

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**Tuesday 4 July 2023, 7.00 pm - 8.45 pm
Council Chamber - Civic Offices**

Members Present: Councillors H Kane (Chairman), J Parsons (Vice-Chairman), I Allgood, D Barlow, R Bassett, A Lion, L Paine, R Pugsley and B Vaz

Other Councillors: Councillors R Balcombe, C Whitbread, N Bedford, S Kane, J Philip, J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse and D Wixley

Apologies: Councillor(s) E Gabbett and C Nweke

Officers In Attendance: Jennifer Gould (Strategic Director and Chief Operating Officer), Natalie Cole (Corporate Communications Officer), Francesca Edmonds (Climate Change Officer), David Marsh (Waste Management Team Manager), Vivienne Messenger (Democratic Services Officer), Mandy Thompson (Interim Acting Service Director (Technical)) and James Warwick (Interim Acting Service Director (Contracts))

Officers In Attendance (Virtually): Stephen Lloyd-Jones (Sustainable Transport Officer) and Rebecca Moreton (Corporate Communications Officer)

Contractor: B Johnson (Qualis Solutions Limited) and M Sharples (Qualis Solutions Limited)

Contractor (Virtually): G Donoghue (Optimum Professional Solutions), R Brooks (Anthony Collins) and D Stewart (Anthony Collins)

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

1 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.

2 SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee noted that there were no substitute members.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(a) Pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor R Bassett declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item of the agenda by virtue of being a Non-Executive Director of Qualis and would remain in the meeting for its consideration.

- Grounds Maintenance

(b) Pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor D Wixley declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item of the agenda by virtue of being a member of Loughton Town Council, which was referenced in the agenda presentation, and was the Chairman of the Recreation Committee with responsibilities for grounds

maintenance. The Councillor stated he would remain in the meeting for its consideration.

- Grounds Maintenance

(c) Pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor A Lion declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item of the agenda by virtue of being the Chairman of the Digital Innovation Zone and would remain in the meeting for its consideration.

- Terms of Reference and Work Programme

4 NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Following the approval of a new scrutiny committee structure on 4 April 2023, the Committee agreed the notes of the last meeting of the Stronger Place Select Committee held on 7 March 2023.

5 TERMS OF REFERENCE & WORK PROGRAMME

(a) Terms of Reference (draft)

Agreed:

- (1) That the draft Terms of Reference be agreed, subject to approval by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18 July 2023.

(b) Work Programme (draft)

Councillor A Lion was of the opinion Place Scrutiny Committee encompassed a wider scope of the place we lived in and the environment, as this also included broadband provision, roads and transport. As Chairman of the Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ), which was currently looking to provide fibre-based services to GP practices, he asked if an annual progress review of the DIZ could be added to the work programme. At the Strategic Director and Chief Operating Officer's (J Gould) suggestion, the Scrutiny Committee agreed to add this to the work programme for the January 2024 meeting.

Councillor H Kane asked if members could visit some specific sites to monitor grounds maintenance progress with Qualis personnel. The Managing Director of Qualis Property Solutions (B Johnson) offered to provide a schedule of works between Qualis and the Council.

Councillor A Lion remarked a 'who's responsible for what' would be very useful to help identify which piece of land was managed by who and whether it was a town/parish council, EFDC or Essex County Council. The Strategic Director and Chief Operating Officer would look into this suggestion of how best to identify on local maps the grounds maintenance responsibilities for the different council tiers in the District.

Agreed:

- (2) That an annual progress review of the DIZ to include an impact assessment of the project to provide fibre-based services to GP practices, be added to the work programme for January 2024;
- (3) That the Strategic Director and Chief Operating Officer would look into the suggestion of how best to identify on local maps the grounds maintenance responsibilities for the different council tiers in the District; and

- (4) That the draft work programme with the inclusion of the DIZ item above be agreed, subject to approval by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18 July 2023.

6 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

The Committee received a presentation on Grounds Maintenance from B Johnson (Managing Director) and M Sharples (Head of Operations) of Qualis Property Solutions. Housing repairs had started three years ago in 2020 and the presentation included updates on Qualis' business plan objectives, its financial benefit, staff resources and apprenticeships. Highlights included the scope of the grounds maintenance service as well as performance monitoring and the customer satisfaction survey undertaken.

The Committee's questions encompassed hedge trimming, apprenticeships, maintenance equipment used, risk assessments and maintenance of closed cemeteries.

Resolved:

That the Place Scrutiny Committee reviewed the updates provided for Qualis Property Solutions Grounds Maintenance service.

7 CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN

The Climate Change Action Plan was adopted by Cabinet in April 2022 and stated the steps to be taken by the Council to make Epping Forest District Council area carbon neutral by 2030. Introduced by F Edmonds (Climate Change Officer), the report detailed the Plan summary to show the outcome of the review undertaken and progress made on the climate change agenda.

The Committee's questions centred on electric vehicle business use and encouraging staff take-up, EV charging point locations including charging from lamp posts, sustainable transport and reducing travel by cars, which were answered by S Lloyd-Jones (Sustainable Transport Officer). The Climate Change Officer answered queries on the low success rate of trees planted last year in the District.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Committee reviewed the Climate Change Action Plan Summary and progress to date on the Climate Change agenda; and
- (2) That the Committee agreed the recommendations for Priorities 2023/24.

8 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Place Scrutiny Committee noted the next meeting would be held on 19 September 2023 at 7.00pm.

9 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Committee agreed to exclude under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press from the meeting for the item of business set out below on grounds that it 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):

Agenda Item No	Subject	Exempt Information Paragraph Number
11	Waste Collection Services – Future Delivery Options	3

10 WASTE COLLECTION SERVICES - FUTURE DELIVERY OPTIONS

J Warwick (Contracts Service Director) introduced the report which was discussed in private session and answered the Committee's questions.

Resolved:

That the Committee approved of the report's four recommendations to Cabinet.