

		AGENDA ITEM 12
		PSEG/09/14
Committee:	Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	23 January 2014	
WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATES		
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The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Committee's work programme, and proposals for taking forward the planning of certain scrutiny reviews where it has been established that it may influence the Council's activities going forward.

The Committee's work programme that was drawn up during the summer has been overtaken by subsequent events during the Autumn at both national and local levels including the Committee's call in of various Cabinet Member decisions that has affected the way resources are prioritised. The work programme is monitored regularly and experience is highlighting the importance of careful topic selection at the outset in order to maximise what can be achieved in the longer term.

Update on recent activities

Since the Committee's last formal meeting on 24 October 2013 Members have been engaged in various activity as listed below, and reported more fully elsewhere in this agenda:

- **Trading Standards Visit:** On the afternoon of 24 October, Members of the Committee had an opportunity to visit Trading Standards and gain an insight into its work. Councillors Ian Grundy, David Kendall and Andy Wood attended the visit.

During the visit it was explained that within the past few years Trading Standards had moved to an 'intelligence-led' approach, which made better more effective use of resources. The way in which this approach worked was explained to Members. The Members were taken through the many different functions of Trading Standards with some practical examples of its work.

- **Informal Meetings relating to Call Ins:** Individual Cabinet Member decisions for Part Night Lighting in (1) Colchester, (2) Castle Point, and (3) Epping Forest Forest; and a decision of the North Essex Parking Partnership

- **Essex Economic Growth Strategy:** On 28 November the Committee took part in a briefing on the Strategy.
- **Country Parks:** On 19 December the Committee took part in a briefing on the future of the Council's Country Parks.
- **Part Night Light Task and Finish Group:** The Group has begun collating evidence to inform this review.

Proposed activity

The following issues that have already been agreed for future review are drawn in particular to Members' attention.

• Recycling Centres for Household Waste (RCHW) Service

It is necessary to clarify for the purposes of the work programme that there are in fact two strands to the Committee's consideration of the RCHW Service. As advised to the Committee in September 2013 (Minute 4), an earlier scrutiny review recommended that further investigation be undertaken on the longer term future of the Service. However, as identified elsewhere on this agenda the Committee's engagement is being sought in the development of the RCHW service delivery and infrastructure strategy now under consideration by the Executive, and the active formulation of proposals for changes to the Service in the short/ medium term.

With particular reference to the overall work programme any further scrutiny work on the RCHW Service will have to be considered in terms of the topic selection criteria and prioritising resources, including the original recommendation.

• Parking Partnerships

Although it may not be possible to take forward this review in any depth in the next few months given that resources have to be directed to other Committee priorities, it would be helpful if Members could begin to consider whether or not they would wish to be considered for membership of the proposed Parking Partnerships Task and Finish Group that will be formed to conduct the review. In particular attention is drawn to the chapter on the 'Operation of Task and Finish Groups' in the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Handbook, which is published on the Essex County Council website, www.essex.gov.uk (*From the Home Page, click on 'Your Council', then on 'Meetings and Agendas', then on 'Public Documents' from the list on the left hand side of the screen, and finally select the Overview and Scrutiny Handbook from the list of documents*). The Chapter sets out a framework for the conduct of task and finish groups, and the role and responsibilities of a member in group activity.

Please could any Member wishing to put forward their name for consideration as a member of the Group, please do so in writing to the Chairman and give an indication of their particular reasons for wanting to take part in the investigation and what they may

be able to contribute as a constructive team member including an indication of the types of questions you may wish to ask as part of the review that has the following terms of reference:

‘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?’

Depending upon responses in this matter, it is hoped that some preliminary discussion could take place with prospective Group members to inform the forward planning of the review.

COMAH Scrutiny Report/ Communication Protocol: Task and Finish Group

Arising from the Off Site Emergency Planning Arrangements around COMAH sites in Essex, it was agreed (Minute 6/ September 2013) that the Committee set up a Task and Finish Group to complete more in depth consideration of recommendation 4 set out in the original scrutiny report namely:

‘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’. (IS – Information Systems, ECPEM – Essex Civil Protection and Emergency Planning)

Providing that the Task and Finish Group stays focussed upon monitoring whether or not the recommendation has, in fact, achieved any outcomes it is not envisaged that this review will require more than three meetings (one to plan the review, one to receive and consider evidence, and one to agree the final scrutiny report).

Councillors Terry Cutmore, Tony Hedley, Malcolm Maddocks and Andy Wood indicated an interest in conducting the review at the Committee’s September meeting.

It is hoped that arrangements can be made for the Group to meet in February/ March. However, its timing will depend upon what priorities exist at the time.

Next steps

Aside from the Committee’s aspirations to conduct overview and scrutiny, it is suggested in May it reviews its own experience since its formation in order to improve its operation based upon the lessons have been learned. The current Part Night Lighting Task and Finish Group’s activity is being observed by an independent facilitator who will be able provide some useful oversight.

In the meantime it is necessary to review the work programme in the light of current circumstances. Therefore it is proposed that the Chairman will oversee further discussion with the relevant Cabinet Members to gather up to date information on those strategic issues where the Scrutiny Committee could usefully direct its attention. Then the topic selection criteria can be applied to inform the prioritisation of the resource available, including Member capacity, so that a revised work programme can be submitted for the Committee's consideration.

The current work programme has been updated to reflect the latest circumstances and is attached at the Appendix.

Action required by Committee:

The Committee is asked to (a) note the foregoing report subject to any action proposed in relation to other reports on this agenda that may affect the work programme, and (b) those Members who wish to be actively involved in the proposed Parking Partnerships Task and Finish Group take the action requested in the foregoing report.

Appendix

Preliminary work programme of the Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee: Forward Look for 2014 (as at 14 January 2014)

Meeting	Topic	Approach	Current status
<i>TFG – Task and Finish Group</i>			
23 January Formal meeting	Work Programme	Progress report to consider proposed committee activity and reviews	Ongoing NB reference to establishing Parking Partnerships TFG
	Recycling Centres for Household Waste Service	Briefing on current activity, including public consultation, on proposals for the changes to the current service	
	Update on Call Ins reconsidered since last meeting	1.Colchester Part Night lighting (PNL) 2.North Essex Parking Partnership 3.Castle Point PNL 4.Epping Forest PNL	In line with procedures it is necessary to report to Committee all call ins withdrawn following informal meetings
	Economic Growth Strategy	Committee engaged in workshop held in November, and Members input actively sought	Report to record Committee activity
	Country Parks	Committee engaged in workshop held in December, and Members input actively sought	Report to record Committee activity
	Part Night Street Lighting	Scrutiny review ongoing	Report on progress of TFG activity
	Local Highways Panels (LHPs)	Cabinet Member has requested opportunity to update the Committee on the LHPs	
January TBC	Financial Inclusion: Task and Finish Group	Monitoring Cabinet response to Scrutiny Report recommendations	Await Cabinet response and then TFG to

			report back to Committee
January Task and Finish Group (Date tba)	Part Night Street Lighting	Ongoing – in process of collating further evidence	
Winter Task and Finish Group (Date tba)	COMAH Communications Protocol	Proposal to set up TFG agreed by Committee on 26 September (Minute 6)	To examine outcome of original scrutiny report recommendation, and then to report back to Committee
Winter/ Spring Task and Finish Group (Date tba)	Parking Partnerships	Proposal to set up TFG agreed by Committee on 24 October (Minute 5)	First meeting of TFG will plan review and draft scoping document for Committee's formal approval

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

- Future of Recycling Centres for Household Waste Service (reference from former Committee)
- Integrated passenger transport (including reference from former Committee)
- 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)
- Government Consultation on Aviation Policy/ Stansted Airport
- Essex Economic Growth Strategy – Partnership working

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

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	Ongoing
Off Site Emergency Planning Requirements around COMAH sites	Cllrs Cutmore, Hedley, Maddocks, and Wood	Proposed to be set up to monitor outstanding responses to recommendations set out in Scrutiny Report	To be scheduled
Parking Partnerships		Agreed to be set up October 2013 (Minute 5)	To be scheduled
RCHW Service		Referral from earlier scrutiny report to consider longer term future of RCHW Service (Minute 4/ September 2013)	To be scheduled
Part Night Lighting	Cllrs Pond, Hedley, Hirst, Danvers, Robinson, Wood, Smith, and Walsh (ex officio)	Scrutiny review in progress	Ongoing

Please note that the TFGs will have to identify timetables for their activities that will have to be managed within overall resource available.