

**SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTS FOR
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Tuesday 11 July 2023 at 7.30 pm
Council Chamber - Civic Centre**

The attached documents are due to be considered at the meeting listed above and were unavailable for circulation when the agenda for the meeting was published. The agenda items to which the documents relate is noted below.

AGENDA

8. Review of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Harassment - Question and Answer with Essex Police and Safer Harlow Partnership (Page 2)
9. Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2023/24
 - b) Agreement of Work Plan (Pages 3 - 4)

Agenda Item 8

3. Provide a brief written summary of Changing Pathways work (around domestic abuse and sexual harassment); the issues your organisation faces and how Harlow Council could help. This is required by Wednesday 5 July at the latest please.

We support clients to report to police, and refer to SERICC if necessary.

Changing Pathways is the lead provider for Domestic Abuse Services in West Essex. We have a base in Harlow (as well as in Basildon and Thurrock). In Harlow, we provide outreach support for victims (male or female) of domestic abuse, we work with standard, medium and high risk clients are supported by Domestic Abuse Practitioners and Independent Domestic Violence Advocates. We also provide the only Essex based specialised service for our Black and Minoritised Community. This service covers Essex (excluding Thurrock and Southend). Our main aim is to facilitate victims (and their children) to safety, by providing support, advice, linking with partners, providing safe accommodation or pathways to keep victims safe in their own homes. We deliver an award winning programme in Harlow and Epping, which is a collaborative programme with Essex Ministry and Changing Pathways.

We provide Refuge space across our two Refuges in Thurrock and Basildon and are able to internally refer to these services for Harlow residents who are fleeing domestic abuse.

The issue our organisation faces is recognition that we are the lead providers in the area, since there are other domestic abuse services in Harlow. We would welcome support from Harlow Council to work with us raise awareness of who we are what we can provide to Harlow (and surrounding areas) residents.

Cllr Tony Edwards
Chair of the Scrutiny Committee

cc. Cllr Alastair Gunn
Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Dan Swords
Leader of Harlow Council
Civic Centre
The Water Gardens
Harlow
CM20 1WG
www.harlow.gov.uk

Monday 3rd July 2023

Dear Cllr Edwards,

Thank you for your invitation to set out in writing my views on the committee's work plan for the year ahead and I am very grateful for this early interaction and the way in which you have engaged with me as Leader.

As I said to you in our recent meeting, I strongly believe in the role of the Scrutiny Committee and this administration will give the committee the full respect it demands. You will be aware of the legal powers of the committee, and I very much hope you will exercise these to the fullest because a well-oiled committee is both in the administration's and more importantly, the town's interest. If you have not already done so, I would urge you to read the LGA's '*A councillor's workbook on Scrutiny*' guide as this sets out in great detail best practice of the committee and I fully endorse its recommendations.

The work plan of the committee is set by the committee; however I do welcome the opportunity to express my thoughts on this. My belief is most eloquently summarised in the following statement contained within the LGA guide:

"The Local Government Act 2000 introduced a new political management system for local councils in England and Wales, requiring them to have a separate 'executive' in the form of a leader, or elected mayor, and cabinet.

"To provide a counterweight for this, the Act also introduced the concept of 'overview and scrutiny', whereby every council with an executive management structure is required to have an overview and scrutiny committee. This enables the rest of the council to scrutinise the executive by investigating their decisions and policies, and issuing reports and recommendations where any shortcomings are identified."

I would draw your attention to the final sentence of this statement regarding the committee's role, backed by legal powers, to '*scrutinise the executive*'. In recent years, the committee has, in my view, carried out some admirable work on important issues to the town, but less so, on the work of the executive. I would urge the committee to ensure its workplan focusses on the work of the administration; how well it is fulfilling its functions, whether it is succeeding in delivering its corporate priorities and provide challenge on those issues, as opposed to a focus on outside bodies over which the committee has no powers or influence.

Therefore, I would kindly request the committee focus all of its time on the work of the administration and council as a whole and not on topics and issues that the council does not control, nor can the committee legally enforce. This, I believe, will ensure the committee sticks within its legal bounds,

terms of reference and above all, will ensure the administration is effectively scrutinised and held to account.

Too often, councillors have seen meetings of Cabinet as the appropriate forum in which backbench and opposition councillors should scrutinise the administration. This belief is incorrect. It is your committee that is the forum in which councillors should scrutinise the administration, as the Local Government Act 2000 makes clear.

This year, our administration will focus on five clear priorities, and I very much hope that your committee will scrutinise our progress on those priorities:

1. **Fix council housing** by clearing the backlog in housing repairs so your home is fixed quickly and ensuring Harlow's council homes are for Harlow families.
2. **Restore pride in Harlow** by tackling the issues in your street with better landscape maintenance, new estate car parking, estate replanting and, by working with Essex County Council; fix the potholes, street signs, railings and street furniture.
3. **Rebuild our town** by transforming the town centre with a once-in-a-generation programme of regeneration, building new council homes for Harlow families and reviving left-behind neighbourhoods.
4. **Secure investment into Harlow** to back local businesses, improve our infrastructure and create jobs and apprenticeships to grow Harlow's economy.
5. **Improve council services** to ensure Harlow Council truly works for you, providing you the very best and most efficient services for the lowest possible council tax and making Harlow a better place to live, work and raise a family.

I hope that my submission is useful for our discussion at the committee meeting which I am looking forward to attending.

With every good wish,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Smeeth". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Leader of Harlow Council