

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee:	Stronger Place Select Committee	Date:	Thursday, 4 November 2021
Place:	Council Chamber - Civic Offices	Time:	7.00 - 9.05 pm
Members Present:	Councillors R Bassett, S Heather, I Hadley, J Jennings, R Morgan (Vice-Chairman), R Balcombe, A Lion (Chairman), J H Whitehouse and M Owen		
Other Councillors:	Councillors P Bolton and R Brookes		
Apologies:	C McCredie		
Officers Present:	L Kirman (Democratic Services Officer), N Dawe (Chief Operating Officer), A Buckley (Higher Level Apprentice (Internal Communications)), D Fenton (Service Director (Housing Revenue Account)), A. Hoke (Team Manager-Leisure and Parking) and J Warwick (Acting Service Director (Contracts))		

16. Webcasting Introduction

The Chairman 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.

17. Substitute Members

The following substitution was reported:
Cllr Janet Whitehouse for Cllr McCredie.

18. Declarations of Interest

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

19. Notes of Previous Meeting

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2021 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

20. Terms of Reference & Work Programme

The Select Committee noted their terms of reference and work programme.

21. Essex Highways Update

Cllr Lee Scott, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport at Essex County Council attended the meeting and gave a brief overview of his remit which covered potholes, buses, transport, coastal erosion, cycling, walking and footpaths. He outlined his desire to meet with District and Parish Councils to gain an understanding of the issues across the County, suggested that the key issue for the County was flooding and advised the Committee that he could be emailed directly, or through the Chairman, to address any issues. He reminded Members that there was a limited

budget, if something was dangerous it would be fixed, but this could not be guaranteed for other issues. He offered to answer questions from the Committee.

The Committee sought further information on:

- The delay on road repairs - Cllr Scott Advised that there was a dependency upon budget, there had been an impact from covid affecting work, but roadworks would be completed until up to date.
- The state that utility companies leave the roads/pathways - Cllr Scott advised that meetings would take place to ensure contractors and utility companies ensured the state of the highways would be properly reinstated.
- If inspections of pavements would recommence, as these were dangerous and discouraged walking- Cllr Scott asked that details of the specific areas be sent to him.
- Road work signs being left at the side of the road after works completed- Cllr Scott advised that he recognised this scenario and would take this back to the relevant officers.
- What was being done to encourage Public Transport - Cllr Scott advised that there was a new scheme 'bus back better', usage needed to be at pre pandemic levels, but through liaison with the bus companies there would be more environmentally friendly buses and services that go where and when people want them, with an aspiration to be able to track the service through an app.
- Charging points for electric vehicles – Cllr Scott acknowledged these were essential and suggested there could be potential for funding for points from companies that sell electric vehicles, it was important to have the correct charging points for the vehicle.
- The potential to include sustainability as part of the tender process – Cllr Scott advised that there would be economic, efficiency and environmental factors in all new contracts, this would not happen overnight but would include home to school transport.
- If planned works could be diverted to dangerous works -Cllr Scott advised that budgets could be vired, and there was an expectation that teams were flexible,
- If it possible to introduce regulations to prevent pavement parking - Cllr Scott suggested that there were some roads where this would not be viable but he was lobbying government for the introduction of legislation.
- If there was an intention for Safer Streets for Schools - Cllr Scott confirmed that this was the intention and suggested it was important to have lower speed limits and ensure that people felt it was safe for children to walk to school.
- Cllr Scott confirmed that rural areas still had road inspections carried out, that incenses were required for road closures and there would be more enforcement for parking, speeding and for wider issues.
- Cllr Scott offered to return to the Select Committee to provide updates and answer further questions.

The Select Committee thanked Cllr Scott for his attendance at the meeting.

Resolved:

Cllr Scott would be invited to attend a future meeting of this Select Committee.

22. Review of off street parking tariffs

J Warwick (Acting Service Director) introduced the off-street car parks tariffs report and advised the Select Committee that tariffs had not increased since 2015. The

review aimed to ensure tariffs were set at a sustainable level to support the operation of car parks and to assist with budget pressures. Cost benefit analysis and consultation with officers and members had been carried out to inform the proposed changes to off street parking charges, permits and seasons tickets. These were detailed as:

Parking Charges;

- The existing tariffs of £0.20 for 30 minutes, £0.80/£0.90 for up to 1 hour and £1.60/£1.80 for up to 2 hours to be increased by £0.20 across the District. The principle of differential tariff between car parks to be retained.
- To retain the tariffs for stays above 2 hours.
- To extend full tariff on Saturday to apply to all car parks across the District.
- To extend 1 hour free parking on Sunday to 2 hours across the District and increase all day £1.00 charge to £2.00.
- To remove daily 1 hour free charging in Civic Offices Car Park (Sunday free allowance will remain) in consistency with other District car parks.
- To agree full tariffs to be introduced in Beaumont Park Drive Car Park, with a view to exploring satisfactory resolutions for demand.
- To retain free weekend and Bank Holiday parking during the month of December.
- To continue free parking for Blue Badge holders and motorbikes.

Permits & Season Tickets;

- To increase first residents permit charge from £50.00 to £55.00 per annum, in line with on-street charges.
- Introduction of business and residents permits in Cornmill Car Park (Waltham Abbey) and business permits in Oakwood Hill East Car Park (Loughton).
- Season Tickets 5% discount to be retained and prices to be adjusted in line with proposed parking charges.

Operational hours of 08:00-18:00 in all car parks, and

Implementation of changes in tariff would commence in Q1 2022

The review of the off-street car park tariffs also took into consideration the climate change action plan and the need to reduce our carbon footprint and improve air quality in Epping Forest. Car parks were operating at 80% of pre-pandemic income.

The Committee considered and discussed the proposed changes tariffs and raised queries in relation to:

- Electric Vehicle charging points in car parks. J Warwick advised that that a detailed assessment of all car parks had been carried out to assess power supply and infrastructure costs with an external provider and at this stage EV charging was only viable in four car parks. He advised that Langston Road was not an EFDC car park. but that issues with the EV points would be taken up with asset management.
- Concerns were raised in relation to the increased fee for up thirty minutes parking and the impact on businesses and revitalising the high streets. J Warwick advised that there had been liaison with the economic development team, and that research from the British Parking Association and the Government suggested there was no clear relationship between parking charges and footfall. This review suggested a sustainable charge to cover the operational costs. The Select Committee felt this increase would drive members of the community to use areas outside the District that offered free

parking. The Committee requested that an option to keep the first 30 minutes free, with additional increases to fees for longer stays to offset any financial impact should be presented to Cabinet for consideration.

- Members discussed the potential to have an annual payment for occasional use of the car parks and felt this would be advantageous to residents especially where there was restricted hours parking. The Select Committee were advised that this could present operational difficulties but different options would be investigated.
- The Committee were advised that car park payment machines would continue to accept cash and cards. That there were no business or resident parking permits, only season tickets, in the Epping and Loughton Sainsbury car parks.
- Members requested that the service gave consideration to Member parking, with the reduction in parking allocation at the Civic Offices and suggested that parking permits could be issued. Cllr Kane advised he would take this back to Cabinet and J Warwick informed the Select Committee that a variety of options would be developed.
- Members welcomed the two hours free parking on Sundays

Resolved:

To recommend the review of off-street car parking tariff for consideration and approval by Cabinet with the inclusion of the additional options:

- (a) the first 30 mins parking be free of charge, or remain as is, and the financial impact be offset with further increased tariffs for longer stay periods of parking, and
- (b) the feasibility of the introduction of an annual payment system to allow the occasional use of all EFDC car parks for up to 2 hours,

23. Improving Payment Options for Leaseholders

D Fenton, The Housing and Property Director presented a report on improving the payment options for Leaseholders. She advised the Select Committee that properties have a finite life cycle and the Council's residential assets were nearing the point where major investment was required. This could cause a financial strain for leaseholders who have to contribute to the cost of the works. The proposals would assist leaseholders with options for payment and had been benchmarked with similar organisations, these were detailed as:

The Council should review the current Corporate Debt Policy to allow increased payment terms for leaseholders, and

- (a) offer a menu of payment options for resident leaseholders and for non-residential leaseholders who do not sublet more than one EFDC leasehold property where the property is owned by individuals.
- (b) approve that any repayment plan for a sum of £12,500 or above to be secured as a voluntary charge on the property. The administration cost associated with this should be borne by the applicant and would be in the region of £150.
- (c) agree to an interest rate for leasehold payment options based on 0.25% above the average Council lending rate for the previous year for the above.

(d) delegate authority to Director for Housing & Property to consider any applications from leaseholders on the grounds of extreme hardship to vary the length of repayment periods.

(e) delegate authority to the Director for Housing & Property in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Community the ability to agree payment plans on a project by project basis where leaseholders estimated bills are likely to be in excess of £12,500

The Select Committee:

- Welcomed the approach presented and received confirmation that works were required because of a natural cycle
- Queried if there was a transfer of credit risk and the suggested the rate at 0.25% above lending rate was too low. The Select Committee were advised that the corporate debt policy would mitigate risk to the Council and that additional options would be developed to be presented to Cabinet.

Resolved:

The Select Committee recommended the improved payment options for Leaseholders, with the inclusion of additional options for increased interest rates as part of the major works proposed repayment plan, for the consideration and approval by Cabinet.

24. Dates of Future Meetings

The date of the next meeting was noted as 13 January 2022 at 7:00pm.

25. Exclusion of Public and Press

RESOLVED:

That the public and press should be excluded from the meeting for the items of business set out below on grounds that they would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the following paragraph(s) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) or are confidential under Section 100(A)(2) of the Local Government Act 1972,

Agenda Item No	Subject	Exempt Paragraph Number	Information
9	Waste and Recycling Collection / Street Cleansing Contract	3	

26. Waste Management Contract/Service Options

J Warwick (Acting Service Director) presented a paper on waste and cleansing contract. The Select Committee considered the report.

Resolved:

To recommend to Cabinet an in-principle extension, of up to ten years from November 2021, on the current Waste/Cleansing Contract for approval by Cabinet

CHAIRMAN