

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL COUNCILS' LIAISON COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 1 March 2006 **Time:** 7.30 - 10.05 pm

Place: Council Chamber, Civic
Offices, High Street, Epping

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

Councillor(s): Mrs J H Whitehouse

Other Councillors:

Councillor(s): (none)

Representing Essex County Council:

County Councillor(s): G McEwen

Representing Local Councils:

Councillor J Salter (Abbess Beauchamp and Berners Roding), J Knapman, S Deluca (Chigwell Parish Council), B Rolfe (Epping Town Council), Mrs P Smith (Epping Upland Parish Council), K Percy (Fyfield Parish Council), R Ainswoth, Councillor J E Dolder (High Ongar and Matching PC), Councillor R Pearce, Councillor Mrs J Woods (Loughton TC), Councillor L R Norman, Councillor Ms J Bowerman (Matching Parish Council), J Collins, C Thompson (Moreton, Bobbingworth and Lavers PC), Councillor E Borton, Mrs D Borton, Councillor Ms G Castle (Nazeing Parish Council), R Wood (North Weald Bassett Parish Council), Councillor B Surtees (Ongar Town Council), N Wilkinson, Councillor Miss H Nicholas, Janet Ballard (Roydon Parish Council), Councillor R Russell, Councillor J Farren (Stapleford Abbots PC), Councillor G Bishop, Peter Boshier and Councillor J Harrington (Sheering Parish Council)

Apologies: **Epping Forest District Council –**

Councillor(s): B Sandler, Mrs A Haigh and R Morgan

Essex County Council –

Councillor(s): (none)

Parish/Town Councils: -

Councillor Ms K Canning, D Farr and T Taylor (Epping Upland Parish Council)

Officers Present: J Scott (Joint Chief Executive), T Tidey (Head of Human Resources and Performance Management), J Nolan (Environmental Services), C Neilan (Conservation Officer), J Gilbert (Head of Environmental Services) and Z Folley (Democratic Services Assistant)

By Invitation: (none)

17. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2005 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

18. DRAFT COUNCIL PLAN 2006-2010

The District Council Head of Human Resources and Performance Management presented the draft Council Plan covering 2006-10. The plans set out the District Council's ambition and priorities over a four year period showing how it would support the Community Strategy, the government and residents of the area. This took a strategic approach to the Council's aims over the next four years and focused on those issues that mattered most to people, national priorities and local challenges. The report highlighted the approach being taken to reviewing the current strategy and the development of a new plan.

A copy of the emerging document was attached and was now subject to consultation.

The starting point of the strategy was the key aims within the Local Strategic Partnership entitled Green and Unique, Homes and Neighbourhoods, A Safer Community, Fit for Life and Economic Prosperity. It also comprised the Council's own themes and prioritised the existing medium terms aims.

The Head of Human Resources presented each section. He reported the progress made in achieving the themes, which was followed through in the action plan to the back of the document. He advised that it was important that the targets in the strategy were measurable and could be assessed objectively as they would be used by the Comprehensive Performance Assessment when assessing performance. He explained that the strategy was part of a wider hierarchy of plans and that the previous plan could be made available to members on request.

Officers were currently consulting very widely with community groups and those involved in services to canvass their views. Any comments arising from this exercise would need to be fed back for the 6 April 2006 meeting of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee where the report was to be considered. Members were invited to take away the document to enable them to read it in more details and submit comments within the next 2-3 weeks.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the draft Council Plan for 2006 to 2010 be noted and;
- (2) That comments on the plan be sent to the Head of Human Resources and Performance Management

19. LICENSING ACT 2003 - CONSULTATION PROCESS

The District Council Assistant Head of Environmental Services, Mr Jim Nolan presented a report on the consultation rights for Local Councils from which it was noted that Local Councils had no statutory right to consultation in the new licensing regime.

The presentation was aimed at giving Local Councils a greater knowledge of the provisions of the Licensing Act 2003 which transferred the duty of approving licensing for liquor and other licensable activities to Local Authorities.

The Licensing Act 2003 identified two groups who were entitled to make representations against an application. These being interested parties (comprising a person living in the vicinity or involved in a business, or bodies acting on their behalf) and Responsible Authorities. The act comprised specific guidelines for displaying and publishing notices on proposed variations which was noted.

The Assistant Head of Environmental Services reported that the Local Authority Co-ordinators on Regulatory Services had issued a statement on the status of Town and Parish Councils. This indicated that there was no requirement on the Licensing Authority to keep Town/Parish Councils apprised of all the hearings given that they were not Responsible Authorities. The Licensing Authority must have regard to these provisions when consulting upon applications to avoid the perception that it was acting beyond its powers by breaching the statutory consultation rules. The District Council and the Essex Association of Local Councils had made representations requesting that Local Councils together with the relevant building control section be considered Responsible Authorities.

The Assistant Head of Environmental Services reported that interested parties might ask another body to represent their views such as Local Councils. Such representatives however must be able to identify during any proceedings the party they were acting on behalf.

It was reported that a premises license was reviewed annually which was not subject to consultation. A license would also be reviewed following a representation from a Responsible Authority. Local Councils were able to approach a Responsible Authority to ask for a review but could not approach the Licensing Authority directly to request this.

The Committee thanked Mr Nolan for his presentation and insight into the new regime.

RESOLVED:

That the District Council Assistant Head of Environmental Services be thanked for his presentation on the new licensing legislation.

20. ISSUES RAISED BY LOCAL COUNCILS

(a) Highways issues

The District Council Head of Environmental Services reported the current position due to the unavailability of a representative from Essex County Council. He had spoken to the Area Highways Manager, Mr Paul Hardy, who was to leave his present post this month about the level of resources that would be spent on the District over the forthcoming years (Attached) which were significant. He reported that the County Council's programme of works was reproduced in the Members Bulletin.

He clarified that the Local Highways Service agreement (LSA) had resulted in the County taking control over the highways network. Under the arrangements decisions were now made by the County and the Area Highway Forum however, the District could input into the prioritisation process for the local roads.

The West Essex Area Forum would receive a presentation at its next meeting on 9 March 2006 from the County on the agreement. The Committee stressed that it was important to make sure that local representatives liaised with this new Committee. Consideration was given to the mechanisms for setting priorities.

The Head of Environmental Services advised that the County was receptive to ideas and looking at the programme of works again with a view to introducing some flexibility into the process. He advised the Committee that Highways matters should be reported directly to the County Council Area Highway Office at Harlow, but to contact him if they experienced any problems. He undertook to take these up. In relation to the consultation arrangements for the new highways arrangements, he explained that the Council had reserved the right to be consulted over highways issues and was represented at the Area Highways Forum by the District Councillor Mrs Grigg. The Council had decided to delegate the power to prioritise projects as there was no longer any highways staff available for this at the District. A local representative reported that their Parish had produced a leaflet detailing their local needs which the Committee though was worthwhile. The Head of Environmental Services undertook to establish details on the frequency of the grass cutting service.

(b) Refuse Collection

The Head of Environmental Services reported on the current position regarding refuse collection. He outlined the timescale for the implementation of the wheeled bin scheme across the District. In September 2005, the first phase of the scheme was implemented. This involved changes to the structure of the rounds and generated many problems. In November 2005, an alternative collection system was introduced in Lambourne and Chigwell with excellent results. Since that time, the recycling rates for these wards had increased from 24-25% to 41% exceeding the government target. Current major issues were the alternative weekly collection and concerns about the collection of residual side waste. Advice was being offered on this and steps would be taken for larger families who struggled with the system. Over recent week the wheeled bin system had been rolled out to Loughton and Waltham Abbey. It was anticipated that all areas would have a wheeled bin service by the end of the calendar year.

The Cabinet had established a Cabinet Sub –Committee on waste management to report in April 2006. The Sub-Committee had been tasked with considering the Council's current waste management contract including the operational aspects. The Committee considered the options open to the Council in relation to this process and the associated consequences. The Committee requested that a report to be given to its next meeting detailing progress made in ensuring that the contract was being fulfilled to standard.

Reference was made to the difficulties experience in rural areas and the factors taken into account in determining the frequency of the street cleansing service which were based on standards set by legislation. The Committee also considered the approach taken to commercial waste and were informed that there were few incentives to encourage the collection of such waste as it did not contribute to the targets set for recycling.

(c) Stansted Airport – off site parking

The District Council Head of Planning and Economic Development referred to concerns raised about unauthorized business activities on land near Stansted Airport. Local Councils had reported that two sites were being used as parking facilities for the airport breaching planning policy. Two visits had been paid to the sites on 10 and 30 October 2005. In both instances, planning contravention notices had been issued. In the meantime, an investigation was being carried out to gather information for possible

enforcement action and identify those involved. It was reported that legitimate businesses in the vicinity were being adversely affected by the unauthorised activities.

The risks associated with injunction action together with issues around highways and ownership of the land was reported.

The Head of Planning and Economic Development reported that the main aim was to stop the activity therefore priority was being given to ensuring that any action was effective. It was noted that other Authorities had policies in their Local Plans to deal with such issues. It may be worth including such provision in the emerging Local Development Framework.

Local representatives should be made aware of this problem as there was a chance that it might start up elsewhere. They were invited to feed back any observations to the Council.

(d) Community Development Fund Initiative

Councillor E Borton of Nazing Parish Council reported on progress with the Community Development Fund Initiative. A Sub-Committee of local representatives had met on several occasions between November 2005 and January 2006 to assess the applications submitted for funding from the initiative. This comprised 17 applications from Local Councils and 1 case from the Copped Hall Trust.

The Sub-Committee chose to reject 3 requests, defer a further 3 and recommend 11 to the meeting on 1 February 2006 of the Town and Parish Council for passing by the County who provided the funding. The meeting subsequently agreed these recommendations and they have now been passed to the County for a final decision which was awaited.

Councillor Borton reported that it was possible that further funding would be forthcoming from the West Essex Forum and that another bid might be submitted to the body.

No recommendations would be forwarded on the next round of applications including the 3 deferred cases until a decision on the outstanding applications had been reported. There was a desire to ensure that the scheme was continued and local representatives would be meeting with the County officer who was to take over from the present post holder Peter Pearson. Concerns were expressed about the timescale for the process. Consideration was given to the level of expertise on the Sub-Committee.

Councillor Borton reported that the decision making process had taken into account the level of local support for the identified schemes and took into account this information when formulating the preferred list.

(e) Planning

The Head of Planning and Economic Development gave a progress report on issues considered at the last meeting of the Committee on 2 November 2005. This focused on the perception that District Council Officers and Members did not always understand the representations submitted by the Local Councils. In response to some of the specific issues, the Committee were advised that the correspondence and leaflet sent out to neighbours of planning applications had now been redesigned. A seminar held in January 2006 on planning issues was well attended by representatives of local councils possibly due to the interest generated by the points under discussion. The matters had been considered by the Local Council Charter Review Committee who may take on the issue and agree a framework.

A guide to the Epping Forest District Local Plan Polices was attached to the minutes of the last meeting.

The Head of Planning of Economic Development considered the question of what was a proper comment and suggested that Local Councils think about the local knowledge that they could offer to the planning officers.

He reported that there was an attempt by officers to focus comments on areas where action was most likely to be successful.

(f) Local Government Re-organisation.

The Leader of the District Council, Councillor Knapman reported on emerging government proposals for the reorganisation of Local government. It was likely that they could lead to some amalgamation of Town and Parish Councils and some merging at the District/Borough/County level. A white paper was scheduled for June/July 2006. A small groups of Councillors to include the Leader would be meeting to consider Essex's response to the proposals. There was support for the current structure with improvements. Councillor G McEwen of Essex County Council reported that the County supported this approach. The Joint Chief Executive (Community) reported the timescale for the process and invited members to submit their views to the consultation.

21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Councillor R Wood of North Weald Parish Council referred to the Public Examination for the East of England Plan which had just come to an end. Arising from the discussion, a water paper on sewage issues was out for consultation. The exercise concluded on 3 March 2006. It was agreed that contact be made with the Panel for the Examination to inform that local interest wished to make comments on the paper and ask whether provision could be made for these to be submitted after the deadline baring in mind the tight timescale involved.

On 14 March new housing figures would be published for the region.

22. LAST MEETING OF THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Chairman thanked local representatives and District Officers for supporting the Committee over the past year and said that this was very much appreciated.

23. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 21 June 2006 at 7.30.pm in the Council Chamber at the Civic Offices Epping. Following this meetings would be held on:

8 November 2006
28 March 2007

CHAIRMAN

Minute Item 20

Essex County Council Highways Budget Information

Maintenance Initiative (Large Maintenance schemes) Epping District

| | |
|---------|------------|
| 2005/06 | £4,800,000 |
| 2006/07 | £4,100,000 |
| 2007/08 | £4,400,000 |

Normal Maintenance Budgets Epping District (Annual)

Basic - £1,100,000
Trees and Weeds - £100,000
Grass Cutting - £100,000
Environmental (Signs / Lines / Drains) - £325,000

Paul Hardy

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Highways and Transportation

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