

# EPPING FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL COUNCILS' LIAISON COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Date:** Thursday, 8 November 2012                      **Time:** 7.30 - 8.46 pm

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

**Members Present:**

**Representing Epping Forest District Council:**

Councillor(s): B Rolfe (Chairman), K Angold-Stephens, Mrs M Sartin and Mrs P Smith

**Other Councillors:**

Councillor(s):

**Representing Essex County Council:**

County Councillor(s): G McEwen, Mrs J H Whitehouse and J Knapman

**Representing Local Councils:**

Mrs V Evans (Epping Upland Parish Council), R Alvin (Chigwell Parish Council), R Balcombe (Fyfield Parish Council), Mrs S De Luca (North Weald Parish Council), Mrs E K Walsh (Loughton Town Council), Councillor Mrs J Bowerman (Matching Parish Council), R E Russell (Stapleford Abbots Parish Council), J Brown (Stapleford Abbots Parish Council), R Northwood (Sheering Parish Council), Mrs S Jackman (Ongar Town Council), K Avey (Epping Town Council), R Morgan (Matching Parish Council), Councillor J Harrington (Sheering Parish Council), Mrs A Jones (Moreton, Bobbingworth & The Lavers Parish Council), Ms P Smith (Stapleford Abbots Parish Council), Councillor R Witham (Lambourne Parish Council), Mrs K Canning (Chigwell Parish Council), Councillor B Miller (Epping Upland Parish Council), A Tadjrishi (Epping Town Council), Cllr S Weston (Loughton TC) and R Gunning (Lambourne Parish Council)

**Apologies:**

**Epping Forest District Council –**

Councillor(s): B Sandler

**Essex County Council –**

Councillor(s): Mrs E Webster, V Metcalfe and C Pond

**Parish/Town Councils: -**

Mrs D Borton (Nazeing Parish Council) and G Chambers (Buckhurst Hill Parish Council)

**Officers Present:** G Chipp (Chief Executive), D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive), P Millward (Business Manager), C O'Boyle (Director of Corporate Support Services), K Polyzoides (Assistant Director (Policy & Conservation)), M Jenkins (Democratic Services Assistant), J Leither (Democratic Services Assistant) and G J Woodhall (Democratic Services Officer)

**By Invitation:**

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## **10. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION**

The Chairman 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.

## **11. MINUTES**

### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 5 July 2012 be agreed.

## **12. ISSUES RAISED BY LOCAL COUNCILS**

### **(a) Standards Committee**

The Director of Corporate Support Services advised the Committee of options for affiliating to the District Councils Joint Standards Committee so far:

- 12 Parish Councils had affiliated to the Joint Standards Committee
- 6 had affiliated to Epping Forest District Council Joint Standards Committee
- 2 had declined to affiliate
- 4 had not responded.

### **(i) Codes of Conduct/Complaints Procedure**

Most Parish Councils had adopted the Public Law Partnership (PLP) model for these aspects of the standards regime. Of those who had responded 1 had adopted the National Association of Local Council's (NALC) code and was devising their own complaints procedure.

### **(ii) Joint Standards Committee**

The Committee had its first meeting and adopted its constitution. The Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer would be arranging a training session once individual Parish representatives were known.

### **(iii) Handling Complaints**

It was advised that complaints would be handled by the District Council up to the point where a complaint investigation was due for consideration, in respect of a member from

one of the twelve affiliated Parish councils. Liaison would be undertaken at the district level, with the independent persons. Complainants and councillors who sought a discussion with an independent person would be directed to the District Council for making the arrangements. The Monitoring Officer had increased powers for ruling out frivolous complaints at an early stage and direct actions for resolving complaints short of an investigation.

**(iv) Dispensations**

The Monitoring Officer had delegated powers for some of the simpler applications, some, which were a matter of judgement would go to either of the two Standards Committees for determination.

Initial applications should be directed in writing to the Monitoring Officer.

**(v) Registration of Sensitive Interests**

Councillors should register their interests and tell the Monitoring Officer why the information was sensitive.

**(vi) Independent Persons**

There had been three independent persons appointed plus one reserve. In June 2013 one of the three independent persons would be required to step down, the reserve person would take over. The Monitoring Officer was planning to involve the reserve person on a flexible basis on a variety of matters.

**(vii) Complaints**

Currently there were a number of complaints involving Parish Councils affiliated to the Joint Parish Standards Committee. These were being investigated and the cost would be recovered from the 'host' Council for the member concerned as set out in the constitution of the Joint Standards Committee. The Epping Forest District Council would be charged at £85 per hour. The Public Law Partnership rate was £300-£350 per hour.

**(viii) Current Issues**

**Local Plan** – concerns had been raised about the current and future stages of this exercise. Members should be directed to EFDC for advice. As the process moved forward the declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI's) would become more important if a plan affected a Councillor's property interests.

**Budget/Precepts** – the Localism Act cancelled the standing dispensations regarding budget setting. Some Parish Councils had been concerned about how they were to agree their budgets without a dispensation.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report regarding the Standards Committee be noted.

**(b) Local Highways Panel**

The Chairman advised that Councillor G McEwen, County Councillor and Chairman of the Local Highways Panel would be answering questions. He asked that the Vice-Chairman, Councillor S Jackman would speak.

Councillor S Jackman brought this item to the Committee on behalf of the Epping Forest Branch. She asked that the Committee look at the compositions of the Local Highways Panel which current excluded Parish and Town Council representative. She advised that Braintree Council's Highways Panel consisted of 12 members, 4 from County, 4 District and 4 Parish Councillors, all of whom had voting rights. This illustrated inclusiveness and demonstrated the importance placed on local views.

The Chairman of the Local Highways Panel, County Councillor G McEwen answered the points by stating how sorry he was that this issue was being raised. He said that the Panel worked well as a team by the District Council choosing 1 member from each of the County divisions to work alongside County Members, therefore creating pairs of Members specialising in the needs of their division.

The Panel reported back to the County Member for Highways, the Panel had a budget allocation of £700,000 for 2012/13 for Epping Forest schemes, £100,000 was allocated for each of the 7 divisions. He advised that there were over 100 projects they were looking at.

Councillor R Morgan wanted it noted that he fully supported what Councillor S Jackman had said and would seriously like to see more representation from the Parish Councils on this panel. He would like it noted that the District and County Councillors for Matching had not been contacted regarding any local highways issues.

Councillor J Knapman advised that there were 7 County Councillors, 7 District Councillors and 7 Parish Councillors on the Local Highways Panel, he advised members of the dual hatted nature and in some cases triple hatted nature of some Members. He went on to say he couldn't believe that more than 14 Members were needed to decide on local highways issues when each of the 7 divisions would get £100,000 each of the budget. We are supposed to be operating as a team not a them and us syndrome.

County Councillor G McEwen concluded that the Panel was well balanced with fair representation. He added that the Members in some cases were also Members of Parish and Town Councils.

Councillor K Angold-Stephens offered his full support to Councillor G McEwen. He advised that Loughton had 2 County Councillors who worked very closely and liaised effectively with the District, Town and Parish councils.

County Councillor G McEwen requested that his thanks be noted for the support he had received from other Members.

Councillor J Knapman asked advised that the Local Highways Panel should be a point on the agenda of every Local Council's Liaison Committee.

**RESOLVED:** It was agreed that the Local Highways Panel should be a standard item on the Local Council's Liaison Committee Agenda.

**(c) Local Plan**

Kassandra Polyzoides reported on the Issues & Options Consultation which concluded on the 15 October 2012. There were a large number of representations submitted and interest generated regarding the consultation as a whole.

The Issues and Options Consultation was launched on the 30 July 2012 and ended on the 15 October 2012. The consultation was publicised by the following means:

- a) Drop-in sessions around the district.
- b) Information could be found on the EFDC Homepage the Planning pages, Facebook, Twitter and the Forward Planning consultation phone line.
- c) A static exhibition at the Civic Offices including questionnaires and a submission box.
- d) Letters or emails to individuals who were on the database from previous EFDC planning policy consultations.
- e) Letters or emails to anyone who owned land within any of the potential development/opportunity areas within the consultation document.
- f) Consultation boxes (questionnaires, I&Os documents, leaflets, posters etc) provided to all Town & Parish Councils and Resident Associations
- g) Leaflets distributed to Epping Forest District residents, leaflets handed out at all the District tube and rail stations.
- h) A rotating series of exhibitions at all the Libraries in the District.

Figures of the responses received were as follows:

- 843 attended the drop in sessions held across the district;
- 5650 respondents, 114 of which were statutory consultees;
- 264 land owners;
- 3158 residents; and
- 2089 residents represented by one of 19 groups.

Officers were also consulting on the Statement of Community Involvement which outlined how officers had consulted on the Local Plan.

Councillor Knapman raised a point in the previous minutes, page 8, 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph A: The standards worked to was for 13.5 premises per hectare. He thought it should be 30 premises per hectare and wanted clarification. Ms Polyzoides confirmed that this was incorrect and it should say 30 premises per hectare.

Councillor G McEwen wanted to thank the planning officers concerned and asked for support from members. Councillor S Jackman seconded and requested that it be noted in the minutes.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the report regarding the Local Plan be noted;
- (2) That the thanks of the Committee be extended to planning officers for their work on the Local Plan.

**(d) iPlan Update**

The Committee received a report from the Business Manager of Planning and Economic Development regarding the iPlan.

At the committee meeting on 3 November 2011, members received a report on the iPlan User group meetings facilitated by Planning and Economic Development. The group had agreed that iPlan constituted an important element of planning meetings held by parish Councils. However a major concern had been to improve access to iPlan and improve the quality of plans and documents online. The group suggested that:

- (i) There were significant limitations in the use of iPlan
- (ii) Paper copies should continue to be provided of planning documentation

- (iii) Continue encouragement of electronic planning records
- (iv) The District Council should target the more well resourced parish Councils and move towards an element of holding planning meetings using electronic planning records and complement this with paper records as well. The District Council should also take steps to identify those less well resourced parish councils that may have needed support utilising planning records

### **Joint Working iPlan User Group**

There were five nominated representatives from parish councils on the user group. Since the last meeting of the committee, the group had met on 14 November 2011 and 26 September 2012.

### **iPlan User Group Meeting 14 November 2011**

At the 14 November meeting the members received a presentation on the proposed District Council website and iPlan. The following was discussed:

- (i) Responding to feedback on the website and implementing changes
- (ii) Updating of website and removing irrelevant content
- (iii) Developing an in-house on-line mapping program
- (iv) Steps were taken to improve the quality of images as a result of feedback, planning officers may decline to validate an application if plans were not legible or of poor quality
- (v) Advised that scanned images were good on Information@Work, but the quality seemed reduced when it appeared on the website, ICT were looking at practical solutions which included phasing out Adobe 10
- (vi) Planning and Economic Development were making efforts to improve the image quality of documents. However resource issues had made this difficult
- (vii) Members found it impossible to access some older applications, it was advised that in many cases historical records were held on microfiche and had not yet been electronically converted
- (viii) ICT were looking at ways of dispensing of the wild card (%) when searching documents

### **iPlan User Group Meeting 26 September 2012**

The following issues were discussed:

- (i) Development of open-source mapping system replacing the old inaccurate Pinpoint mapping system
- (ii) ICT were investigating Planning Explorer's not being able to download all documents at once
- (iii) Quotations were being obtained for scanning and indexing paper documents, the oldest being prioritised

- (iv) Rural parishes who met in hired halls found that there was no facility for accessing the web
- (v) Continuing problem of clarity of plans, standards should be raised at validation stage
- (vi) Adjacent area consultations were being scanned but not published to the web
- (vii) It was noted that there had not been many recent visits by Parish/Town Councillors and Parish Clerks to Planning. Extra training support was needed and a training package would be put together if demand was there.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report regarding the iPlan User Group meetings be noted.

**13. POST OFFICE**

The Chairman advised that Mr Gary A Herbert, Senior External Stakeholder Manager – East Network Services and Transformation, Post Office Limited, had been invited to this meeting but had declined due to other commitments. He had advised officers that he would try to attend meeting on 7 March 2013.

Members expressed disappointment that Mr Herbert could not attend as it would have been useful to ask him questions.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that Mr Herbert was a regional manager and had a large area to cover. If there were any issues that Councillors would like answered they could speak with him and he would be able to contact Mr Herbert to get some answers.

**14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**(a) Police and crime Commissioner Elections**

The committee was advised that 15 November 2012 the Police and Crime Commissioner Elections were taking place, it was advised that the Safer Cleaner Greener Scrutiny Standing Panel would be receiving the new Police and Crime Commissioner at their July 2013 meeting. It was suggested that members of this committee should be invited to attend this Panel meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Parish/Town Councillors and Clerks be invited to attend the Safer Cleaner Greener Scrutiny Standing Panel in July 2013 where the Police Crime Commissioner will be attending.

**(b) Locality Boards**

A Locality Board had been created, its Terms of Reference were being considered in two week's time.

**15. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

It was agreed the date of the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Thursday 7 March 2013 at 7.30pm.

**CHAIRMAN**