

**EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF STRONGER PLACE SELECT COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY, 9 DECEMBER 2019
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES
AT 7.00 - 7.45 PM**

Members Present:	D Sunger (Chairman), S Heather (Vice-Chairman), L Burrows, I Hadley, H Kauffman, C McCredie, J McIvor, R Morgan, S Heap and D Wixley
Other members present:	None.
Apologies for Absence:	J Jennings and S Neville
Officers Present	S Jevans (Interim Strategic Director), A Blom-Cooper (Interim Assistant Director (Planning Policy)), D Fenton (Service Manager (Housing Management & Home Ownership)), J Nolan (Service Director (Commercial & Regulatory Services)), N Richardson (Service Director (Planning Services)), J Warwick (Service Manager (Contracts)), V Messenger (Democratic Services Officer) and S Mitchell (PR Website Editor)

21. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman made a short address to remind all present that the meeting would be broadcast on the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

22. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following substitutions were reported:

That Councillor D Wixley was substituting for Councillor J Jennings; and

That Councillor S Heap was substituting for Councillor S Neville.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- (a) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Conduct, Councillor C McCredie declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 7, Work Programme (item 3 - St John's Road Development), by virtue of being a member of Epping Town Council.

24. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the notes of the last meeting of the Stronger Place Select Committee held on 17 September 2019 be agreed as a correct record.

25. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Select Committee noted its Terms of Reference.

26. WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20

Strategic Director, S Jevans, advised that older people's services would be included in the Select Committee's current work programme going forward, especially as there was a report on this agenda and an ongoing review of these services.

The Chairman also asked if climate emergency could be added to the work programme as a climate change officer would be appointed by the Council in the near future to try and make Epping Forest District carbon neutral by 2030.

Councillor C McCredie asked when councillors would be given information on the plans to show what would be happening on the St John's Road site? The Strategic Director replied that an overview report would be going to Cabinet in January 2020 and a progress report would be coming to this Select Committee at the next meeting in March 2020.

Agreed:

That the following items be added to the Select Committee's work programme:

- (1) Older people's services; and
- (2) Climate emergency.

27. OLDER PEOPLE'S SERVICES - REVIEW

The report, introduced by the Strategic Director, covered the proposed high-level strategic review of the Council's older people's services including the Council's older people assets and the careline offer. It outlined the three areas recommended for review:

- to make best use of Council stock;
- to deliver needs-led support services that would provide value for money; and
- to take advantage of smart technology to enable older people to continue to live as independently as possible for longer.

The Council's older people's services would come back to scrutiny to review following an additional and more detailed report to Cabinet outlining the resultant recommendations.

Councillor D Wixley asked if the scope of the report covered care homes because he was interested to know which ones the Council had responsibility for and which ones came under Essex County Council. There was one home in particular he was referring to in Loughton that came under Essex County Council but it had Epping Forest District Council residents living there. He asked if more information could be provided on the different types of care homes and if a comprehensive report on this could be published in the Council Bulletin.

The Strategic Director replied that this report was on the Council's own sheltered housing but she would come back to Councillor D Wixley on this wider enquiry.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report on the proposed high-level strategic review of the older people's services be noted;
- (2) That subsequent to the completion of the review, an additional and more detailed report to Cabinet be made to outline the resultant recommendations; and
- (3) That the Strategic Director look into the wider issue of the different types of care homes in the District and to publish a comprehensive report in the Council Bulletin for information.

28. CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The Service Director (Commercial & Regulatory), J Nolan, referred to the Council's decision to declare a climate emergency at its meeting on 19 September 2019. The recruitment of a new climate change officer was being proposed, initially for two years, to address changes the Council would need to make for Epping Forest District to be carbon neutral by 2030. The Council would be engaging with young people and appoint an ambassador from the Epping Forest Youth Council. Cabinet approval would be sought on a draft plan for wider engagement with key stakeholders including the Youth Council.

The Service Director (Planning), N Richardson, advised that the Interim Assistant Director (Planning Policy), A Blom-Cooper, was drafting an action plan and once agreed, regular update reports would be issued. There were also a number of other Essex local authorities preparing similar plans and therefore, there might be the opportunity for some sharing.

Councillor I Hadley asked what experience the new climate change officer would need to have. The Service Director (Planning) replied that job candidates were likely to require a combination of air quality and planning background expertise. He informed members that Colchester Borough Council had received some 27 applicants for an air quality officer position there.

Councillor D Wixley asked about a tree planting strategy as he was a tree warden, had an interest in trees and had recently heard that Essex County Council intended to plant some 375,000 trees in Essex. He did not know if this was just on Essex County Council land or trees would be sent out to other local authorities. He referred to Councillor N Avey's forthcoming report to Council that 120 trees were to be planted in the Epping Forest District, which did not seem a particularly high number. He was aware that the Portfolio Holder, Councillor N Bedford, was trying to resurrect the 'green arc'. He suggested that green spaces on the Limes Farm estate (Chigwell) and Jessel Green (Loughton) could benefit from tree planting.

The Service Director (Commercial & Regulatory) replied that the climate change officer's work would be divided into three main areas – enforcement, active planning and management of the Council's estate regarding energy efficiency and its open land. He agreed that Councillor N Bedford had a keen interest in this area.

Councillor S Heap asked how assertive could the climate change officer be, i.e. was the position more involved with monitoring or would the officer be able to recommend the Council update relevant policies etc. The Service Director (Commercial & Regulatory) replied it would be very challenging for Epping Forest to become carbon

neutral by 2030 and an action plan would need to be developed that would meet Cabinet's approval. The Council would ultimately be measured on results.

The Chairman asked if a job description for the climate change post could be circulated to members before going to advert. The Service Director (Commercial & Regulatory) agreed that a proposed job description could be circulated for comment.

Councillor J McIvor remarked that it was sensible for the Council to work with other local authorities on this and could we lead the way and invite other officers and host meetings. The Service Manager (Planning) replied that Uttlesford was leading the way on climate change along with Colchester Borough Council but the Council would liaise with other local authorities.

Councillor H Kauffman asked if the new climate change officer could deliver 'easy wins' that would help improve air quality in the District provided that a budget was in place to achieve this. He had been in contact with Councillor N Avey to request the Council stepped up its provision of electric charge points in Council-owned car parks. This was expensive to do but budgetary power behind these basic initiatives was required.

The Service Manager (Contracts) replied the Council would be installing electric vehicle charging points at its leisure centres in Waltham Abbey and Loughton, and was also looking at the feasibility of other Council-owned car parks. However, there would be additional costs in car parks where there was currently no power provision and he would be working with the new climate change officer on this project. The Service Director (Planning) added that Planning (Development Management) did issue planning conditions to install electric vehicle charging points.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the proposed recruitment of a new climate change officer be noted;
- (2) That the proposed job description for the climate change officer post be circulated to members before going to advert by the Service Director (Commercial & Regulatory); and
- (3) That an action plan be developed to deliver the Council's resolution to declare a climate emergency and its pledge to do everything within its power to make the Epping Forest District carbon neutral by 2030.

29. WASTE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT - CURRENT PERFORMANCE

The Service Manager (Contracts) reported that the Council's waste management contract was performing well. Performance was monitored by two key performance indicators - M8 showed a reduction in household waste and M9 an increase in recycling. The Waste Management Task and Finish Panel's next meeting was on 16 December and was due to conclude by the end of January 2020. Recommendations made by the Panel would go to Cabinet but if a service change was required, the proposals would be handled by the Innovation Forum and the Waste Management Partnership Board.

RESOLVED:

That the report on the current performance of the waste management contract be noted.

30. LEISURE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT - CURRENT PERFORMANCE

The Service Manager (Contracts) reported that the Council's leisure management contract was performing very well across all four sites in an upward trend. Swimming and gym membership at Waltham Abbey Leisure Centre had slowed recently but overall memberships were well in excess of forecasts. Loughton Leisure Centre had also continued to grow since the recent enhancement works.

Councillor H Kauffman said he was impressed with the Council's leisure facilities and used the Loughton centre but asked if the Council was doing enough to promote its leisure activities and was there a marketing budget to push leisure services.

The Service Manager (Contracts) replied that the Council itself did not have a budget for this but Places Leisure had dedicated marketing resources and ran campaigns. Ongar was an older facility, recently affected by maintenance issues and did seem to be struggling, but Places Leisure had undertaken a recent drive to improve memberships, which had been successful. However, he would take these comments back to Places Leisure to find out more information.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report on the current performance of the leisure management contract be noted; and
- (2) That the Service Manager (Contracts) apprise Places Leisure of the Select Committee's comments to optimise its promotion of leisure activities available within the District.

31. EPPING FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN & EPPING FOREST SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION

The Interim Assistant Director (Planning Policy) explained that this report had gone to Cabinet on 31 October 2019, which had agreed the governance arrangements for the implementation of the Local Plan and that the Implementation Team would provide regular updates. As part of the Independent Examination of the Local Plan, the Council had agreed Statements of Common Ground with all the site promoters of the following strategic sites in North Weald Bassett, Waltham Abbey North, South Epping, West Ongar and South Nazeing. Statements of Common Ground with all the main site promoters were also signed for the Garden Town allocations at Latton Priory, Water Lane and East of Harlow.

Councillor D Wixley asked what CEG stood for in paragraph 9 of the report, to which the Interim Assistant Director (Planning Policy) replied that they were the promoters of the Latton Priory site.

RESOLVED:

That the progress of the masterplans and concept frameworks, including the use of planning performance agreements and the progress of other proposals at pre-application and application stage, be noted.

32. NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD - MASTERPLAN

The Service Director (Commercial & Regulatory) referred to the early update report provided and that Turner and Townsend had been the consultants appointed under delegated authority by the Chief Executive. The Council was entering into a planning performance agreement. Adhering to the Council's Statement of Community Involvement, the Council was identifying key stakeholders and work was also progressing on site surveys.

Councillor J McIvor asked about the stakeholder consultation. The Service Director (Commercial & Regulatory) replied that initially this would be a phased consultation, which would involve the commercial tenants on North Weald Airfield and the parish council. The Council would be consulting thoroughly, including with residents, and have discussions with the other masterplanners on the site to ensure both masterplans complemented each other.

RESOLVED:

That the progress report on the North Weald Airfield masterplanning process be noted.

33. LOCAL AIR QUALITY - VEHICLE EMISSIONS

The Service Director (Commercial & Regulatory) explained that the report detailed the role and responsibilities of the Council to do with enforcement of legislation in respect of air quality and pollution from vehicle emissions, which was requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 July 2019. Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) placed a statutory duty on local authorities to assess their districts and identify areas with high air pollution. Measuring certain chemicals (nitrogen oxides) would give an indication of where the hotspots were, and Bell Common, Epping, was the only area in the District where levels exceeded the current standards. The Council was required by DEFRA to declare an air quality management area (AQMA) and put in place an air quality action plan that was submitted to DEFRA to improve the air quality. The other area was in relation to the examination of the Local Plan and the impact of air quality on Epping Forest.

There was also the enforcement of idling vehicles by authorised Council officers who could issue fixed penalty notices (FPN). Officers would inform the driver to turn the engine off before issuing a FPN and as all drivers had complied with this instruction no FPNs had been issued so far. Epping Station had a problem with idling vehicles but as this was situated on private land Council officers could not issue FPNs. The Council did try to educate the public and supported National Clean Air Day, which was publicised in the District and large topical banners were displayed especially around schools, Epping Station and Bell Common. The Portfolio Holder had attended Epping Primary School with the Public Health Team as part of that education programme.

Councillor D Wixley referred to areas where additional monitoring had been set up, but asked if this could include the heavy build-up of traffic in Rectory Lane/Chigwell Lane/ Oakwood Hill in Loughton, which had increased since Epping Forest Retail Park had opened. There was also high pollution at the junction of Roding Road from Alderton Hill down to the traffic lights with Oakwood Hill/Valley Hill in Loughton, Loughton High Road and also around Loughton Station.

The Service Director (Commercial & Regulatory) asked if Councillor Wixley could email these locations to him to investigate further. However, he explained that a build-up of traffic at certain places might not necessarily mean the Council would want to declare an AQMA because it also had to take into consideration people (human receptors) in close proximity to the sites.

Councillor D Wixley referred to the National Clean Air Day and asked if a day was long enough and whether it should last week.

The Service Director (Commercial & Regulatory) said Clean Air Day was a nationally recognised day but there was no reason for the Council not to have additional initiatives throughout the year.

Councillor S Heap urged the Council to push beyond DEFRA recommendations and take other receptors into consideration. Also on monitoring pollution, were these done at different times of the day to reflect different levels of traffic?

The Service Director (Commercial & Regulatory) replied the Council was required to monitor people receptors but putting resources into other receptors would probably not be very productive. In respect of monitoring, this was done using passive diffusion tubes which operated 24 hours a day over a period of weeks.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the position with regard to the enforcement of current legislation relating to air quality be noted;
- (2) That Councillor D Wixley forward to the Service Director (Commercial & Regulatory) the Loughton locations where there was heavy traffic to investigate further in relation to possible monitoring; and
- (3) That additional initiatives to promote better air quality/less pollution could be undertaken by the Council's Public Health Team.

34. COUNCIL HOUSEBUILDING PROGRAMME - PROGRESS

The Service Manager (Housing Management & Home Ownership), D Fenton, reported on the progress made over the last twelve months. A total of 91 new homes for affordable rent had been completed with 16 units still in progress from Phases 1 – 3 of the programme. On progress achieved across Phase 4 of the Council housebuilding programme, a further 72 units would be delivered over four packages. All four of the packages had planning approval consent. Package 1 consisted of 14 properties in Loughton (Bushfields, Chequers Road and Chester Road), Ongar (Queensway) and High Ongar (Millfield). Subject to completion of the contract and approval by the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee, works should be able to start on site in the new year.

Following the change in methodology in February 2019, as a result of work carried out by Internal Audit, officers would be reviewing other potential Council controlled sites within Phases 5 – 6. The aim of this exercise would be to either build-out or raise capital to purchase larger sites.

Councillor D Heap asked about two properties in Hornbeam Road, Buckhurst Hill, regarding compensation to the owner on right of easement, to which the Service

Manager (Housing Management & Home Ownership) replied this matter was currently being dealt with.

Councillor R Morgan asked about Phases 5 – 6 regarding the review of other potential sites, who would this be reported to and would the Parish Council be notified if sites were sold? The Service Manager (Housing Management & Home Ownership) replied that this would be reported to the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee and the Council would be consulting with parish councils. There were some 40 sites that had already been identified but some of those sites would not be suitable for housebuilding or sale. A surveyor would be reviewing all the sites and a report on the options available for these sites would be received by the Manager (Housing Management & Home Ownership) shortly.

RESOLVED:

That the current progress with regard to Phases 4 – 6 of the Council housebuilding programme be noted.

35. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Select Committee would be held on 24 March 2020 at 7.00pm.