

# EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COUNCIL MINUTES

**Committee:** Council **Date:** 27 September 2016

**Place:** Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.30 - 8.25 pm

**Members Present:** Councillors J Lea (Chairman), D Stallan (Vice-Chairman), N Avey, R Baldwin, R Bassett, A Beales, N Bedford, A Boyce, H Brady, R Brookes, R Butler, G Chambers, K Chana, D Dorrell, R Gadsby, L Girling, A Grigg, S Heap, R Jennings, J Jennings, H Kane, S Kane, H Kauffman, P Keska, J Knapman, Y Knight, M McEwen, L Mead, A Mitchell, G Mohindra, R Morgan, S Murray, S Neville, A Patel, J Philip, C P Pond, C C Pond, B Sandler, M Sartin, G Shiell, S Stavrou, B Surtees, G Waller, E Webster, C Whitbread, H Whitbread, J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse and D Wixley

**Apologies:** Councillors W Breare-Hall, L Hughes, S Jones, A Lion, C Roberts, D Roberts, B Rolfe, L Wagland and S Watson

**Officers Present:** D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Neighbourhoods), C O'Boyle (Director of Governance), R Palmer (Director of Resources), A Hall (Director of Communities), S G Hill (Assistant Director (Governance & Performance Management)), T Carne (Public Relations and Marketing Officer), A Hendry (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and R Perrin (Democratic Services Officer)

## 34. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Assistant Director of Governance and Performance Management 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.

## 35. MINUTES

### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 27 July 2016 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to the following inclusion of Councillor G Mohindra's update on item 33. Joint Arrangements and External Organisations as the Health and Wellbeing Champion for West Essex.

"He had attended meetings with key stakeholders and important voluntary sectors about working together to gain a better understanding of individuals needs, efficiency savings and how best to work together. He would continue to update members on his role."

## 36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

**37. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- (a) Announcements by the Chairman of Council
  - (i) Extraordinary Council Meeting

The Chairman advised that on Tuesday 18 October 2016, there would be an Extraordinary Council meeting to consider the draft Local Plan Consultation document. The meeting would start at 6.30 p.m. and refreshments would be made available in the Member's rooms beforehand.

- (ii) Chairman's Events

The Chairman advised that she had attended several events including the annual petanque match; an evening event hosted by Voluntary Action Epping Forest, laying a wreath for the Battle of Britain and attended a visit to Langston Road with Councillor A Grigg.

- (iii) Floral Display

The Chairman announced that she proposed to send the flowers from the meeting to King Harold Business and Enterprise Academy.

**38. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)**

The Council noted that there were no public questions under notice for the meeting.

**39. FIRE ALARM**

At this stage in the meeting the fire alarm sounded. The meeting was adjourned and the Council chamber was evacuated.

On returning to the chamber the Chairman thanked Members for taking part in the fire alarm testing.

**40. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER NOTICE****Local Council Tax Support****By Councillor S Neville to the Councillor G Mohindra, Finance Portfolio Holder**

"Can the Finance Portfolio Holder tell me with regard to Local Council Tax Support:

- (a) How many people applied for the exceptional hardship fund over each of the years 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16;
- (b) How many people were successful in their applications over each of those years?
- (c) How much money was on offer for each of those three years?
- (d) How much was actually paid out?
- (e) How much money was saved in the last budget by reducing local council tax support; and

(f) How much would we have had to put up council tax to keep local council tax support at the 80% level last year?"

**Response by Councillor G Mohindra, Portfolio Holder for Finance**

"I would like to thank Cllr Neville for the question as it has highlighted Local Council Tax Support and in my Portfolio Holder report to Council I have invited Members to respond to the consultation on the Local Council Tax Support scheme for 2017/18. It is important in any debate about Local Council Tax Support to consider the effects of any changes in policy on both those who receive the support and those who pay for it. My response is as set out below –

(a) The number of applications received was, for 2013/14 85, for 2014/15 50 and for 2015/16 37.

(b) The number of successful applications was, for 2013/14 28, for 2014/15 19 and for 2015/16 17.

(c) An amount of £20,670 was on offer in each of the three years.

(d) The actual expenditure was, for 2013/14 £5,239.63, for 2014/15 £3,342.67 and for 2015/16 £3,369.72.

(e) The amount saved in the budget by reducing the level of local council tax support from 80% to 75% was £204,000 (as set out in the report of the previous Finance Portfolio Holder to Council on 15 December 2015).

(f) To have raised an additional £204,000 from council tax would have required an increase of £3.96 or 2.7% (for a band d property)."

**Additional question by Councillor S Neville**

Councillor S Neville thanked Councillor G Mohindra for his reply, although he had concerns by the lack of people successful in their application for the hardship fund and asked what sort of criteria, if any was used?

**Response by Councillor G Mohindra**

Councillor G Mohindra advised that only 1% of the working-age case load had applied and he urged all Members to make sure their residents knew about the application process. The Benefits team were very proactive in ensuring that the correct people were receiving the support available.

**41. REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET**

(a) The Leader of the Council

The Leader advised that there had been a reduction in the number of meetings he had attended over the summer period, although Members had been heavily engaged in the development of the Draft Local Plan and attending the workshops, briefings and group meetings. The Leader reiterated the importance of the Cabinet meeting on 6 October 2016, the Extraordinary Council meeting on 18 October 2016 and the launch of the consultation on 31 October 2016.

The Leader advised that he had been engaging with many district leaders on a range of issues affecting the whole of Essex. The devolution deal had stalled somewhat

over the mayoral issue and the lack of clarity from the Government and although it was still being considered, the Council would not be able support the requirement for a mayor.

Furthermore he had attended a briefing by the newly elected Police Crime Commissioner, Roger Hirst, who advised that he was preparing a new Policing Plan for the County and highlighted the preparation he was making for a business case to bring together the governance arrangements of the Police and Fire Authorities. There would also be a police representative attending the Communities Select Committee to address the concerns of Members.

Finally the Council hosted the Locality Board, where the County Council Director of Place Services provided a presentation on the co-location of public services, which the Council had currently under review through its own Transformation Programme. Likewise progress on the Transformation project had been continuing steadily over the summer period.

(b) Planning Policy

Councillor J Philip advised that unfortunately the distribution of the Cabinet Agenda, which included the Consultation of the Draft Local Plan could not be handed to Members that evening but would be delivered by special delivery the following day.

(c) Leisure and Community Wellbeing

Councillor H Kane thanked her officers for successful securing £270,000 from the Arts Council England. The funding would provide services across Epping Forest, Broxbourne and Chelmsford Museums and they were one of only two Councils in Essex to have received the award, out of only 94 nationally.

#### 42. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS WITHOUT NOTICE

(a) Essex County Council (ECC) decision to stop accepting DIY recyclable Waste in the District

Councillor C C Pond asked the Environment Portfolio Holder about what pressure he would apply to ECC regarding the decision made to stop accepting DIY and construction waste from commercial type vehicles or towed trailers at Recycling Centres for Household Waste within the District. He advised that the decision had been subject to a call-in at ECC level and the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste, S Walsh had undertaken to review the decision in February 2017.

Councillor G Waller answered in the absence of Councillor W Breare-Hall. He advised that he had attended the last meeting of the Essex Waste Partnership Board, where ECC advised that their intention of the decision had been to stop businesses avoiding the waste charges by using the household recycling centres. Consequently, the decision would now prevent householders from turning up in commercial vehicles with their own personal DIY household recycling waste. Furthermore, the decision also had consequences of potentially increasing flying tipping because of the distance some householders would now have to travel to dispose of their waste. The nearest available centre that accepted this type of waste would now be in Harlow.

Councillor G Waller advised that the Portfolio Holder for Environment had raised his concerns about the lack of consultation that had taken place and welcomed the action of the call in by County Councillor C C Pond, although the decision had not been changed. Councillor G Waller advised that the situation would be monitored but

he felt that it would be hard to prove that the closures could be linked to the effect on flying tipping. The Council would do their best to impose fixed notice penalties and for the more serious offences, he hoped that the courts would impose the serious fines and that the Council would seek costs.

(b) Enforcement of ECC decision to stop accepting DIY Waste

Councillor R Gadsby advised that residents had already reported that trade vehicles were being turned away from the recycling centres within the District, when the actual date to stop accepting the waste should be 31 October 2016; and therefore was he aware of this?

Councillor G Waller thanked Councillor R Gadsby for notifying him and he would raise the issue with ECC. He advised that if any Members were aware of any incidences of flying tipping, could they report them to both Councillor W Breare-Hall and Councillor G Waller for monitoring purposes.

Councillor Webster advised Members that Waltham Abbey Town Council had written to ECC expressing their dissatisfaction at the decision. They also had advised the Lee Valley Park Authority and the Corporation of London.

(c) Public Transport

Councillor S Murray asked the Leader of Council, Councillor C Whitbread whether he;

- (i) welcomed the establishment of the Epping Transport Action Group (ETAG);
- (ii) shared their general policy that public transport in Epping Forest should be reliable, adequate and cheap as possible;
- (iii) shared Councillor S Murray concern regarding the decision by ECC to curtail the 167 bus route between Loughton and Debden and the effect it would have on the community; and
- (iv) would ensure that a Conservative Member attends that next meeting of the (ETAG).

Councillor C Whitbread advised that public transport was important to everyone and that it should be good value. He advised that a Conservative Member would attend the next meeting of ETAG and pressure, where possible would be applied to ECC.

Councillor S Murray advised that the next meeting of ETAG was on 12 October 2016.

(d) A Ban on Single use Items

Councillor S Neville asked the Safer, Cleaner and Transport Portfolio Holder, Councillor G Waller whether following the French Government's plan to ban single use plastic items, would he look into this Council following the same approach?

Councillor G Waller asked Councillor S Neville to forward him further information and he would have a look at it, although this Council had limited powers.

(e) Self Service Kiosks

Councillor J M Whitehouse asked the Finance Portfolio Holder, G Mohindra whether it could be possible for some assistance to be provided for the Self Service payment kiosks in Epping, once the floor walkers were removed at the end of October 2016.

Councillor G Mohindra advised that the Self Service Kiosks had been installed to save money, although he would ensure that the service would be monitored following the removal of the floor walkers and officers would be provided if required.

(f) Langston Retail Park

Councillor S Murray asked the Assets and Economic Development Portfolio Holder, Councillor A Grigg whether she was satisfied that the publically announced retailers for the Epping Forest Retail Park; whether she considered them a threat to retail activity in the Broadway; and that the Council was not damaging local businesses?

Councillor A Grigg advised that it was always going to be difficult to avoid competition and some conditions had been imposed, which had prevented a post office and pharmacy being included in the Langston Retail Park. A number of offers had been received and the Council would be considering them carefully, but it would be very hard for no competition to arise, although she did understand the local businesses concerns.

(g) Unauthorised Advertising Boards

Councillor D Wixley asked the Governance and Performance Development Portfolio Holder, Councillor R Bassett whether enforcement action would be taken against the people erecting the boards as well as the advertisers.

Councillor R Bassett advised that the Council was concerned by the company who were erecting the advertising boards, as unfortunately some of the advertisers were unaware that they were unauthorised. Consequently, the Council was warning the advertiser first and then taking action, if they persisted to use the boards, which would result in action being taken against both parties.

#### 43. MOTIONS

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

#### 44. KEY ACTION PLAN 2017/18

**Mover: Councillor C Whitbread, Leader of the Council**

Councillor C Whitbread submitted a report regarding the Corporate Plan Key Action Plan for 2017/18.

Report as first Moved **ADOPTED**

**RESOLVED:**

That the Corporate Plan Key Action Plan for 2017/18 be approved.

#### 45. EQUALITY POLICY 2016

**Mover: Councillor R Bassett, Governance and Performance Management**

Councillor R Bassett submitted a report regarding the Council's Equality Policy 2016.

Report as first Moved **ADOPTED**

**RESOLVED:**

That the Council's Equality Policy 2016 be adopted.

**46. STATUTORY STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2015/16**

**Councillor J Knapman, Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee.**

Councillor J Knapman advised that the Statutory Statement of Accounts for 2015/16 had been considered by the Audit and Governance Committee and were recommended to Council.

**Councillor G Mohindra, Finance Portfolio Holder.**

Councillor G Mohindra submitted the report regarding the Statutory Statement of Accounts for 2015/16.

Report as first moved **ADOPTED**

**RESOLVED:**

That the Statutory Statement of Accounts for 2014/15 be adopted.

**47. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

The Council received a written report from Councillor M Sartin, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**48. CALL- IN AND URGENCY - PROCUREMENT OF CONSULTANTS TO SUPPORT THE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN**

The Council noted that the Chairman of the Council had agreed that the following decision be treated as a matter of urgency and not subject to call in;

(a) Procurement of Consultants to Support the Draft Local Plan

That the letting of the entire contract for the provision of technical support for the Draft Local Plan for a total sum of £366,272, and the publication of an appropriate Contract Award Notice in the Official Journal of the European Union, be agreed.

Councillor J M Whitehouse asked why this decision had come as a surprise and required the urgency?

Councillor J Philip advised that owing to a loss in planning policy officers and the urgent need to complete the site selection element for the consultation of the Draft Local Plan for the Cabinet Committee on the 6 October 2016, the formal tendering process had to be set aside for efficiency and the background knowledge that the consultants had gain through previous work.

Councillor R Morgan asked what the original budget had been and with this extra amount how much had it cost so far?

Councillor J Philip advised that he had not got the exact figures but it was significant since the Local Plan had begun in 2007. He would update Members on the figures through the Members Bulletin.

**49. JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS****(a) Update on the Health and Wellbeing Champion**

Councillor G Mohindra updated Members on his role as the Health and Wellbeing Champion. He advised that Health and Wellbeing was a key concern for local residents and the health economy was going through a period of change, with the increasing demands and pressure on resources. The Chief Executive and he had taken on the lead for this in West Essex, completing an extensive consultation programme with the many organisations that had been charged with funding and/or delivering services, the challenges faced and areas where performance could be improved. This had initially involved leaders from West Essex and had been expanded at the partners request to include Eastern Hertfordshire, who comprised of a major element of the local Health Economy. The Partners were clear that with the current challenges, more needed to be done to better coordinate and where possible integrate service planning and delivery with new joint opportunities to innovate. In order to lead this work, it had been proposed that a new executive and committee of elected Members would be established as a pilot programme to enable and test the effectiveness of this approach across the five district council areas in the Essex-Hertfordshire Boundary. A key role for this group was to also find new ways to better support the existing health and wellbeing partnership at local level and it had been anticipated that the structures would be in place and they would have met before Christmas.

**(b)** No requests were made for written reports to be made by representatives on joint arrangements and external organisations at the next meeting.

**CHAIRMAN**