

## **EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COUNCIL MINUTES**

**Committee:** Council **Date:** 29 September 2015

**Place:** Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.30 - 8.40 pm

**Members Present:** Councillors E Webster (Chairman), J Lea (Vice-Chairman), K Angold-Stephens, N Avey, N Bedford, A Boyce, H Brady, W Breare-Hall, G Chambers, K Chana, T Church, D Dorrell, R Gadsby, A Grigg, J Hart, L Hughes, R Jennings, H Kane, S Kane, H Kauffman, P Keska, J Knapman, M McEwen, L Mead, A Mitchell MBE, G Mohindra, R Morgan, S Murray, S Neville, A Patel, J Philip, C P Pond, C C Pond, M Sartin, G Shiell, D Stallan, S Stavrou, B Surtees, L Wagland, G Waller, S Watson, C Whitbread, J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse, D Wixley and N Wright

**Apologies:** Councillors R Bassett, R Butler, L Girling, S Jones, A Lion, H Mann, C Roberts, B Rolfe, T Thomas and S Weston

**Officers Present:** G Chipp (Chief Executive), D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Neighbourhoods), C O'Boyle (Director of Governance), R Palmer (Director of Resources), S G Hill (Assistant Director (Governance & Performance Management)), S Mitchell (PR Website Editor), R Perrin (Democratic Services Officer), A Hendry (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and J Leither (Democratic Services Officer)

### **42. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION**

The Assistant Director of Governance and Performance Management 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.

### **43. MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the Council meetings held on 28 July 2015 and the Extraordinary Council held on 10 September 2015 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **44. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

### **45. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **(a) Announcements by the Chairman of the Council**

##### **(i) Events**

The Chairman advised that she had hosted the Civic Lunch at Gilwell Park, attended the Costmonger's Harvest Festival at Guildhall Yard, London, the opening of a

memorial plaque for former Councillor Penny Smith at the Grange Farm Trust and taken part in Explorer Conservation Project with the Scout's.

**(ii) Flowers**

The Chairman advised that she intended the flowers from tonight's meeting to be sent to Jubilee Court, Waltham Abbey.

**(b) Announcement by the Portfolio Holder for Housing**

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor D Stallan updated Members of the Council on the request for assistance for Syrian Refugees. He advised that the Council would assist up to 6 refugees each year for the next four years with non secure tenancies and accommodation consisting of a 1 bed and a 2 bed flat.

**46. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)**

The Council noted that there were no public questions for this meeting.

**47. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER NOTICE**

The Council noted that there were no Members questions made with notice for this meeting.

**48. REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET**

The Council received written reports from Members of the Cabinet.

The Chairman invited the Leader to provide an oral report and other Members of the Cabinet to give an oral update.

**(a) The Leader of the Council**

The Leader of the Council advised that he had attended a number of forums since the last meeting on 28 July 2015. He updated the Council on work of the Greater Essex group that had undertaken to explore the potential benefits and risks of the devolution deal for Essex. A high-level submission had been made to Central Government on the 4 September 2015, confirming in principle that the Great Essex Partnership would like to continue their interest. The Leader confirmed that a report would be presented to Cabinet on the 8 October 2015, which would provide much more detail on the devolution with any final decisions being taken by this Council.

The Leader also advised that he had attended the South East Local Economic Partnership (SELEP) Board on 25 September 2015. It had been considered that an Enterprise Partnership solely for Essex would be more effective in delivering better economic benefits and crucial infrastructure; although the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Greg Clark had announced that he would not be approving any changes to boundaries and therefore SELEP would be moving forward in its current composition.

**(b) Governance and Development Management Portfolio Holder**

The Governance and Development Management Portfolio Holder, Councillor J Philip advised that outstanding households required to register for electoral registration had reduced to just over 9,000 households and was significantly better position than other authorities.

**49. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS WITHOUT NOTICE****(a) Syrian Refugees**

Councillor S Murray asked the Housing Portfolio Holder whether he would agree that;

- (i) residents in district would have very mixed views on the issue;
- (ii) a minority or majority would be happy that the Council had decided to help; and
- (iii) the response had not fallen on all of the districts residents but on those which were on the housing waiting list, in Council housing and therefore that the response was unfair?

Councillor D Stallan agreed that there would be mixed views from residents across the district in offering housing assistance to the Government's request for help with Syrian Refugees. He advised that some residents would feel that the burden had fallen upon them, if they were on the housing waiting list, although he had to balance the needs of the Government request with the needs of the district's residents and took into consideration the local demand for housing and the request made to the authority.

**(b) Syrian Refugees - Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme**

Councillor S Watson asked the Housing Portfolio Holder whether he could confirm if the Council would be housing Syrian Refugees under the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme and that the relevant security checks would be undertaken before they were placed in the community.

Councillor D Stallan confirmed that it was the intention to assist Syrian Refugees under the Vulnerable Persons Scheme and prior to relocation in local authorities, the refugees on their arrival to UK would be initially housed in Government accommodation and go through the relevant checks.

**(c) Syrian Refugees - Housing Policy**

Councillor N Bedford asked the Housing Portfolio Holder, whether in light of the Syrian Crisis, would any changes be required to the Housing Policy.

Councillor D Stallan advised that officers had advised that no alterations to the Housing Policy would be required because the refugees would be treated in the same way as a homeless applicant. Therefore the five year residents rule would not be applied and they would only be offered non secure tenancy, which would prevent the Right to Buy.

**(d) Syrian Refugees – Housing Availability Calculations**

Councillor L Wagland asked the Housing Portfolio Holder, how the calculation had been made with regards to the availability of housing for Syrian Refugees?

Councillor D Stallan advised that the number of void properties of an average year had been taken into account, alongside the type of property whilst balancing the needs of the housing waiting list. Furthermore, if the Government asked the Council to take refugees tomorrow they would be able to accommodate them with what they had offered.

(e) Syrian Refugees – ECC Support

Councillor K Angold-Stephens asked the Housing Portfolio Holder whether the Council was liaising with Essex County Council (ECC) for the additional support services that would be required for the refugees.

Councillor Stallan advised that the Council would be working with ECC and at the next Locality Board further information about the services ECC would be providing would be advised.

(f) Syrian Refugees – External Agency Help

Councillor B Surtees asked the Housing Portfolio Holder whether he was aware of the Bishops of Chelmsford call to all Christian and church people within the diocese, to respond as positively as possible to the Syrian crisis; that the Bishop had made sure that there was church property available to offer in appropriate circumstances and; that he had called upon the Christian community for skills and training to support refugees when they arrived?

Councillor D Stallan welcomed the response and advised that the crisis should not just fall upon local authorities but that all community and external agencies could offer their support and could contact the Council for further guidance and advice.

(g) Green Belt Review Visit

Councillor J Knapman asked the Planning Policy Portfolio Holder if he could honour his promise to visit Chigwell Parish Council with regards to the Green Belt Review.

The Leader advised that in absence of the Planning Policy Holder, that he would ask Councillor R Bassett to visit Chigwell Parish Council.

(h) Devolution

Councillor C C Pond asked the Leader of the Council whether he was aware of a briefing the Leader of the ECC had given to group leaders regarding local authorities in the County that were beyond the metropolitan green belt and wanted to accept more of the housing growth than other green belt authorities, who were not keen?

Councillor C Whitbread advised that EFDC had raised this issue because of the devolution deal and the aspirations for growth that this would create. He advised that residents in the district had told the Council that they wanted the green belt protected and not to build more houses than were required locally. For this to be achieved, a Essex SHARM would be required to spread the development, which had yet to be put into legislation and so he would only sign up to what was best for the residents and Council, when the details were available.

(i) Parkguard

Councillor D Wixley asked the Safer, Greener and Transport Portfolio Holder whether Parkguard had been patrolling because of reductions in the Police service; whether they were regulated; and what the costs were involved for the Council?

Councillor G Waller advised that a meeting had been held with Chigwell Parish Council, Members of the District Council and the Police which concluded that some additional support was required alongside the Police. The agency Parkguard specialised and added value to the work being carried out in the Limes Farm area.

The money being spent was being monitored with contributions from the pubs that agreed to this way forward bearing some of the costs, although an exact figure was not yet known.

(j) House Building Programme –Carbon Emissions

Councillor S Neville asked the Housing Portfolio Holder that with the Government cancelling the introduction of 0% carbon home standards by 2016 and the negative impact that this could have on households in risk of fuel poverty in new housing. Would he meet with him to discuss increasing the Council housebuilding standard from code 4 to code 6?

Councillor G Waller advised that in the interests of making the Council as green as possible, he had proposed that the new Council homes should be built to code 4, which had only resulted in an additional cost of £1500 per dwelling and was worthwhile for the Council and future tenants. He believed that no other authorities had gone above code level 4 and to go beyond this level would be difficult. Councillor G Waller advised that code levels were being phased out and replaced with building regulations to ensure the maximum efficiencies were achieved and that the Council would like to build homes to the maximum efficiency possible.

(k) Local Plan

Councillor J M Whitehouse asked the Planning Policy Portfolio Holder about the engagement of consultants looking at recreation plots of land outside the green belt and within urban areas, and the lack of information and updates provided to Members and when would Members get a full briefing about this?

Councillor Whitbread advised that Councillor R Bassett would provide a written answer to his question and hoped that the process had been open and transparent.

(l) Parking Permits

Councillor J H Whitehouse asked the Safer, Cleaner and Transport Portfolio Holder whether only parking permits for 24 hours could be purchased and not the 2 and 4 hours permits that had been formally available, as this meant that residents who had two or more visits per day, were having to hand out permits that cost £1.30 instead of 40p; Had he attended the meeting where this was decided or was it an officers decision; Could something be done to reinstate the permits; Was there a carers permit available and; if so could details be given and publicised?

Councillor G Waller advised that there was a meeting in October 2015 and he would raise the matter for discussion and report back.

(m) National Planning Policy

Councillor L Wagland asked the Governance and Performance Management Portfolio Holder how he interpreted the national planning policy statement on Green Belt protection and the intentional unauthorised development issued by Steve Quartermain, Chief Planner of Department for Communities and Local Government (DLCG), which states that intentional unauthorised development would be a material consideration that could be weighed in the determination of planning applications and appeals. Although there was a concern of who had to prove the intentional unauthorised development?

Councillor J Philip acknowledged that the policy was a positive step forward and the changes would be a good thing for the Council. He advised that the planning department would be investigating it.

(n) Broadway Parking Review

Councillor C C Pond asked the Safer, Cleaner and Transport Portfolio Holder when the Broadway Parking Review would start.

Councillor G Waller advised that a date for the Broadway Parking Review would take place shortly and would include relevant officers, Wards Members and himself.

(o) Waste and Recycling Collections

Councillor B Surtees asked the Environment Portfolio Holder when the Waste and recycling Collection service would normalise because he had received reports from residents regarding vehicles driving over the curbs and damaging the pavements in Ongar.

Councillor W Breare-Hall advised that some agency staff were still being used until the service level increased to a satisfactory level and further training and development had taken place. Regarding the issues with vehicles driving over curbs, Councillor W Breare-Hall asked that details were passed on to him for further investigation.

(p) AECOM

Councillor J Knapman asked the Leader what was the role of AECOM in relation to the Council because Chigwell Parish Council were unable to procure their services?

Councillor Whitbread indicated he would find out and come back to Councillor J Knapman.

(q) Lyndsey House, Epping

Councillor J H Whitehouse asked the Portfolio Holder for Asset and Economic Development whether the sale of Lyndsay House in Epping could be sped up because of residents concerns about the deterioration of the building.

Councillor A Grigg advised that Lyndsay House was still in the ownership of EFDC and the sale to ECC was being held up by the submission for State Aid to the Secretary of State and once she had further information it would be published in the Members Bulletin.

**50. MOTIONS**

The Chairman reported that there were no motions to be considered at this meeting.

**51. DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS IN 2015/16**

**Mover: Councillor D Stallan, Portfolio Holder for Housing.**

Councillor D Stallan submitted a report requesting a supplementary capital estimate for Disabled Facilities Grants for 2015/16.

Report as first moved **ADOPTED**

**RESOLVED:**

That a supplementary capital estimate in the sum of £120,000 for 2015/16 to supplement the existing agreed budget of £380,000 for Disabled Facilities Grants be approved.

**52. STATUTORY STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2014/15**

**Mover: Councillor J Knapman, Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee.**

Councillor J Knapman submitted a report regarding the Statutory Statement of Accounts for 2014/15.

Report as first moved **ADOPTED**

**RESOLVED:**

That the Statutory Statement of Accounts for 2014/15 be adopted.

**53. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

**(a) Report of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The Council received a written report from Councillor Morgan, the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He advised that the Neighbourhoods and Community Select Panel would be holding a special meeting on 17 December 2015, to review the problems with regards to the new Waste Contract, which would open to the public and webcast. He also advised that the Principal of Epping Forest College would be giving a presentation at the next meeting on 20 October 2015.

**54. JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

**(a) Royal Gunpowder Mills**

Councillor H Kane advised that the report for the Royal Gunpowder Mills related to two meetings on 15 August 2015 and 12 September 2015.

**(b) Grange Farm Trust**

Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor R Gadsby declared a pecuniary interest on this item and the Grange Farm trust and left the meeting for the remainder of the discussion on this item.

Councillor M McEwen advised that Colebrook Royals Football Club had negotiated the use of the Grange Farm Centre facilities and the Trust had applied for planning

permission for an extension to increase the general usage of the centre, which had been endorsed by the Football Foundation who had determined that it would enhance the suitability of the site for the Football Club. It was hoped that the extension would go ahead as soon as the funds were available.

Councillor M Sartin advised that the financial report and final accounts for the year ended April 2015 would be presented to the Trustees in November 2015. In 2014/15 the Trustees had agreed 21 grant awards totalling £71,792, of which five were awarded to organisations within Epping Forest District and included North Weald Mums, Chigwell Men's Club, Loughton Grassroots Football Academy, Loughton Youth Project and Theydon Bois Village Green. In the current financial year, six grants had been agreed so far with one going to Chigwell Lawn Tennis Club to enable the resurfacing of two courts.

Councillor M Sartin advised that grants were available to any group providing or assisting in the provision of recreational facilities or for leisure occupations which would benefit residents in the area of Epping Forest District Council and the Metropolitan Police area. The Metropolitan Police area covered all the London Boroughs and it appeared that organisations in the District had been quite successful in their applications.

Events at the Trust which had taken place recently were opening of the new children's playground and the unveiling of the memorial plaque in tribute to former District Councillor Penny Smith, for the work which she had completed as one of the District Council's representatives on the Grange Farm Trust.

The Grange Farm Centre's website had recently been updated and gave more details on the various activities which were taking place at the site.

There was also a suggestion that Members might like to visit the site to see how the sports fields, the pavilion and Chigwell Meadows had developed and a suitable time and date could be arranged for Members to visit.

(c) Stansted Airport Community Trust Fund

Councillor R Morgan advised that he would be submitting a written report to the next Council meeting regarding the Stansted Trust.

**CHAIRMAN**