

## **EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES**

<b>Committee:</b>	Council	<b>Date:</b>	Tuesday, 5 April 2022
<b>Place:</b>	Council Chamber - Civic Offices	<b>Time:</b>	7.00 - 8.00 pm
<b>Members Present:</b>	H Kane (Chairman), N Avey, R Balcombe, N Bedford, P Bolton, H Brady, R Brookes, L Burrows, D Dorrell, I Hadley, S Heap, S Kane, P Keska, J Lea, J Leppert, A Lion, J McIvor, R Morgan, S Murray, M Owen, A Patel, J Philip, Caroline Pond, C C Pond, K Rizvi, M Sartin, P Stalker, D Stocker, D Sunger, B Vaz, C Whitbread, H Whitbread, J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse, K Williamson and D Wixley		
<b>Members Present (Virtually):</b>	R Baldwin, P Bhanot, S Heather, R Jennings, J Jennings, H Kauffman, C McCredie, L Mead and D Plummer		
<b>Apologies:</b>	J Share-Bernia, R Bassett, J Jogia, S Jones, S Neville, S Rackham, C Roberts and B Rolfe		
<b>Officers Present:</b>	Andrew Small (Strategic Director Corporate and 151 Officer), Gary Woodhall (Team Manager - Democratic & Electoral Services), Jackie Leither (Democratic Services Officer) and Steven Mitchell (PR Website Editor)		
<b>Officers Present (Virtually):</b>	Adrian Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)		

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### **80. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION**

The Democratic Services Manager 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.

### **81. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

### **82. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

In the absence of the Vice-Chairman, who had tendered her apologies, it was proposed that Councillor M Sartin be Vice-Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That Members agreed that Councillor M Sartin would assume the role of Vice-Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

### **83. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **(a) Arrangements for the Local Elections Count**

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager advised Members of the arrangements for the Local Elections Count, he stated that this information was also in the Council Bulletin this week.

The count for this year's Local Elections will be held on the night of Thursday 5 May at the Civic Offices in the Conference Suite and the Café Area for the 13 Count Teams. The Corporate Communications Team and televisions will be based in the Community Hub and there will also be a coffee station. There will be a walkway around the outside of the area where the Count Teams are but we would ask you to refrain from entering the Count Hall until either your ward or a ward for which you are an agent was being counted. Further information regarding the Count will be relayed to you with your entry tickets.

**(b) Chairman's Announcements**

**(i) Civic Awards**

The Chairman advised that the Civic Awards was a great success and that she set out to achieve two things, firstly that the Civic Offices could be used for hosting events and functions and secondly to welcome the community. I would like to extend my thanks to the officers and staff who made this event a reality, there were many positive comments made about the success of this event.

**(ii) Flowers**

The Chairman announced that she intended that the flowers from this evening's meeting to go to the reception area in the Civic Offices to be enjoyed by all of the staff and visitors.

**84. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)**

**Question by Mr M Searle, resident of Waltham Abbey to Councillor N Avey, Environment and Technical Services Portfolio Holder**

I would like to bring to the attention of the Council that an unknown number of manholes situated on public land in Waltham Abbey are not being inspected or maintained by anyone.

Thames Water, Essex County Council (Highways) and Epping Forest District Council have all stated that it is not their responsibility to inspect and maintain these manholes.

This is a real problem because a number are damaged and hazardous and have been for some time. It's insufficient for the council to say action will be taken once it's made aware of a problem, because by then somebody may have already been injured, as demonstrated when a grandmother out walking her dogs suffered severe leg injuries after falling down one of these neglected and defective manholes.

Councillor Steve Heather, who was contacted last July regarding this matter, stated, after receiving photographic and video evidence of damaged manholes, that "this is a very serious ongoing problem" and "they are death traps in waiting".

Somebody needs to take responsibility because I'm sure nobody disagrees that the health and safety of everyone in Waltham Abbey is paramount and that some system of inspection and maintenance should be in place to prevent further accidents occurring.

Will the council please be proactive rather than reactive and endeavour to find a solution to this very serious issue?

**Response given by Councillor N Avey Environmental and Technical Services Portfolio Holder**

Manholes can be owned by several different companies on both private and public land, Thames Water, Essex Highways or even BT/utilities. It is not a function of EFDC to inspect the statutory sewerage undertakers' assets, Thames Water are responsible for their assets and Essex Highways are responsible for the safety of the highway as the Highway Authority, highway rights take precedent over ownership in most instances.

The majority of non-highway adopted "public land" areas in Waltham Abbey tend to (but not exclusively) fall within Housings overall estate management responsibilities and are working towards an inspection regime including manhole covers once a year. If locations of defective covers can be provided, responsibility for them can be investigated and the appropriate agency informed.

The graphic below from Thames Water's website shows where property owners would be responsible for drainage systems for context.

Thames info: <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/help/emergencies/manhole-covers>

The Essex Highways reporting tool takes you directly to the relevant companies website to report it:  
[www.essexhighways.org/tell-us](http://www.essexhighways.org/tell-us)

If you know the postcode you can find out who supplies the water and sewerage to the area by the website: [www.water.org.uk](http://www.water.org.uk)

**85. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER NOTICE**

The Council noted that there were no questions by members under notice that had been submitted for consideration at this meeting.

**86. REPORTS FROM THE LEADER & MEMBERS OF THE CABINET**

The Council received written reports from Portfolio Holders. The Chairman invited the Leader of Council to provide an oral report and the opportunity for other members of the Cabinet to give updates on matters concerning their relevant portfolios.

**(a) Leader of Council**

Councillor C Whitbread congratulated the Chairman of Council for hosting the Civic Awards in the Civic Offices and added that it was a great demonstration of the versatility of the Civic Offices building.

Other uses recently were the Ukrainian collection hub, the opening of the Regis Company on the top floor and the actual use of the hub by Officers and Members. He stated that the hub had become a very versatile and useful space for the district as a whole.

He advised he had been invited to the opening of Regis and thought the mix of people using the office space would bring more life back into the High Street.

He stated over the last few weeks that he had been meeting other Leaders from Harlow, Broxbourne and East Herts some of the meetings were to do with the Harlow Garden Town project and how that was progressing, but also to look at opportunities for the future. He advised that he was looking to maximise opportunities with other nearby authorities to drive further benefits to the residents of Epping Forest.

He reported that he had recently been able to get out and about to other parts of the district, he had met with Councillor Keska on Sunday at the Ongar Farmers Market which was run by the Ongar Forum, one of the most successful business groupings locally and to have discussions around what was going on in Ongar, he stated that it was great to be able to get out and about again visiting different communities.

### **Questions to the Portfolio Holders regarding their reports**

Councillor Chris Pond advised his question was to Councillor S Kane and referred to his report on pages 15 and 17 of the agenda and stated that he agreed that the car park tariffs needed revising but what he and his constituents didn't find acceptable was the change of time for charging in Traps Hill Car Park in Loughton where charging now starts at 8am. A special arrangement was entered into with Councillor Waller when he was the Portfolio Holder to enable Traps Hill car park to be used as a starting point for the Staples Road School walking bus which took place in the morning at around 8.30 to 9am. Also many users of the leisure centre, in EFDC's own facility are also aggrieved at the bringing forward of the time. Therefore would Councillor Kane reconsider this start time for the charging regime as it does seem to have been done without any consultation.

Councillor S Kane advised that he had also received emails from constituents and it was very unfortunate that this was not picked up at the Stronger Place Select Committee or Cabinet as there was quite clearly an approach to standardise the hours of operation. This can be reviewed, particularly in mind of the walking bus to which I wasn't aware of, he stated that he had to be very careful because making exceptions for one car park opens the gates for making exceptions to others. He advised that he would take this under review and respond to Councillor Pond at a later date.

Councillor A Lion referred to Councillor Patel's report on Limes Farm and stated that he regularly attended the Community Café and also participated in the tree planting sessions where 500 trees were planted. He added that he applauded Councillor Patel and the Council for their active engagement on Limes Farm and the support that was being given to the residents.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse stated that his question was to Councillor Avey relating to electric car charging points and I note that new ones were recently introduced at Oakwood Hill. There were at least two car parks in Loughton with electric charging points but the situation wasn't the same in other parts of the district. Therefore was there an update for the programme to roll out charging points in other parts of the district and in particular was there any updates on discussions with the County Council about on-street charging as many residents did not have drives and need access to on-street charging.

Councillor Avey thanked Councillor Whitehouse for his question and stated that he did not have details of the information to hand and he would report back with further updates. He further added that it was important that the electric charging sites were rolled out as quickly as possible all over the district. He stated that Tesco in Epping

were installing electric charging points so he hoped that both in the public and private realm there will be some coverage across the district.

Councillor J Philip asked the Chairman to clarify which items were these questions being asked under, questions directly on the reports or on Agenda item 8, Questions by members without notice.

The Chairman replied that these were questions pertaining to the Portfolio Holder reports.

## **87. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS WITHOUT NOTICE**

The Chairman thanked Members for giving notification of their intention to ask a question without notice.

### **(a) Grant Aid**

Councillor Murray advised his question was to the Community and Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder and stated that it was to do with a press release issued on the 21 March regarding Grant Aid. Councillor Patel said in that press release that he was delighted to approve 30 applications totalling £85,000 of Grant Aid and the Council recognised the significant impact that our amazing local community and voluntary sector groups who in turn supported the positive well health and wellbeing of our residents. He asked why did Councillor Patel feel able to put forward and be part of a leadership party, that the budget papers for 2022/23 which consisted of 147 pages and tucked away on page 105 there was one line in the budget that showed the grants to voluntary organisation in the new financial year had been cut by over 50%. I thought it was important, after the fine words Councillor Patel had said for this year, and wanted to know why was he able to go along with the budget and a 50% cut for the next municipal year. Councillor Murray stated that he could find no explanation or notification of this cut so why Councillor Patel, as the Portfolio Holder would accept that cut.

The Chairman asked Councillor J Philip to answer this question as it was to do with finance and the Council budget which fell into his remit.

Councillor J Philip thanked Councillor Murray for his question and stated that there was a fixed pot of money for 2022/23 to spend, there were difficult choices to be made with the grant aid and the frontline services we provide and if more money was put into the grant aid then some services would have to be cut. The budget papers went to Cabinet where it was debated and no objections were made to the grant aid being cut. Councillor Philip stated that he did not want to cut any of the Council frontline services and as he had said at Cabinet the next financial year would be a very tough year for the Council. Council Philip stressed that the Council was aiming to come in under budget and if so that meant that the Council could be more generous with the Grant Aid in the 2023/24 financial year.

Councillor S Murray thanked Councillor Philip for his answer but stated that his question was quite specific to which Portfolio Holder he asked his question to and stated that he had great respect for the Chairman but didn't think it was up to her or the Cabinet to decide who would answer his question and he would like the Portfolio Holder in line with his press release to answer his question.

Councillor J Philip stated that Councillor Murray asked a question regarding the budget and advised that it was brought forward as a Cabinet, there were trade-offs within it but the Cabinet had a corporate responsibility when they brought the budget

forward. He advised that the budget came under his portfolio and he was responsible for balancing it out.

Councillor S Murray asked once more was the Portfolio Holder he asked saying he was unprepared to answer the question or was he happy for the answer that the Finance Portfolio Holder gave.

Councillor A Patel advised that as it had already been stated by Councillor Philip it was a budget related question and that Councillor Philip had given a full and comprehensive answer to the question.

(b) Places Leisure Centre Loughton

Councillor R Brookes advised that her question was to the Environmental and Technical Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor N Avey and stated that it had been a substantial increase in the fees for leisure centre members, which had been held back for two years, but what had affected many of the residents was yet again adult lane swimming was much more reduced for the Easter holiday period and I wondered if you would investigate and talk to places leisure about it.

Councillor N Avey advised that he would be happy to take that up with officers and Places Leisure.

(c) Highway Rangers

Councillor P Stalker advised that his question was to the Environmental and Technical Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor N Avey and stated that he had recently received some very positive feedback from residents regarding the Highway Rangers and asked for an update on the current activities and status of the Highway Rangers.

Councillor N Avey stated that the Highway Rangers continued to be a very successful initiative and as noted in his report the Highway Rangers have taken a number of recent projects including district wide roadside cleaning and repair, assisting with the removal of trees on the highways during the recent storms and providing traffic management for other teams. A new full time Ranger had recently been recruited which brought the team up to full strength. He hoped in the future that the services of the Highway Rangers could be expanded and that they would continue to bring excellent service to the residents and the district.

(d) Government Benefit for Council Taxpayers

Councillor A Lion advised that his question was the Finance, Qualis Client and Economic Development Portfolio Holder and stated as we emerged from the pandemic and we understand the pressures facing many families, as global inflation levels increased, he asked the Portfolio Holder how the £150 that the Government have allocated to council taxpayers was going to be developed and managed in Epping Forest for the benefit of the residents.

Councillor J Philip advised that the Council had been awarded money by the Government to pay residents in the Council tax bands A-D which consisted of £150 towards the cost of living. The Council had received almost £4.8 million which equated to approximately 32 thousand homes within the district who pay council tax. For the council tax payers that pay by direct debit this will automatically be paid into their bank accounts by the end of April. For those who do not pay by direct debit they will receive a letter asking them to apply for the £150 grant and to provide payment

details to enable the Council to make those payments this would have to be done by September this year.

For residents that are challenged with properties sitting above band D there was a small discretionary fund that would be allocated to residents who applied, for example people who might be property rich but poor in terms of income.

(e) Planning Application by a Buckhurst Hill Parish Councillor

Councillor S Heap advised that his question was to the Planning Portfolio Holder, Councillor N Bedford and asked why a meeting between senior planning officials and Conservative members of the district to discuss an application by a Conservative parish member in Buckhurst Hill eight days prior to that meeting being heard. He asked if this was common practice and did the Portfolio Holder think that it sent out the right signals in terms of fairness and justice.

Councillor N Bedford replied that this matter was being investigated by EFDC Officers that there was no further comment at this stage.

Councillor C Whitbread stated that the meeting was not outside of a normal process and the meeting was to discuss a planning process and not a planning application and he thought it was out of order for Councillor Heap to have asked that question this evening.

(f) Council Housing Allocation

Councillor D Stocker advised that his question was to the Housing Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor H Whitbread and asked if she could confirm that the council houses that became available would be allocated to local residents that were on the waiting list and not people from outside of the area.

Councillor H Whitbread advised that this was in her report and at a recent Cabinet Committee housing policies were passed which reinforced the Councils commitment that local residents on the waiting list would come first. In order to be on the Council housing waiting list you need to have lived in the district for seven years.

In March 2022 a number of units in Waltham Abbey were handed over to Epping Forest tenants and there were more to come this month in Beech Walk, Waltham Abbey.

The Housing Team have informed me today that there was a huge list of new homes to be handed over very soon.

(g) Police Hub

Councillor P Bolton advised that his question was to the Housing Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor H Whitbread and stated that a technical point in her report which advised that two police officers were joining and presumably these are on rotation and not new.

There had also been reports of anti-social behaviour within North Weald and he suspected other wards as well and asked if the Portfolio Holder was happy that the Police Hub was able to target these problems and deal with them efficiently.

Councillor H Whitbread advised that Epping Forest District Council originally had a service level agreement with Essex Police to hire three police officers who worked

exclusively within the Epping Forest District and because we have a good relationship with Essex Police they have given us a free Police Officer now making four in total who work from our policing hub. The two new Police Officers were to replace the vacancies that we had for a short period.

In relation to specific targets for anti-social behaviour, particularly in Blenheim Square in North Weald officers have worked really closely in partnership with Essex Police as well as the Councils Community Safety and Resilience team at the District Council to carry out targeted patrols. They also do some work with the youth and youth offenders and carry out patrols with the roving CCTV to try to alleviate the problems.

If any members are aware of anti-social behaviour issues within their wards do get in touch with the Community Resilience Team who do a really good job at targeting particular problems of anti-social behaviour in the district.

(h) Weed Spraying

Councillor D Wixley advised his question was to the Environmental and Technical Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor N Avey and stated that his question was to do with a very angry phone call that he had received today regarding weed spraying, which happens this time of the year and stated that where this had been going on it was causing a scorched earth appearance around the base of trees and along verges, he asked why was it necessary, which chemical was used, was the chemical entirely harmless and the resident was particularly concerned about the effect on potential wild flowers and insects.

Councillor Wixley did not expect the Portfolio Holder to be able to answer his question this evening but asked if he could look into it and come back with an answer or for wider interest reply in the Bulletin.

Councillor N Avey replied that residents complained if the Council didn't spray enough and complained if they sprayed too much he advised that he would get the technical information and would publish the information in the Bulletin for the benefit of all members.

(i) Tree Planting Scheme on Council Owned Estates

Councillor K Williamson advised his question was to the Housing Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor H Whitbread and asked if she could inform members regarding the tree planting scheme on Council owned estates.

Councillor H Whitbread advised that the tree planting programme was the result of grant funding from the Forestry Commission for 2,500 trees to plant across the district on Council owned estates. Conversations between the different groups as to where they thought these trees should go. A few weeks ago 500 were planted in Limes Farm at Chigwell with the help of Councillor Lion who was ably digging some holes and planting trees and numerous other trees were going to be planted in Loughton and Debden estates.

(j) Electric Charging Points

Councillor J Lea advised that her question was to the Environmental and Technical Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor N Avey and stated that she had recently been on holiday with a friend, who had an electric car and they found only one electric charging point that worked on the journey home and ended up being brought home by an AA vehicle recovery lorry in this brand new electric car. Everywhere they



stopped you wasn't aware in the electric charging points were working or not until you have downloaded the app for the charging point to find out it was not working after four or five stops the last one being on the motorway, they had four charging points, they were told that they had not been working for about five months. She asked the Portfolio Holder about the charging points the Council were installing in the car parks and asked if you had to download an app to find out if they were working or not or could you just put your card in and pay for it. In her opinion she did not think it was viable to have an electric car.

Councillor N Avey stated that Councillor Lea had highlighted the problems with owning an electric vehicle and that was why he did not own one. There were a multiplicity of companies around the country that provide these charging points and if you are doing a long journey the last thing you want to find on a motorway late at night was charging points that did not work so you are stuck at the services for the rest of the night. He advised that he would check to see what the ones were that the Council were installing but he expected that there would be an app attached to them. As a Council we should look to make sure that we had the most efficient system by the best provider and stated that he would find out and provide some more detail.

## 88. MOTIONS

The Chairman reported that there were no motions to be considered at the meeting.

## 89. ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY

### Councillor I Hadley, Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee

Councillor I Hadley advised that the Audit and Governance Committee, at its meeting on the 23 November 2021, reviewed and referred the revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy to the Council for approval.

He stated that this was a very robust strategy and pointed out the four amendments which were made:

- **HR related fraud – such as false information on job applications, bogus qualifications / references, failing to declare previous convictions etc;** (Appendix A page 50 of the Agenda)
- In cases where the offence is deliberate and serious enough to warrant prosecution, consideration will be given to the Council's **own policies as well as The Code for Crown Prosecutors** ~~fraud prosecution / sanction policy~~. If deemed appropriate legal proceedings will be undertaken in conjunction with Legal Services and / or other bodies such as the Police. Utilising the provisions of Section 222 of The Local Government Act 1972, the Corporate Fraud Team in conjunction with Legal Services are appropriately authorised to undertake criminal prosecutions (Appendix A page 51 of the Agenda);
- **Increasing ownership of the fraud risks in service areas** (Appendix A page 52 of the Agenda); and
- Reduce the losses as a result of fraud or corruption **and fully utilise available methods of loss recovery (e.g. POCA (Proceeds of Crimes Act))** (Appendix A page 53 of the Agenda).

Councillor S Murray asked if this strategy also applied to Qualis and if so do the Council expect them to follow this strategy or did they have their own Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy.

Councillor I Hadley stated that this strategy applied only to Epping Forest District Council as Qualis was a separate company.

Councillor S Murray asked if EFDC were the only shareholder in Qualis.

Councillor J Philip advised that Qualis did have its own strategy on Anti-Fraud and Corruption which was reported in the last Qualis Annual report about the governance that was in place. All Qualis policies are in place and are regularly monitored to make sure they are compliant. Being a private company their drivers are slightly different from being a local authority and that was why they required a different one because there were different standards that needed to be held because they were effectively a Government owned entity in terms of the bribery and corruption act which needed to be correct.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the recommendations of the Audit and Governance Committee as set out below be agreed:

- **HR related fraud – such as false information on job applications, bogus qualifications / references, failing to declare previous convictions etc;** (Appendix A page 50 of the Agenda)
- In cases where the offence is deliberate and serious enough to warrant prosecution, consideration will be given to the Council's **own policies as well as The Code for Crown Prosecutors** ~~fraud prosecution / sanction policy~~. If deemed appropriate legal proceedings will be undertaken in conjunction with Legal Services and / or other bodies such as the Police. Utilising the provisions of Section 222 of The Local Government Act 1972, the Corporate Fraud Team in conjunction with Legal Services are appropriately authorised to undertake criminal prosecutions (Appendix A page 51 of the Agenda);
- **Increasing ownership of the fraud risks in service areas** (Appendix A page 52 of the Agenda); and
- Reduce the losses as a result of fraud or corruption **and fully utilise available methods of loss recovery (e.g. POCA (Proceeds of Crimes Act)** (Appendix A page 53 of the Agenda).

#### **90. CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP REPORT**

**In the absence of the Chairman of the Constitution Working Group, Councillor S Rackham, Councillor J Philip presented the report on her behalf.**

Councillor J Philip advised that this review had occurred as a result of questions from members on a Constitution training course in May 2021. It was felt that a majority of the plans and strategies either did not exist, were no longer needed or had already been replaced. At the Constitution Working Group (CWG) on the 23 November 2021 members of the CWG considered and took the time to go through each one of the plans and strategies and agreed on what was to be either removed or updated. He

therefore urged Councillors to agree the recommendations in the report on pages 73-80 of the agenda.

Councillor S Murray stated that he felt there was not enough information in the report to agree the recommendations and stated that he had four statements to make and referred to appendix 1 (pages 74-75 of the agenda).

- (a) Community Plan / Strategy which was being removed from being reported to Council. He felt that this was important and should not be removed.
- (b) Economic Development Strategy being removed from Council to go to a Scrutiny Committee and then to Cabinet and stated that the Economic Development Strategy was important and should be reported to Full Council where all Councillors would have a chance to debate that as a member of the debating group which was key to the district.
- (c) Local Transport Plan he stated that anyone that uses buses in the district would know that the Council did not have a Local Transport Plan but he said it should not be removed.
- (d) Social Inclusion Strategy he stated he felt very strongly about this strategy, there had been no evidence of adoption by Full Council recently so it was recommended to be removed. The Social Inclusion Strategy was absolutely crucial and he gave an example relating to the Food Bank that the Council had an agreement with operated the Food in School Holiday meals (FISH) and over the last two days over 73 families had been referred to them by primary schools, feeding over 304 people through the school holidays. Any Youth worker, teacher that you speak to will tell you that social exclusion exists and therefore social inclusion in Epping Forest was really important. He stated that social exclusion was a growing problem and sadly not a diminishing problem and thought that this should not be removed as it was a strategy that should be a part of a Full Council agenda when it was relevant to be.

Councillor J Philip commented on the Social Inclusion Strategy and stated that the last reference to this strategy was in 2008 and if that was the last time there was a reference to a Social Inclusion Strategy then clearly this Council doesn't think it was something that was needed to have as a strategy adopted by the Council otherwise it would have come forward before now. Therefore given that the Council do not have a Social Inclusion Strategy, given that the Council last had one 14 years ago and given that there were currently no plans to produce one, it made no sense to the Council being the body which it should come to.

The same could be said of the other areas that Councillor Murray referred to. There were areas of the Economic Development Strategy, the Economic Development Department with the Council consists of 3.5 people which was less than one percent of the FTE equivalent in the Council therefore it did not make sense to come to Council. The Council were working on Economic Development, looking at town centres, a town centre project manager was employed working with Town and Parish Councils to drive things forward for economic development which had clearly not been successful from the Town and Parish Councils point of view and was something the Council needed to look at but it did not fit in with an Economic Development Strategy.

Councillor Chris Pond referred to the Local Transport Plan and advised that he had spent many hours at County Hall in 2011 discussing the Local Transport Plan and it

was concluded that it was the responsibility of upper tier authorities and I am not quite sure how it found its way into this Council's Constitution. He stated that he shared some of the issues that Councillor Murray raised and agreed that this district did need a Local Transport Plan but it was down to Essex County Council to reinstate it to which I believe will happen in the next few months.

Councillor Pond then referred to Appendix 2 on pages 77-80 of the agenda, the sentence which half way down page 77 that ended with statue should read statute and asked for this to be amended.

Councillor J McIvor stated a point of clarity that most of the matters discussed at CWG were discussed at the Scrutiny committees, where many members had the opportunity to raise questions and scrutinise them they also appeared in Cabinet members reports to Council where members were entitled to ask questions of the Cabinet members report at Full Council. If members had a specific concern they are entitled to ask officers or ask to meet with a Cabinet member to discuss those concerns.

Councillor Janet Whitehouse stated that she was at the Constitution Working Group when these recommendations were put forward and she agreed with Councillor Murray regarding the Social Inclusion Strategy and that it should not be abandoned as there were a lot of people that felt excluded and maybe the Council should be looking to work again on a Social Inclusion Strategy and have one that comes to Full Council to be adopted.

Councillor J Philip stated that the fact was the Council did not have a Social Inclusion Strategy, there were no plans to create one it was not something that had been identified in terms of the work programme of Overview and Scrutiny, it had not been identified as a key decision for the Cabinet to look at going forward and there were no plans for it to fit within the role of the Council at this present time. If the Council finds that they need a strategy of this nature then the Council will go through a process of identifying where that strategy needed to come from and where it needed to go which would probably be through scrutiny first. He reiterated that Council did not have a Social Inclusion Policy and it had not been discussed at Council since 2008.

Councillor Chris Pond stated as we have just adopted the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy that it should now be added to Appendix 2.

Councillor J Philip stated that as this strategy had now been adopted he would be happy for it to be added to Appendix 2.

**RESOLVED:**

That the recommendations of the Constitution Working Group as set out below be agreed:

- (1) Recommending that the following amendments to Article 4, 1(c) be made as detailed in Appendix 2 (attached); and
- (2) That pursuant to Recommendation (1) above, the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make necessary revisions to the Council's Constitution.

**91. JOINT ARRANGEMENTS & EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

The Chairman advised that the Royal Gunpowder Mills, Waltham Abbey would be opening to the public on Easter Sunday, 17 April 2022, which had been well received by the local press.

**CHAIRMAN**