

# **EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday 5 March 2024, 7.00 pm – 9:10pm  
Council Chamber - Civic Offices**

<b>Members Present:</b>	Councillors A Patel (Chairman) J Lucas (Vice-Chairman), I Allgood, L Mead and J H Whitehouse Mr W Marshall
<b>Members Present (Virtually):</b>	Councillors C McCann
<b>Other Councillors:</b>	Councillors R Balcombe, S Patel, C Whitbread and J Philip
<b>Apologies:</b>	Councillor(s) M Markham, S Murray, R Brookes, J Jogia, Caroline Pond, R Sharif and S Yerrell
<b>Officers In Attendance:</b>	Laura Kirman (Democratic Services Officer), Louise Baker (Internal Communications Assistant), Fabrizio Ferrari (Public Health Improvement Officer), Tracy Scott (Complaints and Customer Satisfaction Team Manager), John Taphouse (Interim Service Manager (Assets Strategy)) and Gill Wallis (Service Director Customer & Community)
<b>Officers In Attendance (Virtually):</b>	Jennifer Gould (Strategic Director and Chief Operating Officer) and Matt Picking (Democracy & Elections Apprentice)
<b>Also In Attendance:</b>	Rachel Lewis, West Essex Relationship Manager – Active Essex, and Jo O'Boyle, Chief Executive – Citizens Advice Epping Forest

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

### **30 WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION**

The Chairman reminded everyone present that this meeting would be recorded and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

### **31 SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

The Committee noted that:

- Councillor Allgood had been appointed as substitute for Councillor Caroline Pond,
- Councillor Mead had been appointed as substitute for Councillor Brookes, and
- Councillor Janet Whitehouse had been appointed as substitute for Councillor Sharif.

### **32 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor Patel declared he was the Chairman of the Health and Well-being Board.

**33 NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING****RESOLVED:**

That the notes of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 16 January 2024 be taken as read and were agreed as a correct record.

**34 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Communities Scrutiny Committee noted the progress made against the work programme.

**35 HOUSING ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY UPDATE**

John Taphouse, Interim Head of Asset Management, provided an update on the Housing Asset Management Strategy, and highlighted the research that had been completed to develop the position statement and draft outline Asset Management Strategy, the Draft Strategy identified seven strategic priorities.

There had been an amendment to the Draft Strategy which detailed that the service level agreement developed with Qualis would work towards top quartile performance in all areas through year-on-year improvement at a cost that was value for money.

The Committee provided a variety of comments and questions. The Committee welcomed the report and acknowledged this was an overarching document, so specific detail should not be present and that decent home standards must be met.

The Committee were advised that:

- This was an outline strategy and that responsibility for housing asset management remained with the Council,
- The approach to the use of data should improve the scheduling of repairs programming.
- Membership of 'Housemark' would enable comparison with and a benchmark to assess performance.
- Officers confirmed that the key facts section of the strategy would be completed, and that labels would be attached to the pie chart in the final version of the report.
- The void repairs budget was £2.8m, this could be minimised by reducing voids, working with tenants to ensure properties were left in a good state of repair and through the required standards to ensure value for money. The Future Homes Group would help set these standards.
- The Council would look to strengthen action when there had been deliberate damage to property.
- The Strategic Asset Management Group was a strategic group, and the Future Homes Group would be involved in the detailed operational aspects.
- An annual delivery plan would be developed from the Strategy, this would provide specific actions and a monitoring mechanism.

**Resolved:**

That the Communities Scrutiny Committee commended the report and draft outline asset management strategy to Cabinet for approval.

**Action (1):**

The Communities Scrutiny Committee suggested that oversight of the 12 monthly review and action plan should be included in the work programme for this Scrutiny Committee.

**36 EPPING FOREST HEALTH & WELLBEING STRATEGY**

Fabrizio Ferrari, Health Improvement & Economic Development Team Manager, introduced the report with representative of key partners for The Health and Well Being Strategy, Rachel Lewis, West Essex Relationship Manager, Active Essex, and Jo O'Boyle Chief Executive, Citizens Advice Epping Forest

The key priorities were outlined as: improve mental health and wellbeing; reduce loneliness and social isolation; increase physical activity; support residents in relation to the rising costs of living; and tackle alcohol and substance misuse issues. The strategy delivery was underpinned by principles of delivery, that had agreed by partners and stakeholders these were outlined as: a whole system approach, prevention and early intervention, self-care and management of own wellbeing; place-based approach, and life course approach.

The delivery and governance structure of the Strategy was described, and the multi-agency themed groups detailed as Healthy Behaviours Action Group, Socio Economic Action Group, Clinical Action Group, and Built and Natural Environmental Action Group. Specific projects and individual case studies associated with each of the groups were given and the successes, key outcomes, outputs and added value were provided.

The next steps included:

- the replication of the place-based approach to health inequities which was an exemplar of best practice, funding was being sought from Essex County Council for Public Health Accelerator Funding;
- the alignment of strategic priorities through a whole system approach;
- alignment with the Council's 'Fit for the Future' transformation programme;
- action plans and priorities would be refreshed through the multi-agency groups and the reporting dashboard and action plan report would be updated to show progress of the strategy.

The Chairman stressed the importance of partnership working, the joint effort in developing the strategy to find common objectives, and the effectiveness of the place based and whole systems approach. He highlighted that money had been levered in from external sources, the added value associated with the strategy and difficulty in quantifying the benefits of prevention. The Chairman thanked all members that had participated in the Board and commended Gill Wallis for her contribution.

The Committee provided a variety of questions and comments and were advised that:

- Some projects and services covered rural areas, including the warm places project and community champions. Bids had been submitted to the UK prosperity fund, which if successful would impact on the rural communities.
- The marketing approach was outlined, including the use of social media and screens in GP surgery and leisure centres. Community champions, groups and partners were actively involved in promoting the projects and services.
- The requirement for health impact assessments has been embedded in planning policy, when developments meet specific requirements. A Healthy Weight Strategy was being developed and the Playing Pitch Strategy would be refreshed.
- Participants in mental health groups had been referred after clinical assessment and work with a social prescriber. Other referral agencies for mental health issues were available including mental health practitioners in the community.
- The dashboard should provide a mechanism to show progress made against the Strategy and Action Plans. The dashboards would be used by all partners and data sharing would be beneficial in quantifying progress. It would be possible to bring further updates to Scrutiny if required.

**Resolved:**

That the Scrutiny Committee noted the update on the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

**37 CUSTOMER SERVICES UPDATE**

Tracy Scott, Customer Service Contact Centre Team Manager, provided an update on the performance of the Customer Contact Centre and the suitability of the key performance Indicators (KPIs). An outline of the work carried out by the Contact Centre was provided. The new telephony system, Cirrus, had become operational, this had given access to increased functionality and data, however the implementation of the system had impacted on data collection for quarter 3 of 2023/24. The service was developing a short, medium, long-term improvement plan underpinned by the Council's Fit for Future Transformation Programme which includes a key Digital Customer Pillar.

The three current KPI were detailed: first point of resolution as a customer contact centre KPI and two corporate KPIs: formal corporate complaints resolved within service level agreements, and overall customer satisfaction. The service proposed the removal of the overall customer satisfaction KPI and the introduction of an answer rate (%) KPI.

The Committee

- Thanked the officers for the update on customer services.
- Received clarification that calls to the contact centre were signposted, and customers were provided with direct contact numbers or transferred for housing services queries.
- Discussed the appropriateness of the customer satisfaction KPI, the balance between satisfaction, quality of service and speed of response, and the difference between first point resolution, and the importance of solution to the Customer.
- Received confirmation that the new Cirrus platform could break down waiting times, and provide detailed data.

The Jen Gould, Strategic Director, advised the Committee that there needed to be clarity around what was measured. From the customer perspective there need to be a seamless and comprehensive response to queries. The approach needed to consider customer journey from end to end and find the best methods and measures to assess the effectiveness of the service. This would be considered as part of the Fit for the future programme.

**Resolved:**

That the Scrutiny Committee supported the removal of the customer satisfaction KPI and agreed the three KPIs as: answer rate (%) ; first point resolution (%); and formal corporate complaints resolved within service level agreements.

**Action (2):**

The Committee requested further updates be brought back to Scrutiny to explore and share developments for delivery and appropriate measures for Customer Services.

**38 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS****Resolved:**

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting was on Tuesday 19 March 2024 at 7:00pm, this would be a dedicated Police and Community Safety Partnership meeting.