

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY, 27 JUNE 2016
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.03 - 9.55 PM**

Members Present: Y Knight (Chairman), G Shiell (Vice-Chairman), R Baldwin, A Beales, K Chana, R Gadsby, L Girling, S Heap, S Jones, S Murray, A Mitchell, B Surtees, H Whitbread and W Marshall (Tenants and Leaseholders Federation)

Other members present: S Stavrou (Housing Portfolio Holder)

Apologies for Absence: L Hughes and B Rolfe

Officers Present A Hall (Director of Communities) and M Jenkins (Democratic Services Officer)

1. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (MINUTE ITEM 39 - 23.7.02)

There were no substitutions made at the meeting.

2. NOTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the notes of the last meeting of the select committee held on 8 March 2016 be agreed.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, W Marshall, Chairman of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item of the agenda by virtue of being a Council tenant. He advised that he would remain in the meeting for the consideration of the item and any voting that may take place:

- Item 8 Housing and Planning Act 2016 – Summary of Key Housing Proposals

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE/WORK PROGRAMME

The Select Committee received a report from the Director of Communities regarding its Terms of Reference and Draft Work Programme 2016/17.

An Overview and Scrutiny framework based on a structure of four select committees was established from the commencement of the municipal year. The Select Committee framework ensured that all services now had a reporting route for overview and scrutiny and that there was clear scope to the scrutiny activities of each committee. The framework continued to provide for relevant scrutiny activity to be undertaken by way of the establishment of task and finish panels as necessary.

Lead officers had been nominated for each select committee; their initial responsibility was to review the Terms of Reference for the select committee for which they were responsible. These should reflect the scope of the select committee and provide regular progress reporting on relevant matters made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, whilst ensuring consistency of operation across the whole. These Terms of Reference would be considered by members at the first meeting in the municipal year and then agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

It was noted that the Work Programme should be relevant and achievable and be informed by relevant service aims and member priorities. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had indicated that a more robust approach to the development of work programmes was required for 2016/17. Therefore a co-ordinating group consisting of the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of each select committee would be meeting on 30 June 2016, together with lead officers, to consider a way forward for the identification of appropriate scrutiny activity during this coming year and future years. It was advised that it would therefore be inappropriate for the Select Committee to formally agree any work programme already in development, until this had been considered by this group.

The Director of Communities provided a draft programme for the Select Committee for 2016/17 for consideration, and asked members if there were any items which they thought should either be deleted or added to the Draft Work Programme. Councillor G Shiell suggested scrutinising the promotion and marketing currently used for encouraging tenants to downsize to consider it. This could be marketed in a better way. Members agreed to schedule this for the September 2016 meeting of the Select Committee.

Members felt that a senior Essex Police officer could be invited to attend a select committee meeting to answer questions on policing and crime. This should be woven into safeguarding and mental health issues as well. It was identified that the November meeting of the Select Committee would be appropriate for this, since the Draft Community Safety Partnership Plan would be considered at the same meeting. The Director of Communities undertook to invite the District Police Commander, Chief Inspector Denise Morrissey to attend. It was also agreed that consideration should be given at the September meeting to any questions that should be asked of Chief Inspector Morrissey.

RECOMMENDED:

That the draft Terms of Reference and Work Programme of the Communities Select Committee be recommended to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval subject to the following additions:

- (1) That the promotion and marketing arrangements used currently by the District Council for encouraging tenants to downsize to smaller properties be submitted to the September select committee meeting;
- (2) That a discussion with the District Police Commissioner on current policing issues in the District be scheduled for the November select committee meeting; and
- (3) That questions for the District Police Commander be formulated at the September select committee meeting.

5. HOUSING SERVICE STANDARDS - PERFORMANCE REPORT 2015/16 AND REVIEW

The Select Committee received a report from the Director of Communities regarding the Housing Service Standards – Performance 2015/16 and Review.

In 2007, the then Housing Portfolio Holder agreed a range of Housing Service Standards covering all of the Housing Service's main areas of activity. It was also agreed that, annually, the Housing Service's performance against the Housing Service Standards should be considered and whether any changes should be made to the Service Standards. Tenants were provided with a handbook setting out all the agreed Service Standards, which was also available on-line.

The Chairman introduced Councillor S Stavrou as the new Portfolio Holder for Housing, to the Select Committee.

The members supported the following:

- (a) The Select Committee agreed to add a figure to (H1) of the Service Standards – “Interview with a Homelessness Prevention Officer within 7 days of initial contact.”
- (b) Service Standard PS2 – “Undertake jobs through our Handyperson Service within 2 weeks of request,” the Select Committee requested an amendment to 3 weeks.
- (c) Service Standard PS4 – “Respond to applicants for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) within 10 working days of receiving a referral from an occupational therapist (OT).” Members supported amending 10 working days to 15 working days.
- (d) Service Standard PS7 – “Issue a decision on a formal application for other types of financial assistance for private occupiers within 5 working days of receipt.” The Select Committee recommended moving the target to 10 days.

RECOMMENDED:

- (1) That, following appropriate scrutiny and questions, performance against the previously agreed Housing Service Standards in 2015/16 be noted;
- (2) That, subject to the views of the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation, the proposed changes to the Housing Service Standards be recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder and that the relevant leaflets be updated at an appropriate time; and
- (3) That the Housing Service Standards and performance against the Service Standards in 2016/17 be reviewed in June 2017.

6. HOUSING STRATEGY: 6 MONTH PROGRESS REPORT ON KEY ACTION PLAN 2016

The Select Committee received a 6 month progress report regarding the Housing Strategy – Key Action Plan 2016 from the Director of Communities.

The Council had adopted a Housing Strategy that assessed the District's current and future housing needs and set out the Council's approach to meeting those needs. The Strategy also included a Key Action Plan which set out the proposed actions that would be taken by the Council to contribute towards the achievement of the housing objectives over the first year of the Housing Strategy. When adopting the Housing Strategy, the Cabinet also agreed that Key Actions Plans for the Housing Strategy should be produced and updated on an annual basis.

The latest Key Action Plan was agreed in January 2016 and the Cabinet had previously agreed that progress with the Key Actions Plans should be monitored on a 6-monthly basis by this select committee (previously the Housing Select Committee). The members therefore considered progress with this Plan. They were advised that the formulation of a new Housing Strategy had been delayed as a result of delays with the formulation of a new Local Plan.

Members were advised that in regard to Item 26 Council Housing Accommodation, the authority would be providing 1 x 1 bedroom and 1 x 2 bedroom flats each year for 4 years to Syrian refugees on non-secure tenancies which would be assisting the Government's commitment to accommodate 20,000 Syrian refugees in the UK over a 4 year period. The Director of Communities added that the District Council would be the landlord but that Essex County Council were responsible for the resettlement of families.

RESOLVED:

That, following appropriate scrutiny and questions, the 6 Month Progress Report on the Housing Strategy Key Action Plan 2016 be noted.

7. HOUSING AND PLANNING ACT 2016 - SUMMARY OF KEY HOUSING PROPOSALS

The Select Committee received a report regarding the Housing and Planning Act 2016 – Summary of Key Housing Proposals from the Director of Communities.

It was noted that following a lengthy and somewhat controversial passage, the Housing and Planning Bill, now the Housing and Planning Act 2016 had received Royal Assent on 12 May 2016.

The new Act comprised a number of provisions relating to both housing and planning, in particular for housing it covered:

- (a) Lifetime and fixed term tenancies;
- (b) Voluntary Right to Buy for housing association tenants and sales of high value void Council properties;
- (c) Starter Homes; and
- (d) "Pay to Stay" – Increased rents for tenants on higher incomes.

There was concern among Select Committee members about the Act's consequences in terms of the security for neighbourhood cohesion and the authority being forced to sell higher value properties that they possessed.

The Director of Communities advised that he would be arranging a Housing Information Evening for Members regarding the legislation and its implications in late September or early October 2016, once the required Government Guidance and Regulations had been received.

RESOLVED:

That the report regarding the Summary of Key Housing Proposals contained in the Housing and Planning Act 2016 be noted.

8. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2015/16 - QUARTER 4 OUTTURN PERFORMANCE

The Select Committee received a report regarding Key Performance Indicators 2015/16 – Quarter 4 (Outturn) Performance from the Director of Communities.

The Local Government Act 1999 required that the Council make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions and services were exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

As part of the duty to secure continuous improvement, a range of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) relevant to the Council's services and key objectives were adopted each year by the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee. Performance against the KPIs was monitored on a quarterly basis by the Management Board and Overview and Scrutiny to drive improvements in performances and ensuring corrective action was taken where necessary.

A range of 36 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2015/16 had been adopted for the Council by the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee in March 2015. The KPIs were important to the improvement of the Council's services and comprised a combination of some former statutory indicators and locally determined performance measures. The aim of the KPIs was to direct improvement effort towards services and the national priorities and local challenges arising from the social, economic and environmental context of the district.

The Q4 (Outturn) performance summary in respect of each of the KPIs and those falling within the Communities Select Committee's areas of responsibility for 2015/16 together with details of the specific twelve month performance for each indicator are listed below.

- (a) 27 (75%) indicators achieved target;
- (b) 9 (25%) indicators did not achieve target; and
- (c) 1 (3%) of these KPIs performed within its tolerated amber margin.

Ten of the KPIs fell within this Select Committee's areas of responsibility. The overall position with regard to the achievement of target performance at the end of the year for these indicators was as follows:

- (i) 8 (80%) indicators achieved target;
- (ii) 2 (20%) indicators did not achieve target; and
- (iii) 0 (0%) indicators performed within their tolerated amber margin.

RESOLVED:

That, following appropriate scrutiny and questions, the Key Performance Indicators 2015/16 – Q4 (Outturn) Performance be noted.

9. CORPORATE PLAN KEY ACTION PLAN 2015/16 - QUARTER 4 (OUTTURN) POSITION

The Select Committee received a report regarding the Corporate Plan Key Action Plan 2015/16 – Quarter 4 (Outturn) Position from the Director of Communities.

The Corporate Plan was the Council's key strategic planning document, setting out its priorities over the five year period from 2015/16 to 2019/20. The priorities or Corporate Aims were supported by Key Objectives providing a clear statement of the Council's overall intentions for these five years.

The Key Objectives were delivered by an annual action plan with each year building upon the progress against the achievement of the Key Objectives for previous years. The annual action plans contained a range of actions designed to achieve specific outcomes and were working documents subject to change and development.

The Corporate Plan Key Action Plan for 2015/16 was agreed by the Cabinet in March 2015. Progress in relation to individual actions and deliverables was reviewed by the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly and outturn basis. In May 2016, Management Board agreed that scrutiny could be enhanced by consideration of progress by the Select Committee on a quarterly basis.

Some actions had cross directorate responsibility, where this was the case the most appropriate Select Committee was requested to consider the action. This report presented outturn progress against the Key Action Plan for 2015/16 for actions most appropriately considered by this Select Committee at the end of 2015/16.

There were 55 actions in the Key Action Plan 2015/16, at the end of the year:

- (a) 36 (65%) of these actions have been achieved by year end; and
- (b) 19 (35%) of these actions have not been achieved by year end.

15 actions fell within the areas of responsibility of this Select Committee. At the end of the year:

- (i) 8 (53%) of these actions had been achieved at year end; and
- (ii) 7 (47%) of these actions had not been achieved by year end.

This report was also considered by the Cabinet on 9 June 2016 and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7 June 2016.

RESOLVED:

That, following appropriate scrutiny and questions, the Corporate Plan Key Action Plan 2015/16 – Quarter 4 (Outturn) report be noted.

10. FUTURE MEETING START TIMES

The Select Committee supported retaining the starting time for future meetings of 7.00p.m.

11. FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting of the select committee would be on Tuesday 6 September 2016 at 7.00p.m. in Committee Room 1.

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