

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL CABINET MEETING MINUTES

Monday 9 October 2023, 7.00 pm - 7.40 pm

Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

Members Present:	Councillors C Whitbread (Chairman), R Balcombe, S Kane, S Patel, J Philip, H Whitbread and K Williamson
Other Councillors:	Councillors R Brookes, J M Whitehouse and D Wixley
Other Councillors (Virtually):	Councillor S Heap
Apologies:	Councillor N Bedford
Officers In Attendance:	Georgina Blakemore (Chief Executive), Tom Carne (Corporate Communications Team Manager), Melissa Faux (Senior Crime and ASB Officer), Jennifer Gould (Strategic Director and Chief Operating Officer), Christopher Hartgrove (Interim Chief Financial Officer), David King (Licensing Manager), Therese Larsen (Democratic Services Officer), Vivienne Messenger (Democratic Services Officer), Steven Mitchell (PR Website Editor), Andrew Small (Strategic Director, Corporate and Section 151 Officer), Christopher Smith (Environmental Enforcement Officer), John Taphouse (Interim Head of Asset Management) and Mandy Thompson (Interim Acting Service Director (Technical))
Officers In Attendance (Virtually):	Gary Woodhall (Team Manager - Democratic & Electoral Services)

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

38 WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Leader of Council 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.

39 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

40 MINUTES

That the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 18 September 2023 be taken as read and signed by the Leader as a correct record.

41 REPORTS OF PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

- (a) Community Health and Wellbeing Portfolio

Councillor S Patel reported that a vigil was being held from 18.30 in Epping tonight by Rabbi Posen following the terrible events in Israel over the weekend, which Councillors L Burrows and H Whitbread were attending as representatives of the Council.

(b) Customer and Corporate Support Services

Councillor S Kane reported that all members would soon be required to change their main log-in password following a potential security issue.

42 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE CABINET

The Cabinet noted that no public questions or requests to address the Cabinet had been received for consideration at the meeting.

43 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Chairman of the Committee reported that there was nothing to report as there had been no recent meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

44 AGENDA ITEMS REORDERED

The Cabinet agreed the Landlord Compliance Policies agenda item would be dealt with later in the meeting, as Councillor H Whitbread had given her apologies for lateness since she was attending a vigil in Epping.

45 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE UPDATE

The Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor K Williamson, informed the Cabinet that this update had been pre-scrutinised by Place Scrutiny Committee in September. The report detailed the challenges that had arisen and the steps Qualis Property Solutions had taken to mitigate them while continuing to strive to improve performance and customer satisfaction where it could.

Councillor J Philip queried if there were still seven vacancies (see paragraph 6 of agenda report), but the Regulatory Interim Service Director, M Thompson, clarified that as four FT posts had been recruited to, there were three vacancies currently.

The report set out the options considered, if any, and the reasons for the recommendation and the decision.

Decision:

That the Cabinet considered and agreed the report noting that, as four FT posts had been recruited to, there were three posts currently vacant.

46 PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO) - DOG CONTROL

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 introduced a variety of powers for local authorities to deal with anti-social behaviour including PSPOs to deal with a particular nuisance or problem in a certain area which, if detrimental to the local community's quality of life, allowed conditions to be imposed on the use of that area and would apply to everyone.

Councillor K Williamson (Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder) advised that the Council tried to encourage responsible dog ownership, for the benefit of all residents and visitors to the District and that responsible ownership would be supported by a set of conditions outlined in the report. It was noted that there had been incidences in the District and having a PSPO in

operation would streamline and improve the enforcement process carried out by the Council's Environment & Neighbourhoods officers.

The Cabinet agreed to amend the wording of the second decision to read, '...where greater than 60% of responses...', as below.

The report set out the options considered, if any, and the reasons for the recommendation and the decision.

Decision:

- (1) That the Cabinet agreed to a 28-day public consultation on the proposed Public Space Protection Order (PSPO).
- (2) That the Cabinet agreed where greater than 60% of responses were positive that the proposed PSPO be implemented on the date specified in the public notice.
- (3) That the Cabinet agreed where more than 40% of objections were made, it would reconsider the proposal in light of those objections within 2 months of the date specified in the public notice.

47 PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER (PSPO) - DEBDEN BROADWAY

The Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder informed the Cabinet that a proposed PSPO was set up to provide a safe environment for residents, workers and the community when frequenting The Broadway. The Portfolio Holder recommended the report to Cabinet and that a decision on a 28-day consultation was being sought. The report had been pre-scrutinised by the Place Scrutiny Committee in September.

In reply to the Housing and Strategic Health Partnerships Portfolio Holder (Councillor H Whitbread), the Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder advised that other areas within the District could be looked at with a view to being funded by the Home Office 'ASB hotspot patrols' scheme as well. The Senior Crime and ASB Officer (M Faux) advised if another PSPO was set up, the exact same process based on evidence would be needed.

The Cabinet agreed to amend the wording of the second decision to read, '...where greater than 60% of responses...', as below.

The report set out the options considered, if any, and the reasons for the recommendation and the decision.

Decision:

- (1) That the Cabinet agreed to a 28-day public consultation on the proposed Public Space Protection Order (PSPO).
- (2) That the Cabinet agreed where greater than 60% of responses were positive that the proposed PSPO be implemented on the date specified in the public notice.
- (3) That the Cabinet agreed where more than 40% of objections were made, it would reconsider the proposal in light of those objections within 2 months of the date specified in the public notice.

48 LANDLORD COMPLIANCE POLICIES

The Housing and Strategic Health Partnership Portfolio Holder recommended the report to Cabinet, as the Council was a provider of social housing and was required to meet the legislative standards in respect of the five safety policies detailed in the report.

In reply to Councillor S Kane (Customer and Corporate Support Services Portfolio Holder) about a Waltham Abbey resident not being allowed to park a mobility scooter in a communal area, Councillor H Whitbread clarified that nothing could be stored in the communal corridors of blocks, but she would try and find a way forward on this.

The report set out the options considered, if any, and the reasons for the recommendation and the decision.

Decision:

That the Cabinet adopted the following Landlord Compliance Policies covering:

- (1) Electrical Safety Policy
- (2) Fire Safety Policy
- (3) Gas Safety Policy
- (4) Lift Safety Policy
- (5) Water Hygiene Policy

49 TAXI TARIFF CONSULTATION

Section 65 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 permitted Licensing Authorities to set the fares tariff for Hackney carriages (taxis) licensed in the district. The tariff set the maximum fares that taxis could charge the public when using their vehicles. The report detailed the current taxi tariff agreed in 2014 and the proposed, increased tariffs. The Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder stated that the legislation required a public consultation and a public notice advertising the changes before the tariffs took effect. Therefore, the Cabinet's agreement to a 28-day public consultation was being sought.

In reply to queries on the national and Essex councils rankings in the report, Councillor K Williamson replied that it depended on when other councils had undertaken their reviews.

The report set out the options considered, if any, and the reasons for the recommendation and the decision.

Decision:

- (1) That the Cabinet agreed to a 28-day public consultation on the proposed taxi tariff.
- (2) That the Cabinet agreed that where no objections were made, the proposed taxi tariff be implemented on the date specified in the public notice.
- (3) That the Cabinet agreed that where objections were made, it would reconsider the proposal in light of those objections within 2 months of the date specified in the public notice.

50 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**(a) Updated Medium-Term Financial Plan 2024/25 to 2028/29**

The MTFP provided a tentative, forward look at the Council's financial picture over the next five years (2024/25 through to 2028/29). Councillor J Philip (Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder) reported it would be a very difficult budget setting process this year because of the economic and wage situations along with inflation. There would be fewer easier opportunities going forwards. Appendix A detailed the General Fund element of the MTFP which revealed a projected deficit of £3.720 million in 2024/25. The HRA element of the MTFP (Appendix B) revealed a small surplus in 2024/25. It was noted the projected balance of the HRA in March 2024 could comfortably withstand the planned deficits in 2025/26 and 2026/27.

The report set out the options considered, if any, and the reasons for the recommendation and the decision.

Decision:

- (1) That the Cabinet noted the report, including the:
 - General Fund element of the updated Medium-Term Financial Plan (2024/25 to 2028/29) (Appendix A); and
 - Housing Revenue Account element of the updated Medium-Term Financial Plan (2024/25 to 2028/29) (Appendix B).
- (2) That the Cabinet considered and agreed with the assumptions contained in the MTFP and the potential options for addressing the underlying budget deficit in order to set a balanced budget for 2024/25.

(b) Capital Programme Update 2024/25 to 2028/29

Introduced by the Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder, the Capital Programme Update was a key part of the early budget preparations for 2024/25. The updated (indicative) Capital Programme comprised a total investment of £210.258 million (General Fund £53.913 million and Housing Revenue Account £156.345 million) over the five-year period 2024/25 to 2028/29. The growth items were indicative. If the Council did not need to borrow it would not because of the high interest rates. The Leader (Councillor C Whitbread) remarked this was a bold outline.

The report set out the options considered, if any, and the reasons for the recommendation and the decision.

Decision:

- (1) That the Cabinet noted the report, including both the updated General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programmes (2024/25 to 2028/29) at Appendix A; and
- (2) That the Cabinet did not identify any other actions (in the context of the updated Medium-Term Financial Plan) for the further refinement of the Capital Programme as part of developing integrated draft budget proposals for further consideration by Cabinet in December 2023.