sent under separate cover to Committee Members.

Following the Council's May elections and the restructuring of its political management structures, the emergency planning function became part of the Cabinet portfolio for Transformation and Corporate Services and now falls within the remit of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee. However, the Scrutiny Board agreed that given this Committee's familiarity with the original EDEHPSC through its membership that the monitoring of the outcomes of the Scrutiny Report should be undertaken by this Committee rather than the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

Progress to date

The EDEHPSC forwarded five recommendations in total to the Cabinet.

Councillor Louis, Cabinet Member for Transformation and Corporate Services, has responded to those recommendations, which fall solely within his portfolio namely Emergency Planning. His response is attached at Appendix B to this report.

Recommendation 4 of the Scrutiny Report focuses upon Corporate Services issues and reads:

'That, in view of the importance of community resilience and the County Council's statutory duties, it be recommended to the Cabinet Members for Communities and Planning, the Leader, and Finance and Transformation Programme, that a protocol be developed to ensure that the services provided by the corporate Communications and IS Teams to the ECPEM Team are modern up to date, effective, and user friendly in the support and delivery of public information on emergency planning in Essex taking into account the needs of individual residents'.

At the time of writing this report the Cabinet's response to this recommendation was outstanding. While the overall tenet of the Scrutiny Report was very positive in terms of the Emergency Planning function itself, this recommendation around communication arose from Members' perception that improvements could be made to the way that the Council's corporate services support that function. Consequently the effectiveness of the County Council in its engagement with the public is a key issue in terms of this monitoring exercise, and is fundamental to the success or otherwise of this scrutiny project. Therefore it is proposed that a small Task and Finish Group be established to receive and cross examine the Cabinet response to this recommendation once it is received, and its findings be reported back to the Committee.

The fifth recommendation set out in the Scrutiny Report is around a further review being undertaken on the effectiveness of the Council's own corporate preparedness to respond if, in fact, emergencies do occur. Given the changes in the Scrutiny Committee structure Members' views on the way that this should be taken forward are invited, namely whether or not they would prefer to propose a joint Task and Finish Group with the Corporate Scrutiny Committee or to refer the recommendation to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee for it to take forward the recommendation without any further input from this Committee (notwithstanding that this Committee will complete the monitoring of the other recommendations of the original scrutiny review) .

Councillor Derrick Louis will be attending this meeting, together with David Johnson, Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive of Essex County Fire & Rescue Service & Head of Essex Civil Protection and Emergency Management, to address the Committee on their reaction to the Scrutiny Report.

Action required by the Committee:

- 1. To consider Councillor Louis' response to the original Scrutiny Report.**
- 2. To establish a Task and Finish Group to cross examine the Cabinet response to recommendation 4 as proposed above.**
- 3. To agree a way forward in relation to recommendation 5 and the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to investigate the effectiveness of the Council's own preparedness to respond to emergencies.**

Extract from approved Scrutiny Report on the Off Site Emergency Planning Requirements around COMAH Sites in Essex

‘Conclusions and Recommendations

The Committee has decided not to make any specific recommendations on the direct regulation of COMAH Sites. It was agreed from the outset of this scrutiny review that it should have a narrower focus than may have been preferred by those people who have voiced their fears about the control and regulation of COMAH sites in Essex. While Councillors recognised that the presence of such sites close to urban areas had given rise to local criticism, there are studies being undertaken at a national level to review some of the concerns raised about the control and regulation of industrial sites, including land use planning issues. Indeed in July 2012 the European Commission published Directive 2012/18/EU, the Seveso III Directive on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances, which will introduce a number of further changes.

Nevertheless the evidence collated as part of this review does provide the Committee with an opportunity to promote further good practice in the way that emergency planning is developed in Essex, and through the scrutiny process produce some positive outcomes. Therefore the following recommendations have been formulated for the Council's Executive to consider and report back to the Committee in June 2013.

General: Recommendation 1

During the review the Committee learned through collating first hand evidence of the innovative work undertaken by the Council's Emergency Planning Team, and its high level of commitment to fulfilling its role on behalf of the community.

It be recommended that the Essex Civil Protection and Emergency Management Team and the Essex Resilience Forum be formally commended for the ongoing development of emergency planning work in Essex, and the national recognition achieved for those initiatives they have championed including the film ‘Civil Contingencies Act. Act One’, developing community resilience through the Schools Project, and its input into off site COMAH Emergency Plans including the Shoeburyness Emergency Alert Service.

Public Communications Good Practice: Recommendation 2

The QinetiQ COMAH Site at Shoeburyness/ Foulness provides an illustration of good practice in the way that it has sought to engage the community as part its public safety information campaign and fulfil its obligations under the top tier COMAH regulations. In recognition of the success of its Emergency Alert Service the site is being used as a case study to promote the use of similar systems to other COMAH operators.

Given the importance of positively engaging the public as part of COMAH off site emergency planning requirements, the Committee considered that steps should be taken to encourage all COMAH Operators across Essex to adhere to national good practice in order to ensure the effective dissemination of public safety information on their individual sites. Proactive steps should be taken to engage public attention so that the information is readily available to the layman both in terms of its accessibility in a variety of media as well as its content.

It be recommended that the Cabinet Member for Communities and Planning urge all COMAH site operators in Essex to provide consistent high quality public safety information to local communities on their individual sites in accordance with good practice being promoted nationally as part of COMAH regulations and as demonstrated by QinetiQ at its Shoeburyness site.

Schools Project: Recommendation 3

Community resilience is an integral part of emergency planning both at a strategic level in the way that local emergency responders harness local resources and expertise in an emergency eg through the Essex Resilience Forum, and at a local community level whereby individuals are prepared on how to react if an emergency arises. In Essex there are examples of successful innovative projects that have been undertaken to promote the community's understanding of emergency planning through raising various awareness campaigns and high profile activity such as the Schools Project. There is anecdotal evidence to support the argument that engaging school children has an important knock on effect as children share the information they have learned with their families and friends, and so across different generations and the broader community.

It be recommended to the Cabinet that the County Council continue to promote and support the development of community resilience through the Schools Project based upon the success of engaging school children to raise awareness about the importance of being prepared for emergencies.

Corporate Services: Recommendation 4

Over recent years Council Services have been subject, both directly and indirectly, to ongoing structural change within the organisation, combined with increased partnership working and an overall need to respond to changes brought about by advances in technology, the modern environment, and public expectations. The review provided an insight into how one service has addressed both internal and external influences, and demonstrated how it has had a much broader impact beyond its own administrative boundaries to encourage good practice in emergency planning.

The Committee was impressed with the ECPEM Team's ongoing development of its work to promote community resilience and fulfil the County Council's statutory responsibilities in a positive and meaningful way. Nevertheless it would be naive to overlook the fact that the Team's success or otherwise is affected by the quality and responsiveness of shared corporate support and facilities.

In the modern world electronic media plays an increasingly integral role in the way that organisations may behave and communicate with the community at large, especially as it has become a popular means for individuals to acquire information as technology advances is changing very quickly eg handheld devices to access the internet, SMS texting, and real time information both locally, nationally and internationally. People will use various means to look up traffic information before embarking upon a journey, and similarly if there have been reports of flooding or a major incident at an industrial site they will expect to find up to date information and act accordingly.

While the Committee was satisfied about the high standard of emergency planning in Essex, it recognised that the scrutiny review had been prompted by the concerns of some residents who perceived an absence of emergency planning control at COMAH sites, even though it had been demonstrated satisfactorily to the Committee that this was not the case. Given this anomaly it was considered that there is a need to ensure that the Council's own channels of communication and information provided at a corporate level are fit for purpose. Residents should be reassured that there are effective emergency planning measures are in place, and that they have easy and timely access to advice on what individuals should do in an emergency.

With specific reference to Canvey Island, the Committee acknowledged that the close proximity of COMAH sites to residential areas probably does contribute to an increased perception of danger among residents. While there are historical reasons for the location of the COMAH Sites and residential areas that have developed in close proximity to those sites, it was agreed that in an ideal world such sites would be planned distant from houses. However, the Committee focussed its attention on existing circumstances and believed that the best way of countering those fears is by effective public information systems and robust emergency planning.

The Committee was disappointed with the limited information available via the Council's own website, which was exacerbated by the fact that some of the valuable materials produced by the ECPEM team could not apparently be published on the site even though other local authorities had published the same materials. Furthermore attention had been drawn to advances in technology such as real time information and social media systems that could be harnessed to develop even greater community resilience. The Committee believe that steps should be taken to explore such avenues as soon as possible. As a first step, it was considered that full access to the widest range of electronic information should be afforded via the County Council's website www.essex.gov.uk

That, in view of the importance of community resilience and the County Council's statutory duties, it be recommended to the Cabinet Members for Communities and Planning, and Finance and Transformation Programme, and Economic Growth and Waste and Recycling that a protocol be developed to ensure that the services provided by the corporate Communications and IS Teams to the ECPEM Team are modern up to date, effective, and user friendly

in the support and delivery of public information on emergency planning in Essex taking into account the needs of individual residents.

Corporate Emergency Planning: Recommendation 5

Aside from the corporate support given to the ECPEM Team to undertake its responsibilities, the review has highlighted the importance to Essex residents that the County Council should be able to demonstrate its own ability to respond to an emergency and co-ordinate emergency work with partners.

The ECPEM Team provides a unique set of emergency planning services on behalf of the Council. However, other services across the Council also contribute to the overall provision of emergency support across Essex eg communications, highways infrastructure, and strategic planning. While the Council may have a variety of business continuity and communication plans that are required to be in place by way of good organisational practice, the Committee considered that the robustness of various corporate strategies for planning and managing in an emergency should be scrutinised. Residents need to be reassured that the Council does in fact robust tested procedures in place.

Over the past couple of years there have been incidents where the Council's own response to emergencies could be examined to gauge how effective strategies may have or not have proven successful in practice. For instance recent crises, flooding across Essex, water and fuel shortages, and extreme weather conditions like the heavy snowfall in 2010/ 2011, as well as the effectiveness of the strategies put into place to address any problems that could have arisen from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Committee therefore proposed that it would be helpful if a short scrutiny review could be conducted on the effectiveness of corporate communications across the Council in business continuity planning, and consequently in the implementation of those plans. Furthermore given the professional expertise that the Council exhibits in the performance of its emergency planning function, how does it monitor its preparedness to respond across the broader services to emergency situations given its ongoing structural changes and move towards a commissioning organisation.

It was agreed that as part of its Forward Look the Committee set up a Task and Finish Group to scrutinise the effectiveness of the Council's own corporate preparedness to respond to emergencies.

Monitoring Outcomes of scrutiny review: Recommendation 6

That the Committee seek an initial response from the Cabinet Members to the five recommendations set out above to be reported in June 2013, and the outcomes of this scrutiny review be monitored in the Autumn of 2013.

Appendix B

Cabinet Member Response

'Dear Cllr Walsh,

Re: Scrutiny Report on the Off Site Emergency Planning and Requirements around COMAH sites in Essex

As you will be aware I have now taken on the portfolio of the ECPEM Service from Cllr Jowers, and while I was unable to attend the final meeting of the Economic Development, Environment and Highways Policy and Scrutiny Committee on the 21 February 2013, I have read the report with interest, and the 6 Recommendations identified.

First, I should like to congratulate the Committee on a detailed and well researched report. My reading of the report provides me with a reassurance that the ECPEM service for which I have only just taken on has indeed been diligent in their work against the back drop of changes they faced with the redundancies of managers, and the move into the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service.

I should like to make you aware that this Report and the 6 Recommendations has been taken to the first ECPEM Board Meeting which was held on the 17th April 2013 for Members' information and they were delighted with the outcome.

With regard to the requirement to provide you with my feedback on Recommendations 1,2,3 and 4 and consider these in line with Recommendation 6, these are my initial views.

General: Recommendation 1:

I am delighted that the ECPEM service in conjunction with other services and stakeholders were able to demonstrate an effective approach to the delivery of Essex County Council's duties under the COMAH Regulations and additionally to use innovation methods such as the DVD and schools work to underpin this duty. It demonstrates to me a full understanding of their role and I am delighted that the Service was commended for this work. This was taken to the ECPEM Board in April 2013.

I should also add that the schools work under their Community Resilience Programme has indeed gone from strength to strength, and the Service has received numerous enquiries from other local authorities around the country and overseas. In addition to this, five academic institutions have initiated discussions with the Deputy Head of Service to be engaged with research and these are as follows:

- Essex University
- University of East London
- University College London
- University of West England
- Lancaster University

We will be continuing our work on the schools project and engage with other stakeholders to encourage more development work. Although this will take resources and funding, ECPEM are looking at external funding wherever possible to achieve this. Work is also underway with our own ECC Flood Water Management Partnership which will ensure we are developing a consistent approach to public awareness on flood risk management and utilising limited resources effectively.

Public Communications – Good Practice: Recommendation 2

While the COMAH Regulations are clear on the consultation distances for public engagement and awareness, I know that our ECPEM Service have established good working relationships with the Site Operators and to that end, they are able to encourage them to raise a higher level of awareness beyond the consultation distances of the site identified by the HSE. Additionally as a result of the COMAH Review, locally elected members are wherever possible also been invited to attend the Exercises which are being planned. The ECPEM Service are also extending liaison with the neighbouring Unitary Authority of Thurrock to again ensure a consistency of approach. This is of course against the backdrop of ensuring that information is managed in a secure manner.

Schools Project: Recommendation 3

As indicated in my response to Recommendation 1, this work will continue as it is a well-rehearsed and effective method of working with our communities. As I have mentioned, we will be working with our own Flood Water Management Partnership to support them in their delivery of their public awareness engagement programme and work has started on this. I also know that the Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Secretariat are working with our ECPEM Service to ensure that they continue this work and have a national approach.

Corporate Services; Recommendation 4

Communication is an important channel to work with the public, and ECC should have good and effective systems in place to achieve this. I would expect that ECC should be supporting the ECPEM in the delivery and publicity of their work not only on the schools work but for the wider community under our duties of the Civil Contingencies Act.

The ECPEM Service have started to look at working on the content of a website to ensure that information is available to the public and this is particularly important given the concerns raised by the pressure group “People Against Methane – PAM”, who I understand were delighted with the outcome of the review and the work ECPEM have done on engagement programmes as was the local MP, Rebecca Harris.

Corporate Emergency Planning: Recommendation 5

While you have not sought my views on this recommendation, I should like to add my comments and agree that this is an important area of work and I have already discussed this with the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and the Deputy Head of ECPEM. They have advised me of the work they are currently undertaking with our own ECC corporate leadership team (executive directors) and political leadership team (Cabinet Members) and County Tactical Group, this also includes a planned exercise in November.

Indeed, I have agreed with the Chief Fire Officer that we will put in place a four phased training programme:

- Phase 1: briefing on roles and responsibilities. This will include a briefing on Gold, Silver and Bronze, SCG and the Command structure for ECC (including the duties under the Civil Contingencies Act). We are looking to secure a date in October for this training.
- Phase 2: 11th November exercise and briefing for the political leadership team and corporate leadership team. This will include briefing on awareness of the role of elected members as community leaders and media handling, together with a practical exercise.
- Phase 3: Spring 2014 – Full exercise for the corporate leadership team and political leadership team – scenario and date to be decided
- Phase 4: No notice exercise – As requested by yourself, this will be a communications exercise to test and exercise members only (date to be determined)

However, I do agree that this goes beyond our own ECPEM Services and those who attend the above groups I have mentioned. I would welcome the proposal for the establishment of a review of our own ECC Emergency Planning capabilities. I am sure that the ECPEM Service would be able to assist you in this process.

Monitoring Outcomes of Scrutiny Review: Recommendation 6

I monitor the ECPEM service and this will be conducted on a regular basis, through regular monthly meetings with the Head of the ECPEM Service who is the Chief Fire Officer. In addition the ECPEM Board also provides me with the reassurances of the continued work the service conducts. I will also look to raise this with my Cabinet Members at Cabinet and also with CLT to ensure that this continues to be on the agenda.

I am also aware that the Emergency Planning College is currently looking at good practice around the country on COMAH and our work is included in this survey.

I hope I have addressed all of the issues you raised, and an assurance of my intention to move these recommendations forward.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Derrick Louis

Cabinet Member for Transformation and Corporate Services'

		AGENDA ITEM 6
		PSEG/05/13
Committee:	Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	26 September 2013	
MONITORING OF SCRUTINY REPORT ON FINANCIAL INCLUSION		
Enquiries to:	Christine Sharland, Scrutiny Officer 01245 430450 Christine.sharland@essex.gov.uk	

An in depth investigation on Financial Inclusion was conducted during the second half of 2012 by a Task and Finish Group, and its scrutiny report was agreed by the former Economic Development, Environment and Highways Policy and Scrutiny Committee (EDEHPSC) in January 2013 (Minute 4).

While a copy of the Scrutiny Report's Executive Summary is reproduced at Appendix A to this report, the full Scrutiny Report is available via the following [Link](#) . A copy has been sent under separate cover to Committee Members.

The Financial Inclusion project was a cross cutting scrutiny review with implications for a number of the Council's functions as well as taking account of services provided by other external organisations. The EDEHPSC forwarded seventeen recommendations to the Cabinet that have budgetary considerations, policy review and development implications. The Cabinet response is now attached at Appendix B to this report, and sets out individual recommendations and responses.

The Scrutiny Report has attracted wider attention in the community and the monitoring of its outcomes will be important in terms of the longer term impact and development of the overview and scrutiny function in addition making a positive contribution to the promotion of financial inclusion across Essex.

The original Task and Finish Group comprised four members: Councillors Ian Grundy (lead member), David Kendall, Simon Walsh, and former Councillor Guy Mitchinson. It is proposed that given the volume and depth of evidence originally considered by the Group and Members' wishes to ensure that the investigation does produce tangible benefits, the Group be reconvened to cross examine the Cabinet's response and what progress has been achieved through Council activity in the promotion of financial inclusion since the report was published. In turn the Group will report back its findings to this Committee for its consideration.

Action required by the Committee:

To consider reconvening the former Financial Inclusion Task and Finish Group to cross examine the Cabinet response to the Scrutiny Report recommendations and consider what progress may have been made since its publication to promote financial inclusion in Essex.

Extract from the Scrutiny Report on Financial Inclusion

Executive Summary

The concept of taking forward a scrutiny review on financial inclusion was considered originally by the former Safer and Stronger Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee, because of growing awareness and concern about the increased numbers of people facing financial/ debt difficulties during the recession. Changes to the welfare system also have the potential to increase the number of Essex residents experiencing financial difficulties – raising the profile of financial inclusion even more urgent. When the Council's Policy and Scrutiny Committee structure was revised in May 2011 the Economic Development, Environment and Highways Policy and Scrutiny Committee (EDEHPSC) continued to champion the review.

The review offered those councillors engaged in overview and scrutiny an opportunity to influence policy and develop a longer term in-depth themed review with cross cutting implications for both the County Council and partner organisations. It provided the Committee with the opportunity to influence and place shape rather than focus on services provided exclusively by Essex County Council (ECC). Furthermore it was intended that the review should raise awareness of the subject across the whole community, its complexities, access to and quality of advice, and provision of support to individuals. The approved scoping document for the review is attached at Appendix A, and includes the following key objectives:

'To consider the issue of financial exclusion and promote financial inclusion to individuals in Essex. The findings of the review will be reported in two stages:

1. An interim report in Summer 2012 to inform the County Council's budget setting process for 2013-14; and
2. a final report with recommendations aimed at improving financial inclusion across the County in the longer term.'

A Task and Finish Group comprising Councillors Ian Grundy, David Kendall, Guy Mitchinson, and Simon Walsh conducted the in depth review. Councillor Grundy led the Group. This report summarises the evidence gathered by the Group, and its findings and conclusions. It outlines the broad challenges facing both individuals, in relation to accessing financial support and advice, and agencies in delivering those services against a background of growing demand and limited resources.

Based upon the evidence considered the Group developed a set of recommendations designed to address the challenges identified for the County Council and its partners to consider as follows :

That it be recommended to the Leader of the County Council and the Cabinet:

Recommendation 1

That as part of its equality and diversity framework the County Council take into account financial inclusion both when assessing the potential effects of future policy development and when reviewing the impact of current policies, and the monitoring of financial inclusion issues across the Council be incorporated into the terms of reference for the Equality and Diversity Board.

Recommendation 2

That the County Council undertake an in depth review of what the Council and other public agencies could do to promote skills and employment not only for young people but more generally for other residents in the context of financial inclusion.

Recommendation 3

That Welfare Reform Working Group be urged to highlight the impact of the proposed welfare reforms upon policy development or service changes on the issue of financial inclusion, and that there is specific support in place to provide residents with suitable information, guidance and IT infrastructure through libraries and other local authority access points.

Recommendation 4

That based upon the positive feedback received of the Village Agent project, consideration be given as to how the project could be extended into urban areas eg 'Urban Agent' pilot, and to develop an additional focus, at least in part, on promoting financial inclusion.

Recommendation 5

That steps be taken to raise the awareness of all County Councillors and staff of the financial exclusion that exists in Essex in a way that enables them to signpost those individuals in need to the relevant services at the earliest opportunity.

Recommendation 6

That, as a primary source of information on the relevant services available across Essex, a prominent financial inclusion portal be developed on the ECC website providing residents with easily accessible advice and signposting for support.

Recommendation 7

That the County Council review how it allocates funding to the twelve Essex Citizens Advice Bureau, which takes greater account of local need rather than being allocated according to population levels, and that clear objectives be established for the provision of that funding.

Recommendation 8

That the County Council consider how it may provide practical support for the CAB to reach out to potential community champions within the business sector who may be willing to help finance the work of their local CAB, including the option that it provide additional monies to finance the employment of a CAB fund-raiser tasked with reducing CAB reliance on local authority grants.

Recommendation 9

That the County Council consider the provision of funding to train four CAB Debt Advisors who will in turn each provide specialist debt training to five CAB volunteers providing face-to-face advice for clients across Essex.

Recommendation 10

That the County Council raise awareness of the StepChange Debt Charity, and consider how it may engage with that Charity's activities alongside targeted CAB preventative work, to extend debt advice to Essex residents.

Recommendation 11

That the County Council explore the feasibility of providing deposits with, or the direct funding of, credit unions with a view to them securing critical mass thereby supporting their sustainability and the services that they provide.

Recommendation 12

That the County Council provide practical support and expertise in assisting Credit Unions to reach out to potential community champions within the business sector who may be willing to help finance the work of their local Credit Union to reduce reliance on local authority funding.

Recommendation 13

That the County Council take active steps to promote positively on its website and within the literature it produces, the existence and potential suitability of borrowing and/or depositing monies with credit unions, and that all such information should be easily accessible to all.

Recommendation 14

That the County Council work with borough, city and district councils and housing authorities to encourage them to consider using credit unions to deliver social outcomes and to promote the use of credit unions on their website and within their literature, and to both staff and citizens.

Recommendation 15

That the County Council engage with local schools and with other appropriate bodies with expertise in this field to promote the development and use of financial literacy courses for schoolchildren, so that training in financial literacy plays a greater role in the school curriculum. A financial incentive could be provided to promote intra-school competition, which could see individual schools and schoolchildren work to develop an appropriate financial literacy programmes for different school years.

Recommendation 16

That the County Council offer a range of appropriate budget management and financial literacy courses both through its Adult Community Learning and Libraries services.

Recommendation 17

That the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet be requested to respond to each of the recommendations set out in this scrutiny report in October 2013.

The Group presented the scrutiny report to the EDEHPSC meeting on 17 January 2013, drew attention to the individual recommendations, and answered Committee colleagues' questions. While the Committee endorsed the scrutiny report and complimented the Group on its investigation, it did vary the wording of recommendation 11 as referred to in the 'Conclusions and Recommendations' section of this report. As there was also some limited discussion on the topic of loan sharks, pawnbrokers, and payday loans, a brief overview of those particular issues has been incorporated into this report at Appendix F.

Ultimately the Group's attention has been upon the subject of the scrutiny review and reaching positive, workable recommendations directed to the Council's Executive. However, this scrutiny review also provided valuable experience in terms of the way it evolved and the positive way the Group conducted its activities in practice. It is hoped that the project itself can provide useful evidence in its own right towards the development of more effective overview and scrutiny arrangements within the Council's own organisation.

The Group has managed to address the complexities thrown up during the review, and work outside the familiar comfortable parameters of traditional committee activity. In doing so its Members have had the satisfaction of producing a unique piece of work based upon their own investigations, and are able to look forward to finding out how they may have been able to encourage greater financial well-being across Essex.

An overview of the lessons learned by the Group as part of this scrutiny review will be reported separately to the Committee, and will contribute to consideration of the way that scrutiny is developed by the Council in the future.

Appendix B

Essex County Council
Leader of the Council
PO Box 11, County Hall
Chelmsford
Essex CM1 1LX



Cllr Simon Walsh
Gibraltar Mill
Mill Road
Great Bardfield
Braintree
Essex
CM7 4QG

Date: 11 September 2013

Our Ref: DF/AC

Dear Cllr Walsh

Re Financial Inclusion

I am responding on behalf of the Cabinet to your scrutiny committee's report on Financial Inclusion. The committee have produced a comprehensive report, which reflects the growing importance of financial inclusion as an issue.

Essex County Council is proud of the good work that we have done in recent years to support people, businesses and communities during difficult economic times. We have made significant progress at helping over 2,000 young people into training and then employment through the highly successful Essex Apprenticeship programme. We have also promoted and supported credit unions, recognising as far back as 2008-09 their positive role.

We recognise, however, that times are tough. Economic conditions remains difficult and promoting financial inclusion – through various means – is important.

I have set out below the responses to the Committee's recommendations and I understand that your committee will be considering this again on 26th September.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr David Finch
Leader of the Council

Tel No: 01245 430670
Email: david.finch@essex.gov.uk

- 1. That as part of its equality and diversity framework the County Council take into account financial inclusion both when assessing the potential effects of future policy development and when reviewing the impact of current policies, and the monitoring of financial inclusion issues across the Council be incorporated into the terms of reference for the Equality and Diversity Board.***

Agreed in principle and in part.

The proposal was tabled at the Diversity and Equality Board on 30 January 2013; a discussion took place on how the Board could promote financial inclusion along with equality issues. Board members felt that historically, the focus on financial inclusion has been looking at households that have been marginalised e.g. low income households and accepted the need to look at a wider population.

Various council functions are currently contributing to achieving financial inclusion outcomes, for example through Trading Standards, the Council tracks down loan sharks and also makes the public aware of the high interest rates charged on borrowing money. The Board agreed that the practical implementation of financial inclusion work should be implemented through the Council's commissioning function and agreed with the proposal of developing a strategic oversight of financial inclusion projects. The benefits of this approach would include the ability to develop a sophisticated understanding of financial inclusion issues.

The Board agreed that additional support would be required within the existing Diversity and Equality function initially to take on board the strategic development of financial inclusion activity. Financial inclusion considerations will be mainstreamed within tools for assessing equality impacts and will be embedded within D&E guidance for commissioners. Embedding financial inclusion considerations within the development of performance and outcome frameworks would also support a programme of relevant activities.

Following publication in June of the Council's new Vision document for 2013-17, the Council is now developing a new Corporate Outcomes Framework. Following the development of this framework (which will be for Cabinet and Council to approve), we will be clearer about where responsibility for financial inclusion sits.

- 2. That the County Council undertake an in depth review of what the Council and other public agencies could do to promote skills and employment not only for young people but more generally for other residents in the context of financial inclusion.***

We do not accept this recommendation as being required at this point in time, due to the reasons set out below.

As part of the Whole Essex Community Budgets (WECB) programme, Essex County Council has worked with partners to review the skills system.

We recognise that access to employment is the best way of preventing financial exclusion. From the very start of the Community Budget pilot work on skills, it was recognised that a crucial component of the proposal must be the establishment of an employer-led Employment and Skills Board (ESB) for Greater Essex to provide a platform from which employers can have a real voice in shaping skills provision so that it delivers economic growth and is attuned to the needs of employers.

Under the partnership work of the WECB programme we have taken steps to establish an Essex Employment and Skills Board. This is not a County Council board but rather a board that has representation from the County Council (Cllr Bentley), as well as from employers and from the Higher and Further Education sectors. The inaugural meeting of the Board, in shadow form, was held on the 30th July at Raytheon in Harlow and will meet properly for the first time on 25th September.

The Board's mission is to help create the most productive and responsive skills system in the country, ensuring businesses have a workforce with the skill sets they need to thrive and young people have the ambition and skills that will advantage them when competing in the labour market.

We do not therefore think that a further review is needed at this stage.

It is suggested that Cllr Bentley brings regular update reports on the work of the Employment and Skills Board to the scrutiny committee.

More widely in terms of promoting skills and employment for Essex residents, Essex County Council is very conscious of our own Adult Community Learning (ACL) offer, with over 33,000 learners per year who are being given a range of opportunities to improve their employment/career prospects through accessing new skills/qualifications. These include Apprenticeships, independent information, advice & guidance sessions to discuss learning/careers, Pathways to Employment for the unemployed, Skills for Life to give residents the basic literacy and numeracy skills required in most jobs, and craft skills that often people use to develop self-employment opportunities.

- 3. *That the Welfare Reform Working Group be urged to highlight the impact of the proposed welfare reforms upon policy development or service changes on the issue of financial inclusion, and that there is specific support in place to provide residents with suitable information, guidance and IT infrastructure through libraries and other local authority access points.***

Accepted and progress is listed below.

As part of the scope of the core project group for welfare reforms and referencing the wider Welfare Reform Working Group (WRWG), work has been carried out to measure and forecast potential impacts of the welfare reforms.

Initially focusing on how the reforms will affect Essex residents as well as modelling the potential impact to ECC services, work is now being scoped to review the specific impacts on some of the poorest households who find themselves trapped in poverty. In addition to this, a detailed risk analysis was carried out through the group and this highlighted the need to review existing ECC policies and guidance including the fairer charging policies and the leaving care financial handbook. These are now being reviewed.

The WRWG have also consulted with partner organisations and District authorities to review the support and advice that has been made available to the public. This has enabled the promotion of best practice and to better understand any gaps in provision that will need to be addressed and forging the links with those providing access points. Specifically, the WRWG have provided sessions to various groups including the Employee Engagement Panel and the Benefit Network Group as well as a Member session with accompanying Benefit booklet to ensure the correct information is available to pass on to residents.

The design of the Essential Living Fund recognised the need to ensure that specific support for those struggling to manage money is available. This has been assured through partnering with organisations that are best placed to provide the support and advice necessary with initial telephone interviews through Southend Borough Council and distribution of goods using our Citizen advice Bureaux. This partnership provides signposting for additional support available along with the ability to provide advice on a wide range of issues including budgeting and financial options.

In relation to IT infrastructure it is worth noting that the Council's network of public libraries have internet facilities that enable people without home internet to access information.

It is also worth noting that the Council is currently embarking (with BT) on the roll out of superfast broadband across Essex by 2016. This will transform and modernise the broadband infrastructure in Essex, helping to create a mobile internet infrastructure that enables more people to access fast broadband – whether that be at home or on their smart phones.

4. That based upon the positive feedback received of the Village Agent project, consideration be given as to how the project could be extended into urban areas eg 'Urban Agent' pilot, and to develop an additional focus, at least in part, on promoting financial inclusion.

The recommendation that consideration be given to how this concept could be extended – or perhaps developed – is agreed.

The key issue that will need considering is source of funding. The Committee will be aware that Essex County Council faces reduced funding and needs to save over £215M by 2016/17. Financial resources in the council are therefore very constrained.

Nevertheless, Cabinet recognises that the Village Agent project has been successful and that it has great potential and believes that the Committee's recommendation is timely and is worth further consideration.

Cabinet also notes that this recommendation is in line with a key recommendation from the independent report from the Sir Thomas Hughes-Hallett Commission on Health and Social Care in Essex about the need to build community resilience and resources and, in particular, his recommendation that there should be:

“The creation of an Essex-wide organisation embracing paid staff and volunteers so that every household has a team or individual charged with identifying early signs of difficulty, combining concepts such as Health Champions, Neighbourhood Watch, Village Agents, and the current Essex Fire Prevention initiative”.

Cabinet also supports the point made by Essex Citizen Advice Bureau that the work of the Whole Essex Community Budget (WECB) has highlighted the need for services – including CAB services – to focus on the development of prevention and early intervention strategies which deliver both better outcomes for clients but also reduce demand on public services and thereby achieve savings.

As a key recommendation of the Health and Social Care Commission, ECC is keen to see this approach implemented, and will work with partners across the wider public and voluntary sectors to assess how best to achieve a wider 'Village Agent' type programme'. This work will need to consider how such an approach could be funded.

5. That steps be taken to raise the awareness of all County Councillors and staff of the financial exclusion that exists in Essex in a way that enables them to signpost those individuals in need to the relevant services at the earliest opportunity.

This recommendation is accepted.

We will look at a number of means for doing this, including:

- Communications work to raise public and media awareness, highlighting the extent of the problem and the sources of help and support. This can explore use of social media, identify key timing during the year (for example, in advance of Christmas as people start thinking of large financial outlays), linking with other organisations/bodies calling for greater financial inclusion, and seek coverage with local media, targeting those areas in the county which have a higher need of credit unions

- Information on our website to provide information and signposts to help and advice
- The work of our Trading Standards team

6. *That, as a primary source of information on the relevant services available across Essex, a prominent financial inclusion portal be developed on the ECC website providing residents with easily accessible advice and signposting for support.*

This is accepted and can form part of a wider refresh of the Council's website.

7. *That the County Council review how it allocates funding to the twelve Essex Citizens Advice Bureau, which takes greater account of local need rather than being allocated according to population levels, and that clear objectives be established for the provision of that funding.*

We agree that more work is needed and believe that this should form part of the County Council's budget planning process.

We agree that funding should follow need, rather than population and we agree with the response to the committee from the Citizen Advice Bureau that "areas of deprivation do not follow District boundaries" and particularly that "demand also comes from other vulnerable groups such as those with disabilities, mental ill health and the elderly."

Currently there is a core annual grant paid to Essex CAB Ltd and distributed by them as below. The funds are to enhance the access to, and provision of, high quality information and advice and assist and enable CABx users in Essex to improve on their quality of life by claiming their entitlements and rights

Name	Split
Basildon, Billericay and Wickford	£15,331.86
Braintree, Halstead and Witham	£12,423.25
Brentwood	£6,433.47
Castle Point	£8,146.59
Chelmsford	£14,764.93
Colchester	£14,641.68
Epping	£3,749.90
Harlow	£7,419.44
Loughton	£5,113.50
Maldon	£5,583.07
Rochford and Rayleigh	£7,382.46
Tendring	£13,027.15
Uttlesford	£6,482.77

Waltham Abbey	£2,499.93
TOTAL	£123,000.00

There is also a county wide contract with CAB (administered centrally by Brentwood BCAB) which supports benefit form filling via home visits from CAB for vulnerable citizens. These citizens are those who are being financial assessed in line with our charging for care processes and the contract supports our statutory duty under fairer as part of our duty under Fairer Charging. The contract has a maximum annual budget of up to £60K.

8. That the County Council consider how it may provide practical support for the CAB to reach out to potential community champions within the business sector who may be willing to help finance the work of their local CAB, including the option that it provide additional monies to finance the employment of a CAB fund-raiser tasked with reducing CAB reliance on local authority grants.

The Cabinet believes that there is potential for the Essex Funding Team to be utilised more effectively to support organisations such as CABs, Credit Unions and CVSs collectively.

The Essex Funding Team supports ECC and external organisations across Greater Essex to source and secure external funding (non-ECC funds).

The Funding Team can already point to some successful work supporting Essex Citizens Advice Bureau by supporting applications for a slice of the £65 million [Advice Services Transition Fund](#), launched in November 2012 by the Big Lottery Fund in partnership with the Cabinet Office.

Applications were submitted at the end of January 2013 and in total £1.8m was awarded to partnerships within Essex (£2.4m including Southend and Thurrock). This was a great success. Projects began this summer (various dates specific to each project) and will last for 2 years. The breakdown of funding awarded is set out below.

Advice Services Transition Fund Greater Essex

CAB	Submitted?	Success?	Amount
Basildon	Yes	Yes	£310,085
Braintree	Yes	Yes	£154,336
Brentwood	Yes	No	N/A
Chelmsford	Yes	Yes	£349,918
Colchester	Yes	Yes	£348,618
Epping Forest	Unknown	Unknown	N/A
Harlow	Yes	No	N/A
Maldon	No	N/A	N/A

Rochford & Castle Point (Joint bid)	Yes	Yes	£337,967
Tendring	Yes	Yes	£207,398
Uttlesford	Yes	Yes	£111,872
Southend	Yes	Yes	£301,000
Thurrock	Yes	Yes	£339,434

It may be that an additional and dedicated post could be recruited within the funding team and even that such a role could be financially supported by an external funder such as, the Essex Community Foundation via the Thriving Third Sector Fund, or via the Community Resilience Fund

9. That the County Council consider the provision of funding to train four CAB Debt Advisors who will in turn each provide specialist debt training to five CAB volunteers providing face-to-face advice for clients across Essex.

This is not accepted at this stage.

The Cabinet notes the submission from ECAB that debt is one of the biggest issues that CABs have to deal with but also that debt advice should not be considered in isolation.

As per recommendation 4, it is important that we look at how advice and support is made available to people across Essex in a way that can sign post them to help and advice when they need it.

10. That the County Council raise awareness of the StepChange Debt Charity, and consider how it may engage with that Charity's activities alongside targeted CAB preventative work, to extend debt advice to Essex residents.

We accept this recommendation.

StepChange Debt Charity is the new name for the Consumer Credit Counselling Service. They provide free, impartial debt advice to those in debt.

The County Council will look to ensure that appropriate links are available to the charity's website via our own website.

However, it is important to note that Step Change is just one organisation and we would not give preference to working with any one organisation over any other.

11. That the County Council explore the feasibility of providing deposits with, or the direct funding of, credit unions with a view to them securing critical mass thereby supporting their sustainability and the services that they provide.

We agree in principle to this recommendation.

Essex County Council has long supported the local credit union movement and we have backed this in principle support with financial backing too. We have a track record of working with not only Essex Savers but also the other credit unions in Essex – Holdfast, Colchester Credit Union, HarlowSave and the Basildon Credit Union.

Since 2009, we have provided financial and in-kind support to credit unions across Essex totalling more than £300,000.

Essex County Council is keen to see a vibrant, independent, sustainable credit union movement across the county and will continue to work with every Essex credit union as they look to develop a habit of thrift amongst their members, provide an alternative to more expensive forms of credit, and to teach simple financial skills.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has recently highlighted the good work of credit unions and this is something we endorse and recognise.

It is of course important that credit unions are financially sustainable and have business plans that enable them to thrive without complete dependence on Essex CC funding and the possible risk to tax payers money if any credit union were to prove unsustainable.

12. That the County Council provide practical support and expertise in assisting Credit Unions to reach out to potential community champions within the business sector who may be willing to help finance the work of their local Credit Union to reduce reliance on local authority funding.

We accept this recommendation and can point to the financial support we have given credit unions in recent years, as well as the expertise that our External Funding Team has which could help them secure external funding sources.

However, the Cabinet notes the response from ECAB that their experience of raising funds from the business sector is poor.

13. That the County Council take active steps to promote positively on its website and within the literature it produces, the existence and potential suitability of borrowing and/or depositing monies with credit unions, and that all such information should be easily accessible to all. website, libraries offering collection points, possibility of a payslip promotion

We agree with this recommendation.

We have done much already to promote credit unions, and have also supported them with funding.

We will continue to promote credit unions through our communications and information on our website.

We will look into payslip promotions but committee need to be aware that payslips are now accessed online by employees, rather than in paper form.

14. That the County Council work with borough, city and district councils and housing authorities to encourage them to consider using credit unions to deliver social outcomes and to promote the use of credit unions on their website and within their literature, and to both staff and citizens.

We welcome this recommendation and will table the item for discussion at a meeting of Essex Leaders and Chief Executives in October.

15. That the County Council engage with local schools and with other appropriate bodies with expertise in this field to promote the development and use of financial literacy courses for schoolchildren, so that training in financial literacy plays a greater role in the school curriculum. A financial incentive could be provided to promote intra-school competition, which could see individual schools and schoolchildren work to develop an appropriate financial literacy programmes for different school years.

The Cabinet agrees that local schools have a hugely important role to play. We support the idea of promoting an intra-school competition.

The sentiment behind this recommendation has since been echoed by the Coalition Government. The recently published draft National Curriculum for England should see financial education embedded in mathematics and citizenship education from September 2014 onwards.

The national curriculum for citizenship aims to ensure that all pupils “are equipped with the financial skills to enable them to manage their money on a day-to-day basis, and plan for future financial needs.”

It would include the following areas at key stage 3 and 4:

- **KS3** = the functions and uses of money, the importance of personal budgeting, and managing risk.
- **KS4** = income and expenditure, credit and debt, insurance, savings and pensions, as well as a range of other financial products and services.

The Government is also considering introducing financial literacy exams for 15-year-olds in England from 2015 to measure their “real-life” knowledge and financial capability. These would be part of the OECD’s PISA international testing. Essex is already keen to join PISA through their PISA for Schools Programme and will shortly be entering into discussion with DfE and OECD about how to do this in a way that secures

both school and authority level data that is comparable internationally. From 2015 when financial literacy is included in PISA tests this will allow us to use the results to benchmark and drive further improvement.

16. That the County Council offer a range of appropriate budget management and financial literacy courses both through its Adult Community Learning and Libraries services

Essex County Council provides functional skills Maths courses (free to those who do not have a Level 2 maths qualification) across the entire county in all 14 of our main centres as well as in outreach / community venues and in partnership with other organisations (e.g. JCP, Probation), schools (Family Learning) and the voluntary sector (e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau) to tackle the issues.

Following an initial screening process for all learners, tutors plan a programme of learning which is tailored to each individual learner depending on their level, circumstances and need including financial literacy needs. Through the relationship built with the tutor and initial and diagnostic testing financial literacy needs will be identified and addressed in the learning plan. Learners are also referred to us from agencies as well as our own advice and guidance staff who deal with the impact of financial literacy on individuals such as CAB and are advised of appropriate courses with ACL where these needs will be addressed. Such information would be shared with the tutor to enable them to plan an appropriate programme.

		AGENDA ITEM 7
		PSEG/06/13
Committee:	Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	26 September 2013	
IMPLEMENTATION OF PART NIGHT STREET LIGHTING		
Enquiries to:	Christine Sharland, Scrutiny Officer 01245 430450 Christine.sharland@essex.gov.uk	

On 30 August Councillor Stephen Robinson called in this decision on the 'Implementation of Part Night Lighting in Braintree and Chelmsford Districts' , and a copy of his Notification of Call-In form is attached at Appendix A.

A copy of the Cabinet Member's decision notice is available on the Council's website via the following [Link](#). A copy has been sent under separate cover to Committee Members.

In line with the procedure for handling the call in of a decision, an informal meeting was held on 3 September. A formal note of that meeting is attached at Appendix B.

At the informal meeting Councillor Robinson agreed to withdraw his Call In on the basis that arrangements would be made for this Committee to have a detailed briefing today on the implementation of part night lighting across Essex, and consider the feedback received so far from the countywide consultation on the proposals.


Attention is also drawn to the Scrutiny Report on 'Street Lighting at Night' that was published by the former Safer and Stronger Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee in July 2010, and provides further background on this topic. The Scrutiny Report is available on the Council's website via the following [Link](#). A copy has been sent under separate cover to Committee Members.

At this Committee meeting Councillor Bass, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation, will open discussion on the implementation of part night street lighting by providing information on the way that the project has evolved since 2007 and why certain choices have been made in the way it is to be rolled out across Essex.

Action required by the Committee:

To cross examine the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation on his proposals for the implementation of Part Night Street Lighting across Essex.

Notification of Call-in

Decision title and reference number KD11/FP/265/07/13	
Implementation of Part Night Lighting in Braintree and Chelmsford Districts.	
Cabinet Member responsible Councillor Rodney L Bass	Date decision published 22 August 2013
Last day of call in period 30 August 2013	Last day of 10-day period to resolve the call-in
<p>The Liberal Democrat group would like to call in the decision on Part Night Lighting in Braintree and Chelmsford because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient regard has been paid to the fact that Chelmsford and Braintree have a significant night-time economy compared to Maldon and Uttlesford, and people will be out and about after midnight to a much greater extent. • That fear of crime, not just reported crime, is a significant issue. • If "lights off" leads to more people using taxis rather than walking, the hoped for CO2 reductions will be reduced. • Suggestions from consultees on paths that should be lit have been mostly ignored. The definition of "remote" should be reconsidered. Paths that are significant routes away from the town centres should be lit. • Since lights will be back on again at 5am until dawn, this undermines the argument against leaving them on until 1am. • The suggestion of LED lighting has been insufficiently explored. 	
Signed:  Cllr Stephen Robinson	Dated: 30 August 2013
For completion by the Governance Officer	
Date call in Notice Received	Date of informal meeting
Date Scrutiny Committee Meeting (if applicable)	Date call in withdrawn / resolved

Notes of Informal Meeting regarding the Call-In of a Decision

Call in of decision reference FP-265-07-13 – Implementation of Part Night Lighting in Braintree and Chelmsford following consultation

Note of an informal meeting held at County Hall, Chelmsford on Tuesday, 3 September 2013

Present:

Councillor Stephen Robinson (Committee Member responsible for calling the decision in
Councillor Rodney Bass, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation
Councillor Simon Walsh, Chairman of the Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee

Paul Bird, Director for Commissioning: Transportation and Infrastructure
Dan Fryd, Cabinet Advisor
Christine Sharland, Scrutiny Officer

Councillor Robinson emphasised the reasons set out in his Notification of Call In of the decision to implement part night street lighting in Braintree and Chelmsford. As well as outlining his concerns about the Part Night Lighting project, Councillor Robinson expressed his concern that not all representations about leaving on particular lamps had been taken into account.

The Cabinet Member reiterated the background to the part night street lighting project set out in the decision paperwork, and addressed the reasons given for the call in. He drew attention to the criteria used determine where part time night lighting would or would not be implemented. Furthermore he confirmed that arising from the consultation undertaken various locations had been identified under the exception criteria, and street lighting would remain turned on during the night. He also argued that there is no evidence to support the claim that crime would increase in those roads where lights are switched off, and pointed out that in fact that crime rates have actually fallen where similar schemes have been implemented.

With reference to LED lighting it was confirmed that the installation of such equipment had been explored extensively. Given that the technology is still being developed and is very expensive, it was considered that it would be inappropriate to adopt LED lighting until a solid business case can be made. Nevertheless there is flexibility around the technology now being used and it can be changed in the future.

Councillor Bass reinforced the fact that he had taken pragmatic decision to go ahead with the implementation of the part night lighting project across Essex based upon both environmental and economic considerations.

Paul Bird drew attention to the Scrutiny Report on 'Street Lighting at Night' that was undertaken by the former Safer and Stronger Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee. It had been a thorough review and the Committee had investigated many of the issues now under discussion.

As a way forward Councillor Walsh suggested that a full briefing on the Part Night Street Lighting project could be incorporated into the Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee agenda for 26 September 2013, and would provide Members with an opportunity to learn more about the topic and debate the project being implemented across the County.

Councillor Robinson said that he had found the informal meeting helpful, and agreed to withdraw his call in on the understanding that arrangements would be made for the Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee to have a detailed briefing on the implementation of part night lighting across Essex and consider the feedback received at that point from the countywide consultation on the proposals. This will provide the Committee with the opportunity to give thorough consideration to the part night street lighting project.

