

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**Tuesday 21 November 2023, 7.00 pm - Time Not Specified
Council Chamber - Civic Offices**

Members Present: Councillors D Wixley (Chairman) J Mclvor (Vice-Chairman), R Baldwin, R Bassett, H Kane, C McCann, C McCredie, C Nweke, A Patel and L Burrows

Members Present (Virtually): Councillors S Heap

Other Councillors: Councillors I Allgood, R Balcombe, S Kane, J Philip, C Whitbread, H Whitbread and K Williamson

Apologies: Councillor(s) I Hadley, S Heather, S Murray, J Parsons and R Pugsley

Officers In Attendance: Georgina Blakemore (Chief Executive), Jennifer Gould (Strategic Director and Chief Operating Officer), Andrew Small (Strategic Director, Corporate and Section 151 Officer), Laura Kirman (Democratic Services Officer) and Rebecca Moreton (Corporate Communications Officer)

Officers In Attendance (Virtually): Therese Larsen (Democratic Services Officer)

Qualis Representatives: Sacha Jevans, Andy Howarth and Brian Johnson

[A RECORDING OF THIS MEETING IS AVAILABLE FOR REPEATED VIEWING](#)

35 WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman 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.

36 SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee noted the following substitutions reported at the meeting:

- (1) That Councillor Burrows had been appointed as substitute for Councillor Parsons

37 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- (a) Pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor Bassett declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda items 10: Qualis Quarter 4 Budget Monitoring Report, and Item 11 Qualis Business Plan, by virtue of his role as a non-executive member of the Qualis Board.

38 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2023 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

39 MATTERS ARISING AND OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

The following actions were still outstanding.

18 July 2023

(4) To investigate and report back on whether a summary of the project closure reports could be produced- Project Team Manager

(6) An update on the measures to reduce bad debt referred to by the Portfolio Holder on the 18 July 2023 was requested by The Chairman.

24 October 2023

(2) To investigate and report back on specific geographical or service issues that impacted on low customer satisfaction - Service Director - Customer Services,

(3) To investigate and report back on the impact from the new policy in relation to rent in advance - - Interim Housing and Property Director

(4) To investigate and report back on the reasons for the levels of homelessness - Homelessness Team Manager

(5) The target for customer services would be corrected to read 70% and all other targets would be checked for accuracy -Project Team Manager

(6) Member briefing on the interim polling districts to be scheduled - Corporate and Section 151 Officer

RESOLVED:

The Chairman requested an update of the outstanding action points.

40 PUBLIC QUESTIONS & REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee noted that no public questions or requests to address the meeting had been received.

41 EXECUTIVE DECISIONS - CALL-IN

The Committee noted that no executive decisions had been called-in for consideration since the previous meeting.

42 PLACE STRATEGY

The Chief Executive, G Blakemore, introduced the overarching draft Place Delivery Strategy which provided a 'high-level' corporate framework to support the delivery of the Council's ambitions through the use of its land and property holdings.

The Committee proposed the following amendments before the Strategy was presented to Cabinet.

- Could the partnerships with other public sector bodies necessary to develop Place, be more explicit.
- Ongar, should be 'Chipping Ongar' which comprises of 4 areas and includes Greensted
- The Local Plan emphasis for development is on the Local Plan, but could there be greater reference to rural communities,
- Section 6 'funding our approach' should this include Essex Council Tax Sharing Scheme and payments from Qualis.
- Domestic Abuse, the definition should be more inclusive.
- Protection of Green Open Space, could green space in urban areas be protected with Fields in Trust Status
- Update Qualis Groups to reflect the current structure.
- Could a reference to Epping Forest Museum in Vision for Waltham Abbey be added.

It was highlighted to the Committee that individual development decision will be subject to normal governance routes and approvals.

The Committee requested an update on the proposed action plan, and any measured enhancements to green and blue open space be considered for inclusion in the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for the next municipal year.

RESOLVED:

The Committee considered and endorsed the draft Place Delivery Strategy to Cabinet on the 18 December 2023.

43 QUALIS QUARTER 4 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2023

The Strategic Director and Section 151 Officer, A Small, outlined the Qualis Quarter 4 Budget Monitoring Report 2023. The format to the report for Qualis had been improved. A correction to paragraph 1.10 of the report, was highlighted this should be read as 'Quarter 4' and not 'Quarter 3' loss £760,000 for the 2022/23 trading year.

The committee received confirmation that:

- A community interest company did form part of the Qualis Structure, which would be utilised moving forward.
- It was incumbent upon the Council to ensure Best Value in relation to all site acquisition and disposal.

RESOLVED:

The Committee discussed and commended the Quarter 4 monitoring report to Cabinet.

44 QUALIS BUSINESS PLAN

The Strategic Director and Section 151, A Small, introduced the 4 Year Business Plan. Qualis provided a delivery vehicle for the Council's place shaping ambitions, and advised that this was a milestone business plan, as this would move Qualis into income generation and provide a capital return to the organisation. It was highlighted that the Council received the region of £2m/year from Qualis.

Qualis provided an overview of the business plan.

The Committee welcomed the 4-year business plan and the key achievements and the success of Qualis to date.

Councillor Heap challenged the impact of the macro-economic shocks in section 4 of the Business Plan, this was rebutted by Councillor Philip.

The Committee:

- Received confirmation that all affordable homes were in line with the definition of affordable homes, the requirements of the Local Plan and viability applied to all developers.
- An explanation of social rents was provided.
- Were advised that the potential for modular constructions had been considered at specific sites and would be kept under review.
- Suggested that communication with the public relating to the benefits and long-term strategy associated with Qualis could be strengthened.
- Were advised that contributions to the Council's budget would continue and this would impact on the whole district.
- Received confirmation that the initial delivery was on land owned by the Council, but in the future there would be broader schemes that would still support the objectives of EFDC

RESOLVED:

The Committee considered and commended the Business Plan for consideration by Cabinet.

45 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the additional meeting on 12 December 2023.

46 CABINET BUSINESS

RESOLVED:

That the Committee reviewed the Executive's current programme of Key Decisions.