

# STRATEGIC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

## 12 JUNE 2012

*Present :-* Councillor Kevin Bentley (Chairman)  
Councillors Helen Chuah (Former Mayor) ,  
Beverly Davies, Bill Frame, Pauline Hazell,  
Peter Higgins, Kim Naish, Nigel Offen, Gerard Oxford  
and Terry Sutton

*Also in Attendance :-* Councillor Tina Dopson  
Councillor Annie Feltham  
Councillor Paul Smith

### 3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2012 was confirmed as a correct record.

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2012 was confirmed as a correct record.

### 4. Annual Scrutiny Report

The Annual Scrutiny Report, drafted by Mr. Robert Judd, Democratic Services Officer, informed the Council of the work of the scrutiny panels enabling the Council to form an opinion of the effectiveness of the scrutiny function. The Panel was asked to consider the draft report before it is submitted to Council.

*RESOLVED* that the Panel considered and agreed to the Annual Scrutiny Report to be submitted to the next convenient Full Council meeting.

**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)**

### 5. Work Programme

The Work Programme was presented by Mr. Robert Judd.

Mr. Judd said further to discussions on the Work Programme between the Chairman and Group Spokespersons, officers had made some preliminary enquiries and the panel was asked to consider the following additions or amendments to the programme.

- i) The Safer Colchester Partnership to be moved from the meeting on 29 August to the 18 September meeting.
- ii) Health and Wellbeing (HWB) – Ms. Clare Hardy, Senior Manager for Health and

Wellbeing at Essex County Council, to give a presentation on proposals for the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and the opportunity for members to comment and respond.

iii) Health and Wellbeing – To consider local arrangements including the work and progress of the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG), with invitations going to Councillor Ann Naylor, Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing (Confirmed), Ms. Clare Hardy (confirmed) and Dr Shane Gordon and Dr Gary Sweeney (CCG)(to be confirmed).

iv) A review of the Member's Locality Budgets scheduled for the meeting on 15 January 2013.

v) A further review of Health and Wellbeing late in 2012 / early 2013, to consider the new Essex County Council Strategy, with an opportunity to discuss the impact of the strategy on local services e.g. older people, public health and leisure and sport, with invitations going to groups such as Age UK, Alzheimer's Society.

During the discussions on 'Addressing Older People's Needs' (part of the Performance Report), Councillor Davies said despite the good work to improve patient experience of discharge from hospital, she was being told at the Older People's Forum that there remained too many residents whose lives were impacted on negatively, that it was not working, with too many not receiving the appropriate after care. Councillor Offen said this work had been carried out successfully by the Essex Rivers Trust, but the level of care had declined since the start of Primary Care Trusts. Councillor Bentley said this was an issue that could be taken up as part of the work on Health and Wellbeing.

*RESOLVED* that the Panel considered and commented on the draft Work Programme for 2012-13 and agreed to the proposed amendments and additional reviews.

**Councillor Kim Naish (in respect of being a Director of Anlia Care Trust) 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 being the Chairman of Colne Housing Society) 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)**

## **6. 2011-12 Year End Performance and Strategic Plan Action Plan**

Councillor Tina Dopson, Portfolio Holder introduced the 2011-12 Year-End Performance and Strategic Plan Action Plan in Councillor Turrell's absence. Councillor Dopson said both Councillor Paul Smith and Mr. Mark Wright, Director of Property Services at Colchester Borough Homes was present to help to respond to questions

from the Panel.

Ms. Lucie Breadman, Head of Life Opportunities presented the Performance Report. Ms. Breadman explained the results was for the period April 2011 to March 2012, with appendix 1 providing year-end data for the Council's key indicators (a mixture of local indicators, national indicators and Best Value indicators), showing performance set against target, the proposed target for 2012-13 and commentary on each indicator from the relevant Head of Service. Ms. Breadman said 73% of targets were met during 2011-12.

In response to Councillor Offen, Councillor Dopson said the Council had set a challenging target in 2011-12 in respect of indicator KSI H3 the number of homelessness cases prevented, and achieved a credible 91% of target. Councillor Dopson agreed that it was a huge task to determine those landlords who provided accommodation fit for purpose but the Council would continue to try to reach its target, set at 260 cases for 2012-13.

Councillor Bentley and Councillor Smith agreed that revenues and benefits welfare reform was inextricably linked to homelessness. Councillor Smith said Welfare Reform would be presented to a member development session on Tuesday 19 June 2012.

Following on from this development session Councillor Bentley requested that a pre-scrutiny session on any formal decision taken on changes due to welfare reform, with both he and Councillor Smith agreeing that looking at homelessness and welfare together would make some sense. Mr. Judd was asked to make the necessary arrangements.

Councillor Frame said indicator KSI H2 'The number of affordable homes delivered' is becoming more and more difficult in an unpredictable housing development market and a reducing affordable housing market would impact on homelessness. Councillor Sutton said developers had said from the outset that these targets were unachievable. Councillor Bentley said the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was an integral part of this debate, would help members get a better understanding if considered as part of the overall review. Councillor Bentley said the aim of the review was for all councillors to get a better overall understanding, and to help the Administration to improve future homelessness and affordable housing results.

Councillor Dopson said the current result of KSI H2 was very good, 366 affordable homes delivered against a target of 117, but this was due to a number of factors including additional funding for one year only and robust S106 negotiations.

Councillor Dopson responded to Councillor Sutton on waste recycling, saying that whilst our 40.2% recycling result was close to our 42% target, Colchester's results do look disappointing when compared to other local authorities, and this is in the main due to those authorities introducing wheelie bins on a fortnightly collection, a system that does have a large positive impact on recycling. This way of working though does require a huge investment programme given the fleet of refuse vehicles would need to be renewed to facilitate this change.

It was agreed by all members that even with the current method of collection accepted, there remains a hardcore of residents who still do not recycle their waste. It was reaffirmed that the Council was committed to a campaign to increase awareness and education, and proactively contact those households that do not recycle waste.

Councillor Offen that whilst he accepted there has been resistance in the past to wheelie bins, he was getting the impression that more and more people were changing their opinions, and a straw poll to gauge the public's view would be helpful.

Mr. Mark Wright addressed the Panel in regards to comments on indicator KSI H6 'The average time to re-let council houses', and where the 28 days result was below the 24 day target for 2011-12. Mr. Wright said the target was challenging but sensible. Some of the delays that impacted on the result were for example, i) displaced people from Sheltered Housing having the right to move into general needs properties, ii) offers of properties not considered desirable, iii) properties that are abandoned or where no notice of termination is given resulting in this time being built into the overall void time before any refurbishment has started, iv) all tenancies commencing on a Monday (due to welfare regulations) delaying the process if an agreement is reached the previous week, and v) properties where significant disrepair or vandalism requires a radical refurbishment.

Ms. Breadman introduced the year-end Strategic Plan Action Plan, where 96% of the actions were achieved.

Members debated age, around the actions on 'Addressing Older People's Needs'. It was generally agreed that whilst some people approaching 50 years old or in their 50s did not feel or think of themselves as older people, across the board, the needs and feelings of individuals is very different and so understandably building into the plan actions for people 50-55 years of age did make sense. Councillor Dopson said the strategy around older people was based on national labels and was not a local thing.

Councillor Dopson said the £20,000 investment in new volunteer led clubs was an initiative reaching out to rural areas. Some areas are already doing well and this investment enabled us to build on this good work. Councillor Bentley said he felt the commentary on this outcome should be more detailed so members got a better understanding.

Councillors Bentley, Oxford and Chuah spoke of the good work of the 'Changing Lives' project and the involvement of ten young people from the Gilbert School. This had been a once in a lifetime experience for these students who would remain involved in the project right up to the launch. The Treasures of China exhibition will be the first of its kind outside of China.

Councillor Dopson responded to Councillor Naish in explaining that the work of the Colchester Countryside Volunteer Rangers is to provide additional training in many countryside skills such as woodland management e.g. coppicing and nautical management e.g. pontoon building and repairs, and this work helped sustain the park on a part voluntary basis.

Councillor Bentley said for transparency the £250,000 invested in the support of voluntary organisations should have more detail to provide the information needed to the wider audience.

Councillor Bentley said the Strategic Plan Action Plan would need to reflect the Olympic Legacy. Councillor Dopson said in regards to outputs from the Olympic Games, the partnership would be measuring outcomes, was very specific, with details available on the website.

In conclusion, all three Appendices were reviewed and a number of key performance areas were discussed including; Homelessness and the impact future Welfare change will have both directly on this but also on the wider Health and Wellbeing of residents of the borough; the links to Affordable Housing; impacts and performance around re-let times for council houses and Waste, both in terms of the cost and reduction of this overall as well as participation in recycling.

There were no specific proposals from Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel for Cabinet to consider but the Panel did agree to add some of these key areas discussed to their future Work Programme.

*RESOLVED* that the Panel;

- i) Considered and noted the 2011 -12 year-end performance summary.
- ii) Noted the proposed indicators for inclusion into next year's performance management reporting process, and the targets to measure progress.
- iii) Noted the Strategic Plan actions for 2012-13.
- iv) Requested further information, an update, on the Congestion Busting actions for the Northern Approaches Road and Busway, and the delivery of Park and Ride to Colchester.
- v) Requested further information on the work of officers in regards to deliver improvements in air quality and sustainable transport infrastructure.