

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Overview & Scrutiny Committee **Date:** Thursday, 31 March 2022

Place: Council Chamber - Civic Offices **Time:** 7.00 - 9.35 pm

Members Present: Councillors M Sartin (Chairman), R Jennings (Vice-Chairman), P Bhanot, P Bolton, R Brookes, H Kane, J Lea, A Lion, S Murray, S Rackham, D Stocker, J H Whitehouse and D Wixley

Members Present (Virtually): Councillors I Hadley, T Matthews and P Stalker

Other Councillors: Councillors L Burrows, S Kane, A Patel, D Sunger, C Whitbread and H Whitbread

Other Councillors (Virtually): Councillors N Avey, C McCredie and J M Whitehouse

Apologies: R Baldwin, S Heather, D Plummer and K Williamson

Officers Present: G Blakemore (Chief Executive), N Dawe (Chief Operating Officer), A Small (Strategic Director Corporate and 151 Officer), G Woodhall (Team Manager - Democratic & Electoral Services), V Messenger (Democratic Services Officer), D Gilson-Butler (Young Persons Officer), K Lucas (Young Person's Assistant), P Seager (Chairman's Officer) and G Wallis (Community, Culture & Wellbeing Service Manager)

Officers Present (Virtually): F Edmonds (Climate Change Officer), J Leither (Democratic Services Officer) and V Willis (Principal Planning Officer)

By invitation: Epping Forest Youth Councillors: Sonny Bazzoni, Martin Prinsloo, Daniel Turner, Finlay Wallbanks, Frank Cullis, Archie Flynn and Sydnae Smith

84. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Democratic and Electoral Services Team Manager 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.

85. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee noted the following substitutions reported at the meeting.

- (1) That Councillor R Brookes had been appointed as substitute for Councillor R Baldwin;
- (2) That Councillor H Kane had been appointed as substitute for Councillor K Williamson; and

- (3) That Councillor D Stocker had been appointed as substitute for Councillor S Heather.

86. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2022 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

87. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- (a) Pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor S Murray declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Annual review of the work undertaken by the Epping Forest Youth Council item, as two of the youth councillors were pupils at Roding Valley High School where he worked part time.
- (b) Pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor S Murray declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy and Governance Arrangements item, as he was a member of Loughton Town Council, which held a 125-year lease on the Roding Valley Recreation Ground, he was a member of the Town Council's Recreation Committee and was also a member of the Epping Forest Heritage Trust.
- (c) Pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor D Wixley declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy and Governance Arrangements item, as he was a member of Loughton Town Council, which held a 125-year lease on the Roding Valley Recreation Ground, he was chairman of the Town Council's Recreation Committee and was also a member of the Epping Forest Heritage Trust.
- (d) Pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor R Brookes declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy and Governance Arrangements item, as she was a member of Loughton Town Council, which held a 125-year lease on the Roding Valley Recreation Ground and fully participated in the Recreation Committee debates. She was also a member of the Epping Forest Heritage Trust.
- (e) Pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor J H Whitehouse declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy and Governance Arrangements item, as she was a member of the Epping Forest Heritage Trust.
- (f) Pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor B Jennings declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy and Governance Arrangements item, as he was a member of the Epping Forest Heritage Trust.

88. PUBLIC QUESTIONS & REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee noted that no public questions or requests to address the meeting had been received.

89. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS - CALL-IN

The Committee noted that no executive decisions had been called-in for consideration since the previous meeting.

90. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE WORK UNDERTAKEN BY EPPING FOREST YOUTH COUNCIL

The presentation was introduced by Epping Forest Youth Councillors Sonny Bazzoni, Martin Prinsloo, Daniel Turner, Finlay Wallbanks. They were joined by other Youth Councillors Frank Cullis, Archie Flynn and Sydnae Smith along with the Community, Culture and Wellbeing Team – G Wallis (Service Manager), D Gilson-Butler (Young Person's Officer) and K Lucas (Young Person's Assistant). Their highlights included:

- Youth Council elections in March 2022 that had been competitively contended;
- #yoursay survey in June 2020 evidenced the need for a mental health project;
- MiLife C 19 project was updated to respond to Covid 19's impact on young people and now generated an income for the council by reaching a wider audience;
- Worked with Red Balloon Foundation to create and deliver 10 lesson plans on mental health and wellbeing in schools;
- Contributed to 17 surveys for local, regional and national consultations;
- Actively promoted their achievements in local council newsletters, local press, their schools and on social media;
- Interacted with other Youth Council and the British Youth Council;
- 8 Youth Councillors received achievement awards from the Council Chairman, Cllr H Kane, at this year's Civic Awards in March;
- 6 Youth Councillors received the Jack Petchey Achievement Award for their outstanding work;
- Hosted the Annual Youth Conference at the Civic Offices in November that focussed on climate action;
- Youth Activities Map on the Council's website was fully interactive and growing with 68 listings to date; and
- A thank you for the Council's continued support of the Youth Council's project work.

Members asked the following questions after the presentation.

What was the biggest impact the Youth Council had had on you? The youth councillors replied that they had made lots of friends with like-minded people. The Youth Council was helpful and accepting, it had grown their interest in politics and had given them the opportunity to help make a difference.

It was good that youth councillors used social media as they bridged a gap between young people and older generations, but did they use Tik Tok? Promoting the youth council's work on social media was a good way to reach other young people, so Tik Tok could also be used.

If you could use technology to change one thing in the District, what would that be? The Youth Council was involved with the Ripples Project in relation to the ripple effect of crime on the community and raising awareness. In February during half term, they had taken part in a consultation with Essex Police Press officers and held an interesting discussion on social media on how it could influence young people's lives.

Were the Youth Council involved in knife crime awareness? The Youth Council had worked heavily with the Essex Police Media Team and on the Ripples Project. They would be doing some casework projects alongside the police using actual incidents to spread the word in a young person friendly way. The Youth Council also had representation on the Independent Advisory Group. Youth councillors promoted the County Council knife bin initiative in schools to design a poster to raise awareness on knife crime, as this reached out and highlighted the dangers to young people.

How were they adjusting to coming out of Covid? The Youth Council had provided a lot of support and the MiLife C 19 project had helped young people with mental health issues. A survey had shown that underage vaping statistics had grown since the last survey, so they were hoping to address this concern.

Litter was a major problem in the District, how were youth councillors helping on this? They explained they would be continuing their environmental work on 5 April to help clean up the River Stort when they would be joined by the Emergency Planning team, Thames Water, The River and Canal Trust and Canalability. Providing bins for litter and recycling was crucial to helping to reduce litter and youth councillors could also help on litter picking.

The Youth Council seemed to be targeted more at boys than girls. Young Person's Officer, D Gilson-Butler, replied that 13 out of 29 youth councillors were girls but this was unusual as in her past 20 years of supporting Youth Councils, there has been a balanced representation.

How were people able to nominate other organisations that worked with young people on the Youth Council's interactive map? The Young Person's Officer advised that anyone could join it by filling out the application online on the Council's website and would provide more details after the meeting for members.

The Leader, Councillor C Whitbread, and Portfolio Holders, Councillors D Sunger and A Patel, offered to meet up with the Youth Council to support their work further. The work by the Young Person's officers was excellent, as they were learning lifelong skills.

The Chairman, Councillor M Sartin, thanked the youth councillors for sharing their achievements over the last two years and answering the many questions members had raised. She remarked that each new cohort of youth councillors had something new to bring to the Youth Council and thanked the officers as well.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee received an annual progress report on the work undertaken by the Community, Culture and Wellbeing Team with the Epping Forest Youth Council; and
- (2) That details of how other organisations could be added to the Youth Council's interactive map would be provided after the meeting.

(Post meeting update: The Youth projects interactive map was an excellent interactive resource. It could be searched by address, place or by category. New youth projects can be added to the map, simply by completing the short on line form on the Youth projects page at the link below:

<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/community/youth-projects/>)

91. PROPOSED EPPING FOREST DISTRICT MARKET POLICY

It was noted that this item had been withdrawn from the agenda by officers prior to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 31 March 2022 because more work was required but it would come back to this Committee before going to Cabinet for a decision.

92. EPPING FOREST SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION STRATEGIC ACCESS MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Vicki Willis (Principal Planning Officer) introduced the detailed report concerned with the potential impact of residential development on the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in relation to additional visitors using the Forest for recreational purposes. The Council had a legal duty as a 'competent authority' under the Habitats Regulations to protect such internationally important sites, which could be best achieved using measures put in place at the Local Plan level. The Partnership Agreement was jointly developed by the Council with other competent authorities, Natural England and the Corporation of London as the delivery body. It would replace the 'Interim Approach to Managing Recreational Pressure on the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation' adopted by the Council in October 2018. The document outlined the updated SAMM Strategy for Epping Forest and the governance arrangements to ensure that financial contributions that had been / would be collected from developments were spent in accordance with the purposes for which they had been secured and that proper monitoring of spending would be put in place.

A selection of the questions raised by members were detailed below, which the Planning Officer answered.

Was the Technical Oversight Group there to ensure that the money raised was spent on implementing the measures and costs in Schedule 1 of the Partnership Agreement? Yes, the Epping Forest Conservators had created the list, but work to progress it was ongoing, as the Conservators were the delivery body. The representatives from Natural England and the Conservators had been very supportive.

Regarding the in-perpetuity period in the original SAMM Strategy, 125 years seemed right, but the finance period had been interpreted as an 80-year cost? As the original SAMM Strategy had not had any allowance for in-perpetuity, an 80-year period was determined to be more appropriate with Natural England and the Technical Oversight Group.

There was support for the recommendation that all qualifying development was required to contribute with a 'tiered' approach taken, so that development that was closest to the Epping Forest SAC paid proportionately more than those further afield.

Councillor S Murray asked about the £716 per dwelling that would be required from new residential development within 3 kilometres of the Forest in respect of the implementation of the Roding Valley Recreation Ground (RVRG) between Buckhurst

Hill and Loughton, as a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). Loughton Town Council had not been consulted yet, but it held a 125-year lease to manage the RVRG. How detailed were the plans for the RVRG as a SANG and how had the £716 per dwelling been worked out? The work was at an early stage, but the Council had adopted a Green Infrastructure Strategy that provided the District wide framework for designating new areas of SANG together with identified opportunities to provide an alternative recreational offer to the Forest, including through enhancements to existing open spaces. N Dawe, Chief Operating Officer, continued that the budgeted figures were from the Green Infrastructure Strategy. The Roding Valley Recreation Ground work was being led by N Linihan with exploratory discussions underway and proposals would be brought back to Members.

Councillor J H Whitehouse supported the tiered approach but asked where were the 3-kilometre and 6-kilometre radii were measured from? What was the mechanism if other local authorities wanted to make changes and 80 years was not in-perpetuity in her opinion? What was the money being spent on? There was a map that showed the central point for the 3-kilometre and 6-kilometre radii and this could be included in the report to Cabinet on 11 April. There might be changes over the 80-year period, to the actual measures and there might be other factors to address the development over the length of the period of the Local Plan. The monies the projects were to be used on were detailed in appendix 1 of the report. A strategic approach had been taken with the Council apportioned a percentage of overall SAMM Strategy costs. It was up to the Council to determine how it would deliver the amount apportioned to the District.

How was the money being collected being spent, as within 3 kilometres of the SAC it was £352 per dwelling, and what were the totals so far? The Council had collected £45,000 and £200,000 was outlined within completed S106 agreements, which was dependent on these developments coming forward. However, the governance structures needed to be in place first to enable delivery of measures to start.

Would town and parish councils be represented on the Technical Oversight Group? This would be taken away and the Planning Officer would report back.

Councillor D Wixley commented that part of a border on the RVRG came under Chigwell Parish Council but this was not referred to in the report. The Planning Officer would clarify this further.

Councillor A Lion said that in Chigwell there were several open spaces but where access and parking was restrictive, how could these be improved? The Green Infrastructure Strategy had identified some measures, there might be items within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, so over the lifetime of the Local Plan there would be chances for improvement.

The percentage of visitor pressure was likely to rise but why were the Waltham Forest figures higher? The London Borough of Waltham Forest had higher housing figures so there would be more developments, therefore, there would be a higher percentage of visitors to the Forest.

Regarding clauses 14.3 and 14.4 of the Partnership Agreement, it was preferable if more details on how the expert was decided could be included. Also, in clause 15.8 (Notice), the Committee noted that it was good practice to include a point of contact if a notice was served.

The Chairman asked if the Committee's recommendations below could be taken into account by the Cabinet on 11 April 2022, as the report was going to that meeting for a decision.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee reviewed the adoption of a Partnership Agreement for the delivery of the SAMM Strategy for the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation in respect of the Agreement, which comprised governance arrangements, the SAMM Strategy and the approach to apportionment of SAMM Strategy costs to the relevant competent authorities;
- (2) That the Committee supported the recommendation on the approach to securing financial contributions from qualifying development within the District to deliver the SAMM Strategy;
- (3) That a map to show the central point for the 3-kilometre and 6-kilometre radii could be included in the report to Cabinet on 11 April.
- (4) That the Planning Officer would report back on whether town and parish councils could be represented on the Technical Oversight Group;
- (5) That the Planning Officer would clarify if a border came under Chigwell Parish Council; as this was not referred to in the report;
- (6) That within clauses 14.3 and 14.4 of the Partnership Agreement, it was preferable if more details on how the expert was decided could be included, and in clause 15.8 (Notice), the Committee noted that it was good practice to include a point of contact if a notice was served.

93. CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN CONSULTATION UPDATE

F Edmonds, Climate Change Officer, updated the Committee. The draft action plan had been approved by Cabinet and a public consultation was held last autumn. The methods, a summary of the responses received and changes to the Climate Change Action Plan were detailed in the report. The consultation survey included general questions around individual and community behaviours to understand the level of engagement with climate change in the District and to inform a behaviour change strategy for the future. The survey asked other questions related to businesses, travel and the Climate Change Action Plan itself. The Epping Forest Youth Council had also participated in the consultation and provided valuable input.

Members raised several issues, which the Climate Change Officer replied to, as detailed below.

In relation to the consultation's travel specific findings, Councillor A Lion commented that in Chigwell there was a limited bus service through lack of use, many of the roads did not have footways so there were issues there, and it had the highest number of electric vehicles but there were not any on street charging points. Buses and the rural network were a major challenge and although the Council was working with Essex County Council which had a bus improvement programme, there was not much for Epping Forest District. S Lloyd Jones, Sustainable Transport Officer, was looking at EV charging points and had carried out an audit on Council-owned car parks and rapid charging points had been installed this month. Also, disused Council-

owned garages could be converted to EV charging points, so there was more work to be done.

Nationally construction counted for 50% of all emissions and would low-emission concrete be used as an alternative on building developments? Within the emerging Local Plan there were environmental projects and details of what was expected on materials that builders needed to use to keep carbon emissions as low as possible and address sustainability.

To promote increased walking and cycling in the District was there a plan to improve pavements? Where the Council had walking and cycling plans within the action plan, it was aiming to make improvements and there were additional actions for the County Council.

How were household emissions tackled? Raising people's awareness through campaigns aimed at households and advising residents how they could reduce their energy use in the home, especially as energy bills were rising. Promoting grant funding, such as the Green Homes Grant and the Sustainable Warmth Scheme, for low energy efficient homes by upgrading properties. There was also the Government's Boiler Upgrade Scheme from April 2022 to encourage property owners to install low carbon heating systems.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee reviewed the outcomes of the Climate Change Action Plan Consultation ahead of the Climate Change Action Plan going to Cabinet on 11 April 2022.

94. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 2021 – 22 ANNUAL REPORT (DRAFT)

Councillor M Sartin advised that the final draft would go before the Committee at the 16 June 2022 meeting, and then to Council in July for approval.

The following amendments were noted at the meeting:

- Sale of the Pyrls Lane site, Loughton, to Qualis – the number of houses within the scheme had been increased to 37 following the Committee's meeting in June 2021; and
- Epping Forest District Market Policy report – the item had been withdrawn from the agenda and it would not be scrutinised this municipal year, as it was the last meeting.

95. CABINET BUSINESS

Cabinet's Key Decision List (KDL) updated to 1 March 2022 was scrutinised by the Committee and the following points were raised.

(a) Environmental and Technical Services

Regarding the two businesses case items for the transfer of services to Qualis of Ground Maintenance and MOT and Fleet, the Portfolio Holder, Councillor N Avey, replied that it would be pre-scrutinised before Cabinet made a decision.

(b) Housing Services

Councillor C Whitbread, Leader, confirmed that the item on the new policy on Proposed Change to Service Charges RTB Receipts would come before Scrutiny, prior to a decision by Cabinet.

(c) Corporate Services

The Portfolio Holder, Councillor D Sunger, confirmed that the Direct Award of the Print Contract would go to Cabinet on 11 April for a decision.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee reviewed the Executive's current programme of Key Decisions of 1 March 2022.

96. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – WORK PROGRAMME**(a) Current work programme**

G Woodhall, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager, stated that most of the work programme for this year had been completed with the exception of the Market Policy that had been withdrawn. Any transfers of services to Qualis would come to committee for pre-scrutiny before going to Cabinet for a decision. It was noted that the report on cash payments solutions was scheduled for the first meeting in the new municipal year on 16 June 2022.

The Committee agreed that external scrutiny of the City of London Corporation Epping Forest Management Strategy and Business Plan 2020-2030 should be earmarked for the meeting on 26 July 2022, which G Woodhall was to progress.

(b) Reserve work programme

Councillor M Sartin reminded members that they could suggest outside organisations they wished to scrutinise. Currently those listed included Essex County Council Children's Services, Essex Highways and Thames Water.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee reviewed its current work programme and reserve programme; and
- (2) That G Woodhall invite City of London Corporation to the Committee meeting on 26 July in respect of the Epping Forest Management Strategy and Business Plan 2020-2030.

97. SELECT COMMITTEES - WORK PROGRAMME**(a) Stronger Communities Select Committee**

Councillor J Lea, Chairman, reported that it had been interesting to ask questions after the presentation from Chief Inspector Paul Ballard, Essex Police District Commander for Epping Forest and Brentwood, on current policing and crime issues in the District at the last meeting on 22 March. Everything seemed to have gone well over the last year. The work programme included some items for the next municipal

year, and she also hoped that external scrutiny of a housing association might be possible.

It was noted that items 17 (Housing Associations) and 20 (Unaffordable rents) had yet to be confirmed by relevant officers.

(b) Stronger Council Select Committee

Councillor P Bolton, Chairman, reported the select committee had reviewed the Qualis Monitoring reports for quarter 4 (2020/21) and quarter 1 (2021/22) but they had already been to the Cabinet and Full Council. The Auditors were satisfied with their accounts.

Councillor S Murray declared that he would be a candidate in the 2022 elections being held on 5 May and queried if there had been an update report on the forthcoming elections, such as where the Count was taking place etc. Councillor M Sartin replied that the Elections Planning Group met regularly and information on the arrangements for the 2022 elections was usually publicised in the Council Bulletin. G Blakemore, Chief Executive and Returning Officer, advised that the Count would take place in the Civic Offices this year. A briefing for candidates and election agents would also be organised.

(c) Stronger Place Select Committee

Councillor A Lion, Chairman, reported that the select committee had achieved a lot this year and thanked the members who had contributed so much during the year. The Sustainable Transport Officer, S Lloyd-Jones had made a presentation to the select committee at the 15 March meeting on transport strategy and sustainability, a strategic overview and status update, as the Council was working hard to maximise use of its own land and assets to provide EV charging. He also remarked that littering across the District (work programme item 6) needed a higher profile next year.

Councillor M Sartin thanked her Vice-Chairman, Councillor B Jennings, for his support over the last year, and all the members and officers for their work over the last year, as this was the last meeting in this municipal year.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the progress of the three select committees against their work programmes;
- (2) That it was noted that Stronger Communities Select Committee work programme items 17 (Housing Associations) and 20 (Unaffordable rents) had yet to be confirmed by relevant officers;
- (3) That members would be kept informed about the arrangements for the 2022 Elections through the Bulletin; and
- (4) That littering across the District needed a higher profile on the Stronger Place Select Committee next year.

98. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Committee noted that there was no business which necessitated the exclusion of the public and press from the meeting.

CHAIRMAN