

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL  
NOTES OF A MEETING OF STRONGER PLACE SELECT COMMITTEE  
HELD ON TUESDAY, 22 JUNE 2021  
IN CONFERENCE SUITE - CIVIC OFFICES  
AT 7.00 - 8.10 PM**

**Members Present:** A Lion (Chairman), R Morgan (Vice-Chairman), R Bassett, S Heather, I Hadley, S Heap, R Balcombe, J Share-Bernia and J H Whitehouse

**Other members present:**

**Apologies for Absence:** J Jennings and C McCredie

**Officers Present** N Dawe (Chief Operating Officer), L Kirman (Democratic Services Officer), N Richardson (Service Director (Planning Services)), T Carne (Corporate Communications Team Manager), N Cole (Corporate Communications Officer), J Leither (Democratic Services Officer), S Mitchell (PR Website Editor), R Perrin (Democratic and Electoral Services Officer) and Natalie Blaken (Interim Planning Policy Manager)

**1. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION**

The Chairman reminded everyone present that this meeting would be broadcast live to the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

**2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Councillor J H Whitehouse as substitute for Councillor C McCredie

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor R Bassett declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of being a non-Executive Director on the Qualis Board.

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

**4. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 March 2021 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**5. TERMS OF REFERENCE & WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman, asked members to consider the terms of reference and work programme. He suggested that the terms of reference were generic and that a definition of what was included in Place would be beneficial. He detailed the definition of Stronger Place from the 2018 Corporate Plan:

- Delivering effective core services that people want:
- Keeping the district clean and green

- Improving the district housing offer
- A district with planned development:
- Planning development priorities
  - Ensuring infrastructure supports growth
- An environment where new and existing businesses thrive:
- Supporting business enterprise and attracting investment
  - People develop skills to maximise their employment potential
  - Promoting retail, tourism and the visitor economy

He advised that there would be discussion with the Chairmen of the other Select Committees and felt that it was important to get input from Members of the Committee and asked for comments, suggestions or proposals for areas that should be scrutinised either from the floor or in writing after the meeting.

Cllr Hadley suggested that there was some overlap between Stronger Communities and Stronger Place, and suggested that Place related to infrastructure and physical things. He suggested a number of areas that should fall in the remit of the committee: the implementation plan after the adoption of the Local Plan; Public Transport within the scope of the district; electric scooters, flooding; tree preservation, climate change and the clean air strategy.

Cllr Whitehouse reminded the Committee that she had raised the lack of correlation of the Scrutiny Panels to the corporate objective at Overview and Scrutiny Committee. She suggested that all members should have the opportunity to put forward areas for scrutiny, this process had been hindered as members did not know what scrutiny was covering and scrutiny had become officer led. She asked which Portfolio Holders and which services were aligned to each Committee. Mr Dawe (Chief Operating Officer) responded that Cllr Avey, Environment and Technical Portfolio covered waste, parking, sustainable drainage; Cllr Patel, Community and Regulatory, covered North Weald, and the employment land and the Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and countryside development was expected to be scrutinised; Cllr H Whitbread, Housing, the physical build of the programme, with improvements and digital. Cllr Philip, Finance, covered the Town Centre Plans which centred on economic activity, digital and other infrastructure issues; and Cllr Bedford, Planning and Sustainability, covered planning, climate change and sustainable travel, these all aligned with Stronger Place. He advised that The Climate Change Strategy and North Weald Master Plan consultation would take place in autumn if the Committee wanted to consider inclusion in the work programme.

Cllr Whitehouse commented that there were many interesting ideas, but only three meetings per year. She suggested small focussed task and finish groups for half or single day sessions for focused areas of scrutiny.

Cllr Bassett suggested that there could be alignment between The Utilities 5 year plans and the Council's development plan, and questioned where healthcare, the new junction 7a on the M11 and Qualis should be scrutinised due to their cross cutting nature.

Cllr Balcombe suggested that there should be liaison between the Select Committees for joint working. Cllr Lion responded that he hoped areas of overlap would be address at the meeting of the Joint Chairs of the Select Committees.

Cllr Lion suggested that broadband development, the climate emergency, transport and electric charging points that could be added to the programme. He also drew attention to the potential impact that closure of civic amenity sites to commercial operators by Essex County Council may have increased fly tipping and how total impact of decisions could be considered.

Cllr Heap supported the area proposed by Cllr Hadley and requested more scrutiny on how planning and enforcement operated. Nigel Richardson advised that KPI could be presented at future meetings. Cllr Share-Bernia asked if there could be something presented in a pictorial form to show overlapping responsibilities.

Nick Dawe suggested a spatial and sequenced overview which would set out where and when things are due to happen could be provided with a brief paper on KPI to provide an overview of information to allow members to prioritise and focus on of areas of interest.

Cllr Heap asked if meeting could go back to zoom, Nick Dawe advised that as a response to national legislation and the removal of emergency powers members had to be present at decision making meetings, this was being continually reviewed.

Cllr Lion, thanked everyone for their participants, suggestions and ideas.

Cllr Lion stated that to be able to effectively operate a scrutiny function, written reports were required to be submitted so members of the Committee could consider issues and questions before the meeting.

It was proposed that ideas should be submitted by 6<sup>th</sup> July to be considered by the Chairman.

**Resolved:**

The Committee would review the terms of reference and develop a Members led work programme.

**6. LOCAL PLAN UPDATE**

Natalie Blaken (Interim Planning Policy Manager) provided an update on the Local Plan and reminded members of the process and consultation that had occurred to date, culminating in the Inspector's advice in August 2019. The Local Plan had reached an advanced stage and had significant weight for planning decisions and appeals. The Council has carried out further work to address the comments made by the Inspector in August 2021, when she advised what was required to make the Local Plan sound.

There was one round of statutory consultation on the main modifications. It was important to note that the main modifications did not change the spatial data. The Council were working with the Inspector to produce a schedule of the main modifications, this would be published with supporting documents on the Local Plan website and be made available at local libraries and the Council Offices. The statutory consultation period of six weeks, which should start the week commencing 5 July 2021, had been extended to mid-September to account for the holiday period. A briefing had been arranged for all members on 28 June 2021, everyone on the consultation database would be contacted, there would be a developers' forum and Town and Parish Councils would be briefed. All the responses would be provided to the Inspector for consideration before she produced her final report and

recommendation. The Local Plan could then be adopted by the Council, if it chose to make the main modifications recommended by the Inspector.

Cllr Lion what asked what was expected to come out of the consultation. He was advised that the focus would be, if the main modifications were appropriate and sound. Three groups of responses were anticipated: developers and landowners; Statutory Consultees and Parish and Town Councils; and a large volume of public responses.

Cllr Janet Whitehouse suggested that written reports were required for scrutiny and asked why officers could attend by zoom and members couldn't. The Service Director for Planning Development, Nigel Richardson, advised that a verbal information report was provided as dates for consultation had just been agreed and that working practices in relation to Covid safety and the distance the officer needed to travel had led to the decision to present in a virtual manner. The Chairman confirmed that he had accepted this verbal update but that future reports to the Committee would be written.

Cllr Bassett asked what would happen when the local plan had been adopted, as sites allocations, offices of national statistics, and housing and employment data would all be 10 years old. Would an early review be planned and what would be the ongoing process. The Committee were advised that when the Local Plan was adopted it would be a statutory development plan and decision must be taken in accordance with that plan unless there were material considerations. At this time there was no indication that the Inspector would require an early review, but this could be in Inspector's final report, although clear reasons for the review would be required. The Local Plan had been developed using previous guidance, if the process was started again new guidance would be applied, however the development plan stands until it is changed. The plan would move to the delivery and implementation phase.

Cllr Lion asked if there would be a published implementation plan, N Blaken advised that there was a housing implementation strategy. There would be corporate working and work would be carried out with developers and Qualis to implement the Local Plan.

Members of the Committee discussed several scenarios that related to changes in permitted development rights, and they were advised in summary that as no planning application was required these would sit outside the development plan.

**Resolved:**

The update on the Local Plan was noted by the Committee.

**7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The Committee noted that the date of the next meeting was 23 September 2021.