

Supplementary Council Agenda



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Council Tuesday, 16th December, 2008

Place: Civic Offices, High Street, Epping
Room: Council Chamber
Time: 7.30 pm
Committee Secretary: Council Secretary: Ian Willett
Tel: 01992 564243 Email: iwillett@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

6. REPORTS FROM THE LEADER, CHAIRMAN OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET (Pages 3 - 10)

To receive the attached reports from the Civil Engineering and Maintenance Portfolio Holder, the Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder, the Environment Portfolio Holder and the Housing Portfolio Holder on matters falling within their areas of responsibility.

8. MOTIONS (Pages 11 - 14)

(b) To consider the attached motions, notice of which has been given under Council Procedure Rule 11.

This page is intentionally left blank

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 16 December 2008

Subject: Civil Engineering and Maintenance Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Richard Bassett

Item: 6(c)

Recommendation:

That the report of the Civil Engineering and Maintenance Portfolio Holder be noted.

I am pleased to report that the Council has now responded to Traffic Regulation Order (Amendment No. 14) with our comments. One area we had most difficulties with the area of Upper Park in Loughton and following a meeting with Highways it has been agreed to work on a revised plan for this area.

We have also discussed with Highways the current state of the parking reviews and they believe that they should have completed their amendments following the reviews with members in the next few weeks. Copies will be made available to members as well as notification to residents. Individual road changes will be notified on a road by road letter drop to which residents will have 28 days to respond. After which final decisions will be confirmed and the necessary orders raised. Highways will be providing us with a timeline shortly which I will publish in the Bulletin.

I also attended a meeting with Essex and Hertfordshire Highways and Councillor Norman Hume on 26 November to discuss the Nazeing and Roydon area and especially the Dobbs Weir Rd and surrounding area. Trading Standards have informed us that since March 2008 they have spent 28 hours monitoring Dobbs Weir Rd and in that time have reported 149 lorries who contravened the 7.5 tonnes weight limit. They will be continuing their monitoring work and possibly extending it to Nazeing New Road and possibly to start checking in the evenings. Highways have informed us that they are planning to reduce speed limits on Dobbs Weir Road from 40 to 30 mph and in the derestricted part of the road will become 40mph and this will include Sedge Green.

We were informed that Essex Traffic Management and Freight Management Strategies were still not available but were being actively progressed. We stressed that any strategy should take into account the neighboring areas and similarly any strategy they have should be agreed with ourselves. I have asked for a provisional date for delivery of the strategies but none is available at this time.

The safety investigation work is progressing on the B194, Crooked Mile. Several safety improvements have been suggested and any works suggested will receive an urgent priority. There also are some scheduled maintenance and safety work already in plan and it is envisaged this work will be completed by April 2009.

With regards to ECC plans on localism I can report that we now have a meeting on 18 December with Councillor Norman Hume where we will start the process for EFDC. As previously stated I am doing some work on how this should be structured but I am always open to member suggestions.

This page is intentionally left blank

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 16 December 2008

Subject: Community Wellbeing Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Syd Stavrou

Item: 6(d)

Recommendation:

That the report of the Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder be noted.

Crime figures for the District are continuing to fall below the reduction target. For the current year to date recorded crimes are 194 below the reduction target for the year. There is some evidence that high visibility policing activity being conducted by the Metropolitan Police service to target crimes of dwelling burglary in the neighbouring London Boroughs is causing a rise in similar offences in the Epping Forest District.

The Limes Farm playground has now been completed.

The Safer Communities Partnership has been approached to match District Council funding for CCTV coverage in the Buckhurst Hill Underpass. The proposed system will be integrated into the Lower Queens Road system and upgrade and enhance the Waitrose system. The Partnership has also attracted Alcohol Related Partnership Activity Funding in the sum of £6,300 to go towards the provision of alcohol awareness workshops in 30 schools across the district aimed at Key Stage 3 year 6 pupils.

Members will be aware that since the restructuring of the Safer Communities Team into East, West and South, circulation of the minutes of Joint Area Action Groups have ceased. I have requested that these are once again made available to members, sooner rather than later.

This page is intentionally left blank

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 16 December 2008

Subject: Environment Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mary Sartin

Item: 6(f)

Recommending:

That the report of the Environment Portfolio Holder be noted.

Bobbingworth Tip

On 27 November 2008, I visited Bobbingworth Tip along with the Leader of Council, Councillor Collins, and officers of the Council where we met with volunteers of Countrycare who were starting the next phase of tree planting around the area of the leachate treatment plant. Since then local school children have undertaken some planting as have officers from Countrycare. To date somewhere in the region of 1000 trees have been planted around the site.

Once again the weather has played against us and it will not now be possible to seed the area until next year which will, unfortunately, mean a delay in opening the site to the public.

Environmental Issues

The first draft of the Council's Climate Change Strategy is about to go out for consultation with the hope that it will be ready to go forward for adoption in March or April 2009. The main objective of the strategy will be to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from the Council's own operations as well as looking at ways to prepare and adapt to predicted climate change impacts. The Green Fleet review will be taking place alongside this and it is hoped to incorporate the way forward for our vehicles into the Strategy.

During November a staff travel transport survey was carried out as an aid to producing a travel plan which it is hoped will encourage staff to travel in more sustainable ways. Alongside the cycle allowance and cycle purchase scheme which have been adopted, the Council has signed up to a car sharing website offered by Essex County Council but we are awaiting the results of the travel survey before this is launched.

As part of a survey carried out on behalf of the Government, 5000 questionnaires have been sent to random households in the District. This will help in assessing the level of fuel poverty amongst our residents.

Waste Management

On 21 November 2008, I visited the Shanks' run East London Waste Authority facility at Frog Island, Rainham with Mr Durrani and Portfolio Holders and officers from other authorities in Essex. This gave us an insight into the workings of Mechanical Biological Treatments where municipal solid waste is dried and stabilised and any recyclates present are separated before solid recovered fuel is produced from the remaining material. The material from this plant is currently being sent for use in the cement industry.

A meeting is to take place on 11 December with the County Portfolio Holder for Environment and the Head of Waste when it is hoped that some indication may be given as to what support we can hope for in the setting up of the next stage in our waste management service. Depending on what support we are offered we can then start making decisions on the future of what we collect and how.

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 16 December 2008

Subject: Housing Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor David Stallan

Item: 6(h)

Recommendation:

That the report of the Housing Portfolio Holder be noted.

Homelessness

The Housing Directorate are working hard to assist those who are faced with losing their homes due to the current financial crisis. I have already agreed to increase the amount the Council underwrites for the Epping Forest Housing Aid Scheme which provides rental guarantee deposits assisting homeless applicants to secure accommodation in the private sector.

In addition, the Cabinet is being asked to bid for DDF funding to increase the amount of money available in the Rental Loan Scheme. This scheme assists homeless applicants further with an interest free loan repayable over a 24 month period to meet the cost of one months rent in advance which is required when moving into the private sector. An Essex-wide LAA bid has also submitted for further funds for local authorities for similar schemes, I am hopeful that this Council will also benefit which will add even more funding for rental loans.

I would reassure Members that we have an excellent Homelessness Prevention Team who provide valuable housing advice even to those whom we do not owe a duty. We also work with a registered social landlord who leases private sector accommodation on our behalf which they manage for a small fee and enables the Council to nominate homeless applicants to this accommodation. We also provide high standard Hostel accommodation.

Officers last week met with representatives from other authorities in Essex together with the Communities and Local Government Special Advisor on Homelessness. It was explained that a Mortgage Rescue Scheme is expected to be introduced in January, although we are awaiting further guidance.

Tenant Satisfaction Survey

Every two years the Housing Directorate carry out a tenants' satisfaction survey. The survey for 2008 has now been completed and the full results will be considered by the Housing Scrutiny Panel in January with more detail being provided in the Members' Bulletin thereafter. I am able to report that 1,500 tenants were surveyed with 53% responding. 84% of respondents said they were satisfied with the overall service provided by the Council as their landlord. This is an unusually high level of satisfaction. It does represent a 1% decrease compared to the 2006 survey.

However, it is important to note that the Council were required to exclude residents living in sheltered accommodation on this occasion. As usually reported by tenant surveys, satisfaction levels are normally highest amongst older tenants, so to exclude this client group from the survey and record only a 1% reduction in overall satisfaction levels is very good news indeed.

Funding for additional tree maintenance work on housing land

The amount of maintenance work required to trees on Housing land throughout the District continues to increase, which has resulted in a backlog of work valued at approximately £26,000.

In addition, an urgent programme of tree work is needed on the Shernbroke Road side of the Ninefields Estate, Waltham Abbey which includes felling a number of trees, (many of which are in danger of causing subsidence to properties), and extensive maintenance works to shrubs at a cost of around £38,000. The Cabinet have agreed to recommend to full Council that a supplementary estimate of £64,000, funded from HRA balances, be agreed in order for this work to be undertaken as soon as possible. It has also been identified that further work to trees and shrubs will be needed in this area in 2010/2011, which will cost in the region of £38,000. This will be brought to the Cabinet's attention in the next budget cycle. I am sure all Members would welcome this programme of extra tree maintenance work especially as it will substantially improve the environment on our housing estates.

(b)(i) Gypsies and Travellers Development Plan Provision

“(1) That this Council expresses its outrage at the effect of the Government’s decision to direct the Authority, against its wishes, to prepare a Gypsy & Traveller DPD at this time because as a result:

(a) the Council has been unable to assess all local housing needs (including those of the Gypsy & Traveller community) as a single exercise resulting in the provision of accommodation for that community being highlighted prematurely and proving to be unnecessarily divisive;

(b) the consultation process has led to strong concerns being expressed to the Council by local residents and landowners about property blight, fear of crime, loss of amenity, reduction in land values and compulsory purchase of sites as a result of the Direction and by the Gypsy & Traveller community about social cohesion;

(2) That the Council records that, over the lifetime of this Council, there have been few occasions when the Authority has voluntarily exercised compulsory powers of acquisition to achieve its objectives and confirms that the Council remains extremely reluctant to exercise compulsory purchase powers in the future for the purpose of implementing the proposed DPD or for any other purpose;

(3) That the Government make a clear statement as to how it views the exercise of compulsory purchase powers in the current circumstances, bearing in mind:

- that all but two of the sites identified in the consultation document are in private ownership; and
- the need for the Council to comply with its duty under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 to promote good relations and equality of opportunity between persons of different racial groups when performing its functions; and

(4) That the Government commission urgently definitive research on the concerns of residents as expressed in the current consultation process so that the Council can engage effectively with the community in the future.”

Mover: Councillor Mrs D. Collins

Seconder: Councillor C. Whitbread

This page is intentionally left blank

(b)(ii) Economic Climate – Advice for Residents

“That the Council notes:

(a) the growing economic crisis and the impact it is having on individuals in the District;

(b) the increasing number of people struggling with mortgage repayments and the record levels of personal debt;

(c) the increasing demand placed on the Council's Benefits Section and on local organisations such as the Citizens' Advice Bureaux; and

resolves to:

(i) ask the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to work with relevant local public and voluntary sector bodies to undertake a review of current debt and money advice service provision;

(ii) ask the Cabinet to review the support that the District Council offers the Citizens Advice Bureau and similar services and consider whether this support should be extended, and to incorporate the outcome of the review into the budget process”.

Mover: Councillor Jon Whitehouse

Seconder: Councillor Ann Haigh

This page is intentionally left blank