

Supplementary Council Agenda



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Council Tuesday, 28th July, 2009

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 Environment Portfolio Holder, the Housing Portfolio Holder, the Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder and the Performance Management Portfolio Holder on matters falling within their area of responsibility.

14A. REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES – EPPING FOREST CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE’S PARTNERSHIP (CYPSP)

Recommending:

That Councillor B Rolfe be appointed to represent the Council on this Partnership for the remainder of the current municipal year in place of Councillor Mrs H Harding

At the Annual Council meeting on 21 May 2009, the Council appointed the following members to the Epping Forest Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership:

Conservative Group: Councillor Mrs H Harding
Liberal Democrats Group: Councillor Mrs A Haigh

The Conservative Group nominee was the then Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder whose responsibilities include Young People. Following the appointment of Councillor Rolfe as Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder the Conservative Group have advised that they wish to change their nominee.

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 28 July 2009

Subject: Environment Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mrs Mary Sartin

Item: 6(d)

Recommending:

That the report of the Environment Portfolio Holder be noted

Waste Service

A meeting of the Waste Management Partnership Board was held on 20 July when members were updated on the implementation of the new Food and Garden Waste recycling service.

All households where the new service will be implemented should now have received an introductory letter and a bin hanger giving the date of the start of the service and information on how to find out about roadshows. The first few roadshows have now taken place and there are others to follow at sites throughout the District.

Containers are currently being delivered ready for distribution to households from the beginning of August. Included with these will be an information pack with a collection calendar. There will be no changes to the day of the week on which collections are made in each area.

In the week prior to the start of the new service residents will have a second bin hanger delivered telling them that the new service will be starting in the following week.

As with all new initiatives things do change along the way and whereas previously I have said that food will not be able to be placed in plastic bags Sita now tell us that the facility that these materials will be going to can take compostable bags. These can be identified by a special logo and details of these will be given in the information packs. Food can also be wrapped in newspaper. I have also now been told that we will be able to take small animal bedding in the food and garden waste bins. Literature which has already been printed indicates that this will not be possible but any further material will include this and it will be shown on the Council's website that this is acceptable.

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 28 July 2009

Subject: Housing Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor David Stallan

Item 6(f)

Recommending:

That the report of the Housing Portfolio Holder be noted.

Rent Decrease

The HRA subsidy determination includes a number of elements, one of which is the guideline rent. Originally for this financial year, the Government increased the guideline rent by 6.2% due to the high increase in the Retail Price Index at September 2008. In fact the determination did state that authorities could increase rents by up to 7%.

However, Members considered that 7% would have been excessive given the economic climate. Therefore, on 17 February, full Council set the average rent increase at 4%. This was possible as the HRA was in a good position.

In March this year, the Government announced that the guideline rent increase would be reduced from 6.2% to 3.1% which was designed to encourage authorities to reduce their rents accordingly.

The Council responded to the Government's consultation paper on the issue and asked that the Council be compensated for its additional costs in administering the decrease, but was unsuccessful.

On 20 April, the Cabinet agreed that the Council adjusts its rent increase for this year to achieve a reduced 3.1% increase. All tenants will be receiving a written notice between late July and early August, advising them of the lower increase to their rent for the current year.

Fire Safety following the Camberwell Fire

On 3 July 2009 at Lakanal House in Camberwell, London, six people lost their lives as a result of a fire. Investigations into the cause of the fire and any lessons that need to be learnt are still being identified. However, whilst these investigations are being carried out, the Rt Hon John Healey, Minister for Housing and Planning at the Communities and Local Government has written to all local authority Chief Executives asking that some reassurance be offered to tenants.

Members should be aware that in 2006 the Council undertook a fire risk assessment in each of its blocks of flats, as well as in each of its Sheltered Accommodation Units. Any recommendations to reduce the risk of spread of fire that came out of those risk assessments have been actioned. These risk assessments are undertaken every five years in flat blocks, but annually in Sheltered Accommodation.

In the Private Sector, all licensed Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMO) also require the landlord to produce a fire risk assessment for their property. This is carried out in conjunction with the Essex Fire and Rescue Service and the Council's Environmental Health Officers.

In an attempt to give further reassurance to tenants, in conjunction with the Essex Fire and Rescue Service, the Council is preparing an information leaflet, which lists a range of Do's and Don'ts. This leaflet will be delivered to every Council property with the rent decrease letter, which is due to be delivered from 30 July 2009. The leaflet will also be published on the Council's website.

Some of the advice on the leaflet includes:

- Fitting smoke alarms on every level of your home
- Testing the batteries in your alarm once a week, and never remove them.
- Avoid leaving children in the kitchen alone when cooking on the hob, and keep matches and saucepan handles out of their reach
- Take care when cooking with hot oil
- Don't overload electrical sockets – try to keep one plug per socket
- Stub cigarettes out properly and dispose of them carefully. Put them out, right out!
- Ensure candles are secured in a proper holder and kept away from curtains or fabrics
- Plan an escape route and make sure everyone knows how to escape
- Make a bedtime check of your home before you go to bed – you are more at risk from a fire when asleep. Close inside doors at night to prevent a fire from spreading
- Don't tackle fires yourself – get out and stay out and call 999

Essex Fire and Rescue Service offer a free home fire safety visit to people living within their fire station boundaries. This initiative has been highly successful in reducing accidental fires and deaths in the home. If tenants or residents want a free home fire safety visit, they can contact the Essex Fire and Rescue Service on 0845 6012495.

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 28 July 2009

Subject: Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Brian Rolfe

Item: 6(h)

Recommending:

That the report of the Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder be noted

Since my appointment on 13 July 2009, I have been taking the opportunity to bring myself up to speed on the range of services, within the scope of the Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio.

Whilst the previous focus for the role was largely on young people and the range of sports, arts, museum and community services provided by the Council, this has been expanded on in the recent Cabinet re-organisation, to include Grant Aid, Health Inequalities, Voluntary Sector Liaison and a lead role in Equality and Diversity.

I have been fortunate enough in my first two weeks to attend a number of events which have demonstrated the value of the work undertaken. As a result of the development of a District-wide Play Strategy and the successful submission of a bid to the Big Lottery Fund, £247,000 was secured to upgrade playgrounds across the District. The latest completed project which was officially opened by the Chairman on 16 July 2009 was at Hoe Lane, Nazeing. Judging by the local children and parents I spoke to, I am sure it will be a great success.

On Friday, 17 July 2009, I was also pleased to be present at the opening of the latest Museum Exhibition, "The Great War". This exhibition illustrated the important role that local people played in the defence of the realm. I would recommend all Members to visit.

Over the summer, I will also be visiting the extensive range of Summer Holiday Activities for Young People, provided by the Council.

If any Member has any issues that they would like to raise regarding my new Portfolio, I would be happy to hear from them.

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 28 July 2009

Subject: Performance Management Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Richard Bassett

Item 6(i)

Recommending:

That the report of the Performance Management Portfolio Holder be noted.

With the tight economic climate one of the important areas this year will be ensuring that the Council is delivering value for money from its services and we should not be afraid to examine if the way the Council currently deliver services are the most cost effective. We have already conducted an external review of the Estates and Valuation service which gave a positive report but it also offered useful recommendations.

We shortly will be examining a review of Reprographics and does it provide value for money. Further reviews will continue throughout the year.

I shall also be looking at Emergency Planning and how we link with the parishes and question if our emergency plans are properly linked. Combined with this will be initial review of the Pitt report on the flooding in the summer of 2007. We have already prepared our initial views to send back on the review but more work will need to be done. This will link with our Land Drainage and Environment departments.

The first meeting of the new Highways Localism Panel is scheduled for the 21st July. This first meeting will be mainly educational where the roles and responsibilities will be explained and we will look at existing budgets and projects. We believe it will take a few meetings to get the Panel properly organized and operational. We have used comments from members to agree projects for this budget year but we can still influence priorities. We do need to start work on identifying new issues and priorities which will be input into the process for consideration.

The Epping Parking review has been published and there have been about 1000 responses received by Highways on the proposals. Many comments have been favourable but I am sure there will also be suggestions for improvements. This item will be monitored by the new Highways Localism Panel. We were asked by the O&S group to change the consultation period for the Debden and Buckhurst Hill reviews because of the summer holiday period. We took this to Highways and we have amended the dates so that everyone will have the opportunity to comment.

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