

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF STRONGER PLACE SELECT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 8 NOVEMBER 2022
IN
AT 7.30 - 9.10 PM**

Members Present:	Councillors R Balcombe (Chairman), R Pugsley (Vice-Chairman), R Bassett, I Allgood, P Bolton, R Brookes, J Whitehouse and H Brady
Other members present:	Councillors L Burrows, J Philip, C Whitbread and H Whitbread
Other members virtually:	Councillor A Lion
Apologies for Absence:	Councillor S Heather, J Jennings and C McCredie
Officers Present:	L Kirman (Democratic Services Officer), A. Hoke (Team Manager- Leisure and Parking), R Moreton (Corporate Communications Officer) and J Warwick (Interim Acting Service Director (Contracts))
Officers present virtually:	J Gould (Interim Strategic Director), D Marsh (Waste Management Team Manager), M Thompson (Interim Acting Service Director (Technical)) and J Leither (Democratic Services Officer)

9. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman made a short address to remind everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the internet, and would be capable of repeated viewing, which could infringe their human and data protection rights.

10. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee noted that:

- Cllr Janet Whitehouse would substitute for Cllr McCredie, and
- Cllr Brookes would substitute for Cllr Judy Jennings.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

12. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

That the notes of the meeting held on 5 July 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

13. MATTERS ARISING AND OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

There were no matters outstanding or actions that were not covered by the agenda.

14. TERMS OF REFERENCE & WORK PROGRAMME

Due to the death of Her Majesty the Queen, the meeting scheduled for the 13 September 2022 had been cancelled. Items marked for that meeting had been

incorporated into the agenda for this meeting with the exception of the Market Policy which had been considered and approved by Cabinet. Members requested that a copy of the relevant papers be circulated.

The Committee noted the Terms of Reference and the Work Programme.

15. LITTER STRATEGY

J Warwick (Acting Service Director (Contracts))

The Epping Forest District Council Litter Strategy as approved by Cabinet was presented to the Select Committee by James Warwick (Acting Service Director (Contracts)). The three aims of the Litter Strategy were highlighted as:

- Change the behaviour of people who felt it was acceptable to drop litter through education and social media campaigns,
- Make it easy to dispose of litter, provide the appropriate facilities in the right places, and collect litter in a timely fashion, and
- Improve enforcement by exercising Council powers to deal with anyone who drops litter.

He advised that the waste management team had started to implement a variety of actions to achieve the aims of the litter strategy. These included:

- Development of a waste communications plan with regular social media posts, in conjunction Essex CC & Love Essex,
- Delivering recycling and anti-litter workshops at local primary and secondary schools, working with the Youth Council,
- Assessment of the current contractual arrangements for weed spraying,
- Improved monitoring of gum clearance from Streets by Area Waste Officers,
- Extending the trade waste collection service, and
- The development of QR codes for street litter bins.

The Committee

- Commended the revisions made to the Draft Litter Strategy that had been brought to the Select Committee on 5 July 2022.
- Noted the value of Community litter picks, J Warwick advised that the importance of these groups had been recognised with litter picking awards, that there would be continued support with the supply of equipment and risk assessments, and the litter campaigns recognised the importance of the voluntary groups and Town and Parish Councils.
- Queried the level of fines and enforcement for fly tipping. Mandy Thompson (Acting Service Director (Technical)) advised the Committee that the £400 fine was for a fixed penalty notice (FPN) which could be issued without going to Court. The fines that could be issued by the Courts were unlimited, but those levied were not always substantial and taking a case to Court could be a lengthy process. There had been approximately 2000 report of fly tips in the last six months compared to 1,800 last year. The number of FPNs issued had increased, 20 had been issued for the year to date in comparison to 13 for the full year in 2021/22. All reported fly tips were investigated, but the perpetrators were making it more difficult to find evidence within the fly tip. This year evidence had ad been found in 127 fly tips and investigations to follow the trail of where waste had originated were ongoing.
- Suggested that Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and targets could improve the Litter Strategy.

- Expressed frustration with litter from moving vehicles and stationary vehicles near food outlets. Mandy Thompson advised the Committee that littering offences could be reported to the Enforcement Team, a relevant vehicle registration number and a witness statement would be required before any further action could be taken.
- Expressed concerns over the delay of the removal of fly tip, which contained hazardous waste, but understood that the process required permission from Essex County Council, as the Waste Disposal Authority, to ensure costs were recovered.

The Committee received confirmation that:

- CCTV could be installed in rural areas; a survey of the site would be required to identify if the camera would require a battery pack. The location of sites of concern for fly tips should be provided to Mandy Thompson.
- Dog fouling would be covered by awareness campaigns and joint work with enforcement.
- Litter bins were monitored by Area Waste Officers and Biffa Operatives and emptied when they were three quarters full. In areas of high footfall bins would be emptied more frequently.
- Builders waste was classified as trade waste, and under legislation this needed to be paid for. There had been no change in Essex County Council's policy. Civic Amenity sites could be used by residents to dispose of their own repair and building materials.
- Litter on the slip roads of motorways was the responsibility of Highways England and roundabouts were the responsibility of EFDC. Highways England would be contacted to encourage clearance of the slip roads.
- A number of local residents, who were environmental champions, had requested that their recycling sacks be replaced with a wheeled bin. It was confirmed by David Marsh that a special collection would not be required as the vehicle could collect both wheeled bin and sacks.

Actions:

- James Warwick would provide Theydon Mount Parish Council with payment details for the collection of the litter bin.
- The Committee proposed that an update on the Litter Strategy should be included in the 2023/4 Stronger Place Work Programme.

Resolved:

The Committee noted and commended the Council's Litter Strategy.

16. LEISURE SERVICES CONTRACT UPDATE

The update on the Council's Leisure Services Contract District Council with Places for People Leisure (PFPL) was introduced by James Warwick, who advised the Committee that the Leisure Management Contract Partnership Board provided strategic oversight, supported by monthly contact management meetings with officers.

The Committee were advised that the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) received effective scrutiny by Officers and Members, these showed that fitness membership levels remained below pre pandemic levels, whilst swimming membership and swimming lessons had now recovered and surpassed the February 2020 figures.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, EFDC provided financial support, through monthly open book examination, to Places Leisure to maintain the operations of the leisure centres in the district. The recovery rates in leisure centre usage had enabled Places Leisure to resume the payment of management fees. The risks associated with increasing energy costs and relevant mitigation measures were highlighted.

The Committee were advised of the current timeline for the new leisure centre in Epping which was in the second stage of the procurement phase, the contract award was anticipated early 2023. The construction phase of the new Epping Leisure Centre was expected to commence Summer 2023, with a two-year construction period.

The Committee:

- Received confirmation that a decrease in use of the leisure centres was anticipated due to the current economic situation, this would be monitored against normal seasonal variations and work would continue to ensure that the pricing schedule was competitive.
- Were advised that there would be no Health and Safety issues in relation to the shortage of swimming instructors. Places Leisure were aware of the regulations and had cancelled swimming lessons when there had not been enough staff, this situation was monitored.
- Were advised that swimming pools were open for the same hours of use.
- Suggested that pool covers should be instigated across all pools to ensure energy efficiency.
- Challenged the need for a fourth pool and questioned the impact this may have on Ongar pool. J Warwick advised that a full viability study had been carried out for the pool in Epping, there was demand and waiting lists for swimming lessons in the District and with neighbouring authorities. Ongar had £1.3m invested in the pool to ensure the lifetime of the pool was extended.
- Asked if an incentive for parking discounts at leisure centre would encourage use, the impact would need to be considered in the whole as this would impact on car parking income but this would be explored by officers.

Resolved:

The Committee noted the report.

17. WASTE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT UPDATE

The Interim Acting Service Director (Contracts), James Warwick, informed the Select Committee that the Council was in contract with Biffa Municipal Ltd. for the delivery of waste, street cleansing and processing of dry recycling services. Cabinet had agreed to go to run a full procurement process for this contract which would expire in November 2024. Officers had started the procurement process and market engagement events had held with potential waste contractors. A Portfolio Holders Advisory Group would be established to consider the current challenges and support the procurement of a new waste and recycling contract.

The Committee were advised by J Warwick that the Waste Management Partnership Board provided a strategic oversight of the contract at senior officer and Member level, supported by monthly contact management meetings and daily monitoring and inspections by the waste and recycling team manager and area waste officers.

It was acknowledged that there had been unprecedented levels of missed collections over the course of this year. This was due to multiple factors including a national shortage of staff, in particular drivers and loaders; and the breakdown of vehicles, compounded by a lack of hire vehicles. Biffa had implemented a variety of investments and initiatives to improve their performance including: increased pay of operatives; trialling an Operational Support colleague to help track and drive improvements; procured two replacement footpath sweepers; sourced two replacement cage vehicles and a replacement van; purchased a new pick-up truck for the Streets Supervisor; developed a full refurbishment program for the 32t Scania fleet, and were trialling a better solution for Narrow Access Vehicles.

The Committee:

- Welcomed the opportunity to visit the Recycling facilities at Edmonton
- Sought clarity on the wheeled bin trial and were advised that this would take place in Theydon Bois, although there would be some trails across the district.

This would help to determine if the current use of sacks and blue boxes could be replaced by a wheeled bin. No decision had been made and this was one option that could be considered by the Portfolio Holder Advisory Group.

- Suggested that narrow access vehicle could be required when cars parked on both sides of the roads as well as rural areas with restricted access
- Discussed the potential to charge for the collection of garden waste as other local authorities did. J Warwick advised that the new Environment Bill, if enacted, recommended that food and garden waste was collected free of charge. Cllr Philip advised that this service was a high value service for many residents.
- Raised concerns that bins were not being repaired but replaced.
- Received confirmation that when whole streets or known areas had missed collections these could be seen on the opening pages of the Council's website.

Action:

J Warwick would organise a visit for members of the Select Committee to the recycling centre at Edmonton

Resolved:

The Committee commented on and commended the waste management contract update report.

18. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted their future meeting dates.