

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COUNCIL MINUTES

Committee: Council

Date: 26 April 2016

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

Time: 7.30 - 8.35 pm

Members Present: Councillors E Webster (Chairman), J Lea (Vice-Chairman), N Avey, N Bedford, A Boyce, H Brady, W Breare-Hall, R Butler, G Chambers, K Chana, T Church, D Dorrell, L Girling, A Grigg, J Hart, L Hughes, R Jennings, S Jones, H Kane, S Kane, H Kauffman, P Keska, J Knapman, A Lion, M McEwen, L Mead, A Mitchell, G Mohindra, R Morgan, S Murray, S Neville, A Patel, J Philip, C P Pond, C C Pond, M Sartin, G Shiell, D Stallan, S Stavrou, B Surtees, G Waller, C Whitbread, J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse and D Wixley

Apologies: Councillors R Bassett, R Gadsby, Y Knight, H Mann, C Roberts, B Rolfe, B Sandler, L Wagland and S Watson

Officers Present: G Chipp (Chief Executive), D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Neighbourhoods), C O'Boyle (Director of Governance), R Palmer (Director of Resources), S G Hill (Assistant Director (Governance & Performance Management)), R Perrin (Democratic Services Officer), S Kits (Social Media and Customer Services Officer), A Hendry (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and P Seager (Chairman's Secretary)

1. **WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION**

The Assistant Director of Governance and Performance Management 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.

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2016 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3. **STANDARDS COMMITTEE INDEPENDENT PERSON - ROGER PRATT AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR K ANGOLD-STEPHEN**

It was with much sadness that the Chairman informed the Council of the deaths of Roger Pratt and Councillor K Angold-Stephen.

Roger Pratt had served as the Independent Person on the Standards Committee since 2012 and was an active participant in Voluntary work in Loughton.

Ken Angold-Stephens had served as a Loughton Residents Association District Councillor and Loughton Town Councillor representing the Loughton Roding Ward since 2004. In his role as a District Councillor he served as Chairman and Vice-Chairman on various Council Committees which included Licensing, Overview and Scrutiny, Task and Finish Panel on Register of Development Proposals, The Pitt Review Task and Finish Panel, Senior Recruitment Task and Finish Panel, Overview

and Scrutiny Review Task and Finish Panel, Review of Chief Executive Appointment Task and Finish Panel and the Scrutiny Review Task and Finish Panel. He became the Vice Chairman in 2010/11 and the Chairman of the Council 2011/12 and had been a Loughton Town Council Mayor in 2009/10. He was a well respected Member of the Council and a Governor at Staples Road Primary School.

Members paid tribute to the memory of the Standards Committee Independent Person, Roger Pratt and Councillor K Angold-Stephens and stood for a minute's silence in their memory.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Announcements by the Chairman of the Council

(i) Flowers

The Chairman advised Members that she would be sending this evenings flowers to Jill Angold-Stephens and her family.

(ii) Extraordinary Council Meeting

The Chairman advised that an Extraordinary Council meeting had been arranged for Monday 6 June 2016 at 7.30 pm, Civic Offices to consider the planning applications at the Royal Gunpowder Mill, Powder Mill Lane/Beaulieu Drive, Waltham Abbey which had been referred from District Development Management Committee on 20 April 2016.

(iii) Councillor J M Whitehouse

The Chairman congratulated Councillor J M Whitehouse for recently running the London Marathon in under 3 hours.

6. COUNCILLOR S WESTON - RESIGNATION

The Council noted that Councillor S Weston had resigned on 23 March 2016. Following that notification and a public notice of the vacancy, a request for an election to fill the vacancy had been received, nominations had been made and the election would take place at the same time as the other elections on 5 May 2016.

7. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

The Council noted that there were no public questions for this meeting.

8. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER NOTICE

The Council noted that there were no questions under notice for this meeting.

9. REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET**(a) The Leader of the Council**

The Leader advised that he had attended a number of meetings representing the interests of the authority and highlighted the on going conversations across Greater Essex with regards to devolution. There were a number of authorities who were much keener to pursue an agreement with Central Government. Given that an elected Mayor now seemed to be a requirement for devolution, it seemed clearer that he could not recommend this to the Council or support it, without knowing the cost of bureaucracy involved.

He had been delighted to attend the re-opening of the Museum in Waltham Abbey and thanked the staff for securing the external funding and successfully managing the construction project. The museum was now open and he recommended that all Members should visit.

He had attended a duty to co-operate meeting with Councillors R Bassett and J Philip for the Local Plan and other meetings for outstanding items, so that the Council could deliver a successful Local Plan. The Leader had met with the Local MP, Eleanor Laing to discuss the Green Belt Review and the Settlement Capacity work that had been undertaken and her involvement continued.

Other issues that had been raised through the duty to co-operate meeting were the concerns about the Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH) and it's future. He thanked Councillor G Mohindra for being a Champion for health care in the District, who continued to work hard, so that the Districts voice was heard and made sure that PAH got the urgent funding required.

Progress continued with the Council's Transformation Project, and the Leader had attended one of the staff briefings. He advised that it had been useful to hear staff views on what was going on and assured Members that Transformation was high on the Council's agenda, to deliver a service that was suitable for the 21st Century.

(b) Leisure and Community Wellbeing

Councillor H Kane advised that the highlight of the year for Leisure and Wellbeing had been the re-opening of the Museum in Waltham Abbey. She appreciated and congratulated the team of Officers for their diligence and dedication to the project and was very proud. The Officers had also produced a short clip on YouTube called 'Museum on the Move' for a Museum competition around the world, which had already progressed to round two.

Councillor M Sartin advised that the next opportunity to vote for the short clip was Monday 2 May 2016.

10. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS WITHOUT NOTICE**(a) Buckhurst Hill Parking Review – Briar Close**

Councillor G Chambers asked the Safer, Cleaner and Transport Portfolio Holder whether he could suggest a cost effective solution to an error made on the Buckhurst Hill Parking Review in Briar Close, where the changes had made access to the residential properties almost impossible for emergency and refuse collection vehicles?

Councillor G Waller advised that the Buckhurst Hill Parking Review had been completed quite effectively, although he had recognised that there were some issues which had not been dealt with satisfactorily. He had been aware that a few adjustments were required and he would gladly meet with Councillor G Chamber in Briar Close to discuss the issue.

(b) Council Drones

Councillor M Sartin asked the Governance and Development Management Portfolio Holder about the Council's purchase of drones and whether he could assure Members that;

- they would be used in a responsible manner;
- they would assist officers in their work; and
- there would be policy and training in place before they were used?

Councillor J Philip gave his assurance that the Council's aim was to use the drones in a completely responsible manner and there would be a policy document and operation manual on how they were to be used by mid May 2016 and the end of May 2016 respectively. In addition, the two members of staff that would be operating the drones would be required to sit an exam for the necessary qualifications and obtain an aviation permit. The drones had been brought to assist the Council with aerial photographs, enforcement concerns and Council owned property inspections; saving money for the residents, whilst being in accordance with the law and the Council's policies.

(c) Crime Statics

Councillor S Murray asked the Portfolio Holder for Safer, Greener and Transport about the crime statics in Epping Forest and whether they had increased or decreased in 2015/16?

Councillor G Waller advised that the overall trend for Crime in Epping Forest was moving downwards, although there had been blips in the data. The Neighbourhoods Select Committee had received a report regarding an increase in March 2016, because of new types of crime being included in the data such as online fraud and domestic abuse. The trend had continued downwards.

(d) Local Plan Consultation

Councillor J M Whitehouse asked the Portfolio Holder for Planning Policy about the postponement of the draft Local Plan until autumn 2016 and whether the length of the new consultation would be the same?

The Leader advised that Councillor R Bassett would supply a fully written explanation to Councillor J M Whitehouse. However, the Leader advised that the deferment had been down to Highways England and the delay in the transport model for the new junction 7a on the M11, which would produce an autumn consultation period.

Furthermore, Councillor J M Whitehouse asked whether the information regarding the Green Belt Review and Settlement Capacity study could be published beforehand, as there would be a mass of information/data that residents would have to absorb, consider and respond to in a relatively short period of time.

The Leader advised that they were looking to get the Local Plan right for Epping Forest and although there would be a lot of evidence that was required for the next

stage, residents/Members should not look at any information in isolation because some very tough decisions would be required. He also advised that the consultations with residents would be statutory consultation periods, which would be completed properly.

(e) Parking Issues - The Broadway, Debden, Loughton

Councillor L Girling thanked the Portfolio Holder for Safer, Cleaner and Transport for meeting with him to see the dangerous parking problems in The Broadway, Loughton and requested an update on the emergency Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) for double yellows in this area and whether adequate enforcement would be available from North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP).

Councillor G Waller advised that a temporary measure would be taken to install double yellow lines in The Broadway, in advance of the main Parking Review which would be carried out shortly with the more in depth consultation requirements. The works would be carried out shortly and he agreed that enforcement was required for the TRO to be effective and to ensure safety for local residents.

(f) Housing Appeals Panel

Councillor D Wixley asked the Housing Portfolio Holder whether applicants would be able to have the support of their local Councillors at any Housing Appeals Panel that would be held following the demise of the Housing Appeals Panel in the new Constitution.

Councillor D Stallan advised that following the discontinuation of the Housing Appeals Panel the decision would be delegated to Officers and therefore it may not be possible, although he would seek further clarification and answer Councillor D Wixley directly.

(g) Postal Delivery to Council Owned Flats

Councillor L Girling asked the Housing Portfolio Holder whether the Council had been made aware of changes to the times of deliveries and post by Royal Mail to the Council owned flats across the District and whether there was anything that EFDC could do about the matter.

Councillor D Stallan advised that the Council had a contract with the security systems and access to the Communal flats and was also surprised that Royal Mail had changed their delivery times without notice to residents or the Council. He would contact officers to find out further information.

11. MOTIONS

The Chairman reported that there were no motions to be considered at this meeting.

12. NEW COUNCIL CONSTITUTION AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS

The Chairman of the Constitutional Working Party, Councillor M McEwen presented a report on the new Council Constitution and associated matters.

Amendment moved by Councillor J Philip and Seconded by Councillor C Whitbread

That an additional recommendation be added;

“That an additional paragraph be added to The Rules contained in Part 4 – Rules of the new Constitution under Rule V1 – Voting as follows:

Quasi-judicial meetings – Voting

If a Committee, Sub-Committee or Panel is acting in a quasi-judicial capacity, any member absent for any part of the hearing of evidence for the item of business shall not vote. This may also be subject to such a ruling by the Chairman of the meeting concerned.”

Carried

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the proposals for a merged Audit and Standards Committee not be adopted as part of the changes to the constitution;
- (2) That the position of the Audit and Governance Committee and Standards Committee be reviewed in two years’ time;
- (3) That, the membership of the Audit and Governance Committee be increased to five members;
- (4) That the Standards Committee be convened to meet only when there was business to be transacted;
- (5) That the Remuneration Panel be asked to consider the appropriate level of remuneration for the Chairman of the Standards Committee and report back to the Council in due course;
- (6) That, the Housing Appeals and Reviews Panel be discontinued with immediate effect;
- (7) That responsibility for all Housing Appeals and Reviews currently within the scope of the Panel be delegated to the appropriate Assistant Director of Communities and, in the case of Homelessness Reviews, the Housing Options Manager as required, with the appropriate changes being made to the list of officer delegations contained within Part 3 of the revised Constitution;
- (8) That an additional recommendation be added to The Rules contained in Part 4 – Rules of the new Constitution under Rule V1 – Voting as follows:

(i) Quasi-judicial meetings – Voting

If a Committee, Sub-Committee or Panel is acting in a quasi-judicial capacity, any member absent for any part of the hearing of evidence for the item of business shall not vote. This may also be subject to such a ruling by the Chairman of the meeting concerned.”; and

- (9) That the New Constitution of the Council with the above decisions be adopted with immediate effect.

13. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

(a) The Council received a written report from Councillor R Morgan, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

14. CALL-IN AND URGENCY - TENANTS' DECORATION VOUCHERS

The Council noted that the Chairman of the Council had agreed that the following decision be treated as a matter of urgency and not subject to call in;

(a) Waiver of Contract Standing Orders – Tenants' Decoration Vouchers

That the Council enter into a 12-month supplies contract with Wicks Building Supplies Ltd for the purchase of Tenants' decorating vouchers following the termination of the previous supply contract with Argos Business Solutions Ltd for a similar scheme through Homebase, based on a budget estimate of £45,000; and

That Contract Standing Order C5, Contracts exceeding £25,000 but not exceeding £50,000, be waived to allow the Council to enter into a contract without seeking competitive tenders, due to the urgency of being able to continue to provide a decorating voucher scheme for new tenants, until such time as a new supplies contract can be tendered.

15. JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

(a) No further updates from Council representatives on any other business of joint arrangements and external organisations were advised; and

(b) No requests were made for written reports to be made by representatives on joint arrangements and external organisations at the next meeting.

CHAIRMAN