

	AGENDA ITEM 4
	PSEG/03/13
Committee:	Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee
Date:	26 September 2013
WORK PROGRAMME AND UPDATES	
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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.