

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF NEIGHBOURHOODS AND COMMUNITIES SELECT
COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 15 SEPTEMBER 2015
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.30 - 9.45 PM**

Members Present: M Sartin (Chairman), H Brady (Vice-Chairman), N Avey, L Hughes, R Jennings, A Mitchell MBE, S Neville, A Patel and B Surtees

Other members present: R Bassett, G Waller and J M Whitehouse

Apologies for Absence: R Gadsby and L Mead

Officers Present D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Neighbourhoods), K Bean (Planning Policy Manager), K Durrani (Assistant Director (Technical Services)), G Wallis (Community, Health & Wellbeing Manager), C Wiggins (Safer Communities Manager) and A Hendry (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

9. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

It was noted that there were no substitute members for this meeting.

10. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The notes of the meeting held on 8 July 2015 were agreed.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

12. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted their Terms of Reference and Work Programme. It was noted that item 10 of the work programme on establishing a Museum, Heritage and Culture Development Trust would be rolled forward to a future meeting.

Councillor Surtees wondered if this Committee could look at the work taking place on the 'prevent initiative' and radicalisation. Mrs Wiggins said that if the committee wanted she could arrange to have some speakers come in to talk about these initiatives as a lot of work was taking place at County level. The Committee agreed to this and asked for something to come to their March 2016 meeting.

AGREED to look at the 'prevent initiative' and radicalisation issues at their March 2016 meeting.

13. CRUCIAL CREW INITIATIVE

The Community, Health and Wellbeing Manager, Gill Wallis introduced the report on the Crucial Crew initiative and its future. This was an annual event which was

facilitated and delivered by the Council's Community Service and Safety teams. It was specifically designed to educate primary school pupils aged 10 (year 6) in a range of personal safety, health and wellbeing topics.

Crucial Crew has been provided for over 10 years and was historically delivered over the same two week period in June, in line with agreed primary school timetables. This year every Year 6 primary school pupil in the Epping Forest District attended the half day events; in all 1351 Epping Forest pupils participated. In addition 13 schools from the Brentwood area paid to attend, bringing a further 408 children into the project, making a total of 1759 attendees.

The Community, Health and Wellbeing Manager made an amendment to the income table on the second page of their report. The income from the Brentwood Schools had been missed out, and a further £4,644 should have been included to bring the total up to £22,874.

The event has traditionally been held at Gilwell Park Scouting Headquarters; however, following recent notification of a planned increase in hire costs by approximately £2000 in 2016 it was decided that an alternative venue of Debden House would be piloted in 2016 for the same venue costs as 2015.

The Committee noted that the event holds a VIP morning, where in the past they had received the Lord High Sherriff of Essex and the current Chairman of the council to see what they did. Officers would like to open this up to all members so they can see the event in action. An invitation would be put in the Council Bulletin next year.

Councillor Mitchell asked about the expenditure of £80 listed in the report for refreshments, was this for the Children? She was told that it was for the staff. The children were told to bring their own packed lunch.

Councillor Neville noted that the vast majority of the income was not from EFDC, but from money officers had raised and he commended the amount of work they had carried out on this scheme.

Councillor Patel asked if they received any feedback from the schools taking part. He was told that officers did contact the schools after the event and asked for feedback which was invariably positive, with specific reference to the relevance and importance of the key messages delivered. They get them at just the right age, Year 6, just before they move up to secondary school. Officers were now also looking at perhaps extending this type of event by going into schools and talking to Year 8 pupils.

Councillor Surtees commented that for the money they produced an amazing amount of benefit for the children concerned. At the VIP event could they not invite some charities to view Crucial Crew in action and perhaps raise some more financial backing and maybe do more of these events in a year.

The Safer Communities Manager, Caroline Wiggins thanked the council for funding this event as a lot of other authorities did not fund things like this and noted that this was an important event for the children.

Councillor Brady asked if this was just for state schools and was told that it was inclusive for all types of schools.

Councillor Patel asked if they received any funding from Essex County Council. He was told that they did not as it was seen a multi authority event. They did however support the road safety events.

Councillor Patel then asked if children on alternative education programmes were catered for and was told that they were.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee noted the successes of the Crucial Crew initiative.

14. CHANGE IN AGENDA

With the Committee's agreement the Chairman took agenda item 8, the Community Safety Partnership, next.

15. DRAFT COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2014-15

The Safer Communities Manager, Caroline Wiggins took the Committee through the draft Community Safety Partnership Annual report for 2014-2015. She noted that this had only been presented to the CSP that morning.

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) was made up of representatives from Essex Police, Essex Fire and Rescue Service, Community Rehabilitation Service, Epping Forest District Council, Voluntary Action Epping Forest and the Magistracy. They meet on a quarterly basis to oversee the range of work undertaken and were responsible for undertaking an annual review of current crime and disorder issues.

Their main source of funding was from the Essex Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and although this has reduced, they have still managed to function efficiently and effectively.

Over the year they had assessed the following issues as local priorities:

- Domestic Abuse;
- Assault/violent crime;
- Anti-social behaviour; and
- Burglary in a dwelling.

They did some of the best work in Essex on domestic abuse by care and support of victims. They ran a sanctuary scheme with Community Safety, Essex Police and Essex County Fire & Rescue Service to provide enhanced security to very high risk victims that do not wish to move, making them feel safer at home. They also run 'J9' training courses across West Essex to deal with the preventative side of domestic abuse. Their work on Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) continues to be a priority area. They have an ASB investigator who is trained in mediation and is also the EFDC Restorative Justice Ambassador to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. This was a new initiative to identify emerging problem families and provide support and mediation before problems escalate.

In 2013 with funding from the PCC, EFDC's community safety team purchased 5 cameras allowing the installation of a self contained CCTV system (camera, monitor and recorder). These were offered to local residents on a loan basis with an option to purchase at cost price. They would be used to assist across a broad range of

matters including gathering evidence in support of allegations of Anti-social Behaviour or deterring bogus callers.

Burglary from dwellings continued to be a priority crime due to the close proximity to the London Metropolitan area and the excellent transport links through the district. This allows travelling criminals to enter and leave by a number of different means.

EFDC manages an area (crime) analyst, funded by the CSP who was dedicated to support the partnership activities. If this Committee so wished, she could come and address them on the work she does.

AGREED that the area crime analyst be invited to a future meeting to give a rundown on the work she undertook.

During the year Epping Forest CSP and Braintree CSP along with Victim Support funded a six month Young Persons Independent Sexual Violence Advisor post to carry out targeted work with young people who have been the victims of sexual abuse or have been sexually exploited. On 1st April 2015 Epping Forest and Braintree CSPs and the office of the PCC agreed to joint fund the post for a further year.

Councillor Sartin noted that the CSP was doing a fantastic job in the district; it was unfortunate that more people were not aware of this. The Safer Communities Manager agreed they should be promoting them more, even if only by putting something in the member's bulletin. Councillor Sartin agreed if only just to show we were not wasting the money.

Councillor Avey said that there was a public perception that there was a lot of crime in the district, may be by publicising the work of the CSP it would help redress the balance. The Safer Communities Manager noted that we did suffer from criminals coming in from London, using hire cars to bring people in; sometimes flying them into London and then bussing them out. Councillor Waller added that over 70% of our crime was committed by people from outside our area. Councillor Avey said that the proposed closure of Police Stations would add to the disquiet.

Councillor Surtees asked what the council's involvement with restorative justice was and what about the more serious offender. The Safer Communities Manager noted that they had recently attended a meeting about this and agreed that because of cuts this would be more challenging for officers in the future. Councillor Surtees agreed that this would put an increasing burden on services provided by EFDC. There was an increasing need to pick up slack left by other agencies and it could not be done cheaply. This was a bleak situation.

Councillor Patel asked about sharing information with the Parish and Town Councils, as it was a big frustration not knowing what was happening on their patch. He was told that this was improving and they were doing a lot of work with the various Town/Parish clerks encouraging them to raise issues with us. There was a need to encourage more communication with the clerks. This annual report could go out to them for information.

Councillor Neville asked how they promoted the Neighbourhood Watch. He was told that this was handled by the County Council, although we did help.

Councillor Surtees said that the Town and Parish Councils needed more timely information. Councillor Waller said they also needed to keep the public informed; he

would like to champion the use of public information pillars, set up in public spaces. These could be used to post relevant notices and messages for public information. They would need local councils to take part in using them and would also need planning permission to put them up. The Safer Communities Manager said that they were looking into the funding for this.

Councillor Bassett noted that there was a lot of concern around rural areas, with the closure of Police Stations and the resulting fall in response times. Blatant daylight thefts were now taking place. Did we have some way of sending text alert messages to inform people of the neighbourhood watch that there were problems in their area? He was told that officers would find out if there was such a thing. Councillor Neville said that these messages were at the discretion of the Police officer on the beat.

Councillor Patel asked if there was any secure by design advice. He was told that one of the safety team, Mr Gardener, was trained in this and went around advising owners of properties at risk.

Councillor Surtees noted that there was an absence of support mentioned and as a priest he had noticed this. Could not the police use a network of trusted persons that can send in high priority reports to them? The Health and Wellbeing Manager said that EFDC was one of the best areas for volunteers and have about eight volunteer youth cadets, but there are also volunteers for the fire service called community agents. This could all get confusing.

The chairman noted that the meeting had covered a lot of ground on this report and they were happy to note and agree the draft report.

RESOLVED:

That the 2014-2015 Annual Report of the Community Safety Partnership was noted and agreed.

16. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2015/16 - QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE

The Director of Neighbourhoods, Mr Macnab introduced the Quarter 1 update on the Key Performance indicators specific to this Select Committee. As asked for at the last meeting the tables were reproduced in colour and they contained more numeric figures rather than percentages which could be misleading.

The committee went on to review each indicator that looked to be in trouble and question any inconsistencies that they came across.

NEI001 – *how much non-recycled waste was collected for every household in the district?* – Councillor Neville wanted to know what kind of recyclable went in the wrong bin. He was told that about 45% of rubbish in the black bin was food waste. Officers were looking at policies to address this. There was also a problem for blocks of flats and recycling, and this was a problem across all of Essex.

Councillor Patel asked how was this measured and was told by random sampling across the area.

NEI003 – *what percentage of our district had unacceptable levels of litter?* – It was noted that there was a combination of factors that was stopping the council meeting this target. Agency staff have been brought in to deal with street cleansing. We were

working with Biffa to improve this quickly, but it was hard to tell if the target would be met by the end of the year.

Councillor Neville noted that there was a bin in his ward that was constantly overflowing, having investigated he found that this was not on the collection schedule. Were there any other bins not being scheduled for collection?

Councillor Jon Whitehouse wanted to know if Biffa were recruiting more street cleaners and what was the Council doing about this.

The Assistant Director (Technical Services), Mr Durrani, said that this indicator had not been worded properly. They were trying to make sure that Biffa recruited more permanent staff or brought back the staff that had the local knowledge. If they did not adhere to our standards set out in the contract we could fine them. They were working with us to improve this situation.

Councillor Surtees commented that there seemed to be very little continuity of the staff involved. The new ones were not familiar with the areas they work. Mr Macnab said that they now had the capacity to start tackling these problems.

NEI008 – *What % of the recorded incidences of fly-tipping...are removed within 10 working days of being recorded?* – Councillor Bassett commenting on fly-tipping said it was confusing to know who was responsible for removing them. We need a clear agreement with Essex County Council as they do not turn up for a lot of the ones we think they are responsible for. There was a need to review our policy. Officers offered to ask the Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services to attend a future meeting to clarify what type of waste was being tipped, the complex legislation involved, and issues of land ownership.

AGREED – that the Assistant Director, Neighbourhood Services be asked to attend a future meeting to address the problems of fly-tipping.

NEI009 – *what % of out of hours noise complaints are responded to within 15 minutes?* – It was noted that had been some problems with the new call handling service, but these had now been resolved.

NEI010 – *what was the net increase or decrease in the number of homes in the district?* - Councillor Bassett said that developers have been given permission to build but they did not. As the cost of housing was high so developers tend to wait for the optimal moment to start building. Councillor Neville asked how many were to be affordable housing. The Director of Neighbourhoods replied that the Council has a policy of asking for 40% for larger developments. Councillor Bassett said that they averaged out at about 20%.

Councillor Patel noted that the second sentence under the corrective action proposed section did not sit well by saying that “the Council can encourage more building of dwellings by granting planning permission...” this assumes an almost automatic granting of permission on the Council’s part. Officers agreed and said they would change the wording.

NEI011 – *what %of the rent we were due to be paid for our commercial premises was not paid?* - The Director of Neighbourhoods said they were collecting 95% of the rents and this was still a good performance.

17. REVIEW OF THE LOCAL PLAN

The Planning Policy Manager, Mr Ken Bean, introduced a report updating the Committee on the Local Plan. They noted the key dates of the Local Development Scheme as agreed by the Cabinet on 11 June 2015 and noted that it would be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate by October 2017, the examination would be by early 2018 and adoption by September 2018.

The Green Belt Review has reached a key stage. The reports on the high level strategic Stage 1 Green Belt Review and settlement hierarchy was considered by the Cabinet on 3 September 2015. The Council had allowed a 6 week period for comments on the draft reports and received 20 responses (out of 24) from the Parish / Town Councils and 11 from District Councillors.

The original intention had been to work jointly with Harlow, with the appointment of consultants to undertake the more detailed next stage of the Green Belt review work which should be completed early next year. This would be a more detailed assessment of the broad locations identified in Stage 1 of the study. However, Cabinet decided that this second stage work should be undertaken solely for EFDC and outcomes then subsequently shared with Harlow and other neighbouring authorities. The consultant's brief included provision for workshops with officers, district council members and parish/town representatives.

The government has put a spotlight on Local Councils who fail to produce 'a published Plan by early 2017'; but it remains unclear how they would define a published plan and the precise timescale allowed for this. It was understood that the government would publish league tables identifying authorities poorly performing in terms of time taken to produce a Local Plan but again details of the criteria to be used to judge performance was unknown at present.

Considerable work had been undertaken under the duty to co-operate and working with our Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) partners (Harlow, Uttlesford and East Herts.) to update the SHMA and establish an objectively assessed housing need figure for both the wider area as a whole and for each of the local authorities. It was important to note that this figure was not the housing target for EFDC but represents a major stepping stone for establishing one. The revised SHMA was almost complete and was scheduled to be considered for sign off by the Co-operation for Sustainable Development Board on 22 September 2015 with a report then going to the October Cabinet meeting to be noted and the report added to the Local Plan evidence base.

The economic and employment work carried out by Hardisty Jones Associates would also shortly be complete and will also be reported to the Cabinet at their October meeting along with the revised SHMA. The economic work will give a range for job growth across the same four authorities during the new Local Plan period up until 2033. Detailed work on EFDC's local economy by the same consultants would also provide analysis of the employment sectors in our district, which were the strongest, how they were predicted to change and what type of employment space we should look to provide in the Local Plan, for example small business units, office space etc.

There have been delays in the strategic transport assessment work being undertaken by Essex County Council.

With regards recent progress made on Neighbourhood Plans, Moreton, Bobbingworth and the Lavers Parish Council has now submitted their draft plan for

examination. Epping Upland Parish Council has applied to establish a neighbourhood area for their parish and this is currently under consideration and being consulted on.

The government has recently issued new guidance, including a change of definition for the Gypsy and Traveller community. All Essex authorities would now need to carefully consider the impact of this for the Essex wide GTAA work and their policies in the light of this new guidance.

Members were reminded of the SHMA and economic work briefing on 21st September and advised that they would shortly be notified of dates during November when Local Plan workshops are to be arranged.

Councillor Bassett commented that we were now reaching the interesting stage in terms of work on key evidence including the position reached on the green belt review, housing and employment work. He noted that he had been through the SHMA document three times critically questioning the methodology and robustness, assumptions made and accuracy of information on which it relied, as he was not prepared to accept it as it was. As a consequence the headline objectively assessed housing need numbers for EFDC had now come down. This Council was undertaking a full Local Plan unlike many other authorities, who for example had only taken a core strategy to adoption. We have a difficult area to prepare a local plan for, with Harlow to the north, London to the south and two flood plains crossing the District. The more issues that we cover in the plan the more we find other matters that we still need to cover. We are getting into a dialogue with London under the duty to co-operate, and in the context of the next iteration of the London Plan, the GLA was also keen to get into a good dialogue with its neighbours.

Councillor Surtees asked if there was anyway to get the information from the SMHA briefings that were being held if some councillors could not attend them. Councillor Bassett replied that he was willing to set aside time and talk to anyone about this.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse asked what government league table we would be in and when were the detailed policies for Development Control going to be worked out as they were important. Mr Bean said that the members workshops would help shape the Local Plan and views expressed on policy content and detail would inform drafting of the policies. Officers would be sending out dates for the November workshops via emails and the Council Bulletin. As for the League Tables, it was understood that the government was still looking at criteria used to define these 'leagues'.

Councillor Neville asked if officers had a timescale for consideration of the Buckhurst Hill comments on the settlement hierarchy report, and in paragraph 8 of the report it mentions 'VISUM'. What was VISUM? Mr Bean replied that VISUM was one of the traffic models used; this was one of the more sophisticated types. He was still speaking to the Clerk at Buckhurst Hill about timings for responding to the Parish Council but was hopeful that a letter would be sent shortly.

Councillor Patel asked if the contributions made at the workshops that took place in 2012 were still relevant. Councillor Bassett said that yes, most of that was still relevant and comments made then would be considered and taken account of in progressing the Local Plan, although some things may have changed.

RESOLVED:

That the Select Committee noted the progress made on the Local Plan.

18. REVIEW OF THE WASTE CONTRACT - PICK FORM

The Director of Neighbourhoods, Mr Macnab, introduced the scoping report on the review of Waste and Recycling collection arrangements following the request from the Environment Portfolio Holder that Overview and Scrutiny undertake a review on his behalf.

The review was requested following problems that occurred after the switch to the four-day collection schedule and the introduction of new vehicles and technology on 12th May. Over a period of several weeks an unacceptably high level of missed collections were reported and the service was yet to fully stabilise. The Environment Portfolio Holder believed that that it was very important to establish the reasons behind this service failure and to this end requested that Overview and Scrutiny undertake a review on his behalf. It was agreed that the Neighbourhood and Community Select Committee was best placed to undertake this review. This would be undertaken by holding an additional special meeting dedicated to this single subject and would be held on 17 December 2015 in the Council Chamber. The meeting will also be webcast.

It was proposed that the structure of the meeting be broken down into four parts:

- **Part one** –the procurement process (the background on how the tenders were considered and the reasons for Biffa's success and the rationale behind that decision);
- **Part two** – Mobilisation and first six months of the contract (run up to the start of the contract and the first six months of operation);
- **Part three** – problems encountered (operational issues and the remedial actions and recovery plan); and
- **Part four** – conclusions and recommendations.

In attendance at the meeting, would be council officers, representatives from Biffa, representative from the consultant that supported and advised the Council through the procurement process, Cabinet members and members of the public.

The meeting would be advertised, probably about six weeks before and any possible attendees who wished to ask questions would be asked to contact us before hand giving an indication of what their question would be; if there were to be a lot of similar questions then officers may group them together and ask that a spokesman ask that question.

The Committee asked:

- that if possible, front line staff be asked to participate and/or their views sought;
- they would also like to know if Health and Safety protocols had been affected in the pressure to bring the service up to scratch;
- if there would be any relevant figure work to help them understand what happened and how it has progressed; and
- information on the problems that occurred with the IT systems.

AGREED – that a further updating report would go to the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the scope of the special meeting on the waste contract be agreed subject to the comments made by the Committee.

19. REPORTS TO BE MADE TO THE NEXT MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee thought that a short report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be given on the items covered at this meeting, especially on the Crucial Crew Initiative and the waste review.

20. FUTURE MEETINGS

The meeting noted the future dates for this committee.