

**STRATEGIC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
8 JUNE 2010**

Present :- Councillor Christopher Arnold (Chairman)
Councillors Nigel Chapman, Mark Cory,
Andrew Ellis, Theresa Higgins, Nigel Offen,
Gerard Oxford, Dennis Willetts and Julie Young
Substitute Member :- Councillor Barrie Cook for Councillor Bill Frame

3. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 30 March 2010 and 19 May 2010 were confirmed as a correct record.

Councillor Nigel Chapman and Councillor Nigel Offen (in respect of Being a Board Member of Colchester Borough Homes) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

Councillor Julie Young (in respect of Being a Member of Essex County Council) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

Councillor Theresa Higgins (in respect of Being a Member of Essex County Council and a Colchester Blue Badge Guide) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

Councillor Christopher Arnold (in respect of his spouse being a Board Member of Age Concern) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

4. 2009-10 Year End Performance Report

Councillor Tina Dopson, Portfolio Holder for Communities (previously the Portfolio Holder for Performance and Partnerships in 2009-10) and Ms. Ann Wain, Executive Director, attended the meeting for this item.

Councillor Dopson introduced the Year end Performance report (including the Strategic Plan Action Plan (SPAP) and proposed targets and actions for 2010/11) making members aware of the Performance Summary, that included commentary on the progress on our National Indicators, LAA 'Have Regard to' indicators, our Local and Life Chances Indicators and the SPAP, and appendix

2 that highlighted the Council's excellent performance in regards to Number of Affordable Homes Delivered (NI155) and the Number of homeless people in Temporary Accommodation (NI156). Councillor Dopson also explained the reasoning for the NI192 Household Waste reused, recycled and composted sadly being below target, though the dry weather conditions that caused a lowering of garden waste collected was out of the Council's control.

Both panel members and Councillor Dopson agreed with Councillor Arnold that NI192 would be better explained and understood if the information was broken down into the three constituent parts.

Ms. Wain explained to the panel the future changes that would alter the Council's Performance Management Framework as we know it, due to the significant changes being made at a national level. Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) and including 'Use of Resources', was now abolished, with the Audit Commission instructing the Council to stop this work, though the Council was awaiting further instruction on the future for Place Survey (Customer perception Survey), a replacement for CAA and the agreed set of National Indicators. Ms. Wain said once further details are announced, briefings on the new arrangements will be organised.

Ms. Wain confirmed to the panel that once the Government provides guidance, likely to be in the autumn, on publication of individual items of expenditure above £500.00, a final decision, taking into account the work of other leading authorities, will be made.

Councillor Chapman explained that the additional information sheet supplied to members provided a fuller list of Awards and Accreditations to Colchester Borough Homes than that presented in Appendix 1 of the main report.

Councillor Dopson confirmed that with regard to 'Future Jobs Fund Project' that included 88 work placements for unemployed people aged 18-24, the project would lose its funding in 2010-11 and would not go ahead.

Further to Councillor Offen's concern about the air quality at certain 'hot spot' locations in or close to the Town Centre (prompted by NI194 'Level of Air Quality from Council buildings and operations', Ms. Wain confirmed these and a potential additional 'hot spot' are part of officer's current work in progress (including Brook Street, Mersea Road and the Town Centre) with ongoing dialogue with DEFRA and the Highways Agency. It is anticipated that the longer term aspirations for the Town Centre will improve air quality.

In respect of the SPAP 2009/10 Congestion Busting action around changes to town centre to reduce traffic, the panel requested the agreement on "Key Fundamentals agreed" should read "Key Principles agreed".

The panel member's agreed with Councillor Arnold that the Cabinet should be requested to provide additional information on Air Quality Hot Spots in the Borough in future reporting.

Following discussions on NI184 'Food Establishments compliant with hygiene law', an indicator dropped for 2010/11, members of the panel considered it desirable to see this indicator retained locally, so that the percentage of compliant premises in any one year was known. Members understood from Councillor Dopson and Ms. Pam Donnelly, Executive Director that year on year comparisons are misleading due to changes in the comparative property data, though the dropping of this local indicator would not impinge on the annual food premises inspection programme. Councillor Dopson and Ms. Donnelly agreed to seek further clarification on this indicator and provide this to the Cabinet for consideration.

During discussions about NI157 The Processing of Planning Applications, Ms. Donnelly explained to the panel that though a Fundamental Service Review (FSR) had been undertaken in Environmental and Protective Services in 2009, there remained areas still to be focused on during phase II of this review, including performance issues, though members should be aware of the reality that due to future financial pressures and decisions taken as part of the FSR, that there could be a trade-off with lower, more realistic targets. Members suggested that a more detailed definition to the three categories of planning applications could be useful.

The panel agreed to discuss future FSR later, during discussions on the work programme.

Councillor Smith addressed the panel to explain that the targets for NI79a 'Benefit Claims Processed correctly' had been revised downwards due to a change in methodology introduced by the Government, not a softening of the expected target level.

Panel members felt a final review of the Community Safety action on 'reducing crime and anti-social behaviour was required, though the panel were not sure whether the Night Time Economy Task and Finish Group, in existence for approximately six years, would be responsible for reviewing the final actions and outputs from the SPAP. The panel therefore agreed for Councillor Offen, Chairman of the Policy Review and Development Panel (PRDP) to confirm to the next SOSP briefing (Chair and Group Spokespersons) whether the PRDP would be completing this review, and if not whether it should be considered as a future SOSP work programme item.

The Scrutiny Officer was requested to check that the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Panel retained an item on their work programme for the need to

examine the finances for a new Park and Ride at North Colchester.

The Chairman requested clarification on what was meant by 'An agreement had been reached with ECC to develop the option for improving bus reliability and operation in Colchester. Councillor Barton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Sustainability explained that the agreement was to look at options generally, with regular 5-aside meetings to be arranged, to develop the options to informal agreements. Councillor Smith and Arnold agreed that greater transparency around this work was needed.

Councillor Arnold questioned the correctness of the Q4 update on the Enabling Job Creation action on 'Increased incubation and grow-on space', indicating 'green', but stating Stane Park development currently on hold.

The panel requested more detail on the SPAP 2009/10 Healthy Living action on the delivery of the Community Sport Network action plan, giving the target for this action was not achieved.

Discussions around the Healthy Living action on 'Work with partners to deliver the London 2012 Partnership Plan', including Councillor Dopson's update on work in progress, resulted in agreement that it would be beneficial for the panel to undertake a review of the London 2012 Partnership later in the year.

Councillor Arnold congratulated the Council and officers on the good news that under the Reduce, reuse and recycle action, the Council had, due to high levels of waste minimisation, achieved a reduction of 8.5% in waste to landfill.

Councillor Arnold said that as one of the main objectives of the Council's Strategic Plan was to make Colchester a place that people want to live, work and visit, the SPAP for 2010/11 should have an action focusing on visits to Colchester to pick up the "visit" in the vision.

Councillor Theresa Higgins requested that New Town be added to the Addressing Young People's Needs action on organising a varied programme of subsidised or free activities.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Dopson and Ms. Wain for attending the meeting, presenting the Year End Performance Report and responding to questions from the Panel.

RESOLVED that the panel

- i) Considered and commented on the performance report for the period up to the end of March 2010 which included progress of our performance measures, the Strategic Plan Action Plan and proposed targets and actions for 2010-11.

- ii) Requested that the Cabinet consider that future performance reports provide the following:
 - a) A breakdown of the three constituent parts that make up NI192 Household waste 'reused', 'recycled' and 'composted'.
 - b) The provision of additional information on Air Quality Hot Spots in the Borough (to run in parallel with NI194).
 - c) In respect of the SPAP 2009/10 Congestion Busting action around changes to town centre to reduce traffic, the panel requested the agreement on "Key Fundamentals agreed" to read "Key Principles agreed".
 - d) The panel requested more detail on the SPAP 2009/10 Healthy Living action on the delivery of the Community Sport Network action plan, given the target for this action was not achieved.
 - e) A more detailed definition to the three categories of planning applications could be useful.
 - f) Given that one of the main objectives of the Council's Strategic Plan was to make Colchester a place that people want to live, work and visit, the SPAP for 2010/11 should have an action focusing on visits to Colchester to pick up the "visit" in the vision.
 - g) That New Town is added to the Addressing Young People's Needs action on organising a varied programme of subsidised or free activities.
 - h) In respect of the retention of NI184 'Food Establishments compliant with Food Hygiene law' as a local indicator, Councillor Dopson and Ms. Donnelly are requested to seek further clarification and provide this to Cabinet for consideration.
- iii) The Scrutiny Officer was requested to check that the Finance and Audit Scrutiny Panel retain on their work programme a review of the financial aspects of a new Park and Ride at North Colchester.
- iv) The Chairman and Group Spokespersons of SOSF to consider a future year end review of the London 2012 Partnership as part of the work programme, at the next panel briefing.

Councillor Nigel Chapman and Councillor Nigel Offen (in respect of Being a Board Member of Colchester Borough Homes) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General

Procedure Rule 7(3)

Councillor Theresa Higgins and Councillor Julie Young (in respect of Being a Member of Essex County Council) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

5. Work Programme

Councillor Smith addressed the Panel to ask for members to agree to a further review of the Greenways Care Home as soon as possible.

Councillor Smith said in light of the Greenways Care Home Case Review published one week ago and uncertainty around the rebuild at this site it was important that a Council enquiry was undertaken.

The panel was informed that whilst the Executive Summary of the Case Review has been published full details of the report had not.

Councillor Smith said the report has 23 recommendations, and he was alarmed that all agencies other than Colchester Borough Council were mentioned in the recommendations or informed of what was happening.

The Panel was reminded that the Council approved a motion in December 2008 in regards to Greenways and following on from this a progress review was undertaken by the Panel in February 2009 in which Councillor Finch as Essex County Council Portfolio Holder attended and contributed to what was considered a thoughtful debate. At this meeting Councillor Finch concluded the discussion by saying he would be happy to return to the panel to brief members on the progress of the Greenways Care Home at some time around the end of 2009.

In discussions with Councillor Smith, the Panel agreed that as the Council has a statutory responsibility to the safeguarding of vulnerable adults, with a strategic role in addressing older people's needs, that it was incumbent on the Council to consider the issues in greater depth.

To this end, the Panel requested that the Scrutiny Officer writes to Ms. Liz Chidgey, Deputy Executive Director of Adults, Health and Community Wellbeing (Essex County Council), and to the Chair of the Essex Safeguarding Board for Adults, to invite them to attend a future meeting so a more thoughtful and informative discussion can take place, and further more the panel felt any meaningful scrutiny can only take place with full unedited copies of the report provided to members of the panel. It was also agreed that Councillor Finch would also be most welcome to attend any future discussions. It was hoped

that a review would be undertaken before the County Council Cabinet approve any recommendations resulting from the Greenways report.

The Chairman explained to the Panel that at the previous day's briefing, members and officers had discussed the need to re-draft the work programme to provide a schedule for each meeting that retained member's focus (less substantive items at each meeting, more thorough reviews, earlier close of meetings), thereby providing a basis for more meaningful scrutiny.

Consideration would be given to amalgam of Portfolio reviews with Fundamental Service / service performance reviews. Prompted by Councillor Gerard Oxford, the Chairman said that members had also accepted that this approach would require the need to schedule in more meetings throughout the year.

RESOLVED that the panel:

1. Requested that the Scrutiny Officer writes to Ms. Liz Chidgey, Deputy Executive Director of Adults, Health and Community Wellbeing (Essex County Council), and to the Chair of the Essex Safeguarding Board for Adults, to invite them to attend a future meeting so a more thoughtful and informative discussion can take place, and further more the panel felt any meaningful scrutiny can only take place with full unedited copies of the report provided to members of the panel.
2. Requested officers to redraft the 2010-11 Work Programme based on the ideas discussed, to be presented to the Chair and Group Spokespersons at the next briefing in preparation for the July meeting.