

Minutes

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

13th July 2011



These minutes principally record decisions taken and, where appropriate, the reasons for the decisions. An audio recording of the meeting is available from Member Services.

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
P R Barlow	Yes	W J Rose	Yes
C A Cadman	Yes	C Sandbrook	Apologies
Dr R L Evans (Chairman)	Yes	G A Spray	Yes
S A Howell	Yes	J S Sutton	Yes
D J Louis	Apologies	J R Swift	Apologies
R P Ramage	Yes		

Councillor P Horner was also in attendance.

The Chairman welcomed members to the Committee. He encouraged all members to become actively involved in the work of the Committee. He also encouraged Committee members to attend Cabinet meetings where possible. He believed attending Cabinet meetings would be beneficial to Committee members in their scrutiny roles.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

INFORMATION: The following interests were declared:

- Councillor Barlow declared a personal interest in agenda items 6, Health Inequalities, and 8, Annual Work Programme (relating to a health and well-being topic to be considered within the report), as a Non-Executive Director of the East of England Ambulance Services Trust, and as Mental Health Act Manager, North Essex Partnership Foundation NHS Trust.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Councillor Barlow remained in the meeting for all the items and took part in the debate and decision thereon.

2 QUESTION TIME

INFORMATION: There were no questions asked or statements made.

3 MINUTES

DECISION: That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23rd March 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

DECISION: That the current Terms of Reference of the Committee, and the plans to review those Terms of Reference as part of a wider review of the Constitution, be noted.

5 **HEALTH INEQUALITIES**

INFORMATION: Members received a presentation on “Health Inequalities in Essex” from Andrew Barnes and David Eagles from the External Auditors, PKF.

Several members noted the relatively lower life expectancy in the Witham area compared to some other areas of Essex. Members noted that Witham did not have a hospital and queried whether this might be a contributory factor to the lower life expectancy. David Eagles replied that access to health facilities is a contributory factor.

Councillor Barlow commented that it is not only socio-economic factors which impact on health inequalities. He believed people with learning disabilities and older people had poorer health outcomes regardless of socio-economic factors. He thought more work could be done in this respect.

Members were of the view that this report could be an important factor in assessing the Committee’s Work Programme later in the agenda.

DECISION: That the “Health Inequalities in Essex” Report 2009/10 be noted.

6 **REVIEW OF OUTCOMES FOLLOWING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND TASK AND FINISH GROUPS**

INFORMATION: Members considered the report reviewing outcomes following the implementation of the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Task and Finish Groups

In considering the recommendations of the Committee’s study into how contributions from Section 106 Agreements are managed by the Council, Councillor Barlow noted that Essex County Council had not delegated certain Section 106 funds. He hoped that changes through the Localism Bill might enable delegation to occur.

Also, in relation to the study into Section 106 Agreements, it was agreed that Committee members would be provided with the link to the Council’s website related to S106 expenditure. **Action: Member Services Manager**

Councillors Ramage and Howell spoke of the rewarding experience of being involved in Task and Finish Groups. Both said it was a way of getting things done and encouraged members to become involved in a Group.

In considering the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group on allotment services, Councillor Rose reported that there are moves to try and increase the provision of allotments in Witham.

DECISION: That the outcomes following the implementation of recommendations from both Committee and Task and Finish Group studies over the period 2007 – 2011, be noted.

Postscript note: In considering the Task and Finish Group review of refuse and recycling, members requested to have the terms “low rave vehicles” explained. RAVE is an acronym for Rotax Automatic Variable Exhaust. The term basically relates to lower vehicle emissions.

7 **ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME**

INFORMATION: Members considered the report on proposed items for the Committee’s Annual Work Programme including the recommendations of the Scrutiny Steering Board

In considering the Steering Board’s recommendation that the Committee scrutinises a topic related to the health and well being of residents in the district, members noted the Committee’s earlier consideration of the report on “Health Inequalities in Essex” and the issue of access to health services being a contributory factor to those inequalities.

Members noted that a review of access to health services could consider both the access of patients to health services under current arrangements, and that of health services moving closer to the location of patients. Members agreed that the issue of access applied across the district as a whole. Accordingly, the Committee agreed to scrutinise access to health services across the district.

Members were supportive of the Steering Board’s recommendation to establish a Task and Finish Group to review local highways liaison matters. Members agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group to review mechanisms for liaison at a local level from the identification of issues and problems through to the completion of highway projects and repairs.

Members also considered the Steering Board’s recommendation to establish a Task and Finish Group to review the Council’s acquisition of Mayland House, Witham, and in particular, what the Council could do better for future significant acquisitions. Members agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group, but to widen its remit to consider the Council’s general land and property investment policies.

Members also noted that the Committee would scrutinise the following as part of its regular work programme:

- Budget matters
- Community Safety Partnership
- Partners - Police, in particular matters relating to proposals to elect Police and Crime Commissioners

DECISION:

1. That the Committee scrutinises transport links and accessibility to health services across the district.
2. That a Task and Finish Group be established to scrutinise mechanisms for local highway liaison at a local level from the identification of issues and problems through to the completion of highway projects and repairs.

3. That a Task and Finish Group be established to scrutinise the Council's general property and land investment policies including the acquisition of the lease of Mayland House, Witham – a review of what the Council could do better for future investments.
4. That the Committee's programme of regular work items be noted.

REASON FOR THE DECISION: To agree the Committee's Work Programme for 2011-12.

8 **DECISION PLANNER**

Members received the Council's Decision Planner for the period 16th June 2011 to 31st October 2011.

It was agreed that Committee members would be provided with the Medium Term Financial Strategy Update report at the time of its issue for the meeting of Cabinet on 1st September 2011.

DECISION: That the Decision Planner be received and noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 9.22pm.

Dr R L Evans
Chairman