

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COUNCIL MINUTES

Committee: Council **Date:** 3 November 2015

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.30 - 9.00 pm

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

Apologies: Councillors K Angold-Stephens, A Boyce, D Dorrell, J Hart, R Jennings, S Jones, S Kane, Y Knight, H Mann, L Mead, S Neville, C Roberts, L Wagland and S Weston

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), A Hall (Director of Communities), S G Hill (Assistant Director (Governance & Performance Management)), T Carne (Public Relations and Marketing Officer), R Perrin (Democratic Services Officer), A Hendry (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and P Seager (Chairman's Secretary)

55. 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.

56. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Council meetings held on 29 September 2015 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

57. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

58. ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Announcements by the Chairman of the Council

(i) Chris Overend

It was with much sadness that the Chairman informed the Council of the death of the Policy and Grants Officer, Chris Overend.

The Council stood for a minute's silence in tribute to the memory of Chris Overend.

Members were informed that Chris Overend had been an employee of District Council since 1990. He had worked within the former District Secretary's Department until 1996 and then as a Policy Officer for the provision of grants to local voluntary organisations and where he worked closely with many Members past and present of the Council and the Voluntary Sector and Community.

The Director of Communities and Members paid tribute to the memory of Chris Overend.

(ii) Citizen of Year nominations

The Chairman asked Members to consider nominating residents within the District that had shown outstanding contributions to their community for the Citizen of the Year and Young Citizen of the Year 2016 Award.

(iii) Chairman's Charity Quiz Night

The Chairman advised Members that the Chairman's Charity Quiz night would be held on Friday 26 February 2015 at Theydon Bois Village Hall.

(iv) Flowers

The Chairman advised that she intended the flowers from tonight's meeting to be sent to Frank Foster House, Loughton Lane, Theydon Bois.

59. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

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

60. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER NOTICE

(a) Waste and Residual Collections

By Councillor B Surtees to Councillor W Breare-Hall, Portfolio Holder for Environment Portfolio Holder

"Whilst recognizing the efforts made by the cabinet and the staff of the District Council it does seem that there are still considerable disruptions and difficulties with both the waste and residual collections. Can councillor Breare-Hall provide a more detailed response than that contained in his report to Council on the following issues;

(a) The number of complaints received to date since the change to 4 day working was implemented in May 2015.

(b) The percentage of those complaints that are to do with missed collections

(c) The number of additional freighters above those specified in the contract or agreement with Biffa that are currently deployed in order to ensure a good service to residents."

Response by Councillor W Breare-Hall, Portfolio Holder for Environment.

"I am grateful to Cllr. Surtees for his recognition of the work done by the Council's staff in addressing the problems experienced earlier this year by our waste and recycling contractor, Biffa Municipal. He will have heard me praise their hard work, dedication and commitment on many occasions, but I am happy to have this opportunity to do so again. It is thanks to their efforts, and those of the Biffa workforce, that our residents no longer face the "considerable disruptions and difficulties" his question mischievously suggests they do.

In answer to his specific queries, between 11th May and 25th October this year we received 9,301 complaints. Approximately 96% of those related to missed collections, and Biffa are currently operating seven more freighters than they originally envisaged.

However, six months on from the move to a four day collection service, the figure Cllr. Surtees has requested for the total number of complaints received is, in the context of the current situation, potentially misleading and, arguably, meaningless. The bulk of those complaints were received in the weeks immediately following the switch over, and Biffa's performance has improved markedly since then.

The service our residents currently receive sees an average of just 34 bins a day being missed. That's out of 27,000 daily collections. Or, put another way, 0.1% of collections are now being missed.

Cllr. Surtees may also wish to note that the doorstep collections of batteries, textiles and small electrical equipment that were introduced in May have already resulted in over 10 tonnes of additional material being recycled, and that our new fleet of vehicles and single-pass glass and dry recycling collections are significantly reducing harmful carbon emissions. I hope Cllr. Surtees will agree with me that this is excellent news for both our residents and the environment.

Additional question by Councillor B Surtees

Councillor B Surtees advised that his interests were with regards to the overall recycling, environmental and financial issues for the Council and he hoped that Councillor W Breare-Hall did not find the question mischievous.

Response by Councillor W Breare-Hall

Councillor W Breare-Hall advised that the question was a little mischievous, as he and the vast majority of residents did not believe there was still a considerable disruption or difficulty with either the residual or recycling collections.

61. REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(a) The Leader of the Council

The Leader added to the comments made by the Environment Portfolio with regards to the 'question by members under notice' and advised that it was encouraging to see that the waste and recycling contract had stabilised to a large extent and he wanted to reassure Members that no one would be complacent in making sure that the contract ran smoothly in the future, so that residents got the service they deserved.

The Leader of the Council advised that he had attended various meetings on behalf of the Council. On the 8 October he had hosted a visit by the Chairman and Chief Executive of the London Stansted Cambridge Corridor, which explored opportunities

for economic development in District. He was able to communicate the importance of the TfL Central Line into the District and the new developments in the District such as the Shopping Retail Park in Loughton and the St John's site. He also attended a meeting with Essex County Council's Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Councillor Kevin Bentley which explored further joint working and partnership arrangements for the District.

The Leader advised that he had attended the Epping Forest Youth Council, Youth Conference hosted at the Civic Offices. This involved young people across the District debating the UK's Membership of the European Union and resulted in the majority of young people expressing a view in favour of the UK remaining in EU.

Furthermore the Leader advised that he had met with Leaders of the neighbouring authorities in Harlow and Uttlesford, to discuss a range of issues that would be included in the proposals being developed by the Essex Authorities for a Devolution Bid. The Cabinet had discussed this issue at their last meeting and agreed to still consider the issue but had been clear about a number of "red line issues" relating to governance arrangements and funding. He advised that at the recent Essex Leaders' meeting on devolution, Epping Forest had appeared to be one of the few authorities who had formally considered the issue and had a mandate.

Finally, the ongoing programme of workshops in relation to the Local Plan were continuing and had been well attended by upwards of 40 representatives of the District and Town and Parish Councils and he encouraged Members to carry on supporting these events.

(b) Governance and Development Management Portfolio Holder

The Governance and Development Management Portfolio Holder, Councillor J Philip updated Members that following the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) decision regarding the dismissal of financial compensation for missed refuse collections. Councillor J Philip advised that it had been clear that the Council had made sound decisions with good governance, which had demonstrated that although problems had occurred with the waste collection service, the Council had been judged on how it had dealt with the problems. Councillor J Philip quoted that "the Council considered the relative issues and explained the reasons for their decisions" and therefore the Council was confident that a clear explanation had been provided to residents and that the right decision had been concluded by LGO.

(c) Planning Policy

The Planning Policy Portfolio Holder, Councillor R Bassett advised that the Local Plan workshop held on 2 November 2015 regarding Natural Environment, Green Networks, Open Space and the Historic Environment had been well attended by District, Town and Parish Members and proved to be useful and interesting. There were further Local Plan works shops on 19 November 2015 regarding Economic Strategy, Food Production, Glasshouses, Tourism, Live/Work and 24 November 2015 regarding Affordable Housing and Housing an Ageing Population.

62. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS WITHOUT NOTICE

(a) Remembrance Sunday

Councillor S Murray asked the Leader of the Council whether he;

- agreed that Remembrance Sunday played an important role in the Civic nature of our society;
- that it was outrageous that the Police gave very short notice of their intentions, not to provide Police Officers for these type of events;
- thinks that the reported comments by the Police Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Essex, stating that the local authorities should be providing stewards for the event, on the Tuesday before the Sunday event was unacceptable; and
- thought that the Essex Police had let down the residents of the District.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor C Whitbread advised that he agreed with Councillor S Murray's comments concerning Remembrance Sunday being one of the most important events within the community calendar each year. He advised that the Police had left it too late to inform the Council this year and that the Police should have taken their part in the parades this year. The Leader informed Members that he had met with PCC Nick Alston in private last week and had tried to get him to change his mind but he had not been successful. The Council had been unable to provide support at such short notice for this year's service, although he advised that every effort would be made to help with next year's service because it was the right and proper thing to do. He personally thought it was disgraceful and that the Police should be ashamed of themselves for not taking part this year.

He advised that the services in Epping and Loughton were still going ahead in District.

(b) Electric Vehicle Charge point - Epping

Councillor J H Whitehouse asked the Environment Portfolio Holder, Councillor W Breare-Hall whether;

- (i) he would consider the Government's offer to local authorities to provide funding for a street charge point, if requested by resident;
- (ii) if so whether he would look into possibility of a charge point in Epping; and
- (iii) to introduce a Council strategy on the use of electronic cars within the Epping Forest District?

Councillor Breare-Hall advised that it was an interesting suggestion and hoped that the Council would support the idea. Initially he would need to look into it further but would be pleased for the details to be passed onto him.

(c) Advice letters of Council Housebuilding programme within Wards

Councillor D Wixley asked the Housing Portfolio Holder, Councillor D Stallan about the house building programme proposed on garage sites in the Fairmead Loughton Ward, and whether Ward Members could be notified of any correspondence sent out to residents beforehand, in preparation for any concerns that may be raised by their constituents.

Councillor D Stallan advised that he had not been aware of this arrangement, but would be happy to liaise with officers to ensure that if there were any correspondence being sent out regarding the housebuilding programme, that the Ward Members were advised.

(d) Royal Gunpowder Mills, Waltham Abbey

Councillor R Butler asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor C Whitbread what the Council was going do about protecting and supporting the Royal Gunpowder Mills,

because plans exhibited by the holiday company PGL looked to take over the majority of the site and leave the actual Royal Gunpowder Mills site insignificant in comparison.

The Leader of the Council, C Whitbread advised that this was not a matter for consideration at this moment because a planning application was to be submitted.

The Chairman advised that the application had to go through the due process and the planning procedure.

The Director of Governance advised caution about speaking on this issue, as it was likely to be a live planning application and all of the matters Councillor R Butler mentioned would be considered through that planning process. She advised that it would not be appropriate for individual Councillors to express views at this moment without all the facts both for and against in front of them, and it would come before the Council through the planning process.

(e) Residual Waste

Councillor C C Pond asked the Environment Portfolio Holder, Councillor W Breare-Hall whether he was aware that as from this week, most of the Epping Forest's residual waste would be taken by ECC to the new Waste Disposal Authority (WDA) facility at Basildon, for further sorting, which should result in a further 7 to 10% of residual waste being recycled.

Councillor W Breare-Hall advised that he was aware and it would result in further recycling for the Council.

(f) Transformation Manager

Councillor J M Whitehouse asked the Technology and Support Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor A Lion what were the arrangements for the new Head of Transformation and which work streams would he be taking over?

Councillor A Lion advised that Transformation Manager, D Bailey had started on 2 November 2015 and he had met with him that afternoon to discuss the Transformation Project. Councillor A Lion would update the Council regularly by including information in his future reports to Council.

(g) Street Lighting

Councillor J Knapman asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor C Whitbread whether in the spirit of devolution he would support and seconded a motion to Essex County Council in favour of Parish and Town Councils to be able to buy back their street lighting.

Councillor C Whitbread advised that he would be more than happy to support such a motion as long as there was financial backing by the Town and Parish Councils.

(h) The Forest, City of London Corporation

Councillor S Murray advised that concerns were starting to be raised with regards to signs of early commercialisation in the Forest and profit seeking from the City of London Corporation. He sought assurances from the Leader of the Council that this Council very much wanted the Forest to remain as it was with free car parks and tea rooms available to residents.

Councillor C Whitbread advised that the Forest was important to all Members, its one of the reasons why people chose to live in the District.

Councillor S Stavrou advised that concerns had been raised locally about the scrutiny of the City of London Corporation and the fact that there were no local representative apart from four Verderer's, which had historically been seen as remote figures. She had attended several meetings with residents, the Forest Forum and the Horse Riders Forum and concerns had been raised about budgets for the Forest and whether it would become commercially run. Everyone had been used to having free access to the Forest and did not like implications of the potential changes and the new bill that was going through Parliament. Councillor S Stavrou advised that the Leader and Cabinet would share information with the Council on a regular basis about this issue.

(i) Street Lighting in High Ongar

Councillor M McEwen asked the Leader whether he was aware that the Parish Council in High Ongar was responsible for their own street lighting and had been for a long time.

Councillor C Whitbread advised that he was not aware of it but welcomed it.

63. MOTIONS

(a) Proposals of Essex's Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable

Moved by Councillor J M Whitehouse and Seconded By Councillor B Surtees

"The Council notes with dismay the proposals of Essex's Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable to:

- Cut the number of Police and Community Support Officer (PCSO) posts in Essex from 250 to 60, of whom just seven will be deployed across Epping Forest and Brentwood;
- Withdraw from dealing with matters such as long-term neighbourhood disputes, low level anti-social behaviour and parking issues;
- Close and sell Epping Police Station without putting in place alternative local facilities;
- Close and sell Ongar Police Station without putting in place alternative local facilities;
- Sell the already closed Waltham Abbey Police Station without putting in place alternative local facilities; and
- Close the front counter at Loughton Police Station.

Council notes these proposals will mean the nearest police front counters for Epping Forest residents will be in Harlow, Chelmsford and Basildon.

Council regrets the absence of discussion and consultation in advance of the changes being announced and condemns the inadequate nature of the feedback

questionnaire, which does not address the main concerns arising from the proposed changes.

Council resolves:

- to communicate these concerns to the Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner;
- to assess what impact the withdrawal of the police from matters such as long-term neighbourhood disputes, low level anti-social behaviour and parking issues will have on the council, especially the Community Safety Team, and North Essex Parking Partnership; and
- to work constructively with the police and other local organisations such as town and parish councils to identify possible alternatives to the closure of local police stations (e.g. co-location)."

Amendment moved by Councillor G Waller and seconded by Councillor C Whitbread

In line 1, delete 'dismay' and insert 'concern'.

In lines 15-17, delete all words from 'Council regrets' to 'proposed changes'.

In line 18, delete 'resolves' and insert 'notes'.

In line 19, delete 'to communicate these concerns' and insert 'that these concerns have been communicated'.

In line 21, delete 'to assess' and insert 'that the Cabinet member responsible for Community Safety is reviewing'.

In line 25, delete 'to work' and insert 'that the Council has been engaging, and will continue to engage'.

Following line 27, add the following words:

- 'Council is strongly committed to the objective of providing one or more alternative contact points which will enable the public to access the same services as have been provided until now at the police counters.'
- that the Police and Crime Commissioner is due to attend a meeting of the Local Councils Liaison Committee on 16 November, and urges councillors and all others concerned about these matters to attend and use the opportunity to put their views and to question the Commissioner on his plans.'

Councillor C C Pond requested that the following be included in the amendment.

"In line 26, add 'and counters' after 'police stations'"

The Mover and Seconder advised that they accepted this inclusion with the amended motion.

Carried

Motion as amended ADOPTED

RESOLVED:

(1) That Council notes with concern the proposals of Essex's Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable to:

a) Cut the number of Police and Community Support Officer posts in Essex from 250 to 60, of whom just seven will be deployed across Epping Forest and Brentwood;

b) Withdraw from dealing with matters such as long-term neighbourhood disputes, low-level anti-social behaviour and parking issues;

c) Close and sell Epping Police Station without putting in place alternative local facilities;

d) Close and sell Ongar Police Station without putting in place alternative local facilities;

e) Sell the already closed Waltham Abbey Police Station without putting in place alternative local facilities; and

f) Close the front counter at Loughton Police Station.

(2) That Council notes these proposals will mean the nearest police front counters for Epping Forest residents will be in Harlow, Chelmsford and Basildon.

(3) That the Council notes;

a) that these concerns have been communicated to the Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner;

b) that the Cabinet member responsible for Community Safety is reviewing what impact the withdrawal of the police from matters such as long-term neighbourhood disputes, low level anti-social behaviour and parking issues will have on the Council, especially the Community Safety Team, and North Essex Parking Partnership;

c) that the Council has been engaging, and will continue to engage , constructively with the police and other local organisations such as town and parish councils to identify possible alternatives to the closure of local police stations and counters. (e.g. co-location);

d) Council is strongly committed to the objective of providing one or more alternative contact points which will enable the public to access the same services as have been provided until now at the police counters; and

e) that the Police and Crime Commissioner is due to attend a meeting of the Local Councils Liaison Committee on 16 November, and urges councillors and all others concerned about these matters to attend and use the opportunity to put their views and to question the Commissioner on his plans.

64. CORPORATE PLAN KEY ACTION PLAN 2016/17

Mover: Councillor C Whitbread, Leader of the Council.

Councillor C Whitbread submitted a report regarding the Corporate Plan Key Action Plan for 2016/17.

Report as first moved **ADOPTED**

RESOLVED:

That the Corporate Plan Key Action Plan 2016/17 be adopted.

65. WATER AND POLLUTION CONTROL OFFICER

Mover: Councillor W Breare-Hall, Portfolio Holder for Environment.

Councillor W Breare-Hall submitted a report requesting a supplementary estimate for the creation of a Water and Pollution Control Officer post during the current year.

Report as first moved **ADOPTED**

RESOLVED:

That a supplementary estimate for the Continuing Services Budget in the sum of £10,000 for 2015/16 be approved.

66. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

(a) Report of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

Councillor S Murray congratulated Members of the Youth Engagement Review Task and Finish Panel following the completion of the review of the budget related to youth engagement and the conclusions reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20 October 2015.

67. JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

(a) The Chairman informed Members that there were no reports to be considered on the business of joint arrangements and external organisations.

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

(c) The Council noted that written reports from the representatives of the Police Crime Panel and Stansted Airport Community Trust would be presented at the next Council meeting on 15 December 2015.

CHAIRMAN