

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 13 MARCH 2018
IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.00 - 8.56 PM**

- Members Present:** Y Knight (Chairman), G Shiell (Vice-Chairman), R Baldwin, A Beales, R Butler, K Chana, S Heap, L Hughes, S Jones, A Mitchell, D Sunger and H Whitbread
- Other members present:** S Kane, H Kane and J H Whitehouse
- Apologies for Absence:** W Marshall (Tenants and Leaseholders Federation)
- Officers Present** A Hall (Director of Communities), R Wilson (Assistant Director (Housing Operations)), J Chandler (Assistant Director (Community Services)), D Bailey (Head of Transformation), P Gardener (Community Safety Officer), G Wallis (Community, Health & Wellbeing Manager), G Gold (Assistant Community Health & Wellbeing Manager), D Butler (Youth Engagement Officer), R Moreton (Youth Engagement Assistant) and A Hendry (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

52. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (MINUTE ITEM 39 - 23.7.02)

There were no substitutions made for the meeting.

53. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the notes of the last meeting of the Select Committee held on 16 January 2018 be agreed.

54. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

55. TERMS OF REFERENCE/WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted their terms of reference and work programme.

56. YOUTH COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

Five members of the Youth Council gave an illustrated talk on the work and projects they carried out during the year, their request for £8,000 DDF.

The Youth Councillors that made the presentation were, Annabelle Yaman from Epping St Johns School; Adam Freeman from Davenant Foundation School; Marley Chick from Epping St Johns School; Ashwin Gohil from Debden Park High School; and Finlay Jordan from Davenant Foundation School.

They thanked the Council for their involvement with and loyalty to the Youth Council over the past ten years. 2018 was the tenth anniversary of the Youth Council and they would be holding a celebration evening at the Houses of Parliament on Wednesday 4th July. This event would be sponsored by the Right Honourable Eleanor Laing.

They were now in their second and last year and were working hard to promote the 2018 Youth Elections to fill the 25, soon to be vacant, seats. They had enjoyed their time learning about the Council, working with the District Councillors and getting involved in numerous community projects.

They thanked the Council for granting them the £5,000 project money for 2017/18 which enabled them to carry out a drugs project to raise the awareness of the dangers of using 'gateway drugs'. They also devised an online survey asking young people about their awareness of drug use in their area. To date the survey had been completed by 2884 young people.

Past projects have included Mental Health, Bullying Awareness and Safety and Drug awareness. Their next project for the new cohort would be 'Gang Awareness' as this was deemed to be a big issue in the district and a major concern nationally.

They were proud of the mental health project 'MiLife' that was set up by the Youth Council in 2016 and was a finalist in the National Crimebeat Awards 2018, endorsed by the High Sherriff. The results would be announced on 18th April.

MiLife continues to be developed as funding has been secured for a three year period, from 2016 to 2019. Over 6000 pupils have attended the roadshows and officers had been invited to deliver MiLife workshop at the Essex County Council Schools mental health conference. A primary school version has also been developed. This will be delivered to 6,500 pupils in reception up to year 6.

They ensured their peers and schools continued to have a voice and they attend individual School Councils and regularly give updates and presentations via school assemblies about their work. They also promoted the use of suggestion boxes and use of their youth councillors to report any issues in their school or community.

In 2017 they held a Youth Conference at the Civic Offices with the aim of promoting Local Democracy Week. They had over 70 delegates representing ten secondary schools from around the District. They identified 5 top issues of concern. These were:

- Skills for work;
- Mental Health;
- Bullying;
- Drug Misuse; and
- Gangs

Social media was an important part of their work, promoting their work and their profile. They now had 1613 followers on Twitter, 794 likes on Facebook and 157 followers on Instagram.

They had contributed to several consultations over the year, including consultations on the Local Plan, Epping Forest College, Essex Police, Citizen Advice and the Children's Society. They also have representatives on various local groups and had received training on Accredited Mental Health First Aid Training, Dementia Friends,

hate Crime Ambassadors, Fearless training by Essex Police, British Youth Council, Consequences of Crime and Drug Awareness.

Volunteering remained a big thing for them. Last summer they had organised a clean up day with the City of London volunteer wardens and the Waste Management team of the District Council, when in just four hours they collected 550 Nitrous Oxide canisters. They were also working with various schools to set up Youth Volunteering days.

They have secured external funding to a total of £4,950 that has been brought into the district over the last year, enabling them to continue to deliver high quality projects.

Their chosen charity for the year was the Children's Society, for which they have raised over £300.

They were also the finalists in the National Crime Beat Awards for the MiLife project and six youth councillors received Jack Petchey Achievement Awards.

To continue bringing new and exciting ideas to the community through their project work they formally requested the allocated sum of £8,000 DDF be released. This would enable them to continue working with the NHS team in schools via the MiLife project, working with the Essex Police Cadets, update the Youth Activities Map and work with the Sparks2Life and other gang projects to create a new gang awareness project for secondary schools.

The Youth Councillors then thanked the Committee for their continuing support and indicated that they were happy to take questions.

Councillor Butler congratulated the Youth Council on their work on mental health and drugs. He asked if the nitrous oxide canisters were legally purchased. He was told that this was a grey area in the law as it was illegal to supply it for consumption.

Councillor Janet Whitehouse asked what sort of support was given to schools. She was told that the Youth Council had suggestion boxes so that people could bring up any areas of concern. They also presented at assemblies to give out information on their new projects. All schools received this opportunity.

Councillor Holly Whitbread asked for some more information on the Police Cadet project. She was told that the Youth Council had been working with them over the last few months arranging a volunteer's day out, when they visited elderly person's homes etc. One of the goals was to increase the profile of the young people and counter all the bad press they received.

Councillor Mitchell asked if they had a 'befriending service' for the elderly. She was told that was what they wished to do and they already had held 'intergenerational events'.

The Committee noted officers recommendation to reduce the number of presentations the Youth Council gave to the Communities Select Committee to just one a year. Members agreed with the proposed reduction but also considered that they would be better served to give this to the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee so that it could be webcast and a wider audience could see the wide ranging work that they carried out throughout the year. Members of the Youth Council present were agreeable to this.

The members of the Youth Council were thanked for their impressive presentation and the helpful answers they gave to members questions.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Communities Select Committee noted the achievements of the Epping Forest Youth Council during 2017/18;
- 2) That the Committee would recommend the proposal to Overview and Scrutiny Committee to allocate a DDF sum of £5,000 to the Youth Council for projects during 2018/19;
- 3) That the Committee would recommend the proposal to Overview and Scrutiny Committee to allocate a DDF sum of £3,000 to the Youth Council for the MiLife project during 2018/19;
- 4) That the Committee also recommends that the number of Youth Council presentations to Members be reduced to once a year, but that this presentation be given at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in order to be webcast.

57. CHANGE IN ORDER OF THE AGENDA

With the agreement of the Committee agenda item 9, the MiLife report was taken next.

58. MILIFE (ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING) REPORT

The Community Health and Wellbeing Manager, Gill Wallis, introduced the report on the MiLife project. She noted that at a 2015 youth conference their priority concern was mental health issues. Young people reported high levels of stress and anxiety as a result of a range of issues including; exam pressure, bullying, family relationship breakdown, negative body image and low self-esteem.

Working with staff from the Council's Community, Health & Wellbeing Team, Youth Councillors formulated and co-designed a project, which they named MiLife, to address the issue of mental health via a programme to be delivered in schools. As the design of the project gathered pace, wider partners were brought on board to provide professional advice and facilitate delivery. These partners included; adolescent mental health staff from the NHS North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT), school representatives and the Red Balloon Family Foundation organisation.

The objective of the MiLife project was to support children and young people to help them understand mental health, dispel stigma, and to equip them with tools to develop personal resilience. It would also help them find information to wider support services.

Pupils from every state secondary school in the district participate in an interactive workshop facilitated by professional youth workers from the Red Balloon Family Foundation, which is a local third sector organisation based in the district. Workshops are also supported by the Council's Community, Health & Wellbeing staff and representatives from the NHS.

A key element of the MiLife Project was its interactive website (www.milife.org.uk) which is hosted by the Red Balloon Family Foundation. Research undertaken by the Youth Council identified a plethora of information available on line but raised concerns around the validity of much of this. Consequently, a dedicated local website was developed as part of the MiLife Project which supported young people, parents and teachers.

Additionally, teachers were provided with Ofsted appropriate teaching resources in order to deliver sessions within lessons over the academic year.

Since the roll out in 2016, over 6,000 Epping Forest young people had taken part in the Adolescent MiLife Programme to date. The programme was continuously evaluated using a range of methods including pupil, teacher and professional agency feedback.

Following the overwhelming success of the Adolescent MiLife Programme, requests for an age appropriate version of the workshop for the district's primary schools began to be received from local teachers, parents and wider agencies.

Evaluation of the Primary MiLife Project has shown it to be a resounding success. To date 6,500 pupils had participated in the programme. Overall, over four in five children have said they had learned something new about emotions through taking part in the day and over half reported that they were more likely to talk to a trusted adult about their emotional state having experienced the presentations and taken part in the workshops.

Parents are invited to be proactively involved in the Primary MiLife initiative. Information about the programme was shared through letters, Parent Mail and face to face parents sessions before and after school.

Reception class teachers and Early Years providers have requested that pilot programmes be delivered in sample settings within the district.

The Committee noted that MiLife has been announced as a finalist at this year's National Crime-Beat Awards on 18 April 2018, having been nominated by the Essex High Sheriff, Mr Simon Hall MBE.

Councillor Knight said that this was a fantastic project and more like this were needed. Councillor Butler commented that this was important work that they were doing and that teenage years were the most stressful and difficult times and could lead to serious psychological problems.

Councillor Helen Kane noted that she had been involved with this project from the start and thanked members for their support. She also thanked officers for their hard work in getting this up and running and making it such a success.

RESOLVED:

That the Communities Select Committee noted the success of the MiLife initiative, which is an innovative programme focusing on positive mental health and emotional wellbeing for children and young people in the district.

59. HOUSING SERVICES ASB POLICIES REPORT

The Assistant Director (Housing Operations), Mr Wilson and the Safer Communities Officer, Mr Gardener, introduced the report on the draft Strategy and Statement on Anti-Social Behaviour (Policies and Procedures). The Select Committee were asked to consider and endorse the draft and provide any comments to the Housing Portfolio Holder.

The Statement had been formulated in accordance with the provisions of the Housing Act 1996 and the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014. It met the requirement under Section 218 (A) of the Housing Act 1996, that social landlords must publish a Statement of their policies and procedures, and an associated summary. The summary was produced in leaflet form and will be updated when the draft Statement has been agreed by the Housing Portfolio Holder.

The Community Safety Team will be consulted on the Statement and their comments will be incorporated. The Community Safety Partnership had also been consulted but had no comments. The Tenants and Leaseholders Panel would be consulted in the near future.

The meeting went through the draft statement on a page by page basis.

Councillor Baldwin noted that this only addressed anti social behaviour in Council owned properties; what were the measures the Council could take against them. Mr Wilson replied that there were a lot of things they could do with tenants as well as a lot of things that were tenant neutral that could be done such as Civil Injunctions and Criminal Behaviour Orders. Mr Gardener noted that his team deals with the District as a whole, council housing or not. The biggest problems they faced were the physical enforcing of their powers once they had them. They did as much as they could for residents but could not arrest transgressors.

Councillor Sam Kane commented that this was an area that he, as the relevant Portfolio Holder, would be focusing on with the Council funded Police Officers. This type of work had gone down the Police agenda, but will be at the top of the Council's list.

RESOLVED:

That the Communities Select Committee considered and endorsed the draft Strategy and Statement on Anti-Social Behaviour Policies and Procedures.

60. HRA FINANCIAL PLAN - 2018-2019

The Director of Communities, Mr Hall, introduced the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Financial Plan for the forthcoming year. The Financial Plan set out the forecast income and expenditure for the Council's HRA for the following 30 years, to enable early decisions to be made based on these long term forecasts. Each year, the Financial Plan takes account of the latest budget figures, Council policy, Government policy and Council decisions, and makes assumptions for a range of future income and costs.

As in previous years, the HRA Financial Plan had been produced by Simon Smith, the Council's HRA financial planning consultant with SD Smith Consultancy, in consultation with the Director of Communities and Finance Officers.

The Financial Plan demonstrated that, despite the Government's policy that all social

rents must be reduced by 1% per annum for four years, which clearly had an effect on rental income, the HRA continued to be in a reasonably healthy state, and that all of the current and planned HRA loans were able to be repaid within 24 years (or 25 years from April 2018), whilst maintaining a minimum HRA balance of £2 million throughout the Plan period.

Councillor Baldwin asked if we were allowed to borrow money to finance Council House building. He was told that the Council could do so, up to a stipulated cap and had to be certain that it could repay this loan in a reasonable time. The Council was about £30million below this at present. Most Councils had borrowed up to their limit and the Housing Minister was considering raising this cap for some local authorities.

Councillor Baldwin asked if the Council could refinance some of the loans to get more favourable interest rates. He was told that the council received very good rates as a public authority through the Public Works Loan Board. The majority of loans were fixed term loans that would mature in 25 years time and were kept under constant review and the one variable 10 year loan may need to be refinanced some time over the next few years.

RESOLVED:

That the Select Committee reviewed the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Financial Plan 2018-19.

61. COMMUNITIES DIRECTORATE BUSINESS PLAN 2018-2019

In the absence of the Housing Portfolio Holder, the Director of Communities introduced the Housing Portfolio's elements on the Communities Business Plan for the coming year 2018/19. This was the second year of operating with a slimmed down business plan.

He explained the key points relating to the Housing Service, which were that:

- the Cabinet had agreed to continue with the Council Housebuilding Programme and good progress had now been made on Phases 2 and 3 and will continue with Phases 4 – 6 once consultants and contractors had been consulted;
- the new Homelessness Reduction Act placed additional responsibilities on the Council, with some funding provided by central government;
- there was additional income of £452,000 mainly due to the government homelessness funding;
- the decision had been made to co-locate the Housing Repairs Service to the Oakwood Hill Depot;
- the Careline Monitoring Service had been successfully out-sourced; and
- the new 5 year Housing Strategy had been approved;

Under the elements relating to Community and Safety Councillor Sam Kane explained that:

concerns had been raised about the level of policing in the district, which had led to a growth to the budget of £215,000 for three EFDC funded Police Officers.

Councillor Helen Kane explained that:

- the application for Arts Council National Portfolio Status had been unsuccessful;

- a new Epping Forest Health and Wellbeing Strategy was produced; and
- that 'Culture without Borders Development Trust' had been successfully established.

Councillor Sam Kane noted that when he joined the Cabinet he was soon alerted to a range of serious ASB issues and a significant increase in crime in several areas of the District. Parkguard Security company was therefore commissioned to undertake patrolling of key areas where high levels of ASB were occurring, but soon became evident that additional Police officers were needed in the area to provide visibility and deter ASB and criminality. This idea led to a Cabinet report recommending that the Council should fund three extra Police officers in the Epping Forest District to be tasked jointly by the Community Safety Officer and local Police Inspector. This report was agreed by the Council and Essex police were currently recruiting one police sergeant and two police constables, who would commence work in the district as from June. Their role would be to prioritise key crime and ASB hotspots in the district and to support Council officers in a range of work where police presence was required.

Councillor Helen Kane presented two items from her portfolio and initially advised the Committee about a funding bid that Museum, Heritage and Culture had submitted to Arts Council England for National Portfolio Organisation Status for Museum partnership of Epping Forest, Broxbourne and Chelmsford. This had been a highly contested scheme and although the partnership had lost out to the National Horseracing Museum at Newmarket, the bid had been highly commended by the Arts Council who had advised that alternative funding was available for some the projects identified.

The council was now also embarking on a five year action plan designed to promote community cohesion and build a sense of community spirit across the district. This work would be supported by a network of Community Resilience Champions to be identified as part of the initiative.

A 'Culture without Borders' Development Trust had now been established with the aim of securing funding to support museum activities and events across both Epping Forest District and Lowewood Museums. The ultimate aim of the trust would be to enable the museum to become sustainable for the future.

In response to the briefings by the Portfolio Holders, Councillor Sunger asked if the three police officers would do 8 hour shifts each. He was told that it was not that kind of operation as they would not work across a 24 hour period.

Councillor Baldwin asked if the community development work associated with the community cohesion project was cost neutral to the council and if there was external funding for this. Councillor Helen Kane replied that the council would be funding it initially. Ms Wallis added that there were various funds that officers would be tapping into, such as the Public Health Partners who were keen get involved with the Council.

Councillor Heap asked if the Police were under the Council's control and if they could be called away. Councillor Sam Kane replied that they could be called away, but only under exceptional circumstances. It would not be a regular occurrence and the Council would be compensated for this.

Councillor Baldwin asked about the government grant for the 'renewable heat initiative' and whether the Council had to repay it? Mr Hall said that as it was grant we did not have to repay it.

RESOLVED:

That the Select Committee noted and reviewed the Communities Directorate Business Plan for 2018/19.

62. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2017/18 (QUARTER 3) PERFORMANCE

The Select Committee noted the Quarter 3 performance of the key performance indicators within its area of responsibility.

Nine indicators fell within the responsibility of the Communities Select Committee. The overall position with regard to the achievement of target performance at Q3 for these nine indicators was as follows:

- (a) 9 (100%) indicators achieved target;
- (b) 0 (0%) indicators did not achieve target, and
- (c) 0 (0%) of these KPI's performed within the agreed tolerance for the indicator
- (d) 9 (100%) indicators are currently anticipated to achieve year-end target

RESOLVED:

That the Select Committee reviewed and noted the Q3 performance in relation to the key performance indicators within its areas of responsibility.

63. KEY ACTION PLAN - QUARTER 3 PROGRESS

The Select Committee reviewed the third quarter progress of the Corporate Plan Key Action Plan for 2017/18. Progress against the Key Action Plan was reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure the timely identification and implementation of appropriate further initiatives or corrective action where necessary.

20 actions fell within the areas of responsibility of the Communities Select Committee. At the end of Q3:

- 13 (65%) of these actions had been 'Achieved' or were 'On-Target'
- 3 (15%) of these actions were 'Under Control'
- 1 (5%) of these actions were 'Pending'
- 3 (15%) of these actions were 'Behind Schedule'

The Committee reviewed each of the 20 actions as set out in the report.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee reviewed and noted the third quarter (Q3) progress of the Corporate Plan Key Action Plan for 2017/18 in relation to its areas of responsibility.

64. TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME - PROJECT DOSSIER - COMMUNITIES DIRECTORATE

The Head of Transformation, Mr Bailey introduced the report on the progress of the projects and programmes within the Transformation Programme. This was the first time that this had come to this committee after the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had requested it.

The Corporate Plan provides a framework to demonstrate how the work of the Council fits together at a strategic level. It provided a focus to establish a set of corporate priorities, describing how the organisation would deliver positive change.

An annual Corporate Specification detailed how the Corporate Plan would be delivered through a set of operational objectives for that year. Operational objectives can concern Business As Usual (BAU) or business transformation.

The Committee were asked to consider and review the list of active High and Medium complexity projects, known formally as the Project Dossier.

They went on to consider and review the 9 project dossiers linked to the Communities Directorate. Mr Bailey noted that the Committee was at liberty to ask for a full report on any of the projects that they may want to scrutinise to come to a subsequent meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee reviewed and noted the updated Project Dossier for the Transformation Programme for the Communities Directorate.

65. CORPORATE PLAN 2018-2023 - PROGRESS REPORTING AND PERFORMANCE INDICATOR SET

The Head of Transformation, Mr Bailey introduced the report on the Council's Corporate Plan for 2018-2023. This would become the authority's key strategic planning document linking the key external drivers influencing the Council services, with a set of corporate aims and objectives, grouped under three corporate ambitions. This report would be going to all the Select Committees for information.

A Corporate Specification for each year (previously called the Key Action Plan) details how the Corporate Plan was being delivered through operational objectives, with these in turn linked to annual Service business plans.

The success of the new Corporate Plan would be assessed through the achievement of a set of benefits, focussed on what the Council achieves for customers. These benefits in turn were evidenced through a set of performance measures. A new format for reporting the Council's performance was also proposed.

Management Board, Leadership Team and Cabinet Members were involved in developing the draft Corporate Plan 2018-2023. The content of the Plan – including drivers, objectives and benefits – were the subject of consultation with customers, businesses, partners and staff. The views of Councillors were also sought through the four Select Committees as well as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The views of the Cabinet were gained through a report to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee. Feedback from local councils was taken through a report to the Local Councils' Liaison Committee (LCLC).

To minimise expenditure associated with its production, the new Corporate Plan will only be available as an electronic download via the Council's website or for customers to view as a hard copy at the Council's Civic Offices.

An annual Corporate Specification detailed how the Corporate Plan would be delivered through a set of operational objectives for that year. The Council had a number of Key Action Plans, so to avoid confusion the yearly action plan for the Corporate Plan would in future be referred to as the Corporate Specification. This name denoted that it specifies the operational objectives for a given year, which in turn are responded to through annual Service Business Plans.

The report presented various ways to show the performance measures and benefits including a benefits map on A3 paper, although feedback on this particular 'map' indicated that it was too busy and difficult to read. A simpler 'map' on A4 was also included which updated the way it used to be displayed and this was likely to be the way it would develop.

Councillor Beales said that she preferred this new design as it was easier to understand. Councillor Knight agreed saying she preferred the traffic light system.

Councillor Baldwin commented that the aims and objectives were fairly abstract and therefore would be hard to represent and measure. Mr Bailey noted that these were just examples and were for illustrative purposes only. As for being abstract the proper plans would contain fewer objectives. The indicators would continue to be developed and would change over time and be refined over the next five years.

Councillor Sunger said that the traffic lights made sense and they could see where they were going. The other 'map' had too many cross over connection lines and was not very clear. Mr Bailey agreed that the simpler traffic light examples were easier to understand and noted that their layout could still be influenced by members before it went to the Finance and Performance Cabinet Committee in June 2018.

Concern was raised that colour printing would be expensive but it was noted the each indicator (Red, Amber, and Green) was displayed as different shapes and could thus be read in black and white as well as colour.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee reviewed and commented on the proposed benefits and performance indicator set for 2018-2023 and on the Council's proposed format for reporting the performance of the indicator set and the progress of the Corporate Plan 2018-2023.

66. REPORTS TO BE MADE TO THE NEXT MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

That the report on the Youth Council and the recommendations that they be given the £8,000 DDF money and that they give an annual presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be reported to the April 2018 O&S Committee meeting.

67. FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted that this was their last meeting of this municipal year.