

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 20 SEPTEMBER 2011

REPORT BY CHAIRMAN OF HEALTH ENGAGEMENT PANEL

MEMBERSHIP OF HEALTH ENGAGEMENT PANEL

WARD(S) AFFECTED: none

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**Purpose/Summary of Report**

- This report is to ask Community Scrutiny Committee to approve an additional seat on the East Herts Health Engagement Panel.

<b><u>RECOMMENDATION FOR : Community Scrutiny Committee</u></b>	
<b>(A)</b>	To recognise the developing workload and increasing importance of health and public health issues at district level
<b>(B)</b>	To agree to increase the membership of the Health Engagement Panel from 5 to 6 members.

1.0 Background

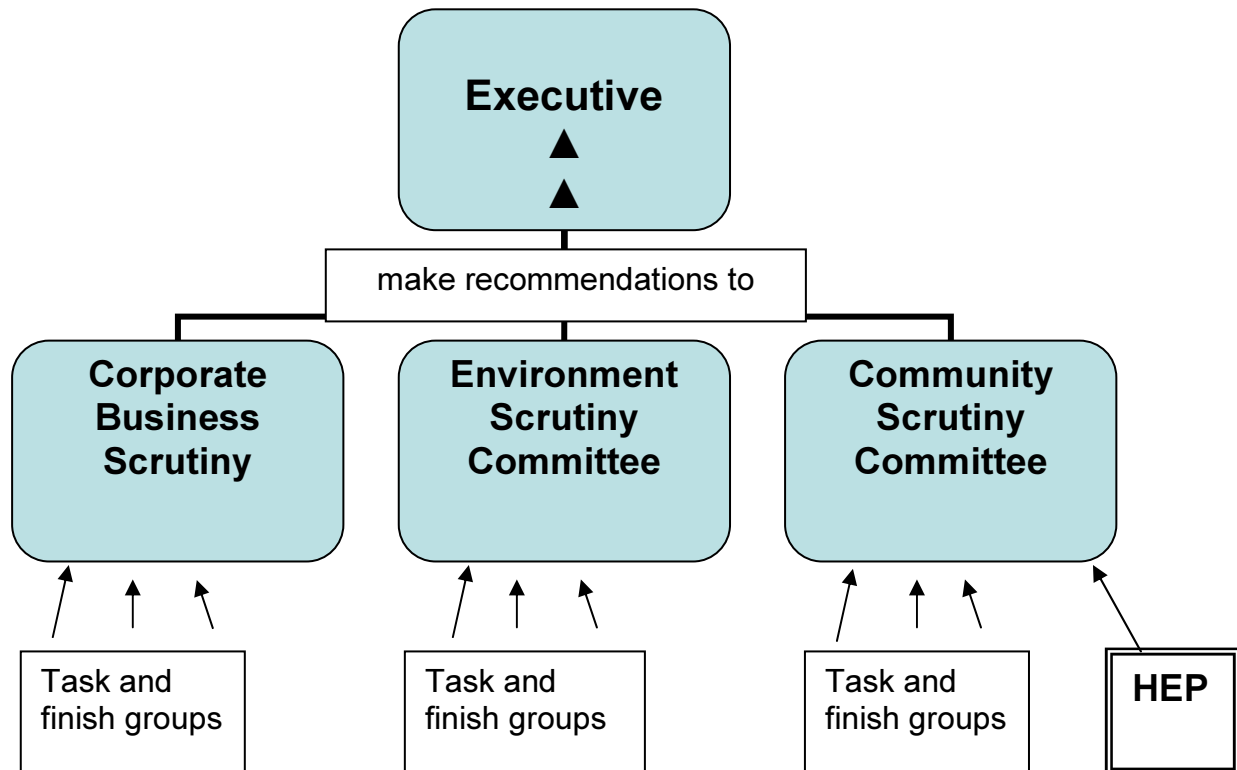
1.1 The Health Engagement Panel (HEP) at East Herts came into being as part of the scrutiny restructure in autumn 2007.

1.2 At that time the (original) Performance Scrutiny and Policy Development Scrutiny committees were reshaped into the (current) Corporate Business, Environment and Community Scrutiny Committees – each having a membership of 10 elected councillors, allocated in proportion to size of political groups.

1.3 HEP was set up with a membership of 5 elected councillors as a 'standing panel' under the Community Scrutiny Committee.

1.4 HEP was set up with a remit to consider matters relating to health in East Herts, in particular to:

- *scrutinise local health issues in the East Herts area*
- *scrutinise partner actions to reduce health inequalities in the East Herts area*
- *scrutinise arrangements for the provision of health care in the East Herts area*
- *make recommendations to the Community Scrutiny Committee on health issues*
- *consider matters referred to it by the Community Scrutiny Committee*



- 1.5 The Chairman of East Herts HEP has a seat on the main Hertfordshire Health Scrutiny Committee (HSC) alongside representatives from all 10 districts/boroughs in the county.
- 1.6 HEP met twice in 2007/08 civic year and has continued to meet four times each civic year since then. Meetings are timed, as far as practical, to occur just before the Hertfordshire HSC to allow their agenda to be discussed and any local issues identified with the HEP Chairman before the county-wide meeting.
- 1.7 This year (2011/12) is the first year that the HEP has had nominated substitutes identified. In previous years, attendance has been drawn only from the core membership of 5 councillors.
- 2.0 Report
- 2.1 HEP has always been a very outward looking Panel and has drawn a significant number of external partners into the scrutiny process. Nine of their 15 meetings (60%) have had external partners attending and contributing. However, given the small

pool of core Panel members, there have been times when these external visitors outnumber elected councillors at meetings (see Essential Reference Paper B).

- 2.2 Given the effort made by visitors to prepare for and attend the HEP meeting, this situation has the potential to be seen as lack of interest/commitment on behalf of the council. This would be an unfortunate impression to leave people with as HEP members have worked very hard to represent the voice of residents on local health matters.
- 2.3 It is partly this commitment to local issues that means HEP members are heavily involved in other partnership activities which necessitate missing some Panel meetings due to an unavoidable clash of events.
- 2.4 The addition of nominated substitutes this year should help to address the situation. However, it was the view of the Panel at their most recent meeting (21 June 2011) that their contribution to this area of work would be strengthened if the permanent size of the Panel could be increased from 5 to 6 members.
- 2.5 Current members were also in agreement with the Panel chairman, that the publication of the government's plans to reform the health and public health services will bring more issues to district council level. One of the key planks in the Health and Social Care Bill (currently going through parliament) is '*greater and more transparent public accountability*' and it is this area of responsibility where HEP will have a growing local role to play under the main Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 2.6 The work of HEP is not insubstantial. The council's Public Health Strategy 2008-2013 is a challenging programme covering the main themes of
- *smoking*
  - *physical activity*
  - *healthy eating*
  - *obesity*
  - *other health factors*
  - *powers of influence*
- 2.7 In 2010/11, 39 projects/activities were undertaken as part of the council's Public Health annual action plan. 32 were successfully completed in-year, 5 are on track to meet later completion dates and 2 could not progress due to withdrawal/shortage of resources. Each year projects are identified in active consultation with HEP

members through an evaluation/planning workshop and through feedback from external partners.

- 2.8 During the 2010/11 activity, it is estimated that over 16,600 children, young people and adults who live, study &/or work in East Herts have had **direct** interaction with one of our public health initiatives in some form.
- 2.9 This work has been recognised by a very positive initial response from an external assessor following East Herts' submission to the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) 2011 Health Promotion and Community Well-being Organisation and Partnership Awards.

“From the outset it was evident that East Herts council has a strong and committed approach to the Health and well being of its residents. This approach is coordinated through the Health Engagement Panel with excellent representation and input from both elected members senior and operational managers as well as valued partners.

The scope and breadth of work, with limited resources, is excellent and there are demonstrable outcomes. This work has been sustained despite times of challenging resources and its non statutory nature..... Overall this is a strong submission for the Health and Well Being award. There is good and demonstrable evidence of a sustained approach to improve the health and well being of local residents through a variety of methods with good partner engagement and senior manager and member support.

The excellent work of the Council's Environmental health promotions officer must also be highlighted. Simon Barfoot's commitment and achievements plus his aspirations for the future health and well being of the local population will ensure that this work is sustained.” **Chris French RSPH Assessor, July 2011**

- 2.10 The Local Government Group (improvement and development) published a document in November 2010 entitled “the role of local government in promoting wellbeing” and on page 12 made the statement: *“To fulfil local government's forthcoming responsibility for public health improvement, wellbeing will have to become central to local government's agenda and no longer a matter to be dealt with by those with 'health' in their job titles”.*
- 2.11 It is against this background that the HEP is asking Community Scrutiny Committee to recognise the increasing importance of this area of work and support a recommendation to increase the membership of HEP from 5 to 6 members.

### 3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'** which follows.

#### Background Papers

Four principles of good public scrutiny published by CfPS (Centre for Public Scrutiny) [click here for link to CfPS external site](#)

East Herts Public Health strategy 2008-2013 ([click here for a direct link to this document](#))

Local Government Group:

“the role of local government in promoting wellbeing”

(<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=23692693>)

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## ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

<p>Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives</p>	<p>Effective use of the scrutiny process contributes to the Council's ability to meet two core objectives:</p> <p><b>Fit for purpose, services fit for you</b>  <i>Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.</i></p> <p><b>Leading the way, working together</b>  <i>Deliver responsible community leadership that engages with our partners and the public.</i></p> <p>In monitoring the performance of the council's services and action plans, the Committee is monitoring the Council's achievement of all of its corporate objectives.</p> <p>Any additional issues identified for scrutiny will relate to at least one of the Council's corporate objectives.</p>
<p>Consultation:</p>	<p>Potential topics for scrutiny are always invited from members of the public, the Executive and all Members.</p>
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>According to the Council's constitution, the scrutiny committees are responsible for the setting of their own work programme in consultation with the Executive and in doing so they shall take into account wishes of members on that committee who are not members of the largest political group on the Council.</p>
<p>Financial:</p>	<p>An additional member on the Panel would incur minimal additional resources (eg. paper copy of agenda papers, travel expenses to 4 panel meetings/year).</p>
<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>none</p>
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p>Broadening the HEP base is to recognise the growing workload and increasing importance of health and public health related issues at district level. Without it, matters which may benefit from scrutiny may be overlooked. Where this involved partners, it could risk damaging the reputation of the council and relations with partners.</p>

## ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'B'

Date of HEP	Panel members	speakers	topic
Feb 08	4		(Inaugural meeting)
Mar 08	2	1 speaker from acute hospital trust	Princess Alexander Hospital on Trust status consultation
May 08	4	3 speakers from East & North Herts NHS Trust, West Herts PCT and East & North Herts PCT	NHS Trust status consultation and GP led Health Centres
Sept 08	2	(3 invited internal speakers)	Promoting physical activity through planning, transport and the physical environment
Dec 08	5	2 speakers from East & North Herts PCT	Transport issues
Mar 09	4		
Jul 09	3		
Oct 09	3	5 speakers from HCC, ACS, NHS Hertfordshire and voluntary sector	Health and public health issues in local drug and alcohol strategies
Dec 09	5	3 speakers from East & North Herts PCT	Urgent Care Centre in Bishop's Stortford
Feb 10	3		
June 10	2	3 external speakers from Herts Sports Partnership, NHS Hertfordshire and SLM	Hertfordshire Physical Activity Plan
Oct 10	4	2 speakers from East & North Herts NHS Trust	Plans for the future - including Lister and QEII hospitals
Dec 10	4		
Feb 11	4		
June 11	4+1 sub	1 speaker from PAH Trust	Plans for the future of acute services at PAH in Harlow
Planned for Oct 2011		Speaker(s) from East & North Herts Trust  Speakers from Children's Centres in East Herts	Briefing on developments of a local A&E service for QEII (2012 – 2014) Work of children's centres (as related to health and wellbeing)
Planned for Dec 2011		Speaker(s) from Herts Partnership Trust (HPT)	New mental health services in the east of the district