

# STRATEGIC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

## 21 SEPTEMBER 2010

*Present :-* Councillor Christopher Arnold (Chairman)  
Councillors Bill Frame, Nigel Offen, Gerard Oxford,  
Dennis Willetts and Julie Young

*Substitute Members :-* Councillor Jackie Maclean  
for Councillor Nigel Chapman  
Councillor Jon Manning for Councillor Mark Cory  
Councillor Kevin Bentley for Councillor Andrew Ellis  
Councillor Peter Higgins for Councillor Theresa Higgins

*Also in Attendance :-* Councillor Anne Turrell  
Councillor Beverley Oxford  
Councillor Richard Martin  
Councillor Paul Smith  
Councillor Pauline Hazell

### 12. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2010 was confirmed as a correct record.

**Councillor Kevin Bentley (in respect of being a board member of the Haven Gateway Partnership) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)**

**Councillor Anne Turrell (in respect of being the Council's representative to the Haven Gateway Partnership and Regional Cities East) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)**

**Councillor Anne Turrell (in respect of her membership of Essex County Council) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)**

**Councillor Kevin Bentley (in respect of his membership of Essex County Council) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)**

**Councillor Bill Frame (in respect of working for the Mental Health Trust) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)**

### 13. Review of the work of the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Performance

Councillor Turrell, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for performance, and Mr.

Adrian Pritchard, Chief Executive, both attended the meeting for this item.

The Panel was asked to consider the effectiveness of the work undertaken by the Leader over the last twelve months, and Councillor Turrell responded to questions from panel members.

Councillor Turrell responded to members enquiring about the future of Local Economic Partnerships (LEP). Councillor Turrell said that Colchester had responded to the Government consultation, in support of an Essex LEP, and was awaiting a Government response. Councillor Turrell was not aware of what would happen should the Government not support any of the LEP bids.

In response to questions on the new A12 junction / park and ride scheme and northern approach road, Councillor Turrell said the completion of the A12 junction was ahead of schedule and she remained hopeful that it would be opened in December 2010, with the park and ride scheme and northern approach road due for completion in 2012. Councillor Turrell confirmed that she remained in continuous dialogue with Essex County Council to gain support and secure the completion of these projects as early as possible. Essex County Council is underwriting the funding of these projects in respect of future contributions to be made from funding partners such as the Mental Health Trust.

Councillor Turrell confirmed to Councillor Gerard Oxford that whilst the regeneration of the Hythe and St Botolphs areas appeared to have stopped, progress, be it very slow, was continuing, and she remained hopeful that there would in the not too distant future be confirmation of new private investment.

Councillor Turrell confirmed that the Council continued to negotiate, to find a way forward in regards to the flooding issues around the Community Stadium.

In regards to the RCE, Councillor Turrell responded to Councillor Bentley, saying RCE was a partnership made up of the six major towns and cities in the region, with the aim of working collectively to provide the leverage in the creation of jobs and affordable homes, and thereby generate sustainable growth in the East of England. The partnership was in dialogue with various business franchises to secure improvements to rail travel in the region as well as endeavouring to provide regional strategies on carbon management and the arts. Mr. Pritchard confirmed that the cost of supporting RCE was £20,000 per annum. Councillor Turrell agreed to provide members of the panel with a written response detailing the gains made locally through the RCE partnership.

Councillor Turrell confirmed to Councillor Bentley that the sale of Tymperleys was only the start of a process for determining a sustainable long term future of the building. It was appreciated that given recent press coverage on the proposed sale, that the public may respond to the Budget Consultation in proposing that this building should remain in Council ownership. Councillor Turrell said such responses would be considered by the Cabinet.

Councillor Turrell also confirmed to Councillor Young that as part of the budget

consultation process, all suggested cuts in spending would be quality impact assessed. With regards to future reductions in staffing levels, Councillor Turrell, in response to Councillor Willetts said the first step had been to undertake Fundamental Service Reviews (FSR), in which the process was to break down the whole service and all its component parts, and then rebuild the service in a smarter way. There was no pre-determined idea of the required staffing levels following a review, though improvements in procedures including a reduction in duplication have and could continue to lead to staff reductions.

It was anticipated that the October spending review by the Government would lead to an anticipated 20% cut in the Government funding for 2011-12, with a further overall 20% reduction over the following three years. Councillor Turrell responded to Councillor Bentley by confirming that whilst the Cabinet would strive to retain as many non-regulatory front-line services as possible, this could not be guaranteed, but all service areas will form part of an overall budget assessment once the Council's funding is known.

In response to Councillor Willetts, Councillor Turrell said the twice yearly performance monitor, including the performance results of all national indicators are reviewed by the Cabinet, along with the mitigation action where performance is below the annual target. Councillor Turrell said that in respect of the Strategic Plan Action Plan (SPAP), progress is regularly discussed by Cabinet members. All decisions taken are linked to the SPAP, and it is inevitable that future budget assessments will have a knock-on effect on the SPAP.

Councillor Arnold said members of the panel had previously expressed a wish that the Leader should attend the December meeting to discuss the 2011-12 Budget papers, and if she had not been already, invited the Leader to attend this meeting. Councillor Arnold said the panel had requested the Cabinet to give a strategic update with tables and indexes illustrating the implications on the delivery of the SPAP.

*RESOLVED* that the panel noted the responses from the Leader of the Council and thanked her for attending the meeting.

#### **14. Work Programme**

The panel considered and noted the 2010-11 Work Programme.