

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL COUNCILS' LIAISON COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 29 November 2022 **Time:** 7.00 - 8.25 pm

Place: Council Chamber - Civic
Offices

Members Present: **Representing Epping Forest District Council:**

Councillors M Sartin, R Morgan and D Sunger

Other Councillors:

Councillors R Balcombe, N Bedford, L Burrows, A Lion, A Patel and K Williamson

Representing Essex County Council:

County Councillors H Whitbread, C Whitbread, J McIvor, S Kane and Chris Pond

Representing Local Councils:

Abbess, Beauchamp and Berners Roding Parish Clerk (Abbess, Beauchamp and Berners Roding Parish Council),
Buckhurst Hill Parish Clerk (Buckhurst Hill Parish Council),
Chigwell Parish Clerk (Chigwell Parish Council), Epping Town Clerk (Epping Town Council),
Fyfield Parish Clerk (Fyfield Parish Council),
Epping Upland Parish Clerk (Epping Upland Parish Council),
High Ongar Parish Clerk (High Ongar Parish Council),
Lambourne Parish Clerk (Lambourne Parish Council),
Loughton Town Clerk (Loughton Town Council),
Matching Parish Clerk (Matching Parish Council),
Moreton, Bobbingworth and the Lavers Parish Clerk (Moreton, Bobbingworth and the Lavers Parish Council),
Nazeing Parish Clerk (Nazeing Parish Council),
North Weald Bassett Parish Clerk (North Weald Bassett Parish Council),
Ongar Town Clerk (Ongar Town Council),
Roydon Parish Clerk (Roydon Parish Council),
Stanford Rivers Parish Clerk (Stanford Rivers Parish Council),
Stapleford Abbots Parish Clerk (Stapleford Abbots Parish Council),
Stapleford Tawney Parish Clerk (Stapleford Tawney Parish Council),
Theydon Bois Parish Clerk (Theydon Bois Parish Council),
Theydon Garnon Parish Clerk (Theydon Garnon Parish Council) and
Theydon Mount Parish Clerk (Theydon Mount Parish Council)

Other members virtually: Councillor J H Whitehouse

Apologies: Epping Forest District Council –

Councillors H Kane and J Lea

Essex County Council –

Councillors L Scott

Parish/Town Councils: -

Sheering Parish Clerk (Sheering Parish Council) and
Waltham Abbey Town Clerk (Waltham Abbey Town Council)

Officers Present:

J Gould (Interim Strategic Director), N Richardson (Service Director (Planning Services)), S Lewis (Customer Services Manager), A Marx (Development Manager Service Manager (Planning)), T Scott (Complaints and Customer Satisfaction Team Manager), A Buckley (Higher Level Apprentice (Internal Communications)) and R Perrin (Democratic and Electoral Services Officer)

Officers present virtually:

J Warwick (Interim Acting Service Director (Contracts)), D Marsh (Waste Management Team Manager) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

20. 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.

21. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN & VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED:

1. It was confirmed that District Councillor M Sartin would be the Chairman of the Committee for this municipal year; and
2. Councillor B Scrutton was appointed the Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the municipal year.

22. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 March 2022 be taken as a correct record.

23. ISSUES RAISED BY LOCAL COUNCILS

The Committee received written responses which were set out in the agenda for the New Planning System and Epping Forest Recycling Hubs. It was noted that the ECC Cabinet Member for Highways, Councillor Lee Scott had sent his apologies for this meeting, although he would be invited to the next meeting.

Officers for Customer Services and Planning and Waste were in attendance to clarify any further questions. The webcast for this meeting can be found here [Local Councils' Liaison Committee - Tuesday, 29th November 2022 at 7:00pm - Epping Forest District Council webcasts \(public-i.tv\)](#)

Written responses to the questions raised regarding Communication were set out below.

- **How does the new communication system installed by EFDC benefit its residents?**

First point of contact for all service areas excluding Housing & Rev/Benefits was managed by the customer contact centre. The team were not a switchboard but highly trained to resolve customer queries at first point of contact and in approximately 65% of cases they could do this using scripts developed in conjunction with our technical officers. If they cannot a call back request was allocated to the relevant Officer for response and the contact centre would ensure a response was given in a timely manner in line with SLA's. We must free up our technical officer's time to focus on their day jobs and we must introduce more efficient ways of managing contact. We were going through change, 80% of our residents use digital in everyday lives, we were in the process of making our online experience as simple to use as possible with customers involved in the consultation. If we can deflect those residents who prefer to use digital to a simple online solution, we free up our phone lines and improve our answer rate for the 20% who cannot use digital. The majority of people do not want to hold on to speak to someone they want the transaction to be as simple and quick as possible.

- **How does the new communication system installed by EFDC help to forge and maintain good relationships with Town and Parish Councils?**

It would seem that the engagement with T&P was not to the level it should have been when the new operating model was implemented. We must now look forwards together, be mindful of budget constraints and resource challenges to mutually agree communication channels and ways of working. We have developed a process for T&P to get queries resolved in the most efficient way and that was by using our online form, the query would be logged, allocated, triaged, and tracked to ensure a response was given within the agreed SLA. If the query was an emergency i.e. risk of life & death, then you can call our contact centre. A copy of the flow diagram describing this process has been attached.

- **Why must Town and Parish Councils first point of call be to the contact centre and not to relevant EFDC Officers?**

The agreed operating model was outlined above, Members approved this model to ensure we manage contact in the most efficient manner. We would welcome any Town or Parish Councillor to spend some time with our contact centre to see the process in action. We now work in a flexible agile manner, but all Officers have committed to ensure they are available, if they were not, they would ensure a timely response is given should a query require a technical response, if this does not happen it will be managed via the above process and escalation on your behalf.

- **The EFDC Constitution states that the Monitoring Officer will make arrangements to ensure good communication with the Town and Parish Councils in the District – What are these arrangements?**

Moving forwards as described we were keen to ensure that communication channels were in place. We now have monthly catch up's and invite T&P to nominate others to join this group and ensure effective two-way communication.

- **Does EFDC accept that its relationship with the first tier of local Government needs improvement, and if so how and by when does it intend on doing this?**

Yes, for the reasons described above, in a nutshell, we would ensure two-way communication channels, work with you to take on board feedback and find solutions that work for both sides. We cannot go back to the old way of working we are not resourced to do so, and it does not fit the agreed operating model approved by Members.

Rest assured customer service and in particular communication was a priority for everyone here at EFDC and it is our job to make sure it improves. Our wider leadership team were committing to making improvements to communication, we were introducing a customer service best practise 'health check' for them to carry out with their teams. They would commit to action plans for the improvements required. We welcome your ongoing feedback and look forward to working with you moving forwards.

It was noted that the Customer Services, Service Manager and Complaints and Customer Satisfaction, Team Manager would be hosting monthly meetings with interested Town and Parish Clerks to discuss customer services issues. The details of these meeting would be emailed to all Town and Parish Clerks by the Epping Forest Branch Secretary, Adriana Jones.

New Planning System

The Town and Parish Councils requested training for the new planning system and a point of contact that they could forward comment, suggestions, or improvements to, which would assist users. The Planning and Development Management Service Director requested that town and parish members also use and experiment with the new system.

Epping Forest Recycling Hubs

The Service Director for Contracts advised that officers were discussing enforcement and mobile CCTV units for these areas to improve the issues of fly tipping at recycling hubs in Epping Forest.

ACTIONS:

1. EFDC to look at providing short demonstration videos of how to use the new planning system for the Town and Parish Councils.
2. Parish and Town Councils to experiment with the new planning system.
3. EFDC to establish a method of collating the feedback, suggestions, and improvements on the new planning system to the planning department.

(Feedback and suggestions of Town and Parish Councils on the new system should be sent to contactplanning@eppingforestdc.gov.uk .)

24. EPPING FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN - PROGRESS

The Planning and Development Management Service Director advised that the consultation on the Further Main Modifications to the Local Plan was currently running until 9 December 2023. This was an opportunity to comments on the Further Main Modifications only, and if there were any comments that exceeded 300 words, an executive summary would be required. The Council would then submit the all the comments to the Inspector.

It was expected that the Local Plan would be adopted by the Council in late January or February 2023.

It was noted that a final Local Plan document would be created with the policies set out, although it would probably not be in a paper format and if required, a charge would be applied.

25. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. It was noted that Parish Council Tax Bases for 2023/24, along with the annual pro forma Precept returns should be submitted by 31st January 2023.
2. That the preference for future meetings of the LCLC should be face-to-face and that there were no preferences to the day or time of these meetings.
3. That future items of interest would be discussed by the Epping Forest Branch and forwarded to the Committee Officer.

26. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting would be changed due to the decision for face-to-face meetings and emailed to Parish and Town Councils accordingly.

CHAIRMAN