

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COUNCIL MINUTES

Committee: Council **Date:** 30 July 2020

Place: Virtual Meeting on Zoom **Time:** 7.00 - 9.10 pm

Members Present: Councillors H Kane (Chairman), J Share-Bernia (Vice-Chairman), N Avey, R Bassett, N Bedford, R Brookes, L Burrows, D Dorrell, I Hadley, S Heap, S Heather, R Jennings, J Jennings, S Jones, S Kane, H Kauffman, P Keska, J Leppert, A Lion, C McCredie, M McEwen, J Mclvor, L Mead, R Morgan, S Murray, S Neville, M Owen, A Patel, J Philip, D Plummer, C P Pond, C C Pond, B Rolfe, M Sartin, P Stalker, D Sunger, B Vaz, C Whitbread, H Whitbread, J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse and D Wixley

Apologies: Councillors R Baldwin, A Beales, P Bolton, H Brady, G Chambers, Y Knight, J Lea, G Mohindra, S Rackham, C Roberts, D Roberts, B Sandler and D Stocker

Officers Present: G Blakemore (Chief Executive), N Dawe (Chief Operating Officer), S Jevans (Strategic Director), A Small (Strategic Director), N Boateng (Service Manager (Legal) & Monitoring Officer), G Woodhall (Democratic & Electoral Services Manager), J Leither (Democratic Services Officer), P Seager (Chairman's Officer), V Messenger (Democratic Services Officer) and R Moreton (Corporate Communications Officer)

12. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager reminded everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

13. COUNCILLOR SYD STAVROU

It was with much sadness that the Chairman informed the Council of the death of Councillor Syd Stavrou.

Members were informed that Councillor Syd Stavrou had been a District Councillor since 2002, representing the Waltham Abbey High Beach Ward of the District as a Conservative Councillor. She served on the Cabinet for many years holding many of the most senior positions, including Deputy Leader, Community and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder, Finance Portfolio Holder, Housing Portfolio Holder; and was a Member of various outside bodies such as the Lea Valley Regional Park Authority. Councillor Syd Stavrou was also a Member of Waltham Abbey Town Council and had served several terms as the Waltham Abbey Town Council Mayor.

Members paid tribute to the memory of Councillor Syd Stavrou and stood for a minute's silence in her memory.

14. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 21 May 2020 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct.

16. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (a) Announcements by the Chairman of Council

Overview and Scrutiny Rule 53 (Call-in and Urgency)

The Chairman, Councillor H Kane advised that in accordance with the above mentioned rule, she was satisfied that the following decision of the Cabinet was reasonable in all circumstances and should be treated as a matter of urgency as any delay likely to be caused by the call-in process would seriously prejudice the Council's interests.

Decision:

(1) To note that the Business and Planning Bill is at Committee Stage in the House of Lords and is likely to get Royal Assent this month and that the Council should have a process in place to determine licensing applications made under the Act;

(2) That in order to achieve the tight timelines for determination of Licence Applications under the new Act agree:

- (a) To amend the Scheme of Delegation and add decision making authority to the role of Director of Contract and Technical Service / Director of Commercial and Regulatory Services in respect of applications that do not receive any objections and those that do receive objections the Portfolio Holder for Commercial and Regulatory Services or the Leader of the Council be consulted as well as the Chair or Vice Chair of the Licensing Committee before a decision can be made,
- (b) That Consultations on licence applications be carried out by electronic and digital means only;
- (c) That the relevant ward members would be consulted on any licence application related to their ward;
- (d) That Licence fee will be to be set out in Resource Implication section of the report;
- (e) That the licence period shall be the maximum permissible under the Act currently likely to be up to September 2021;
- (f) That Licensing Conditions attached at appendix-1 are adopted.

(3) That the Chairman of Council be requested to waive the call-in for this decision on the grounds that the implementation of these recommendations would need to be put into immediate practice as soon as the Act received its Royal assent.

The Chairman therefore determined that the call-in provisions of the Overview and Scrutiny Rules, which would otherwise apply, be disregarded for this decision.

17. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

The Council noted that there were no public questions under notice that had been submitted for consideration at this meeting.

18. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER NOTICE**Question by Councillor J M Whitehouse for the Planning and Sustainability Portfolio Holder, Councillor N Bedford**

“What assessment has the Council made of the impact on the district of recent and forthcoming changes to use classes and permitted development rights? These changes were wide-ranging and among other revisions appear to allow, subject to certain restrictions, the construction of up to two new storeys above houses and blocks of flats (and one new storey above bungalows) without requiring a full planning application. In particular:

- (a) will the Council consider what steps it could take, such as Article 4 directions or similar measures, to protect streets where the current uniformity of design makes a major contribution to the special character of the area (for example The Orchards in Epping)?
- (b) what were the implications for policies in the emerging local plan including policy H 1 F which seeks to resist the loss of bungalows?”

Answer to Councillor J M Whitehouse from Councillor N Bedford, Planning and Sustainability Portfolio Holder

- (a) Several new changes were being introduced firstly, as part of the Governments stated intention for reform of the Planning System and secondly, as a response to the challenges posed by COVID-19 and the need to ensure that the system can continue to operate effectively and support the recovery. It was too early for an assessment to be made at this initial stage, but in the case of building up additional storey's, a large proportion of properties in the district will not be affected.

For example, among the changes, it will be permitted in principle to allow the construction of two additional storeys on the topmost storey of buildings of two storeys or more, or one additional storey on a detached house of one storey, above ground level. But, not in conservation areas, areas of sites of special scientific interest, listed buildings or properties built before 1 July 1948 or after 28 October 2018. These will still be subject to the usual planning permissions and consultations. The rest would need prior approval from the Council after notifying adjoining owners or occupiers, which will consider certain matters relating to the proposed construction of additional storeys. These included:

- consideration of the impact on the amenity of neighbouring premises, including overlooking, and
- privacy and overshadowing; the design, including the architectural features of the principal elevation of the house, and of any side elevation which fronts a highway.

The Council could consider imposing an Article 4 direction where necessary, which basically removes the permitted changes and therefore still required planning permission. This though cannot be imposed immediately because it

needed to go through a due process that can take 6 to 12 months. The prior approval though still retains the need to consider amenity of neighbours and also design, so if there were streets where the uniformity of buildings was a character of that area, then there will still be control where the neighbour raises objection.

In addition, the Use Classes Order was being altered to create a new broad category of 'commercial, business and service' uses (Class E) incorporating shops, restaurants, offices, day nurseries, indoor sport and recreation among other uses, such that planning permission will not be required to move among these uses. Changes to hot food take-aways or betting shops will still require full planning consent. Given the reason was to make it easier for high street uses to change use without the need for a planning application, any potential further restrictions through an Article 4 Direction will need very careful consideration.

- (c) Policy H 1F of the current emerging Local Plan Version states that the loss of bungalows will be resisted. This was because they support the needs of people with accessibility needs, including older people. The policy will still be a material consideration where planning permission was required, but only on amenity and design grounds where the adjacent neighbour raises such an objection on the new prior approval application.

19. REPORTS FROM THE LEADER & MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

The Council received written reports from the Portfolio Holders. The Chairman invited the Leader of Council to provide an oral report and the opportunity for other members of the Cabinet to give an update on matters concerning their relevant portfolios.

- (a) The Leader of Council

The Leader advised the Council that in recent meetings there had been various reports that focussed on the recovery from Covid-19 and many of the Cabinet reports at this meeting would touch upon this in greater detail. The Council had to start looking to the future and needed to make sure that all the plans put forward in February 2020, as part of the budget, were implemented and he stated that his report would focus on some of what had been achieved and how we as a Council would move forward.

At Cabinet in February 2020 the Leader reported that the Highways Rangers would be brought back to Epping Forest, recruitment had taken place and there would be two Highway Rangers starting in mid-August 2020. Additional funding had been secured and repairs to finger posts would be matched funded by Town and Parish Councils. This was a positive action during the Covid-19 lockdown, it showed that the Council had been working on moving forward.

The Leader advised that recently there had been some reports in the media on Qualis and he felt it was time to clarify some points that had been reported. The Qualis group of companies had been set up by the Council, they would benefit the Council in several ways and formed a key part of the medium term financial strategy and budget.

Through Qualis the Council were looking to achieve an improved and more efficient service to customers, for example housing repairs, which was a key driver behind the setting up of Qualis. Qualis were looking at an estimated growth investment by the Council of approximately £150 million over the next five years delivering a 3% net

return across the portfolio. In real terms this would translate in a return to Epping Forest District Council of £1.5 million for the first year rising to £12 million by year five of operation.

The Council through Qualis was looking to deliver 300 new homes for the district, new amenities including a new leisure centre in Epping, supporting economic growth, creating new jobs and a portfolio of new investments.

The Council have always been open and transparent on how Qualis would operate and this had been discussed in several forums, it was critical that Qualis were allowed the space to operate commercially to achieve the industry role the Council had to rise to and ensure we have the correct skills and expertise in business.

In February 2020 all Members were invited to a workshop for legal advisers to go through a Shareholder Agreement and how the monitoring of the new company would be undertaken. This was followed by a Cabinet paper that agreed quarterly reports on the finance and performance of Qualis would be presented to Cabinet and Council which would provide the correct monitoring.

Following recent comments and criticisms regarding costs and transparency and given the challenges faced during Covid-19, at a meeting with members of the Cabinet it was proposed that the following changes be applied when the Qualis permanent board was recruited in September 2020. There would be one Council Member outside of the Cabinet to be appointed to the Qualis board on the equivalent Councillor allowance, this would ensure the transparency by providing a link for the Council to Qualis and would also reduce the cost from the three interim board members down to one. The recent decision to second a Strategic Director from the Council onto the Qualis board would reduce the requirement of having two Councillor appointee members thus creating a further saving to the overall cost of the Qualis board. All members of the new permanent Qualis board will be interviewed by the Council's senior appointments panel as agreed, followed by recommendations to Full Council, this will be a robust process and will ensure the Council has the required skills and experience required to run the group of Qualis companies. The February Cabinet report set out the benchmarking cost for these roles and this was the correct market rate.

The quarter 1 and quarter 2 financial operational reports of Qualis have been reviewed by the Qualis board and will come to the next Cabinet meeting and then on to full Council.

The Leader hoped this clarified the situation with regard to Qualis, this Council has always been open and transparent and we need to work towards Qualis being the unrivalled success it needs to be to drive forward our Council.

(b) Housing and Community Services Portfolio Holder

Councillor H Whitbread advised that in light of recent events she would like to highlight and add some information to her published report.

Illegal Raves

There had been reports of illegal raves in the district and across the country in recent weeks also large gatherings during the lockdown period. We have been working closely with the Police on this particularly around the kind of noise related reporting. The Council have an out of hours reporting service for any loud noises also in terms of a Closure Order where any kind of illegal large gatherings like there were in Water

Lane in Roydon at an Airbnb. The Council was able to get a Closure Order in place, through the court system, which was excellent work by the Community Safety Team.

Town Centre Teams

I recently met with the Town Centre Team at Waltham Abbey and the District Chief Inspector on the first anniversary of the scheme. The Town Centre Teams consisted of two Police Officers based exclusively in the Town Centre, they had a really good proactive community policing attitude working with the local businesses and residents. They would tackle shoplifting, anti-social behaviour and any give any other assistance that they could.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for all the work they are doing with the local community as their work needs to be recognised.

Woodland Grove, Epping

In June this year a fire broke out in a block of flats in Woodland Grover, Epping. This was a very sad incident where one resident of the flats lost their life. The community response, the Council's response and the Fire and Emergency Services' response was remarkable.

Councillor H Whitbread advised that she had stayed at the rescue centre all day where the Red Cross attended and immediately jumped into action, equipped with all sorts of help materials for the victims. Julies Café at Stonards Hill served refreshments all day, the Council Housing team made sure that everyone had overnight and the longer term provision they needed in terms of housing and support.

Councillor H Whitbread gave thanks to all those involved in that response and remarked how well managed it was on the day.

The Bell Hotel, Epping

There had been a lot of attention in the press recently in relation to a video that had been circulated via YouTube, which gave some misleading information.

Councillor H Whitbread advised the Council that she would like to address and clear up some of this misleading information.

The Bell Hotel has been procured by the Home Office to house asylum seekers for a temporary period during the Covid-19 pandemic. There had been no increase in crime during this period, local food charities have not been giving food to these people, the Home Office are providing their food and also they are not illegal immigrants they are asylum seekers and this point needs to be made clear.

(c) Planning and Sustainability Portfolio Holder

Councillor N Bedford advised that he would like to refer back to his report as there had been an update to the Local Plan.

Housing Requirement in the emerging Local Plan

It was important that plans were reviewed in the light of later and better information and that the emerging Local Plan moves forward towards adoption so that sustainable and environmentally sensitive growth can occur in the District.

It was common practice that after publication of more recent household projection data such as that recently published by the Office of National Statistics, 2018 population projections, that authorities were encouraged to look at their housing requirement and the Inspector examining the Local Plan had written to the Council asking us to do that in the light of the new data which shows a reduction in projected household growth over the plan period compared to that used to support the plan which used the 2014 population projection data.

In the light of this the next steps for the Council were to ask the Opinion Research Services who undertook the original Strategic Housing Market Assessment, and on which the housing requirement in the emerging Local Plan was evidenced, to review the latest data to see whether the housing requirement for the District was still the right approach, this was based on the 2012 approach as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. This was scheduled to be completed by the end of August.

If the current Local Plan requirement was still correct taking account of the proposed alterations already being considered to meet the actions identified by the Inspector, the Council will advise the Inspector and move towards the Main Modifications consultation and adoption of the plan in line within the current timetable.

If the current housing requirement cannot be justified further reduction in the proposed allocations and removal of sites will be considered with preference being given for removing environmentally sensitive sites. A revised timetable will then be agreed with the Planning Inspector to agree the additional work required to evidence the plan, this could include traffic modelling, air quality modelling and the provision of infrastructure such as school provision and similar.

Taking all the above into account the Council's focus has to be getting the Local Plan over the line and getting the Habitat Regulations Assessment and the associated Air Pollution Mitigation Strategy agreed by Natural England and the Conservators of Epping Forest, so that we can start to determine the planning applications that have been held in abeyance as soon as possible.

I hope this gives Members confidence that we are moving forward at an alarming pace and nothing will stop the Council from getting this plan through.

20. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS WITHOUT NOTICE

The Chairman thanked Members for giving notification of their intention to ask questions without notice.

(a) Local Plan

Councillor S Jones asked the Planning and Sustainability Portfolio Holder to comment on the Planning Inspector's letter suggesting that the Council look again at the housing numbers in the light of new projections and would this have an impact on the Council's delivery of the emerging Local Plan.

Councillor N Bedford referred Councillor Jones to the statement and letter he had read out earlier in the meeting.

(b) Governments likely proposals for Unitarisation and Devolution

Councillor C C Pond stated that there was a summit meeting to be held soon of all Leaders and Chief Executives of all Councils in Essex relating to the Governments

likely proposals for unitarisation and devolution. He asked the Leader as to what line he would take, how would he consult ordinary councillors and would he report back in the Member's Bulletin as to the progress of those discussions.

Councillor C Whitbread advised that he would be virtually attending that meeting and would wait for the Government's White Paper to be published in the autumn, once that was published then there would be a better idea of how to proceed. He stated that he would keep Members advised as the discussions progressed.

(c) Council Housing Repairs to Qualis

Councillor R Bassett asked the Housing and Communities Portfolio Holder what were the benefits of moving the Council housing repairs service to Qualis.

Councillor H Whitbread advised that by moving housing repairs to Qualis it would make the service much more efficient with a technology app that repairs could be reported on which would save more time with staff not having to travel from one side of the district to the other.

(d) Council Housing Stock

Councillor S Neville stated that although the Council took great pride in building new council houses to a high environmental standard he asked the Housing and Communities Portfolio Holder what plans did the Council have in terms of retrofitting their existing housing stock to the same environmental standards.

Councillor H Whitbread agreed that the Council did have high environmental standards when building new Council Houses from solar panels to all modern appliances to ensure that the Councils properties are as environmentally friendly as possible. In relation to retrofitting I will have to consult with officers and put a response in the Members' Bulletin.

(e) Telecare

Councillor J H Whitehouse asked the Housing and Communities Portfolio Holder why Telecare was put on hold in March 2020 and would not resume until September 2020. Just after lockdown started she advised that she had referred an elderly resident to Telecare and was told installations had been suspended. Four weeks ago this 90 year old resident fell over in her garden and had to shout for help until someone found her. It seemed wrong that she and others on the Telecare list were having to wait until September to get this very important support.

Councillor H Whitbread stated that she was sorry to hear of the elderly lady falling over and hoped that she was recovering. She advised that she would press officers to get an answer as to when the installations would start again and would liaise with Councillor Whitehouse when she had an update.

(f) Leisure Centres – Covid-19

Councillor P Keska asked the Environmental and Technical Services Portfolio Holder if he could comment on how leisure services have been affected by Covid-19 and how does that affect the Council's plans for leisure in the future,

Councillor N Avey advised that officers were working closely with Places Leisure to monitor and manage the impact of Covid-19 on the leisure management contract. There have been financial losses due to the closure of the leisure facilities and the

Council are hopeful, with centres reopening, the Council will move to a better financial position. The leisure facilities dry side, such as the gym and studios will reopen on Monday 3 August and the swimming pools on the 10 August, this was due to Places Leisure adopting a cautious approach to reopening across all of their contracts. They have allowed sufficient time to fully train staff with new operational procedures and health and safety measures.

(g) Royal Gunpowder Mills

Councillor D Plummer asked the Leader if he would undertake to use every effort within his power to keep the Royal Gunpowder Mills fully open to the public as one of the district's main visitor attractions and historic sites.

Councillor C Whitbread advised that this Council was always keen to make sure that this district maintains its tourism attractions.

(h) Government Support – Covid-19

Councillor Ian Hadley asked if the Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder could comment on Government support during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Councillor J Philip advised that the Government had provided all councils with a huge amount of support, above £4bn, of this £3.2bn was for emergency grant funding during March and April and £5bn of cash flow support for local authorities through Covid-19, the support included £3.7bn to councils that was not ring fenced, £600m in support for adult social care, £20bn in support for businesses, £500m in council tax hardship funds, £300m towards test and trace, over £100m for homeless support and over £50m for reopening high streets.

In July the Secretary of State announced a new set of support measures which included a scheme to reimburse councils for lost income from sales, fees and charges which allowed the Council to spread the tax deficits over the next three years.

EFDC received just over £1.5m but more will follow in the future to compensate for income losses, losses from business rates and council tax. The Government is continuing to work with councils, we provide the Government on a regular basis with the gaps that the Council are seeing in revenue coming in and increased costs going out. That has been used to target the financial support from the Government to the councils that need it most.

(i) Business and Planning Bill, grant of Pavement Licences

Councillor S Heap asked the Planning and Sustainability Portfolio Holder if he would agree, given the recent ban in France, that outdoor heating is an anathema in the light of the climate crisis declaration and should be similarly banned?

Firstly, Patio heaters are very bad for the environment, they are the equivalent to a truck passing by, a standard 13kg canister could heat up to 25m sq for 12 hours but could do the same indoors for 120 hours together with the emissions and damp heat produced. Secondly they encourage people to congregate and even huddle together in close proximity, which was a very bad thing in the light of Covid-19.

Councillor N Bedford advised that a balance must be struck between supporting business survival, resident nuisance and also climate matters. We want to encourage/ facilitate businesses to be able to use outdoor space in the cooler

months and into the evenings. We are promoting electric ahead of LPG and have suggested more climate friendly solutions too, and I think this is a reasonable balance. Licence conditions require safety measures in place for proper maintenance and storage of heating appliances and management are under an obligation to ensure social distancing is observed; these conditions can be enforced by our Licensing Team.

- (i) Where heating was proposed for colder weather, electric heating was preferred to LPG, to minimise the carbon usage. Fire pits are prohibited. Alternative options of temporary screens (subject to Council approval) and rugs, cushions and blankets can also be considered as climate friendly solution.
- (ii) All outside electrical heating must be suitable for the use intended and installed and located to eliminate any risk posed by power supply cables, including tripping hazards. All electrical equipment must be subject to regular visual inspection and must be safe, maintained free from 'danger' and not pose a risk. Where necessary, electrical equipment must receive an appropriate safety examination, to ensure that it remains safe, maintained free from 'danger' and not pose a risk.
- (iii) All full and nominally empty gas cylinders for patio heaters or other liquid gas fired appliances, must be stored outside either in a secure cage or suitably secure location, bear the correct signage and located away from drains and gullies (min 2M). The maximum number of cylinders onsite (full and nominally empty) shall not exceed a volume of 100Kg. All gas cylinders must meet latest BS EN requirements.
- (j) Large gatherings

Councillor D Sunger asked the Housing and Communities Portfolio Holder what comments she had on illegal raves and large gatherings that are taking place in the district and what actions have been taken to tackle this. Could the Council use social media to discourage people from arranging such events.

Councillor H Whitbread advised that this problem was a really important issue especially from a public health point of view these kinds of events are lethal and they should be discouraged every way possible. I am aware that the police have done a social media campaign around this and I will speak to the Councils Corporate Communications team to ensure that we are sharing all of that information.

- (k) Homelessness

Councillor L Burrows asked the Housing and Communities Portfolio Holder to comment on how rough sleepers and homelessness were coping during the Pandemic.

Councillor H Whitbread advised that the Council's homeless team have done a great job throughout the Pandemic. The Covid laws changed and the Council had strict guidance from the Government to get every rough sleeper and homeless person into accommodation whether they were an Epping Forest resident or not. In the first two months of lockdown 26 rough sleepers had been found temporary accommodation. The Homeless team have informed me that they are trying to secure permanent accommodation for these people when the legislation changes.

There was a wider concern regarding homelessness as lockdown begins to ease a real increase in homeless applications have been received. There was a 65% increase in applications in June/July which is very concerning, a lot of these are as a result of domestic violence. There was also concern about the economic consequences of crime and how this might impact on people in private tenancies but I have been assured by the Council's Homeless team that they were very organised and were ready to receive those applications.

(l) Town Centre sites in Epping

Councillor J M Whitehouse asked the Commercial and Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder if he had had any discussions with Qualis regarding the consultation it was running on the town centre sites in Epping and the fairly vacuous nature of the current consultation exercise and whether he would push for a more detailed consultation on the actual proposals in due course.

Councillor A Patel advised that he hadn't had any meetings with Qualis as yet but that he had scheduled a meeting to be held with the new Managing Director of Qualis and once that had taken place he would be happy to report back in due course.

(m) Qualis

Councillor S Murray advised the Leader that he was grateful for his verbal report and comments on Qualis this evening, but would he agree to outline these really important changes in an email or a written report. These are quite significant issues and to verbally report these changes at Full Council isn't really acceptable.

Councillor C Whitbread advised that he agreed with Councillor Murray and there would be a written report going to Cabinet, detailing the make-up of the Qualis Board. The Board that has been in place was an interim Board and there was always the plan to make changes.

21. MOTIONS

The Chairman reported that there were no motions to be considered at the meeting.

22. CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP REPORT

Mover: Councillor S Jones, Chairman of the Constitution Working Group

On behalf of the Constitution Working Group, Councillor S Jones presented a report regarding Constitution revisions and amendments. She advised that there were nine recommendations to be agreed.

Report as first moved **ADOPTED**

RESOLVED:

1. (a) That the revision to the Council's Scheme of Delegation as set out in the report, be agreed; and

(b) That pursuant to Recommendation (1(a)) above, the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make necessary revisions to the Council's Constitution.

2. That existing arrangements for public speaking in respect of planning applications remain the same for the District Development Management Committee.
3. That the Developer Contributions Strategy identified infrastructure requirements for minor sites where applicable and the involvement of local councils.
4. (a) That the incorporation of the revised Officer Employment Procedure Rules be approved; and

(b) That pursuant to Recommendation (4(a)) above, the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make necessary revisions to the Council's Constitution.
5. (a) Recommending: that the proposed changes to the Audit and Governance Committee's Terms of Reference be approved; and

(b) That pursuant to Recommendation (5(a)) above, the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make necessary revisions to the Council's Constitution.
6. (a) That the transfer of the responsibility for the reviewing of, and recommending revisions to, the Corporate Risk Register from the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee to the Audit and Governance Committee be approved; and

(b) That pursuant to Recommendation (6(a)) above, the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make necessary revisions to the Council's Constitution.
7. (a) That a change to the current delegations and standing financial instructions to require only one sign off signature (electronic or physical) by the designated budget holder (usually a team manager) for purchases and payments with a value of £24,999 or less that are within budget and only purchases and payments off £25,000 and / or in excess of budget requiring a second signature from a director, be approved. (This was to retain control whilst significantly reducing transaction costs and paperwork pending a major system review and change timetabled for April 2021);

(b) That the issues of real or virtual purchase cards to all budget holders and directors and expect all purchase below £1,000 to be made by this route and where applicable purchases of £1,000 to £4,999 to also be made by this route, be approved. (This was to retain control whilst significantly reducing transaction costs and paperwork pending a major system review and change timetabled for April 2021);

(c) That pursuant to Recommendation (7(a)) and (7(b)) above, the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make necessary revisions to the Council's Constitution; and

(d) That the Audit and Governance Committee review the Financial Regulations in a year's time.

8. (a) That existing arrangements remain the same for the Audit and Governance Committee and the Standards Committee with no merger; and

(b) That any future merger will be reconsidered by the Constitution Working Group only at the request of either of the Audit and Governance Committee or the Standards Committee.
9. (a) That 'another' at paragraph 1.3 last sentence be included in this draft revised protocol, to read, 'Co-opted members can also add value to the scrutiny process by considering service provision from a customer perspective and acting as another channel for questions from outside the authority';

(b) That the draft revised protocol for the co-option of non-elected Members to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees pursuant to Recommendation (9(a)) above, be recommended to the Council for approval; and

(c) That pursuant to Recommendations (9(a)) and (9(b)) above, the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make necessary revisions to the Council's Constitution.

23. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Council noted the written report of Councillor M Sartin, the Chairman on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor M Sartin advised that at the meeting on 16 July 2020 the Committee had received a presentation from the Epping Forest Youth Council on the activities that they had undertaken during the last twelve months. The Committee were highly impressed by the work of the Youth Council and acknowledged that they were one of the best Youth Councils in operation in the region.

24. AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

Mover: Councillor I Hadley, Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee

Councillor I Hadley reported that the Annual Report of the Audit and Governance Committee outlined the Committee's work and achievements over the year ending 31 March 2020, and demonstrated to residents and other stakeholders the vital role that was carried out by the Audit and Governance Committee as well as the contribution that it made to the Council's overall governance arrangements.

Report as first moved: **ADOPTED**

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Annual report of the Audit and Governance Committee for 2019/20 be noted.

25. JOINT ARRANGEMENTS & EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

(a) External Organisations

Councillor C Whitbread, Leader reported at the meeting of Annual Council an error had been made of the Member Appointment to the Police Fire and Crime

Commissioner Panel, Councillor H Whitbread was nominated and not as stated Councillor N Bedford. Therefore would the Council agree to this change in membership of the outside body for the remainder of the municipal year.

RESOLVED:

That the Council agreed to the change in membership to the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner Panel for the remainder of the municipal year.

(b) Royal Gunpowder Mills

The Chairman, Councillor H Kane reported that she had been trying to contact the CEO of the Royal Gunpowder Mills, Stella Morris for an update. She managed to contact her on her private phone and was informed that she had left her position at the company, of her own accord. Councillor H Kane promised to inform all councillors, as soon as she had contact with the Chairman, by publishing a report to the Members Bulletin.

Councillor C C Pond stated that the Council should pay tribute to Stella Morris and the work she did at the Royal Gunpowder Mills. The Gunpowder Mills should be opened as a unique facility in the world and something that is unique to the Epping Forest District.

Councillor H Kauffman thanked the Chairman for all her efforts in trying to get an update for the Gunpowder Mills and stated that he and Councillor C C Pond would be willing to attend any meetings with the Chairman.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Kauffman and advised that as soon as she had an update she would put it in the Members' Bulletin.

(c) Roding Valley Nature Reserve

Councillor S Murray advised the Council that he was the Council representative on the Roding Valley Nature Reserve, which was very important for the district. The Essex Wildlife Trust who manage the reserve and have a long standing agreement with us have asked for the agreement to be changed to incorporate a farm business tenancy agreement, which was motivated to source funding from the Government. He had emailed Abigail Oldham, Team Manager for the Countryside and Landscape team to obtain her professional advice on this proposal.

(d) North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP)

Councillor S Heap requested a report from NEPP regarding the exact process they went through to get the temporary works that were put through High Beach and Theydon Bois, which included road closures and red lines that pertain to the tarmac and not the forest itself. They have spent around £80,000 and he would like to know how much money the Council contributed and how involved the Council was in the discussions.

Councillor N Bedford stated that this question had been asked many times by different people and advised that because of the Covid-19 restrictions, emergency powers were brought in. A conference call was held between the Corporation of London, Essex County Council and Epping Forest District Council Officers and Members and I confirm that I was present at that meeting. Discussions were held around what could we do to deter people from parking in the forest and the Corporation of London suggested that double red lines would be a good way to

police the parking. This was then investigated by Essex County Council who agreed that red lines was the way forward as a moving traffic camera offence could be committed and officers would not be put in jeopardy issuing Penalty Charge Notices(PCN's).

This was joint funded and the recovery of the money would come from NEPP by way of the issued PCN's. There were no minutes from any meetings that took place as this action needed to take place quickly and was therefore brought in under the emergency powers and was a temporary measure for 18 months.

Councillor M Satin, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee added that NEPP have been asked to attend an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in the near future.

(e) Epping Forest District Health and Wellbeing Board

Councillor A Patel reported that Health & Wellbeing Boards were a county-wide initiative coordinated through the Essex Public Health team that were in place across all district, borough and City Councils in Essex.

The Council was reminded that the local Epping Forest Health and Wellbeing Board was chaired by Councillor A Patel and included a range of local partners such as the West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, Essex Social Care and various voluntary Sector organisations. The Board met quarterly, and was responsible for agreeing local health priorities and tackling any emerging issues affecting the health of local residents. Examples of specific projects being undertaken by the Board included: the MiLife mental health initiative in Primary Schools; the establishment of walking sports; and 'Stay well this Winter' events. A multi-agency project to tackle health inequalities in the Paternoster ward of Waltham Abbey would be undertaken later in the year.

The Board launched the Epping Forest Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-28 in 2018, which set out the vision and aspirations for the health and wellbeing of the District. Three multi-agency, age-specific Action Groups were also established to deliver the aims of the Board. Each Action Group met quarterly and reported to the Board on progress made with meeting its Action Plan. Common priorities across all three Action Groups included: mental health and wellbeing; tackling obesity; and supporting older residents to live independently.

Governance of the board was undertaken through Essex Public Health and twice yearly all the Chairmen from the Health & Wellbeing Boards across Essex and their officers met to share items of best practice and interest.

CHAIRMAN

This page is intentionally left blank