

Extract of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
held on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2007.

8 WORK PROGRAMME 2007/08

Task and Finish Groups

While the Committee noted the recommendation that there should only be three areas selected for the Task and Finish Groups Members felt that the four areas set out below were equally important and should be progressed by the task and finish groups.

(1) **Allotment Services Provision:** To undertake a study of the Council's Allotment services provision: The key issues here were (1) encouraging residents to grow their own produce to reduce the carbon footprint of the area, and (2) allotment security. The key questions were: How can we encourage residents to rent allotments and how can the Council help ensure that allotments are not subject to vandalism? The outcome is expected to be recommendations which would improve the take-up of allotments in the District.

(2) **Rural Isolation, local facilities and service provision to vulnerable people in the towns.** The key question here is how can we improve access to services for residents living in areas with few accessible facilities and/or no public transport?

(3) **Democratic Renewal:** It was agreed that voter turnout is a matter for national government. It was noted that the Council will soon be required to monitor and improve voter turnout as performance indicators were expected to be applied. It was noted that Polling Stations weren't always easy to find. One of the key questions is how can the Council make it as easy as possible for residents to vote ?

(4) **Refuse/recycling collections.** How is the system working? Can it be improved?

It was agreed to accept the above four items and leave the following as a reserve item:

(5) **Alleviation of traffic congestion in the Braintree District.** Whilst it was appreciated that this is a matter for the Highways Agency, it was noted that Braintree was not mentioned in the Eastern Regional Plan yet roads in the District carry traffic between Colchester and Chelmsford and between Stansted and Harwich, and these are causing serious congestion problems. Facets to be considered include inter-urban rail travel, commuter parking, and integrated transport policy.

Finally, the Committee discussed the need for a budget/resources. It was noted that such a budget would cover the work and expenses of the Committee/Task and Finish Panels, possible consultancy expenses, training needs, copying and printing costs, advertising but would not need to cover the support staff already allocated to help with these projects.

**DECISION:** That it be recommended to the Cabinet that a budget of £20,000 be made available to cover the costs/expenses of Overview and Scrutiny.